

*Marshfield High School Literature Club*



# The Tiger Journal

May 2017 Issue

Special Feature: Creative Writing Pieces

*This issue captures creative moments*

*It has various writing pieces*

*All of them developed by students*

*Because for creativity, you don't need any leases*

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# Note from the Editor

This issue of The Tiger Journal features various creative writing pieces from students in the creative writing class at the Marshfield High School. These stories are from a wide range of topics and themes and we hope you enjoy reading these student selections.

We would like to especially thank Ms. Mahoney for providing these creative writing pieces, along with Mr. Wilhelm, MHS principal, and Mr. Michalec, for their support in this publication.

- *Muhammad Abidi, editor of The Tiger Journal, Founder and President of the Marshfield High School Literature Club*

# Dragon Cavern

By: Lili Smith

## Chapter 1

The air was damp and chilly as I stepped my way through the cave; my boots striking each puddle I came across. My backpack weighed heavy on my shoulders as I slipped further down the cavern, a small smile splayed on my lips. My legs and arms were scratched to hell by the rocks and vines, making me quickly realize that shorts and a hiking top did not offer the best protection. My hair was pulled loosely in a ponytail behind my head, knotting and tangling into a rat's nest on my head. I had only started hiking here a short time ago, so my inexperienced feet stung with blisters. I had started coming here by accident one summer when I had stumbled upon this cave's secret.

The summer was long and boring, I do not lead an exciting life. It wasn't like I didn't have friends, I had a good amount, but we didn't really do things outside of the house. My mother, however, forced me outside. She doesn't see the disgust I have for humans, and wanted me to go enjoy my teens years. She doesn't understand the beauty in sitting in a room and watching videos all day. I can't be too mad at her though.

The day she forced me out of the house, I decided to go for a walk in the woods, not really knowing what else to do. If I got lost, it would at least show her that I shouldn't be trusted outside by myself.

My short walk had turned into a longer hike than I had intended, and I quickly realized that I may have actually gotten myself lost. Panic began to ebb its way into my senses as I fumble for my phone. I sent a quick text to my mother, telling her of my situation, but ceased all movement when I came to the huge mouth of a cave. I stared at the overgrown entrance and blinked at it. I glance at my phone before placing it back into my pocket and paced towards the cave face.

It looked beautiful, with the fading sunlight beating on the moss and rocks, which looked to be damp with recent rainfall. Vines hung lazily over

the edge of the entrance, curling around patches of moss and grass. Light glistened off the droplets of water on each surface, the different shades of green becoming bright and inviting. Inside the cave, it felt to be several degrees cooler than it had been in the sun. Normally, when one thinks of a cave alone in the forest, they think of a shallow hole in a hill. At first glance, that's all this cave appeared to be too; just a small hill hollowed out with spikes dripping water from the ceiling. Walking further, however, I saw a small hole behind a rather large rock that lead into more cave. It went deeper in, and, when I shined the light of my phone's flashlight to see better, the walls shimmered as if a toddler had thrown their glitter project everywhere.

I took a few more tentative steps forward, nervous about exploring this new environment. I wasn't the adventurous type. Honestly, I was barely a "type" at all. If it wasn't for my few close friends, I wouldn't even have a personality. Caught between wanting to go forward and worrying about never being able to find my way back, I was startled by my phone buzzing in my hand.

My mother had texted me back to say that it was a good thing I was lost, all the greatest things are found when you are lost, and to go have fun.

And she loves me.

Taking a deep breath, I reasoned that if she wasn't worried, I shouldn't be either. I seemed to have decent reception in this place, so I could always call for help need be. Calming my nerves enough to keep walking, I proceeded deeper into the cave.

The ground was really wet for some reason, causing me to slip every now and then, falling flat on my butt a few times. As I walked, everything felt strangely bluer for some reason. I thought at first that it was just my eyes adjusting to the dark, but the shimmers on the walls were definitely reflecting a blue hue of color. I had quickly turned off my flashlight, and sure enough, I finally noticed tiny blue orbs poking out of the walls at seemingly random places. They emitted a soft, tiny glow that grew brighter the deeper I had walked in the cave. Soon, a pleasant shine glistened all around me, setting me in a comfortable ease.

