

When I am alone

21. ročník Literární soutěže SPUSA



The 21st annual SPUSA Writing Contest

## **WHEN I AM ALONE**

Awards Ceremony  
At the Information Center of the U.S. Embassy

September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013

On behalf of SPUSA, We would like to thank all the contestants and sponsors for making our 21st Annual Writing Contest another success.

We would like to express our thanks to the judges, both the Education Center staff and the outside members of the SPUSA family. Their work guarantees the quality of this event.

Further, we would like to express our gratitude and thanks to the Embassy of the United States for its dedicated support and coordination of this event, which makes this all happen.

Thank you all so much,

Štěpánka Maňhalová

Head Director

&

SPUSA Education Center

2nd round judges:

**Jiří Stránský**, former President of the Czech PEN Club

**PhDr. Miroslav Jindra**, Translator

**PhDr. Eva Škarková**, Czech Academy of Science

**Christopher Thornton**, English Teacher

**PhDr. Karel Vala**, English Teacher, Telč

**Vincent Verdier**, Independent

**Mgr. Marek Vít**, English Teacher

**Jan Vodňanský**, Czech Writer

*(All the essays are intact as submitted by the authors.)*

SPUSA Writing Contest 2013

## Senior Category

### 1st place

**Daniel Eidi Hakimi**

Gymnázium Jiřího z Poděbrad, Poděbrady

### I am dreaming a dream

I am dreaming a dream  
Or a nightmare maybe?  
Everything is grey  
Except for me

Why am I here?  
Alone  
What will I do?  
Don't know

I look up  
Blue sky  
White clouds  
I started to cry

Why have you left me alone, Lord?  
Why in this land of shadows?  
Have I done something wrong?  
I suppose..

Tears are rolling down my cheeks  
The hardest tears I've ever had  
Where everyone is merely a shadow  
Where I was left

I am a person in a land of ghosts.  
Or a ghost in our world?

No one hears me  
No one... would..

No one touches me  
No one speaks  
No one loves me...  
Tears on my cheeks

I am alone in a crowd  
Do you know that feeling?  
With a number of gray people everywhere  
But no essence of being

I am hopeless  
But I cannot be!  
I have to get out  
Lord, why me?

I have never stood against you  
I have helped save lives  
I have never been laughing  
When a baby cries

Why have You damned me  
Swept my family away  
And left me, a child, here  
With no one to play

Have you ever been so lonely?  
Can you imagine the emotion?  
How do you deal with it?  
What's your solution?

All of my world is grey  
Only the sky is blue  
I don't know if I'm dreaming

Or if it's really true

I am walking in the streets  
Looking around  
Trying to see some colour  
Or hear some sound

Not just the grey  
And silence everywhere  
All around me  
But.. what is it there?

I've seen something  
A glimpse of colour maybe  
Is it real?  
Can it be?

Yes!  
It is true!  
But where?  
I've seen another blue!

The most beautiful colour  
I have ever seen  
I must find it  
I will be mean!

I've walked through the crowd  
Making my way  
Desperately looking for another one  
To share my day

I don't want to be alone  
No  
I need somebody  
Not to be alone

There!  
I've seen!  
I start to run  
I must catch him!

I got him!  
And looked him in the eye  
It is a girl!  
Oh, my!

And she's smiling  
And it's beautiful  
And the grey world  
Becomes colourful

The ghosts are still there  
Grey as before  
But the world..  
Is not like before...

I was alone  
Alone in this place  
Now it's gone  
My life has sense

I know why He left me here  
Why He left me alone here  
I needed to feel the loneliness  
To love true and sincere

I have been damned  
I nearly died  
Only to found her  
Only to love

God  
You've tried me  
Cursed and again  
Cured me

My world is beautiful again  
I just hope, it's not a dream  
For I would lost her, the nicest  
I've ever seen

I have someone to love  
And will cherish her forever  
I will never let her go  
Ever

When life gives you lemons  
You can make lemonade  
And turn the black to the white  
You will see, just wait

God is Forgiving  
And He Cares  
When it looks like a punishment  
It is merely a test

At the end of it  
Something beautiful awaits  
I've found it  
And it is worth it

## 2nd place

**Nikola Bříšová**

Vysoká škola ekonomická v Praze

### Hand-wash only

“So, you were saying...”

