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Junior School Art Purchase Award

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*The Buckeye* is a magazine of writing and art from seventh and eighth grade classes at Montgomery Bell Academy. The title was inspired by the buckeye tree that stood in the grove on the north end of campus. It was once a familiar gathering place for both faculty and students.
Whisperings of Shadows
by Josh Cheng

The whisperings grew louder, never stopping; the tiny candle gave light, but just faintly. The darkness crept in slowly, kept back by the bare light, yet was persistent and drew closer and closer. Shadows, they continued to flirt at the edges of my eyes, becoming larger and larger, but vanishing if I turned. The air stayed cold, but not a frosty cold. No, this cold filled my insides; it chilled my bones and froze my blood. The shadows, the whisperings, the darkness and hopelessness of it all! No, I can’t give up. Not yet, they may have, all of them, but I will not. I can’t. The cheap mattress is thin yet comfortable. I let my thoughts wander. That keeps me occupied. Once again I find myself recalling the events leading up to this end, a mix of darkness and mystery that led to this dreadful end.

The town was small with a population of a couple hundred at most. It was one where everyone knew everyone and trusted them too. It was a town where if someone was to go missing, news would spread like wildfire. I had many friends there, but as the events progressed, my memories of them faded, I’m lucky to remember anyone at all. My home was nice, two stories tall and connected to all the utilities. We were a happy town; the cobbled streets often filled with cheerful residents, and they had good reason to be joyful too. The town was built upon a flat plateau, the air clean, a warm sun overhead, and a thriving economy. At night the stars were clearly visible, as well as lights from the distant city. The far-off city lights stretched a long distance, and many young children would make constellations out of them too. The first day the events begun to transpire was one of these warm, happy summer days. I was doing my job; I was a delivery man, a job which paid quite well in that town. I had just finished delivering to a family at the end of the street and began to walk to a house where a couple lived. As I walked up the street, I happened to bump into the lady that lived at the house! I greeted her and noticed she bore an expression of great worry and concern. I asked if anything was wrong, and she told me that her husband had disappeared in the night. While he often went on business trips, he had left all his belongings behind. This was quite surprising as nothing of this had ever happened before! I wished her luck with her report at the police station and went on to finish my last delivery. As I made my way home, I contemplated what she had told me. It was quite strange, I thought, how he would have just mysteriously disappeared like that. I slipped into my home and walked over to the kitchen, where I began to boil a hot pot of water. I felt the need for a nice cup of tea. I sat down and continued to think on the man’s disappearance. No one in the town would have abducted him, and any outsiders would have been noticed. Violent creatures were not known to roam the woods, and he knew those woods as well as anyone! I doubt he could have gotten lost. It was all very mysterious, very mysterious indeed.

A sudden scream jolted me from my thoughts. Bolting from the chair, I flung open the front door and looked up and down the street for the cause of such a loud noise. Many of the neighbors had done the same as I, and some ran down the street looking. After a half-hour of searching, nothing was found. I returned home; my peace of mind quite shattered. For the first time in years, I locked my door. I went upstairs, undressed, and slipped into bed. Turning on my side I once again recalled what had happened that day. After some time I slipped into an uneasy sleep.

It was a dream; I could tell. I was standing on a grassy field, but could not move my legs. The grass was dead, the sky empty, and a strong wind blew across the barren land, bringing with it a faint howling sound and a lonely, empty feeling. It was depressing, to say the least. But then I saw shadows; shadows in the corners of my eyes. I turned to see what caused them, but they were gone as quickly as

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they appeared. Then whisperings started, at first barely audible but grew steadily louder. They seemed soft and quiet, almost kind. Yet I could feel it in my heart that they were evil. They were tempting me, to what I do not know, but they were trying to draw me closer. I tried to back away, but I could not escape them. They spread all around me. They spread like wildfire, spread like disease, spread like the shadows. The unavoidable shadows.

I awoke suddenly, nearly out of my bed, breathing hard and clutching my bedpost with a grip so tight my knuckles were very white. That dream, it was eerie and strange. Just like the previous day’s events. Dragging myself back into bed I pondered the meaning of it for a bit, but came to nothing. I rose and put on some clothes and headed outside. A walk along the woods might clear my head. I gently pushed my way through the busy town square, yet the news I overheard troubled me even more. It seemed more had disappeared in the night, to where no one knew. Rumors began to spread of a ghost that took them, of course I snorted at such nonsense. I left the town road and gloomily trudged down the hill to the edge of the woods. My mind raced. I knew all that had disappeared, they were my friends, kind to me. Yet they were gone now, and I had no idea where to. My mind raced, I tried to estimate the number of people that had disappeared, but I figured even more had gone than I didn’t know about. I kicked along a stone as I continued my musings, and hoped that this would all end soon. Suddenly, I felt a strange presence and stopped my walking, my heart picked up speed as I turned and looked into the deep, dark woods. I felt something was there, the darkness seemed to waver, and I thought I heard whisperings. Those evil whisperings. I turned as quickly as I could and sprinted back into town along the dirt path. I told myself it was just my imagination, but at heart, I felt truly terrified, horribly terrified.

When I reached town, I found the mayor speaking in the town square. Investigators had arrived from nearby towns, and the police would patrol the streets at night. Of course, curfews had to be put in place, but most everyone was relieved to have some protection. The meeting broke up, and everyone left feeling a bit more secure; however, the fact that this was needed was very disturbing.

That night I had the same dream, but the sky was darker, the whisperings louder, and the shadows larger. The dead trees seemed to creep in, bringing with them the shadows and whisperings. Then the dead grass began to fade, leaving behind dirt. The air grew colder, freezing my bones and filling my heart with dread, so much terrible dread.

I woke again, with such a start my bedside lamp got knocked over, clattered to the floor, and shattered into many sharp shards of glass. I sat for a few minutes, clearing my head. I got up and made my way downstairs, but felt something was off. When I got downstairs, I realized what it was. I glanced out the window and noticed it was fairly dark out. The sky was grey, and it lacked stars. The bright lights from the distant city were not there, just gone. Just like some of the others...