This kept on for a while until my comfortable stroll was interrupted by a light up ahead. This light, in contrast to the bright blue color of the

orbs, was pale orange and seemed to be coming from a few ways away. A slight fear began to nudge its way back to the surface as I glanced at the harsh color. It seemed to be a light shade, like the blue orbs, but the change in color didn't settle well with me.

Cautiously, I made my way to the end of the cave where the light was coming from. I realized, the closer I got, that the light was coming from a hole in the cave; one that stretched out into a massive area of space. Pale orange orbs of the same nature as the blue ones littered the walls, and the area around me was filled with what seemed to be piles of various items and knick knacks. I stood in the entrance to the area and looked around at the piles of shiny objects that shone brightly in the dim light: golden mugs, shiny stones and crystals, feathered items I didn't recognize, even a large ball like object that was soft to the touch.

I looked around at these treasures in awe, amazed at someone's findings, but halted abruptly upon seeing a disturbing sight. The corpse of a large bird like animal, I couldn't tell what kind, lay splayed out and half eaten on the ground. The smell finally assaulted my nose when I took the time to notice it. Its ribs poked out of torn flesh and one eye remained in its skull, staring up at me. At that point I had freaked out and turned to leave, not wanting to meet the thing that had eaten this poor bird, when a loud huff stopped me in my tracks.

I turn sharply to check my back, looking more closely at my surroundings. I had finally seen more bones, varying in size, strewn about in between the piles of objects. Panic chewed at the back of my throat and my eyes stung with warm tears. Fearing I had been spotted, I side stepped behind one of the many piles and pressed my back firmly on the wall. I slid alongside the cavern to see if I could spot where the huff had come from. If I knew where the sound was, I could better stay away from it, right?

Inching along, I tried my best to steady my breathing and keep as quiet as possible. Every tiny noise I made set me closer and closer to a panic attack. I tried my best to calm down and had to stop a few times to remind myself to breath. Each time, once I was calm enough, I tentatively continued my slide to the far end of the cave. My foot had crushed something that made an enormous crunching sound, however, and my

heart jumped to my throat and my breath hitched. Fearing I had stepped on another bird, I almost didn't want to look down.

The shock of what I had actually stepped on almost made me wish it had been another dead bird. A giant, tail like dead piece of skin lay on the ground, the tip now damaged by my foot. Tears spilled down my face in fear as a loud rustling came from my left. Luckily, I was behind one of the piles and froze in place. The sound continued for a minute longer before going still again. I took this opportunity to peek around the pile of shiny objects and see if I could find the source of the noise. My breath caught in my throat when I laid eyes on it.

At the end of the room, only a few feet away from me, stood a large reptile. Not just large; it could tower over an average house easily, with wings that could probably tear it down with one stroke. My mouth hung open slightly as I stared at the creature. It stood with its nose pointed to the ceiling of the cave, neck stretched all the way up and back straight. Its large eyes were closed, as if it were trying to listen for something. It sat atop of a pile of some of the better looking pieces of gold and knick knacks; shiny objects reflecting light off of its gorgeous scales. It looked so proud and beautiful, I was in awe of this humongous beast. For a moment, I even forgot that I should have been very afraid of it, and I gasped softly as I remembered to breath.

Its head turned my way, I could see the muscles in its neck move under crimson scales, and its eyes open to stare at me. Those large, bright green eyes bore hard into my own and once again I was caught in a trance. My breath became shallow and ragged and I began to feel light headed. My vision blurred, my body wanting to black out on me, and the last thing I saw was the creature lowering its head closer towards me.

