

23. ročník Literární soutěže SPUSA  
The 23rd annual SPUSA Writing Contest

# **TOLERANCE**

Awards Ceremony  
At the American Centre of the U.S. Embassy  
January 21st, 2016

On behalf of SPUSA, We would like to thank all the contestants and sponsors for making our 23rd 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 co-ordination of this event, which makes this all happen.

Thank you all so much,

Štěpánka Maňhalová

Head Director

&

SPUSA Education Center

the Head of Judges:

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

## Senior Category

1st place

Nicole Brišová

Praha

### Tolerance or however you call it

*Note: You might find yourself wanting to replace the words tolerate/tolerance/tolerating with other words of your choice. The author does not take any responsibility of the text's impact in such case.*

I can't remember the name of the bar but I think I blushed  
when I realized he was *tolerating* me all over the  
place

I might have felt more than *tolerance* towards him too  
After couple dates, *tolerance* ended up being the core of  
our relationship

Though to *tolerate* the way he eats hamburgers is still a  
toughie. There is always some ketchup on his chin  
when he tries to kiss me

I *tolerate* his strokes on my cheeks and the way he hugs  
me in public

I shiver when I catch myself *tolerating* his messy bed  
hair

He believes I *tolerate* the dirty dishes, I believe his dish-  
washer finally *tolerates* me I *tolerate* his random 'Hal-  
lelujahs' and all the sins. Even the forgiven ones

[Dear friends, let us *tolerate* one another, for *tolerance* comes from God (The book of *tolerance*, 4:7)]

The way he smiles always makes me want to *tolerate* the buttons of his shirt Then he wrinkles his nose, but I need to *tolerate* my boundaries. And I need to *tolerate* the buttons of his shirt

I *tolerate* that he doesn't want to sleep with me yet. Every time with my teeth clenched

I *tolerate* his 'I need to be alone now' moments, and days, and weeks. Every time with my nails less bit

For what can he possibly *tolerate* when I'm not around

It takes more than 5 cigarettes to *tolerate* his mother. He says it's killing me

I *tolerate* his tongue in my mouth even though I hate it and I told him so

[Above all, *tolerate* each other deeply, because *tolerance* covers over a multitude of sins (The book of *tolerance*, 4:8)]

I think I'll *tolerate* the movies he watches as soon as we finish the fight over Sponge Bob. I keep *tolerating* it as a slice of cheese

I roll my eyes when *tolerating* the way he sucks leftover ice cream from the bottom of the cone

I *tolerate* the way he bites his lip and am out of breath when he bites mine

I find myself *tolerating* his ear. He sighs every time  
Then it's just me *tolerating* his teary eyes while praying  
I think I *tolerate* this triangle  
[*Tolerance* must be sincere. *Tolerate* what is evil, *tolerate*  
what is good (The book of *tolerance*, 12:9-21)]

## Intermediate Category

**1st place**

**Alžběta Vítková**

**Stareč**

Dear Diary,

It has been a long time since we talked for the last time. I thought I would not need you any more. But now, I must... I must confide to someone. To someone who would not judge me. To someone who would not judge him. Is it too much to demand a bit of tolerance? Even though... Where are the limits of the tolerance? What can I expect from others, from me?

I am sorry for being so secretive but I cannot tell it straight out. Now, please, just listen to me. You know, in a little town like this, everyone knows everything. These gossips are killing me, all the more so I am their target.

Alright, I will face it so that my problem would make more sense. My son. My only son. My lovely little boy committed a crime. He strangled his girlfriend a month ago. No extenuating circumstances. No mercy. For no reason.

I am not convinced of what I am supposed to do and how should I feel. I am his mother, am I not? So I must help my child to deal with his problems, it would be a sin if I turned my back on him. Nonetheless, I am also a moral person, how could I tolerate a murderer? If he was me, Hamlet would say: "To tolerate, or not to tolerate, that is the question."

