

**Thoreau Middle School
Literary Arts Magazine
Volume 35 Summer 2024**

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***“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams.
Live the life you have imagined.”
-Henry David Thoreau-***

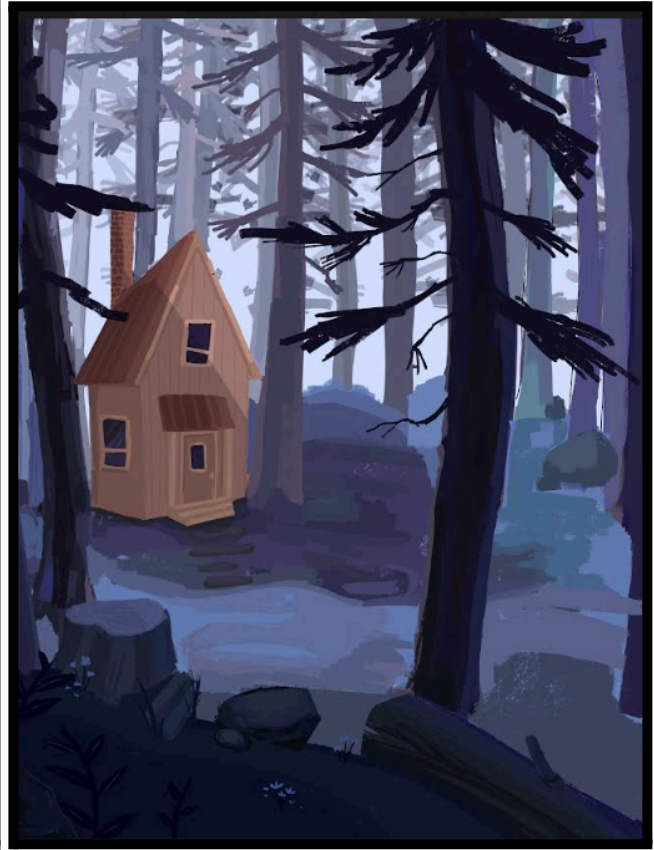
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Cabin in the Woods Cover Contest Submissions



Artist: Serena Cheng



Artist: Jenny Wang



Artist: Viktoria Ignatieva



Artist: Katherine Williams

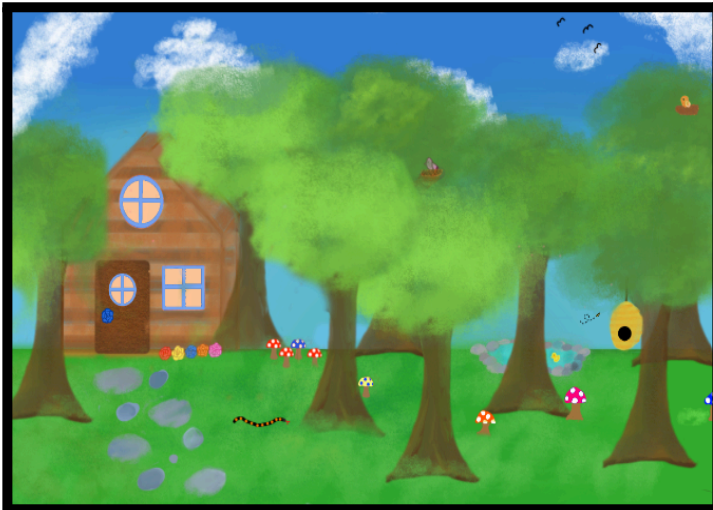
Cabin in the Woods Cover Contest Submissions