When I came to, my head was pounding, and it took me awhile to get my eyes to function properly. At first, I figured I was just dreaming, but the hard floor of the cave had way too many rocks and small, pointy objects to be my comfortable bed. I shot up as quickly as I could with a throbbing headache and looked around. I had somehow been moved closer to the pile where the creature had sat, which I noticed then was nowhere to be found. I had tried to stand, but everything was throbbing, so I crawled to the pile, leaned against the sturdiest looking object, and sat there for a moment. I

could hardly believe I passed out, mentally slapping myself for being a movie cliché. Snickering bitterly at how ridiculous this whole situation was, I realized that everything that was happening only ever happened in movies. I brought my legs up closer to my torso and my elbows on my knees, placing my face in my hands. After some time, the pain in my head went away and my vision steadied.

I had been about to stand when more rustling came from somewhere in front of me. I look up to see the creature again, now standing on all fours, walking around piles and stalagmites. It takes me longer than it probably should have to realize it was walking back over to me, and I should have been running. I had gotten onto my feet and fumbled backwards, suddenly realizing that the creature was standing in the way of the exit. My mind went blank, and I didn't know what to do.

The creature stood above me at that point, stopping just a few feet away. It lowered its head until it was nearly touching the ground and I went numb, believing it was probably going to eat me. The beast opened its mouth, and I closed my eyes, not wanting to see myself getting devoured. A dull thud was heard, and I instinctively peek an eye open. Another animal corpse, now covered in saliva, lay in front of me. The creature took two small steps back and plopped down behind the corpse, staring at me.

I looked at this giant beast of a creature, still slightly trembling in fear, and realized that it was trying to feed me. I was more confused at that moment than I had been in my entire life, and I would have laughed if it wasn't also the scariest moment in my entire life.

I thought about whether I could make it past the creature or not, but looking at its massive form, I knew that I wouldn't be able to outrun it. My breathing had become labored again, on instinct, and I trembled forward a few steps. The creature's eyes never left me, watched my every movement. It scooted forward, causing me to snap back violently, and nudged the corpse more towards me.

"N-no, thank you," I quivered with a nervous smile. The creature continued to stare at me. My shoulders slumped, why did I think talking to it would work?

We stayed that way, me standing there like an idiot, and the creature staring at me. After a while, it suddenly stood, causing me to jump again,



tears just barely prickling my eyes. It walked past me, I tried to sidestep out of its way, and dropped back down on its pile.

It brought its head right beside me, causing my stomach to tighten painfully. Before I could even really process what was happening, it brought its huge tongue out of its mouth and took a long lick of me. I had started to panic then, thinking it must be tasting me or something. Tears poured down my face again. The creature brought one of its claws up and wrapped it behind my back, pulling me closer. I was sure it was going to eat me then, I was going to die in a cave and it was going to be painful, and oh geez my mother was going to never know what happened to me, and I was going to die.

I was freaking out at this point, wishing it would be over soon. I kept expecting the creature to tear at my flesh, but it merely kept licking me, turning me over occasionally to get all sides. Finally, once it was satisfied with its work, it curled around itself, dragging me along, and rested on its pile of shiny items. I was cradled between its arm and neck, like a child. My shaking calmed down after what felt like an eternity of sitting there. I tentatively took my phone out of my pocket, and checked the time. I had been down in this cave for three and a half hours. Wincing, I noticed that my mother had called me twice, and texted me asking where I was.

Looking at the creature, I noticed its eyes were closed and it was breathing steadily. I figured it had gone to sleep and took this as my opportunity to leave. Fumbling over a claw and various items, making my way off of the creature and tried to sprint for the exit. I had looked behind me before leaving, only to see the creature was looking down at me again. I cursed myself under my breath.

I had gotten an idea then. Not a smart one but it was worth a shot. Reaching into my pocket carefully, I felt around for some loose change. The creature stared at me with great interest. Sighing, I pulled out a quarter, hoping it was shiny enough, and held it up for the creature to see. Its pupils blew out upon seeing the quarter, watching it hit the dim light of the cave. It was actually pretty adorable; I half expected it to stick its tongue out and wag its tail. I was stepping towards it now, very careful not to scare or annoy the creature, and placed the quarter right in front of its claw. Stepping backwards, I watched the creature carefully. I had to hold back a chuckle at

its behavior, staring at the quarter with dilated pupils and great interest, it was being so cute.