Although... I guess I could put up with this dilemma. Actually,

the worst thing about all this case is not the fact that my son has murdered someone. What I cannot bear, that is the attitude of my neighbours. "Who is to blame? Of course, his mother! She gave birth to a monster, she brought him up, she is the one who failed." Why do they poke their nose into my personal issues? Why do they have to whisper all the time I pass, without consoling me, without trying to understand that I am the victim, too?

Is it fair? I mean, nowadays, there are so many associations supporting minorities and encouraging them to stop hiding that they are different. I have always been a sympathizer of this trend, I have always thought that the tolerance is something we should preserve, all of us, no exception. So why is my son that exception, then?

... Shame on me. I am complaining about the lack of tolerance, but do I tolerate their opinion? They might be right, a murder is a murder, and I could have prevented it. Instead of learning how to cope with it, I blame anyone except my son. My son who is the real cause of all this pain.

So, tell me, where are the limits of the tolerance? There are not any. Tolerance means everything and nothing. Everyone understands it as he wants, as he needs. And maybe that is why there are so many conflicts. Maybe too much tolerance causes that we try to break it incessantly. As we all do...

## **2nd place**

**Magda Hašplová**

**Praha**

### **Alternative reality**

Once... or was it twice? There was a man in a totally different galaxy. Far, far from the planet Earth. He called himself the TOLERANT-MAN. Guess what his super power was! I know, I know, you cannot know that. I have not told you yet. So, his super power... let me remember... yeah! His super power was that he was super tolerant! In present days, my memory is not what it used to be but I will try to write down everything I remember.

Where shall we begin? He was born in the year 86a9. It was such a special year! I remember the sky of that year was emerald green. The TOLERANT-MAN, then known as Jip Hip (this was his civil name), had only two mothers and one father. Everyone expected he would eventually explode with anger because of the modest number of his parents. Expectations are not reality, fortunately.

His ability to tolerate was firstly spotted by wider public when he was attending kindergarten. Every single child there but him had at least five parents. They made fun of him but he was just: "Yeah I know and I tolerate it." He was never troubled with their silly jokes.

As he grew he tolerated more and more things. He tolerated that his first girlfriend was not tolerant at all. He tolerated that his step brother from the second- mother's side had seven parents. He tolerated everything! He was not ordinary man. So he has become quite famous.

As he was so tolerant and famous for that, people all over the



world called him and paid him to tolerate their problems. It was unbelievably lucrative business. Many of those who wanted to become richer tried to imitate his lifestyle and earn money for tolerating others. However they usually ended their career soon because either they went bankrupt or more often ended in lunatic asylums. They just had not the gift of tolerance.

Back to the TOLERANT-MAN, women love rich men and this man was very rich. Out of the blue, he had dozen wives. That was not normal at all. Even the richest man on TOLERANT-MAN's planet could have only eight wives. Some tried to have more than that but all of them went crazy with the ninth wife, not the TOLERANT-MAN. As he could tolerate his first wife's weird screaming during the night (it was terrifying but fortunately they did not have any neighbours), he tolerated all his wives. He was such a happy guy with happy marriages.

Then the last wedding came. His thirteenth wife was extremely beautiful. She was also young... Now the "but" will come, but she was obsessed with creating her own zoological garden right in front of her husband's palace on the adjacent land. The TOLERANT-MAN tolerated gorillas, dolphins, wolves, hippos, lions, elephants and every animal that his wife desired. The thirteenth wife's passion was his undoing. However before the disaster he lived happily with his thirteen wives for a few months.

The disaster came in the morning of the day when the TOLERANT-MAN found his first grey hair. Of course he tolerated it. After the breakfast he went to histoleration park. His last sight was focused on his favourite tree. Then the giant elephant on the run pressed him under his right front leg. After that the elephant went on running.

I do not remember any news that would not mention his death

that day. The elephant was caught on the same day and no one tolerated the elephant anymore.

The TOLERANT-MAN was famous. People liked him but I think that it was his toleration that killed him. Perhaps if he were not tolerant, he would not be rich. If he were not rich, he would not have the thirteenth wife. If he had not the thirteenth wife, he would not have the killer elephant in his garden. Finally, if he had not the killer elephant in his garden, he would probably live longer.

