

# Panther Press

## Literary Magazine



September to January  
2021-2022

**By Madison Sigona**

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# Port Byron Central School District

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	A Trip to the Bathroom Results in an Epiphany by Ruby Seamans	The Pink House by Irelynn Randolph
	The Performance by Alexis Haluska	Loving Mothers by Camden Manley
	Panic at the Park by Lacey Sparano	<b>Alternate Endings</b>
	Movement by Madison Sigona	Hare Marlena Doerle

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Ashton Fronzek  
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Alisa Ilcu  
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Madison Gillespie  
Aubrey Frigon  
Alexander Doerle  
Connor Burt  
Giselle Beach  
Brandon Reich  
Artie Lamouroux  
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Alexis Warren

Home of the Panthers

# Multi-Genre

For this writing, authors chose a topic. Then they composed including their topics in various genres: haiku, cinquain, narrative poetry, personification poetry, metaphor poetry, micro-fiction, and other choice genres.

## Walls

By Ares Nielens

### Introduction:

My topic was a wall inside my head where I write down my thoughts, though sometimes they just appear. It feels like there’s thousands of crazier ones each day, and often like there are way too many. It gets overwhelming, but writing helps me feel like I have some control over that--a physical manifestation of that chaos, arranged in a way that I have control over, is comforting. I try to keep my thoughts organized to the best of my ability, as cluttered as it tends to get.

The basic idea of using the walls was to represent that it feels enclosed, and it eventually becomes uncomfortable to sit in my own head and think, because it tends to become overwhelming. I could sit and think about something for hours, but get almost nowhere because of it getting overwhelmed by other writing. Art has always been a medium of sanity for me, and writing has been important to me for years.

At the time of writing most of these poems, I was feeling less than creative. I didn’t feel present for most of them. Looking back on almost any of my writing, I don’t really feel a connection to it. It feels like taking a malignant piece of me and laying it onto an observation table. It’s hard to believe that that kind of *bad* can come from me. But I feel it’s important to keep record of my thoughts, especially in writing--it helps me stay grounded, and makes it easier for me to be confident in my memory.

### Sixth Wall

*A faint beating heart,  
A slow rising chest, moonlit  
A stirless body*

### Seventh Wall

*There  
Cold, wounding  
Hell in first  
Amusing from the outside  
Here.*

## Eighth Wall

By Ares Nielens

*A room like a canvas  
But I am not the artist.  
Something inside me pulls art out,*

*I am not the artist–  
I am a fruit fly,  
drowning in the paint,  
While, on occasion, the brush is picked up,  
And I am splattered along the canvas*

*Eight walls, none of them connected to me  
But I will never separate myself.*

*That is not to say for a lack of attempt,  
but as insects drown,  
they do not think to swim–  
Instead, they flutter about wildly,  
Drowning themselves even further.*

*I live as that,  
As a bug,  
A pest,  
Never truly able to remove itself  
From the eight walls, thus far,  
That I have decorated.  
A prison does not become more home if it’s painted pretty.  
A fly does not become any less pest if it is dead.*

Ninth Wall

By Ares Nielens

Now and again I find myself along the ninth wall.

It's not the most pleasant of walls, crumbling and dirty.  
But I suppose it has never been about how the walls looked—  
A trap is a trap,  
Even nicely furnished.

What I care to oversee,  
what I observe along my favorite wall,  
Is the immortalization of my lesser memories.

It has not been often that I've sought out the memories  
that did not ache,  
they brought me feelings I was not capable of understanding.  
And I wanted to feel that which was familiar

The ninth wall is ever-busy when I watch,  
Constantly being carved, embellished  
with shreds of memories past  
But these ones,  
This wall, above the others,  
it's special  
Reserved only for memories that do not jab.  
It is my calm before the storm.

Each time I return,  
The chisel is picked back up.  
I find new memories,  
Ones that do not hurt.

Here is where I spend free time.  
Though never for long—  
The rest of my home needs tending,  
And there is always a whining voice along a different wall.

But for now,  
for now--  
I am free to survey.

There is even the gentle smell of burning wood.  
There is burning.  
A fire.

Panicked, I realize my favorite wall is ablaze.  
I have looked too long,  
Tainted this wall as I have all the rest.

The dirt,  
dry and caked,  
burns.

The ink,  
Fresh, new,  
fuels.

I asked for one day,  
One day where I could observe—  
Where I could enjoy something inward,

And yet I sabotage another.

New words emerge,  
mocking.

“This is your inferno. You could tame it.”  
The words cackle.  
“Those memories aren't right. Don't you know?”

“That never happened. Pathetic, how you gnaw your own wounds into life just to lick them,”

I know now I could not put this fire out.  
There was nothing in here but other ink,  
It would not smother the fire.

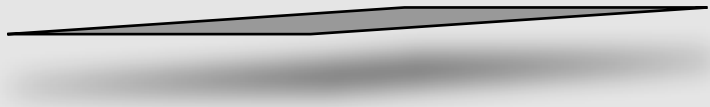
I open my eyes again.  
The wall is calm.  
There is no fire.

The taunts have erased,  
And I have only crumbled memories that were chased off,  
And ashen bricks  
To remind me that any of it was real.

I could not tell if I was dreaming,  
Or if I am now.  
For now, my wall is calm.

There's a nagging tug along the fifth wall.  
I must attend now.

Farewell to the Ninth, for now.



## Tenth Wall

By Ares Nielens

*Strange is it to think that all living things are living all the time.*

*It feels odd to imagine that,*

*Even outside my presence,*

*Walls keep breathing,*

*And minds keep thinking.*

*Stranger still,*

*That I am not the only one who thinks about me.*

*Other people see my work and think of me,*

*They remember how my writing speaks and wonder if I am writing now.*

*Everything, everything*

*It all lives and breathes and feels,*

*Even when I rest.*

*When I sleep inside my walls,*

*Others are just waking-*

*Does everyone think as I do?*

*Is everyone in a space of their own design where they see what they feel?*

*The walls breathe,*

*Reminding me I have work to do.*

*The ink walks along the walls,*

*Creeping,*

*Filling in more thoughts.*

*Cracks heave,*

*Why haven't I fixed them?*

*Everything thinks.*

*What I wouldn't give to think,*

*just for a day,*

*As something else thinks.*

*Do the trees wonder what poetry is?*

*Do plants think,*

*"Oh, if only I had a brain.*

*Then, maybe,*

*they would think I'm alive-*

*but as rabbits are alive.*

*As they are alive."*

*What I wouldn't give to see from the eyes of another.*

*If my eyes were blue, would they tell me different things?*

*If my eyes were green, would I see different colors than I do now?*

*Walls breathe.*

*And they should not be.*

*Maybe someday soon I can pull myself from here.*

*Stop the walls from growing.*

*Live outside instead of in.*

*Find out, someday,*

*That trees really do wonder what poetry is.*

*Maybe,*

*One day,*

*I'll leave my own head-*

*And show the trees these poems myself.*



Dogs

By Ashton Fronzek

**Introduction:** Dogs are man's best friend; they make the perfect companions. I have two myself and they're always there when I need them. When I'm sad, they're there to get slobber on my face and turn my tears or anger into laughter. They also make good cuddlers. Dogs are, in my opinion, very unappreciated because many are still in animal shelters and pounds or on the streets looking for scraps of food. In short, I love dogs, and that's why I picked them.



Puppy Wars

Two pups lined up like gladiators  
Each one ready to fight for the ball  
Growling and barking, but neither will back down  
Both know the risk  
Saliva coated fur, getting knocked over, and worst of all  
Tiny bite marks

All the sudden, both stand still  
And stare each other down  
As a last ditch attempt to scare their opponent off  
Both unflinching, neither going down without a fight  
They charge at each other ready for whatever happens next when...  
It's time to go home for both of them

"Maybe tomorrow" they both think.

Lost Lucy

By Ashton Fronzek

Playing with my dogs  
We're all out of breath  
I'm about to go get some water,  
when they both start running  
I start running too  
But they're too fast for me  
They come up from behind  
in their running "fight to the death"  
Took out my legs and made me fly,  
Landed on my back, got up  
and I say  
"Let's go inside"  
Bailey trots back panting  
but Lucy is still running  
I go around the house to catch her  
but she's gone  
  
"Luuucy!" I yell but all I hear  
Is the echo of my voice in the trees  
And Bailey trotting through the grass behind me  
I look around the yard to see  
if I just missed her  
But I don't find her  
anywhere  
So I dash inside the house with Bailey

And I tell my Mom  
"Lucy's gone"  
She says  
"Did you look under the deck?"  
I go out and peek under  
Still no sign of Lucy  
I look for her in the road  
Nothing  
  
I go inside and say  
"She's not under the deck or in the road"  
She says "Alright, let me look"  
I go in the garage to get a treat  
And lure her back home  
But when I open the garage door  
I see Lucy laying on the floor mat.  
Panting, looking around  
She gets up  
and starts licking me  
But the door was closed,  
She is smarter than she looks

My Dogs

Bean Bag and LuLu:  
The two best dogs in the world,  
Good Goldendoodles.  
  