After backstepping for quite a while, I turned sharply and sprinted for the door. I didn't hear anything behind me, so I didn't think it was following me. As soon as I was back outside, I winced noticing it was dark out. I just knew my mother was going to kill me.

# Never

By: Alexis Nicolaisen

She wakes up in the morning  
Disturbed by only the sun  
She stays in bed for as long as she can  
While she rests, she focuses on her breath  
And stays in tune with her heart beating.

Now it's four in the afternoon  
The day has passed by  
She finally sets her feet on the ground  
She stands up and looks around  
She doesn't dare make a sound

Five after four and she takes a few steps  
And passes through her room door  
She steps over piles of clothes and goes to the kitchen  
She didn't feel hungry  
So she wandered outside instead

A breath of fresh air  
And a shiver from the breeze  
The beautiful sounds of nature  
And the rustling sound of leaves  
Was this the landscape of freedom?

He wanders slowly  
With drag in each step  
He hasn't slept for a few days  
The sky holds his despair  
He doesn't know where he is

Now the sky's going to dim soon  
The day has brought him nothing  
He finally decides to sit down  
He rests for the first time in a week  
He doesn't dare move again

It hasn't been long and his eyelids begin to droop  
The lights turn on in the house nearby  
His breath slows and calm washes over him  
But he didn't feel tired  
So he opens his eyes again

Light from the house's now open door blinds him

The air turns cold  
And the breeze is sour  
The yelling of the animals  
And the fright sets in  
This scene was torture

She saw him  
He saw her  
It was *terrifying*  
The girl was washed pale  
The boy was covered in dirt

She stared  
He stared back  
Her breath quickened  
Anxiety took over  
She shut the door

He couldn't believe what he was seeing  
A door slammed shut  
The sun was setting  
It got cold  
The only source of light was the moon

He wasn't lovestruck  
Neither was she  
A homeless tired boy  
A sheltered oversleeping girl  
It could never be.

# War

By: Anthony Frey

March on back to your homeland  
Deliver your guns to the peace man  
Burn them in the flame  
Cause you are to blame

For a battle of shame  
All for world fame  
Leave our home in vain

Now kids are crying  
Tear gas crime  
Like fish out of water  
A clock without time

Battle of shame  
All for world fame  
Leave our home in vain

Cultural hunger  
Meet up with the flock  
Steel birds above  
Post traumatic shock

Battle of shame  
All for world fame  
Leave our home in vain

Pull out your guinea pigs  
Pay for Pink Mist  
Camouflage pants  
Pill pushing paramedics

Battle of shame  
All for world fame  
Leave our home in vain

Justice is served

To the ones with light skin  
But across the ocean  
We shoot and we sin

Battle of shame  
All for world fame  
Leave our home in vain

Leaders grab your armor  
Mount your metal horse  
Head toward the sand  
Kill those innocent, of course

Battle of shame  
All for world fame  
Leave our home in vain

Do you understand?  
It's all just a game  
Angry protesters  
They're coming your way

Battle of shame  
All for world fame  
Leave our home in vain

Harmless like you  
Our Intentions are good  
To keep peace the main factor  
Means to be understood

Battle for fame  
Our world is full of shame  
We kill those already in vain

# Solo and Ensemble

By: Kellen Teche

District Solo and Ensemble comes around every year in March. And every year I practice harder and harder. This year marks my fifth consecutive year competing in the Solo and Ensemble event. And as I get older the judges expect more from me, and I intend to give them exactly what they expect.

When I started out back in 7th grade I could hardly play. I played only easy, class C music. As I got better throughout the years, I went on to class B music and now I only play class A music. At Solo and Ensemble I play in Ensembles, Duets, Trios, and more. But, my main event is my solo. This year for my solo I played Rondo written by Mozart. I practiced it over and over again to refine it. I still feel like I didn't practice enough though.

When I step on stage for a trio or an ensemble, I hardly feel nervous because there are others that the audience can pay attention to. But for my solo I get very nervous.