That is my version of the TOLERANT-MAN. So, will you tolerate everything around you?

### **3th place**

**Petra Třísková**

**Praha**

#### **Tolerance**

I wake up in the morning and I feel that something is strangely wrong. I know that I should stand up and that I have to go to school but frankly, I don't know why. It was happy and easy Sunday yesterday and the reality of the ordinary weekday morning is nearly unbearable. TV in our kitchen is on and I can hear the morning news. It looks more like a report of an opened Pandora's box. I feel slightly dizzy. I hate to start the day with terrorists, fallen planes, climatic and ecologic disasters, but I have no choice. My dad needs the news for his life and he is extremely unhappy when he can't have them. We have to suffer with him and although he says that he hopes in the good news, the bad ones grow like a cancer and influence us.

Today, it is worse than usual, because hundreds of migrants

drowned in the Mediterranean sea. I am trying to imagine the death in the cold water. My dizziness deepens up when I realize, that they were crowded under the deck, without any chance to escape. TV shows the handfull of saved men and I understand that inside the ship there were mainly women and children, because they weren't strong enough to fight for their place on the deck. I feel guilty although I am sure that I can't be blamed for their situation. What were the reasons which made them to leave their homes and to risk their lives in the open sea? I am afraid that the roots of their discontent are in the fact that the world isn't fair to them. I know that the world is getting smaller, the population grows up and these changes are faster. We can see injustice every day, covered live online by TV. We can feel sorry in our safe houses. Nevertheless, our sympathy for them has its limits. Tolerance towards migrants isn't high. They are too different, their poverty is too distant.

I leave the house in a hurry. I try to define what means tolerance for me. I feel a sudden aversion to this word, although I know that it is innocent. I hate instinctively the big magnificent words. I try to guess whether I am tolerant and I find out that it is not so easy as it looks on the first sight. My bus just arrived and it is jampacked as usually. I manage to make it in but it isn't a cakewalk at all! I meet my schoolmates and we talk about the weekend. I realize that some of them have another nationality, colour of skin or religion. Nobody cares although we know each other pretty well. Does it mean that it is the genuine tolerance? And how much could this easygoing, broadminded tolerance be changed under the pressure? Squeezed in the middle of the crowd I can't get rid of the morbid thoughts on the migrants in their wet grave.

Finally the bus stops and we can run out into the fresh air. It's

drizzling and I am shivering. I walk with the others to face the another manic Monday at school and I try to imagine the world what it could be like ten years from now. I hope that there will be more tolerance and less reasons to flee away from home but I can't take it for granted. When I enter our locker room I look at the timetable. Anyway, there is no Tolerance education for today.

## **4th place**

**Jan Rigó**

**Třebíč**

### **Be tolerant, but not dumb**

Because of the storm that day, I could not go to school on my motorcycle. I had to take a bus. Around a boring day at school, I finally got into the back of a bus. When I had at other stop to change my sit, I saw about three years old child goes from mom to foreign older lady in a big hat and begins to fumble into her shopping bag. The child took one roll and went to give it to his mother. Mom just looked around to see, if anyone see her, and had a roll in her bag. When the boy took a second roll and went to his mother, I was really enraged so I went to intervene. I wove between the passengers and tapped on the shoulder of old lady and warned her, but she just spread her old age marked faces by big smile, and said: "I know."

I sat back, on a seat, really shocked, and kept an eye on the little boy. When the boy went for a third roll, old lady pushed her bag and said: "That's enough. You already have rolls for you and your mother. Here's one more for your father, but it's the last," with caress she sent him back to his mother. I was shocked once more. What

the bloody hell just happend? Why did not she scream or smotehing like that? I had to find it out.

I wove back to an elderly lady and asked if I can sit down. "Of course, young man, but to the window.

"I know why you're here, young man," said the old lady suddenly. I was astonished. So I turned at her. As she saw me and reached out to me and took of my nail from Mount, because I began biting my nails. "It's a terrible habit. Whenever you want to bite your nails, think back to what you've reached that day. "With humility, I wiped my fingers on my jeans and straightened up, so I could see the old lady straight in her eyes.

