



2nd prize

11-13 years age group

Name: Isla S.

Age: 12

Bio of author: My name is Isla Smith and I live with my mum and dad and my little sister. I have a tabby cat called Ava who is crazy! At school, my favourite subjects are writing, art and music. Outside of school, I enjoy gymnastics and being with my friends. I also enjoy reading in my spare time. I mostly read chapter books, that's why I love the library. When I was 4 years old I told my parents that I wanted to be a 'writer booker' when I grow up! I still love writing stories now.

Title: Firestorm

Judge's notes:

"A very moving piece of writing. Heartbreaking in its graphic detail and knowledge of the reality of it. The joy of the sapling."

Firestorm

The fire trailed across the water, sending a blanket of hissing steam over the unsuspecting animals lurking near the lake. Once again lightning split the sky, this time a nearby tree was its victim. The tree thrashed wildly for a few moments before bursting into scarlet flames. Thick smoke rose up over the valley, choking anyone who dared to breathe. The crimson tongues of fire lapped at the roots of almost every tree in sight. Many ran, many were left to perish in the unforgiving fire.

In mere seconds the entire forest was ablaze, screams could be heard from miles away. The trees blocked the paths of fleeing souls, as if envying their ability to escape the scorching flames. The bushfire leaped from tree to tree, laughing mercilessly. The shrieking of dying creatures echoed across each tree. The flames crept so high that even birds could not escape. Staying calm was no longer an option, everyone had to take risks or die. The sharp tang of blood could be scented in the air and panic rose in the midst of their hearts. The fire raged on...

Finally the fire fighters came, they had never seen a fire so big and so hungry. It shook the earth and sparked the ground, eventually each fireman was forced to retreat. Those who fled underground couldn't even seek refuge because the fire burrowed down and trapped the innocent creatures. The lake was still smoking from being struck; the fish shriveled, unable to run. The fire scorched on...

The fire was a raging beast, its selfishness was overpowering the forest. All creatures were gone. Anyone who survived this fire was lucky to be alive at all - or were they? The truth was hard to accept for families who had lost their loved ones. When everything was burnt the fire still found a way to burn more. The sky could no longer be seen because of the amount of smoke and soon the forest seemed more ash and charred wood than a forest. Yet the fire still blazed on...

By now the night had fallen, even though nobody could tell. The fire – which still crackled on - illuminated the ghostly forest, while the hidden moon made its way across the night sky. The noxious smoke still hung in the air along with the smell of death. The forest was silent, not even a whisper from the dried leaves could be heard. The fire grew weak...

After what felt like a decade, the fire eased and the forest was blessed with rain. Though every tree was burnt to the core and the ground was bleached with ash, life would always find a way. And though the forest and the animals within were lost, the heart of the forest thrives everstrong. The forest will grow back to what it once was. All it takes is a tiny sapling.