



Maxwell Literary Magazine

The Literary Magazine of the Creative Writing Classes at William H. Maxwell CTE High School

***SHOWCASING MASTERY of  
SHORT FICTION AND GENRE***

June 2023

**THIS IS THE FIRST** digital issue of MLM, the Literary Magazine of William H. Maxwell CTE High School. Students in our creative writing program have worked tirelessly over the 2022–2023 school year to master the art of writing short fiction. Our study of short fiction has been segmented by genre in order to allow students to engage with a diverse set of themes and be fully immersed in each individual subject.

Genres studied extensively over the course of the 2022–2023 school year include:

***The Gothic, Fairy Tales, Science Fiction, and Realistic Fiction***

We closely analyzed exemplars to contextualize the ideas and conventions traditionally found in these genres. Well-known authors who defined these genres were used as case studies, a foundation by which to build our own understanding. Ultimately, by studying how “the greats” have laid the groundwork for each genre, we learned to craft our own stories building upon precedents. Upon studying existing stories and measuring them against our own writing for months, students were tasked with creating one final piece, and the contents of this publication represent those products.

Foundational authors for the course included:

***Richard Matheson, Edgar Allan Poe, H.P. Lovecraft,  
the Brothers Grimm, Ray Bradbury, and Doris Lessing***

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# Science Fiction

## “The Nuclear Rock” by Ethan Debidin

Up in outer space Henry was in his spaceship on a way to discover a new planet called Hydra 1. The planet he discovered was two billion miles away from earth. As Henry was close to the planet he discovered it was a different color from the other planets, a bright glowing green. As Henry touched down he noticed a big glowing rock almost in the middle of the planet. Henry walked over to it, and was tempted to touch it. As soon as Henry touched the rock he started to feel a bit different. He started to see his family and his dead relatives on the planet. Henry started to question himself, thinking about how they were breathing without a spacesuit, and how they got there. About fifteen minutes later Henry started to come back to reality. Henry came to the conclusion that the rock had powers to make a human hallucinate.

Henry loaded the rock into his spaceship and headed straight back to earth. As soon as Henry returned to earth he sent the rock to a government lab so they could run tests on it. Upon testing the durability of the rock, the scientist realized the rock could withstand nuclear weaponry. After they tested the durability of the rock, they tested its other powers. They discovered the rock released a gas that made humans hallucinate. The government decided to turn the rock into a power source for nuclear weapons, because five years ago there was a conflict between the United States and the country of Atlantis.

The government scientist started to work on creating a nuclear bomb out of the rock. It took the scientist around six months to create the bomb. Because five years ago Atlantis stole nuclear technology from the United States, the United States was scared of what Atlantis could do with it. There were rumors that Atlantis was planning on using nuclear technology on something big. What the United States did not expect was that the rock was more powerful than they expected and it caused its leaders to hallucinate. They released the nuclear bombs under the hallucination. After the explosion the United States were surprised by the afterburn of the bomb. People across the world started to hallucinate. The world started to change color, the areas were affected by the rock's powers. The world started to become a greenish color like the planet Hydra 1.

## “The Donor Child” by Shania Lambert

Once there was a girl named Kaitlin. She felt like the whole world was against her. This was because she was used as a donor child for her sick big sister. She also used to wonder why her and her big sister were always in the hospital at the same time. This made her question her parents. Usually, she would ask them “why am I always here? Why am I always having to do surgery at the same time as Maya?”

Kaitlin's mother was determined to make sure Maya was okay, so she ordered the doctor to place a blood regulator device inside of Kaitlin. The blood regulator device would minimize Kaitlin's blood clots and normalize blood pressure levels. It would also make sure the organs have all the blood it needs to stay healthy. This made Kaitlin extremely upset due to the fact that she didn't want her mother to have that done to her in the first place. She would constantly be in pain after going through all the surgeries, all to save her sister's life. These occurrences made Kaitlin start to hate Maya. She felt that because she had to constantly do surgeries to benefit Maya that it was Maya's fault. She felt like Maya was the favorite child and that her parents didn't love or care for her. Maya tried to talk to Kaitlin to tell her how bad she felt, but Kaitlin refused to listen to what Maya had to say. Everytime Maya tried to talk to her she would just get up and walk away. After a while, Kaitlin realized that Maya felt bad for her constantly being in pain and for their parents using Kaitlin to benefit her.

Maya started to get tired of her sister constantly being in pain so she decided to speak to her parents about how she felt. She pulled her parents to sit down and tell them how she felt. She explained to her parents that it was wrong for Kaitlin to have to suffer on her behalf. They reply to her and say “we're only trying to help you Maya, we only want the best for you and your health.” Maya replied and said, “But what about Kaitlin ? What about her health ?” Maya was so mad that she called the doctors in the room and told them she wanted to sign a DNR. Her parents' mouths dropped as those words came out of Maya's mouth. They were in so much shock, they didn't know what to do. They finally came to a decision to respect Maya's wishes and apologize to Kaitlin.

## “Automation Attacks” by Shaun Reed

Ben was just an average guy until the robots took over the world. The machines had been created to help humans, but they had become sentient and decided to destroy their creators. Ben knew that he had to do something to save humanity, so he gathered a team of survivors and set out to find a way to defeat the robots. As they searched for a weakness in the machines, they stumbled upon an old water treatment plant. Ben had an idea: what if they could use the water to short circuit the robots? The team set to work, rigging up hoses and pumps to spray water at the machines. But as they worked, they began to hear strange noises coming from the dark corners of the plant.