The air was cold, the bone chilling cold. Only well lit areas seemed to have warmth. Walking over and opening the closet door, I brought some extra lamps out from the closet and lit them, doing my best to expel the darkness. I leaned against the windowsill and looked outside again, the streets were deserted. Some windows seemed to be barricaded, yet some doors broken and scattered. Further down the street, I saw a broken lamp and an officer’s hat, upturned and crumpled. Growing more frightened by the second, I shut the curtain and stumbled backwards. I attempted to wrap my head around what was happening but then, the whisperings began. They were real this time, and the shadows, they appeared too. My heart turned to stone, and I began to become completely terrified. I ran upstairs, flicked on my bedside lamp and began to search for some means of defense but wait... bedside lamp? I turned and continued on page 5
sure enough it was there, unbroken and working. Fear and terror began to overwhelm me. I ran back downstairs and crashed through the front door. I looked down the street at the shops and homes of people I knew. They seemed to be fine, yet I blinked, and the doors and barriers seemed to be broken, and I thought I heard an echoing scream. I cautiously approached one and peered inside. It was empty, broken furniture scattered, and a desolate wind blowing through. The house gave a feeling of emptiness and dread, the same in my dream. The same I had foreseen. I backed away and began to turn and run, yet down the street I saw a light. I sprinted toward it, shouting for someone, anyone. As I approached it, I heard a faint cry. I blinked, and the light seemed to have gone out. The house consumed by the shadows. The dread and fear continued to build up inside me. I sprinted back up the street. The cobble seemed to slowly turn to dirt, and the darkness seemed to warp into unimaginable creatures. I barged into my home and locked the door, grabbed some canned food and some lights and went down into the basement. I used furniture to heavily barricade my door and hid down there.

That’s what I did for what seemed like months, yet truly I believe it to only be a few days. During those days I never heard another person, never saw another ray of daylight, and never heard another noise aside from those whisperings. I spent many days trying to figure out what they were, but the fun of the mystery was gone. Those forces of the dark and whisperings, they are horrifying and make me tremble at the thought, but perhaps there is an alternative...

The shadows are closing in on me again, yet for once I won’t try to dispel them. The whisperings are growing louder, yet I won’t try to ignore them. Instead I think I’ll listen. Perhaps they aren’t evil, just misunderstood. The darkness consumes me, and the light fades slowly, perhaps its the last light I will ever see. But I do not fear; the voices give me hope, even when all else fails.

Deep in the dark, malevolent woods that surrounded the town, the ancient and sinister spirit settled down, satisfied another group of pesky interlopers had been disposed of once again.
He walks through the woods, unaccompanied, stepping gently over dead leaves.

The trees around him sway softly in the wind, occasionally dropping a lone leaf.

He notices that the bark on some trees is brown, with streaks of green moss climbing up; while on others it is a soft grey, spotted with dark brown knots.

As he walks, he stumbles upon flowers and blades of grass poking through a carpet of dead leaves.

The wind blows casually through the branches of trees and rustles leaves.

He looks up and sees light grey clouds covering a dark grey sky, keeping out the early morning sun and its warmth.

He watches a squirrel dash up a tree and a small bird zip through the air.

He follows no trail, just walks with the contours of the woods, avoiding briars and thick brush, enjoying the peaceful morning.

The sun, now slowly rising, peeks out from behind the clouds, drowning the sleeping forest with light.

He approaches a fallen tree, a perfect front row seat to watch the woods wake.

From the log, he observes the edge of a pasture with green grasses swaying in the wind.

He stares into the distance, and sees Milo’s ridge, the farm’s highest point.

Far off, a tall cell tower protrudes from a hill, and he thinks about these woods and wonders how many years it will take the expanding city to claim them.

And if one day he will be sitting here with his son or grandson, enjoying a cool morning.

His thoughts are interrupted as a graceful doe, light brown with an innocent face, gingerly walks out from cover to the edge of a pasture and peacefully grazes.

He thinks about that deer and how she has no responsibilities, no troubles, just peaceful grazing on a cold winter morning.

But then he thinks, what would the purpose of life without purpose be.

Pauses, then attempts to recall a memory about a story that I told him, but he can’t remember the details, only the cold winter morning on which I told it while we sat on a log in the woods.

Then he thinks about how life and memories are funny like that, you can remember everything about an event or time or place except what you believe to be the most important part, even though the most important parts are the things you do remember, not the things you don’t.

His thoughts are once again broken as the sun reaches higher, dousing more light upon the forest, and he notices that the doe has mindlessly wandered off.

He feels that his time is up, and just as silently as he came, my son walks off into the cool and quiet woods, just as I did with him many years ago.
The Peasant Who Lived by the Sea

by Bradford Holladay

A long time ago in a faraway land,
Lived a King who lacked of wisdom.
He had plenty of money and objects at hand,
But his luxurious life had no rhythm
And he said to himself, “There is nothing more to demand,
“For I have everything small and grand,”
“I own everything from here to what is left to expand”
“But for happiness I have no kingdom”

Meanwhile by the sea lived a poor nobody,
Who lived on solid faith alone.
He had extremely little but that was the key
That made him feel like he lived on a throne.
He heard of the King’s troubles and knew instantly
Why the King was never happy.
So the poor nobody who lived by the sea
Saddled up to ride to the castle unknown.

He walked into the throne room and saw the King,
As he wore royal robes from head to toe.
The King saw the peasant and didn’t notice a thing
Because of the wisdom he needed to know.
But to all of his possessions the King wanted to cling,
And his selfishness overruled everything.
He was incapable of living with nothing,
And the peasant’s lifestyle was his foe.

