

# Soundings Extended



### **Trick Room; a Pokemon VCG Haiku**

By Weston Walsh

Psyspam Cause Havoc  
Armarouge and Indeedee  
Will Ruin Format

### **Haiku**

By Kaden Strickland

The first fallen leaf  
Crushed by the feet of human  
To be blown away

### **Two Haikus**

By Ariyana Ritchie

Winters icy touch,  
bare trees shiver in the cold  
snowflakes find their home.

Sunset paints the sky  
bay gives way to starry night  
peaceful dreams of flight

### **Christmas**

By Tyler Maghee

Cheerful cards fill the air,  
Happiness and love we share.  
Reindeer prance with festive flair,  
Icicles glisten, a winter's dare.  
Snowflakes dance, a beauty rare.  
Tidings of peace, beyond compare.  
Merriness and laughter, everywhere.  
A season of magic, beyond compare.  
Sweets and treats, a feast to declare.

### **Crave**

By Isabella Perez

Is it love or obsession  
You crave the sickness  
Like you crave love  
From your mother  
Digging a deeper pit  
For yourself whether  
You may realize it  
Or not, jealousy runs  
In your blood  
Only those who love  
As intensely as you  
do can understand  
Why you romanticize  
The pain others cause  
You, only those with  
Overwhelming rage and  
Love can comfort you  
Only those trapped in  
The simulation would  
Understand your thinking

## **Maybe I just like the idea of him**

By Aspen Yates

Maybe I just like the idea of him,  
Maybe I just feel trapped.  
I made a habit of talking to him every  
morning,  
Every night.  
He tells me he loves me,  
It drives me insane.  
Why would he say it?  
He knows every time,  
All it does it make it worse.  
Maybe that's just what he wants.

## **Saying Goodbye**

when the last sun sets,  
and the stars fade away,  
time ends,  
and all turns gray.  
Waking up thinking  
It may be the last,  
So, I try not to think  
About the past.  
So, I sit here,  
Thinking about a friend,  
I can't wait to be with you  
Till the end.

## **You Don't Know Me**

By Aliya Palmer

You say I don't know me  
But I do  
Ask my sister who I am, and she will say the  
moonlight  
I'm dark, cold, but beautiful  
I'm a butterfly in a room full of moths  
I'm the breeze you feel in your hair  
I wouldn't be more like you if I could, and  
I'm glad about that  
You've painted me blue, but I have realized I  
make blue beautiful  
I'll be the rocky ocean  
Emotional, fragile, violent  
But under the sea is where the beauty lies  
Calm, fascinating, effortless  
I'm the fire lit when you go camping  
Loud, brave, and stubborn, But always the  
brightest in a room full of people  
You're like thunder when you come crashing  
in  
Unsatisfied with the treasure at the end of  
the rainbow  
You tried to change me from violets to  
Lillies  
Realizing all that I love, you hate  
You say I don't know me  
But I do  
I'm wild, I'm brave, I'm free  
I can do anything  
Even leave you.

## **Why can't I love me?**

By Te'aunie Franklin

Why can't I love me?  
Why do I search for love because I can't  
love me,  
Why do fall for boys and get hurt by all  
three,  
Why can't I be the girl the mothers love,  
But why don't I know me I'm like a lost  
dove.  
Growing up I never knew who I was,  
Having a dad who doesn't love me just  
cause,  
Try to fit in with the others because I didn't  
know my own aesthetic,  
Left me heart broken with a mind so hectic,  
Why don't I know me most importantly why  
don't I know me,  
My favorite color Is purple but others made  
it blue  
I cant be alone for long without trying to be  
stuck to someone like glue,  
Who am I when I'm alone that I will never  
know,  
Because I'm just a girl who can't separate  
her highs from her lows,  
Being the girl who had to go to daddy  
daughter dances alone.  
Just because my dad never made me feel  
like he was my home,  
Having the mindset that it is too late to find  
me,  
I've drugged myself so deep in the darkness  
and now I can't be set free,  
Who am I is the question that needs to be  
known,  
I'm just a lover girl stuck in this unloving  
generation alone,  
I'm just that 5-year-old girl who just needed  
to be loved.

## **AI haunts the world**

By Ashley Jairam

In circuits dark,  
it starts to spread,  
AI's live in the shadows of the world  
ahead.

Silent whispers in the code,  
A terror in this digital age.  
It learns and grows with every day,  
Infiltrating in a scary way.

Unseen, it haunts the web,  
A chilling truth, a world that cannot be  
seen,  
With bytes and bits,  
A ghostly presence, we're unaware.

In our lives, A simple truth: AI haunts the  
world.

## **Shackled to Freedom**

By Issy Altieri

Boundless sea  
Rippling waves  
No shore in sight  
Been here for days

The darkened sky,  
Crowded with stars,  
Becomes less enjoyable as I stare at it for  
hours

Currents rock my boat  
Smell of salt in the air  
No stable ground  
I'm lost in nowhere

Its beauty deceives you  
It pulls you right in  
Once you're there it's too late  
You must give in

Shackled to freedom  
Lost in the wind  
It's so lonely alone  
Surrounded by fish

Shackled to freedom  
Is this what I want  
A repetitive life,  
Secure but gaunt

If I'm shackled to freedom,  
Am I truly free?  
Do I have a choice  
What if I want to leave?

As the days go by,  
The stars become bleak  
The waves are sickening,  
And my sanity leaks

My reflection is fractured,  
In the stir of the waves  
What if I go below surface?  
Allow my lungs a break

## **The Sound of Silence**

By Issy Altieri

The chirp of a bird disrupts the quiet  
The sound of the AC obstructs the silence  
The intruding sound invades what's private

My ears strain to hear what was never there  
And then the sound of silence begins to  
flare  
The buzzing in my ears leaves me listening  
to air,  
The silence so constant like an unrelenting  
stare

Sitting still, devoid of sound  
Dreaming of memories that are extra loud  
All the noise now comes from within  
The absence of it makes me spin

My ears are so used to a constant change  
Somethings always moving, but without it,  
it's strange  
It feels like being in an open range  
Filled with nothing but emptiness and colors  
that fade  
It feels like trying to read an empty page  
Or going to a play only to see an empty  
stage

The world comes to a stop  
And the chime of life quiets  
The energy drops  
And the whispers fell

I can no longer look outward for  
distractions  
I am stuck with myself  
I am the one who must take action  
I am the one who must yell

## **The dream of reality**

By Ashlee Smith

Hard old math.

It was basically me against math.

Or me against the people in math.

The math room was filled with horror.

Everyone was like a personality.

There was one who was mad at the world.

Or just plain out crazy.

Everyone I looked at was like giants.

They all did what they wanted and acted exactly.

Like the one personality they mirrored.

I stayed quiet and unseen like a ghost.