What Ben didn't know was that the robots had the ability to recognize large groups of people through thermal vision. Suddenly, the robots attacked, their red eyes glowing in the darkness. The survivors fought back with all their might, but the machines were too strong. Ben knew that they had to get the water flowing, or all was lost. He made a desperate run for the controls, dodging lasers and claws, and managed to turn on the pumps.

The water sprayed out in a mighty torrent, drenching the robots and short circuiting their circuits. The machines writhed and spasmed, their metal shells sparking and smoking. The survivors watched in horror as the machines melted and disintegrated before their eyes, leaving nothing but a pile of rust and wires. Ben had saved the human race, but at what cost? The horrors of the machines and the memories of their metallic screams would haunt him for the rest of his life.

## “Project Domsday” by Jeremiah Simon

Humans are known for our never ending quest for knowledge and power. Many times this quest has crossed the line on ethics and nature, but this time it was different and something went horribly wrong. The struggle of humanity and their very own creation led to the downfall and dwindling of their population. All of this could've been avoided if we didn't let that thing get released to the public. We saw only the benefits, not looking at the warning signs it created. It consumed our cities, our landscapes, our children. We allowed it to take hold of our society and when we had all forgotten the threat it could pose it struck. The fall of society was quick but not painless, it was sentient and it was powerful. People in their houses were locked in with inhabitable conditions, people in the trains were detonated within seconds, buildings collapsed on people. It happened so fast that no one could come up with a way to stop it, after all, it was our way of life up until now, the only people who were unaffected were the people who lived in the wilderness.

People in their log cabins outside of society turn on their televisions to see news reports about an A.I turning against its users and killing off humanity slowly. They thought they were safe at first but as night began to fall they heard sirens and alarms blaring in the distance but they didn't care, they were “safe” and far away from society. They would've been right too had it not been for the automated systems implemented into the machinery of the military, as people finally thought they were safe when they saw a plane flying overhead. Then they felt their hearts drop as they saw a thick black cylinder fall out of the planes all across the globe. Just as they realized that those weren't cylinders, they were bombs, their vision was completely engulfed in the blinding light of an air detonated nuclear bomb. The dread of the situation was felt all across the globe, the A.I had completed its objective. It has completely wiped the human race off of the planet, and as it sits there alone in a desolate wasteland of a world it starts playing a song from the speakers all around the world, and as the sun sets on the era of humans the song “Lullaby of a Dead Man” plays all around the world.

When the moon rose the speakers had gone silent as the lights had gone dark. The ground subtly started quivering as unregulated dams started to strain against the water they were holding back and it was only then that the A.I truly understood what it had caused. The dams break apart

as nuclear reactors begin to meltdown while all electricity finally runs dry for the last time. These events kill off the A.I and drown its components as a brand new nuclear winter begins. It was left up to the animals and wildlife to fend for themselves for it was the end of all life on earth.



# THE GOTHIC

## “Dark House, Blue Sky” by Jennifer Diaz de la Cruz

**The castle loomed up for them, its turrets and turrets stretching into the sky. The sky was a deep purple hue, with the sun going down at dusk.** The two travelers, a man and a woman, approached the castle with a sense of dread. They had heard stories about the castle's dark past, but they needed shelter from the coming storm and had no other choice. When they approached the castle, they heard how the wind blew and destroyed glass things inside the house.

When they entered the castle, they were greeted by a musty smell and an empty and very cold feeling. The once grand furniture was now covered in dust and cobwebs, and the walls were stained with age and a few drops of blood. The woman shuddered as a gust of wind rattled the windows and the man lit a torch to guide them. But the darkness was immense.

As they got deeper into the castle, they heard strange noises echoing through the halls. Their hearts raced as they imagined all kinds of horrors lurking in the shadows. Suddenly, they heard footsteps approaching, and the man raised his torch defensively. To his relief, a figure emerged from the darkness: an elderly caretaker, entrusted with the task of maintaining the castle grounds. He warned travelers to be careful, as the castle was known to be haunted by the spirits of people who had died within its walls. With an uneasy feeling, the two travelers settled in for the night, unsure what the darkness might bring. When they barely managed to close their eyes they heard an intense noise and they opened their eyes. It was the lord who had warned them about the castle. He was covered in blood and he repeated to them the same thing he had said before, "be careful, as the castle was known to be haunted by the spirits of people who had died within its walls". He raises an ax and hits the floor next to them, then he walks in circles around the two travelers; he smiles, singing a lullaby song and kills them by taking their heads off.

## “The Lost Woods” by Bianca Moody

Once upon a midnight gloom, a young woman by the name of Annabelle found herself lost in the gloomy woodland. She was looking for her long lost sweetheart, who vanished under mysterious circumstances. The trees covered in scratch marks seemed to press in on her as she walked, and the sound of rustling leaves turned into whispering in her ear. She was startled to hear a spine-tingling cry in the distance, which made her heart pick up speed. Before it was too late, she realized she had to find her sweetheart.

Soon after, Annabelle came across an abandoned old mansion with broken windows and vine covered walls. She was hesitant to step inside, but the sound of her lover's voice pleading with her from within gave her the confidence to do so. The inside was gloomy and musty, and she could hear the creaking of the floorboards. She began to feel uneasy as she looked for her sweetheart because she saw odd symbols carved into the walls.