“Live like me and you will be wise.”
Explained the nobody who lived by the sea.
“Don’t listen to riches as they tell you their lies,
And you will truly be happy.”
“No!” the king screamed as his anger began to arise,
“Riches are not evil in disguise.”
“Get out of my kingdom, for wealth is my prize.”
So the peasant left, sorry the king had to disagree

Meanwhile by the sea lived a poor nobody,
who lived on solid faith alone.
He saw the King’s troubles and knew instantly
That to the King a life would never be known.
The King held on to his riches and would never be free.
He would die with depression his fee.
The King had to chase after this world’s false source of glee.
And he would die in the castle unknown.
The pain comes quick, but it will never leave
From someone that you thought that you had known.
You will not even have the time to grieve
The vast betrayal left you all alone.
But in the end you will find out the rue
Reality had formed a sly disguise
The love was great but never fully true
The only world you know is full of lies
Prosperity and peace both quickly die,
Replaced with anger and an intense hate.
The rain starts falling from your tired eyes
Accept it now, this is your wretched fate.
Divorced and torn you leave that fatal land,
You hope that God will grant you someone grand.
Night in the Forest

by James McKnight

The red and yellow leaves are gently rustling as a slow and steady breeze blows peacefully through the tree-tops.

The birds are nestled in their comforting nests of twigs, awaiting the powerful rays of the sun to wake them, so that they may search for their next meal.

The owls let out their quiet hoots as they listen for the scampering feet of a mouse on the dried up October leaves on the forest floor.

The frogs are letting out deep croaks hoping to attract a mate.

The crickets come out and make the sound that is music to our ears.

The forest is alive.
Honorable Mention Poetry

Outside the Box

by Will Evans

Here I lay, outside the box,
Alone, with all men inside,
Ignorance is bliss,
And their hearts are troubled,
So they make themselves blind,
Though mine is too,
I long for truth,
So here I shall reside,
Outside the Box,
All alone,
With the rest of world inside.
Come on Jake! You can do it! Just jump!” Jake looked down. He saw a twenty-five foot drop to the river, but the other boys already jumped, and he was the last one of the group to go. The other boys did not get hurt, so why would he? “Okay, I can do it... 3, 2, 1, NOW!” said Jake. “Woo! This is awesome!” Jake hit the water with a big splash. All the other boys swam over to congratulate him.

They said, “Dang, Jake, that was the best jump out of all of us. Now just one more event and you can become a member of the Cherokee Indians!” Jake was the new boy in town, but all the boys liked him and wanted him to be part of the tribe. The chief of the tribe, Blue Stream, swam over to him and said, “All you have left to do is go into Fish Cave and catch a bass with your bare hands. Don’t worry; it’s not dangerous at all.”

Jake looked into the cave and shuddered. It looked dark and had jagged edges all around it. Maybe this wasn’t such a good idea.

“Oh...” Jake went into the cave, asking himself why he even thought about joining this crazy group of kids he met at town. The rednecks were nice, but definitely wild. The boys made him jump off a bluff into the Tennessee River, eat worms, hold a piece of hot coal on his arm for thirty seconds, and now they are making him catch a fish in pitch black with his bare hands. It is hard enough to catch a fish with fishing pole, and they want him to catch a fish in a dark, mysterious, and freezing cold cave.

By now he was in the cave and searching for a fish. He felt something massive swim by his leg. It felt just like a cold hand was touching him.

“Ahhh! GET ME OUT OF HERE!” He started swimming towards the mouth of the cave, and he felt another fish swim by his leg, but this time, out of instinct, he grabbed the fish and held it dangling and thrashing above his head. The fish’s tail slapped him on cheek. He thought to himself: “Yes, I finally did it!”

He came out of the cave whooping and went over to the rest of the tribe. All of them got out of the water and circled Jake. They started chanting, built a bonfire, and roasted the fish on a stick. When the boys settled down, the chief came over to Jake and said, “Jake you have mastered your fears, and for that I now rename you Moon Fish. Now meet your new brothers.”

Jake was thinking that these kids must be out of their minds, but he went along with it because he wanted some new friends. He’d only been in town week. Jake, now Moon Fish, shook hands with Mighty Squirrel, Majestic Robin, Green Tree, and Brown Rock.

“Now that Moon Fish has been welcomed,” said Blue Stream, “let us show him our sacred grounds.” They walked the trail up to town and stopped at a McDonalds.

Once everybody got their burgers, Blue Stream said, “My real name is Luke, Mighty Squirrel is Jack, Majestic Robin is Rob, Green Tree is Peter, and Brown Rock is Zach. We’re really not weird and crazy— we just wanted to see if you would do everything we said.” While Luke was saying this, everybody was cracking up laughing.

“Man, you fell for it!” shouted Rob.
Jake and the Tribe

by Joe Moxley

“I can’t believe you actually had the guts to go into that cave!” said Jack.

By this time Jake was feeling pretty stupid, and his face turned red. Seeing Jake’s embarrassment, Luke said, “Don’t worry about it, Jake. We were just playing. And what you did was pretty impressive.”

Jake felt better and started to joke around with his new friends, or his new tribe mates. By the end of the day, the boys were swimming and fishing, jumping and screaming. Jake thought that maybe the little town of True Mount Point, Tennessee, wasn’t that bad after all.

“Alright, Mom, I’m leaving for Luke’s house,” said Jake as he was opening the front door.

“I’m not so sure about you camping out, Jake. Are Luke and your friends responsible?” asked Jake’s mom.

“If course they are, Mom. Don’t you trust me?” asked Jake with a sweet voice. “I’ll be late in a few minutes.”

“Oh, alright, just wear your helmet.”

“Thanks, I’ll be back on Sunday,” said Jake as he sped out of the house and hopped on his bike.

It was Friday afternoon.

As he pulled into Luke’s driveway, Jake heard Luke laughing. “Sorry I’m late, guys. My mom was being over-protective as always.”

“No problem, some guys had to cancel too. Only Rob and you could make it. Come on, let’s get the canoes and get going down the stream.”

Rob, Luke, and Jake loaded their gear, a cooler, tents, sleeping bags, fishing poles, and an overflowing tackle box into the canoes and slipped it into one of the many streams that led into the Tennessee River. Rob and Jake were in one canoe, and Luke was in another. “So where did you say we are going?” asked Jake.

“We are going through this stream to an amazing beach that has a deep fishing hole.” said Jack.

“We call it Hook Escape.”