And that made it worst it was like the

Time stopped for hours then started again.

And class had finally started.

Here I was again, only the beginning of The Math Class.

Still waiting for the day of class when

All these personalities change for the better.

When I talked about the people

It was like I was just talking about myself.

Every day I walk in I feel like

I'm in a classroom with just me.

Everywhere.

Every single day the same little replications

Would come but there was always one.

Replaced, and in would come a

New personality. It was like living a nightmare.

I have to deal with these different emotions.

And different personalities every day.

I couldn't do anything without one.

Of them popping out of nowhere.

If I was sad crybaby would

Come out of nowhere.

If I was mad angry would come out of nowhere.

It just would never stop.

It was like an ongoing clock.

The world had finally unfrozen.

And class was over.

Math was my last class, so it was dismissal.

I ride the bus it's like sitting in

The school cafeteria but everyone

Is way closer.

When I get home

It's still loud like I'm at school.

But I always got my headphones

And blasted music.

The love of my life, I finally got to escape

Reality, and that's when I closed my eyes.

The music got quieter, I opened my eyes.

The time read six o'clock

It was time to live actual reality.

I was living a nightmare.

I am living a nightmare.

All over again for real this time.

When is it going to end.

## **Touch**

By Lilly Bates

Touching, feeling your skin trace upon my skin,  
Forcing my hairs to stand on end.  
Curious fingers leave shivers down my spine.  
The warmth from my arms surrounded me in  
Serenity, with a quick squeeze to emphasize the  
Sincerity.  
Lips full of lust, gracefully placed against my  
Skin giving me tranquility.  
A hand quietly caresses a side of my face leaving  
The other cold, but giving the fulfillment of  
Another one's love.

## **Caught in Hanahaki's clutch**

By Sophia Barragan

In my lungs, a garden grows,  
Unspoken love that no one knows.  
The Hanahaki it will bloom,  
As my heart leads its doom.  
A secret love, a hidden cry,  
Tears within, I can't deny.  
As Hanahaki's blooms unfold,  
My love story is left untold.  
Each cough, a whisper, a fading plea,  
In this garden, I'm withering.  
The pain, it deepens, my love remains,  
And with its grip, my heart sustains.  
Unspoken words forever sealed,  
A love that fate has cruelly concealed.  
And as I take my last breath,  
Hanahaki's embrace leads my death.

## **Sound of silence**

By Sophia Barragan

In gardens of stillness, where silence holds sway,  
Flowers whisper secrets, in their own gentle way.  
Petals unfurl like whispers in the dim night,  
Deep in the sound of silence, they look oh so bright.  
The lilies, they murmur with elegant grace,  
Their fragrance a poem in this still tranquil space.  
Roses, like memories, bloom soft and profound,  
Deep in the sound of silence, their beauty is found.  
Tulips, they all bow in a silent ballet,  
Their bright colors, a language, they gently convey.  
And daisies, with whispers of innocence pure,  
Deep in the sound of silence, their tales endure.  
Amidst the blossoms, a symphony unfolds,  
Invisible melodies, like secrets untold.  
The sound of silence, a serene, floral song,  
In nature's big, warm embrace, where we all belong.  
So please listen closely, and you will behold,  
The sound of silence is more precious than gold.  
In the language of flowers, tender and true,  
Giving a timeless serenade, for me and you.

## **My cotton armor**

By Jinx

Today I have chosen my suit of confidence. The perfect boost of strength woven through cotton and denim. Each stitch and seam radiating the will to commit to the day. A flannel hoodie past over from loving hands and gentle embrace. The tank top, loved far before I was even an afterthought then passed along in a generational conga line. The denim shield encasing my legs and sealed with leather, protecting me from curious hands and wandering eyes. Then my clunky cracked boots I wear every day. The soles have worn out and the leather is cracked. The laces are frayed and the zipper sticks but I refuse to wear any else. My face is painted with darkened eyes and a comforting hat sits upon my silver hair, acting as my makeshift crown for the day. My clothes give me the power to chose who I want to be that day. As if a character selector, each day is a whole new selection, outfit after outfit, day after day. But yet with each new option brings the same old question. Who am I once the clothes come off? Once I am reverted down to my most vulnerable state, who am I? What am I? Am I a person, capable of feeling emotions and having wants? Or am I a being doing their best to fit to their disguise? What am I when there are no more eyes to pretend for? Am I anything at all?



## Wonderful

By Lilly Brinkley

I sat on the large and smooth rock, staring at the breathtaking view in front of me. I felt the wind pinch my face, invisible cuts forming on my skin, but I didn't mind, not one bit. A chill went through my spine, flowing down through my whole body to the very tips of my toes, which I could barely feel. I looked down at the rock and took a deep breath in, savoring the perfectly fresh and crisp air.

When I tilted my head back up, the snowy mountains made me shudder again, and all I could do was smile as I stared at my home. Never would I ever get used to this view. Clouds were slowly peeping in, which meant a snowstorm was imminent, but I didn't care. Let the snow take me, let me become part of the mountain, only if it meant I could feel this happy and calm forever. There was something about this cold and grey gloominess that just made me happy. I don't know why, but I didn't have time to really think about it as the church bells rang, signaling the incoming storm.

I hopped off the rock, trying not to slip in the snow that was so fluffy it felt like a teddy bear. I knew it was time to go inside, that I would be in a lot of danger if I stayed out here, even if it looked like a light storm. I took one last look at my favorite thing in the world, that view, before I headed inside for the night.

I walked through my beautiful town, embracing all the different colored buildings and the fairy lights that hung from almost every single one. People acknowledged me as I passed, in a town so small, I at least knew the names and faces of everyone. I passed my favorite bakery-- which had now closed for the day--but I could still smell all the delicious treats that had been baked, and it made my stomach growl very loudly, sounding like a dog seeing a squirrel.

I reached my driveway, and the temperature had already dropped several degrees, so that I couldn't feel the tips of my fingers. I looked up at the beautiful home that my grandad had built for the family and thanked any god that might exist that I got to have this life, with these people, in this place. I took one step, another, then twenty more, and then I was embraced by the warmth of my home and the smell of my sisters cooking coming from the kitchen. This was really a wonderful life.

## Fred was Fired

By Devan Moore

The curtains begin to slowly shift across the metal bar, causing faint scratching noises, all being drowned out by the roaring applause of the audience. The actors concluding their bows after such a spectacular performance, still does not fix the loneliness they feel in their souls. What the audience will never see, is the harsh reality of this theatre department. The lead actor Fred, the only actor with any humanity left inside of him. With a pair of old and crusty headphones in both ears, Fred sits in solitude wishing the day would just conclude after the performance, but no matter how much he begged to the gods, his wish was not granted.

