

Years 7 & 8

1st Place and Best Overall: Aydee Bull  
Year 8, Kelmscott Senior High School

### **Fruit Bowl**

Meghan stared at the canvas, pondering over her next move. The course was advertised as an 'amateur class', though that was hardly the case. Upon entering the class (late as she always was), she was met with a variety of different expressions, none of which being particularly impressed. In fact, some of them could only be described as quite hostile or judgemental. She wasn't really surprised, I mean, what did she expect? But she couldn't shake off the nagging feeling that she was being judged. Of course she was, what was she talking about? Meghan turned to her paints, wincing as the colours fell to the ground with a loud bang.

"Sorry . . ." she mumbled as she crouched to retrieve the pallet.

What had she been thinking? She should have trusted her gut, the gut that told her to stay away. The gut that told her people would judge her. She'd ignored it, passed it off as her mind playing tricks on her. But look where she was now. Meghan shook her head as she stood up and looked at her model. The fruit bowl sat in the middle of the room, a stark contrast from the white, flaking walls. Meghan quickly assessed the room, and noticed the half complete paintings on the easels. Some a big blur of colour, some masterpieces fit for Da Vinci himself. How was she going to top that? Meghan quickly mixed her paints, glancing up to the bowl. With a few strokes of her paint brush, Meghan was lost in her painting.

Jade scowled as she looked across the silent room. She hated that her parents had made her come here. It was unfair, what had she done wrong? She batted her long fringe out of her face as she did another glance around the room. Who even were these people? And more importantly, why should she care? She certainly didn't trust them enough to talk to them. Anyone who'd started to introduce themselves had been met with a piercing glare. No one had dared even try after that, and she was happy. She supposed maybe they were nice, maybe they were trying to help her. But she quickly pushed that thought away. What was she thinking? Jade didn't trust anyone, and to be quite honest no one trusted Jade. She was known to lash out, like most teenagers. But she was always filled with this constant anger, maybe from the fear. Maybe the fact that she was scared to let people in. Jade winced as memories started flooding in. People she had once trusted, letting her down, letting her fall. Jade scowled as she put on her headphones, determined to drown out her anger in the form of heavy metal music, as was expected from the onlookers. Jade quickly started to paint the canvas, a variety of furious, jarring strokes. Jade smiled as she swiped at the paper, her canvas rocking precariously on the easel. She wouldn't let those memories in, not today at least.

Dahn surveyed his painting, taking in every detail, every stroke. He was almost happy with the quality; it just needed a few finishing touches. He scoffed as he looked around the room. Amateurs. Surely none of them had official training. And surely none of them wanted to be painters. Most of the paintings were, average to say the least. His however, was amazing. Every line, every colour beautiful in its own way, more specifically realistic. He sighed as he imagined his future as a famous painter. Then maybe he could finally help the family reputation, his lifelong goal. It

had no doubt taken a hard hit when they emigrated from Vietnam. It had been a tough couple of years, and people had been as welcoming as they could. But there were always those people who weren't willing to make the change, to accept his family. There were always days when he was made fun of, or bullied. Those were the days that he went home and cried. He cried for him, he cried for his family, and he cried for all the families that went through this. But now, for every tear that they made him cry, he would defy the odds. He would prove them wrong. As Dahn continued with his painting, he swore to protect his honour, his family. He swore to help them, no matter what.

Maude splashed the colour across the canvas, swirling and mixing until everything was just right. She was covered in paint, from head to toe. Red, blue, yellow, you name it and she had streaks of it in her hair, or on her clothes. Painting gave her such a thrill. She could control the colours, the patterns, everything. One sweep of her hand sent the colours hurtling towards her face. She chuckled heartily, flicking the blob of paint off her nose. If you gave her a canvas, she could give you a masterpiece. Though not exactly in the form you're expecting. Maude was proud of how she was different. She was nothing like these uptight, snobby painters that sat around the room. She wouldn't let herself become that. She had received a fair share of stares and muttered insults. To be honest, she didn't care. It was deathly quiet in that room anyway; they needed some fun. She needed some fun. Some colour to block out what was the endless grey of her life. Art, painting and creating were her escape from that endless grey. The endless grey that seeped through her life like watercolour on a page, drenching the beautiful colours to a blank, empty nothingness. The canvas gave her a chance to not only show how she was feeling, but to make her feel again. None of those emotions mattered anymore when she had a paintbrush in hand and a canvas in front of her. She could create her own story, her own life. It was finally something that she could control, that she could harness. To create beauty from nothing.

Albert chuckled as he watched the painters at their easels. He had been cleaning for this class for what seemed like a century, seen the coming's and going of these students from the very beginning. The painting class, despite its low funds, had lasted incredibly long. He remembered accepting the job, relieved that he finally had some means of employment. His family, his parents mostly, had always told him he was wasting his life. That he should get a real job like 'Cousin Jim', make something of his life. But no matter what they said, he loved his job. He became infatuated with the story behind this little house, the people who came, the people who went. He'd never seen quite a diverse bunch throughout all those years. He looked around the room, sighing as he assessed the heavy silence that drenched the room. The room had once been full of happy conversations, new friends, new relationships. What happened? When had that hearty laughter faded to nothing? To a bitter silence that couldn't be broken? He couldn't recall the last time he'd heard a muttered greeting, let alone a joyous conversation. As he mopped to cold, tile floor, he flicked his eyes around the room once more. One girl sat awkwardly in the corner, shielding herself from the others. Another with her arms folded, with a cold, calculating glance around the room, eyeing potential threats. One man stood tall, a smirk on his face as he put his paintbrush down. The last woman, covered in paint, laughing wildly as she did a small victory dance. He chuckled once more, perhaps his job wasn't so bad after all.

And so that day, four people walked out of that hall, canvases tucked neatly under their arms. A nod of acknowledgement here and there, the goodbye of a stranger longing for the comfort of their own home. One woman, sitting on the bus, her arms shoving away the world that didn't care. As awkward and shy as the pear that she held in her hand. Another, brooding in the back of a car, sour as the lemon that she had furiously painted upon her canvas. A man, proud and true, the apple of one's eye. The last, as quirky and different as the banana, no doubt the odd one out since the very beginning. But was that really the case? Was there something different, something unknown below the surface? As the strangers stepped into their warm homes, they looked back at the lesson. To the naked eye, a normal meeting between four strangers. But little did they know, even a simple fruit bowl could have many secrets.