

3rd Place Equal (Schools Y7&8, 2023): Charlotte Robinson-Gooch, Matakohe School,  
The Hues of Twilight

Blackness began to swallow up the world, leaving the flames dancing devilishly as neon orange illumination cast a sparse light across the hill. Fog drifted through the bush like grey ghosts.

Giant blue eyes locked onto her target, her little black pupils enlarging until her irises were only thin rings of sapphire blue. The creature's tail swished cunningly, her back end wriggling as her ears pricked up like a nail to a magnet. She moved in slow motion, her paws padding silently over the moss. The sound of the trickling river reverberated through her ears as she stalked her prey, the fallen autumn leaves crackled and crunched faintly under her paws. The trees swayed softly, morepork calls echoed through them as dew settled daintily on the forest canopy.

Suddenly, like an ultrasonic bullet, she darted forward and just before she was upon her bewildered target, she shot high into the frosty air and landed on her twitching foe. Her tiny razor sharp claws sank into her prey. The furry little beast violently stabbed her fangs into the animal.

As the struggle to be free began trepidation trickled through her prey like poison seeping into blood. Pain shot through the creature's minuscule grey body making it squeak vigorously before it was too late...

The whirl of wings from above caught the killer's attention. The attacker's head shot up in alarm. Her grip on the prey loosened. The creature wriggled free and scampered off into the now quiet bush.

The flames died down, and she gazed in the direction of her escaped prey.