

# C'mon. Turn the page. We dare you. What are you, chicken?

The Anniston Star received nearly 500 entries in our 31st annual Halloween story contest for kids. The winning stories appear inside, followed by a gallery of spooky drawings.

Photo by Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star

## Ghoulies and ghosties and long-legged beasties

Every year, The Anniston Star receives hundreds of entries in its annual Ghostwriters contest, and



Homeland

I love reading the stories. So what are kids scared of this

"The Covid Monster took many lives, and forced us all to stay home!" wrote MaKenzie Curry, age 11, of Talladega.

year?

In "The Ghost of Emma" by Zainatu Sesay, age 10, of The Donoho School, a young girl who dies of COVID haunts the doctor who turned off her ventilator because, as he said, "You are

going to die anyway and there is nothing I can do about it." 2020 is going to haunt us all for a very long time. Thankfully, not all the kids' ghost stories were

This year's tales included the usual assortment of dark woods and haunted houses, creepy dolls and killer clowns. There were evil teachers and evil principals.

Kidnappers and serial killers. Murder hornets and Nazis.

Here are some of my favorite moments from among the nearly

Best title: "The Night of the Living Homework" by Iradessa Williams, age 10, White Plains Elementary.

**Best opening line:** "There was once a guy that ate people for a living," from "The Night the Streets Became Red" by Connor Bannister, age 12, of Williams Intermediate School.

Best setting: In "The Last Nail" by Sam Wakefield, age 13, of the Donoho School, customers go into a nail salon, but they don't

Best sound effects: "Drip, drip, drip, drip, drip." From a story

by Paisley Freckman, age 9, of The Donoho School. Best musical prop: A piano

that plays haunting melodies – literally — in "The Piano" by Mason Lee, age 10, of Williams Intermediate School. Best non-musical prop: In "Written Disasters" by Haley

Hartwell, age 13, of the Donoho

School, a boy finds a mysterious

pen and discovers that, if he

writes down the names of the kids who bully him, they immediately die gruesome deaths.

Best accidental summoning: In "The Cake with Hatred" by Christopher Perkins, age 12, of The Donoho School, a mom unwittingly unleashes a demon when she decorates her son's birthday cake with a red star that turns out to be a pentagram.

Best clown alternative: In a story by Lake Hill, age 11, of Williams Intermediate School, a family is menaced by a creepy garden gnome.

Scariest villain: In "The Crazy Kid" by Jaxon Ralph, age 11, of Williams Intermediate School, the killer is an evil dentist ... with a big drill ...

**Best-named villain:** A murderous video game character

comes to life in "The Legend of Tomato Head" by Hunter Hartwell, age 10, of the Donoho Creepiest villain: In "The Tall Watching Man," by Bailey Haynes, age 8, of Coosa Valley Elementary

School, the title character is just

that: A tall man who creeps into

just stands there, watching them

children's rooms at night and

sleep.

Scariest monster: In "Never Kill Spiders" by Olivia Green, age 9, of Ohatchee Elementary School, two girls are hunted by a 10-foot-long spider. Nope nope nope nope nope.

Even scarier monster: In "Haunted House" By Rylee Smith, age 9, of White Plains Elementary, two girls are hunted by a 200,000-foot-tall spider.

Tastiest monster: In "A Doughy Situation" by Landon Craycraft, age 14, of Alexandria High School, the monster is a scientist who accidentally turns himself into a giant jelly doughnut.

Best mutant: In "Bloody Monkeys" by Matthew Roper, age 11, of Williams Intermediate School, some monkeys drink toxic water, steal a bunch of AK-47s and start shooting people.

Worst monster: In "The Missing Friend" by Sophee Tuiolosego, age 10, of Ohatchee Elementary, the monster is a zombie unicorn. That's just not

right. Biggest misdirect: In "One

Halloween Night" by Mia Busby,

age 13, of White Plains Middle

School, a boy and girl follow a trail of red stuff through the halls of a creepy old hotel, only to discover it was made by a cute puppy who had found a peanut butter and strawberry jelly sandwich.

Ickiest title: "The Lice Zombies" by Rylan Harmon, age 12, of Williams Intermediate School. No. Just no.

