



Young Adult

CREATIVITY CONTEST
NEWSLETTER



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Winners for the Fall 2025 Creativity Contest are posted below, and winning entries are featured in this newsletter. 52 teens were represented by 75 entries received. We thank everyone who took the time to participate. If you're eligible to enter again in future years, please do so!

ART – Grades 6-8

1st – Miles Lee Fisher, 7th grade
2nd – Madilynn Smart, 7th grade
3rd – Eliza Williamson, 8th grade

ART – Grades 9-12

1st – Jayce Jennings, 10th grade
2nd – Emily Link, 10th grade
3rd – Kru Harris, 10th grade

PHOTOGRAPHY – Grades 6-8

1st – Hudson Ohnmacht, 6th grade
2nd – Emmet Penner, 7th grade
3rd – Ainsley Zies, 8th grade

PHOTOGRAPHY – Grades 9-12

1st – Jaycie Ohnmacht, 10th grade
2nd – Salena Garcia, 10th grade
3rd – Alexis Noone, 11th grade

SHORT STORIES – Grades 6-8

1st – Olivia Markus, 6th grade

SHORT STORIES – Grades 9 - 12

1st – Brennan Schrag, 10th grade
2nd – Willow Clayman, 10th grade

3D ART – Grades 6-8

1st – Layton Oeser, 6th grade

3D ART – Grades 9-12

1st – Jaden Roots, 10th grade
2nd – Avery Epp, 10th grade
3rd – Faith Baxter, 10th grade

POETRY – Grades 6-8

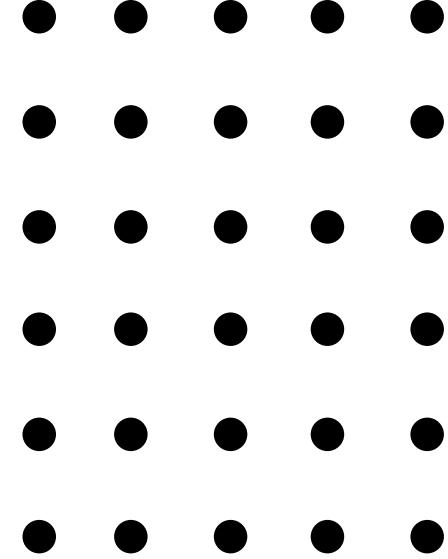
1st – Iris Riggs, 6th grade
2nd – Easton Gnapp, 7th grade

POETRY – Grades 9-12

1st – Ember (Azar) Haden-Henderson, 10th grade
2nd – Emma Kay Waltner, 11th grade
3rd – Ashton Baldwin, 9th grade