“Yeah,” Dean moves on a leather chair. He hates leather; that sweating after 5 minutes and squeaking sounds, “so, like I said I feel weird.”

“Could you be more specific?”

He sighs. Personal questions bother him.

“Well, I just hate being all alone.”

A man sitting across from him kept writing notes. *Passive-aggressive, dynamic, smart, sensitive, divorced...*

“That’s quite normal, Dean. No one enjoys being on his own for too long or too often.”

“This is different. I’m never alone.”

...*paranoid*...

“Have you taken your pills today?”

“Yes, of course. What’s the connection?”

“No worries, just checking. Carry on.”

...*smug*...

“I don’t know. Maybe I’m just scared.”

...*paranoid*...

“Scared of what, Dean?”

“Of what would I do...you know. When people are alone, they do a lot of weird stuff.”

“Like what?”

“God, I don’t know. Just weird.”

He almost yells that. He hates when people don’t understand.

“Would you like another cup of tea?”

Dean looks around the room while the water is boiling.

*Not enough light and too many books.*

*Not enough space for legs and too many pictures on the desk.*



*Not enough curtain clips and too many fingerprints on the window.*

*Not enough...*

“Dean? What do YOU do when you are alone?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, when there is no one around you to...”

“...watch me?”

“Yes, for example. So, what do you do when there’s no one watching you?”

Dean drinks and notices that there’s a new picture on the wall.

“Your daughter looks different on that one.”

“Dean, answer the question.”

“First of all, Mr. Niroll, there’s always someone watching...”

“Mommy, mommy! Mr. Rollin is lost!”

“Sweetie, come on. We don’t have time for this. We gotta go.”

Eliza enters the car and fastens her seatbelt with little pictures of Bugs bunny on it. Her mother starts the engine, backs the car out, goes straight and turns left heading Eliza’s pre-school.

Mr. Rollin is a rabbit. Soft, brown hair, always smiling with a carrot in his left paw. One of his ears is shorter than the other one but he never noticed. Eliza did.

“Mom, will you find him? Please?”

“Yes darling. I promise he’ll come back soon.”

“So, he left? You know where he went?”

“No, love. I don’t. Maybe he’s just looking for some carrots to eat.”

“Mom, he still didn’t finish the one in his paw.”

The woman smiles. *Oh, gosh. She’s so smart.*

“Mom, will you find Mr. Rollin?”

“Yes, honey. I told you I would find him. And, you know, there are some other toys you can play with.”

“I know...but Mr. Rollin hates to be alone.”

A young attractive woman is sitting at the table. Starbucks would usually be hopelessly full at this time, but not today. She is

sipping her cappuccino and reading a book. Finally. Pages 238 and 239 have been bookmarked for months.

A man comes. Casual, good-looking, smiling.

“Hello.”

“Hi.”

“May I?”

“Sure.”

He joins her table; a waiter brings his ‘usual’.

Macchiato, two sugars. The woman continues reading.

“Ah, so glad these chairs are NOT leather. So, what are you reading?”

“Anna Karenina.”

“Hum, Pushkin.”

“Tolstoy.”

“Of course.” He sips a little from his coffee. “Literature has never been my strength.”

“Hum, you don’t say?”

“...My dear Sarah, how are you?”

She looks at him, licks her finger and turns the page. Without answering she reads about Mr. Vronsky.

“I thought you’d like to talk.”

“I would, just not with you.”

“Is everything ok?”

“No.”

She takes a deep breath, closes Anna and puts her on the table.

“Mr. Rollin is lost.”

“Oh, no. Again?”

The woman nods.

“How is she?”

“What do you think? She’s been with him since you left us.”

“Yeah, I know. I’m sorry.”

“Shut up! I don’t give a damn... anymore.”

“So, what are we gonna do?”

“I don’t know. Maybe I’ll buy her something else. Or maybe this is the time for her to know the truth.”

“But Sarah, she’s four.”

“I’m thirty-four.”

“And she hates to be alone.”

“Just like her father.”

“I know. I’m sorry.”

He puts another sugar into the coffee.

“So, what really happened?”

“I washed him.”

“So, what?”

“He smells differently, Eliza would notice.”

“Just spray my fragrance on it.”

“I can’t.”

“Why?”

“You could use him as a keychain now. He shrank.”