Hyper and fluffy  
Sleep on the couch, not the bed:  
Good Girls, Good night pups.

## Feral

By Ashton Fronzek

“Run, run, run, run” Emmet thinks to himself repeatedly as he hears the soles of his boots pounding rapidly on the soft dirt, the crunching of sticks below his feet, the sound of barking and snarling right behind him to remind him to pump his legs, forcing them to go faster, but also telling them to avoid the trees. He checks to make sure the berry is intact, The Antidote, the berry that could save the dogs and make them normal again. He looks back and a sense of surprise runs through him as he sees his German Shepherd, Ruby. The dog he cares about more than anything, about to maul him.

He remembered getting her when he turned fifteen. That big box with all of the holes told him it was some kind of animal, and as he opened the box to see the fluffiest, cutest puppy he had ever seen, along with a little pile of poop his parents must not have noticed. He then thought back to two years later when the mist, the cause of all of this, first came and Ruby went feral and started attacking them. Fortunately, he and his parents kept her kennel she had, so they put her in it and ran, knowing she would eventually break out

He looks ahead and sees the tree house in the distance, so he runs as fast as his legs can go. He climbs up and remembers back when he was seven, building that tree house with his Dad. It was one of the best moments he had with his father. He thought back to the painful memory of when that Rottweiler got him, he knew he could have saved him if he was stronger like his Dad tried to get him to be. He shivers and tells himself “Don’t let it distract you!” Once inside, he analyzes a sample of the berry, hearing his Dad’s screams, hoping this will work, hoping he can save the world, hoping he can avenge his father, hoping he will get back his Ruby.

### Dogs are Diamonds

Dogs are diamonds

Valuable yet imperfect

Elusive and hard to take care of

And you would do anything

To keep them safe

Losing one puts you in deep despair

But there are many

And only one is the perfect companion

For you

Dogs

Lovable, Soft

Fast as lightning

Barks loud as explosions

Friends

## The Batik Design in Dress

By Maria(Hannah) Aguja

The sky was so dark:

“It looks like it’s ‘gonna

rain tonight,” Grandma said.

As she takes the dress down,

she hoped that it was dry

and that the design wasn’t ruined.

“Swoosh,” the wind

replied, and the trees started

dancing in their desire.

I could see the little

liquid falling down but

it looked like random raindrops.

“It’s so cold. Aliyah, do you

think you could make a cup

of coffee?” Grandma asked.

“Okay, Grandma, “ Aliyah replied.

After the coffee was done,

Aliyah watched as

Grandma checked the dress with

a batik design on it. She was making

sure that it was still beautiful

and colorful.

“It still looks fine and fresh colors

are still attached in the dress, “

Aliyah said while smiling.



## The Dress

By Maria(Hannah) Aguja

Grandma hangs the

Batik design cloth

To let it dry.

The colors race

Across, from side to

Side of the dress.

The lines are dizzy, the

Dress smiles because

Of the colors that it attracts.

It dances with the

Air, singing with the wind

Exposing its skin color.

## Batik Design

Tasteful, bulky

Colorful like a rainbow

Beautiful as the blooming flowers

Material



## War

By William Cuddeback

The concept of war has barely changed throughout centuries. The idea of putting multiple groups of people together to fight to the death over the different ideas of their superiors. Now instead of it being kings and sultans, it is dictators and presidents. The invention of gunpowder by the Chinese led to cannons, guns, and overall making warfare more and more deadly. Especially since everyone is trying to out compete each other with whom can make the best army. This mentality has led to automatic rifles, militarized ships and airplanes, in recent terms even nuclear armaments. All this does is make sure that many men that didn't have to die, did. Everyone's lives have been changed by the outcome of past wars. Whether that be the Battle of Hastings (changed the English language), to WWII which stopped evil and oppressive warmongers from taking over the world. These reasons are why I chose war as my topic.

By William Cuddeback

**I was walking over,  
The steep hills,  
Covered in mud.  
My rifle kept clenched  
In my hands, with  
Visible breath in the air.  
I had been ordered,  
To hold this ground,  
At all costs.  
The sun had fled,  
Only to be replaced,  
By the moon.  
The only light was the,  
Flashlight my corporal,  
Had given me.  
Sporadically looking  
In every direction,  
I had become paranoid,  
That something would pounce,  
In the middle of the night.**

## Battle of Lodi

By William Cuddeback

Waving the French flag high. I was wearing my blue uniform while carrying my rifle above my left shoulder. I was marching in a giant horizontal line. Being but one of many under General Bonaparte's command. He had raised us from nothing to winning multiple campaigns for Française. We had been marching down a cleared out forest with a dirt path from the town of Mondovi. The Austrian cowards kept on fleeing, though a small force stopped to face us, and in the distance a few horses were racing our way. I assumed it was to keep us busy as they reached a nearby town. I took my rifle off of my shoulder and knelt down along with everyone else, for I was in the front of the line. The horses kept on getting progressively closer to us.

"Fire!" Bonaparte yells from atop his stallion. Everyone aims and shoots the approaching Austrian horses as a huge white cloud of smoke appears right in front of me. The bullets from the muskets whiz past my face. Their swords clink off of the dirt.

"Nice work men!" General Bonaparte once again exclaims while trying to keep his stallion in one place. We pick our brownish rifles back up over our shoulders, aiming at the sky and we continue marching down the trail, past the dead horses. As if nothing had happened.

The green forest is increasingly turning more and more wet and disgusting. The town of Lodi must have recently had a downpour, as there is mud everywhere. It is very hard to march and a few are getting stuck. We finally reach the abandoned suburbs under Austrian General Sebottendorf's control. As we run in, we meet little resistance. That is until we get to the center of town, where Sebottendorf had set up fierce defenses.

The town was almost completely made of brick and even had a few churches. After a bit of searching around the town, we had concluded that the one thing preventing us from getting them out of this town was the bridge, which was where the majority of the Austrians were. We had wanted to storm the old wooden bridge.

"Not just yet!" Bonaparte yells. "Unfortunately we must wait; charging over that bridge right now would be suicidal! We have to wait for more men to show up."

We were forced to set up camp right there and wait for several hours as the Austrians were raining hell upon us with their own cannons. When I heard the news, I was furious. For the next few hours I was just going from house to house just simply trying not to be blown up. The mud didn't make our chances that much better, as it made a few of us easy targets. After a few hours went by, it seemed like they were just taking pot shots at us.

Though in the seventh hour, more blue coats had arrived waving the French flag high up in the air where it needed to be. Fortunately for us, though, our iron cannons had finally been put into place near our side of the bridge. The general had ordered us to charge through the bridge with now more men. He even jumped off of his horse to aim one of the cannons. I took my musket, and started running to the bridge, almost slipping on the vast amount of mud between our position and the bridge, even as a few cannonballs flew right by me. I wasn't the only one; the whole regiment seemed to be right beside me as we took out the white coats. We did as the General commanded. Eventually, we made it to the other side of the bridge, which had practically the same amount of infrastructure. Though after so many hours of being hit with cannons, it had practically been reduced to rubble.

"Nice work men!" Bonaparte yells.

"What are our orders now sir?" I ask while looking up to him as he gets back on his horse, covered in mud.

"Quickly get anything valuable you can get your hands on, then we make our way to Vienna!"

"Yes Sir!"

I salute him then start running from house to house once again looking for valuables. We couldn't take too long, though, as the Austrians were already on the run once again.

# Memoir

## Jewelry Box

By Anonymous

A sweet scent of tomato and beef wafted from the kitchen, into the next room where I was sitting. I twirled a plastic cup with images of boats on it between my fingers and stared at the cork flooring, trying to ignore how hungry the aroma was making me. My grandma poked her head out of the doorway that connected the kitchen and living room, looking at me.

"How are you doing?"

I rubbed my eyes, trying to push the sleepiness away that always came with a lazy afternoon.

"I'm just bored."

My grandma looked from the kitchen back out to me and finally caved with a sigh, walking over to sit next to me on the futon.

"OK, fine. But I'm gonna need to get up in a bit to stir the soup."

I hid a victory smile from her and led her to her bedroom and sat cross legged at the foot of the bed, which was taller than my waist and forced me to pull myself up. My grandma opened the top drawer of her dresser across from me.

"Let's see..." she pulled out two small brown boxes and set them in front of me on the bed. They were old and wooden, their detail work worn away with age. I ran my hands over the faded stain on the first box and pulled up the lid. It opened with a creek of protest from the old hinges and a puff of dust.