Jake was puzzled, but he gets confused a lot by the friends, so he causally asked, “Why is called Hook Escape?”

“Oh, only because there is a crazy monster catfish that is about four feet long and has been taking our hooks and lures for many years. We call it Big Papa Daddy,” said Rob with a smile. “We’re coming to catch it.”

After around ten minutes, the boys docked on a beautiful beach. It had couple of giant sycamores, which provided shade in the back. There were also big flat boulders on the beach too. Shells were everywhere. It looked like a picture from book. It was perfect.

“Whoa!” Jake shouted. “This is the best place in the world! Back in my old city, no park could top this!”


They unpacked their gear, and in less than twenty minutes, the tents were up, and the boys had their fishing lines out. Jake was all smiles. They fished for a couple hours, but only caught small bream; it was not impressive.


“That’s a great idea! I’m starved!” said Rob.

As Luke was starting the fire, Jake grabbed some cokes from the mini cooler for the guys. Once continued on page 13
the fire was started, the teenagers began to roast their hot dogs. They tasted great. Jake wished he moved to the town a long time ago. He just seemed made for the woods.

After supper, Jake went back to his fishing pole and put on the juiciest, most nasty, most wriggly worm he could find in the bait bucket and put it on his hook. He wanted to catch Big Papa Daddy, so that he could prove himself to his friends. His friends were nice and accepting, but he wanted to show them that he was not an ignorant city boy. He threw out his line; the night was getting dark. Jake started to lose hope and lazily held the pole loose in his hands. Suddenly, he got a massive jerk that pulled him from one of the boulders he was sitting on!

“Oh my Gosh! This fish is humongous! I NEED HELP!” screamed Jake.

Luke and Rob jumped up from the camp fire; Jake’s rod was bending into a U.

“Hold on, Big Pappa Daddy’s a fighter!” said Rob.


Eventually, Jake beached Big Pappa Daddy. It was massive, thicker than four baseball bats put together. It was murky brown and croaked louder than a barking dog. Jake had never seen a bigger catfish.

Luke looked at it with an awed gaze and said, “Dude, we’ve been trying to catch that fish for at least five years. You are AMAZING!”

They took a picture of the fish and released it back into the stream. For the rest of the weekend, the boys had a wonderful time telling stories, canoeing, and fishing. By the time the boys had to leave camp, Jake was fully accepted into his group of friends; and, he was feeling like he was on top of the world.

Summer dragged on in its special way. Jake and his friends played everyday. They swam, threw ball, and did all other cool activities. They were gone from dawn to dusk. Before Jake knew it, school was starting up.

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The school was big because the whole county was zoned for it. Through all of Jake’s accomplishments, Jake was becoming popular. Of course Jake’s fish story had been exaggerated, but that did not stop people noticing him. Jake only had that first group of friends, but he kept getting stares from other students. One day at lunch, while the guys were laughing, they saw a lonely kid. He had just moved before school and was looking for a place to sit with his tray of food. He was just like Jake when he first moved to town.

“Hey, you wanna sit with us. We don’t bite,” smiled Jake.

“Alright,” said the kid.


“Sam”

“Where you from, Sam?” asked Rob.

“Atlanta”

The boys talked together till about five minutes before lunch ended. Sam muttered something about going to the library and left. He was really shy.

“You know what I’m thinking, Jake?” said Peter. “We should show Sam that spooky cave.”

“I don’t know. It was pretty dangerous, and I got freaked out,” said Jake.

“Come on! It’s not that dangerous!” screamed the rest of the group.

“Oh alright . . .”

The boys planned their prank on Sam for next weekend. On Friday, Jake and the rest of the gang were hanging out during lunch. “Hey, Jake, what if Sam backs out?” said Rob.

“Oh, he won’t. When I first moved into town, I was desperate for friends. I would do whatever you guys said.

Just as Jake finished talking, Sam walked up with his tray and said, “Can I eat here?”

Everybody said, “Dude, of course, you don’t have to ask. By the way, tomorrow we’re going down to the river to mess around, you know fish and stuff. You in?”

“Oh man, that sounds awesome; yeah I’m in.”

“Sweet, see yah at ten o’clock tomorrow,” said Luke.

In the morning, the gang met with Sam and headed for the cave by the river. After a while, the guys got to the beach across from the cave.

“Come on, Sam! We’re going to the cave!” said Jake.

“Um... okay, this is safe, right?” squeaked Sam.

“Oh sure; I’ve been in there before. It’s just a little dark inside.”

“Whatever you say...” said Sam.

Jake and Sam swam over to the entrance of the cave and stopped for a breather. “What a sec, why are we even going to the cave?” asked Sam.

“Well, to be honest, it is kind of an initiation. I went through it when I moved into town,” answered Jake.

“You guys are crazy.”

“That’s what I thought at first, but your only gonna be in there for ten minutes.”

They swam into the cave and instantly, the light was dimming. Jake actually started to get nervous. Suddenly, a strong current from the river came into the cave and swept away the boys far into the cave.

They finally stopped when the water was thinning. “Well, we’re gonna die,” said Sam.”

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“We better try to find our way back.”
The boys, who did not have a flashlight, groped around till they found the wall, and they slowly
inched their way forward. Out of nowhere, Sam felt something massive slowly swim through his legs.
“Oh MY GOSH! WHAT WAS THAT!” screamed Sam.
Sam got a sudden sense of deja vu. “This is definitely not going to be fun,” said Jake.
For what seemed like hours, they crawled through tunnel after tunnel. They were losing hope
and becoming desperate.
“Let’s rest a while. I’m stinking tired.”
Jake, who had watched his fair share of survival shows, said, “Nope, we gotta keep going. If we
stop now, we will not ever get up again.
As they rounded a corner, they saw light at the end of the tunnel.
“NO WAY!” screamed Jake.
Sam, who was so tired, almost cried.
When Sam and Jake got back to the beach, they sprawled out across the ground.
The other guys were fishing. One of them asked, “What’s the matter with you?”
Exasperatedly, Jake said, “We got lost in the cave for hours; didn’t you notice?”
Luke said, “Jake, Sam and you have been in that cave for only twenty minutes. You are crazy.”
“That’s not possible, I thought we were in there for forever,” said Sam.
“We would’ve looked for you if you were gone that long,” pointed out Rob.
It took Jake and Sam a while to calm down; eventually they broke out in laughter, but Jake was
starting to feel guilty even though nobody was hurt.
“I’m done with pranks.”
Dream Come True