This year I stepped up, my heart already beating fast. I grabbed a music stand and set in the center of the stage. I announce my name, my accompanists name, the name of the solo and composer. The judge in the

auditorium tells me to start whenever I'm ready. I looked over to see that my accompanist was ready to play and I start. It did not start well this year. I miss the first note and my heart starts to beat faster. But, I press on. I continue with the 16th note runs without too much incident. The whole time I'm playing my solo I think about how much better I could have done it-- how much better I had done it. Every mistake I made got me more nervous and I started to shake. And then almost abruptly it was over. I put my instrument down and let out a ragged breath.

Now the judge was going to critique me. He started out telling me the things that I did well. I had a good tone. I used lots of air. And he pointed out specific measures I played especially well. Then he went on to the mistakes I had made. I missed the first note. I needed to use more air and so on. I walked out of the auditorium with all of these comments in mind. On my way out everyone congratulated me. My instructor, my parents and my girlfriend all told me how good I sounded. But, it was hard to believe them because I know that I could have played it better. And, it felt like the compliments they gave me were made up to try and make me feel better.

And now I had to wait for results. Sometimes it took 15 minutes to get results. Other times it took hours. I checked every couple minutes to see if my results were up. Of course they weren't. In between checking for my results I talked with my friends and went to some of their events. It took so long that I had to play my duet an hour after my solo before I saw my



results. I got back from playing my duet and saw that my results were finally up! I walked over to the wall of doors where the results were posted. I had to push through all of the stupid people who congregate there to talk. As I neared all I could think is that I must have gotten a 2 or worse from the performance I gave. But I finally was within range of score. And I got a 1 and it had a little star next to it. I'm going to state! I'm so relieved to finally see my score. This is the third year that I've gone to state with my solo.

Now I have even more time to practice my solo. State Solo and Ensemble is in May, and I'll do even better than I did at District.

Solo and Ensemble is very important to me. I take pride in how well I play my instrument. Solo and Ensemble is a way to show my worth. And, my plans after high school are to play French Horn professionally. This event is kind of a set up for the future. I hope to be in a well known orchestra travelling all over the world playing for all kinds of people.

# Society and Her Beauty

By: Sierra Loew

I might be ugly according to others  
And to them I can't afford to think  
that  
I am beautiful  
Society told me  
Everything is beautiful  
Yet, it also told me that  
Most people are ugly  
Society thinks that  
beauty  
Is more important than  
self-confidence  
Some people say  
everyone is beautiful  
But most say  
You have to be a model to be  
beautiful  
*America's Next Top model* tells me  
How I need to be thin to be  
beautiful  
I don't think it's true  
I am beautiful the way I am  
In the future,  
Girls will need a waistline of sixteen  
inches to be considered thin  
No longer can a person say  
A plus size girl is pretty  
It is certain that  
We will kill ourselves over looks  
And it is absurd to think that  
We will love our selves  
This is all true unless we reverse  
society and her beauty,

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You have to be a model to be  
beautiful  
But most say  
Everyone is beautiful  
Some people say  
Self-confidence  
Is more important than  
Beauty  
Society thinks that  
Most people are ugly  
Yet, it also told me that  
Everything it beautiful  
Society told me  
I am beautiful  
And to them I can't afford to think  
that  
I might be ugly according to others.

# Thaw

By: Iris Huang

## Chapter 1: The Traitor

*Humanity is unpredictable, only by trusting your own judgement, you may live till the next day.*

During Ming Dynasty, Emperor Zhu formed an intelligence investigation organization. The people serving in this organization were called 'Jin Yi Wei' or 'the guardians' working only for the emperor. The mission for guardians of emperor was not like any other jobs, it required the soldiers with total loyalty and high military skills. They worked in the dark to eliminate any opponents threatening the emperor. They were only loyal to the emperor and that's all.

"Your majesty, within all the skilled soldiers, why did you choose him to be your guardian?"

"He is the only one I could trust."

