



3rd prize
14-16 years age group

Name: Jacinta L.

Age: 14

Bio of author: Hi, I'm Jacinta and I am 14 years old. In my spare time I enjoy playing tennis and watching movies.

Title: When the Rain Stops

Judge's notes: N/A

When the Rain Stops

I was only around 9 or 10 then, strapped into the seat of the car that was covered in mud from our recent adventures. The key turned in the ignition of the car, and slowly, but surely, it began to depart from our garage. Reaching the highway, my fingertips twitch. The uncontrollable bounce of my leg taps constantly to the beat of the radio, counting the inevitable white lines that coursed along the tarmac roads as we drove past. Again and again, I asked the unavoidable question to my parents: "Are we there yet?", those four words repeating through our trip as if I were calling to a black void that had no light, no answer at the end of it - a black void that would soon suck us all in.

They told me that it was not about the destination, but rather the journey instead. Yet I thought there was no point in that; why would it matter if we knew where we were going? Why watch a movie if you were completely conscious of the entire plot? Why read books over and over if you know the ending? But on that April afternoon I sat by the car window, eyes half shut as scenery flickered past. It was like watching the ocean wet the same patches of sand over and over again, only this time, I wasn't fully aware of the weather that approached us.

The roar of thunder reverberated all the way to the pits of my stomach, and soon after followed the raindrops that ricocheted off my window. It occurred to me that at one point, the flowers that open their petals up to the sky must have struggled through the rigid and impenetrable earth, only to be

Jolted
by the hail.
Blasted
by the wind.
Obliterated
by the storm.

But despite the harsh conditions, I began to take notice of the landscape through the glass. The distinct cacophony of birds shrieking as they take flight, searching for shelter. Rain pouring down, creating a fresh fragrance upon the concrete surface. Dewdrops sliding off branches. Eventually, the ravaged atmosphere left no remains except for the faint chill of the wind.

Car doors slam. Dappled sunlight emerges through the treetops. Crimson-coloured leaves drift to the floor as we walk up the sharp incline of the peaky mountains. Pale white clouds hang in the sky, enveloping us in a silky veil which seemed to stretch endlessly on the horizon.

We were finally here but it didn't matter anymore. When I reached the top and looked around, I thought to myself "What now? What else is there left to do?"

"Do you want to head back to the car?" Dad asked.

"Yes," I said. "But can you drive as slow as possible this time?"

When the rain stops, musky undertones of soil linger around us.

When the rain stops, a piece of driftwood floats out to sea.