Artist: Audrey Munoz



Artist: Elizabeth Yang



Artist: Mariam Zaied



Artist: James Bacher

Searching for My Shine

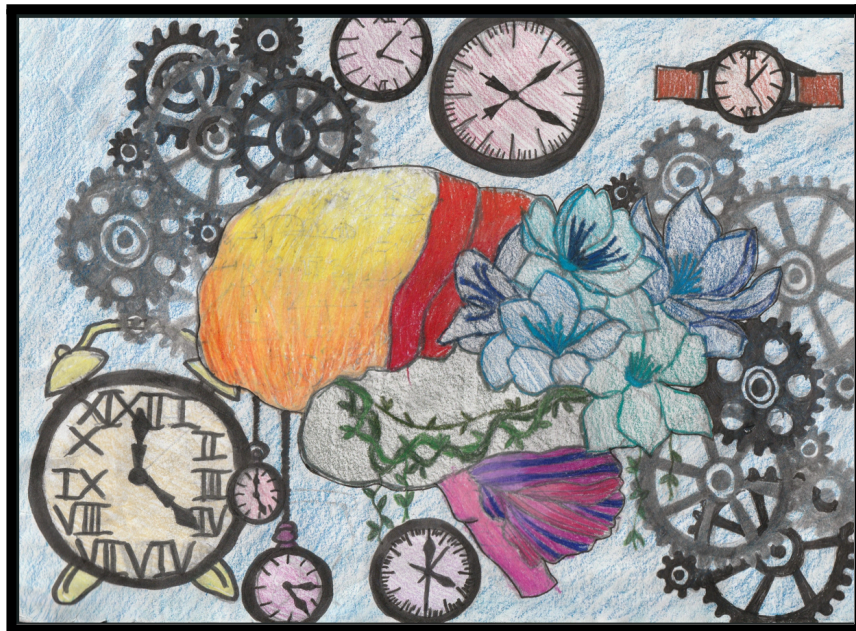
By Zahra Ahmadi

In a world so big, I sometimes feel small,
Others shine bright, while I can't find my call.
They know their path, they've got a plan,
While I'm still searching for where I stand.

I see their skills, they're on their way,
Doing great things, while I just sway.
But deep inside, I've got a hunch,
That I've got a gift, maybe a secret punch.

So I'll keep looking, high and low,
For that one thing that'll make me glow.
A talent that's mine, something to love,
A dream to chase, that fits like a glove.

And I believe as time will show,
I'll find my spark, and then I'll grow.
Into my own, with lots to share,
In life's big story,
I'll find my flare.



We Have Time

By Cassidy Knecht



This Is Me
Sophia Truong

The Melody of Hope

By Zahra Ahmadi

Once was a kid, not long ago,
Who felt life's pace a bit too slow.
Took what they said, the good and bad,
But inside, dreams were all I had.

I've got a light, though sometimes dim,
Inside my heart, it's just for me.
A secret tune, a quiet hum,
A melody that says, "You'll overcome."

Each day I wake, I make a choice,
To listen close to my own voice.
Step by step, I'll find my way,
Work real hard, come what may.

Life's not always what it seems,
But I won't give up on my dreams.
For every no, I'll find a yes,
In my own story, I'll find success.

I'll keep on going, through thick and thin,
Because I know I've got a win.
In my heart, there's a spark,
It lights the way when things get dark.

So here I go, it's my own quest,
To live my life and do my best.
A simple poem, but it's true,
I'll find my path, and I'll break through.



