**Learning Assistance Secondary Winner**

Lily Rout, Age 12 Lourdes Hill College *“Loneliness”*

**Loneliness**

**“Is loneliness the feeling when you are alone?”**

**“Yes”**

Then,

*Why* did I never feel the breaking pain in my chest that people call loneliness when I was *alone*?

*Why* was I only torn apart, piece by piece, once the person I trusted decided to turn their back on me?

*Why*did I open-up my heart and soul in the hopes of finding someone, to maybe make me whole?

*Why* did I open myself up to a world of stormy-grey people, judging actions and opinions every day?

*Why*does it feel like they all push me down?

I’m pushed around,

Face against the ground,

That horrid sound – cause after all I’m the prey they’re the hunting hounds,

Please*, please* stop it now,

I’m overwhelmed, I’m overwound,

My anger’s out, I just rebound,

But now I’m ironbound,

strength newfound,

they stare dumbfound,

then hate surrounds.

This is all I’ll ever be,

the enemy,

they ignore my plea,

they disagree,

but this caged bird yearns to be free.

As I turn there’s a tear,

because ‘surprise’ look who is here,

we were friends once; now where is all that cheer?

You’re in the headlights like a deer,

I was so stupid – now it’s clear.

People can only hurt you once you truly hold them near.

**“Oh, okay then.”**

***Judge Comment:***

*The structure of this poem is one of the things that attracted me to it. The bookended question and response is so dismissive of the heartfelt explanation throughout, and adds another layer of meaning to the overall piece.*

*"I'm overwhelmed, I'm overwound" is one of the many wonderful moments in this poem, as is this line: "People can only hurt you once you truly hold them near", which evokes the feeling of withdrawing oneself to avoid further pain.*

*We receive a lot of poems that deal with bullying, across all categories. This is one of the most honest and powerful of all.*