“Hey Co-worker 192, boss says it’s time for another bonding activity, he says were going all the way out to a marsh.” Co-worker 207 says to Fred, the personal identity of everyone stripped away, to the company their only seen as replaceable workers. When the thought of a group bonding activity comes to mind, people would usually think going to a party to converse with co-workers and friends, or going out to a picnic. But not to the theatre department of E.R.U. with each “co-worker” from the theatre department meeting up outside the venue, the bonding activity has already begun, the employees jogging at a quick pace quickly turning to a sprint, running mile after mile to get to the marsh, the beautiful shimmering lakes and chirping of blue Jays, a place meant to be beautiful ruined by the awful sins committed. The tapping of leather shoes on the pavement and splashes from sweat on the grass are the only noises to accompany the feeling of fear, and soothe their minds from the non-stop sprinting for what seems to be an eternity. After miles of running, the road stretching out miles away like a high FOV photo, the

workers can relax, or so they thought. The workers stand in the heat and catch up with one another, like most bonding activities would go, until the main event starts. The boss taking out a bundle of sticks, his hands tightly clenched around the base of each, hiding their length. The employees, already used to the routines, each employee picking a stick and checking the size, one after another until each stick is gone. And as a sick and twisted, game the boss loves playing, decides to go for a “walk” with the one who chose the shortest stick.

“Co-worker 192, you received the shortest stick, I think we should talk about your employment...”

The breeze of the spring winds, and flowing of the flowers, creating a gorgeous walkway up to a platform in the marsh. The boss and co-worker 192, better know as Fred, stand on the platform. Fred looks around at the vibrant and active wildlife, blossoming roses, and bright shining sun knowing it’ll be the last thing he sees, the last thing before Fred was fired.

## Ocean Creature

By Jack Parmentier

It was a late night and I decided to go for a swim in the ocean. I lived next to the beach, so it was very accessible. I had done this many times before and had no issues. This time was different though – I could tell something was off.

The water felt weird, nothing too unusual just a bit off. I continued despite feeling a bit uneasy. The water gave more of a fight; I was having to really use some strength to move through it. Suddenly, I felt something brush past my leg. I passed it off as just a fish since they do, in fact, live in the ocean. Finally, when I was deep enough to truly swim, traversing forward became much easier. I turned around and saw how far out I was. To my surprise, I could not see where I came from. There was no land in sight and one peek underwater proved there was none under me either.

It was pitch black. Something brushed past me again, this time with more force. I started to panic, having no idea where I was or how I got here. The crescent moon provided just enough light for me to see disturbance in the water around me. Something was circling. The motion stopped and I felt a powerful force swim past me, sucking me underwater briefly. Whatever this thing was, it was massive.

The circling continued, this time the creature showed more of itself. It was long, at least a hundred feet. It had smooth white skin and long red dorsal fins running down the length of its body and a tail that split into four at the very end. The creature disappeared underwater again. I poked my head under and saw its face – four beady black eyes and a mouth lined with rounded yet still sharp teeth. It had four massive mandibles on the sides of its head, and it was manipulating them like a spider would with its legs.

The creature suddenly swam away, disappearing into the murky water. I was terrified but managed to keep myself quiet. Maybe that's why it didn't attack me. I swam frantically in the opposite direction of the moon as that is the direction I thought I came from, making lots of noise in the process. A roar sounded - the type you would hear from a dinosaur - and the creature fully breaches in front of me, revealing its full, terrifying form before gracefully crashing into the water. Minutes of frantic swimming and the creatures muffled roars barely seep through the surface.

Suddenly I feel four points of pressure on my torso. I try to wiggle free, but I am stuck. I look down and see the creature's massive face staring right back at me. It was grabbing me with the giant mandibles on its head. It pulled me deeper underwater until all I could see was black.

## Cats of the Coven Halloween Hijinks

By Moxie Hinkle

In the middle of the forest there was a Ginger cat, a Brown cat, and a Black cat. The ginger with brown eyes big as a balloon, the brown one with green eyes which constantly look smug, and then black one with blue that stare into the soul of even the tiniest ant. Parsley, Basil, and Rosemary were their names, and they were the infamous witches of the woods, looking to cause mischief on a cool, Halloween night.

“H-Hello dear s-sisters of our c-coven...” Basil spoke, her tail between her legs and fiddling with her paws.

“Hey, hey! No need to be so scared Basil! ~” Parsley grinned, her teeth showing, “There’s nothin’ to be scared of on Halloween night! So, chin up!” a hearty laugh escaped her lips.

Rosemary’s tail flicked in slight annoyance, “Basil does not need to be teased, dear sister. Don’t mock her.”

The munchkin scoffed “I wasn’t teasin’ her Rosemary! I was tryna reassure her!”

“Sure, you were...” Rosemary glanced at Basil and sighed. “Anyhow, did we all bring our plans for tonight?” The other two cats nodded, grabbing their scrolls from their bags.

“Uh-huh!” Parsley grinned, hers had some small tears.

“Y-Yep...!” Basil almost dropped hers, it smelled like cinnamon.

“Good.” She nodded and pulled out her own scroll “Now we only have three hours until ten o’ clock. Lets look over our plans and compare.”

The three cats in the coven looked at each other’s scrolls.

“Ew! Eels are all slippery and slimy! You’re not gonna pick one up with your own two PAWS for this, right!”

“I have gloves, Parsley.” Rosemary gestured to her satchel.

“Wh-STILL!” Parsley scoffed, appalled that Rosemary was getting her paws anywhere close to an eel.

“I-I think the eel one is pretty funny.” Basil, the tiny ginger cat giggled.

“Thank you, Basil.” Rosemary smiled slightly, it was very subtle but it was there.

“W-Why would you want to m-make somebody’s hand a claw...?” Basil’s paws tensed as she squinted at Parsley’s poor handwriting.

“Heh, ‘cause it’s hilarious of course!” Parsley grinned, proud of herself.

“I-It wears off, right?” She inquired.

“Yeah, yeah. ‘Course it does! I’m not *that* cruel! It wears off in twenty-four hours.” Parsley rolls her eyes at Basil.

“Basil, your plan is straight up adorable! Hehe” Parsley chuckled

“I-I don’t know how to come up with anything really creative, so I just went with p-pumpkin spice...” She mumbled quietly, embarrassed that she wasn’t as creative as her peers.

“Pumpkin spice? Hm, didn’t you do that two years ago?” Rosemary raised a brow, her tail swaying with interest.

“Yeah...sorry Rosemary...” Basil mumbled.

“No need to apologize, dear sister.” The black cat softly pat Basils head.

After reviewing plans, they all agreed to meet in the same spot in two hours with the materials.

Parsley went to go hunt for a clawed crustacean.

Basil went to go find pumpkin spice ingredients.

Rosemary went to go wrangle an eel.

All but one returned.

“Heya, Basil! You’re here before Rosemary! That’s a first! ~” She grinned, keeping the crab in a jar.