PERFORMANCE – Grades 6-8

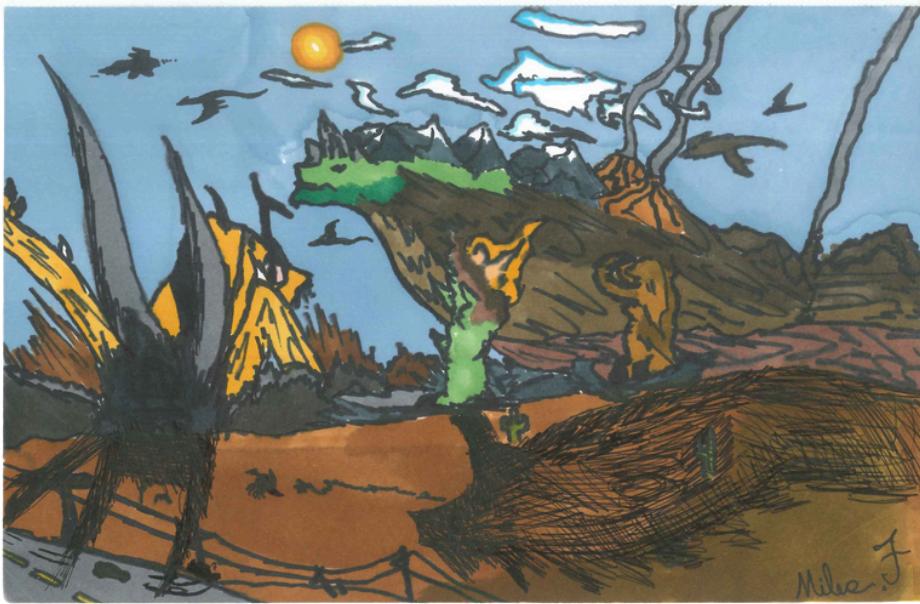
1st – Brian Nininger, 7th grade



ART

GRADES 6 - 8



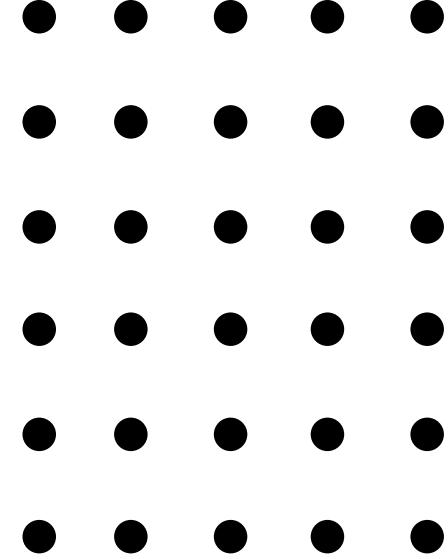


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7th Grade**

**2nd – Madilynn Smart,
7th Grade**



**3rd – Eliza Williamson,
8th Grade**



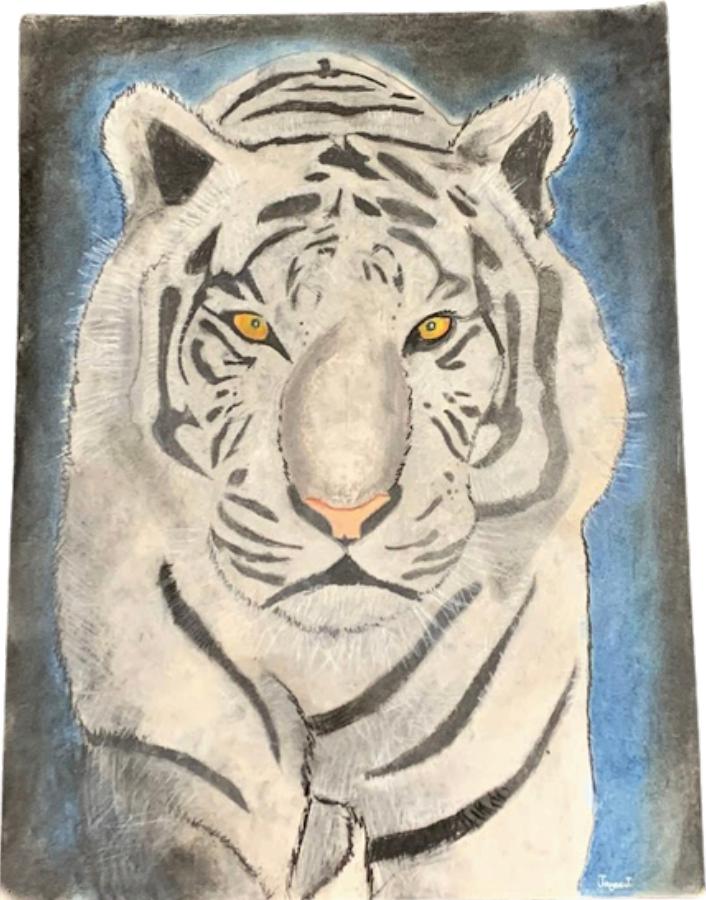
ART

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GRADES 9-12



**1st – Jayce Jennings,
10th Grade**

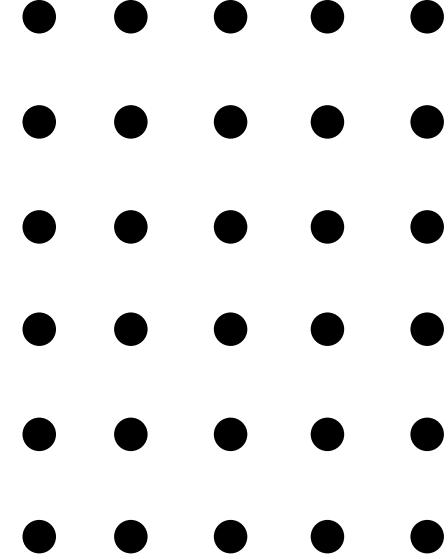


**2nd – Emily Link,
10th Grade**



**3rd – Kru Harris,
10th Grade**





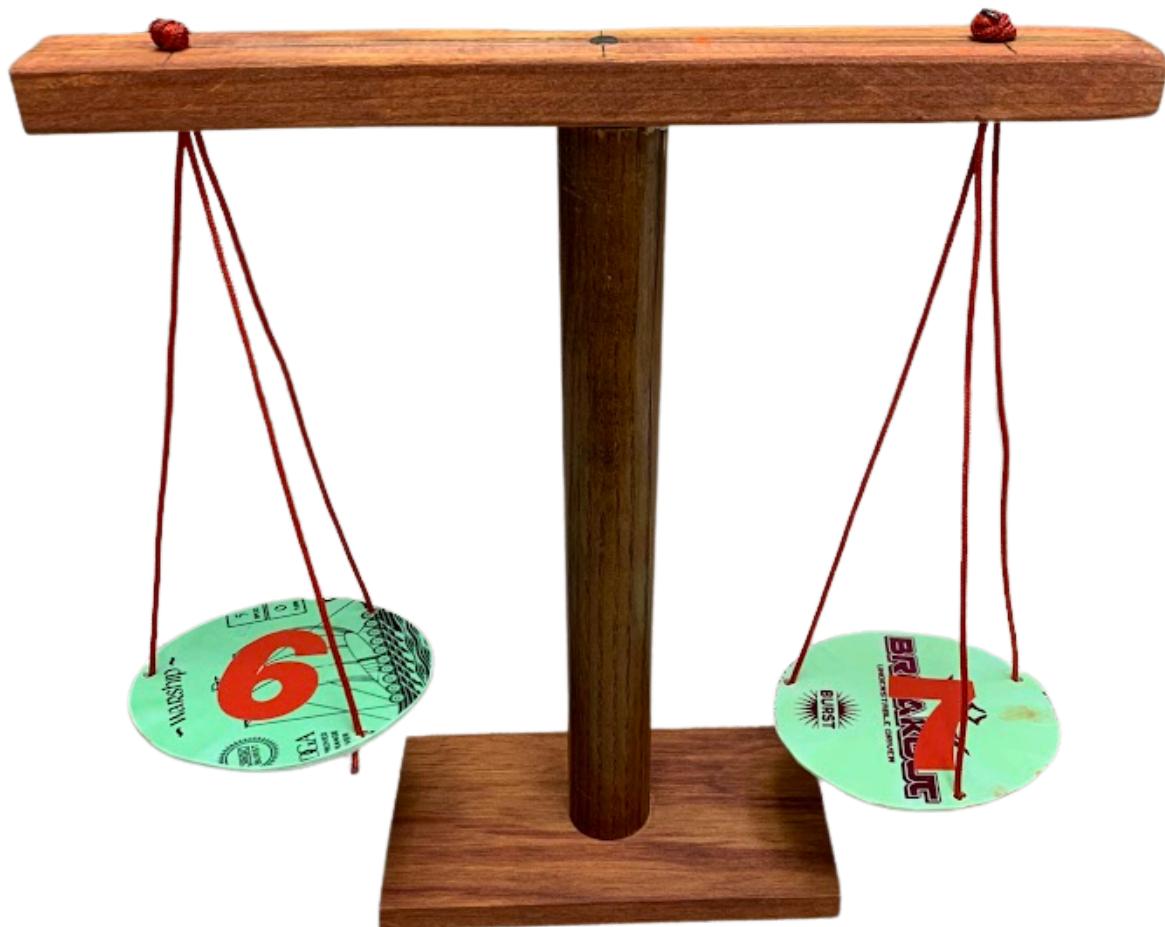
3 D ART

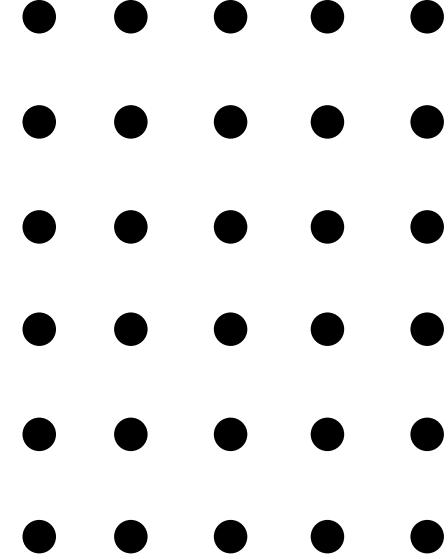