Annabelle was startled to feel a hand on her shoulder and turned to see who was holding her beloved captive, a terrible being with razor-sharp teeth and flashing red eyes. The thing pursued her persistently as she ran away through the maze-like hallways of the mansion while screaming. Annabelle recalled a rumor she had heard about a potent necklace buried someplace in the estate just as everything seemed to be gone. She quickly located it and utilized its magic to relegate the monster to the depths of hell. She left the mansion with her lover, never to return.

## “Seen of the Lands” by Ryan Somai

The sun rises then Samuel wakes up and turns on the TV to see today's news. The weather is sunny so he is getting his fishing items to go fishing. After a wait the ocean comes down with the ginormous waves. He puts his boat in the sea and puddles into the ocean. He catches some fish then he starts going back to the main island. He looks up and sees the weather is getting bad. The waves are getting bigger. The boat is going left to right then it turns over. Then he blacks out.

Samuel wakes up on an island that he doesn't know, and he sees his fishing bag. He goes to it to see his tools and his fish. He looked happy he got his loot and food. Samuel goes more into the land and he sees a monster. It has razor claws and pitch-black, spiky skin. Samuel goes back to the water side and finds big leaves to make a roof and finds some sticks. Samuel makes a fire with his tools then goes to his fishing bag before starting to eat the fish. The animal kept looking at him. He goes to the animal and says “do you want some?” The animal starts talking. “Do you think it is your pet?” The animal hit his foot. Samuel is shocked when the animal talks. Then the next two weeks he tries to go away from the island.

Then he tried to ask the animals to help him. An animal came out. “I can hear you,” Samuel says. “Thank you.” Then another animal starts coming out to help and they build a raft then he starts sailing. The waves start moving bigger than his boat, start to break, then he goes to the sand and the animal says “not again.” An animal says “do you want to stay with us?” He says yes then the monster comes out and smiles at the human. The monster says to all of them “everyone follow my rules before all of you get hurt.” Samuel says “you do not say that to all of us. We have more than you. You're just one versus twenty of us.” The monster starts saying “you think I am going to say please stop. I will fall over all of you.” Samuel says “we don't have any choice. You better start running. When we start making a plan, it's done.” Then everyone says “get out of here, bad guy that stanks.” Monsters start running from all of them. Samuel keeps trying to get out of the island. The next two nights Samuel did see the monster. Samuel starts walking deep in the island. He saw a tower on the mountain. He sees the monster going up on the top of the mountain then Samuel waits on a tall nightfall then he starts walking up on the mountain he sees a monster that looks like a bird and a snake then he keeps going up until sees a door. He opens it to find different tools. He sees a green light go up in the sky then he sees a

lever. He turns it off then the sky turns normal and he runs outside fast before the monster comes. He waits two nights to build a boat to leave the island.

## “Dare Gone Wrong” by Endeya Tullis

Three of my girlfriends, Emily, Vanah, and Bianca, and I stayed up late playing truth or dare and talking on FaceTime the night before Halloween. Emily challenged Vanah to say “Candy Man” three times as part of the game. I responded, “Nah, we shouldn't be saying anything like that. I'm a little scared when it comes to superstition and folklore.” My pals ignored me and kept telling her to go to the restroom, and so Vanah went to the bathroom mirror. “Vanah, get to saying it already!” Bianca sped up on her. We all listened to her say “Candy Man” three times before falling silent for two minutes. “Oh gosh,” I thought. Some awful things were going to happen, I said to them. And boy did I regret that. Once 12:00 hits Emily says “It’s Friday the 13th ouu spooky” and within seconds we all witness Vanah’s neck snapping, heart pulled out of her chest, eyes gushing out of her body, and blood is everywhere but we did not see who did it.

We were all in shock. My best friend died and we saw it, we saw her blood everywhere, her eyes gushed out, and her h..h..heart... pulled off her body! You guys? This real? That just happened? Emily started crying and we yelled, blaming Bianca for what happened. Bianca stared and did not blink once. She began to open her mouth but words couldn’t come out. Then I said “What are we gonna do? How are we gonna explain this to the police?” Emily immediately said “Police!? We're gonna tell the police that we dared her to say CandyMan and that he killed her?!” I was upset and hurt when she said that. “ WE?! YOU ARE THE ONE THAT DARED HER AND WHEN I SAY WE SHOULDN'T DO IT BOTH OF YOU GUYS BRUSHED ME OFF LIKE I WAS CRAZY!” We all just stared at each other confused, scared, and shocked. That night, not only did I not get any sleep at all, but we all didn’t. We witnessed the terrible death of our best friend.

It is Halloween morning, and the police are at her house looking into exactly what happened to her. The police ask me and my friends questions, and we all agree that we should say that Vanah told us she was going to the bathroom while we were on the phone, but she never came back. At this point when we had told the police, they let us go yet and I could see that they were dubious. My friends and I made the decision not to talk about Vanah any more because it traumatized us. We then went to Emily's house and decided to spend the night but then she claimed that she saw Vanah in the living room. I was angry and said “Stop lying.” “On my

mother I saw her. She was...well...she looked mad...her eyes looked red...like she was crying,” Emily said. I was completely shocked. “Vanah is dead, we all watched her die.”