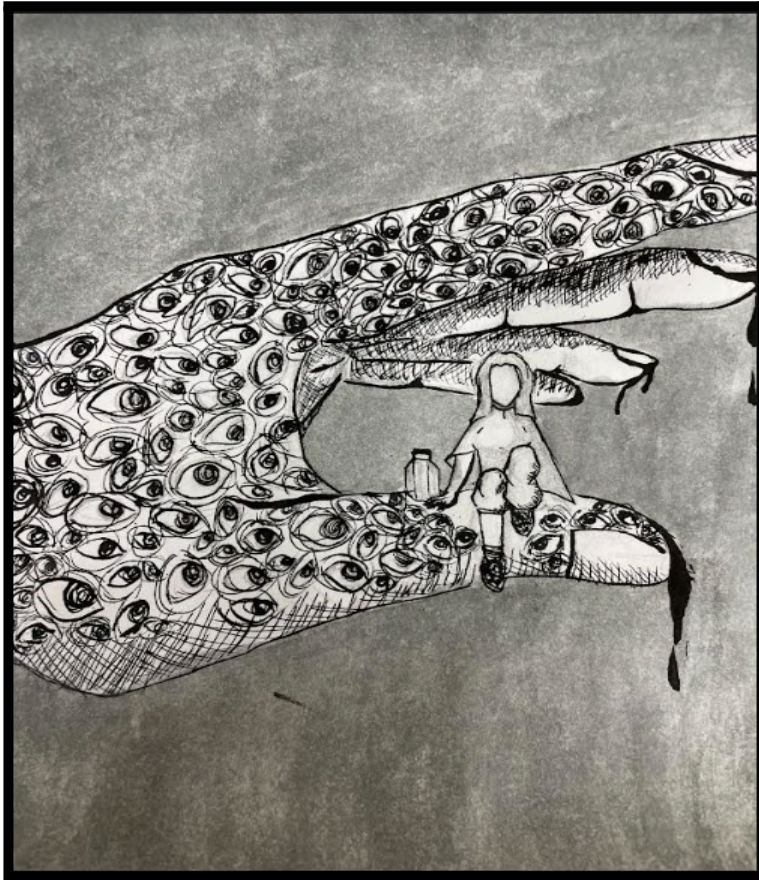
Cherry Blossoms

By Elizabeth Ni

The World is a Better Place

By Beatriz Perosa

The world is a better place
Because you are there to fill its space.
And I don't yet know if you see,
But you mean everything to me.
So don't jump off and think to yourself, fly.
Because here on the ground, I'll start to cry.
My tears on the ground matching yours in the air,
Tossing your feelings aside as if no one will care,
But just look for a moment, how far you've come.
Would you really leave me as if I was no one?
It hurts to see you suffer,
So please don't let me see you going six feet under.
Swear to me you'll get off the roof,
Even if it is only long enough to see the truth.
For my world is a better place,
Because you are here to fill its space.



Eyes on Me

By Elizabeth Yang

Cabin in the Woods

By Esther Fearn

I can't decide if I like the summer or just the absence of school. I like the warm weather, but I stay inside where it's cool. I like the clear skies, but I can't stop thinking about the rain. I like to travel, but I miss my home and friends. I like the freedom, but I often find myself with nothing to do. *Bored.*

Hearing the birds tweeting outside makes me feel trapped. I long to go outside, to play, to be free. But there is nothing for me outside, no one. Also, I'm too tired to get up anyway. But I want to go outside, I need to. But inside, it's just so tempting. I have everything I need here, why leave? Then I just feel trapped again.

It's not like I have anything to do. Every Monday I walk down to the music academy and practice, but that's it. I don't do sports, summer programs, or anything like that. My friends do though. They go to competitions and games for all sorts of unique talents. I don't have a talent besides being able to go long times without water because I'm too lazy to get more.

I want to change that, I *need* to.

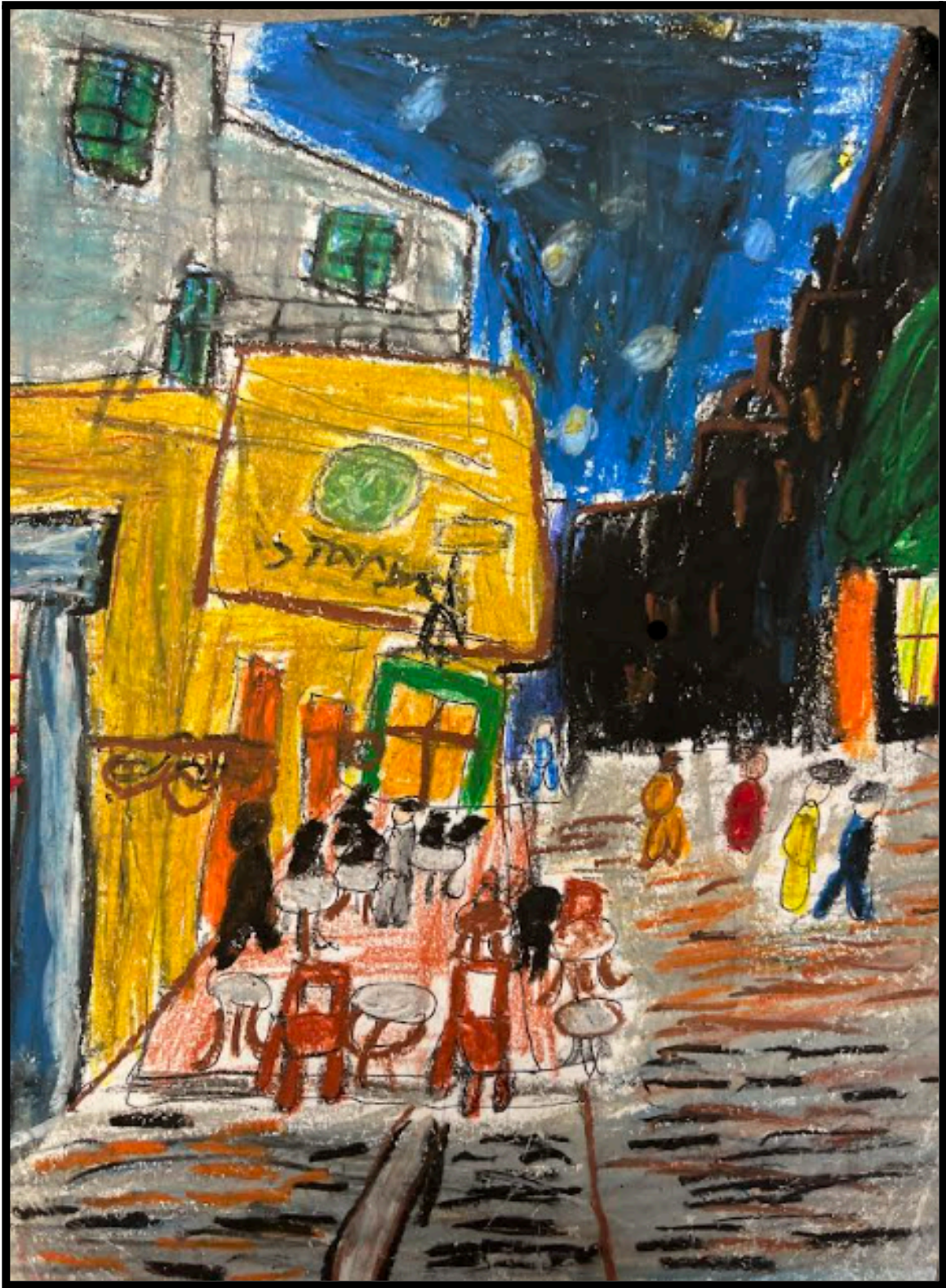
I slip my sneakers on my feet and leave through the back door, the front door leads to a more urban area that I've walked up and down too many times. I only now realized I'd never explored the woods before. It's really hot out and there are bugs everywhere. I regretted my decision but I took a long time to get ready and I didn't want it to go to waste.