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GRADES 6 - 8



**1st – Layton Oeser,
6th Grade**





3D ART

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GRADES 9 - 12



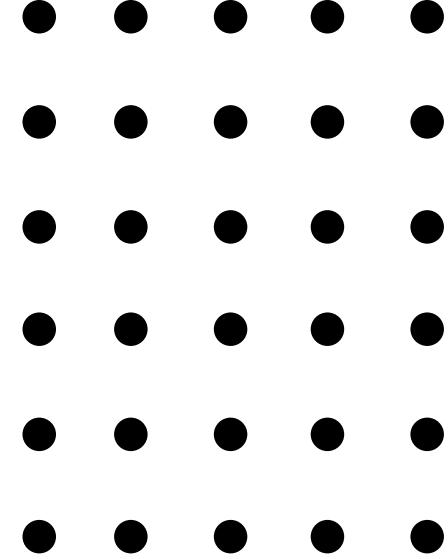
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10th Grade**



**2nd – Avery Epp,
10th Grade**



**3nd – Faith Baxter,
10th Grade**

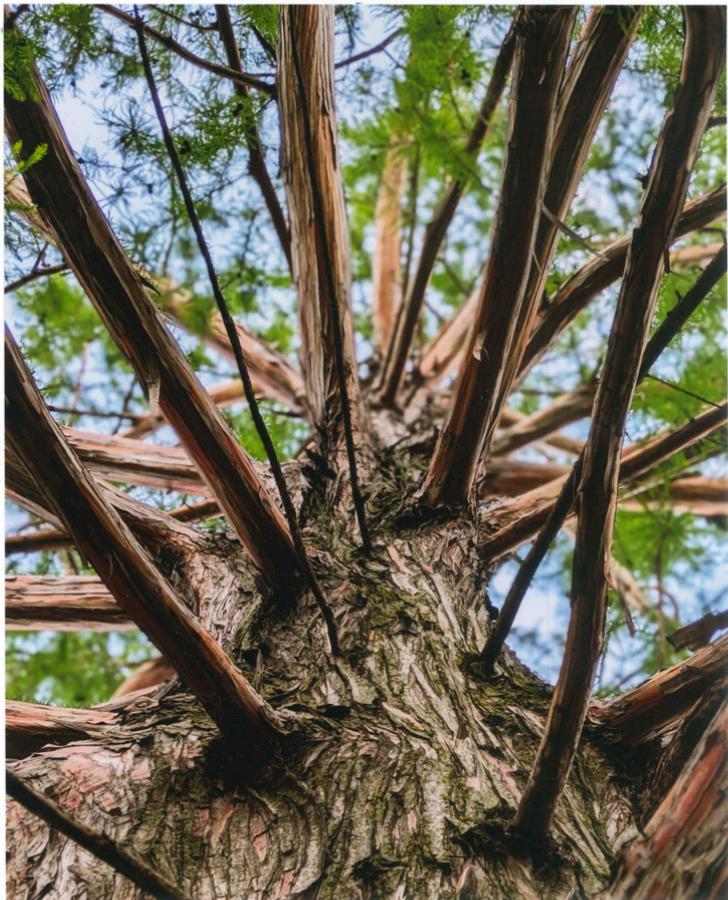


PHOTOGRAPHY

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GRADES 6 - 8



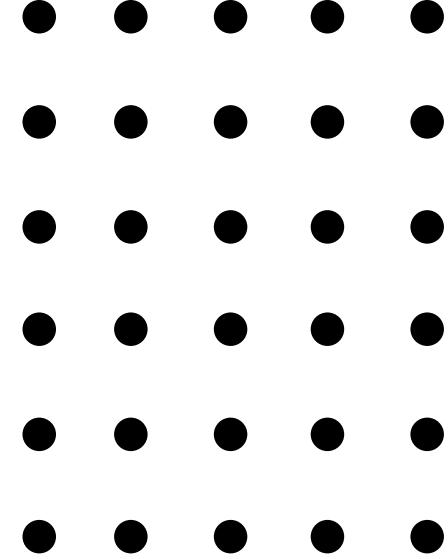


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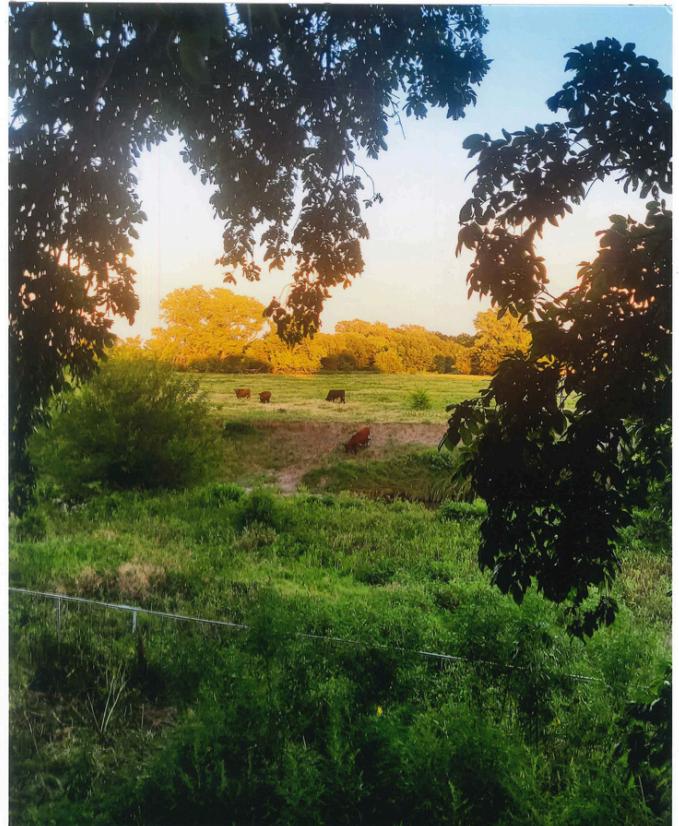
PHOTOGRAPHY