I waved my hand to clear the smell from years of sitting untouched. Inside of the box, it was filled

with old jewelry. My eyes widened in wonder, tiredness completely gone as I examined the different pieces. Dirty silver, costume gems, chipped metallic paint, but to me it was a treasure trove. My grandma sat next to me and took a pair of large fake diamond earrings.

"I wore these at my wedding," she said, holding them out for me to see as the light from a nearby window shone through them, making them sparkle.

She moved a cat shaped brooch and pulled two more pairs, one made of beaded wires in the shape of peacock tail feathers, and the other two shiny crescent moons with bent posts. One of the feathers was missing the hook to wear it, but I still stared at them intensely.

My grandma opened the other, more plain box.

"These were all from my mother and grandmother," she told me. These ones looked far older and more extravagant.

I pulled out a pair of what looked like earrings, but had a clasp at the top instead of a post.

"What are these?"

"They're clip-ons, they used to be popular," she picked another pair and clipped them onto her ears. I couldn't help but laugh, I had never seen her wear jewelry before, especially not ones with big black jewels.

"Don't they hurt?"

She shrugged and put the other on, "Not really. I'm not going to wear them all night though."

I picked up another clip-on earring shaped like a rose.

"People couldn't just pierce their ears?"

"It does seem like it would be less trouble, right?" my grandma laughed and took hers off and set them back in the box.

She sat up as if she'd thought of something, "Speaking of my grandmother..." she set her feet onto the carpet and crossed the room to her closet. After a few minutes of shifting through the different nightgowns and winter coats, she came to a wrinkled black dress with drooping and faded cloth roses sewed to its waist.

"This," she said, carefully pulling out the hanger, "was my grandmother's flapper dress." She pulled one of the frills out. "It's too old to wear, otherwise I'd have you put it on. If you do want to wear something," she dove into the closet again and took a blue dress off its hanger. She motioned for me to stand and held it in front of me to measure its size.

"My high school honey's best friend was in the military in Iran, and he sent this back for me, probably around 50 years ago before I went off to college. It obviously doesn't fit now."

I took it from her hands carefully. It was a rough material but surprisingly breathable. It had tiny hooks running up the side to the collar to fasten it closed and a pair of separate pants that reached just above my ankles. As I looked closer, I realized that the fabric had a flower pattern woven into it. I turned to my grandma in wonder, not knowing any words. "Would you like to try it?"

I nodded vigorously and ran through the living room with the dress extended carefully in front of me, passing my sleeping grandfather and into the

spare room.

As soon as I had it on and finally figured out all the hooks, I twirled in front of the mirror. It fit perfectly, as if it had been made for me. I smiled giddily and turned around again.

I heard a knock on the door.

"You have it on?"

"Oh- yes!" I nodded out of habit and kicked my old clothes behind the bed just as the door clicked open.

I watched my grandma's face light up with a smile.

"You look wonderful! Give me a turn."

I spun around in my place and got an applause from my small audience.

"Oh, it matches your eyes..." She thought for a moment. "Would you like to keep it?"

I looked up at her. "Really?"

"Well, I'm not going to be wearing it anytime soon."

"Yes of course!" I went to hug her, forgetting that the dress was probably too old for that.

"Okay, okay, get changed. Dinner's done and I don't think you want anything spilled on that since you just got it. Meatball soup, I know you like that."

She closed the door behind her and I heard her footsteps back down the hall. As I turned to grab my clothes, I noticed a clear plastic baggie with the peacock and crescent moon earrings sitting on the bed. She must have placed them there when I wasn't looking.

I picked the bag up, still smiling. My grandma always knew how to make me feel better.

# A Trip to the Bathroom Results in an Epiphany

By Ruby Seamans

*New year, new friends, new life*, I tell myself, reaching up for my binder. The mantra doesn't help much, but it's the best I've got for now. I close my locker and head for my next class. Math, I think- something about ratios or fractions- my memory of what we're learning is fuzzy. As I enter the room and take a seat, Noah is there, as always, making fun of me.

"What are you drawing, Ruby? Is it a *yoo-nee-corn*?" He stretches out the last word on purpose.

"Nothing," I answer, sketching out tiny construction lines in the corner of my worksheet. I try to hide my anger at him. It doesn't really work.

Honestly, I don't understand why he picks on me. Sure, I like 'yoo-nee-corns,' but what else do I have right now? It's not like any of my friends are here anymore... Most of them have moved away, so now drawing is my only comfort.

Sometimes I wonder if I should have made more friends. Maybe I could have prevented this.

Anyway... I bring my attention back to my work. The numbers and ratios jumble together, so I start drawing again. The strokes of my pencil start forming the smiling face of a pony. Escaping into fantasy, I give the creature a swan-like neck and a long,

curving horn. Swooping lines become her mane, her hair shiny and lustrous. "Rubyyyy!" Noah butts in and I hold my paper up to my chest. "Why aren't you doing your work?" He narrows his eyes, smiling gleefully. I look down. He's going to make fun of me. Noah pries the paper away from my chest, turning it over to see what I've done.

"No!" I pull back at the paper, but he manages to catch a glance at what I'm drawing.

"Ha! Ruby's been drawing *unicorns*!" He announces to the entire class. "What a baby."

I lay my paper flat on the desk, pressing my hand over the picture to hide it. I lower my head and start to work.

The problems still don't make sense. I don't want to put in any effort to even look at them.

There's a heaviness in my chest. My body feels so limp and unwilling to cooperate, meanwhile my brain is buzzing. I have so many conflicting emotions. I want to sock Noah in the face, I want nothing to do with him. I want to get up and leave.

So I do.

Closing my binder, I stand up from my seat and walk over to the door. I sign out and leave the classroom behind.

I just need a minute away from everyone.

*That's funny.*

I laugh to myself. I thought I wanted friends, but now here I am, eager to get away from everything.

What am I thinking?

I take long, slow strides down the hallway. The bathroom is empty. It's usually empty at this time.

I go inside, lock myself in a stall.

It never occurred to me just how many times I do this.

Is it always like this? I ask myself.

It always is. It used to be different... but not anymore.

I sigh, letting out a shuddering breath-the closest to crying I can come. I don't want to go back. If I didn't need to go back there, I would abandon that place forever. The classroom. The students. Everyone.

But that's not the case.

I compose myself and check my watch. I need to go back now.

Speed-walking back to the classroom, I wonder if Noah's actions are justified. Maybe he is right. Maybe I *am* childish.

No, I'm childish for letting him push me around, like I'm nothing. Like I'm worthless.

I stop next to the door, hesitating to turn the handle.

I am *NOT* worthless.

I can fight back.

I open the door and scribble my name<sup>21</sup>

onto the sign-out sheet, then take my seat and get straight to work.

It's only a matter of time before Noah opens his big mouth again. "Are you drawing something stupid again," he asks, tilting his head mockingly, "like fairies or ponies or mermaids?" It takes me a second to think, but I come up with a comeback.

"Yeah, I'm drawing something *really* stupid. YOU."

That seems to shut him up. Thank goodness.

Noah hesitates. "W-well, you're supposed to be doing your work. You're going to fail." He crosses his arms.

I give him a look. "I didn't know you were so concerned about my grades. Maybe you should be concerned about your own."

"Mind your own business."

"As should you."

I settle back into my work, pleased with myself. Things seem a bit brighter now. Maybe it's just me, but things are looking up.

∴-}|{|{-∴.

Years from now, Noah is only a meaningless speck in my life. Sometimes I look back and remember him-who he was and what he did, but in the end, it doesn't matter anymore. I fought back and he finally backed off.

## The Performance

By Alexis Haluska

I walked through the doorway into the practice room. I saw everyone setting up their instruments and getting out their sheet music to practice before the concert. The whole room turned very noisy, with different instruments being played simultaneously.

I started to become very nervous about the thought of performing. This was my first ever band concert and I felt anxious about an audience watching me play. I worried about the mistakes I could make while playing on stage, knowing the audience would notice. I decided to sit down in one of the many chairs spread out in the practice room to start preparing my instrument. I had opened up my clarinet case. I started taking all of the clarinet parts out, assembling them together. I made sure to use the best reed I had for my instrument. Once I had set my clarinet up fully, I grabbed my scales packet. I went through each of my different scales that ranged from low notes to high notes. Then I started to practice the music that would be played during our performance. I repeatedly went over parts of my music that were the most challenging. I feared these were the notes that I would have trouble with on stage. Soon I was done practicing, my instrument seemed to be ready for the performance.

A few minutes later, Mr. Bearup entered the practice room. "It's our turn next, we will be on stage in about 10 minutes. Please get ready," he said to everyone. After the announcement, I felt a tight knot in my stomach. We would be performing in only a matter of minutes. I looked around the room and all of my band-mates seemed to be quite nervous as well. The anxiety in the room had skyrocketed. Five minutes had passed when Mr. Bearup had told us to line up in order by Instruments. So I rushed into the back of the line with my clarinet and my music in my hands. All of the clarinet players were supposed to be positioned in the back of the line. It took

about a minute for everyone to get into their correct spots.