After walking for a while I feel like a kid again, tall trees towering over me, examining rocks and bugs. Completely unaware of the outside world, peaceful. I start getting hungry so I sit on a boulder in the middle of a creek. The water is clear and cool. I cupped some in my hands and washed my face and hands. I took a granola bar from my pocket and just sat there, silently. Watching and observing the nature around me.

As I finish my granola bar and start to regroup, rain slowly develops from a drizzle to a shower. I know if I stay out much longer it will start to pour. I take shelter in our shed, it's more like a cabin but it's filled with tools and supplies on every wall. As I walk in I notice something moving around, a squirrel. It squirmed through a hole in the back wall probably seeking shelter from the rain too.

Me and the squirrel aren't that different when you think about it. But if you think about it too long you probably wish you stayed oblivious.

I saw a spider in the corner and I wasn't going to stay around for that so I ran home. I slipped off my muddy sneakers and dried off. As I look out the window I realize I didn't go that far out, maybe I should go again someday. Maybe tomorrow.



The Night Cafe at Starbuck
By David Cruz

Scenery

By Sean McCaslin

Bold trimmed field
Flowers scattered
Beauty it can wield
The gardeners would be flattered

With a bench and a tree
And a perfect sunlight shine
An urban house near
As flowers grow

Makes you feel free
Trees, oak and pine
Community greenhouses
A small stream flows

What a beautiful place
Its calming grace
As nature takes up space
But considered a someplace



Lilacs

By David Cruz

Redacted Memories

By Andersen Harman

File 908

Source Material: Extracted Memories

Subject Number: 908

Subject Name: [REDACTED]

Date: 9/5/20

Overseeing Researcher: Dr [REDACTED]

Classification: Level 5 Required

<Begin Memory Transcript>

Pain. That was the first thought that hit my mind. I opened my eyes, the sunlight streaming through the canopy of leaves. I groaned, sitting up. Where was I? My entire body was sore and I had a splitting headache. Standing up, I looked at my surroundings. It was serene, with birds softly chirping from between the massive trees surrounding me. I was standing on a well-worn dirt path that cut through the forest. I instinctively put my hand in my pocket, expecting to find my phone, but instead finding (drumroll please!) an empty pocket. So, with nothing else to do, I began to walk down the path.

I started thinking. Then I realized something. I had no idea who I was. I tried to remember, to know, but it was like trying to break through a brick wall with an origami hammer. This frustrated me. I had seen so many movies and read so many books with the main character losing memory, but they could never have prepared me for this. If anything, they overstated how easy it was. Darn.