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GRADES 9-12



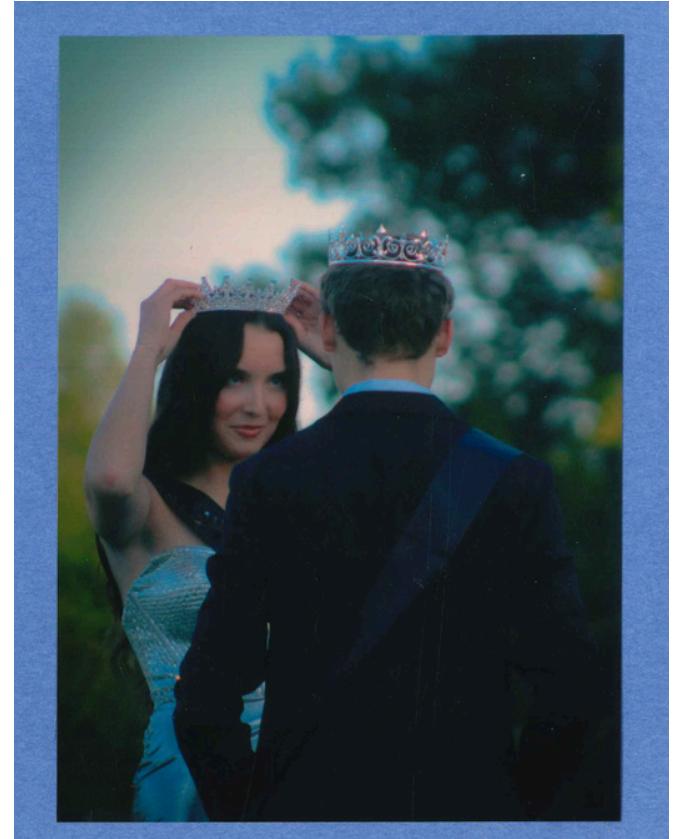
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10th Grade**



**2nd – Salena Garcia,
10th Grade**



**3rd – Alexis Noone,
11th Grade**



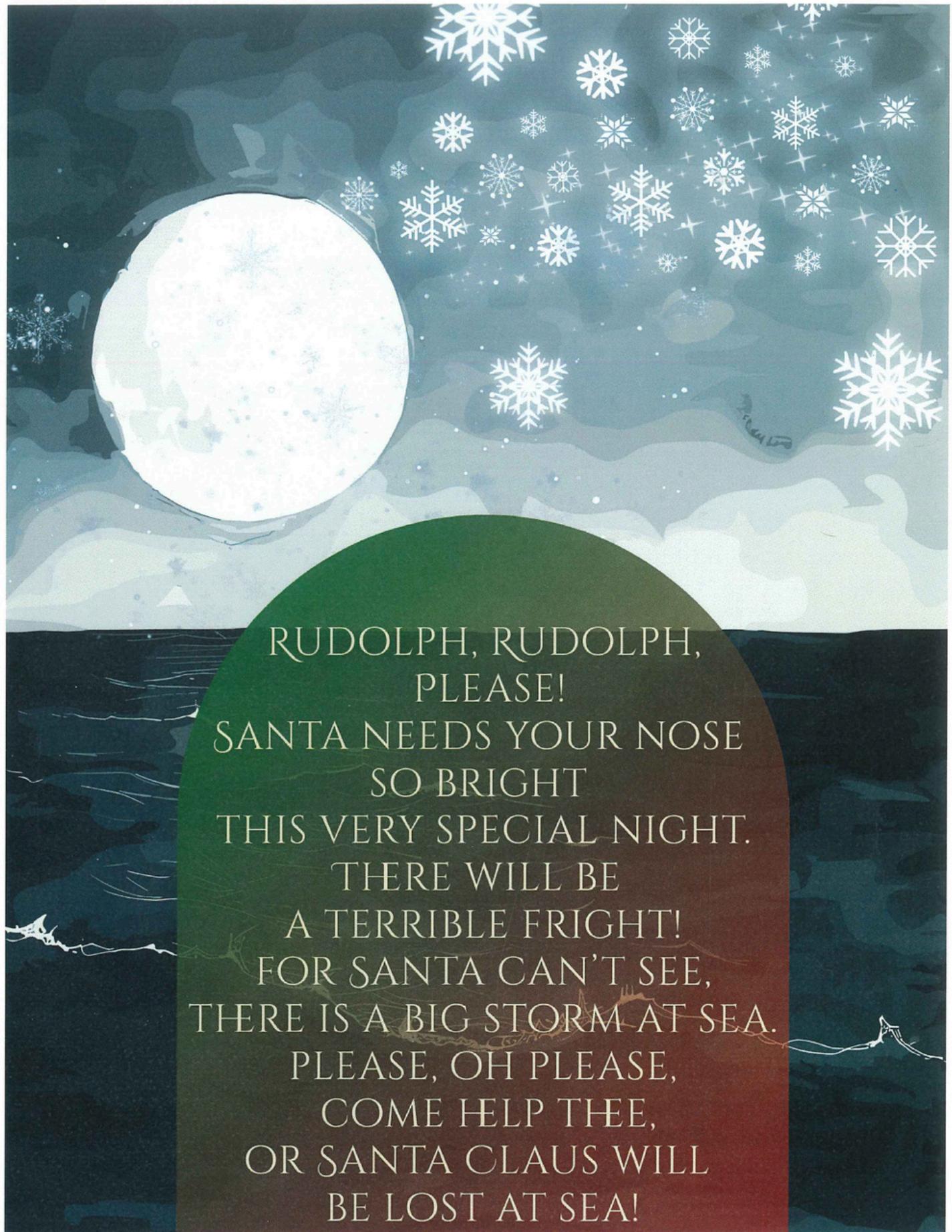
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POETRY