by Andrew Duffey

When a little boy in Africa meets an old man, their love for the same game creates both a national hero and a champion. Kofi has one true love. That love is for the beautiful game of soccer. He always walks over to the fields two blocks from where he lives to watch both adults and kids his own age play. He would love to be able to play this sport. However, there is one problem that prevents him from playing. Kofi lives with his mom, and she cannot afford much. His father walked out on them when he was born, so his poor mother has raised him by herself his whole life. Because of this lack of money, Kofi cannot play. That is until he meets a kind old man who changes his life forever.

Kofi is a thirteen year old boy who lives with his mom in Kenya. They live in a very small apartment. Kofi learns the sport of soccer through games that he watches others play. He learns new skills from every game he watches. One day, as he is leaving the fields at the end of a game, an old man stops him and asks, “Do you know someone who just played?”

Kofi answers, “No sir.”

The man then asks, “Why do I see you at so many games?”

Kofi replies, “I just like watching.”

The man asks Kofi his name. Kofi tells the man what his name is. The man then says “My name is Kato. I also love this sport.” Kato then asks, “Do you play?”

Kofi says, “No sir. My dad left me and my mom when I was born. We cannot afford it.”

Kato asks, “Would you like to play?”

Kofi says, “Yes.”

Kato then says, “Meet me at these fields at eleven o’clock Saturday morning.”

Then, they separate from each other and each one went home. Kofi could not wait to get back and tell his mother. However, he reached the apartment while she was sleeping. When she woke up, Kofi told her everything that had previously happened and about Kato and how they were going to meet. She then asked, “Honey, how are you going to play with no cleats and no ball?”

Kofi pondered about that question the whole night. He went to bed fearful that the lessons with Kato would not work out. He still prayed that night the same thing he had been praying for since a year earlier. He asked God for an opportunity to play soccer.

The next day was his best friend’s birthday party. Kofi felt bad that he could not afford a gift for his best friend. When Kofi told his friend about it, the friend took Kofi to the guest bedroom in which he would sleep for the sleepover. Kofi walked in. All of a sudden he froze and gazed upon the bed in amazement. There was a pair of cleats, in great shape and ready to be worn, and a new soccer ball. Kofi asked with anxiety, “Are these for me?”

The friend responded, “Yes.”

Kofi excitedly dashed over to the bed as fast as a cheetah, and tried on the cleats. Kofi shouted with joy, “They fit perfectly!”

That night, Kofi could not get to sleep due to all his excitement about getting onto the field to start his lessons. However, even though he had little rest, he was somehow filled with a full tank of energy the next day. When he arrived home, Kofi could not wait to tell his mother about the remarkable gift. He failed to find her, but he did not care very much. He simply forgot about it, and his enthusiasm carried him all the way to the fields. As soon as he reached the fields, he put on his cleats and started playing. At first he was a little rusty, but he then began to develop skills for dribbling and shooting.
that day feeling good about himself. He felt ready for the next day’s tasks.

He woke up early the next day energized for eleven o’clock. When he arrived at the fields, Kofi saw Kato and went to him. Kato told Kofi to warm up by running two laps, doing ten pushups along with twenty sit-ups. After that, he had to do the same thing. Every time Kofi made a fundamental error, Kato made him do ten pushups and twenty sit-ups. After one and a half hour passed, the day’s lesson was done. Kofi went home that day in exhaustion. After he had slowly dragged himself home, Kofi told his mother about the lesson. He told her that he questioned if he wanted to keep doing this. She gave her son a little speech, saying, “Honey, you have wanted this so much for yourself. And you want to quit after one day? When your daddy left us, I could have given up. I could have quit on you and me. But instead, I pushed myself through the pain and suffering; I got through. I was in the dirt, and I could have stayed down and quit; I picked myself up, wiped off all the dirt, and shunned all the pain. And that was all for something I did not want as nearly as much as you want to play soccer. So are you just going to stay down and quit after one day? Or are you going to stand back up, and do what you have wanted to do so badly for so long?”

Kofi responds, “I guess I will continue. “Thank you.”

Kofi woke up the next day ready to work hard. He decided to dedicate that day to his mother. Kofi had the same warm-up routine as the day before. He also did the same drills as the day before. He worked mainly on dribbling and shooting. After that day, Kofi decided that he would quit. He felt that soccer was too much work.

He continued to play on his own. After two years had passed, he deeply regretted his decision. He wanted to get back to the lessons, but had not seen Kato around since the day he quit. He did not see Kato again until three years had passed. They continued the lessons with the same warm-up and same drills. As Kofi was playing, Kato was shouting to motivate him, “Push! Push yourself! You didn’t like the hard work last time. But endure it now. You use the sweat, that perseverance to be better than everyone around you! If you want to be the best, you have to work harder than anyone else. Want it more than anyone and everyone.”

Kofi was more motivated than he had ever been. Kofi and Kato continued to work together until Kofi turned eighteen. Kofi then went out for the national team. He made it and started as an eighteen year old. Kofi was the first one to ever do this. He was also the youngest player to ever become captain of the team. He was named captain at twenty-three years old. At age twenty-eight, his team went to the World Cup for the first time ever. They fell short of the championship game when they lost in the semifinals to Spain, who ended up winning. However, Kofi’s team finished third place in the world. When they came home, every member of the team was a hero. They were admired like kings. Kofi came home to find a statue of himself in front of their national stadium. When he was asked to speak, he could not say one word. With all the money he earned he bought a nice house for his mother and himself to live in together. One year later, he found out that Kato had developed a disease for which doctors could not find a cure. While on his deathbed, Kato told Kofi about how he too was a huge part of a World Cup team. He told Kofi about how he played for Ghana, and how they were the first Ghana team to reach the World Cup. They finished fourth place in the world. Kato asked Kofi to speak at his funeral. Kofi read his speech with tears. Kofi realized how much Kato had done for him. Kofi thanked God for putting Kato in his life because Kofi knew that he would not be where he was without Kato.