The elegant red hat with ribbon and beautiful dress with flowers looked on old woman with silver hair like a fairy tale. "Why have you done this?" I asked.

"I wanted to know if any of the passengers react to the theft. Thank you for your reacting, you've tweaked my view on today's young people, "her voice was as engaging as her hat," you know, today's young people think only on themselves and their families. They forget that they are part of a great community exceeding their family circle. They are part of group of friends, school, job, region. They are part of humanity. This is what I wanted to point out. The mutual tolerance and compassion. Without moderation and tolerance by people simply can not live side by side. Everywhere could be a war, without tolerance. People would destroy them selves and nature. "

Suddenly, the boy came back and reached into the shopping bag. Old woman looked at him strictly, took his hand and slapped him. I was confused, but with a warning expression she lifted her finger

"The boundaries between tolerance and stupidity or exploitation

is very small. Always keep an eye on her, "and she stood up and smiled at me," I gotta go. Remember what I told you, "and began to wave through people who would not let her out. This must be improved! People must weigh the elderly! I said to myself. The old lady left in me something rebellious.

## **5th place**

**Adéla Harazimová**

### **Sudice**

When someone says the word tolerance, most people think of the problem among ethnic minorities, homosexuals or religions, not to mention the Islamic State. Yes, in our busy world, these things are very problematic and in many respects dangerous, too. But I, when I hear this simple word, I start to think about the people who are intolerant to any substance. One word allergies. (I get this inspiration from one Scandinavian song). I am deeply interested in biology, so this is actually my cup of tea. An allergy is a hypersensitivity of the organism. It can occur at any age. Personally, I'm not allergic to anything at all (yet). And I am really glad of it. In fact, all around the world, there are many weird allergies. I have read in one scientist magazine that there is even a sun allergy or cold allergy! I can't imagine having this illness. For example, my little friend from Ostrava, is allergic to gluten. That means, she can't eat almost anything. Horrible. Most schools in our country aren't prepared to make gluten free lunches. To the future, I think a lot of kids would be grateful for this opportunity. Let's face it, nobody likes to be hungry.

There is allergy to animal's fur too. Me as a nature and animal lover and a dog owner, I don't want to think about an allergy to my little lovely dog! And the allergy to pollen? I really regret people, who are allergic to pollen. Mainly in April and May, when everything blooms. Poor people. Instead running, cycling, doing whatever they want and having a good time outside, they have running noses, cough and their eyes are red and swollen. Thanks for pills against this disease! And that brings me to the question.

Our doctors can transplant human hearts and almost every part of a human body (Actually they are trying to transplant a human head!!!)... They can cure cancer, inoculate humans against a lot of dangerous diseases ...and they can't cure human from allergy? Of course, there are many pills, which can suppress the symptoms, but what else?

I think that some medicine already exists, but it is something like the thing with light bulbs. It would be possible to make light bulb that lasted forever, but then the manufactures would not earn so much money. I don't want to be critical, but sometimes I have this feeling about more things like this. Quite simple, don't you think?

## Junior Category

**1st place**  
**Magdalena Novotná**  
**Praha**

~a journey~

*It was year 1872 when my narrative starts. It's a story about one lady that lived in Prague at that time. Her name was Johanna Klein. She was not very rich but also not poor. She had got enough money for long journey. And this was exactly what she wanted!*

7th January

It was a hard winter. There was a lot of snow outside and in the dark everywhere glow lights. Johanna was at home in her living room and she packed many things to a big suitcase. However she soon recognised that she must have had a smaller bag. Again and again she considered if it was good idea that she wanted to leave her homeland and to go faraway - in America. At that time it was very long and dangerous journey but she wanted to meet her uncle a lot. At seven o'clock it was dark outside and she had a dinner but she had no appetite. She went to sleep early instead.

8th January

The next day she woke up already at half past four. She couldn't sleep longer, because she was very anxious before journey to America. At eight o'clock she left her nice house in a flowered dress made by her mum. Her neighbours came to wish Johanna good trip. She usually didn't like them so much because they didn't want to live in Austria-Hungary as she did. But they were very polite and tolerant



and wished her good luck.