There were only about two minutes left before heading on stage. Everyone turned quiet to the point where you could hear a pin drop. I started to lightly tap the floor with my shoes, which I usually do whenever I get really anxious. My heart was pounding really fast. I was hoping I would perform well, but I was dreading the possibility of mistakes.

"OK, It's time. Please head out onto the stage, I'll follow right behind you guys." Mr. Bearup had suddenly announced. The line started to move forward towards the open doorway that leads right to the stage. I followed along and in a second we had arrived. The auditorium was quiet, all I could hear was our shoes hitting the floor while making our way to our seats.

Once I had gotten to my seat, I put all of my music onto the stand and had sat down. I positioned my clarinet into my hands, ready to perform. I quickly looked towards the audience, realizing most of the seats were full. I became even more nervous and my heart was still pounding. Mr. Bearup was standing at the front of the stage and was announcing what music we would be playing to the audience. As soon as he was done, he turned around and stood in front of his music stand. He whispered to us to get our music prepared, and to pull out the sheet of music we would be playing first. I shuffled around my pages of music and finally found the first piece. We were ready to start performing. Mr. Bearup signaled to get our Instruments in position. I raised my clarinet up towards my face. I took a couple of deep breaths to try to calm myself. Mr. Bearup quietly whispered to us, "1, 2, 3, and 4," and we started to play.

The first few notes I played had come out perfectly but I was still super anxious. I quickly looked towards the audience and then back at my music. I was afraid of accidentally playing the wrong notes in front of everyone. I thought everyone would be able to tell it was me if I made a mistake.



By Madison Sigona

I was becoming stiff and was trying to focus on each little note on my music sheets. Now it was halfway through the performance and I began to realize that I should just try my best. Being overly stressed wasn't going to help me perform any better. I started to relax myself and played to the best of my ability. I followed the beat and rhythms of the music, noticing it helped me play notes. I avoided looking at the audience since it gave me stress, and it helped me concentrate on my music more. I enjoyed playing the rest of the few songs in our performance.

At the end of it, we all got up from our seats and bowed to the audience. I smiled at the crowd of people while they applauded.





By Madison Sigona

## Panic at the Park

By Lacey Sparano

A small kid, around the age of six-seven, sat bawling. Snot and tears slid down her face as she wailed and screamed. Her glossy, short brown hair glinted in the sunlight. *That obnoxious kid is me. Now you're probably wondering how this happened. Well it all started when we boarded my first flight...*

My flats clapped sharply on the concrete as I jumped from the ledge off the train. The smell of scolding rubber drifted into my nose causing it to wrinkle. Gripping my hand tightly, my mother pulled me onto the sidewalk and walked me towards a big brick gate a few steps away. I was scared, like anxiety itself took control over my body. No matter how I tried to still my shaken limbs, I shook like a tree in a storm and had been like that ever since we landed at the airport.

Once I stepped foot inside, my eyes welled with wonder: there were Disney characters surrounded by

crowds. I sped towards the crowd at the fastest my tiny seven year old legs could go. Alas the toe of my left flat skidded across the floor, and I came crashing onto the rough concrete.

"Ow!--" A quiet yelp escaped from my lips.

My vision began to blur as my right knee bellowed in pain and tears pricked the corner of my eyes. I glanced down at my knee. It had turned beet red and was skinned. I felt my mom lift me off the ground.

"There is a bathroom over there. Let's go wash your knee off," My mom said while beginning to walk towards the bathrooms.

My legs bounced up and down as we approached the bathrooms. I dug my face into my mom's shirt, feeling embarrassed that I had to be carried by my mom. I heard the heavy door squeak open and the clap of sandals against tile floor. She set me down on the marble counter with the sinks. The sink squeaked before the water poured out of the faucet, my mom drenched a wad of paper towels. Cold water touched my skinned knee, sending

chills down my legs and arms. However, it felt soothing, and after a few moments, the pain began to dissipate. My mom then pulled a band-aid out of the mini first-aid kit she kept in her purse. She placed it on my knee and rubbed it so it would stay on.

"Are you good to go now?" My mom asked while zipping her purse.

I nodded and slid off the counter. Although my tears had dried, I wiped my eyes with my sleeve. A silence began to fall as I was guided out into the park again. This time I held onto my mother's hand tightly and avoided anything that could trip me. The whole time my gaze was plastered to the ground, my mom guided me over to an area with a few of my favorite characters. Once I'd looked up, I saw a big sign that read **Stitch's Great Escape!** Outside stood my favorite character of all, Stitch. My mom provided a nice push into the line to meet Stitch as she watched me walk closer nervously. In the end, despite everything I got to meet my favorite characters and overall enjoy my stay.



Movement

By Madison Sigona

I take my shot at the basketball hoop; I'm a bit shaky. I always thought I was the brave type until we go to actual games. I run back in the line tensing up. I look over to the team behind us. They're going so fast and there's a big difference between our team and theirs. I try to calm myself down because we've done this before. It's our last game and I need to give it my all.

Coach blows the whistle and it feels like fire burning in my chest. We hardly have any players compared to them. Everyone on our team is on the court at all times because we don't have any more players. I look over at my coach who seems calm as ever. He's the type to act calm and collected but usually in practice he's the one who always makes us run laps. I look at my teammates again and they all look so tense.

My friend Raegan whispers to me, "Do you think we have a shot at beating them?"

I take a deep breath and I gently punch her arm and say,"With our luck, we'll beat them." She smiles at me as I run up and make a layup.

The first period goes by as fast as it ever has. I'm breathing heavily and everyone else is as well. My coach is talking strategy and I try to pay close attention. We get done with the next quarter and I'm drenched in sweat. We get five minutes to get

water and collect ourselves. I try to joke around with my teammates in an attempt to lighten the mood.

I tell them, "I high-fived the referee by accident. When he called a foul, he put his hand up, and I was walking by and I high-fived him not knowing that that's not what he meant." My teammate Olivia catches on and starts to help me make everyone laugh.

*As he's talking, I can't pay attention. Everything's foggy and I start to feel dizzy. It's as if I'm going to pass out, but I try to push myself.*

Olivia says, "Ha, ha! That's awesome!" I yelled at the girl in

front of me last game!"

Finally everyone is laughing again and we're making this fun, as it should be.

My friend Raegan says, "I'm gonna head to get water. Can you come with me Maddie?"

I quickly glance back and say, "Yeah Yeah!" As we head out, I glance at the scoreboard and it is 13-12. We are winning! I run with her because we had to be back fast for the talking plans with the coach. When she finishes, we run back to Coach and we discuss the plan and the plays for our next move.

The next quarter feels like we are the Flash. Coach calls a time out and starts telling us to be more focused out there. As he's talking, I can't pay attention. Everything's foggy and I start to feel dizzy. It's as if I'm going to pass out, but I try to push myself. It's the last quarter and we've got less than five minutes.

We head on the court and the people in the bleachers are yelling for their teams. I glance at the girl I'm guarding. She's like two feet taller than me. Yeah give the short girl one of the taller girls. The play happens and my feet move out of nowhere, and I grab the ball from her hands and run. I'm running to the other side with no setbacks. The girl that was guarding me is chasing me and so is everyone else; I tense up and just chuck the ball in the hoop without hesitation.

I get pummeled by the girl behind me. She stepped on the back of my shoe and we both went down but I'm not even mad. I want to know the answer. The time is at least five seconds left. That final shot will determined who wins.

Before I lock eyes on the hoop, I sharply turn to the scoreboard: 23-24. We could tie with this! I quickly make a sharp turn to the hoop and see the ball spin around. It and *almost* went in before it fell to the ground. The girl basically on top of me is cheering for her team as she shoves me off. I get up carefully and walk over to my team and all I hear is yelling of cheers. I look at my teammates' faces and they are happy? "WOO!" "WE WERE SO CLOSE!" My teammates cheer. I look at Coach who looks pleased and calm as usual. I put a smile on my face and cheer with them, forgiving myself for not making that shot.

The Little Things  
By Ella Jorgensen

The sound of my flip-flops clicked as I walked down the wooden dock my grandpa built last year. I heard hard, fast footsteps from Ava down the pathway and she slammed the screen door to the attached screened in porch on my grandparents' lake house. Small waves from the wind crashed onto the little pebbles under our feet. The wind was blowing my hair around and making it more tangled than it already was. Behind us, the loud screeching of the boat lift tuned out any other sounds around.

My cousins, my sister, and I all grew up together, so we have always been really close. Maddie is the oldest out of all of us. Mason and I are only eight months apart so we were practically raised like siblings. Ava, my little sister, was one of my best friends growing up; we did everything together and played with so many different toys. When I was little, we lived at my grandparents' house because our house was being built. Maddie and Mason were always there so we always were together to play all the games that all little kids did. We played on the computer, we played family, we played school, we swam in the pool all summer long, and practically all the other games that we could possibly come up with.