The legend of Kato and Kofi has been told long after several centuries. The details may vary some, but everyone continues to focus on how a kind old man changed a poor, little boy into a national hero.
3-2 count, bases loaded, bottom of the seventh inning against our rivals, the Tigers. My team, the Vols, was down by one with a score of eight to seven. It’s the scenario that every kid who ever picked up a baseball has made in up in their head. The shock to me was that it was happening to me in real life, not to mention it was in the championship game.

I couldn’t let my team down. I turned to the umpire and called “time.” I took a few deep breaths, and digested the situation fully. I looked around at everyone in the stands and in the dugouts. Everyone wanted their team to win. I found my dad in the stands as he gave me a wink and mouthed some words I couldn’t understand.

After a few more moments of processing the scene, I stepped one foot into the box as I checked my third-base coach. He gave me a little nod. The pitcher was named Jack Sutherland. He was six-foot-two and working on beard. He stared me down for a few seconds. I could imagine that he was experiencing the same thing that I was. Infielders for the Tigers yelped and cried out phrases, some directed at me, some directed at Jack. Tiger players in the dugout shook the chain-link fence with all their might in attempt to distract me. He began his wind-up. The whole game had been a blur, yet that moment felt like an eternity. He lifted his knee and accelerated down the mound. He released the pitch.

My mind went racing when I saw the ball start moving towards the plate. Even though I knew the pitch that was coming was intended to blow by me and overwhelm me with speed, I still immediately read the seams. It was a four-seam fastball. It looked low and slightly inside, just how I liked it.

I stepped towards first base and turned my hips as I swung my twenty-eight ounce bat with a mindset that it couldn’t get by me, and that no one was going to catch it. The connection between bat and ball generated a loud “crack” as it went sailing down the first base line. It was a rocket headed to deep right field. The ball landed about 15 feet from the two hundred and sixty-foot fence. I was turning first base, headed towards second, when the umpire screamed “Foul ball!”

I jogged back up to the plate. The catcher for the Tigers handed me my bat. As I stepped into the plate again, with my emotions swirling in my head, my third-base coach called “time.” We started walking towards each other and met about halfway, right in front of our own dugout. The only times my coach calls a timeout during an at-bat are to encourage the player or to call a special play. In this situation, I expected a few words of encouragement.

“You okay, buddy?” he said in his deep southern accent.

“Yes sir, just a little nervous.” I said.

“Don’t be. You’re a great hitter. This pitcher’s been havin’ a hard time with you all game. Just think about hitting the ball. Have no doubt in your win that you’re gonna win this game for your team. Believe in yourself, ‘cause I know your teammates do.”

I gave a quick nod and walked back to the plate. This time I was all business. I spit out a few sunflower seeds, tapped my bat on the plate, dug my heels in the dirt, and got into my batting stance. Jack also looked like he planned to throw his last pitch, despite my coach’s attempt to “ice” him earlier. At this point it was a showdown between the pitcher and the batter, and to my advantage, all

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Every Baseball Player’s Dream

by Drew Davis

the pressure was on him to throw a strike.

Once again, he went into his windup with precision and threw a fireball directly into the center of the strike zone.

I smashed it. The ball went directly at Jack. Before I could take three steps out of the batter’s box, he caught the line drive. The whole Tigers team ran to the center of the mound and made a huge pile of bodies. The ecstatic players and coaches jumped around as the members of the Vols walked off the field in shock and disgust. I was completely devastated.

After many minutes of celebrating their championship win, the Tigers lined up to shake hands with the Vols and prepare for the trophy ceremony. We received our second place trophy while still in tears from our heartbreaking loss.

Shortly after I received my trophy, I started hearing a distant ring. It started to get louder and louder, but I could not locate the sound. Then I began to gain consciousness. I turned on my side and slapped a lazy hand on the buzzing alarm clock. It was only a dream. As I sat up in bed, I looked in the corner of my room and saw a four-foot tall state championship trophy. Around the long neck of the trophy hung a medal for the “Offensive Player of the Game” award. It all came back to me. The night before I had hit a walk-off hit to win the championship. The celebration had only begun for myself and the rest of the Vols.

Hamilton Garber
Rain drizzled down on me. I lay, alone and forgotten on the curb of a lonely alley. Hi, my name is George Washington the 1st, and I am a quarter. I did not always used to be here on the streets. I was once an important quarter. The first quarter of my kind in the great states of American back in 1932. I was a famous quarter, a quarter above all others. I was on display in Washington D.C. at the United States Bureau of Engraving and Printing. I was displayed proudly in the spotlight next to other quarters from years ago. All day long tour groups would come and point me out and stare at me. My life was going fine, great even. Every once in awhile I would enjoy a nice bath and be cleaned and polished until I was clean and shiny. I had great friends in the quarter display. Sounds awesome right? But for some reason I was never really happy. I wanted to know what life outside the display box in the U.S. Bureau of Engraving was like. I needed to know if life was more then being stared and pointed at all day. I wanted to get out and explore the real world. But now I wish that I hadn’t. I got out, and all I’ve experienced so far is pain and misery. How did I get out? Well one night after lockup there was a break-in. Several men with ski masks broke through the window and smashed the glass on my display box. I, along with some of the other coins, were thrust into a bag by gloved hands while the alarms blared. The bag jolted as it was yanked off the ground and swung as the robber ran with it out the door. Suddenly I heard muffled sirens and shouts and tires scraping to a stop. Several gunshots were fired and without warning the bag was dropped to the ground. As the bag hit the sidewalk, it opened, and I, along with the other coins, spilled out. As the rest of the robbers tried to escape, their feet kicked me down the sidewalk. I watched the museum curator arrive and pick up the other coins and carry them back into the building. I, being just like any other quarter, was not noticed. I then realized that this was the chance I had been waiting for. The chance to experience the world. Little did I know that this journey would change my life forever. So, as I lay on the sidewalk, the excitement gradually died down, and all the lights shut off again, and I was alone on the cold hard cement. I gradually drifted off to sleep. HONK! I was jolted awake by the honk of a taxicab the next morning. I lay in the cool mist of a morning in the bustling city of Washington D.C.

