

The 2nd Runner Up of English Section

Junior Division

Name of Winner : Li Yu Fei Coffey

Name of School : St. Mary's Canossian College

Book Title : *The Beginning of Everything*

Author : Robyn Schneider

Publisher : Pegasus Books

I'm sure we've all heard about the clichéd story of how a person, in this case a boy, who gets hurt in a freak accident and a girl tries to help the boy and they end up falling in love. The end. That's definitely not the case in the book I'm about to introduce. This is *The Beginning of Everything*, by Robyn Schneider.

Enter Ezra - a popular guy in school only because he is talented in tennis. One day, after a party, he tries to get home, but ends up in a hospital courtesy of getting

rammed by a car. From then on, his life starts to go downhill. His 'friends' abandon him, people start to look down on him, and he gives up hope in life. Then comes a new girl called Cassidy. She manages to make Ezra step out his personal hell and see the world in a different light where popularity and money isn't everything. In the end, it turns out that the person who really needed help was Cassidy herself. The whole reason why she changed schools to where Ezra studied was because her brother was the driver in the accident that crippled Ezra for life.

I have to say that my favourite character is the Cassidy, not because she's a tortured soul or anything, but she's realistic. She may not seem like the best of people, but that just shows that after all, we are humans and we make mistakes, so we strive to improve. That wasn't the case for Cassidy. Not everyone can do things successfully, and Cassidy couldn't climb out the hole she dug for herself. I think that I like Cassidy because of

what she stands for. She is like a symbol of who we are inside. We all have our own fears and problems that we don't want to admit to having, but they'll always be there. I personally don't really agree with how she handled her problem, but that's how everyone is. Life doesn't have fairy-tale endings, and Cassidy is the epitome of that.

The Beginning of Everything talks about lots of things, but personally, the main theme is about being ourselves and making decisions. Ezra had popularity and everything a person would want, but was it really the case? Is being popular really that important? Did people want to be his friend because of his personality or his status in the school? All these answers can be found after the incident – he was shunned by his old friends and was no longer cared for, but there was an upside to all that. He could finally drop the act. He got free of the talons holding him in a situation where he had to fake every little action. He didn't have to act rudely to others

because his friends pressured him. He became free. He had new friends who actually cared for him and understood him.

You might be thinking where Cassidy fits into all this. Like I mentioned, she freed Ezra, but how about herself? She didn't want to be helped by her new friends. She thought she had to deal with it all by herself, but she didn't, which was a bad decision on her part. She chose to continue living her life a prisoner under the shadow of her dead, but guilty brother. Cassidy didn't really change Ezra. He did that himself. Ezra made his own decision to leave everything behind with the support of Cassidy. Cassidy made a choice herself, and she'd have to live with whatever outcome that came from that decision. Now I don't know what happened after Cassidy left, and what she'd do. The author didn't supply that, but our choices stay with us for the rest of our lives, so we have to choose what we think is the right one.

Life is too short to be wasted on actions and decisions that satisfy others more than ourselves. Stop holding yourself down like you're cuffed to the floor. Use the key that was always there, with you. What is there to be afraid of if you don't take chances? What meaning is in life if you do so? We aren't supposed to live our life like criminals – in fear. Wake up! Life isn't a panopticon where there are telescreens behind every wall, listening in on your every word. You already have the key even if you don't know it, but whether you use it or not, the choice is yours. This is just the beginning, and more will come your way, but remember, only you can control your life. No one else. Just you.