My grandpa went across the street to grab branches to start a bonfire down by the water. The hard plastic lawn chairs that were starting to melt from the heat of the fire poked my arms as I sat back into them.

Mason started playing music and dancing around to the songs and Maddie took videos of her brother, probably to save for one day to blackmail him, but we all were enjoying life a little more. We made a couple s'mores and went back up to the house because it started to sprinkle.

Maddie, Mason, Ava, and I all sat around the glass table on

**The small waves crashed on the shore, where all the pebbles and pointy rocks resided. The breeze traveled through the screened in porch; we all shivered as it approached midnight.**

the screened in porch. We all had cans of Pepsi in front of us. The neighbor's bug zapper kept going off, making us jump every time it happened. The pitter-patter of the rain hit the lake. The small waves crashed on the shore, where all the pebbles and pointy rocks resided. The breeze traveled through the screened in porch; we all shivered as it approached midnight. The shorts and t-shirts we were all wearing weren't warm enough for us to sit in all night, so we decided to go inside and sit on the couches. I slid the glass door shut and locked it, just like my mom asked.

"Maddie, can I borrow your charger?" Mason asked his sister.

"Sure, just give it back before we go up to bed," Maddie snapped back.

Mason bent down to the outlet, on the bottom of my grandparents' beam that held two custom-made lampshades. Mason flipped the charger around a couple times because it wouldn't go into the outlet.

"Hey Maddie! Can you plug

this charger in for me?" Mason pestered his sister. As he stood up, his head hit the expensive lampshade that our grandpa had waited weeks for. The white glass went everywhere. It went under the couch, under the table, and somehow under the rug. We all started laughing so hard. Maddie grabbed her phone and got a video of the mess and I frantically ran into the bathroom to grab the vacuum and broom. Ava helped me carry over the part of the vacuum and Maddie plugged it in for us. Mason grabbed the broom and threw away the big chunks of glass that couldn't fit in the vacuum. About twenty minutes later, after it was all cleaned up, we sat around and figured out how we were going to tell our grandparents that we broke their light. We all were insisting that we weren't going to do it until Mason said he would because he broke it.

At that point, we were all exhausted and just needed sleep. We grabbed our bags, got changed, brushed our teeth, and lay in bed. As I lay there, I realized how precious life is and how much meaning it really has. The little things in life matter so much more than they seem. The wind in your hair as you're driving down the lake with some of your favorite people around you. The smell of sunscreen that you had to reapply eight times but still end up burning. The bug zapper that annoys everyone, evoking the same reaction. The drops of rain and the waves crashing that remind us that life can be so calm. The cars driving down the busy road. The laughs that make our stomach hurt so bad you can't breathe. The little things.

# Kayaking Conundrum

By Kailey Goodale

My mom and I were looking for a nice day like this, partly cloudy. It was about 96 degrees, so we decided to wait until roughly 1 PM to get on the water. While mom and I waited for the temperature to cool down, we hosed off our two kayaks and loaded mom’s truck with everything we knew we would need. We ran into some trouble cleaning out our kayaks; that summer we had faced an awful drought so the water frogs to be in our area had made our cool damp kayaks their new home. We had struggled with them for nearly 20 to 25 minutes. They were extremely slippery not to mention they could stick onto anything and wouldn't let go. When we finally got our hands on them, we placed them in a cool damp spot next to our house.

Finally 1:30 PM had rolled around accompanied with a nice cool breeze which we knew would increase as we got closer to the river. I was dying with excitement due to the fact that my mom had little time for our normal adventures. I helped my mom unload the truck, get everything ready and scoot into the water. This time I helped my mom into the water but she barely needed help. I wanted to show her I could be independent so she would take me to wilder places. After I helped her, I got into my kayak and asked her where she wanted me to go. “Mom, where do you want me to go when I get into the water?”

She replied, “I am figuring it out; I'm thinking in this general area.” She splashed the water with her paddle to get my attention and I nodded. I was a mess as always, shuffling everything around to get comfortable almost tipping my kayak. I always had a hard time getting into the water but this was my first time alone. My mom always told me to engage my core muscles, draw the energy throughout my body, push with my legs, scoot with my hips, and use the paddles to push into the muck if I got stuck.

When I realized a boat was approaching, my heart raced with excitement as I relocated my kayak further into shore. I twisted my paddles in the water turning the nose of my kayak toward the boat so the waves wouldn't flip my kayak. Now seeing where the boat was, I pushed myself closer but stayed vastly distanced so I could catch the waves while they were still big. The bigger boats moved slowly through the area because it was a docking area, but the smaller boats moved faster at times. My mom and I avoided these boats because they most likely were not paying attention.

We had set a steady pace to travel up the river. We continued on our path until it was time for us to turn. We took a turn and prepared ourselves for rapid water. As we

turned into the space connecting the river and the outlet, we dodged a few rocks but there was a rock I had not seen hidden by the milky brown water. I maneuvered outward but the huge rock caught the belly of my kayak. As we neared the actual outlet, we realized this was not going to be easy. It was not as open as we had predicted it would be. A tree had fallen and rested without a budge, resting directly in our way. In the middle of the outlet there was a steep drop off, not to mention that was where the current ran the strongest. On the far right there was a little bit of mucky sand and a huge hill. On the left side of the outlet was the fallen tree and a dry rock bank. Mom and I needed to get out and walk on the sharp rugged rocks on the rock bank because the closer the rocks were to the water, the muckier they got.

Depending on the time of year, this current is unforgiving; it never sleeps. If you are in the outlet in the early summer, the current is very strong. It could wipe a 200 lb man off his feet onto his back if he didn't watch his step. We wouldn't be

safe until we landed on the bank where the rocks were dry and loose. We headed in and started to fight the current. We had to push and tease the water leaning our bodies forward, digging deep into the water with our paddles being careful of where we steered making sure not to run into the big tree. But

as I was passing by the tree, the wind changed direction. I lost balance and the current swept me into the tree. Tangled in its branches, I had 30 seconds to get out before the current flipped my kayak. I struggled as I watched my mom who was unable to help me. I was worried my mother would fall, and, like clockwork, as I untangled myself, she tripped and fell. I struggled through the current, no longer worried about how strong it was, not intimidated by its roar as I cut through it with my paddles. My mom’s fall was hard because her foot was not stable on the rock she was stepping on, and she slipped and fell on her knee at first. Then her feet pushed through the rocks and she fell onto her back. I finally got myself untangled and rushed to the bank.

As I banked, I heard my mom groan and I practically jumped out of my kayak. I helped her unpin her foot by moving two rocks. She slowly got up and realized everything in her kayak had been dumped into the outlet and was quickly carried away by the current. I could tell she was very frustrated. I helped my mother up and started moving the kayaks while my mother inspected the knee deep water. I followed my mom and watched which way she stepped. We inspected each rock and checked which rocks had less algae and where the current was weak. We had crossed the rock barrier that had made the current as tough as it was, and we walked into the hip deep water where we were finally able to continue our journey. That was not the end of our journey but just the beginning.

# A Heart of Gold

By Bethany Jump

We got in the car and were on our way to the store. We had to leave by a certain time and we ended up having no time to grab breakfast.

Dad said, “What do you want for breakfast?”

“Let’s try Wendy’s for breakfast. If not, go to Camerons,” I said. We were waiting in line for Wendy’s and we were just sitting there. We weren’t sure if they were open. But there was another car there, so we thought they were open. We waited, but no one came to take our order, so we decided to leave and head to Camerons.

“I told you we should have just gone to Camerons,” he said.

“I thought you wanted to go to Wendy’s and try their breakfast,” I said in a whiny tone.

“I wanted Camerons,” Dad said, starting to get mad at me. We pulled into Camerons and he gave me the money and explained what I could get.

“Get a breakfast sandwich and a day-old apple fritter. If they don’t have any day-old apple fritters, you can get one that was made today,” Dad said. I had to wait outside because there were two people and due to Covid, I couldn’t go in. A lady came out, so I held the door and then I went in. As soon as I walked in, I got the smell of fresh baked donuts and fresh-baked bread. It smelled so good. I got the breakfast sandwich and I went up to the counter.

The worker said, “Is there anything else you would like?”

“Yes, do you have any day-old apple fritter donuts?” I said.

The worker said, “Sorry, but would you like one that was made today?” I couldn’t remember if Dad said to get a donut that was made today. I had this blank look on my face. I just stood there, and the worker was just waiting for me to answer. Then the lady next to me spoke.

She said, “I will get her a donut. Know what, just add everything she is getting to my order.” The worker just had a stolid look on her face. I was so surprised. No one had ever done that for me.