Then she got on to shay and in short time she was on the train station called "Prague - north- west". At eleven o'clock Johanna Klein left Prague with train to Hamburg.

*She travelled several days by train. Afterwards she reached the harbour of Hamburg. The first part of journey was behind her but the harder one was before her. Waiting for a ship, Johanna spent several days in Hamburg.*

12th January

It was good morning that day. Sun shined outside and the snow and icicles on roofs glanced wonderfully. Johanna lived in one not very expensive inn. She had small breakfast soon in the morning and then she took her nice coat and gloves and came out to look around gangways. She walked around Hamburg almost whole day and she returned to the pub only in the evening.

*Two days have passed quietly. But the second evening was more interesting than other ones.*

14th January

It was a cold day when Johanna found out a robber in her chamber. The thief didn't manage rob anything from Johanna so she didn't denounce him. Instead they became friends. The robber was a young man, suspiciously a boy, and he thieved only because he had no money at all. Johanna had sympathy with him and she gave him some money.

15th January

The next day Johanna went to harbour and at midday sharp she moved away from Hamburg. She had a cabin with two other women. She was in the first class on the ship so she lived on upper deck.

*Within following days she made acquaintance with some other*

*people in her class but most of them seemed to be very posh, vain or proud and not very friendly. Johanna couldn't talk with them for a long time.*

18th January

In the morning it was not very cold so Johanna rambled on deck very early when everyone else was asleep. She enjoyed a sunrise and silence. Afterwards she found some stairs to under deck so she went down. It was very dark there. She knocked on the first door. "Come in!" said someone. Johanna hesitated but instantly she opened. In that moment she saw a large room where a lot of people lain. These were poor emigrants that hadn't got enough money for travelling on the deck so they had to travel in bad conditions in the under deck. Some people were ill and some suffered from hunger. Johanna was moved by their situation.

*From that time she spent every day in the under deck. She never mined that these people are poor and that they weren't well-bred. She found friends there and the sailing seemed to pass more quickly.*

1st March

The weather got very bad and a storm befell the ship. Nobody except sailors could go out on the deck so Johanna couldn't visit her friends that day.

It was scary day but in the evening Johanna saw a sunset so a storm was gone.

2nd March

This morning was a nice again so Johanna was in under deck very early. The poor emigrants were very afraid because they knew that the sailing will be longer then it had been and they hadn't enough food for long time. But Johanna didn't lost head and she came out with a simple plan: In the night they will steal some food from rich

people in first class on deck. Johanna knew that is not right but it was sole way how save many people.

When on the ship was dark some people from under deck went out on the deck and thieve enough food. Johanna gave them some food also of her.

Nobody saw them and they have much food now so everything resulted well tonight.

*Many days have passed quietly, when Johanna still went to her poor friends in under deck.*

19th March

The voyage came to the end. The next day should the ship land at the coast of the North America. Although she looked forward to her uncle, Johanna was also sad because she took a fancy to emigrants and found friends there. Each day she shared their poverty and she never mined it even if she had enough money to live in comfort.

She left her friends late in the evening as she wanted to enjoy the last night in their company. She didn't go straight to her cabin but she further rambled on the deck in light from ship lighting. It was relatively cold night but everyone could feel the spring coming. She stayed up late and fell asleep about midnight.

20th March

That day Johanna overslept, she waked up about half past seven. Then she went to see her friends under deck. She remained there all the morning. In the noon some sailor on highest mast exclaimed: "Land on the horizon!" It was time to say goodbye. Johanna simply couldn't help it and wept.

Afterwards she left the ship and set her foot on the ground of America, at the harbour that is till now called New York. She couldn't believe it. She was far in America at last!

*Johanna was accommodated in one small nice pub. She didn't spent there a lot of time. She stayed in New York only two nights.*

23rd March

This Monday Johanna waked up early. At eight o'clock she went to New York's train station and at nine o'clock she was on the road again.