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GRADES 6-8





RUDOLPH, RUDOLPH,
PLEASE!
SANTA NEEDS YOUR NOSE
SO BRIGHT
THIS VERY SPECIAL NIGHT.
THERE WILL BE
A TERRIBLE FRIGHT!
FOR SANTA CAN'T SEE,
THERE IS A BIG STORM AT SEA.
PLEASE, OH PLEASE,
COME HELP THEE,
OR SANTA CLAUS WILL
BE LOST AT SEA!

**1st- Iris Riggs,
6th Grade**

CYCLE OF LIFE

1. Life is full of mysteries IT'S full of Death OR Life.
2. IT can be as happy as young children.
3. OR Be as sad as old adults. Life IS gonna be hard.
4. IT can even let you have a real smile.
5. But IT can ruin you and you're kindness. BUT IT can rebuild too.
6. IT will hurt you deeply IT might even take a love one and make you invisible.
7. Life can destroy you BUT IT will Heal you one day.
8. If you fail Pick you(R) Self up again and just rebuild.
9. You will fail but you need to Get back up again.
10. You need to To Heads Towards The light.
11. If you have to Break a relation to save yourself then do IT.
12. If you want the sadness to go away then end IT make a change.
13. You will suffer but you will be okay we will be okay.
14. Do not give up Do not Give up your will to live.
15. Life will keep throwing rocks at you and they keep getting larger.
16. You must catch them and hit them behind your back IT will do is bring suffer.
17. Look at you're self you are a good person.
18. So Don't Give up.

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POETRY

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GRADES 9-12



The Mind Paradox

Ears wide open
Mouth sewn shut
Listening to every word you say
Latch on
But it seems when I try to speak
Talk of my interests
Interruption
Making it about yourself
I wish you would listen
Wish someone would listen
I want someone to hear what I have to say

The thoughts
I don't want them
Wanting you to shut up
Stop speaking
Stop talking about yourself
Listen
Listen
LISTEN TO THE WORDS I AM SPEAKING
Internal
That's all I'll ever be
Stuck in my mind
The words stitched to my cortex
Unable to reach the surface

Borderline Personality Disorder

You don't understand my illness.
Even though it speaks out.
Reading this, you are my witness.
You must learn not to doubt.

Deterred past times, an identity crisis.
Rapid shifts like a mental brawl.
Might as well call it a virus.
I am internally infected with it all.

Hospitalized for my safety.
Screaming and itchy scrubs.
Interrogating my feelings, they're left with shrugs.
They said my decisions are impulsive, hasty.

Constant states of grief.
It's either all good or all bad.
Very few moments of relief.
Negativity is inevitable, I can't feel sad.

I feel it all ten times stronger, if you're curious
My sad is downcast.
My mad is furious.
Torturous thoughts, I've grown past...it.

Speaking of, a pit in my gut.
I lack stability in my emotions.
I feel happy, they call it the euphoric stage, but
Once again, my bitter tears are filling oceans.

Borderline Personality is my toxic trait.
An interference in my emotional state.
It's a grueling illness.
But a positive light would call it a complex sickness.

One-Sided Love

I gave you pieces of me.
The quiet ones, the soft ones
The parts I never showed the world
And you held them
Like they were nothing
More than borrowed air.

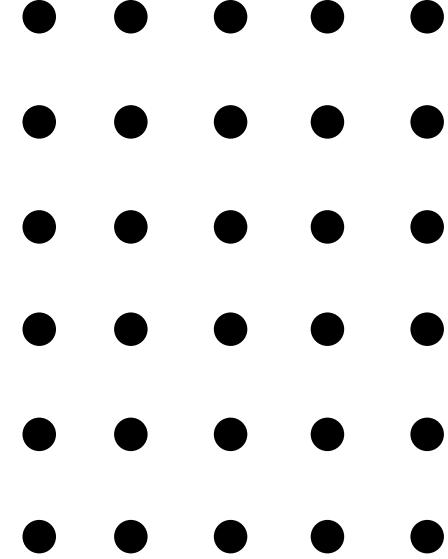
I memorized your smile.
Like scripture
Found comfort in moments
You didn't even notice
Held onto hopes
You never meant to give

Loving you felt like standing.
In a room full of sunlight
But never feeling warm
Watching brightness touch everything
Except me.

And still
My heart kept choosing you
In every silence
Every maybe
Every almost
Even though you
Never once chose me back

And maybe that's the quiet tragedy of loving someone softly
You think your gentleness will be enough to be seen
Enough to be felt
Enough to make them stay

But some hearts aren't built to notice
The way you break beautifully
The way you give quietly
Not even the way you love without asking
For anything but honesty



SHORT STORY

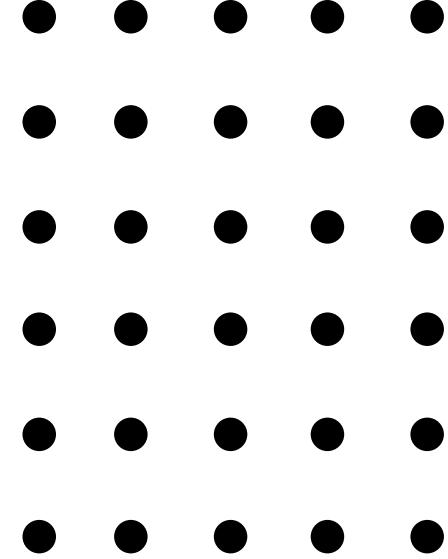
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GRADES 6 - 8



It's been three weeks since the first crime happened. Hi, I'm Laila Brown, and I'm in tenth grade. It was the third week of school when Vivienne Martin died mysteriously. Well, everyone assumes she's dead; no one has seen her since. But I think differently. There's plenty of clues. First she likes to paint. She was last seen in art class. She said she was gonna go to the bathroom to wash the paint off her hands and never came back. Blue paint also dripped from her hands and there's a trail of blue paint leading to the girls bathroom but it stops abruptly at a wall. I wonder if it's a fake wall. I push on it and it falls forward! And there is Vivienne painting a school portrait! She's not dead!