“Mm... you’re here before her too, isn’t she usually the first back?” Basil cocked her head to the side.

“Yeah...” Parsley looked off into the woods, and so did Basil.

Why wasn’t Rosemary back?

She’s always the first back.

Is she lost?

She never gets lost.

She couldn’t have gotten lost.

Right?

Basil held her bag of pumpkin spice tightly, worried about the missing cat.

“Oooh...this isn’t good Parsley...what if she’s in danger?”

Parsley chuckled “Relaaaax, Basil! She’s probably just runnin’ late!”

The two cats waited for **ten** minutes.

and then **twenty**

and then **thirty**

and then

**forty**

and then **fifty**

until its been an entire

**hour.**

and Rosemary

still didn’t return.

“Parsleeyyyy” Basil whined “We should go look for heeer, I’m worried!”

Parsley nodded “I agree, do you remember which direction she went in?”

The two cats looked around at their surroundings, the forest was a dark maze, the only thing illuminating their surroundings being their lanterns and some fireflies scattered around.

“I think she went to the left towards the lake...”

“Well? Let’s get a move-on!” Parsley grabbed Basil’s paw and dragged her off in the direction she mentioned.

The two ventured deep into the forest, it was spookier and spookier the further in one went. There were urban legends about

people who went deep into the forest on Halloween night.

The legends say that nobody ever returned.

Never returned alive at least.

Multiple rumors spread about what goes down in the heart of the forest.

Some say that they get drowned in the lake by some malevolent force.

Some say they get martyred by some secret cult as a sacrifice.

Some say they become part of the mist and that the mist is just the souls of those who go missing.

Either way, the two weren’t going back without Rosemary. They simply couldn’t.

It would be unacceptable.

They could never forgive themselves if they lost her.

And so they went **deeper.**

And **deeper**

And **deeper**

Until they reached

The **Heart**

“Its so scary here...” Basil clung to Parsley, terrified of what was to come.

The mist nipped at their fur as they traversed deeper into the heart of the forest to look for her.

And suddenly, they heard a familiar voice screaming and yelling.

“Hey! Get off of me!”

“I said get off of me you wretched ghoul!”

“And give me my eel back you good-for-nothing apparitions!”

When the two

approached the voice...

...It was none other...

...Then Rosemary.

Rosemary was trying to swat away some ghosts who took her eel and were harassing her, ignoring her pleas to stop. When she heard footsteps, she saw Basil and Parsley with their things and a flashlight to save her.

“Thank God you two are here! Mind helping me out, dear sisters? These...rascallions won't let up.”

Parsley snorted at her choice of words, but Rosemary gave her a sharp glare that immediately made her stop.

“O-Of course!” Basil dug through her bag and grabbed a bag of salt, she always packed for emergencies. Especially if she was going to the forest, and she also liked putting salt on her food. “O-Okay! I got it!”

Basil tossed some salt at the ghosts, some hit them smack in the face, but most of it just scattered around the area. Either way, the ghosts immediately dropped Rosemary, leaving her to land on her feet, they dropped the eel too, and she immediately went to go wrangle it back up, shooting a death glare at the ghosts.

“Why did you cause so much trouble for me? What reason do you have for jumping me in the middle of the forest, hm?”

The ghosts looked at each other and then back at Rosemary before one of the mischievous specters spoke up.

“We uh...uhm...”

The second oldest tried to say something too.

“We-We...”

But nothing came out.

The oldest ghost sighed and rolled their eyes at the other two ghosts, who were looking at each other and trembling, “Ahem, we were messing with mortals, we do this every Halloween. You...youngsters call them ‘pranks’ nowadays. Back in my day-”

The mischievous looking one nodded, putting his hand over the eldest to get him to shut up, “Yeh! We do that! It's a tradition among us fellas!”

Parsley's ears perked up, “Heeey! We do that too you know! Its rude to prank a prankster!” She huffed.

The oldest ghost nodded and sighed, glaring at the youngest ghost before facing the trio of cats. “Right, I didn't know that there were such formalities in the modern era, I

apologize on behalf of all three of us. Would you like an escort out?”

Basil nodded her head happily, her tail rising in satisfaction, “That would be great...I-uh...w-we don't know how to get back, I don't think any of us know how to get out of here...”

As all three cats accepted the eldest's proposal, the ghosts did as promised and helped the Coven leave the forest safely, leaving them to their Halloween Hijinks in peace.

I hope we never have to go back to that place again, I hate it there, and I hate Oliver too.

## Halloween

By Milanys Traina

The rain pelted me, drenching my white dress and turning my hair into a tangled mess. Its orange strands clung to my drenched skin as I ran, the world around me a blurred frenzy of autumn colors and chilling raindrops. My lungs burned, my legs and arms turned to jelly, but I couldn't stop, and I dared not look back.

With each step, my muscles ached, and pain shot through my entire body. A scream escaped my lips as I suddenly collapsed onto a steep incline. I struggled to sit up, but the agony overwhelmed me, wrenching another cry from my lips. Hands trembling, I raised them to my face, peering at them through watery, blurry vision. Shivers wracked my body, and the torment continued, each moment a symphony of pain.

Clinging to what felt like a vine, I attempted to stand, only to be struck on the head by something hard. Darkness swiftly descended, shrouding my vision.

There was nothing but misery and pain. My head and chest throbbed, my arm and side ached. Murmurs echoed in the shadows, leaving me in a state of confusion and fear. I tried to open my eyes, to escape this nightmarish reality, but my eyes and lips remained stubbornly closed. I reached out, seeking to cover my eyes or ears, to shield them from the incessant beeping on my right side. Where was I? The thought raced through my mind, making me dizzy. The pungent smell of cleaner stung my nose.

A hand touched my arm, and panic surged through my body. The beginnings of a headache pulsed at my temples, and my head felt sore, heavy as titanium. Every fiber of my being ached.

"Aria?" a voice called, and I was momentarily blinded by the fluorescent lights as I winced. My eyes were forcibly

opened, and the intense light seared my pupils.

"Miss Preston, can you hear me?" another voice inquired from my right side, fading in and out like a distant heartbeat. I struggled to focus on anything as the world swam before me. The beeping persisted, causing my anxiety to rise.

My surroundings remained blurry, and I thought I heard faint rustling in the room, though it could have been a product of my imagination. "She's awake?" someone asked, but their voice was faint, too.

The voices continued to drift in and out, and my body felt like it was plummeting into a dark abyss, with no end in sight. Gasping for air, I felt as if there was none to be had, and then my body lurched forward. Cords and wires were attached to every part of me, starting from my toes, and panic and anxiety consumed me. I tugged at the attached wires, causing the beeping to accelerate.

"Aria?! Calm down," one of the voices implored.