Best song: In "The Evil Easter Bunny" by Leigh Ann Shute, age 10, of Williams Intermediate School, the Easter Bunny hops along and sings this song: "Here comes the Easter Bunny / Axing all the parents / I can hippy hoppy / Bloodshed's on its way!" Good luck getting that out of your head

**Killer last line:** In "A Clowny Night" by Dacarri Bedford, age 11, of Williams Intermediate School, a boy steals a clown's red nose. The evil clown catches the boy and exclaims, "If you don't give me my nose, I'll just have to take

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## Elementary Division

## 1st Place 'The Mystery of the Dolls'

Eloise tried her hardest not to touch them as she walked by them every day to go play with her other toys. She couldn't help but



Ella Claire Curtis, age 8, Coosa Valley Elementary

stare at them. The dolls' long dresses were made of old materials, stained with age from maybe 100 years ago. Their eyes were black and blue, sewn with tiny strands of thread.

The dolls smelled like old clothes that had

been packed away for a very long time. Every now and then Eloise thought they smelled like smoke. Eloise gently touched the lace on the edge of one of their dresses. Spots of black were all over their torn dresses. These dolls had sat on the dresser for as long as she could remember.

That night, she lay in her bed and could not sleep. Eloise had a strange feeling that she was being watched. She got up to get a glass of warm milk. As she came back up the stairs, she heard a click and saw the light from her bedroom come on and heard a noise. She started shaking and breathing

Eloise tip-toed down the hall towards her room. Her heart started pounding. She turned the corner and immediately ran into "I heard you downstairs, are you OK?"

her mother said as she hugged her. "I felt like I was being watched and I

couldn't sleep and I feel like you won't tell me the truth about them," Eloise blurted out. "About who?" her mom asked.

"The dolls!" Eloise said.

"You're letting all those creepy shows you

watch make you scared," Mom said. "Now Eloise climbed into the bed still wonder-

ing why her mother never told her anything about the dolls. Her mom turned off the light and shut the door. Eloise fell asleen and dreamed about going into a really old house. There were cobwebs in the corners.

Shelves of books covered the walls. On one of the shelves was a picture of a little girl holding the dolls. Eloise picked up the picture. On the back of it, there was a note that said, "1920 — Elizabeth Moore."

Eloise woke up. It was morning. She ran down the stairs. "Mom! Who was Elizabeth

Mom stopped and stared at Eloise. "How do you know anything about her?' Eloise said she had a dream about the

dolls and about Elizabeth. "I saw her picture with the dolls." Mom said, "Elizabeth was your great-

great-grandmother. She was mysteriously saved from a house fire. Her dolls were lost." Eloise screamed, "But how are they in my

room if they were lost?" Mom looked so confused. They both ran

up the stairs and went into Eloise's room. The dolls were nowhere to be found. Was this Eloise's imagination? Were the

dolls really in her room? Only a faint smell of smoke floated

through the air.

## 2nd Place 'The Evil Daycare Teacher'



age 8, Coosa Valley Elementary

ago there lived a little girl named Emily. Her mom, Jessica, was very nice but she was busy all the time. Since she stayed so busy, Emily needed to go to daycare during the day. It was time for

A long time

bed and Jessica

asked Emily to go upstairs and lay down.

Emily was so excited to start her new daycare that she could barely sleep.

The next morning she woke up and jumped out of bed. "Good morning, Mom!" Emily said.

'Good morning!" Mom replied. "Are you ready for daycare, Emily?"

"Yes! I am SO ready!" Emily shouted. "I have all of my stuff ready to go!

"OK, well, it's time to go. Make sure you have your lunchbox!" her mom said. An hour later, they arrived at the day-

care. "Whoa! This is so cool!" said Emily. Emily started running towards her classroom and accidentally bumped into a lady wearing all black and big glasses.

"Oh I am so sorry!" Emily apologized. "Oh, it's OK!" the lady replied. "Are you my teacher?" Emily asked. "Well, yes I am! I am Mrs. Smith. What is your name, cutie?" the teacher asked.

"My name is Emily. I like your name, Mrs. Smith." Mrs. Smith politely replied, "Thank you!" Lunch time came and the teacher stood

up in front of the class. "Time to go to lunch, kids," said Mrs. Smith. The kids all started shouting, "Yay! Lunchtime! I am so hungry! Let's go!" One of the students, Max, asked, "What

are we having for lunch, Mrs. Smith?' "Pizza," she replied with an evil look on her Mrs. Smith may look nice, but deep inside, she could not stand those kids. She

couldn't wait for the opportunity to poison

their lunch! One by one, as she prepared the plates for each kid, she sprinkled a little bit of poison on each slice as she smiled and laughed her evil laugh.