Eventually, I came to a small birdbath with incredibly clear water in it. Curious as to what I looked like, I leaned over the perfectly flat pool. An unfamiliar face started back at me. The person looking at me had dark hair that seemed in need of a haircut. They had a confused look that contorted their face, and their tongue was just barely poking out from the corner of their mouth. The strangest thing, however, was their eyes. They were a brilliant amber color that seemed to pierce into me.

I can't tell if that's normal, I thought to myself, poking around at my face just to make sure it was mine. As I was, I saw something black on my hand. Curious, I looked at it. It was a barcode, with the numbers 19210210050320-908. Weird. I continued poking around my face, pondering what the heck those numbers meant.

At first, I didn't notice the dark shadow lurking behind my shoulder. When I did, my blood ran cold and I froze with a finger poked into the inside of my cheek. It was a vaguely humanoid head, and it looked like a preschooler had tried to make a sculpture of someone but then dropped it into a vat of liquid shadows after stretching it.

It looked at me with eyes that were perfectly white and looked like they had been haphazardly scribbled on at the last minute. I considered my options. I could either stay or run like heck. I decided the best option in this situation was, obviously, to run for the hills. I suddenly bolted away from the birdbath, running as fast as my legs

could carry me. I could hear it directly behind me, its footfalls slowly coming closer. I reached the edge of the forest, and I saw that I was in front of an enormous clearing with a small cabin in the middle.

I continued running, looking back only when I was close enough to the cabin. Strangely, I didn't see the creature, however, I did see a blur of motion retreating into the trees. I cautiously opened the door, afraid that there was going to be some kind of horrific beast. I was relieved to see that my fears had no grounds.

The cabin was warm and cozy, with a large bed to the side and a fire crackling in the fireplace directly across from me. On a small table with a single chair, there was a small plate of bacon and toast that I hungrily devoured.

"Ahem," I heard someone say. I whipped around in the middle of eating a piece of toast, my hair slapping me in the face as I did. I looked around but saw nobody until they cleared their throat again. I looked down, and saw a small teddy bear standing in front of me, crossing its arms and fixing me with what I thought was supposed to be a disapproving glare. I did the most logical thing in that situation, yelling in surprise and throwing the plate at its head. As fast as a blur, I saw it deflect the plate, throwing it out the window. Then, it jumped onto the table and said, "You must be Subject 908; my name is Theodore."

"Uh... hi?" I said, shaking his tiny hand that he had cordially extended to me. "I have no idea what you're talking about... maybe you have the wrong person."

Yet Theodore did not seem convinced. He suddenly grabbed my left wrist, turning it over and revealing the barcode. He studied it for a moment, then released it, satisfied. "I made no mistake; you are indeed Subject 908."

I opened my mouth to object but thought better of it. Theodore then continued. "It is nearly nightfall, we shall set out at dawn to find [REDACTED]," he said, glancing out of the window. "You should get some rest. You've had a long day."

Now that he said it, I was feeling tired. My legs were extremely sore and I still had a headache. I reluctantly climbed into the bed as the darkness covered everything outside under a blanket. It wasn't particularly hard to fall asleep, and I conked out almost immediately as I closed my eyes.

I woke up with a start. Something was wrong, I could feel it. I sat up slowly, glancing around the room until I saw it. The thing with the white eyes was watching me from a dark corner. The fire had gone out, and Theodore was sleeping peacefully on the mantle. The white-eyed creature and I stared at each other until it started moving closer. Terrified, I jumped out of the bed, grabbed Theodore, and threw a blanket over its head.

As I was running, I heard a screech that sounded like a dying fox was conducting a band of eagles who happened to be blowing whistles. As I ran, I made the mistake of looking back. I saw it running towards me, and I froze in fear. It was halfway to me when Theodore woke up and started yelling at me to stop dallying. I began to run again, seeing the lights of a city on the horizon.

I didn't make it. I felt the thing grab my foot, and I faceplanted onto the ground. I rolled over and saw it leaning over me. Something primal inside me clicked, and I put my hand out in front of me. To the surprise of, Theodore, and the creature, a blast of fire came out and shot the creature off of me. I scrambled off the ground, running again as I heard the creature screech.