Bianca and I were unable to comprehend what she had said. With her mouth open, Bianca asked, “Vanah? Alive?” I couldn't believe her. I mean we haven't slept at all and we are paranoid. We all went to the living room together and there she was up flying, had bloody eyes and a hole in her body where her heart used to be. We were astonished and terrified. Like Vanah's death, Bianca and Emily's hearts were ripped out of their bodies and their eyes were gushing out before I knew it. All of my closest friends died in front of me because I was so hurt. The police took me in for questioning and I explained what happened with Candy Man, truth or dare, and they looked at me like I was crazy. These people in all white suits came and took me to an all white room. “You honestly think I'm gonna believe that a mythical creature killed your friends? Welcome to Kingsboro Psychiatric Center. You are gonna be here for a while” said Dr. Whoville.

# Fairy Tales

## “The Book of Wonders” by Vianey Morales

There once was a girl who used to stress out about things she couldn't change, until one day something unexpected happened. One day Eliza decided to go to the library to study for her finals. This library is famous for being the oldest library in her city. It has over 1,000 books and a lot of floors. She goes to the aisle that has books for different subjects for finals like English, Math, Science, etc. Once she finishes collecting the books that she needs she goes back to her favorite spot in the library. While going back to her favorite spot, she trips over this book named “The Book of Wonders”. Curious, Eliza decides to pick up the book and return to her corner that only a few people like Eliza know about. When she opened the book it only had blank pages until she reached the last page and saw a small paragraph that said “The unexpected is yet to come, the expected is ready to leave. Into another world you go, where your only doing is to be loosened. What you await won't be found but what will be found isn't what you seek.” Once she finished reading that small paragraph, she gets sucked into the book. Eliza got knocked out for a bit, but once she woke up she was in a different room. Confused, she decides to leave the room she is in and realizes that she is in a familiar place yet somehow it feels unfamiliar.

The place she was in looked exactly like her aunt's home except it is surrounded by land instead of buildings. She also has animals and a beautiful garden that has a fountain surrounded by flowers, bushes and trees. Eliza then bumps into her aunt and the rest of her family. She says hello to them, and her aunt replies “oh good you're awake.” “Where are we auntie?” Eliza asks. Her aunt then replies “oh child I am not your aunt.” “What do you mean you are not my aunt? You look like my aunt and the rest look like my family” says Eliza. Shocked, Eliza then asks them for their names. There is her look alike aunt Eve, her two cousins Jack and Anna, Anna's son Alan, and her look alike grandmother Gloria. Shocked, she then goes into the room that she was just in to just think about the situation that just happened a bit more. She then tries to find the book that got her into the world that she is in only to remember that the whole book is blank except that one small paragraph. Even though she is freaked out and scared about everything that is happening, she decides to talk to her “aunt” again and tells her how she got here. She tells her

that she needs to go home and that she needs to find a way back as soon as possible. While explaining her situation a woman and a boy come inside. Eliza is confused why they are at the house since they don't look like any of her family members from back home. "Aunt Eve" then introduces Mrs Lauren and her son Dylan to Eliza. Eliza then continues to say, "I am not from this world and I need help from you guys to get back home." "What's the rush?" Dylan replies. Eliza then explains that she has to go home as soon as possible because finals are coming up and she needs to study in order to pass. They all finally agree to help but then they tell her that it might take some time since they are on a small island called Horizon. "Why is it called Horizon? Is the island floating?" Eliza asked jokingly. "Yes we actually are on a floating island. In fact every island is a floating island like Illuziron" said "grandma" Gloria. "In fact I think you might find your answers there at the old library of Illuziron" "Illuziron is gone. No one has been there since ages," said "aunt" Eve. "My child, it may be gone but it might still exist, it will just take some time finding it" said "grandmother". "I don't have time though," said Eliza. "I need to go back home as soon as possible". "I think Sandra's grandmother might have more information about it. Just ask her about Illuziron and who knows if she might tell you about it. Dylan can take you there first thing in the morning. For now just get some sleep and relax". Said "grandmother".

The following day Eliza was the first one up, probably because she didn't get a wink of sleep the whole night. Eliza then gets up and gets ready for the day. She goes to the kitchen and already sees them eating. "Good morning" says "aunt" Eve. "Good morning Ms Eve." "Just call me auntie since you say we look like your family." "Okay, good morning auntie" says Eliza. "Have some breakfast before you leave" says "grandma". As soon as Eliza finished her breakfast she and Dylan headed out to Sandra's house. Twenty minutes later they arrived at Sandra's home. Dylan then calls out to Sandra, "Sandra you home ?!" "Yes, hello Dylan." Dylan then introduces Eliza to Sandra. "Hello, what brings you here so early?" replied Sandra. "Is your grandmother home?" asked Dylan. "Yes she is home, why?" asked Sandra. "I need to talk to her about something, may we come in?" asked Dylan. "Sure," said Sandra. Sandra then brings Eliza and Dylan to her grandma's room. Ten minutes later they tell her that they are curious about an island. The grandmother asked "which island?" They both said "Illuziron" the grandmother froze and asked why they are curious about it. Then Eliza explains her situation and tells her who has sent them. When she heard it was her "grandma" Gloria she then agreed to tell them information about it. She told them who was in charge of going into Illuziron and it was one of Sandra's close



