

## First Place Prose – Middle School

### **The Huntress and Her Prey**

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**Grade: 6**

**School: Homeschool**

As the sun set, darkness spread across the woods like a spilled well of ink. Night settled and extinguished all faint wisps of light that remained. Time seemed to forget the dense forest; there were no crickets chirping, no owls hooting, no birds flying in the starless night sky. Nothing in the deadened woods moved. Everything was eerily silent and hushed, as if waiting for something to set it free.

Something had risen from its hiding. Its breath appeared to clear away the clouds in the sky; sending in a stream of clear moonlight and illuminating the dark. Its big brown eyes gleamed as it pawed the ground. Its antlers seemingly brushed the clouds with their tall golden majesty. It moved quickly, through the woods, but somehow, its hooves made no sound against the leaves.

But, just as fast, it was gone.

The knurled branches of towering trees twisted apart to reveal a path so overgrown and draped with shadows it was nearly impossible to see. Along it, a thin silhouette moved agilely through the tall oaks, quickly weaving in and out of the trees with flashes of silver. In her own mind, her pounding heart seemed louder than the roll of thunder; the whoosh of her breath seemed more powerful than a gale blowing through trees. But like her prey— she scarcely made a sound.

But, just as fast, she was gone.

There was a stream, winding through the forest, and its waters gently trickled over the mossy stones. The prey tipped its head to the cool water and let it flow into its mouth. It should have been peaceful, but instead it was eerily quiet, like nothing else lived or breathed. Something shattered the silence; the creak of a bow, the snap of the string, and the swish of an arrow piercing the air. But the prey was gone; the blade slicing merely a shadow and skidding off the watery stones with a splash.

The golden sun painted the sky pink, purple, and orange, blending together in streaks of color. The trees creaked as they stretched to awaken. The songbirds and the gentle breeze both sang over the waking treetops. Warm light blanketed the forest, and the stream sparkled as it rushed over the rocks in the riverbed, softly laughing as it fell on its way.

Then, the huntress and her prey were both gone, vanishing into the dawn's soft light.