It seemed that my fire had slowed down the creature, and I was able to gain significant ground. On the outskirts of the city, I saw a squat woman with red hair leaning against a wall. When she saw me, she walked towards me.

"Hello, 908. I am [REDACTED]," she told me. She then drew a gun and shot it directly over my shoulder. I looked behind me and saw that the white-eyed creature was now just an inky puddle on the grass. Theodore jumped out of my grip and stood next to [REDACTED]. "You have passed the test."

"What test?" I asked, curious as to what this whole amnesia business was about.

"All will be explained in time," [REDACTED] said, and before I could say anything, I felt a prick in my arm, and everything went dark.

<End Memory Transcript>



You're Next
By Subeen Byeon

You

By Guinevere Johnson

You are one of my favorite things.
You love unconditionally, supporting from afar,
Though it's comforting to know
We sit beneath the same stars.
Phone calls, messages, letters, and gifts,
But I can't help but feel that something's amiss.
Truthfully, I miss your face.
I miss your warmth and your hold,
your curly hair and silly smile
I wish to hold you soon again,
Even just for a little while.
You love like petals falling from a tree,
Drifting across my path through the gentle breeze.
You love like the glorious sun,
Providing continuous warmth even if you receive none.
You love like the curling waves,
Currents guiding me with love and carrying me through my days.
Even when I'm stuck in the dark, you provide everlasting luminance.
When I spend my time with you, all is simply pulchritudinous.



Artist: Umaiya Burkhankyzy



Artist: Viktoriya Ignatieva



Artist: Mackenzie Windham

A Small Storm in the Wild Waves

By Emily Frye

The cold rush of spring water trickled along my feet, wind swirling in every direction and sending falling leaves of swamp trees flickering and fluttering down into the tall grass where they disappeared in the mist. A lone leaf fell just before my face. Reaching out my hand, I caught the fallen angel, just as beautiful as when it was still in the sky. But then the angel fell, and soon it would rot on the water's shallow edge, and I would not.

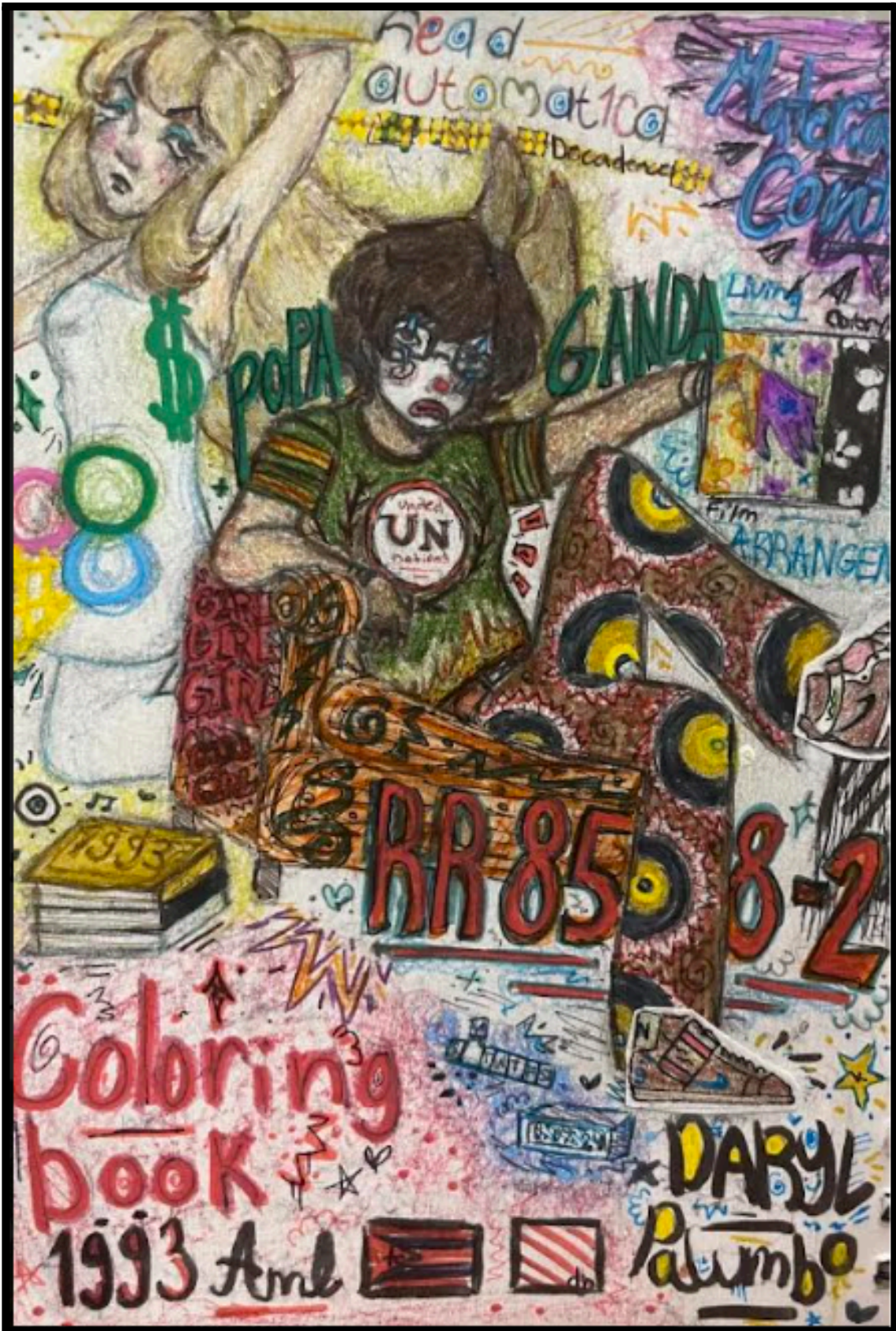
Then a deer came skipping by, followed by a smaller deer who is not as graceful, but what can you ask of it, new life is always imperfect, just as old life. But what is perfect? Well, by that logic, no life, or just unending life. But aren't they one and the same? What makes one immortal also dooms it to death, and what makes one die dooms it to eternal life. What makes water flow, what makes trees grow, what causes nature to nurture?