*Now Johanna travelled by trains (without any major problems) across North America:*

*New York → Detroit → Chicago → St. Louis → Kansas City → Santa Fe*

15th April

When Johanna waked up she was nearby Santa Fe. It was important city at that time and it was also Johanna's finish of her journey. She met her target. From the train station she went to centre of town. Her uncle lived close by the centre. She found his house in short time. It was a large yellow building with big windows and nice garden. The uncle welcomed her gladly and all afternoon she described him her long journey.

*Johanna's uncle went to work almost every day. He worked in the office as a lawyer and Johanna stayed in his house alone. However in the afternoon when the uncle returned from work, he taught Johanna to ride horses, shoot from rifle etc. She enjoyed that and was very gifted for riding.*

*Afterwards she could ride horse alone so she rode her white horse also when the uncle was away.*

22nd April

In that morning Johanna's uncle went to work as usually. After breakfast Johanna went to see her white horse called Hurricane. She saddled it up and then she went for a ride outside Santa Fe. She sat

on a hummock above the town. She saw every house in the town now but she couldn't see a man behind herself. It was a local young man but no tough guy... He sat next to Johanna quietly like a ghost. Firstly Johanna was scared but after a while they became friends.

The name of Johanna's new friend was William. Will was from one ranch in the prairie. He was very brave and he could shoot and ride horse very good. He went to Santa Fe because of buying food for their ranch.

Johanna accompanied him to Santa Fe. Will found a pub for his short stay and they agreed to meet each other the day after.

23rd April

When the uncle went to work Johanna and Will were meeting. They strolled in Santa Fe's streets and Will bought everything needed. In the afternoon Will taught Johanna some useful skills to survive in the wilds. Johanna was a good scholar and she could do soon a lot, although Will was still better.

Afternoon Johanna introduced Will to her uncle. He didn't take quite a fancy to him but he loved Johanna so he didn't say anything.

After dinner with Will, Johanna's uncle went away and Will did as well.

Johanna waited two hours to midnight but her uncle didn't come back. So she went out and saw after the uncle. She found him drunk in one pub. She caught him and brought him to his house. She was however very disappointed, as her uncle was very rude and foul-mouthed that night...

*As the bad behaviour of her uncle didn't change, Johanna decided to leave him. She was curious to learn more about "the Wild West" and aboriginal people, as she had heard a lot of different information about them.*

*Johanna travelled around prairie by her Hurricane with Will. She learned many useful things. Will invited her on his ranch but they couldn't get there...*

7th May

After the long ride Johanna was very tired but she was amazed by the nature.

At noon they rested in a shade to recover. At once somewhere sounded quiet rustle. Instantly there were a lot of unfriendly aborigines. They had bows with sharp arrows so Johanna and Will surrendered without a struggle. Sioux captured them and transported them to their hamlet. It was a small village with totem and three poles in the middle. Besides, there were many tents or cabins, one big tree (maybe an oak) and eight or nine fireplaces.

Indians bound Johanna and Will to two of three poles on full sun.

*About two days they stand at this pole. It wasn't anything pleasant and the future seemed to be not better. However really?*

9th May

It was Johanna's second day in captivity. She was very terrified but still hoped. And that was right. It was already dark when someone said: "Don't move!" They both obeyed and in a short moment they were free. They instantly escaped but they were very exhausted so they didn't run far away. After a while they saw a horseman cropped up before them. It was their saviour. The horseman brought two horses. It was Hurricane and Will's chestnut horse. The saviour gave Johanna and Will their horses and they both went behind unknown man. Afterward they stopped in a small forest. Johanna and Will fell asleep instantly but the guardian didn't sleep at all and kept watch.

10th May

When Johanna and Will opened their eyes in the morning, they found out that the brave saviour was a woman! She wished them good morning and she introduced herself. Her aborigine's name was Fast Shot. Johanna and Will introduced themselves too and they thank her a lot. She didn't like her tribe so she decided to help them and leave her tribe.

