

Second Place Prose – High School

“Nightblood”

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9th Grade

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It’s a frigid winter night, as two figures walked through the cold-blanketed forest. A slow sheet of snow is cascading down, coating a rugged man's shoulders and head. The man gradually limps his way along the snow trodden path as his lifeblood slowly pours out of a large gash in his leg, it is crudely wrapped with a piece of once-white fabric, now soaked in his own ichor. As he hobbles down the path his worn boots hurriedly crunch on the snow. His face upholds an expression of pure terror, his eyes darting into the trees and shadows, lips purse as he trudges down the footpath. His breathing is heavy and rough, his lungs rattle as he tries to keep his breathing even, anxiety constricting his chest. A large boulder appears at an intersection of two paths. The man’s look of terror eases into one of slight worry as he huddles behind the cold, stone boulder, clutching his leg, and hoping for his life that he loses his tracker.

A dark cloaked woman slinks along the edge of the trees, feet noiselessly sliding over the snow as a cold gust rattles the branches, long hair biting into her face as her hood is blown back, being swept up into a frenzy by the ferocious winds. Her head swings side to side as she looks out along the path. Seeing nothing, she stalks down onto it. Her expression is one of primal joy, of rapture in the hunt. The woman’s cold blue eyes pay special attention to the path, flickering back and forth, evaluating every clue and detail along the route, hunting for her lost prey. As she approaches the boulder she hears a quick, raspy breathing. She sees the red ribbons leading around to the weak figure she senses is there, she can smell the metallic tang in the air, causing her nostrils to flare. The blood trail grows larger the closer it gets to the man. She rounds the large stone that is keeping the man from her sight. Seeing him at last, slash through his leg and soaked in crimson, she grins, fangs gleaming. The man whimpers upon seeing her, his face taking up a look of dread, watching as the woman grows ever closer, then crouches down next to him. “You can’t escape me,” she says in a cruel, dark voice, and then lunges. The man screams, limbs flailing, as her elongated canines sink into his neck. Then, his voice slowly dies down. The light in his eyes diminish, and his arms stop flailing, a faint breath escapes his mouth, his last. As she detaches herself from the man, the fresh blood steams in the cold night as it pours out of his neck. She stands back, licking her blood-covered lips and savoring the taste of her latest meal. Then she flees, knowing anyone who found the body will blame the attack once again on the “ominous beast” that had been stalking the woods for two years, only a month after she’d been turned, but nobody knew that, she thought, remembering her experiences.

She looks pleased, eyes twinkling, because once again, she is able to use her curse and insatiable hunger for a good cause, to wipe out the cruel humans of the village, those that did others harm.