Here you go kids! Eat up!" Mrs. Smith said with a creepy grin. Emily felt like something wasn't right.

'Mrs. Smith, I'm not hungry," Emily said as she watched the other kids dig in. Max started looking green and sick.

"What's wrong Max?" said Mrs. Smith. "My stomach hurts and I feel sick," he replied. "Go to the bathroom if you feel sick." she

Max gets up to go to the restroom but before he can make it to the door, he passes out. Next thing you know, each kid starts passing out in their seats.

"Poison! You gave them poison!" Emily exclaimed. Emily tried to run out of the room, but the teacher stopped her by blocking the door.

"You will never get away, Emily!" the teacher said. Right as Mrs. Smith was reaching for some rope to tie up Emily, the announcer said, "Mrs. Smith, will you please send Emily to the office for check

Emily was able to get away. Emily never stepped into that creepy daycare ever

## 3rd place "The Clown"

One dark and scary night, a babysitter was going to babysit some kids. The parents said she could watch TV downstairs because the kids

> were asleep. It was very cold down there, but good thing there was a blanket on the couch.

The only thing that did not feel right was the very, very scary clown statue. So she covered it with the blanket. But

she could still see the pointy hat. So she called the parents and asked if she could The parents said they did not have one

Katelynn Hall, age

9, White Plains

Elementary

They said get the kids and get out of the She called 911, but the clown got away

and was never seen again.

## Honorable Mentions - Elementary Division

## 'Trapped'

"Wham!" It's my first time going in the Haunted Chicken House. I'm scared. I don't like it. These clowns are chasing me. What will I do? I'm trying to run away but it never ends. I have to go back. I'm trapped. What will I do? I'm scared. They keep chasing me. What do I do? I keep running. I don't know what to do. I'm very scared. I'm hiding. What do I do? I'm running. I can't stop or they're going to get me. But I have an idea. I can probably make them stop chasing me. I know a key to

get out. Wow, I finally got out. Yay! Never go in the Haunted Chicken House. - Khloe Thomas, age 9,

**Ohatchee Elementary** 

## 'Deathly Scared'

As I was in my room scared to death, things from my nightmares walked the streets.

My room door creaked open. A witch with a long nose came in. The witch was horrid. Out of her pot came nightmares. Hundreds

of nightmares all wrapped into When I looked out the window,

dark green zombies were there

staring at me. As I looked to the shadows, I saw pale vampires and white ghosts. "Come my dear," the witch said. "I want to drink your blood,"

the vampire said. I ran to the door but I got caught in a web, made by a spider four times larger than Frankenstein's head. I pushed through the

large web to get to my mom, but I found her dead on the rug, with all different kinds of spirits around.

I went to my dad to tell him the

news. I looked all around, but I couldn't find him. I looked in the shadows and I saw a zombie with black hair and green eyes — my dad. He was a zombie! The color of his skin was a dark shade of green. I ran downstairs. The door

swung open. It was my best friend, Ella. We are the only ones in town still alive. After three minutes, silence fell

upon us. Zombies then crowded the room. We ran outside and up to the treehouse. My friend and I love the super-

natural, so we had planned for this and we had everything we needed for the next three months.

rain came. The lookout pad had fallen to the ground. We had to go down to see what was going on, when a witch came and took three-fourths of our food.

A week later, serious wind and

We quickly climbed back up, but the place was destroyed. Then from behind Frankenstein yelled out, "KILL THEM!"

We ran as long as we could, but then when we couldn't any more. within seconds we were gone. We

## ------Middle School Division

### 1st Place 'Books'

Your daughter Lilv loves to read books.



12, Williams Intermediate School

## It was a dreary night in Bloomington,

Indiana. I was walking home from my dreadful radiation job after I had worked overtime.



13, The Donoho School

I was on Johnson Street about to turn onto Woodland Drive. I was walking fairly fast to get home quickly and finally get

some well-de-

served rest.