The emperor gave the guardians far more power than most of the members in his cabinet. So much that the people feared their names and nobody wished to be related to their works because wherever they went, there would be death. The guardians were given the power to arrest anyone including the royalty and hold secret interrogations against anyone as long as the Emperor's authority was secured and protected.

In a camping site away from the capital, a group of guardians were discussing their mission. Commander Lee was the leader in this mission and he was also the leader of the Guardians.

"Lee, what's our next plan?"

"The emperor wishes to see them dead by tomorrow, so I plan to attack their food storage house tonight and light up their tents right after the attack." He talked with a deep voice and calmness and his eyes were firm and shined sharply. His strong leadership and confident spirit were like

reassuring medicine, making the soldiers to trust and obey him. Then, he pointed at the map and showed his fellow generals the specific routes.

Later he added, standing straight, “We have to act tonight or else if their reinforcement army came to rescue, our soldiers would not be able to fight back. Tell them now to prepare lighting powders and arms, then by midnight be ready for my order!”

The guardians were given this mission to eliminate the Wu family, which was a powerful family that helped Emperor Zhu to seize his crown. However, Zhu feared that the family would be too strong to be controlled. The emperor then ordered the guardians to slaughter every member of this family from the servants to Cabinet Wu for them ‘plotting a rebellion against the authority’. It was the only way the emperor could do to secure his throne. Any strong influence in the court could exert threats to the him anytime.

Another guardian, Qian, spoke with a heavy sigh, “I didn’t expect the former attack news was leaked to the Wus, if not, we would be done by now.”

He has worked with Lee in the battlefield and office for years, but Lee was still inaccessible, treating him like any others with no difference. Probably there’s no the word ‘brother’ in his dictionary, Qian thought.

“What? It was leaked out? How did that happen?” Someone in the tent whispered.

Lee’s eyebrows knitted for a second then he returned his face to pure calmness, “It’s simple, someone in this army is not trustworthy anymore, or----Cabinet Wu already placed an informer in this army in the first day the guardians were formed.”

Qian’s eyes turned bigger as he heard this unbelievable inference, “Do you mean there is a traitor among us for all these time? And he probably has reported our missions to Wu?”

“That is possible, and...” *And the emperor probably knows this too.* Lee did not say out the last sentence. He looked around emotionlessly, showing only calm composure and presence of mind, “Whoever that is, the truth will be surfaced after this attack.”

As everyone in the tent went out, Lee carefully scrolled the map and placed it in a wooden box. This map contained so much of their plan, it has to be secured.

Suddenly, a shadowed reflected on the tent and quickly disappeared. Lee skimmed around the room but found nobody.

Not again, he thought.

The attack was held at midnight. Following the order from their commander, the soldiers had a long nap and full preparation.

The guardians, split into three groups, went in into the enemy's campsite. One going into the food storage tent would burn down any resources they could possibly get. One sneaking into the camp grounds would directly end the mission by killing every last man of the target army. And the last one with the final attack would surround their campsite with soldiers. To be sure there would not be any outside support, the emperor has given them full power to eliminate everyone of them and burn down the field.

The first squad which was always led by General Qian sneaked into the food storage tent from the back of the entire campsite right on time with when Lee leading his second squad into the site. The fire raged high above the sky when every Wu's soldier was sleeping. Some night guards who saw the fire and tried to flee were soon killed by the second squad hiding in the dark.

"Fire! Fire!" As the fire extended further, the soldiers were awake due to the heavy smoke. They fled out of their tents, but they faced their final destiny.

"Wait!" Lee pulled back his horse and made a 'hold on' gesture to the soldiers behind him. He spotted that something was wrong.

The smoke has surrounded almost the entire site, but only few of the enemy soldiers ran out and nothing was going on in Cabinet Wu's camp, which was about 50 feet away from them.

*That camp was so 'quiet' that it seemed like nobody was in it...*

*Nobody was in it!* Lee realized the plan was leaked out again! Someone has already betrayed him!

But it was too late. As he realized the truth, a group of people holding long sword has already surrounded them!