*Johanna and Fast Shot became big friends. Fast Shot was daughter of Sioux chieftain "Flying Eagle" and she was very courageous. Will went back to his ranch, but Johanna fell in love with the wilds so much, that she stayed with Fast Shot. Although the two friends were women, they decided to protect weak and fight against injustice that happened sometimes to immigrants and sometimes to aborigines. Although Johanna came from Europe and was Christian, she had a great respect to Indians' religion and customs. She esteemed their culture and they liked her. The times were unfortunately very bad for the native people, as they were driven out from their homes. However she believed that after all the justice will defeat....*

## **2nd place**

**Veronika Bednářová**

**Brno**

### **Tolerance to myself**

Tolerance, acceptance, receiving, empathy... These are extremely important words. Very often we even do not realize how much. What do these words really mean? Each of us probably knows it or at least has some idea. Try to put yourself a question sometime:

”Am I tolerant?”

The majority of people would probably say yes. I do not make fun of people around me, I do not mind the immigrants and I have a quarrel with my partner once a week at most. But this does not mean that I am tolerant after all.

What about tolerance to myself? Every morning we stand in front of the mirror and say: ”Oh no, I put on weight again,” or: ”I hate my huge nose.” Before we try to accept people around us, we should accept ourselves as we are.

And thus when you look in the mirror next time, please tell yourself: ”I like myself as I am.” Because they say the world is the same as we ourselves are. And thus if we learn to accept ourselves, we manage to accept the whole world and every person in it...

### **3th place**

#### **David Talacko**

#### **Praha**

#### **Three friends**

My grandpa is 87 years old. I always like to listen to his stories. When he was a young boy he used to live in a small village with his parents and his older brother and sister. Their grandpa had a farm in a nearby village with horses, cows, pigs and also 2 dogs and 3 cats. All kids enjoyed visiting the farm. One day my grandpa received a small puppy from his grandpa. He brought it home and made a bed for it in a paper box in his room. But the puppy felt sad and lonely and was barking the whole night. It was sad because they took it from its mother. They also had an old cat in the house. The



cat slept in a wooden box in the hallway. Next day grandpa decided to place a small puppy into the cat's box. At first the old cat was surprised and maybe didn't like it, but soon both animals became very good friends. During the day they played together, they ate together and of course they slept together. After a few months my grandpa found a small hedgehog in the garden. All kids looked for its mother but they didn't find it. It was late fall and rather cold. So they talked to their parents and decided to take a small hedgehog home. They placed it into the paper box near the cat and dog's bed. Next morning they found all 3 animals sleeping together. After a while they became good friends, they shared their home and food. Next spring the hedgehog was big enough to stay outside in the garden but every evening he came back to the door and had a meal with the cat and the dog.

I liked this grandpa's story very much. I was surprised how 3 different animals could live together and share their home - maybe better than some people do.

#### **4th place**

**Timon Láska**

**Brno**

#### **Tolerance on first place**

Be tolerant to your brother. I heard since my brother was born. It has happened when I was four...

Mommy comes home, shows me him and says: „This is Tommy, your brother, so be nice and tolerant to him.“ But I can't! He cries, he smells like rotten potatoes and all parent's attention is paid on him.

I am eight and now things starts to be better. Mom is working now, Tommy speaks and is quite kind . Then Tommy starts to go to school. I have good marks and I can study by myself, but Tommy...he seems to be silly. He's got bad marks, he's naughty and mom is upset because of him.

After four years, something happens to him. He walks weirdly, speaks less and some unrecognizable words, so children in his school are cruel on him now. Doctors conclude that he has got some type of incurable brain disorder. Then mommy says to me: „I know it's gonna be hard now, but you must be tolerant to your brother much more than up to now. Please Jamie, do it for me.“

I do it. I help Tommy a lot. He talks to me more, and I like him. He is powerful and nice. But then come another blow: Plane with our parents fell in Wyoming and they died. We are sad, but the social worker takes Tommy to an orphanage. I begin to study at university, so I don't have time for him. Before three years, they called me that he ran out of orphanage. I've looked for him, but I found him by luck. He was freezed and lived as a homeless. I was really surprised because I thought he died. I took him home and now he is living with me.

## **5th place**

### **Adéla Fajstlová**

#### **Ptení**

My life was normal and I was happy with my mum. It was good till she met her boyfriend. His name was Henry and he looked really good. He was fine and everything was okay.

