

2018 YOUNG PEOPLE'S Creative Writing Contest

FOR AGES 10-18



“The Cure” by Avery Videll
1st Place, Short Play 16-18

Poems ☉ Essays ☉ Comix
Short Plays ☉ Short Stories

CASH PRIZES!

Entries Accepted Feb. 1-March 3

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brochure at any library location.

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. CLUTTERED LABORATORY

LANCE (35) and STU (23) stand over two containers filled with an equal number of laboratory mice. STU collects data from the experiment, and LANCE holds a notepad, transcribing what STU reports.

STU

Sample 391. Trial 6. Control group — 0 living, 12 dead. Experimental group — 12 living, 0 dead.

LANCE

12-for-12 again. That's six in a row now.

STU

(coming to a realization)
You know what?

LANCE

What?

STU

I think we did it.

LANCE

Well, you know... I mean... There's still a lot of tests to do and...

STU

I know, I know. But they're all going to show the same thing — it works. We did it. We found the cure.

LANCE

But we haven't even tried it on humans yet.

STU

Yeah, but you know the numbers. 95% of treatments for the disease that make it past animal testing work on people. The target genes are 99% identical in mice and humans. I mean, how much convincing do you need?

LANCE sets his notebook aside and sits down in a chair, looking contemplative.

LANCE

I suppose you're right. There's just so much on the line for me. I want to be sure.

STU

What do you mean?

LANCE

I mean the last 10 years of my life. My hopes, my dreams, all of it. I didn't devote my entire young adult life to this research just to publish too early and be disproven.

STU

Yeah, but think about how many people are dying every day. Real people, real families, real lives being affected.

LANCE

But what if it doesn't work like you think it will? Where will we be then? Do you think a single respected name in science is going to take anything we say after that seriously? But imagine our lives if we take the few weeks we should to test this thing. The Nobel Prize we win will barely be a bullet point on our list of accomplishments. Our names will live forever. We'll go down as the people who changed history.

STU

Three weeks would be 15 million lives,
though. 15 million lives that we can save.

LANCE

The death count is already over a billion.
What are 15 million lives more lives in the
grand scheme of things?

STU

(bewildered)

What are 15 million lives? 15 million lives
are 15 million lives. It doesn't matter how
many people have already died.

LANCE

I'm done arguing, Stu. Listen, I promise we'll
do this as quickly as possible. If
everything goes right, we might even be
able to publish before the end of the week.
Now, go home, get some sleep, and we'll
get back to it tomorrow.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. BURNT DOWN BUILDING

Stunned, STU and LANCE slowly approach the remains of their laboratory.

LANCE

I didn't... It's not my...
What are we going to do?

STU

(optimistically after a long, reflective
pause)
Your notebook! We have your notebook!
We haven't lost a thing! Where's it at? You
keep it in your room, right?

LANCE looks down at his feet, ashamed.

STU

(trying to keep himself together)
Right?

LANCE lets out a prolonged exhale.

STU

(coming apart)
Right?

LANCE

(barely above a whisper)
I left it here last night.

STU

What?

LANCE

(ashamed)
I left it here, Stu! I said I left it here!

Looking defeated, STU sits down on the ground and puts his head in his hands. After some time, LANCE walks over to the debris, picks up his burnt notebook, and flips through it.

LANCE

It's gone. Everything's gone.

LANCE drops his notebook and continues to look around.

LANCE

Wait a minute.

STU

(looking up)

What?

LANCE bends down and picks something up off the ground. Standing up, he reveals an intact test tube labeled 391.

STU

(suddenly jumping to his feet)

That's not what I think it is, is it?

LANCE hands the test tube to STU, and STU inspects it thoroughly.

STU

But can we replicate it?

LANCE

I'll be honest. It's going to take some work. There's not really anyway for us to separate the compound entirely, but at least we're not back to square one.

STU

Well then, let's get to it.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM — DAY

LANCE enters the room, where STU is lying on the hospital bed. He approaches with a stack of books in hand.

LANCE

Feeling any better, bud?

STU

A little bit, I guess. I was able to sleep through the entire night last night.

LANCE

Well, that's progress.

LANCE sets the books on STU's bedstand.

LANCE

I brought those new Patterson books you asked for.

STU

Thanks, man. Watching The Price is Right reruns all day starts to get old pretty quick.

LANCE

(chuckling)

It's good to see you haven't lost your sense of humor.

STU

(after a brief pause)

How are things coming with the cure?

LANCE

You want the good news or the bad news first?

STU

Might as well start with the good.

LANCE

Well, I've narrowed the list of possibilities down to about 50.

STU

And the bad news?

LANCE

Nothing's worked so far. And we're starting to run out of time.

STU

Well, you've got to keep trying.

LANCE

(after a pause)

Come on, Stu. Just take the batch we already have.

STU

I can't.

LANCE

But why not?

STU

We've been over this. How can I cure myself when there's so many other people out there who can't?

LANCE

But Stu, I don't know how I'd ever live it down if I let you die.

STU

And I don't know how I'd live it down if I lived and let others die. If I take that cure, what are you going to use to test other samples against? And how many extra months is that going to add to your research? Four? Five? How many millions of lives am I worth?

LANCE

(exhaling in frustration)

Get better, Stu.

LANCE exits.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM — NIGHT

LANCE and NURSE (28) stand to the side, while STU sleeps in the hospital bed.

LANCE

How long does he have?

NURSE

The doctors say he probably won't make it through the night.

LANCE

Can I talk to him?

NURSE

You can try.

NURSE exits, and LANCE walks to STU's bedside.

LANCE

You awake, Stu?

STU

Who's there? Lance, is that you?

LANCE

Yeah, Stu. It's me.

STU

It's good to see you.

LANCE

How're you holding up, pal?

STU

Not great. I don't think I have much time left. I feel like I'm losing more and more strength with every breath.

LANCE

(starting to cry)

I'm so sorry, Stu. This is my fault. If I hadn't been so stubborn about doing all those tests, we'd have a cure right now, and you wouldn't...

STU

Hey, stop with that! There's no reason to dwell on what we did and didn't do. Right now, the only thing you can do for me is find that cure. I'm not giving my life for nothing. It's up to you to make what I've done matter.

LANCE

I promise, Stu. I promise I'll make it matter.

STU's heart rate monitor flatlines.

FADE OUT.

END OF PLAY