### **3rd place**

**Karel Švarcbach**

Gymnázium Teplice

#### When I’m alone

When I’m alone,  
I feel like a stone.  
When I’m with my friends,  
we make bottles of jams.  
It makes us fun,  
so we began with our clan.

When I’m alone,  
I’m like my clone.  
But without my soul,  
and that isn’t my role.  
So I visit my friends,  
and we make our jams.

Friends are very important,

so don't make dirty tricks,  
Don't be dirty vagrant  
and any ugly ticks.  
Be with your friends  
and make strawberry jams,  
Have some fun  
and begin with your clan.

#### **4th place**

**Adéla Krutilová**

Obchodní akademie a Jazyková škola s právem SJZ, Přerov

#### When I am alone

I was 6 when my father abandoned us and my mother started drinking and lost her job. In the age of six and half a social worker came and took me to the orphanage.

I liked it there. It was much better than my old home. The food was great, I immediately gained some weight and got some friends. I usually spent my free time studying because I wanted to be smart so that a nice family would take me home with them. When I was falling asleep, I would always imagine how my dream family should look like - parents who love each other, maybe a sibling even. And they should have a dog and a cat, who would sleep altogether every night, warming each other. Thanks to this image, I would always fall to the dreamland with a smile on my face.

Not everything was nice though. Every story needs a villain, right? There were older kids around 17, who were about to leave the orphanage soon, and were rude to the "aunts" and bullied younger children. One of them was to become the villain of my story. He was 17, a young man with short hair, muscular, abusive with no respect to other people.

It was late at night when I heard the door slowly opening for the first time. I thought it was the "aunt" checking up on us so

I didn't pay attention to it. Suddenly someone covered my mouth. I was shocked and scared. I started to struggle but I didn't stand a chance against him. He leaned and whispered to my ear.

„Be a good boy and listen to me or I'll beat you so much you won't be able to stand on your own feet without help.“

I froze. I knew who he was. I didn't know what he was going to do though - I was 10 at that time. He started touching me. He was rough. I cried and begged but he didn't stop. I don't know how long it lasted, but it seemed like hours. Everything changed after that. I stopped talking to other people. I preferred sitting alone in a corner with a book. He used to come every once in two weeks. Everytime it was the same. I cried and he didn't care. Everytime I heard steps behind the door, I thought it was him. When I was falling asleep, I felt his hands all over my body. I thought it would never end. Why didn't I tell anybody? I was scared other people would look down on me, that no family would want me, so I kept my mouth shut.

After a few months though, a prince on a white horse (or rather a married couple in a white SUV) came. They saved me and gave me a loving home and a feeling of safety. When I've eventually told them about the abuse, they stood behind me. They showed me that you could rely on other people. That you are not alone in this world.

## **5th place**

### **Aneta Jirková**

První soukromé jazykové gymnázium v Hradci Králové

#### Guilty for being born to Romanian mother

Despite everything they said I knew I was not a gypsy. When looking into the mirror, I wouldn't be so sure either. However, there is not any mark of Romanian ancestor at my

parent's appearance. I am just a white boy who has spent quite a lot of time in the sun.

Nevertheless, what if I actually was a Romany? Does it mean that my classmates are allowed to make my life misery? I truly hope they will start treating me differently soon because prejudice has already destroyed my childhood.

During the time when I was in the nursery I met a girl named Claudia. She had been my best friend for a while until her mom banned her from playing with me. Claudia did sometimes resist her mother's wishes about spending time with me but her mom kept insisting that she should avoid me. Claudia even changed nursery just to make sure she didn't catch any "disease" from me and as time passed by I never found another true friend.

These days I attend seventh grade in primary school and learning is my favorite hobby. Even though I am definitely the most hard-working pupil in our class, I am not a straight A student. My teacher believes that I cheat. Although she examines me orally in front of the classmates, it doesn't persuade her. Since I have never been able to fit in the class, my teacher sometimes suggests to my parents to place me in a school for special kids. So, it is expected that if I am among "my people" I will feel more comfortable.

"What does it mean my people?" I ask. The answer is unpleasant. In fact it breaks my heart because the people that I call mom and dad aren't my real parents. I found out that I was adopted and that I do have Romanian origin in me after all. When I switched school it happened to be the hardest time in my life. Not only did I have to deal with new information about me being adopted, but the possibility of learning something new was also denied to me.