Then I said, “Are you sure?”

The worker said, “Ma’m that was so nice of you. Are you sure?”

The lady in line said, “I am going to church and feeling good today. Who else is with you?”

“Just me and my Dad,” I said.

“Do you want anything else?” the lady in line asked.

“No thanks, that's all we wanted,” I said. “Thanks so much.”

The worker said, “Here you go. I guess you are all set.” Before I left, I thanked her again for what she did and then I went and told my dad what happened. After I told him everything, he was shocked to say the least. He didn’t know what to say. His face was priceless.

“I wish I knew what she looked like so I could go thank her,” Dad said. As we were driving away, we started eating. I was thinking how nice she was and how she had a heart of gold. What she did for me that day came from her heart and her little act of kindness made my day.

# Poetry

The Turtle of the Creek

By Noah Vargason

I gazed over the creek to see  
a small rock on a log.

As my eyes focused,  
I realized, to my surprise,  
it was not a rock.

It was a painted turtle.

I picked it up.

The color of its skin was  
a stunning red  
as bright as a far off red dwarf.

The turtle's short claws indicated  
a female; she was surprisingly  
calm, even with me,  
a stranger to her.

Eventually she started to miss  
the cool water and her mossy log,  
so I gently placed her back.  
Not long after, she swam away to feed her  
growing hunger.

One day maybe I will see her again,  
and maybe she will remember me.  
But I will always remember her as  
the turtle of the creek.

## The Clothes

By Corry McLaurin

**It covers my skin and hugs my curves  
shows off my chest and thighs  
for the world to see  
and judge.**

**I am told that  
Proper ladies wear dresses and skirts  
and must cross their legs.**

**I am told that in the public eye  
If you are a woman  
you should act like it:**

**Shouldn't wear men's clothes;  
Shouldn't roll around in the dirt;  
Shouldn't fool around, like a boy;  
Present as pretty on the eyes.**

**Why is it wrong for someone not  
feeling comfortable  
in their own skin?**

**Since when do these clothes have gender?**

**Restricted to girly things  
and expectations:**

**Why am I?**

**Why is she?**

**Why are they?**

**Since when did the clothes I wear identify  
me?**

**I'm not going to let someone tell me who I am.**

**My name is Corry.**

**That is who I am.**

**And I identify as a man.**

**I'm not**

**Stuck**

**with what society dictates.**

**I'm not here to look**

**Pretty or cute:**

**I'm here to be myself**

**In the clothes I desire.**



## Colored Pencil Past

By Lacey Sparano

*I traced my stiff, fatigued fingers  
lightly against the smooth  
yet rough surface  
of the paper.  
The scent of the layered and blended colored pencils  
walked gracefully into my nose  
and danced around in my brain.  
A stench normally distasteful  
went sweet with pride.  
Pride in myself, my effort,  
Hours of work into such a small project.  
Every detail, no matter how small or insignificant,  
was brought to the closest possible perfection.  
Though even by my own eyes saw the details wonky,  
And the coloring blended coarse.  
I still see value in a piece that I believe to be ugly  
Ugly like any old bug you'd find clinging to the forest's bed.  
Even still I know once the future comes by, near or far  
The evidence of the past will linger around like any wretched stench  
Then unexpectedly will the past knock at your door  
And reveal the value of any piece of the past-present  
Only then should I realize how, even though ugly,  
The piece would allow me to improve.*



Avery Harter  
Port Byron Jr.-Sr. High  
Grade: 7th  
Teacher: Mrs. St. Pierre



Alisa Ilcu  
Port Byron Jr.-Sr. High  
Grade: 7th  
Teacher: Mrs. St. Pierre

# The Pink House

By Irelynn Randolph

I am from the pink house where  
I would watch Disney movies  
on rainy Saturdays.  
I am from the green  
rocking chair that makes a squeaking  
noise everytime you sit down.

I am from playing on the swing,  
to riding my bike, to playing hide and  
seek with my sister,  
then sneaking into the garden  
for a secret snack after playing.  
I am from playing all day with my  
cousins and  
home cooked meals  
every night.

I am from wanting to watch every movie  
in my nana's huge movie collection.  
and from the many knitted blankets  
that keep me warm.  
I am from the huge book collection my  
nana has and wanting to read every book.

I am from the blackberry vines  
in the backyard.  
and from the pretty trees  
that have flowers on them.

I am from the pink house where  
I would watch Disney movies  
on the rainy Saturdays.







Ella Jorgensen  
Port Byron Jr.-Sr. High  
Grade: 9th  
Teacher: Mrs. St. Pierre

Loving Mothers  
by Camden Manley

I'm from fun days and  
summer rays  
with tons of things  
I can use to play

I'm from pizza dinners  
and video game winners  
with familiar faces  
and the same places

I'm from little kitties on your lap  
and caring mothers who got your back  
and long vacations  
with tons to pack

I'm from visiting my grandparents  
on free nights  
and mom trying  
to stop me and my sister's fights

I'm from watching YouTube all the time  
and running laps in the yard  
watching movies from action to sci-fi  
and visitors who always catch me off guard

I'm from school with friends  
and my free time ends  
from having fun weeks  
until seeing how much the garbage can reeks

I'm from a trailer park like no other  
and a super loving mother

and her cookies, I always want another  
and my cats who chose me to smother

I'm from caring fathers  
who will always lend a hand  
when it comes to  
RC cars or a rubber band

I'm from cats always wanting to eat  
and new people I like to greet  
and my turtles who like to swim  
and a pool which we always need to skim

## Alternate Endings to *The Most Dangerous Game, by Richard Connell*

### Hare

"He had never slept in a better bed, Rainsford decided."  
(Connell 18).

Rainsford rolled under the sheets, trying to cling to the last traces of sleep, but eventually opened his eyes in defeat.

The gray light of dawn was streaming down through a window that took up most of the wall opposite of Rainsford, blinding his eyes and throwing a glare off the drying red that stained most of a patterned carpet on the floor.

*Pity*, he thought, rubbing his eyes as they adjusted to the light. *That rug must have cost a fortune.*

Rainsford stood, yawning, and groaned as he stretched his aching muscles which hadn't yet forgotten the three days in the jungle.

He stepped over a blood stained chair leg which had broken off in the fight last night, and followed the trail of red down the staircase until it disappeared out to the dog's pen on the first floor.

Rainsford sat in the extravagant dining hall for some time after restarting last night's fire and eating what he had found of the general's last meal. It might have tasted

better while warm and still fresh, but Rainsford hadn't cared. Now he examined the wall of big game trophies over the fireplace. Rainsford couldn't remember ever seeing a bigger collection of head mounts; every species a hunter could ever dream of was hanging from the wall, everything between elephants and jaguars, their faces stuck in eternal taxidermy grimaces and snarls which cast flickering shadows in the dim room, making them seem almost alive. They were beautiful specimens that at one time Rainsford would have been in absolute awe of, but now he could only think of the "new" collection the General had mentioned. He turned away from the trophies and back upstairs to find a shower.

He hadn't changed his clothes or washed in four days, and the salt from ocean water and sweat had matted his hair. His clothing, which had been brand new when he first wore it, was now ragged and torn, stained with blood and dirt. The hot water felt nice, and Rainsford came close to what was almost peace, but his mind always returned to the new collection of heads.

*I could have been one of them*, he thought.

*All those fine people who have died here...*

Rainsford stopped. The people. Hadn't the General had mentioned a training school in the basement?

He dried himself off and threw on clothes and quickly as he could, running back down the stairs as he pulled his shirt over his head, not caring if it was inside out or not.

On the first floor, Rainsford grabbed the handle of the first door he saw and wrenched it open, but all that was inside were mops and dustpans.

He ran down the hall to the next door and pulled that too, but this time the door didn't open. He jiggled the handle. Locked.

This had to be it. Rainsford took a step back, looking down the hall. *Where would a smart man like Zaroff keep his keys?*

In a place no one would get to, like with his personal guard, perhaps? That wouldn't help Rainsford now.

He tapped his leg.

Zaroff would have wanted to see how his students were training before the hunt, wouldn't he? Where would he hide something valuable like that?

Rainsford had checked every corner of Zaroff's room but had found no key. He found the library and threw all the books to the floor checking the shelves and in between pages. Next, Ivan's room, the closets, the kitchen, the pantry, the dining room, even the dog's pen, and still nothing.

There was only one room Rainsford had refused to yet check. He started back down the hall, every footstep slow but determined.

He stood in front of the door now. He could turn back. He could use the telegraph he had found while searching the house and he could leave right now and forget any of this ever happened like it was all a bad dream. He wouldn't, though. He had to do this. Rainsford stood straight, and, taking a deep breath of air, opened the door and looked up. On all four walls was a and the biggest collection of guns Rainsford had ever seen, and, positioned between them, dozens of dead glass eyes which stared down on him with faces too human to look away.