When I turned the corner I saw a black cat. I didn't really think much of the little feline and

told him to shoo and he went on. I walked a little while more, and there he was again. I shooed him once more, but he stayed put this time. I stomped and waved my arms to get him to move. He, of course, had other intentions and stayed still once more. I must have been very sleep deprived because I could've sworn I heard him

speak. I rubbed my eyes as if I was trying to awaken myself from an odd dream, but this was no dream. I wanted to make sure I wasn't delusional, so I said hello to the cat. He responded in a low monotonous voice saying, "Hello Oliver Smith." I was petrified, and I could barely move a

muscle. I finally got the courage to ask how he knew my name. He responded, "Oh Oliver, I know everything about you.' He then started to change and shift into

a human-like form. I wanted to run away, but my curiosity convinced me to stay. He transformed into a being that looked spookily similar to my son, but not entirely.

My son has blond hair, blue eyes, and is a happy kid. This thing had black hair, red eyes, and seemed troubled. This disturbed me so I yelled, "What have you done to my son?!"

'What do you mean, Dad? It's me, Kevin!" he replied. He continued to talk and make an

entranced. He looked at me and said, "You are going to be very useful, dear Oliver." I then felt something enter my body and everything went black.

attempt to convince me that he was my

son. The more he talked I felt myself being

I woke up two days later without any knowledge of what happened or where I was. I was strapped to a table in an empty room. Someone walked in, and they looked terrified of me. I asked them what happened and why I

was here, but they just turned the TV on. I was dumbfounded by what I saw. My picture was plastered across every TV channel for murdering 14 people. I've been locked up in some mental hos-

pital for four years now. I waste my remaining days in an empty room, and I often find myself wondering about that night Many think that the endless hours of

radiation messed with my head, or that I'm a paranoid schizophrenic, but I know what actually happened that night, and I wonder how different my life would be right now if I had taken the long way home.

### 'The Blood on the Sidewalk' Have you ever heard about the ghost of the blood on the sidewalk?

3rd Place

This story takes place not too far from here in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and it wasn't too long ago either.

The year was 2020 and it was around



age 10, The Donoho School apartment by herself. Quaran-

really close to death, until a young lady

tine was going smoothly, until she just went crazy! It all went downhill from there. She started pulling out her hair, and she was not doing so well. She started getting

are now one with the ghosts.

– Jennings Hagan, age 9, The Donoho School

finally moved in with her. She was very mysterious, and it seemed that she was trying to make Leah's state even worse!

The young lady's name was Elizabeth

Moonshine. She was always looking at some sort of diary. Leah had been breaking windows and mirrors. She almost didn't have any hair! She was banging her head against a pan when

her mom came to check on her. Her mom

was terrified just by the sight of her. Leah's mom immediately drove Leah over to the nearest mental hospital. Her mom, Kimmy, was worried about riding in the car with her! She told herself, "Leah is your daughter! She won't hurt you." Leah was just staring with blank eyes out the car

window.

months to get Leah back to normal. Leah was cleared to go home and she went straight to the apartment in hope to be welcomed by Elizabeth, but there was no trace of Elizabeth at all! Leah searched all over trying to find Eliz-

They arrived at the hospital. It took six

abeth. When she searched everywhere, she looked on all social media and couldn't find anyone named Elizabeth Moonshine. Leah remembered how they took a photo

right when Elizabeth had arrived. When she went to look, she saw herself, but there was no one else in the photo. All she saw her own slim and fragile body, but she did not see Elizabeth. As she put her phone down, she walked towards the door. As she opened it, her mom

burst in. She looked terrified! Her mom said that she must get out of this apartment at once! Leah asked why and her mom grabbed her while saying not to ask questions. When they were both safe in her mom's car. Leah asked why she took her out. Her

mom finally said that Elizabeth was a dangerous serial killer in the 1800s. Elizabeth killed herself, and she wants others to do the As her mom finished talking, Leah saw

a face in the window. Right as she saw it, she jumped out of the car door. Her mom screamed in horror as she saw her daughter's dead body on the sidewalk. People say that you can still see her roam-

ing the street where she jumped out. You can still see where her red blood has stained the

sidewalk forever.

for her 13th birth-

day, you decided

to get her a classic

On her birth-

horror book.

day, Lily had

unwrapped all

had given her

so far and with

one of her big-

gest grins said,

"Thank you for

all my presents!'