I used to believe chocolate can cure anything. However, today it doesn't heal my pain. The only positive thing appears to be that I finally have friends. Nonetheless, I cannot really become an actual member of their community unless I am a trouble maker. I do not enjoy making a mess but it feels amazing

to spend time with people who laugh with me instead of laughing at me.

“It is not your fault,” my dad comforts my mom. “We were raising him right and these are just genes that have woken up in him.” When I walked from my bedroom into the hallway I notice my dad in which I turned back and pretended not to overhear anything.

Are they really genes which turned me into a disobedient person? Isn't it the judgemental Czech nation who should be put the blame on? Which chances do I have to become an honest person when I am being considered as a criminal before I commit any crime?

When I am alone I throw off the mask of a rude guy and I become myself again which it is the boy who secretly cries behind the closed doors. The boy whose tears fall so strongly that he naively hopes they will wash off his tan. The boy who lies to himself and when he is alone he pretends to be an ordinary boy who is beloved just for whom he actually is.

### **Intermediate Category**

#### **1st place**

#### **Daniel Odrobina**

Střední škola hotelová obchodní a polygrafická Český Těšín

When I'm alone. What do people do when they are alone? Why even be alone? I mean, we, humans, are sociable beings. We need someone with us, most of the time anyway. Unless you are some sort of lone wolf type of person who has some sort of trust issues or maybe you are a hermit or a sage who has abandoned humanity in pursuit of greater goals, truths about this world or something like that. Back on track. As I wrote

earlier, mankind is sociable, we enjoy company be it a group of friends or perhaps our significant other.

Sometimes, when we are all alone, its not necessarily bad. I mean we all need our „me time“ for something: To think about important things, to reflect on our decisions or to simply take a nice, long nap and get our energy back up and be able to face our challenges again. So yeah, from time to time being alone is a good thing. But it is important to know when to stop, because too much of it is not good for us. I mean thats why in prisons they lock up the troublesome inmates in those solitary cells. You know what I mean, they have that soft padding on the walls, kind of like where they put those REALLY crazy people? Yeah, those kind of cells. All that isolation and solitude have to affect those prisoners somehow, and not in the good way. Just imagine, being left alone witch nothing but your thoughts for god-knows-how-long, and the longer you stay in there, the worse it gets.

I remember when I broke my leg when I was younger, stuck in my room for whole summer. My friends were out on vacation or just goofing around outside, having way too much fun to even think about dropping by to visit or say hi. And so I began to think: why, with who, when...

My point is: the longer you stay by yourself the more you think about you, what you did, what you could have done and why you didn't do it. And in the end, all youll get is regret and thats bad, because when you think too much about what you COULD have done back then you forget to think about what you SHOULD do now in the present, when it really matters, and that gives you more mistakes that you will regret later and when you'll think of them you won't focus on the matters at hand etc. etc.

So you see, it's good to be with somebody. Somebody who will tell you : Hey! Focus!

Being alone. It's a strange feeling isnt it? It can be both good and bad. It all depends on when and how much. An old saying comes to mind: *Too much of the thing can kill you.* Or be bad for you in this case.



But again if you like being alone, if that's what you prefer, then go for it. I for example like being alone, I can't stand the thought of somebody constantly watching over my shoulder, and if someone persistently kept trying to talk to me I would probably tell him, in a less polite way, to go away and to leave me alone. I mean I'm not a loner on anything, I like to hang out with my friends as much as any other guy, but, well, I like my peace and quiet too you know.

In the end, I guess, it all comes down to each one of us: our preferences, our personality and our social skills. All that determines whenever we will like and welcome being alone, or if we try our best to avoid it.

## **2nd place**

**Daniela Ottová**

Gymnázium a Střední odborná škola, Jilemnice,

### When I am alone

I make sure that no one is home before locking the front door and going into my bedroom. I love being alone at home, mostly because I can finally be free.

Even though I am not doing this for the first time I still get a tingling feeling in my belly, when I kneel to my bed and pull a few boxes from underneath it. I gingerly open the first one and lovingly touch the soft and delicate fabric of my violet taffeta dress. I take it out of the box and spread it on my bed. It's beautiful. It's the first dress I secretly bought for myself and I love it. I decide that this one it is today and close the box. From another one I take simple black heels and my make-up kit.