*"Just marbles,"* Rainsford whispered under his breath. *"Skin and marbles."*

A huge metal cabinet stood at

the end of the room with a door cracked open, almost inviting Rainsford to check inside.

Rainsford crossed the long room, each step feeling like he was walking in slow motion. He stopped at the cabinet and pulled back the door. It's only contents were a set of hunting clothes, a silver pistol, and a ring holding two heavy black iron keys.

Rainsford grabbed the ring and turned on heel, leaving the room as quickly as possible.

*That could have been me, that could have been me-*

He stopped, leaning against a wall and gasping his breaths. He shook his head to clear away the haunting thoughts. It *wasn't* him, and that's all that mattered. He had won Zaroff's game, whatever that meant for him.

The keys felt like ice in Rainsford's hand as he turned the biggest of them in the locked door, opening it with a sickening clunk. He pushed the basement door open, revealing a staircase not quite as extravagant as the rest in the house, but still fit for a king. Rainsford wondered how many times someone had

walked up this staircase and never come back.

At the end of the staircase sat a heavy iron door blocked with a metal bar across it. Muffled whispers came through the door which stopped as Rainsford lifted the bar, metal against metal shrieking as he flipped it over, and a clang as it fell on the other side. He pushed open the door revealing maybe a dozen sailors who all looked up at him with a mixture of fear and hope in their eyes.

"Come on," Rainsford said, sighing with relief. "The General's dead."



# Alternate Endings Continued:

## *The Most Dangerous Game, by Richard Connell*

### Marlena Doerle

After I had woken up from my deep slumber I heard the soft howls of Zaroff’s guard-dogs. My mind went blank until I realized what I had done the previous night. I quickly ran down the grand staircase and burst through the tall double doors.

Laying before me was Zaroff’s soulless body. I collapsed onto the rock path below me and groaned.

“I’m a murderer - no, I’m a hunter,” my mind began to wander.

Suddenly, a violent sound of leaves crunching stumbled behind me. I stood up and whipped my head around. I was hesitant, but I started walking towards the opening of the dead forest where I had heard the sound. I looked past through the trees and noticed a slim figure standing there. “Is Ivan still alive?” I wondered. I squinted my eyes and realized who was standing there. It was Whitney.

“There you are!” Whitney shouted.

He started sprinting towards me like a hungry jaguar. Before long, he stood before me.

“How did you get here?” I asked.

“I heard you fell off the yacht,” he paused, trying to catch his breath. “I told the captain to turn around as soon as he could. I was so determined to find you, and I just did!”

I hesitated and said, “I’ve done a terrible thing.”

Whitney’s face gave off a very confused expression and he took a step back.

“What did you do?” He asked curiously.

“I met someone on this island,” I paused. “He thought it was fun to hunt people. He made a bet with me and I won...”

“How did you win?”

My mouth blurted out the words before I could think about them, “I killed him.”

Whitney’s face turned pale after I had spoken. His body language told me that he was utterly disturbed.

“You can’t be serious, right?” He asked jokingly.

“I am, follow me,” I said as I reached for his hand. “He’s over here.”

Whitney hesitated, but decided to follow me back towards the mansion.

After a long walk, we arrived back at the mansion. I looked towards the main entrance and noticed something peculiar.

“So, where is he?” he asked as he dropped his handkerchief.

“He was right here a second ago...” I said, dumbfounded.

Zaroff was no longer lying below the grand entrance. My eyes jolted across the pathway

and I had noticed that the rocks were in a different direction than they were before. It looked like something had been dragged or pulled rather quickly. I ignored the fact that Whitney was behind me and started down the pathway.

I stumbled upon the rushing waters of the ocean waves. The waves splashed against the jagged rocks that laid below my tore up feet. I glared along the horizon of the ocean and saw absolutely nothing. “What?” I thought to myself.

I walked back towards the mansion and noticed that Whitney was gone. I looked around and noticed a beat-up handkerchief lying on the dead grass next to the path. I dropped down and picked it up.

“Whitney?”

I opened the rusty metal gate that was located next to the main entrance. I walked into some cobwebs before reaching the depressing garden. The plants looked as if an animal had come in and eaten them. I heard the yelps of Whitney far in the distance.

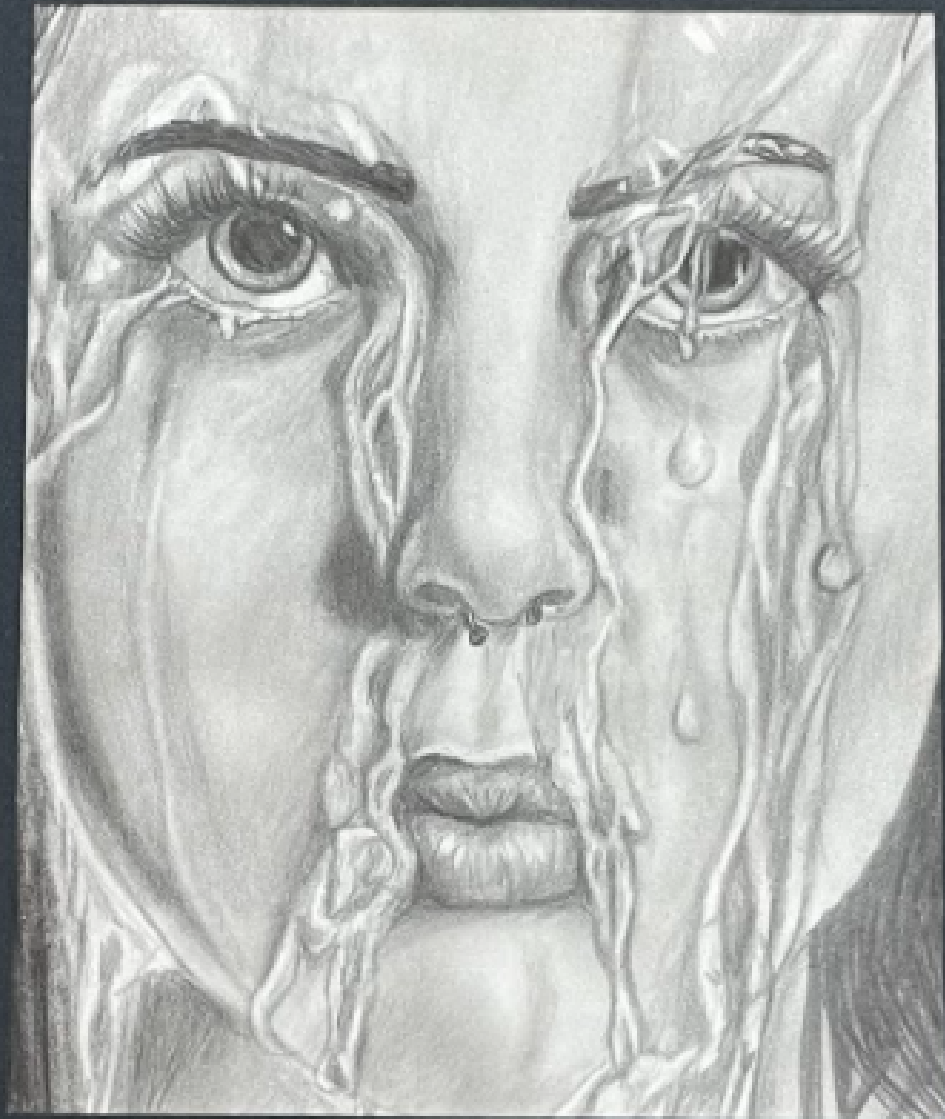
“Agh!” he screamed.

I swiftly turned around and ran out of the garden. I ran towards the direction of the bawls that came from Whitney. I came to an abrupt stop when I saw something horrifying.

On a tree stump, sat General Zaroff.

I froze in place.