“Lee, I was always jealous of your ability to observe,” said a guy clapping his hands and laughing with a sarcastic tone, as he walked out of the dark. It was a voice that Lee could never forget.

“Qian, why?” Two words contained so much of his questions and rage.

Qian looked at the man still riding on the horse with pupils darker than the sky and face covered with a severe expression. He answered, “I am jealous! And that is all! You are always better than me! The emperor granted you the commander position of the guardians, but do you know that is the place I’ve been dreaming about! You shadowed me for all these years, could you even imagine how I feel?” Qian’s voice trembled as he spoke louder and louder. He treated him as a brother, but for all these years he has showed his ability, and nobody even cared!

His voice went across the silent sky, especially sharp in this cold weather.

This is why Qian turned his back on Lee and the entire Guardian team because he wanted Wu to help him to replace Lee.

Nevertheless Lee was not shaken by his rage, instead he remained seated straightly on the horse and looked down at him like looking at a crown playing his own games, thus Qian yelled at him and pointed at Lee’s nose with his sharp sword, “Why! Why are you still so calm! Don’t you care about your life? Don’t you care about your soldiers? Stop showing your obnoxious face like that! You can’t! You CAN’T be like this all the time! Huh! Just watch it! You will beg me!”

Finally, Lee showed a bitter smile, but unexpectedly, when Qian moved one step closer waving his sword, his ‘rebel team’ pointed their swords at Qian.

“Wait! What are you doing! Stop!” Qian did not expect this from happening when two of his men physically controlled him and bended him on the ground, forcing him to kneel in front of Lee. As Lee fixed his eyes on him, Qian felt a chill in the air then he started to sweat.

The black clothes with white detailed embroidery on Wu gave him an air of mystery and solemn feature, decreasing the temperature around him.

Lee spoke, "Nobody knew the last plan was leaked because you were the only one I talked to about the plan," he paused but continued staring at Qian's pale face, "When one-third of the soldiers were dead in the last battle, you were the last one who came back. You were suppose to be dead, but you came back just fine with no wound. The 'blood' on your body already turned black when you appeared in front of me, there is only one explanation for this. You ran to report our attack to Wu when you led the first squad in, then you came back but found out your fellow squad members have almost entirely been slaughtered. So you decided to put on the fake blood you prepared earlier before you come back."

A painful smile gradually showed up on Qian's face. He slightly shook his head and laughed sadly, "I am impressed, Lee. You could see everything coming, and you just waited for me to do the stupid things under your eyes. Lee, I just... I just wanted to see you lose for one time..."

Lee stared at him seriously, but an image of a girl emerged in his head. Her eyes were so pure unlike these ones, tarnished by dishonesty and injustice. They only met once in a busy street. She stood out to speak for a beggar and helped those being bullied. In a chaotic society that nobody wanted to have a hand in, she was willing to stand alone.

*No, not alone anymore.* His eyes were so dark like abysm with endless depth.

"Execute him."

\*\*\*\*\*

Nobody knew about Lee's past. The only thing they heard about was that he became an orphan at a very young age and early independence was the reason why he was now so inaccessible.

In fact, he was born in a rich and powerful family at the time when Emperor Zhu's father was ruling. Ironically, Lee's family was destroyed for the same reason Lee now led this current mission. Lee's family was a threat to the government. There were three generals and two military commanders are from Lee's family. Adding up the most powerful and beloved imperial concubine who was Lee's aunt and the prince's mother, Lee's family almost controlled the entire harem. Through some pillow talk from daughters of some cabinet members who were their political enemies,

the emperor realized this family's invisible power in his court. Later he ordered execution of his entire family to eliminate any possible outcomes of keeping them. However, Lee survived.

He survived because of the prince who was Emperor Zhu now at that time. They fought in battles together, and they were intimate brothers in the battlefield. They witnessed death and victory together and they stood together regardless of any situations, the prince couldn't let his father to kill Lee. And being underestimated by his father for so long, he was determined. He plotted his big brother to kill their father and seize the throne. And his brother did it for he was greedy and irritable. The prince, however, came back and executed his brother for his patricide crime.