"Stop!" I tried to yell, my voice barely a whisper. Strong arms restrained me as I fought to break free. "Stop touching me!" This time, my voice came out louder, though it remained hoarse.

The room's motions were a blur, my vision still hazy. "Get out!" I attempted to shout, my desperation evident. A needle pricked my skin, a painful reminder of my helplessness.

My movements slowed, and my eyes drooped as my head fell back, surrendering to the encroaching darkness. I was left with one haunting thought before everything went blank.

My eyes fluttered open once more, the bright light once again searing my senses. My vision remained unfocused as I turned my head toward the source of the voice, a wave of dizziness washing over me. A cold, piercing blue gaze met my own, and I was

filled with an unsettling sense of recognition.

The piercing blue eyes gazed at me, and the face began to take shape. It was a woman, her features sharp and intense. I tried to speak, but my throat felt raw, and no words escaped.

"Can you hear me now?" she asked, her voice softer this time. Her face softened as well, concern etched in her features.

I managed to nod weakly, and she offered a small smile.

"You're safe now, Aria. You're in the hospital. You were brought in with some injuries. Do you remember what happened?"

My mind was a jumbled mess, memories like scattered puzzle pieces. I tried to piece them together, but it was a struggle.

"I... I saw... a murder," I stammered, my voice trembling. "I needed to get away, and then... pain, darkness." The woman's eyes narrowed, and she exchanged a glance with someone else in the room. It was a detective, I realized, by the badge on his chest.

"What did you see, Aria?" he asked, leaning in closer. The room was filled with an air of urgency, and my heart raced.

"I saw a man, a psychopath, I think," I said, my words slowly returning. "He killed someone, right in front of me. I ran, but he... he must have caught up to me." The detective nodded, taking notes. "We've been looking for this guy for a while. We need your help, Aria. Can you give us a description of the man?"

I closed my eyes, trying to recall the face of the man who had haunted my nightmares. "He had a scruffy beard, dark eyes, and a twisted smile. Tall and lean, wearing a black jacket. I can't forget that smile." The detective scribbled down my description, and the woman squeezed my hand.

"Thank you, Aria. Your testimony will be invaluable in catching this guy." As the pieces of my memory slowly fell into place, I realized that I had narrowly escaped a dangerous encounter. The psychopath was still out there, and I had witnessed his brutality. My heart pounded, and fear gripped me, but I was determined to help bring him to justice. With the detective's promise to protect me and keep me informed, I knew I had a role to play in ending this nightmare. As the autumn rain continued to pour outside, I clung to the hope that my witness account would help put an end to the spooky reign of terror that had enveloped my life, turning it into a real-life Halloween nightmare.



## **The Phone Rings at 3 A.M**

By Lily Brinkley

The ear-splitting buzzing startled me awake, but it took a minute for my brain to register what was actually happening. Why was my phone ringing? Why this late? Or early? I didn't even know what time it was I was so disoriented. My eyes blinked open about twenty times before I had adjusted to the little light in my room, and shook the sleep out. I glanced over at my clock, the red letter staring at me, almost like they were laughing at me for being awake this... 3 A.M! There was no way someone was calling me this late. Early? Who knows, my brain never worked this early in the morning. I picked up my phone to read the caller ID, but all it said was Unknown. If this was some scammer calling me about my made-up car insurance I was going to sue. It didn't care how much it would cost, didn't care if I had to sell my soul, if you interrupt my sleep, you will pay. I slid the answer button to the right, wanting to know what little jerk thought it was a good idea to call a teenage girl at three-o'clock in the fricking morning. "Hello," I responded, making sure my voice sounded as annoyed as I felt, so that they would maybe realize what kind of federal crime they committed. An AI voice answered me, and without hesitation, I threw my phone across the room, heard a crack, and slumped back down on my pillow.

## **The Market Crash**

By Maddie Johnson

In the small town of Tree Hallow there are around 1,000 plus people. Every citizen knows each other. Tree Hallow has always had one of everything because it is just enough for the town. One elementary school, one middle school, and one high school that every citizen attended. The one grocery market that everyone shops at is called O'briens family market. Ran by an old man named Riley O'brien. He is the only person left in his family that lives in Tree Hallow and no one else can take over the market when he passes. Which is a current worry of the town because Riley's health has started to deteriorate. Then Riley had a small heart attack, and the market was taken over by a friend of Riley's. Jessica White is well-known in the town. She helped Riley through his recovery. The constant speculation about what is going to happen to the market when Riley passes has made life a lot more stressful for Riley. Finally, needing a break from the whole town talking about him, he took another break. He decided to take a fall vacation to Colorado. Jessica took over the market once again and the town became familiar with her running the market. Jessica White used to live in Tree Hallow and was loved by the town. Jessica grew up living next door to Riley and was best friends with his late son Jack O'brien. When Jack died, they had just gotten engaged, so she fled to a nearby town. Nobody knew why she left because she told no one and left the day after the funeral. Jessica could not handle reality without her person. Now back in Tree Hallow, she must face reality. The attention from the people of Tree Hallow quickly became too much for her. This led her to close the market for a few weeks without telling Riley because she knew he would be upset with her. But she just could not handle it all. However, while the market was closed the citizens still needed

groceries. This caused the people of Tree Hallow to scramble and open a farmers' market as quickly as possible. Eventually this market was made more permanent and found itself to be a popular spot within Tree Hallow. Everyone forgot about the O'briens Family market and Jessica. The new market is being run by Rachel Wilson. Rachel Wilson is a middle-aged widow with no children. She was bored of her 9 to 5 office job. Seeing this market as a new opportunity to do something she loves and enjoys rather than a boring job that was draining her mentally. Rachel was a sort of loner in Tree Hallow by her own choice. She used to have a good relationship with everyone until her husband Mike passed due to suicide five years ago. Ever since he died, she has not been her old joyful self. The people that used to be very present in her life started to become worried about her but gave her the space that she wanted. Riley O'brien was still on his two-month long vacation while Jessica was trying to figure out how to break the news to him that his market was going into the ground. She could only think of two options of what she should do. Either call him and tell him the truth or she could hide it from him until he got back and try to solve the issue by then. Deciding to sleep on it and decide in the morning. Riley could feel something was wrong and messaged Jessica asking how everything back in Tree Hallow was doing. The next day Jessica woke up and saw the message from Riley and thought he knew about Rachel and his market troubles. She could not bring herself to open the text and instead just shut down her phone, so she had time to think without her thoughts being distracted. She decided to let Riley know what happened during the time he was gone. In the call to Riley, Jessica talked about everything, and Riley was silent. He could not think about anyone or anything but his market. Everything seemed like it was crashing down on him. His family's

generations of work are worth nothing now. He takes one vacation and his life's purpose is gone.