the presents you

All the books you have ever gotten her were fairy tales and sweet novels about unicorns, fairies and all. But

Ava Abbott, age

As you giggle a little, you tell her, "But that's where you're wrong. I actually saved the best

hands, ready to grab her last present. You take the classic book "Dracula" from a bag and put it into her hands. Lily immediately pops her eyes open to see the book in her hands, but instead of one

She closes her eyes and puts out her

of her amazed or shocked look on her face like you expected, it was instead a look of You ask her if she didn't like it, and she says, "No, I like it. It's just ... when I read

book, they come to life and I don't know if I can handle a scary -You'll be all right," you say to reassure her. Lily looks at the book and says, "All right, I'll give it a try," as she starts to flip through

the first few pages. You head to the kitchen to get the cake and ice cream, and as you get the ice cream from the fridge you hear a scream from the party room. You drop the ice cream and dash to the party room, where Lily was wait-

You enter the party room to see the "Dracula" book laying open without a single word in it. Laying on the floor next to it, as pale as a ghost, is Lily. You kneel down to her chest to hear if she

is still breathing. You hear her say, "I told you ... when I read, the books come to life." As she takes her last breath, you hear a bat

shriek behind you.

## 2nd Place 'Midnight and Murders'

loween.

## 'The Detective'

Six months ago, there were a total of twenty people murdered in the same week. Ted Zimmerman, a Canadian detective, had been working nonstop trying to put the clues together, never figuring it out. He was looking at every suspect, witness, and family member trying to find the culprit. While Ted was in his office, there was a

knock at the door. "Come in!" Ted shouted, trying to look

"How's everything going?" questioned Lilian. Ted's assistant.

"Not too great," he moped. "Every clue put together, every person I interrogate, just leads to nothing."

"Cheer up!" Lilian exclaimed, being positive as always. "It has been six months. For all we know, the killer could be dead

"I guess you're right. I have been working so hard that I keep forgetting what I am doing or how two clues are linked together.

Ted ended up working for hours on end after that conversation, eventually forgetting that the conversation even happened. On his way out the door, he bumped into Lilian again. "Hey! I didn't see you at all today. Where have you been?'

"What do you mean you haven't seen me today?" Lilian asked, getting worried. "We talked just a few hours ago. Are you forgetting things again?"

Ted was very confused at this point. "What do you mean again? It has just been a long day," he uttered, racking his brain for any conversations he had that

"You don't remember, do you ... " Lilian whispered, getting more and more wor-

**LIFE & ARTS** 

Honorable Mentions - Middle School Division

"Remember what?" Ted asked, his confusion transforming into nervousness.

'Three months ago you were diagnosed with dementia; that is why you are constantly forgetting things," Lilian uttered, her worry morphing into pity. "The only reason why you are still working on this case is that you were the only witness who

Ted was terrified by the time he got home. He didn't want to forget. He wanted to remember exactly what happened, crack the case, and move on with his life.

That night, he had the worst nightmare he had ever had in his life. He dreamed he was covered in blood, people were screaming, there were dead bodies everywhere, and a wave of guilt rushed over him. He woke up in a cold sweat. "It was me...wasn't it?" he thought to himself. "I have to run away, far away, before they find out," he thought. So he did. He packed his most import-

ant belongings, got in his car, and drove for hours. After a while, he forgot where he was going and what he was doing. His car broke down on a deserted road, so he began the long trek to nowhere.

What happened to him? Well, some say he was murdered by someone who picked him up while he was hitchhiking. On the contrary, most people believe that he starved to death and began haunting small towns in the South, searching for the perfect person to possess to finish what he

— Caitlyn Perkins, age 13, The Donoho School

### 'The Ghost Runner'

Feet stomping. Heart pumping, Lungs screaming. Muscles burning. So close to the finish line, but yet a journey never completed. This is the story of the Ghost

Kevin McConnelly was a high school student in his senior year at Greensborough High. For as long as he could remember, Kevin had always wanted to go fast. Whether it was drag racing, watching NASCAR, running, or even swimming, Kevin wanted to do everything at warp

However, Kevin McConnelly was actually very, very slow. Although Kevin was the slowest runner on the team, he completed every race. However, all this changed one October day. It was the day of the Sectional race, and

the date happened to fall on Halloween. Naturally, everyone was overflowing with adrenaline to be running on the spookiest day of the year. The race was at twilight. This race,

Kevin was determined to go fast, not his usual pace. The runners lined up in their team's starting boxes to start the race. Kevin could scarcely control his nerves. The pistol sounded and the race had begun. Kevin immediately shot off, going

as fast as he possibly could. But, cross country races are 3.1 miles long, so Kevin slowed down rather quickly.