**1st – Olivia Markus,
6th Grade**



SHORT STORY

10 of 10

GRADES 9-12



1st – Brennan Schrag, 10th Grade

The Lockdown

I woke up that morning and began to get ready like any other morning. I sat at the table with my family and began to eat breakfast, which was eggs and bacon, just like any other morning. But deep inside, this was not just another normal day. This was one of the biggest days of my life. Today would determine the job I will hold for the rest of my life. Today is the day of the job selection. Every year the graduating class, before becoming adults, must have their future job selected. Each person takes a turn drawing out of the bowl and receives their job, no exceptions allowed. What you draw you become. I hoped to become a protector, those who guard our city and are trained to fight. There are five jobs in total: builders, medics, protectors, kitchen staff, and teachers. The builders are the city's handymen. They can fix any problem we ever have. The medics are in charge of all of the health aspects of life. They are our doctors. The kitchen staff receive all the shipments of food, and help prepare it. And of course the teachers. The teachers teach the younger generations all of their knowledge until graduation. Often the best of the teachers become the town's leaders, who help manage all of the city's business. I wouldn't mind being a builder I suppose, but ever since I was a kid I dreamt of being a protector. Being one of those tough people who keeps our city safe. I finished my breakfast, dressed quickly and headed out the door to the town management building. Upon arriving, I took my seat on the stage, along with each of my classmates, each anxious for the moments to come. I watched as each of the seats in the crowd began to fill up, and thought back to all the years that I had been just a small child, sitting in the crowds, watching the older classes receive their jobs. "Attention. Thank you everyone for attending the 184th annual job choosing ceremony." The

sound of one of the leaders' voices rang around the large room. I glanced at the bowl of jobs, which sat on a stool at the very front of the stage.

"At this time we are going to begin the drawing, which will run in alphabetical order," one of the leaders continued. "Allen, Harold."

I watched as Harold stood and walked to the stool very slowly. He reached his hand, pulled out a small slip of paper and spoke loud and clearly, "medic". The crowd began to clap. The leader continued to announce names and each of my classmates stood to receive their jobs. Then it was my turn.

"Landing, Jaden."

I arose from my seat and very careful not to trip, walked to the stool with the bowl sitting on top. I lifted my hand down into the bowl and dug around until I felt a paper that fit into my hand perfectly. As I pulled it out I held my breath. Then in a small clean font, I saw the word: *Builder*. I let out my breath. *Builder*. Not my first choice, but definitely not my last. I reverted back to my seat and watched as the rest of my classmates were assigned their jobs. A girl named Isabel Yending had just sat back in her seat when one of the leaders began to speak again. Only then did I look over to the table where they sat. The table, seated high so that everyone could see them, was missing something. Someone. For the first time since I could remember, not all of the leaders were there. One of the seats sat empty. It was clear that Jaden had not been the only one to notice this. Many of the people in the crowd were muttering to themselves or those around them. Soon, the muttering died out and everyone listened to what the leaders had to say, wondering if they would mention the absence of a leader. It was the same speech they had given since as long as I could remember. Every. Single. Year. The leader finished his speech and gave the bow, the sign of dismissal. The room erupted in a loud noise, as everyone stood up and began

to make conversation with each other. Many families were making their way to their children who had just been given their jobs, when the emergency siren began to go off. Everyone looked around at each other, assuming this was just another drill. Ever since I can remember we have always had emergency drills, where we would have to resort to our homes. There was never a warning for when these drills would take place, but we were expected to be in our homes in the next ten minutes. If you failed to get there in time you were harshly punished. Everyone began to walk out of the large room when one of the leaders stood and said boldly, "this is not a drill, please make haste as you return to your homes. Do not leave until the city is in a clear. We are officially in a lockdown." At this, the room broke out into complete chaos, everyone scrambling to get out, find loved ones, or even talk to the leaders. I was still standing on the stage, so I decided to take the back door instead of trying to get through the main doors. As I pushed the back door open and looked outside, the first thing I noticed was how dark and gloomy the sky was. Even the sky knew that something was wrong. People flooded the streets and hurried home, locking up their doors, as if this was a drill, just as we practiced. I began to jog home dodging people all around, adrenaline rushing through my veins, and hoped that my family would already be there. I thought of my younger sister, when I had last seen her. "She will make it," I thought to myself. "She has too." When I was close enough I could see my house, I set off in a sprint. When I reached the door, my mother quickly opened it and let me in. Only then could I breathe deeply again, seeing all my family around me. My mother locked up the door and turned back to all of us.

"What should we do-" I started.

"Close all the windows, shut the curtains. Turn off all the lights except for the one in the living room. That is where we will all stay tonight until we are clear," my father said.

I glanced at my sister, Jaela, who looked on the verge of tears. I didn't know what to say that would comfort her. In fact, I was sure of nothing, what was going on, how long this would last, I knew nothing. We closed off all of the house in complete silence, no one knowing what to say. The only sound that could be heard was the siren, echoing around the city, reminding us of the uncertainty. After we were sure the house was safe, we sat in the living room in complete shock. After I could bear it no longer, I grabbed a blanket, and took a spot on the floor where I tried to fall asleep. Shortly after my family followed suit and we each took a different place around the room. I struggled to fall asleep, just sitting in the dark room until I saw light coming in the corners of the window, from behind the curtain. I arose from the floor and wandered to my bedroom. I looked around quickly then grabbed my notebook. Once I returned to the living room the rest of my family was awake. On a normal morning, my mother would wake up early to make us bacon and eggs, which were the only breakfast foods brought in by the food transportation. However, this morning we took a loaf of bread and ate the slices. I stared at my slice of bread, noticing the individual grains, as I had no appetite. The city was eerily quiet. Once we finished eating, my father said,

“How much food do we have in the pantry? We have no way of knowing how long this lockdown will last.”