My hands are trembling with anticipation when I undress and then slowly put on light violet petticoat and then even slower the dress. I love the feeling of soft fabric against my skin and I feel warmth spreading through my body when I sit down to my desk and open the make-up kit. I don't have much, but I am

perfectly satisfied with my liquid foundation, powder, black pencil and simple coral lipstick.

Because it's not my first time, my hands aren't shaky when I put the make-up on. I have no trouble drawing black lines on my eyelids and I contently smile at myself in the mirror when I put on the lipstick. Even though the lipstick is not very dark, it helps my lips to appear bigger and more girly. I wink at myself and comb my black hair, which is too long for a boy and too short for a girl and tie a simple ribbon in it to make me look nicer.

When I am done with make-up and combing, I step into my heels on and turn on some music. I know that my parents won't come home for another three hours and I plan to enjoy every minute of it. I go to the kitchen and pour some apple juice in one of my mother's favourite wine glasses. I sip a bit, acting as if it is real wine, while dancing to the violin melody of Vanessa Mae.

I love it when I am home alone, because I can be me. I can be Michelle instead of Mike. I can dream about living my life the way I want it, not the way my parents imagine it. As I sway to the music I can forget about social pressure and that I will have to act like a boy when my parents return home. Whatever will come, I will still have these moments of happiness in violet haze of when I am left alone.

### **3rd place**

**Dominik Feri**

Gymnázium Teplice

#### When I am alone

„Man created society and therefore society created a man“. Without society, our lives would be much more difficult, maybe even impossible. In the prehistoric times we would have died without our tribe that protected us and secured food for us.

Punishment of banishment was the worst possible penalty – the one who was banished from the tribe died, either starved to death or was killed by wild animals. In those times, there was no „alone“, the word probably even didn't exist. Everything was „together, as a tribe, us“. That's the way it should be now too. The future events after the prehistoric times taught us that only together as one we can advance in our development (both technological and psychological). Ancient societies in Greece and Rome were examples of that. People now had more power in their hands as there were first signs of democracy in the history. The feel of freedom allowed people to think not only about themselves (securing food, collecting fortune etc.) but to begin thinking in philanthropic way. „Why only care for myself? I don't want to be alone. I want to be part of this free society in the city (or state) I live in. We must cooperate, not to survive but to proceed onwards because that is the goal of man's life.“ This might be an example of the way the ancient Greeks used to think, the way we should get our inspiration from. Everyone has to say to themselves in their inner voices in their minds – „I don't want to be alone. I want to live in prospering and developing society. I want to be part of it. I want to shape it. I want to share my opinion with the others“. Even the youngest baby should be told to work with others, to get used to it. And what to do in the moments when everyone left us, when we stay alone? Do not lose your philanthropic way of thinking. Always think of the others. You must still think of new ideas that could improve quality of living of you and your friends. I do it this way. It works. Sometimes I go through difficult times when my ideas aren't accepted because people in my neighbourhood aren't familiar with manner of thinking and doing that is based on thinking of other people. But this will change. There will hopefully come time when people will think about themselves and their friends in every moment of their lives. Maybe people will use their loneliness to realize that they do not want to be alone, that they want to be part of it all. Of the society of empathy.

**4th place**

**Michaela Jaklinová**

Gymnázium Teplice

Being alone

As you were born and when you die  
When you laugh and when you cry  
Even chatting on your phone  
You have always been alone.

It's all about being the best  
Shining medal on your chest  
You've done all to be well-known  
Even so, you're still alone.

But why should you feel miserable  
People often bring just trouble  
They take away everything you own  
But never you, you left alone.

You're the best, what you've ever had  
Those brilliant thoughts inside your head  
Your meat and skin and blood and bone  
Most amazing, when you're alone.

No more being shy or part of the team  
Now you can just think or live your dream  
You don't have to be as tough as stone,  
You are free when you're alone

Doesn't matter race or nation  
Just you and your imagination  
I don't want to hear you groan  
Be happy, you can be alone.

## **5th place**

**Veronika Sýkorová**

Gymnázium Příbram

### When I am alone

When the night falls and I am alone, I look up at the sky. In the dark, black sky lots of bright stars shine. I am wrapped up in my thoughts. What do the stars want to tell me? They are so far away, but their sparkling light is mirrored in my eyes. I imagine that I am one of them and the rest of the stars, which surround me, represent all the people who live on the Earth. It might surprise someone how many things we have in common with the stars.