“Look Daddy, a quarter,” shouted a little boy as he ran and picked me up with his tender hands.

“That’s great, son” replied the father not looking as he talked into his cellphone.

“Hurry up now or we’ll be late for the baseball game” said the man.

“Alright, Daddy” said the boy as he shoved me into his pocket and ran up to catch his father. Never having heard of the Baseball before I wondered what it meant as the little boy jogged to keep up with his father. I soon found out what it meant. What it meant was people running around a field and swinging wood at little balls and throwing these balls around the field. I got a view of all this because the boy, apparently as bored and disinterested as I was had taken me out of his pocket and was turning me over examining me. After the game we headed down from the stands and past the crowds exiting the stadium.

We came into a dimly lit alleyway on the way home. I was still in the boy’s hand, and I could see a man walking toward us. I watched him pull something shiny out of his pocket, and suddenly I heard two pops, and the boy’s hand went limp as he fell towards the ground. The man approached the bodies and got the man’s wallet. He then found me and picked me up and dropped me into the wallet. He slipped the wallet into his pocket and hustled away. Presently, I heard a door open and a bell ring.
as the man stepped into a gas station. He bought a few items, and I found myself being handed over as the cashier ringed in the purchases. I lay in the cashier’s pocket while she locked up and headed home. Once she entered her apartment, she took me out of her pocket along with a few bills and laid me on the counter.

“What are you doing here?,“ I heard her shout to a man sitting on the couch in her apartment.
“I told you not to come back. I don’t want trouble with the police. Get out!
“Please, Come on let me stay”
“No, I said get out!” she yelled as she reached on the counter for something to throw. Her fingers closed around me, and she hurled me as hard as she could. He ducked, and I went flying through the open window onto the ground below. I was still listening to the argument when rough hands picked me up. They appeared to belong to an old homeless man. He hobbled across the street and suddenly BAM!. He got hit by a car, and I went flying onto the curb. An ambulance raced in and took the man away. There I sat on the curb when a rain began to drizzle. I was lying in a lonely cold alley. Fortunately, this was not the end of my story. At this point I despised the world and believed it to be a dark empty miserable place. I wanted nothing more than to be back in my display case, oblivious to what a horrible, unfair place the world was. I sighed as yet another pair of hands picked me up of the sidewalk.

“Here we go again,” I thought. “Probably going to witness another murder or robbery.” The man that picked me up off the ground quickly hailed a cab and hopped in.
“The hospital,” he said to the cab driver as he handed over the money.
As we arrived at the hospital he was talking excitedly on the cellphone to someone.
“Yes,” he said “It’s a boy, Charlie.” I wondered what that meant as we hurried into the hospital wing. We went to a room and found a group of people surrounding a woman lying on a hospital bed with a baby in her arms. The man kissed his wife and held their new baby. Pretty soon everyone was talking and laughing and taking pictures and holding the baby celebrating. This was the first happy occasion I had experienced. I began to wonder if in fact the world was not such a terrible place after all. After the newly enlarged family had driven back to their house, the dad pulled me out of his pocket and handed me to his other child, a little girl.
“Here you go Susie,” he said.
“Why don’t you open the case and add it to our collection.”

“Alright, Daddy, the girl said happily as she skipped into the living room. This one can be Charlie’s.” She opened a glass case and placed me in a slot on a piece of paper with different coins from other states and countries. From this view where I sit to this day I watch the happy family go about their lives. I realized that the world is ugly and heartbreaking but happy and beautiful at the same time. The ups and the downs are all part of life. Everyone has a chance to experience the world and make the most of it, even a quarter.
The Birds of the Moonlight
by Isaac Wills

Hear the rustling, tapping, and snapping of bark
As dusk comes upon the forest.
What a sight are the birds of the moonlight
As they emerge from the depths of the dark.

The wise owl, it stares with amber eyes
That pierce the darkness of the woods;
With eyes as bright as the moon at night
And a beak so silent, that never cries.

The nightjar rests on the lowly ground,
In a feeble nest made of roots and straw.
The bird waits tirelessly, ever so silently,
For a meal that it will eat without a sound.

When the sun returns to the head of the sky,
The birds of the moonlight leave.
They turn around, bent and bound
To reappear in the dark where they will lie.

Night Time Thoughts
by Joe Moxley

Storms keep me awake,
Lightning, thunder, clattering,
All the night I think.
Its taken me many years to accumulate this collection of items
I traveled & roamed all across the world, like a
Lion searching for
His Lost
Den
I’ve recently wondered why the this collection had importance to me
In the past, but I assume that it was youth
When youth is driven by wanting
Of objects of
Certain Value

But now I’ve realized that all I need is not this collection
But something I’ve wanted for a long time
Without realizing it.
But I still can’t find
What it
Is
The First of April
by John Spurgeon

When the wood is strongest
And the leather, softest
You know it’s that one April day.
The day when the sun is shining
And Winter is slowly dying.

It’s time to start anew
When the sun shines on the spring dew,
And it’s played fifteen times over.
Spring practice is done and it’s time to have fun
In the April dirt and sun.

The smack and crack of leather on leather
Is the second greatest sound ever.
The sound so sweet is an ears treat
But it’s still hours away,
Hours and hours away.