My mother replied, “we just got a restock last week, so we should be set for at least another week and a half.”

At least there was one positive for the day. We won't starve for at least another week and half, I thought to myself sarcastically. I thought back to yesterday which felt like an eternity ago. I was going to be a builder, I was going to be an adult. I am an adult, the reality hit me, washing over. My first day as an adult and I was sitting inside my home in a lockdown. Just then, breaking the

silence, there was a loud knock on the door. We glanced around at each other hesitantly. Then, my father slowly, as to not make any noise, glanced out the window. The knock came again. My father said nothing. I looked to my mother, who nodded at my father. At that, my father walked to the door, unlocked the deadbolt and reached for the handle. Only then did I remember one of the rules to a city lockdown. One of the most important things that must not be forgotten. *In the scenario of a lockdown, homes must be locked until the sound of the all-clear siren.* I was just about to yell out to my father to remember the siren, how the city is still not safe yet, how there could be an intruder outside, but it was too late. His hand was already turning the handle. The door opened. My dad let a man into the house, but he was not one of our leaders. The man began to whisper something and glanced at me. My mother told me to go to my parent's bedroom with Jayla. I sat on their bed, staring at the wall. Time blurred around. I couldn't focus. Confusion arose. I heard talking, but it sounded like mumbling. My thoughts stirred around, getting lost. Then, I heard my father say something that sounded like "thank you we will." But what could he be thanking someone for?

He turned around and my mother said,

"How many things can we bring?"

"Only what we can fit into four backpacks, one for each of us."

At this, I snapped back into focus.

"What is going on? Why would you answer the door? We aren't in the clear yet! The city isn't safe! You could have injured any of us!"

I demanded at my father, wanting an answer.

"We have to go. Right now. The city isn't safe, but not because of the intruders, because of our city leaders. We must get out of here while we still can."

As soon as he said this my mother began scrambling to get us each a backpack that we could bring with us.

“We have to be ready to go by 9. They are leaving at 9:05,” my father said.

Then Jaela, who had been so quiet I forgot about her said,

“But where are we going? Can we really trust these people who came into the city? We don't know them, shouldn't we just stay where we know it is safe?”

My father looked at her and said,

“I trust them. Our city leaders are getting ready to do something unimaginable, and we don't want to be here to see it. Right now they are distracted so we can flee safely, and we must go.”

I thought of a place where my family was safe, where I was free to choose my own job, and to make my own decisions. And that was all I needed before I said,

“Let's go.”

2nd – Willow Clayman, 10th Grade

The Corn maze

10/25/25 - Zoe

“Come on, it's not that scary,” said Ava as she pulls me along.

Ava and I have been friends since preschool. She has been with me through anything and everything. For example, there was a funny time that wasn't so funny, but was funny at the same time. When she was with me at lunch, and I spilled my lunch. It was when flying, landing all over the principal. We got detention for two hours after school.

“Come on, Zoe,” she says once again, yanking my arm through the pumpkin patch. “I'm coming, I'm coming. Slow down, Ava,” I say, running, trying to keep up with her.

We laugh as we walk around the pumpkin patch.

“When do we have to meet the boys?” I say as we wait in line for the slides.

“Ummmm, I don't know. I think Mavyric texted saying six?” Ava says, pulling out her phone and looking at the group chat.

I really don't know Mavyric very well. We have only been friends for a month, but he is nice to be around. He also buys me stuff even though I tell him not to. He also helps all of us with our homework, aka does it for us.

“Yeah, Daniel just said they're here, so after we ride this slide, we should meet them,” Ava said as we walked up to the top of the slide.

I love Daniel like an older brother. Sure, we have only been friends for a year, but I love him. He always cheers me up when I'm sad and knows my favorite food, drink, and everything.

We scream as we slide down the tall slide overlooking the whole pumpkin patch, and you can even see some of the town. You can see all the houses lined up row by row, street by street. You can see all of the different fields and the pretty sky.

We laugh as we walk to the spot where we are supposed to meet the boys.

“What are y’all laughing at?” Daniel asks with his hands in his pockets.

“Oh, nothing to worry about,” I said as I smile at them.

“Well, should we go to the corn maze now?” Mavyric asks a point at the entrance of the corn maze.

“Yeah,” we all say in unison as we walk to the corn maze.

10/15/25 Ava

I hate my friends. I hate them all, especially the boys. Well, except Zoe. I love her, but the boys are always hogging her. I swear, every time I ask Zoe if we can hang out, just the two of us, she asks, “Can we bring Daniel or Mavyric or both?”

I feel like I’m losing my best friend to these boys, who I know just want to date her. Just the way they look at her makes it so, so obvious. Like, I don’t know how she doesn’t know. I think about this as I’m watching one of my favorite horror movies. I’m at the part where the main character and their friends find a box, and it’s full of clues and a bomb that they have to solve before it explodes.

“Ava, come on, dear. We have to go help with the corn maze in an hour,” my mom yells.

I sigh, standing up. I don’t want to help, but I need my hours so I can graduate from high school. I pause the movie, looking at my desk, when I see my small jewelry box. I look at it for a minute, wishing I could be like that killer in the movie and just kill Daniel and Mavyric. I shake my head at how crazy I sound, thinking about how I would get that box to them.

“Honey, hurry. The corn maze isn’t going to walk through itself,” my mom says.

Then it hits me. A crazy, crazy idea.

10/25/25 Daniel

I follow the group in front of me. I watch Zoe walk, talking to Ava. I wish I could be the one next to her, the one holding her hand. It's taking everything in my power not to walk up behind her and hold her waist in my hands, but she sees me as a brother. Nothing more, nothing less.