Since my childhood, I have admired the beauty of the silent and mysterious night, the night that holds the secret of loneliness. Star clusters in the sky always attract my attention as soon as the sun dips below the western horizon and the darkness spreads through all the land. I used to regard stars as scattered beads of a broken chain, beads of the same shape and colour. But as time passes I realize that stars differ and so do people. Every man lives, loves, feels, thinks, behaves their own way. Day by day, we encounter dozens of various types of people. The faces of sadness, the faces of goodness, the looks of hatred, the looks of happiness, the eyes of truth, the eyes of lies.

I used to take a fancy to the largest and brightest stars shining above me. Nowadays, I know that at first sight inconspicuous stars hide their beauty and grandeur inside. Outer prettiness withers away whereas inner beauty cannot decay. Don't base your life on things which usually do not last forever. If only certitude would win over the transience...

The most sparkling stars do not exist alone. Unity is strength. When you are down in the dumps, you need someone who can pull you back up. Stars form constellation, people create a society. Stars are born and then they die. One star disappears,

new star appears. People come and people go. The night sky changes, the society develops. A man is a social being, so always keep in your mind that you shouldn't keep away from other people. The appeal of friendship lies in having somebody with whom you can share the joy and the sorrow, the feeling that somebody cares about you. Do not waste your time.

Solitude - the nest of thought. Sometimes you need it to marshal your thoughts. Solitude - challenges you to face your inner dark side. Solitude – gives you an opportunity to reflect whether your journey of your life has the right direction or not. Nevertheless, you shouldn't be alone all the time. To fear friendship means to fear life, and to fear life leads you to fear yourself.

When the night falls and I am alone, I look up at the sky. Bright stars are shining there. I am wrapped up in my thoughts. What do the stars want to tell me? Now I know as well as YOU...

## **Junior Category**

### **1st place**

**Barbora Čěšpivová**

FZŠ Brdičkova, Praha

### When I'm alone

I'm alone  
here on my own  
I feel strange  
I don't know why  
I need change  
I wanna cry

void is all around me  
just find the key  
it could be anywhere  
perhaps in the air  
I've got a feeling that the time is stopped  
and the meaning of my life is lost

I'm in empty room  
I look into the unknown  
I believe my doom  
because it's my own

whenever I'm alone  
I feel sad  
This feeling is known  
I wonder what I'm doing bad

I have nothing to do  
I hope it isn't true  
I am cold and hot at once  
my life lost all brilliance

this is how I feel when I'm alone  
anywhere and anytime  
I hate being alone  
I don't wanna be alone for even one time

**2nd place**  
**Kristýna Pancová**  
ZŠ Luby

### When I am alone

Somebody feels well when they're alone.. Just being in your room. Lying in bed and thinking about your life, experiences or memories. Out of your troubles . Only to relax. But some people don't like to be alone. They prefer going out , jogging or riding a bike with friends or someone else .

And what about me? The truth is I've experienced the both options. That's the beginning of my story. Since I watched on equestrian competition for the first time , I really have been in love with it. I started the training when I was seven years old and I've participated a lot of competitions. My most important and last competition was in Prague on 10th May 2008. There it happened. My chance to break the record . If I will skip 150 cm high barrier. At the moment when my horse Melissa bounced of the ground ..I recalled my all strain which I tried to expand from myself. I imagined the calm impact on the ground and how I would be happy . But it didn't happen. I fell off .. because Melissa's saddle has been loose. The next seconds I felt a strange hit . I didn't faint but I couldn't get up.. My legs.. I didn't feel them. The next four months I spent in hospital. I never thought that it would be my last day I'd stay on my legs. I changed the horse's saddle for a wheelchair. It changed all my life. So when I am alone .. I just remember and realize how some people don't respect their options. I was one of them. But now. . Everything is different. So I just listen to my favourite music , read books and I really love it! But I prefer looking out the window, a seens where I used to ride my horse .. and I'm saying :“ I have to forget that I can't do the same things like other people but that doesn't mean I am not the same.“ I want to forget it . I try .. And I will.



### **3rd place**

**Kristýna Vítková**

Gymnázium Kladno

#### When I am alone

„ Good morning, please sit down. Well, you can start talking about your life and your problems. “

„ I’m forty-five years old. I used to be very happy. I learned very well. I found a well – paid job. Then I got marry and had two children. Everything was okay untill I noticed that something wrong was with me. I started to behave very strangely. I was getting angry then I was very frightened. And I started to talk with myself. I got sacked.