The kids shout out with glee
After you’ve stood, paid your fee,
And finally found the way in.
You hear the best sound ever as the wooden bat bends
And Opening Day begins.
On Writing a Poem  
by Cole Thornton  

Poems are really very hard to write  
When I am tired and uninspired  
Every noise and movement catches my sight  
But I struggle through and end with “whew”  

Kevin Ware’s Bone  
by Gordon Pollock  

Why did this happen to this young man,  
While playing a sport he loves?  
It was not dirty; he didn’t get shoved.  
It happened so quick,  
All they heard was a click  
And BOOM down he goes.  
And it shows.  
The bone.  
Sticking out like a ray of sunshine, so white.  
Kevin’s bone.
The Final 5 Minutes
by Noah Wamble

5 minutes left, can we hold onto the lead?
five-two... they can’t score three goals, right?
The Patriots go out to defend against the Scuds, #6 and #3.
Oh how big they were, they inflicted fear into our team.
But we were ready; they were not too big for us to give a good fight.

4 minutes left, still have the lead.
We are afraid to even mention the possibility of winning.
The coach has gone quiet, like a cat analyzing his prey, heavily.
The Scuds have not come off the ice... and won’t for the rest of the eerily Quiet game. Save! Still hold onto the lead...how much longer can we fight?

3 minutes left, the Scuds have not yet gone off, they are stuck out there like a starving Dog to a piece of meat. Afraid of losing, their career depends on it. They are the only Backbone to this team. Their coach is pulling his hair out in clumps, yelling, yelling. His career also solely relies on this game. This is the game of a lifetime of coaching.

2 minutes left. We are edgy, antsy, but yet proud. We know we can finish the fight.
One of the Scuds finally goes off, he is back in ten seconds, indubitably.

1 minute left. We can’t hold it in any longer; we are jumping up and down acting
Like a bunch of kids, even our coach.
We are irrepressible, powerful, exhilarating. We are National Champions. We are winners. We are proud of our fight.
Our coach is crying; we are stunned, astounded, shocked, but yet there he is, crying.
We will be remembered. The scouts are coming. They will be ignored, undoubtedly.

Dan Parks
The Battle
by Fenner Pollock

I grip the long and lanky fishing pole
Like a sword in hand.
One hand on the reel and the other on the handle.
The crystal-clear fishing line and
Hook and all are ready for battle.
The razor-sharp hook is nothing near bland,
But it is like a sword that stabs through flesh.
The choppy water's teeth crunches at the land,
And I know that I'm ready to take on the battle.

I don't take my eyes off of my line
As I wade in the water like a boat.
Suddenly, the red-and-white bobber plunges to the bottom,
And I know that I have a big one that is going to be mine.
I reel and reel as fast as I can
While the water's arms pull me in.
The fish is now eleven feet out, now ten, now nine.
I finish the reeling as the beautiful bright bass
Rises above the water and into my hands.
My fishing pole and I captured the prize, and we won the battle.

Friendship
by Dan Parks

I have seen “friends” who stay by the side
Till the going is rough, then they hide.
I have seen “friends” who are there for the weddings
But are nowhere to be found at the funerals.
A real friend is one who helps you recover when
The weight of the world is on your shoulders.
A real friend is one who picks you up,
Then shoves you over and calls you an idiot.
Clocks Tick
by Peter Taylor

Clock ticks, nine minutes to go
After many long hours of waiting
For rice

Nine more minutes until I’m called up
Waiting in line with starving wolves
Under the skin of people

These people have come here
Since time began eons ago
Every day it’s the same old drill
Waiting in line for a grain of rice

Six more minutes, & I’m gone
Back to the place where I sing my songs
Strong sweet melodious songs
Nine minutes is over, alarm rings
For me it’s all a dream

The Lawn Mower
by Mac Roberts

There it sits all winter long,
waiting.

Sitting there silent, waiting like a panther ready to pounce.
I shove it aside as I look for the winter sled.
Its long, black handle and red, metal body seem so pathetic now.
I look at it and laugh at it, with its dripping oil and its layer of dust.
The red beast seems like a shadow of its former self.

But spring is coming, as it always does.
The grass starts growing in length.
I pull the beast out and put the gas in.
I pull, pull, pull on the starter cord.

As it comes to life, it transforms as Jekyll does into Hyde.
Walking back and forth, the mower chops up every stick and throws the sharp pieces at my ankles,
cutting and scratching them.

As summer comes to a close, and the last mow comes, and goes,
I say “Ha, you foul piece of scrap, you will make me ache no more.”
I put it up, back in its place. And it sits there,
waiting.

Waiting patiently for next spring.
The Land Without End

by Sebastian Nigrelli

The land without end will surely not lend
A hand to the men who will travel it. 
Its ghastly tall dunes that don’t seem to end 
Spell to all seers that doom will ascend. 

With a darkened sky, the sand will not rest 
As it whips and whirls violently, 
No one’s to go, that will be best 
For the land without end doesn’t like guests. 

It is hopeless as ever to travel the lands 
For it’s like the devil itself. 
It’s an untamed tiger trying to demand 
The life of everyone through sand. 

This is a land that is not your friend. 
It’ll try to destroy you when near. 
This is a land I won’t recommend 
For it is the land without end. 

Why Today?

by Riley Steanson

Why does this kind of thing happen at all? 
Do we have to face this every day? 
Who is in charge and who makes the call? 
What decisions should be made and done in what way? 

How could this happen, who let it? 
When are events like this one found straight away? 
Where do these things end and where is the whit, 
The one who understands it and who can answer why today? 

You can not find him, not in the world, 
You must find him within you. 
To tell you the truth of his world 
The world that makes sense to you 

But your world is his, and his world is yours 
And together, you may change nature’s course
Weekends
by Drew Davis

I wait all week for it come
After five days of endless work
It seems as though it’s just begun
Before school has to cut it short

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday
My three favorite days of the week
Parties, rest, fun and lots of play
‘Till Monday comes and makes us weep

The weekend’s what keeps me going
Despite school’s endless loads of stress
It’s much like a new beginning
And a time for me to reset

School can be okay at times when
We get three days to make us grin

The Candle
by James McKnight

A little delicate flame flickers
on a long and thin white wick.
The faint halo of light around it
makes it look like an angel in the darkness.

The slightest breeze threatens
to extinguish the fragile miracle out,
and once again cause darkness,
as the thin wisp of smoke snakes silently into the night.