"Ok, y'all, a couple of ground rules. One, if you get scared or lost, just scream really loud and someone will help, but don't move from where you are so it's easier to find you. Two, don't leave someone behind. Try to stay in a group so we know everyone made it out. Three, just have fun," said the worker at the entrance of the corn maze.

We all nod and say thank you as we walk inside. It's weird, but I have a sinking feeling deep in my chest that tells me to *turn around; it's not safe*. I shake my head. What could happen in a corn maze with all my closest friends? Well, except for Mavyric. I hate his guts so much. I can just tell by the way he walks so, so close to Zoe that he wants the same thing as me. As Ava leads, which isn't usual, I walk up next to Zoe, trying to be as close to her as Mavyric is.

"Can y'all get off of me? It's too hot for y'all to make me into a sandwich," Zoe says, walking a little forward.

"I'm sorry, my dear," says Mavyric with a smug smile. I wish I could just rip that smile off his face. It makes me so mad that he just tries to kiss up. Yes, I try to do it *too*, but he's rich, so he can buy her stuff, and of course, he's stupidly smart, so he helps her with her homework. All I do is make her laugh and smile.

We continue to follow Ava because she knows where the end is, so there is no point in trying to struggle. *Turn around; something is not right. TURN AROUND.* My brain yells at me, but I shake it off. I mean, what is the worst thing that can happen?

10/25/25 Mavyric

I look around at the corn. There is so much corn. Go figure, it's a corn maze. It still surprises me, though, because this is my first time doing something like this. Heck, I would be at home right now if Zoe hadn't asked if I wanted to come. I watch her as she talks to Daniel. I hate his guts. He always steals Zoe away from me. I mean, how am I supposed to get a chance with her if he is always hogging her?

"Almost there, y'all, I can feel it," Ava says with an eerie smirk on her face. I honestly forgot she was here. I mean, it makes sense. She and Zoe are close, but she always seems to be in the shadows

We keep following her through the maze. I talk to Zoe here and there, and so does the annoying person next to her. I slowly start to watch Ava as she walks too. She almost seems to have a purpose, walking faster and faster. I don't see why, unless she doesn't like being in here with us. I don't think much about it as I keep talking to Zoe about school and random stuff.

"We're here," Ava smiles brightly. We all look at each other, confused.

"Yeah, really funny, Ava, but this is a dead end," Daniel says, chuckling uncomfortably.

"Oh, I know. I hid something here, see?" Ava says, stepping to the side a little so we get a little glimpse of a wooden box in the dirt. I look at the other two, confused. "Well, don't be scared. Go pick it up, Mavyric," Ava says with an even bigger smile. I have a bad feeling about all of this, but all of a sudden, I feel a nudge at my back.

“Well, go on, Mavyric. I bet it's just candy,” Zoe whispers to me.

I slowly make my way over to the box. I bent down to pick up the small, and surprisingly heavy box. On top, it says “Mavyric, please open me,” with a smiley face. I look back at the others, noticing Ava is behind Daniel. All of them smile at me, nodding. I take a deep breath and slowly open the box. I see something inside. Then darkness.

10/25/25 Zoe

I stand there in shock. I just watched Mavyric get stabbed by some clown-looking thing in the box. He's lying on the ground, the knife still in his chest, his eyes open, blood slowly turning his white shirt red.

“What the hell, Ava?” Daniel says, turning towards Ava. She says nothing as she looks at him. “Well, what is this? Is this all a sick joke that Mavyric is in on?” Daniel asks. Still, Ava says nothing, smiling with a bright smile.

All of a sudden, Ava pulls a knife out from behind her back, stabbing Daniel in the chest. Blood splashes all over her face as she continues to stand there with a smile on her face. I stand there frozen. I don't know what to do. I mean, I just saw my best friend murder my two other friends. I start to scream as she slowly pulls the knife out of Daniel's chest.

“Finally, I don't have to worry about them getting in the way of us having a fun day out,” Ava says happily as she walks over to Mavyric, also pulling the knife out of his chest. I slowly start to back away from her. “Don't run, remember, 'If you scream, someone will come and get you, but stay where you are.' That's what the worker said,” Ava says, standing in between the two dead bodies.

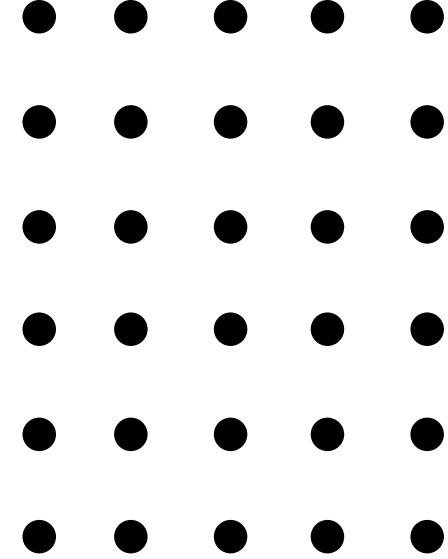
I don't care, though. I run. I run as fast as I can. I run and run, hoping I can get out before she finds me.

After what feels like an hour, and I'm still in the maze, I stop to catch my breath, trying to figure out what just happened. All of a sudden, I feel someone grab my back, covering my mouth. I try to scream, but the hand pushes harder against my mouth, quieting my screams. I feel a knife slowly come up to my throat, pressing on my throat, but not hard enough to break skin. Tears start to fall, wetting the hand holding my mouth shut.

"We can still be friends, right, Zoe? Right?" Ava whispers in my ear. I taste my friend's blood on my mouth from her hand. I cry harder and harder. "They can't bother us now that they're gone," Ava says, laughing a loud and crazy in my ear.

"We can be friends, Zoe, right?"

TO BE CONTINUED...



PERFORMANCE

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GRADES 6 - 8





**1st – Brian Nininger,
7th Grade**



**Scan the QR Code to see Brian's performance of
"All The World's A Stage"**