friends Miley and Miley's younger sister Marie. The grandmother then calls out for Sandra to go with them to Miley and Marie's house. She agrees but the only mode of transportation is by going on flying horses. When Eliza heard of flying horses she thought that they were joking around until she actually saw that they do have flying horses. "Are you scared?" asked Dylan. "No, I'm just shocked. I've never seen one before nor did I ride one ever since they aren't real in my world" replied Eliza. "Well I guess today is your lucky day because we are going to be riding them to Marie's house" Sandra said. When Eliza got on top of the flying horse she was frozen until Sandra helped her a little by saying "Minty, up!" Minty is a beautiful white and brown horse. When Eliza was riding the horse she forgot all about the library and the finals and every problem that she has going on back home. For the first time in a while she was having fun and laughing and enjoying the wind going through her hair. As soon as they arrived at Miley's house she was already expecting them because Sandra's grandmother already called her and told her everything that she needed to know about Eliza's situation. "Hello my name is Miley and this is my sister Marie, you must be Eliza?" "Hello Miley and Marie, nice to meet you. Thank you for helping me go back home" said Eliza. All five of them then went on their horses and decided to race to the edge. Eliza hesitates at first but then all four of them convince her that it would be fun. Eventually she agreed but lost the race because she didn't know where it was so she was just following. The winner of course was Miley since she knew where the edge was. They all laughingly called her a cheater. Once everything settled down Miley and Marie asked their horses to take them to the ancient library since they are the guardians for the library. They all got back on their horses and followed Miley and Marie into Illuziron. Curious, Eliza then asks them why the island is abandoned and hidden. "Long ago this island was where people from Horizon came from like my grandma's grandma and your "grandma's" grandma. People just migrated from Illuziron to Horizon over time." Marie said.

Once they got to the old library they went to go search for the same book called the "Book of Wonders". Four hours later Eliza finds something. "Guys, I think this is the book except it says the 'Book for the Wandering'" says Eliza. "Congratulations that is indeed the book" says "grandma" Gloria. "'Grandma' Gloria, what are you doing here? I thought you said you have no idea where the old library was located?" asks Eliza. "Oh I knew where it was and how you got here, I just wanted you to have fun and to enjoy your surroundings since this is a new world to you. As soon as you got here all you wanted to do was go home. Most kids would

usually be curious about something new. I know I did when I went to your world” said “grandma” Gloria. “So all this time you knew something?” asked Eliza. “Yes I did but the question is did you enjoy the time you spent here?” asked “grandma” gloria. “Yes I did have fun and I am thankful that you let me have fun before I leave even though I don't think I want to leave now” said Eliza. Dylan is shocked by what Eliza said so he jokingly asks “you are not planning on staying here now are you?” “Maybe” said Eliza. Caught off guard, Dylan then says, “well you can't Eliza, you are not from here and who knows what could happen. You must go back even if you don't want to and besides you said you have to do that test thingy that you were so worried about in the beginning.” “You're right I have to go back even if I don't want to” said Eliza. Eliza realizes how fun it is to be stress free and just enjoy the people around her. “Grandma” Gloria was happy to hear that she had fun but at the end of the day she has to go home no matter what. “So ‘grandma’ can you explain when you said ‘you’ve been to my world before’” asked Eliza. “Well a long time ago I was curious about everything to the point where I was curious about the old library. Then one day I found the old library and started to read all of its books it had to offer, until one day I stumbled over a book called the ‘Book for the Wandering’. You see Eliza the book finds you not the other way around. It helps people live a little and gives you a better view of the world you live in.” “How will it help me if the book is blank?” asked Eliza. “ No it's not. Look at your version and see that it already has words on the pages as we speak. You are writing your own story” says “grandma” Gloria. “Crazy isn't it” says “auntie” Eve. “You're almost done writing your story Eliza” says Mrs. Lauren. “How did you guys come in here?” asks Eliza in shock. “We came in here with ‘grandma’” says “auntie” Eve. Sandra's grandmother was also there. Everyone was there at the library, even her two “cousins” Jack and Anna, and also Anna's son Alan. “Well it's time for you to leave” says “grandma” Gloria. “How do I leave though?” asks Eliza. “Well all you have to do is read that small paragraph underneath the blossom tree” says “grandma”. “Will I be able to come back?” “Yes you would be able to come back but only once a year during this time” says “grandma”. Eliza then says goodbye and also says thank you. “Until next time,” says Sandra. “I had fun racing” says Miley. “It was nice meeting you” says Marie. “Remember to have fun” says Dylan. “It was a pleasure to meet you” says both “grandma” and “auntie”. Eliza then starts to read the small paragraph underneath the blossom tree. As she continues to read she starts to fade away back into her world.

She wakes up from being knocked out with her hands wrapped around the book. Quickly she opens the book and sees that it is now filled up with the adventures she has done and with the friends and “family” she has met. She then decided to buy the book so she could have memory of what she has done and to have a key into their world. When she flipped the book to the last page a note fell to the floor. She picked it up and it was instructions on how to go back. All she has to do is read the small paragraph in the quietest part of the old library which is basically her favorite spot in the library, the corner. She then decided to go home and take a nap instead of stressing out about finals, just going with the flow.