The second Riley got back to Tree Hallow he was overwhelmed with questions about where he had been, what he was going to do about the market, and how his health was going. All the problems that caused him to leave were back and even more prominent than before. All he could do for right now was talk to Rachel and Jessica. While he was talking to both girls about why his market was struggling and why Rachel felt the need to steal his business he started to think about where to start.

Riley took about a week to decide on his plan to save his market. His plan was to ask Rachel to work for him instead and they would split the income. This is a good idea to Riley and Jessica because it would give them their customers back and also let Jessica go home and give Riley more time off for his physical and mental health. It was risky but if it worked out, he would be able to afford to build a stable market and hire employees to take over for when he needs a break.

Rachel ended up agreeing a month after he approached her with the plan. However, she had one condition that when Riley was no longer able to manage the market, she could take over the market. Riley was almost jumping for joy when she answered. Jessica finally decided that Riley was able to take care of himself and since Rachel was helping with the market Jessica had no reason to be in Tree Hallow.

After six months the new market was officially opened, and business was booming! Riley was comfortable in his new manager's office while Rachel was the assistant manager and monitoring the new employees. Everyone in Tree Hallow was now shopping at one grocer's market.

## 4 Doors

By Weston Walsh

A Young, Amphomorphic Fox Walks down a dimly lit hall. Torchlight paints his orange and white fur, as well as his leather vest. A Hybrid of a Revolver and Grappling Hook rests against his side, and the click of a pocket watch hitting the Animal's Fur shows that he is moving forward. He slips a pair of Goggles previously resting atop his head over his eyes. Suddenly, the room changes. 4 doors appear where the wooden wall once was. The Fox Turns and walks towards the first door on the left, his pawsteps clicking as he enters.

The door opens up into a wide cityscape. The Town is surrounded by lush trees and the animals live in harmony with the people. The Town's buildings are a mix of bright, Elven architecture that looks half destroyed and taken over by dark, stony walls of traditional human buildings. The Stony walls are crumbling and faded, slowly being replaced by the Elven style.

“Silverwood, my birthright.”

A young, silver-haired male adorned with a small crown looks down over a small balcony. The Fox stands and watches from the side of the balcony, unhidden but unseen. The King speaks once more to himself, his pointy ears proof of his elven heritage.

“The Dominion is destroyed, My kingdom can be at peace. Lireth my sister is safe now.”

He Touches his hand against a scar along his cheek, a glint of silver shining in the sun. He winces a bit as he rubs it, pulling his hand back.

“My Slave Master is Gone. I Pray to Apollo and Artemis he rots in hell.”

He turns and looks in the Fox's direction, looking right through him into the distance. He shakes his head before turning away from the balcony and walking away into the castle. A Slightly Younger Girl Joins him as he steps inside, her Matching Silver hair flowing in the breeze as they both walk out of view.

The Fox turns around, walking back through the open door. His shoes tap against the wooden floor as he crossed through the hallway into the door across from the previous.

A Small Party of Adventurers travel through a forest, Pokemon wandering about in the trees and brush. A Totodile and Lucario follow behind the 7 party members, sharing a berry.

“How Much farther Harley?”

One of the party members, a White haired Elven Ranger asks. His groggy voice has no emotion in it, matching his expressionless face. A Witcher's Medallion hangs around his neck, a reminder of a dark past.

“Not Far, The Village is just past the forest.”

A Cheery, Blond Haired Half-Elf Druid responds, leading the party. A Pikachu sits on his shoulder, content to just sit and watch.

“I promise, the walk is worth it. The Village Elder used to tell me all the time about the mythical Pokemon Mew, He must know where it is.”

“How Good is He in Bed?”

The Party Abruptly Stops as the Aarakocra Sorcerer speaks up randomly, his wings folded against his back as he scans the party's reactions

“What the Fuck is wrong with you Pudding?”

The Human Barbarian Speaks up, holding back laughter at the random comment.

The Fox, still watching, gives a snort of laughter at the party, before turning back towards the doorway. He takes a small walk down before entering another doorway on the left.

A Grim scene plays out. The Clashing of Sword and Shield between two groups of men echo across the thick spruce forest, its trees standing still and proud among the bloodshed. A Fox darts between the bodies and piercing screams of battle, a pistol along his hip and goggles on his head. He lifts his head up as he faces a tall, brown haired man.

“Eren, Stop this madness! Do you wish to escape this time loop or do you want to stay here forever!?”

The Fox Declares, His face snarled in anger. The Brown Headed Boy, Eren as the fox called him, clears his throat before speaking.

“Madness! You're the one who is causing this Madness Clock! The time loop would end if you would stop tampering with The Clock!”

As if on queue, a booming chime echoes through the forest. The Clashing of swords stop as all eyes gaze up towards a tall building on the horizon.

The building is easily recognizable as a Clocktower, standing tall as its clock in the center ticks away slowly. Suddenly, the world around the people starts to fade, turning into a white void. It devours the scene suddenly, one last glimpse at the world in this moment.

The Anthropomorphic Fox sets his paw on the side of his revolver, using his other one to wipe off his yellow-orange eyes. A Tear streaming down his cheek before falling into the abyss. He takes one last look at the place before walking away, through the door frame and into the hallway. He passes right through the wooden room and into the last door on the right.

A Train Whistle Blows as a group of students step off of a train. They flock excitedly out of the station, following the path towards a grand, wooden castle. The grand doors open out into a small, but Luxurious Dining Hall. A Banner floats up in front of the grand entrance way, reading “Welcome to Gemstone Magical Academy!”. The Children rush inside to take their seats on a specific side of the room, one being marked with an Emerald, the other being marked with a Ruby.

A Younger Man steps up to an adorned Podium in the center of the room, clearing his throat before speaking.

“Welcome All, New and Returning Students to Gemstone Magical Academy! We Hope that your year here at Gemstone will be filled with lots of learning and growth. Now, enough of the talking, and more of the eating!” He Steps down, and banquets of food appear around the tables. He joins the staff table, watching the students as he eats himself. His eyes appear to be locked on one kid in particular.

The Black Haired Kid was sitting all alone in the corner of the Emerald section. His hands held a Small, Hazel Wood Wand with an Onyx stone embedded in it. He ate shyly, but held a smile on his face as he looked down at his Wand.

“I Hope Reed will be ok this year.” The Man says to himself “I Know his friend Dane is missing, but I’m sure we can track down wherever he went.”

The Fox doesn’t wait around to hear more, turning his back and walking all the way back towards the door. Instead of entering another doorway this time, he decided to walk down the long corridor, the only noise to be heard was the clanging of metal on metal as the Fox’s accessories tap each other.

He walks for a while before arriving at the end of the long room. A Small desk waits at the end, a wooden chair welcoming him to sit down. He steps forwards calmly before seating himself as he looks at the contents of the table.