After that day, Lee grew up to be a totally independent man. And after that day when all of his family members except the prince and him were slaughtered in front of him, he could hardly trust anyone again.

\*\*\*\*\*

"General! News from the court!" A soldier rushed into his camp and handed a roll of paper in.

As the soldier left his room, Lee flattened the paper near a candle and read:

*"The Wu has surrendered in the court, abandoning all of his political power.*

*General, you could stop hunting down this family because the execution is cancelled.*

*Some may be innocent, but others will be under my eyes from now on.*

*If I could persuade him to focus on the business only,*

*the Wus will not be a threat to me anymore.*

*Zhu."*

Nobody ever uses his name or talks about the emperor with this name. He only allowed his name to be on letters to those he trusted.

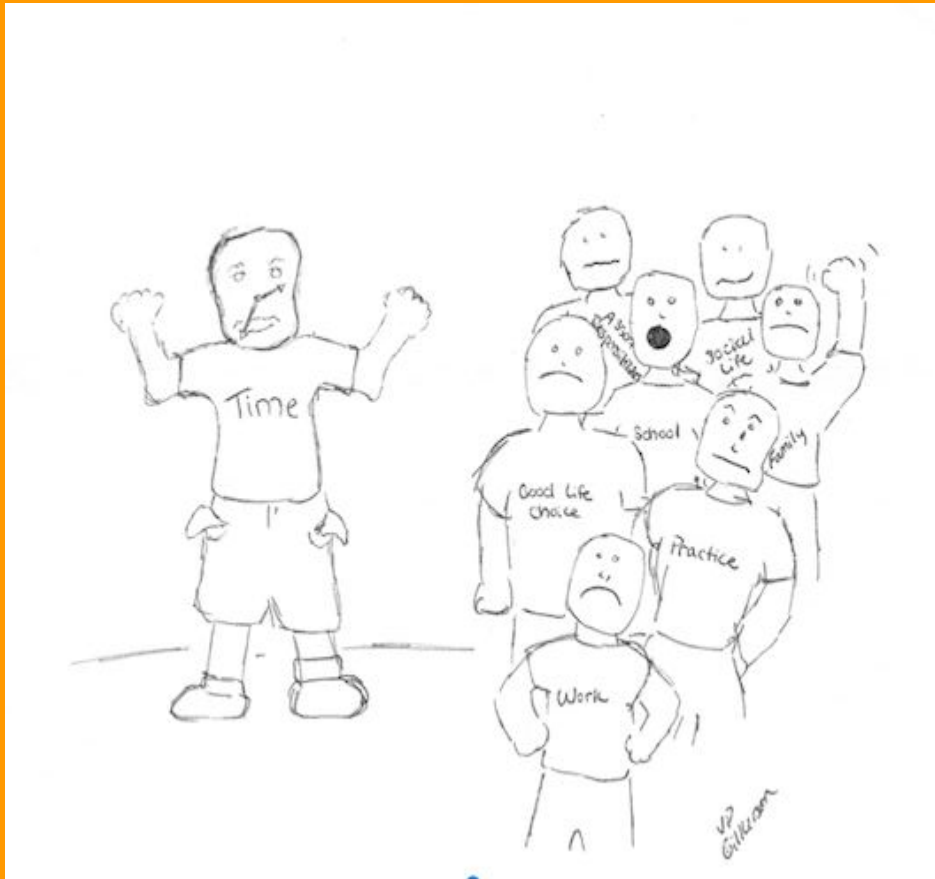
Lee read through the short letter, then burnt it with a candle. *Some may be innocent?* He could almost imagine that girl with firm eyes facing any



problems, but she was so tiny and petite in stature. It just made him want to protect her so desperately from anything. It was like something in his heart has been broken, a feeling he never had before flushed out. *Can't wait to find out who she is.*

“Listen to my order, we will return to the capital by tomorrow.”

# Cartoon



- Emma Gilkerson, Vice President of MHS Literature Club