We got divorced. The trial decided that I couldn’t see my children.

I lived in a hostel. I was trying to find a new job and after a half of a year I finally got it.

I moved from the hostel to a very small flat. I had a job but I lived without my family and friends. I felt alone.

In this time I met a friend. He had no work. He very often visited me and then he moved to my flat. We had lots of conversations, we went together for long walks. I was very happy that I had this good friend who understood my strange behaviour.

Then one day I wanted to introduce him to my boss. I hoped that my boss would give him a job. That day was the worst in my life. My boss told me, that he couldn’t see my friend and my friend was probably a vision. I couldn’t believe it. He sent me to doctor. The doctor said that I had an illness called schizophrenia and my best friend didn’t exist. It was a big shock for me. I was treated. I’ve started to take special pills. My friend hardly ever appears now. Yes, I have almost no visions but I feel very lonely. I have no friends. The only one who I’ve ever had is slowly disappearing. I’m worry about loss of him. I must decide.

Should I take pills, recover but lose my friend or stop taking pills and not to be so alone? Can you help me? “

#### **4th place**

**Tereza Hladíková**

První soukromé jazykové gymnázium v Hradci Králové

#### When I am alone

Sometimes I need time just for myself. I find a place where I can be alone. It's the time, when I can sort out the stuff in my head, clean up the mess in my mind and think. During this time I often realize a lot of important things and when I'm lucky all these things start to make sense. Well, I'll never understand everything, but I can still try and constantly think about life and what's going on. It helps me keep myself in mental balance, and not to get crazy or mad. Everybody needs such quiet moments.

A lot of weird things spin in our heads and they can cause problems if we don't reflect on them. We may get insane. The problem is people don't have any time for being alone and sitting quietly thinking. We can also feel lonely, although we have lots of possibilities to communicate.

People who can't be alone have probably problems with themselves and don't want to be only on their own. Maybe they are not satisfied with their lives. Or maybe they are trying to run away from themselves and not to be alone, spend as much time as possible with friends, in society, or they just turn the music or TV on when they are alone. There's probably something wrong with the way how they see themselves.

Solitude and loneliness are completely different. Loneliness is more about the person not being satisfied. The meaning or importance of solitude is that the person creates his own opinion on various things. The person who's not able to be alone may not have his own point of view.

Solitude prepares us for various situations. We think about them and find our own procedure how to behave. Then they can't badly surprise us. We know what to do.

Generally, solitude is a good status.

## **5th place**

**Alžběta Komrsková**

Základní škola Opava-Kylešovice

### The Empty House

The house is empty. All is quiet. I am alone in an empty ancient house and it's talking to me. The speech of old houses is special. Strange. It carries in itself some kind of magic. Maybe it's the creak of the wooden stairs and doors. It is making me a fear.

„You're alone! Nobody can help you,” whisper the walls and their voice is slow and scary. And I am terrified, really. I'm sitting on my bed and I am trembling with an apprehension.

„Hey! Is anybody here?” I am screaming and my voice is vibrating. I am feeling embarrassed so much, that it drowns my paralyzing fear pulsing deeply in my head. Why should I fear in my own house?

„No,” I say and I am getting out of a plaid. I won't let this stupid house and its friend Fear control my life and my decisions! I'm sharply opening the door of my room and I am confidently standing in the middle of the hostile corridor as if I challenge all phantoms and ghosts of our historical house.

„C'mon! C'mon, you damned spectres!” I am shouting in all directions and my fist is threatening dark shadows and unknown sounds. But the only answer to my defiance is just more silence. There from under the handrail a pair of yellow eyes are looking at me. A cat. What is a cat doing here? Is she the origin of the sounds that scare me so much?

„All right, you silly kitty! You will give the chills to me, won't you?” In spite of the angry tone of my voice I am glad, that the ghosts left my mind.

When a person is alone at home in the middle of the night, all the normal things get a supernatural aura of darkness and evil.

SPUSA wishes to express our gratitude to our sponsors and partners who make this contest possible:

Western Michigan University in partnership with  
Charles University – Prague Summer Program

Velvyslanectví USA v Praze

Oxford University Press

NEOLUXOR

Lobkowiczské sbírky – LOBKOWICZEVENTS

Macmillan

Isobelle Carmody, English Writer