When the spout of answers suffers a drought, it is up to you to figure it out. When cold water turns warm, as it has not yet, we will take this peace and silence, the suffering. While the spout of answers continues suffering, a drought, don't pout, a simple path leads ahead. When cold water goes warm, you look not with dread. The springs flow, the grass grows, the tidal waves of knowledge seep in like pores, they grow on those who welcome them, growing like spores. When a small storm in the wild waves crashes, does not the whole world? No, but those who feed from the blessings know naught to those who feed from the messes. The world turns like a gear, built on hatred and fear, and those who seek a better wheel will find happiness at their heel.



Icarus & You

By Guinevere Johnson



Coloring Book
By Valentina Mindy

An Old Friend
By Cyrus Teixeira

Next to that rainy street I walked
upon that fateful day
For twas there I met a hooded man
Just standing in the rain,
He looked at me
And I, at him
Neither of us spoke
Then his hand began to shake
It reached inside his cloak,
I tensed up, and thought to run
But his hand then moved again
Something white was in his grasps
And on it letters red,
To me he threw it
And it was I that caught
And looked at it's top,
I then read what it said
And memories filled my mind
Then to the man I called his name
As for he
He did the same
As light re-kindled in our eyes
We talked and talked and talked
And though the time we had was short
We vowed to meet again
But what that letter said,
That will remain my secret



Albino Banana Snake
By Elizabeth Ni

Checkmate

An Excerpt

By Paige Davenport

The morning sun shone through the window behind her, impossible not to watch. “Maple,” her classmate hissed in her ear. “The teacher?” Maple Zephyr was in her 8th grade Algebra class. She turned her head to her classmate, Aris, and the room returned to focus.

There were six tables in the room, and Maple was sitting at the one in the back. The teacher, Mrs. Kestrel, was staring at her intensely through her impossibly small spectacles. Mrs. Kestrel’s gray hair was tied back in a stress-worn bun.

The other students were also staring at Maple, except their stares were not paired with scowls as Mrs. Kestrel’s was. Maple sighed. She’d zoned out again. This happened often. Well, it wasn’t exactly *often* two years ago. She never zoned out two years ago, unless she was just so tired that she actually fell asleep.

“What was the question again?” Maple asked Aris quietly. Mrs. Kestrel’s scowl intensified.

“If z is negative 3 and y is 24, then what is x in the problem z multiplied by x equals y ?” Aris responded, at the same volume. This was easy. Maple was good at math, and even better at algebra.

“ X is equal to negative 8.” Maple answered quickly, and at a volume that could be heard even by Mrs. Kestrel, who, in her old age, was slightly hard of hearing.