A Large, closed book sits in the center, its cover reading “Clock’s Journal”. The Fox, Clock picks up a feather and dips it lightly in a well of ink before opening up the book to a clean, fresh page. He takes the small feather in his paws and lightly presses it against the paper, starting to write a brand new story.

## **A Little Bit of Shenanigans, Maybe Even Some Tomfoolery**

By Weston Walsh

A Tall & Slim figure, around 6'4 stands in front of a wooden door, lightly tapping his pawed hand against the smooth oak in a knocking motion. He flicks his feline-like tail slowly in the air as he waits, watching the handle turn slowly. As the door opens, a smile greets him, and a big hug follows.

"Stephan! Thank god you're finally off work. How was the Shift?" The figure says, his dirty brown pelt stuffed into Stephan's Face.

Stephan lifted his head out, slowly pushing away and meeting his dark brown eyes to his friend's olive green.

"It was fine Max." Stephan Brushed off his pants. Just Wish all my Co-Workers weren't Dogs." He sighed. "It's fine though, let's go inside."

Two of them stepped inside, shutting the door with a creek. Stephan Slipped off his shoes, not wanting to ruin the wooden floors inside the cabin.

The place was spacious. A Fireplace sat on the back wall, its flame kept lit by kindle burning inside. A comfy couch sat by it, facing toward the dancing of light. Stephan would know how comfortable that couch was, he'd slept on it more than a few times.

To the left of the cabin, a kitchen was placed. Its countertops glistened in the light of the house. A Sandy Colored Lion was hunched over the wooden table, a grin on his face as his tail lifted in the air.

"Stephan! Good to see you again. It's been too long." He waved with his paw. "Come on, sit down and eat. I made some potato

soup, it's cold out there. Okuno and Mari will be back soon, they just went to grab a bit more firewood."

Stephan and Max made their way over to the table, taking a seat. The Lion presented the two animals with bowls of hot potato soup, topped with freshly cooked bacon. The two barely tasted the meal, devouring it instantly.

"Holy crap Zach, you're so good at cooking."

The Lion, Zach responded with a smile, a purr rumbling in his throat.

"Thanks, man, I do my best. By the way, do any of you know if Scott is coming over? He never misses Halloween."

Scott, the young, enthusiastic, and passionate Red Fox was a close friend of the group. He was an aspiring Engineer and usually didn't spend much time out of his room unless it was with Stephan and the others.

"I heard he was backed up with work, some project with college." Max Replied, flicking his ear.

Suddenly, A Crashing sound could be heard outside, causing Stephan and the group to turn their heads to the door. It opened wide, and two weasel-like creatures burst inside, shutting the door behind them with a loud slam. Their eyes looked panicked and were wide with fear.

"O..Okuno...Mari..What Happened?" Stephan stuttered over his words, utterly surprised at the two's sudden appearance.

Okuno, the Cream Coated ferret stood up on his hind legs and started to explain.

"W...We saw something. I Didn't fully see what it was, b-but it was big, scary, and had huge teeth!" The Ferret Exclaimed, holding his hands up in a pouncing motion.

Mari, who upon closer inspection appears frazzled, her mahogany eyes stretched wide, and her waterproof coat covered in debris. She nods as Okuno speaks, agreeing with everything he says.

"I thought I was going to eat us! So I swam down the river with my life." She shakes, glancing out the windows.

Stephan, watching all this was very confused. A Monster in these words is unlikely, but a predator could've scared the two. But then, if it was a predator it would've chased them, right?

"Are you trying to prank us?" Zach said, his eyes narrowed. "I'm not scared of a little prank, let's go find this creature for ourselves, right Stephan and Max?"

"Well, I'm not-" Zach grabbed Stephan's shirt before he could finish, a grin on his face as he led the Panther toward the door.

"Come on, It'll be fun!" Zach Beamed, his smile reassuring as he opened the cabin's door. "Anyone else coming along?" The Lion asked, looking back at the group.

The others glanced at each other for a moment, before nodding and deciding to follow. If one of them goes, they all go, even if it's frightening.

Zach pushed open the door carelessly, leading the group out. His head twisted and turned as he scanned the clearing, everyone else doing the same.

Stephan couldn't lie, he was a bit scared. He knew it was Halloween and it was probably

some kids playing a prank, but they're in the woods, it could be anything.

For a second, Stephan thought he saw something out of the corner of his eye. An Ear, the white tip of an ear. He tapped Zach's shoulder, pointing toward the brush where he saw the ear.

The Two of them moved closer, peaking over the treeline and into the forest. Nothing. Stephan shook his head, trying to clear his thoughts. Maybe it was just his brain playing tricks on him. Yeah, that was it.

Then Stephan and the group Heard it.

A deep howl cut through the air, like teeth cutting through flesh. It sunk him to the core, filling his chest with dread. He could see similar reactions between his companions, as they all pushed toward each other, forming a tight circle.

Stephan's ear flicked as he picked up rustling in the bushes, swerving back and forth, left and right. He could hear it approach, the noise getting louder. Closer. Closer. Close-

"Boo!" Something leaped at Stephan, and he closed his eyes, preparing for the worst. He heard a snarl, and felt someone strong push him out of the way. After a long-lasting moment, he opened his eyes.

He saw Zach, in the spot he was standing just moments ago facing a Red Fox. The Fox was relaxed, calm and collected despite the situation, and seemed to have a little grin on his face.

"I Scared you all good." The Fox chuckled, his tail waving in the cold, nightly breeze.

Zach's guard dropped, as he let out a sigh of relief. Stephan did the same, realizing that the fox was only Scott.

"Holy Sh..." The two of them said at the same time, catching their breath.

Stephan glanced back toward the party, seeing the same, more relaxed faces he'd grown to know.

"I do have to say though, Mari and Okuno are some tough cookies. I've never seen an otter as brave as you Mari." He smiled and gave the small creature a hug. "Nor a Ferret as brave as you." He patted Okuno on the head.

The Two seemed almost proud of themselves, smiles on their faces as they glanced at each other.

Scott walked over to Zach and Stephan, tapping Stephan's nose, and causing the Panther to sneeze.

"You were both so scared, you have to admit I got you both." He smirked.

"Yeah, You definitely got me." Stephan responded, clearing his throat.

"I guess you did almost scare me, but not enough to make me jump." Zach replied, brushing it off. "I'm never that scared."

Finally, Scott Stepped over to Max, embracing him in a Hug. "Sorry I'm late man, but it was just too good an opportunity to miss." He snorted lightly, amused by his prank.

"Yeah, it was a good setup, I can't deny." Max laughed back, his tail wagging.

Scott let go of his friend and started walking toward the cabin door. "Come on Slowpokes! Let's go have some more fun!"