However it wasn't okay for a long time, because five months after they met, he slapped her. I was really angry with him but my mum told me something like: „It's okay, darling. I'm fine. It was just a mistake.“ And I didn't care about it much. Anyway I payed attention to him.

For about two weeks after this accident he slapped her again. He probably didn't know that I'm awake so I heard their dialogue. He was totally vulgar and my mum was crying. I wanted to kill him but I didn't. In all honesty – I regret it sometimes.

Henry was messing my mum over for next three months until he went on a business trip. When he finally left, I spoke with my mum. She told me everything and I called police. They started to care about it but my „step-father“ had really good lawyer, so he didn't go to the prison.

One day before he left, he killed my mum. It was horrible. Absolutely!

I'm thirty years old now, I have got my own family and I try to help to women, who went through this situation.

It isn't over yet. This is one big story, which never ends. And I've got one message for you all; If a man, or a woman, hits you once, he (or she) will hit you again. Don't be afraid and call your friends. Don't tolerate this!

## Special Award

**Chantalle Matoušek**  
**Praha**

### **My Amazing Friend Eliska**

It was a cold winter day when I travelled on a bus and decided to help a very old lady to get off. And, that's how my story begins.

She clearly needed help getting safely through the heavy snow which had fallen on that winter day, so I helped her all the way to her front gate. We did not speak much but I noticed that there was something very special about this woman. Her age or name I did not know; I could only guess from the way in which she carried herself that she was 80, 85 or even 90. Despite her many years she had the most lively and warm smile you could imagine.

As I said goodbye to her at the front gate, she spoke: "Wait my dear, I don't even know your name". "It's Adrianna" I answered. "What a beautiful name that is! Thank you Adrianna for your kindness. I am Eliska, and I could have made it on my own, dear, but then I would have not met you. And that would have been a pity."

I left and did not see Mrs. Eliska for more than a year. Then one day I was taking the bus again on the same route to town when I saw that special lady with the lively smile and I could hardly believe my eyes. Would she remember me one year later? She certainly did. This time our meeting ended with her giving me her telephone number and asking me to drop by for a cup of tea anytime I felt like it.

I normally feel clumsy talking to much older people and I felt shy

about calling or visiting her. What will I say when I get there? What will I talk about? Do I need to bring a present when I visit an old person? In the end I did not call, but I could not get her smile and her youthful cheers out of my mind for a long time.

Some months went by and this time Mrs. Eliska found me. I was walking on the street when I heard a familiar voice: "Hello Adrianna, when will you come for a visit?" I was filled with embarrassment for not having called her. "I ... don't know, I said quietly. But I would like it very much!" That day we finally set a date for my visit.

On Friday, as I approached the large yellow and white house I was filled with excitement." What would we talk about?" I thought. I rang the door bell holding a bunch of yellow flowers in one hand and a box of cookies in the other. Mrs. Eliska came slowly down the stairs and opened the door with her familiar smile greeting me: "Hello Adrianna, I am so happy that you are finally here to visit me. Please do come in".

After that I visited Mrs. Eliska many times and was never bored even once. She was always in a good mood and even when I was feeling sad, she always made me feel like everything was alright. She was the happiest person I have ever met.

It was only later that I found out her life story. She was from a Jewish family and together with her family was as a young girl in 1942 taken to a concentration camp. There she lost everybody she knew and loved and was lucky to survive to the end of the war.

At first I couldn't believe that Mrs. Eliska was not just any old lady but this truly brave and incredible lady who had been part of that dark history I was learning about at school. I was meeting someone who had lived through the terrible war and concentration camps. I could not understand how somebody with such a sad life could be

so cheerful and positive. How much strength did she have to have to survive? And how much tolerance and positive energy did she need to have not become a bitter lonely old lady?

I knew at that moment that I had just learned the biggest lesson of tolerance in my whole life. And I understood what it meant to be tolerant. Tolerance is going through the unspeakable, the unthinkable - surviving it and coming out still being able to smile at the world!

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