“Correct,” Mrs. Kestrel answered hesitantly, her voice sounding like a snake speaking English. “Can anyone tell me how she got that answer, perhaps?” Three kids raised their hands. Maple didn’t pay much attention after that. She was better at math than this, but she didn’t bother to let her parents put her in a higher level class.

Maple sighed. She zoned out once more, lost in the sun shining through the window and the dazzling world outside. Maple had hair that was dark enough to be confused with black, even when there were no clouds in the sky on a bright summer day. Today, she was wearing a red shirt, which was almost impossible to see past her black sweatshirt. Maple wore gray-black jeans, fastened by a belt of jet-black color.

She had been told that her amber eyes looked scarlet in bright enough light, yet she couldn’t see how. The main problem was that she always tried to shine the light directly into her eyes, which, of course, failed miserably, as she ended up unable to see much of anything for multiple minutes afterwards.

Today, her hair was loose, held back only by an almost-invisible black headband. To complete her day-to-day appearance, her sneakers of dark shades were laced so tightly, it was impossible for anyone but her to untie them. The one thing nobody ever saw was a silver locket she kept around her neck at all times.

On the front of the tear-shaped locket was an indentation in the metal, an ‘L’ shape with the Roman numeral ‘I’ in the middle. Nobody but Maple knew what was inside the locket, not even her mother. Her father couldn’t have known, as he had been missing since she was 4 years old...



Breaking Twilight

An Excerpt

By Elizabeth Nicholas

I knew I shouldn't have strayed away from the tour. But if I didn't I would still be dead right now. I wasn't happy that my parents dragged me all the way out of the city just for a tour of some stupid broken down castle. But I decided to go off on my own quickly when I saw a weird crystal on the ground. It was my favorite geode. And then I tripped. My hands lunged out beneath me as my feet flew out from under me. And then a pair of cold, strong arms caught me. I looked up into the face of an angel. Liquid topaz eyes met mine and a pair of luscious lips inhaled a breath. His tousled brown hair fell down over one of his eyes on his pale face. I inhaled and caught his breathtaking scent of honey, lavender, and something more.

He gently put me down and plucked a leaf out of my hair. "Are you okay?" he asked with a voice that sounded like low chimes and song. I stood silent, awestruck. He looked at me and I realized he was waiting for my answer.

"Uh, um yes. I'm perfectly fine," I said, staring into his eyes which seemed to melt under my gaze...



The World Needs All Kinds of Minds
By Brynn Wiedenmeyer

Gladiolus

By Ronin Hunt

In gardens bold, where colors vie,
The gladiolus stands tall and spry.
A warrior of petals, a blade of grace,
Its presence commands both time and space.

Emerging from earth, a green blade unsheathed,
Its stem sturdy and straight, unwavering beneath.
Each leaf, a lance, poised for the fight,
Ready to pierce the canvas of day and night.

Petals arrayed like armor plates,
A rainbow parade that captivates.
Crimson, coral, gold, and white,
A symphony of hues in morning light.

In the arena of blooms, it takes its stance,
A gladiator challenging circumstance.
Spikes of flowers ascend in tiers,
Their trumpets blaring, banishing fears.

Resilience and elegance entwine,
As if forged by gods in a secret shrine.
Against summer's heat and autumn's chill,
The gladiolus stands firm, indomitable will.

And when the sun retreats, day's battle done,
The gladiolus unfurls its petals, one by one.
A victory dance, a silent cheer,
For it knows its purpose: to persevere.



Neurodiversity is Beautiful

By Katherine Williams

Winner of the 2024 Thoreau Culture Club Mural Contest

8th Grade Goodbye

Anonymous

It's finally time to leave
Finally time to say goodbye
To a short and long chapter in life
And the time has already run by
Ran away and slipped our grasp
As we hold out for a future so grand
Highschool promises endless new joys
But amongst the fun, you'll leave homeland
The friends we have grow further apart
In order to make room for this new start
And as much as it feels like this is the end
It's a new way of living that can extend
The plants of us branch into responsibilities
As we all leave with knowledge from these facilities
So even while we've had fun all the while
We can't wait any longer for this change in lifestyle
I know, I know, it's a real big change
When school takes such a different turn
But it's an amazing new experience to have
Even if we still have to learn
Goodbye Thoreau,
Goodbye 8th grade, too
Goodbye to all of the staff,
We will miss you!