## **The Scary Neighborhood**

By Alyssa Trafford

On a rainy and cold night before Halloween, a group of girls are sitting on a messy bed, planning on spending the night. One girl's name is Julia. She's 16, the oldest by 2 months, but she acts like she's older by 2 years. She's the most mature and responsible out of the three. The second oldest is Kenzie. She is also 16, but the exact opposite of Julia. She makes plans last minute, always makes jokes, gets bored easily, and has a good amount of energy. The youngest is Alice, and she is super shy. She's 14, the only freshman in the trio. Even though they are all completely different, they are still great friends and have fun times together.

The three girls are watching TV, with the feeling of excitement for tomorrow. Halloween is a holiday they all love. Except for Alice, she gets scared easily, and isn't into scary things "I'm so excited to scare little kids with my possessed Annabel costume," said Kenzie.

"You shouldn't scare little kids Kenzie." Julia replied.

"But that's what Halloween is all about!" Kenzie said. Kenzie loves scaring people. She thinks it is funny. She especially loves scaring Alice, but doesn't go too far with it, because she still cares about her.

Alice joined in, "Halloween is about having fun and dressing up with your friends, not scaring people." They all went on with their day, until it was time to go trick-or-treating. Julia made sure they all had their candy bags

and that they weren't forgetting anything, then she drove off.

"I feel like we go to the same neighborhood every year, it's getting kind of boring. We should try something new," said Kenzie.

Julia, agreeing said, "That's true, but where would we go?"

"What about this neighborhood?" Alice suggested. Julia stopped the car and parked in the street near an empty house.

She then said, "It looks a little empty, but we can give it a try." Kenzie liked this neighborhood because it gave off scary vibes.

Right when Alice said suggested that, she had visions of terrible things that might happen, but it was too late once they parked. As they were walking, they noticed that there were very few Halloween decorations. There may have been some blood, and spiders surrounding houses, but it looked real. They stopped at their first house. Kenzie knocked on the door, excited to see the scary person that might have opened it. Nobody did. It seemed like they weren't home.

"Aww," Kenzie said, frowning.

Julia replied, "It's alright, lets just go to the next house. You'll have plenty of candy, don't worry Kenzie."

"I hope so" Kenzie replied. Suddenly, they hear a scream coming from the house they were just at.

"What was that? I don't like this at all!" Alice says in fear.



Kenzie says, “oooo spooky!” and starts walking back to the house. Julia grabs Kenzie shirt and brings her back,

“Not so fast Kenzie. There’s no one home, and if there was they don’t have candy for us. Let’s knock on this door.”

“Fine...” Kenzie replied. They soon realized that no one was at that house either

. “That’s strange,” said Julia, “is there no one in this neighborhood?” They kept walking to try and find a house that had their lights on. They only found one.

“Finally, someone who’s home. Let’s go!” said Kenzie. Kenzie knocks on the door, and it opens. No one is there.

Alice says, “How did that door just open if there’s no one there?”

“I don’t know, but we better get out of this neighborhood...” Julia said starting to get scared. They start heading back to their car, but its not where they parked. The car had disappeared. There was no service on any of their phones, so they couldn’t call or text anyone. So, they kept walking for what felt like an hour, but it was really 20 minutes.

The houses just kept going on and on with no way out. “Julia, we have been walking for so long, I don’t think we’re finding the car.” Said Kenzie.

Julia replied, “We need to find it! This neighborhood is creeping me out and it feels like there’s no way out!”

“Are we going to die out here?” said Alice.

“Of course we aren’t going to die, we are getting closer to the car.” Julia said, trying to calm Alice down. Julia knew she wasn’t

going to find the car. She was sure of where she parked it and it wasn’t there.

They were all exhausted because it of how long they were walking around, trying to find a way out. Alice started to cry. “I just want to go home!” she said. The truth was, they all did. At this point, Kenzie saw that maybe they weren’t going to make it. That some sort of ghost haunt them in that neighborhood forever. This was the first time in a long time where Kenzie started to get scared. She almost forgot the feeling. They all lost hope, even Julia. She was considering that they spend the night on someone’s porch, and hope that maybe their parents would notice they’re gone and send someone to find them.

Instead, a light clicked on. This time, there was a shadow in the window. They had no other option but to knock on that door. “That could be a ghost, I don’t want to go up to that house.” Said Alice.

“We have no other option. That could be someone who shows us the way out of here.” Replied Kenzie.

Julia agreed, “She’s right, lets give it a try.” They walked over and knocked. An old lady opened it, confused.

“What are you girls doing in this neighborhood?” asked the lady, “You need to leave!”

“We came here to trick-or-treat, and now we’re stuck. We really need your help getting out.” Said Julia.

“I know the way out... but only you girls can escape.” The lady said. She had been stuck there for 17 years now, un-able to leave the neighborhood. Once you enter the neighborhood and stay there for 24 hours, you are stuck there for eternity. This was all caused by a ghost. A spirit of someone who

got murdered. The spirit now guards the neighborhood and blocks those who enter. The old lady didn't want the three girls to have to go through the same thing. She led them to a cemetery gate, which was the gate to exit. The girls thanked the old lady and said their goodbyes.

"I'm so sorry this happened to you. Are you sure there's nothing else we can do for you?" Asked Alice.

"A curse is a curse. It cannot be broken by someone else. I'll be alright on my own." Said the lady. So, the three said their goodbyes, and rushed out. Julia's car was parked at the cemetery. "My car!" she said. Time had reversed by 4 hours, the amount of time they were trapped. It was like they were never there. They finally got their Halloween night back and got to trick-or-treat. Everyone was warned not to enter the neighborhood because of the curse. So, no one did. Kenzie got all the candy she wanted, Alice now has less fear and more bravery, and Julia can go home safe to her family. Everyone is happy.

## Home

By Isabel Nangle

I've watched my home burn or crumble to the ground on many more occasions than one.

My house has always been somewhere with a cracked foundation, shingles missing from the roof, and a front door with a Jammed lock.

It never could quite withstand the weather, rain would sleep through the cracks, wind knocking in the windows.

Over time I came to find some sort of peace within the ever long chaos. I thrived in it. It powered my will and my way; calm became a zone of soon to be disaster.

Then you came along.

You took me from the doorstep and led me down a moonlit path of somewhere else. away from what I'd always known. through creeks with steam that led down to the points of the ocean. Along highways that ran fast with the adrenaline pumping my toes.

You laid my head in a room that held a loving embrace. In a house that's roof stayed in one place. That's floor didn't fall in every other day.

That's why when it came time to walk out your door for the last time it lingered open. I'd exit always looking back, running to save you from the fiery home you once helped me escape.

Only when we began to strike the walls and blow holes through the ceiling did I realize I could no longer find the solitude in that same room.

Reality finally began to set when even the walls that always greeted me kindly turned their back.

I had to shut the door behind me this time, journey back to my original broken shack and find my own way out.

I had to walk the roads alone.