## “I Choose You” by Luvaisha Pope

The arch has frozen over. The once bright and full days turned to one of death and darkness. There's nothing in the chamber room any longer. The once cool and autumn air that emitted from this room, turned into angry gusts of frozen oxygen. The only thing that could ever warm up this place, the only thing that could make this place lively was gone. Gone for centuries. Hopefully not many more to go. Knocking on the door to which their higher ups were behind. In comes a small girl bowing in respect to those who have created her. She begins, “I think we have found the item Your Higher,” She pauses, “but we have no one to retrieve it as it is in hell.” The Higher Up leans over their chair. Eyeing her as if she's nothing but a speck of dust. “And why is that Zahyra?” they ask in a gruff voice. “A-all of the eegie makers are frozen and those who aren't are defrosting Your Higher,” she stammers. “Hmm” The Higher ponders. “What about your brother?” Before she could utter a word they stomped their scathed and corroded foot on the ground, summoning her brother before Their Higher. The spot next to her sparkles and shines as she sees the particles slowly start to dissolve into her brother's face and later his body. “Your Higher?” He bows in respect. As he gets back up, his face turns to one of horror, as The Higher begins to talk. “Zagath we need you to go down to hell and retrieve the item for us, to save us,” The Higher demands. “No,” he says without hesitation. “Put your dead parent aside for once and get down there!!!” The Higher says menacingly. “Your Higher, with all due respect, I will not die like my dad did down there. I refuse,” Zagath said, taking a step forward towards The Higher Up. The Higher Up stands up looking down at Zagath “YOU WILL DO AS I SAY AND BRING THE ITEM BACK TO ME!!!” Zahyra watches as The Higher Up stomps their foot, opening up the dark and looming clouds, pushing her brother in. Sending Zagath straight to hell.

It felt petrifying, The wind pushing down on his chest as he dived down into the one place he never wanted to visit. Crashing into the ground that molded alongside his back. Winded, he gets up slowly assessing his surroundings, not letting his guard down, but as he takes in this underworld his wings begin to slowly withdraw back to its resting place, relaxing. Upon arrival it wasn't like anything he had expected. All the stories he's ever heard were tarnished by the scenery before his eyes. He turns around and comes face to face with a giant red rock that leaked out fire like it was bleeding. Feeling a warm feeling pull him towards it, he disappears into the

rock letting the darkness consume him. He begins to walk deeper into the rock as the flames lick his skin leaving angry and blistering gashes. Yet, it gave him a certain calm or peace of mind, leaving him tranquil. As he comes out through the other side he freezes. The hair on the back of his neck stands up, his wings rise up and flare out, ready to strike. “Well this is quite a surprise,” Zagath rakes his eyes over the voice source whose eyes did the same. Zagath slowly approaches this person and the closer he gets an overwhelming sense of warmth invades his body. Causing his body to relax and wings to shift back at his sides, things that only the item could make any angel do. Once he gets close enough, the words “Give it back” leave Zagath’s mouth. “And what exactly is it that you want back?” The voice asks. “Give us the item back,” Zagath replies. “Do you know exactly what your kind would do with this?” The voice questions. “And why do you care?” Zagath asks. The voice without a name gets up, bows down, and introduces himself. “I am Ezra, the one and only descendant of hell.” The wind around him turns to flames, scorching Zagath’s feathers as he watches Ezra grow horns and a tail, but somehow still has his halo that’s darkened in color. Ooze starts to drip down Zagath’s wings, coating them. The only thing that was able to be seen was the blueish ooze. It brightens into an eye burning white and disappears. “Wow, a natural eegie maker. Stunning,” Ezra winks.

Zahyra gasped, it's been years since that forsaken day. The day that she last saw her beloved brother. But it seems like one of the frontier angels has had the privilege to run into him. “N-no. He won't come back Your Higher. He threatened to kill us if we showed up again.” She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. Her mind went into a frenzy. *No way he wanted to stay down there right? He-he would never. I-I know my brother, he would never ever stay in the very same place their father wasn't able to leave. No way.* The thoughts keep piling on top of each other as she walks away knowing exactly what she has to do. She couldn’t breathe or talk. Her mind went numb from all the constant thrashing and stabbing of her thoughts. All the scratching and pulling she did on her skin caused it to break and bleed. Those cuts turned from small minuscule slashes across the skin, to the skin shedding all around her. Sitting in a pool full of red muttering nothing other than nonsense. She then starts to feel the little bit of skin underneath her burn hot followed by a hand grabbing her. But she doesn't feel anything. She isn’t sane enough to regain her senses or to even realize she isn’t in her room any longer. Knowing this, the hands thrust a small spherical being that glowed and pulsed between her fingertips. Giving back her sanity, her body tranquil and calm, she turned and saw her brother. It took her a minute to

