



The Silver Spectrum would like to thank all of the students who participated in the first annual, “First Line Contest.” Honorable Mention certificates were awarded to Heather Haynes and Brett Roche. Their stories can be found below.

First Line Honorable Mention
Heather M. Haynes

“Slow Down”

The contents of my mother’s purse spilled to the floor. My hands shook as I searched for it. I needed it- *craved* it. My legs burned and begged for oxygen. My mouth gasped for air. My chest heaved in and out, trying, and failing to breathe. Wheezing, my body screamed for relief. I was having the most severe asthma attack I had ever experienced and I was home alone. I NEEDED my inhaler- fast. My head felt weightless and my hands and feet felt numb. My vision grew fuzzy and I prepared myself for the worst. There was no one to help me. Tears rolled down my cheeks and my throat grew sore from gasping for the air I knew would not come. My shoulders were tense, my back stiff, and my body shook vigorously. Fluids rattled in my airways. I was choking- suffocating. I was drowning. I didn’t want to die this way.

I gave up searching in my mom’s bag and tried to slow down. I could not find my medicine. I was so scared. This had never happened before. “What do I do?” I

demanded of myself, not really expecting an answer. But despite everything, despite feeling numb from a lack of oxygen, despite shaking and crying and heaving and gasping for air, despite being moments away from passing out, or worse, an answer came. Outside, a neighborhood child on his tricycle tried to catch up with his older brother on two-wheeled bike, yelling, “Hey! Slow *down!*” These words echoed in my head and I knew the little boy was right. So I sat down on the floor and completely focused on slow, deep breathing. Slow, deep breathing. Slow.

It was so hard. I needed to fill my lungs so badly, but I had to force myself to breathe slowly. I felt like I was suffocating myself. Closing my eyes, I pictured the ocean. Beige sand speckled with seaweed and pebbles. Clear blue water, breaking into gentle waves, flowing in and out, long, slow, deep waves; long, slow, deep breaths. The muscles in my back began to soften and my shoulders lowered. I stopped shaking. I was still wheezing and could not get air fast enough, but I was becoming more relaxed. Each symptom that I could control slowly left. My chest relaxed and moved as slowly as the calm ocean waves. The air flowed as slow and light as a relaxed ocean breeze. I was so relaxed; I almost forgot I was restricted from breathing.

Although my asthma symptoms remained, I was now relaxed enough to act rationally and go find my inhaler. I found it within minutes, used it, and called my parents to come home. From that day forth, I smile when my little neighbor rides by on his tryke. He will never know it, but he just may have saved my life.

Heather is a sophomore from Kingston. She has enjoyed creative writing and art since childhood and is always looking for ways to express herself through the arts. She has high expectations for herself, which she fully expects to achieve. Heather values her family and friends more than anything in the world.

First Line Honorable Mention
Brett Roche

“The Right Size”

The face in the mirror is not mine. Its creases are deeper, darker, sharper. The brow is furrowed, an alien feature to my standard countenance. And those eyes, those now fiery eyes. Eyes now swelling with fury, thirst, and primal instincts of a cold-blooded animal. Whose face do I see, whose face, glazed with cold sweat, hot with apprehension, lies before me? My own, it can't be, it is not. But as I place a hand upon its cheek I discover, beyond all belief, it is my own.

With that behind me, my thoughts redirect themselves to my surroundings. My fists clenched tight around the porcelain sink sides of this claustrophobic bathroom. The steady, but strangely deafening huffing of my breath and heart is all the sound in my ears. And the tingle, the icy-electric tingle of unsure anticipation is all I feel.

And then, over the drumming of my heart, I suck in one more breath to release the hold upon me, the gaze my own mirrored image has seized me by. Sound pours in. In the gymnasium beyond I can hear the sounds of eager family and friends. Senses surround me. The cool air dissolves the sweat upon my brow.

This sensation overwhelms me. I begin to choke, not just from my revival of sense, but also from the anxiety of the upcoming event. Though it is not an anxiety of fear or shame, but of the expectancy upon me. It is the anxiety of the necessity to emerge victorious, not for myself, but for all others, for all who know me, for all who know of me. They are shoes I must fill, shoes that I created.

My legs become suddenly weak, my knees buckle, and if it had not been for my grip on the sink, I would have plummeted to the floor. But after this momentary

fumbling, my eyes again peer into the mirror. Again, there is that face. Yet now upon it there is something there was not before. A smile. A grin that breaks halfway into laughter. It is then that I realize the face is so surely my own, it now seems silly to have thought otherwise. I can see the unstoppable pursuit of victory, the twisted fires that fuel my passion. It is my face. It is every part of me; it is the restless ambition that will always drive me forward, that will always fill the shoes I create, no matter the size.

One more deep breath further revives me.

I blink once.

I let go of the sink, and turn right, towards the doorway, flooded with lights and cheers of ready fans, of waiting teammates. And I walk towards them, almost oblivious to the fact that the shoes on my feet are slightly more snug, slightly more filled.

Brett Roche is a freshman who lives in Halifax with his mother, father, and sister. He enjoys writing fiction in his free time and draws inspiration from authors such as Dean Koontz. His other passions include wrestling, football, and cooking.

