

WINNERS! by Cynthia Mercati

For some of the students in Central High School, homework is not the first priority. For some, finding out who they are and feeling okay about that is harder than even the toughest homework assignment. In this monologue, TARA gives a class speech, and an honest account, of how she attempted suicide, the consequences of her actions, and her ability to come to understand and love herself.

TARA

This is supposed to be a speech about a personal experience. My experience is really hard for me to talk about. But I need to talk about it. I tried to commit suicide last year. I didn't leave a note. I just swallowed a whole bottle of pills. It was pretty much on impulse -- but I had been thinking about it. It was all I thought about. And I'd been talking about it. It's not true, that the people who talk about suicide don't try it. Just the opposite. You talk about it a lot -- to anyone who'll listen. Hoping, I guess, that someone will give you a reason not to. I talked to my mom and dad. In a general sort of way. They thought I was doing research for a paper or something. I talked to some of my friends, too. One girl said she thought suicide was romantic -- like *Romeo and Juliet*. But that's only a story -- and nobody really died! Suicide isn't romantic -- it's a waste! But I was lucky -- my mom got me to the hospital in time.

I -- can't tell you exactly *why* I did it. I know I didn't think too much of myself -- so it didn't seem to matter if I was around or not. But I've learned a lot in the last year -- and I think it's time I started using what I learned. Like who I am! I'm a girl who has a problem who's working on solving it. I'm not proud of what I did. But it happened. I can't pretend it didn't. It's a part of me. I'd like people to like me in spite

of what I did -- or at least accept me. But if they can't -- if they call me nuts or psycho -- I'm just going to have to like myself enough not to let it get me down. That's something else I'm working on. Liking me. The real me. Not the TARA I made up to please my parents or get popular. I don't think any of us like ourselves enough! We're always worried that our hair isn't right or our face is all wrong -- or our body isn't like somebody's on TV! Or we want to be good at dancing when we're good at math -- or we wish we were outgoing when we're shy! But those are the things that make us *special* -- not weird! They set us apart -- but they bring us together, too. Because everybody's different and everybody's okay.