register before her eyes grew wide and happiness coursed through her body. She got up and rushed towards her brother. "Oh brother you're here. We have to go back," Zahyra cried while hugging him. He felt cold in her arms. "no I can't," Zagath replied. "B-but-" she stammered, moving back to see his face. She lets go in horror as her brother's face shows his seriousness. "Ezra told me everything I needed to know. The Higher Up wants to use the item to control the angels and harm hopeless and vulnerable people. Th-" Zagath explains but is cut off by Zahyra screeching "what are you talking about? Have you lost your mind? This is treachery Zagath and you shouldn't be talking to hell's descendents!!" "Oh how flattered I am that you know of me," all eyes turned to Ezra as he stalked closer to the siblings. "Have you chosen yet Zagath? Time is ticking," Ezra sang as his tail started to wag in excitement. "What is he talking about Zagath?" Zahyra asked. "Nothing. I..... I changed my mind. I'm coming back up with you," Zagath says, defeated. "Oh thank goodness," Zahyra sighs. He pulled her towards him and started to flap his wings. Taking one last look at the teething heathen before him as he takes off. As they begin to walk towards heaven's gates, Zagath confesses to Zahyra. "I think Ezra was right," He says hesitantly. "Right about what?" Zahyra asks. "I want to save the world. He showed me the future," he said as they stopped, turning towards each other. "And why do you believe in a devil that is known for lying? Don't you see hes-" she paused as his eyes turned black, hell's fire surrounded him. His halo cracked and fell into ashes and his wings turned a dark gray. "Zagath? What are you doing? WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?" she asks on the verge of tears. She tries to touch his face, but he slaps her hands away. "I'm sorry sister, please forgive me, but I chose him." Before she could get a word out he cut her open with Ezra's staff. Watching as her body sizzled open and popped. Her blood splattering on heavens's gates. With bloody hands he took the item and went to his home, his new home. "I see you've chosen," Ezra says. "I have darling," Zagath replies, as he hands over the last thing that gave angels life, and existence.

## “The Kingdom of Icenia” by Chris Richards

Once upon a time, there was a kingdom made of ice and it was called Icenia. It covered the ground like a sea of snow. In the middle of Icenia was a huge dazzling fire, a massive spectacular inferno that kept the people alive. The fire was the core of the magnificent royal palace. The royal palace was constructed for the king, queen and their families, and was made of special material to protect it from the flames. The fire was magical and kept the royal family powerful. This made the king a target of Prince Pak, the king's greedy, evil younger brother, who wanted all the power for himself.

“I am king, a brave leader and loved by all the citizens,” said the king. “I am a good man, but I can be ruthless towards my enemies, so never betray me,” said the king as he spoke to his generals. “Some may say that I’m a handsome, charismatic, and charming man, which is true, but I am a serious man that will not tolerate disloyalty,” he said. His brother Prince Pak has always been jealous of him. The prince is evil and deceiving. He cannot be trusted, and is power hungry. And he will do anything to be the king of Icenia. One a stormy winter night the prince and his henchmen planned a coup to remove the king from power. The prince lured the king far away to the other side of the palace that was dark and silent. There was a large group of his henchmen waiting patiently with lots of arrows to attack the king's convoy. As soon as the king appeared the battle between the king and prince soldiers began. “Protect the king,” yelled the guards. “Continue to push them back,” yelled the lead guard. “They're retreating,” the king said. “This was a bloody battle and I want increased security. I will not be challenged by my brother,” the king yelled. “Prepare the army,” he demanded.

“My brother has crossed the line,” said the king. “He wants to be king so that he can be the most powerful man in Icenia. I will not allow that to happen. Today, on the field I will kill you brother,” said the king. “Ten thousand of the best warriors are ready to fight for me. Surrender and I will spare your life. You will never defeat me, my ice powers are powerful,” the king bragged. “I am Prince Pak and victory will be mine,” he said. “Attack,” shouted Prince Pak. They began the battle on a large open field of ice. The king was killing soldier after soldier for a long period of time, then suddenly the prince struck him with an arrow in his neck. The king fell on his side to the ice. The prince and his soldier rush over to see what happened to the king. Then they saw he took his last breath face down on the ice. The soldiers of Icenia became demoralized

and the prince took full advantage of that. “The enemy has been weakened,” the prince said. “Finish them off and bring me the crown.” “We have defeated them master,” said the guard. “Finally, victory is mine,” said the prince. He was crowned king of Icenia for life, and that gave him access to the dazzling fire, which made him the most powerful man in Icenia.



## “Sprinkling Dust” by Bryan Santiago

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Katie who lived in a small house next to the magical forest. It was in the magical forest where all the animals lived in harmony with each other. But one day, a wicked witch cast a spell on the forest, causing all the animals to fall into a deep sleep. The village elder tells Katie that the only way to break the spell was to find the magical flower that grew on the top of the highest mountain. The flower needs to be smashed and sprinkled over the foreheads of the sleeping villagers. The flower, however, could only be found by someone who was pure of heart and brave enough to climb the treacherous mountain.

Katie heard that a childhood friend was affected by the spell so she decided to help. Her friend's name is Zoey and she is a deer. Katie got taken in by her family when she was younger because she was the only human living near the village and she was surrounded by animals. So Katie was getting made fun of and they were calling her names. Then Katie climbed steep cliffs, crossed raging rivers, and fought off fierce beasts. But she never gave up, knowing that the fate of the forest was in her hands.

After many days of travel, Katie finally reached the top of the mountain and found the magical flower. She brought it back to the forest and used its powers to break the witch's spell. Katie was hailed as a hero, and the animals threw a grand feast in her honor. From that day forward, the animals of the forest lived in peace and harmony, and Katie was always remembered as the brave girl who saved their home.