# ART



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Teacher: Mrs. St. Pierre



Madison Gillespie  
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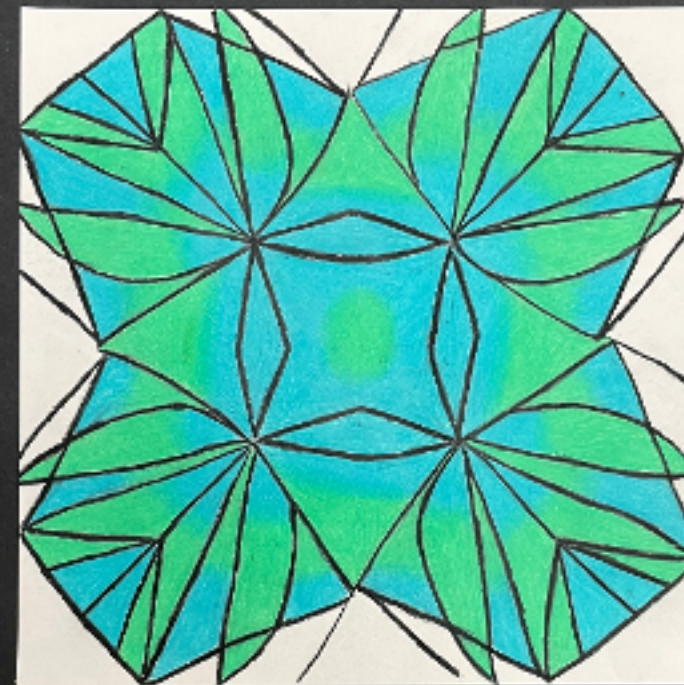


Aubrey Frigon  
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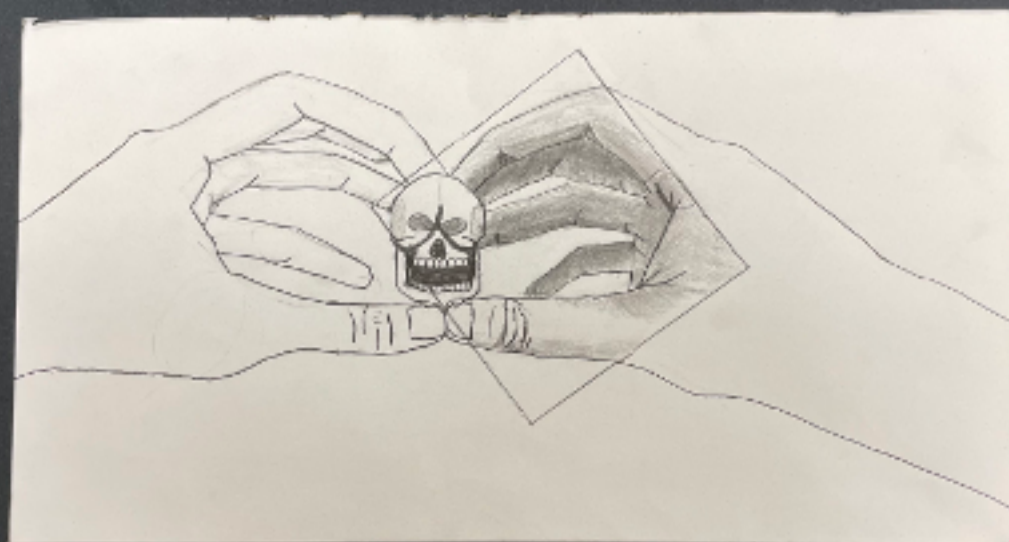




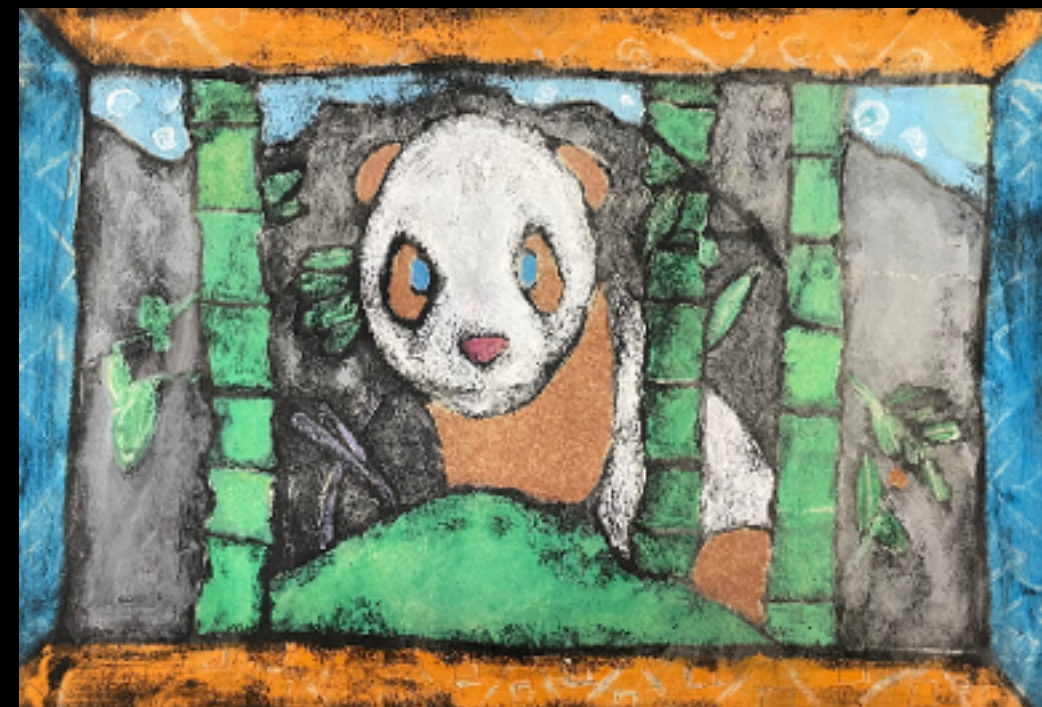
Alexander Doerle  
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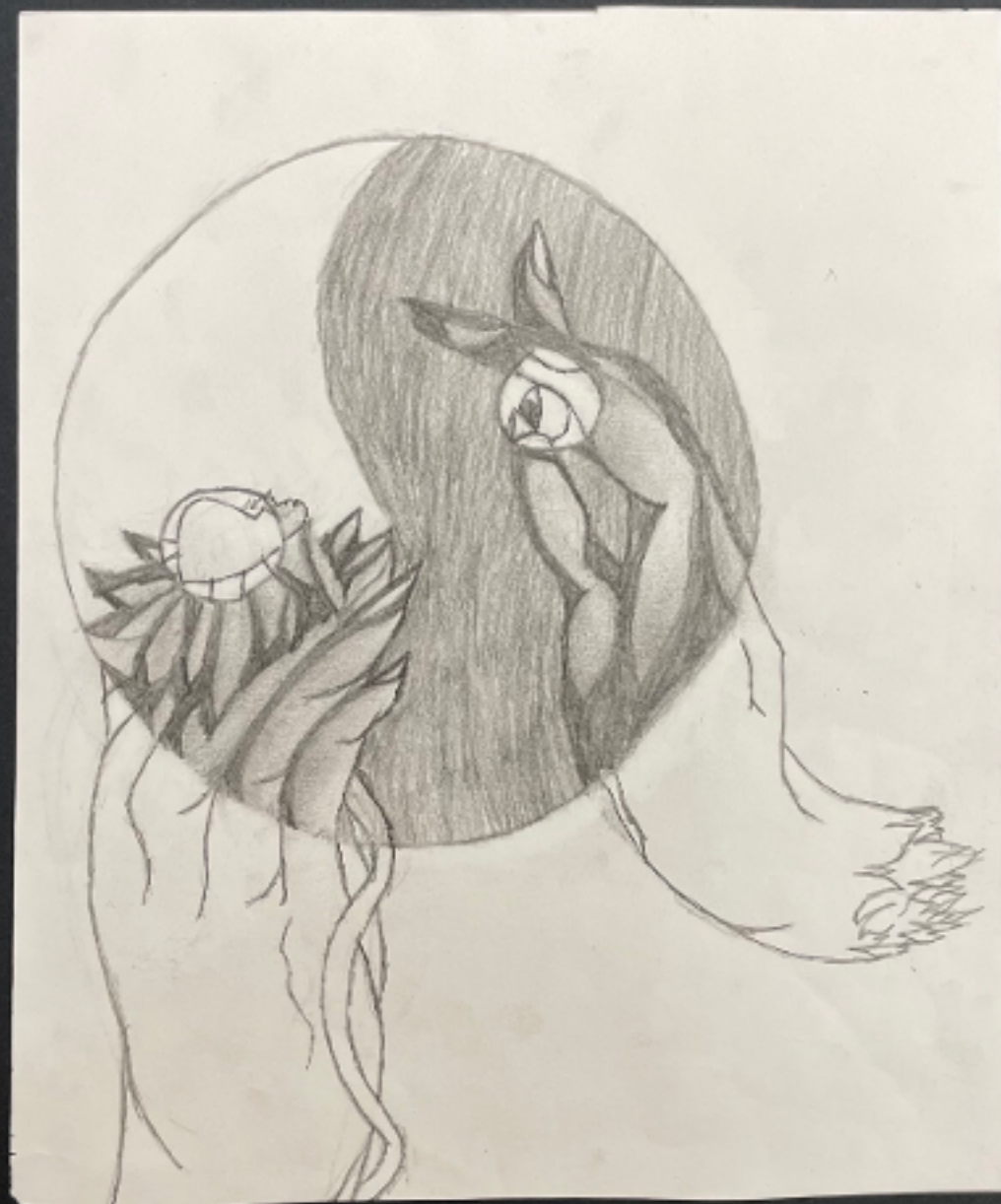


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Alexis Warren  
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