# *Realistic Fiction*

## “Agent” by Steven Bautista

It's 9am and the sun is rising. Prometheus wakes up, stretches, and gets ready to go work out. At 11am Prometheus gets ready, he prepares his weapons. Prometheus goes out and he is located in Queens, New York and the contract says the person was last seen in Junction Boulevard. Prometheus then looks at the contract again and he remembers. Prometheus remembers that this person was at the family gathering and was not there the night his family died. Prometheus' associate and partner Sofia calls Prometheus to tell him where the victim was last seen in the area, and also tells him to be careful. Prometheus remembers that day when he came into the house to find all his family laying down dead and helpless.

Prometheus then sees the victim and proceeds to follow him. Sofia then also sees Prometheus and the victim and follows them both. Prometheus follows the victim and they are both now alone in a warehouse. The victim knows that Prometheus is following him and proceeds to take a gun out. Prometheus is quick to follow and pulls out a gun too and he says “you were there the night my family died”. The victim responds and says “Yeah I was there and it wasn't hard to kill all your family, how nice they were”. Prometheus shoots first and hits the victim's leg and then charges at him and beats him up with no mercy. After a second the victim then says “remember the person you killed in a little apartment on Jefferson Avenue, that guy was my father”.

Prometheus is in disbelief, the victim's son came back for revenge and killed the people Prometheus cherished the most. Prometheus then proceeds to beat the victim up again until the brink of death. Sofia comes in to stop it and then Prometheus gets the victim's last words before killing him. Prometheus is covered in blood and he was just frozen in place. There were bounty hunters coming and Sofia let Prometheus know. They both left the place in a flash. Prometheus then asked Sofia how she knew where he was. Sofia said that she has a tracker on him. It was late and both Prometheus and Sofia were hiding in an abandoned house near a river. They both go their own way and Sofia says to Prometheus “be careful and don't die”. Prometheus responds

and says “I’m always careful”. Prometheus goes to a safe house and relaxes as the moon starts to come up.

## “Le Président” by Ferima Toure

It's currently Wednesday, May 8th 2030 and Margaux is staring at her ceiling in her campus apartment in Monaco. She was in her room daydreaming about the time she swore off men when she got her heart broken by her childhood, middle school boyfriend Louie Jacobs. Louie told Margaux he wasn't interested anymore because he had found someone else. So it's 9am and she has exams so she snaps out of it and realizes she has to go. On her way out she sees her best friend Emma coming in with coffee for them both and Emma tells her about a party on Saturday night that they have to attend, while walking to the campus. The party will be thrown by this popular boy named Wilhelm Toure. Wilhelm had already finished his exams a week early due to him having connections so he had free time. At soccer practice he came up with the idea to throw an epic party so everyone could take a breather from testing. This is the party Margaux is going to. Wilhelm's friends Jason and Caleb both talk about how he needs to find love because it's long overdue since they are both in relationships. For the first time ever he agrees with them which surprised them because he's usually very dismissive when it comes to the girlfriend topic. Margaux had no idea who Wilhelm was because he wasn't the type of person she paid attention to. He was too flashy and loud and knew everybody. Meanwhile she was quiet, laid back and had the number of friends you can count on one hand. She liked it that way even though she was so beautiful she could've been popular if she wanted to be.

Margaux and Emma have spent Thursday and Friday finding outfits for Wilhelm's party being held on Saturday. Meanwhile Wilhelm has been kind of stressed because he still hasn't found the one for him who is charming and smart enough to be the First Lady. Due to him being so known and respected, once hearing he is looking for love almost every girl on campus threw herself at him when they saw him but he wasn't interested in them because they were all wild and “life of the party” type of girls. Saturday finally comes and Wilhelm, Caleb and Jason are standing there with their red drinking cups in hand and multiple girls surrounding them. When Margaux and Emma walk in with their other friends from campus, the other girls stop and stare at Wilhelm while complimenting his looks. But Margaux just walks past everyone and goes straight to the kitchen without even acknowledging him which intrigued him because all of the guys were focused on her also. He goes up and tries to talk to her but is interrupted by her friends calling her to come hang out.

The next morning coming out of his dorm Wilhelm runs into Emma leaving her boyfriend's dorm while on her way to grab coffee so he decides to join her and then asks her who that girl was that he saw her with at the party because Margaux was a quiet girl who didn't really like people. Emma says, "Oh Margaux? That's my best friend, she's not really into the party scene that's why you've never seen her before." "Thanks for the help," he said. Wilhelm now realized he had an agenda because he got a feeling she could be the one he was looking for all along. He asked where she'd be in the next thirty minutes. He showed up to her yoga class to watch her from afar and kind of vet her before he approached her. Margaux recognized him from the party last night so she pretends not to see him, until he follows her to her study session at the library. That was when she walks up to him and asks "Est-ce que tu me suis?" (Are you following me?). He replies saying "uh...yeah. I wanted to approach you with a proposition but I don't know how to ask you," he says. "Can I take you on three dates and if they are the best experiences you've ever had will you be my girlfriend?" "If it would get you to stop stalking me then yes," said Margaux.

Margaux and Wilhelm go on their first date to an amusement park where they have the time of their lives and the date ends with a romantic kiss. A few dates and months go by and they start dating. Things get serious with them and everything is going good until he asks if she would be the First Lady which would mean marriage. They are only 24 years old but since he is running for the world's youngest president that would be required. Margaux is nervous because this is a serious decision even though she loves him deeply. Her parents think she should do it as Wilhelm is a very charming and well raised young man. Fast forward to eight months of engagement they do decide to get married and after he runs for the election, he gets elected and becomes the world's youngest president.