After the first mile, once he settled into his usual slow pace, Kevin began to grow agitated. Kevin was still at his usual position in the very last place. Why should he

have to be in the back of the race all the time?

Unfortunately, Kevin could only think of one way to go faster. He would take a shortcut through the woods. So when Kevin turned the next corner, he dashed into the dark depths of the forest away from the safety of the trail and race staff.

Kevin figured if he ran straight then eventually he should come across the trail again, since the course was circular. Elation rose in Kevin's chest as he crashed through each thicket, imagining the moment where he would cross the finish line first. But, it was a night race on Hal-

As Kevin ran farther and farther away from the trail, a tiny bit of worry rose within him. What if he got lost? But Kevin pushed those negative thoughts far away from his mind. Nothing could stop him. And nothing did.

Kevin McConnelly is still chugging along somewhere, racing to the finish line. At every night race, there are sightings of a tall, lean, young man running in an old Greensborough High School uniform. Every racer always runs their personal best, fearing that the Ghost Runner might

catch them. No one ever tries to take shortcuts either, fearing the wrath of the Ghost Runner. To this day, you can still hear the heavy footfalls and panting of the Ghost Runner, racing to finish. So be on the lookout, because Kevin McConnelly does not give up easily, and he does not want to finish

> —Sarah Sloughfy, age 13, Jacksonville High School

# $ilde{H}igh \, School \, Division \, ...$

## 1st Place 'The Devil's Heart'

It was June 30, 1978, and the police had just taken California's most notorious killer into custody. It had taken five years for the most wanted

serial killer to

be caught. It

was done by

Thomas.

San Francisco

Bob talked to

"We will go to

court first thing

ing the death

tommorow seek-

the press saying,

Police Chief Bob

Later, Chief



age 14, The Donoho School

around the world.

immediately.

penalty for Mr. Tom Graves."

Catching this killer was wonderful for

the town, and also for Chief Bob's son, who

desperately needed a heart transplant. So,

if Tom Graves was sentenced to death, his

In court the next day, Mr. Graves gave

his testimony. He claimed, "After my heart

transplant I would hear the voice of the devil

telling me to go dig holes in different places.

And then, he tells me who to go and kill,

and I dump the body in the hole," he sadly

The jury was horrified as he went on with

About an hour later, Chief Bob's son, Tim,

Five months later, Tim woke up from his

coma and was able to go home, since he fully

Later that day, Chief Bob walked home to

healed while he was in the coma. Tim was

feeling well enough to take care of himself

find Tim playing with their beautiful white

dog, Snowflake. Sadly, when he came home

the next day, Tim was crying because Snow-

flake ran away. Chief Bob wasn't fond of the

Soon after. Chief Bob was stressed out

vard to look at flowers. As he started walking,

from work. He walked into his expansive

he saw a disturbed area that looked like it

had been dug and refilled, so he started to

so Chief Bob was able to go back to work.

the story. Minutes later, the judge sentenced

the death penalty upon Mr. Graves, effective

was prepped for surgery, and four hours

later he was in recovery. Unfortunately,

and he was left in a coma.

dog, so he didn't care.

there was a complication during surgery,

organs would go to other needy people

investigate this mysterious hole. He used his hands to dig through the dry dirt, when he found the cold corpse of a white-furred dog,

Chief Bob ran around to the front of the house in a panic. He saw Tim digging a large hole with an insane look on his face. The Chief whispered softly, "Tim, what are you doing?

Minutes later the police got a call about a gunshot heard close by. When the police arrived, bloodstained dirt was covering the warm corpse of their chief.

Exactly one year later, the police arrested Tim Thomas for patricide and the murder of 16 individuals. In court, he was given the death sentence and his organs are to be sal-

His liver went to Asia, his kidneys to Europe, but his heart stayed in California, waiting for its next victim.

### 2nd Place 'Hide and Seek'

After our high school football game, my friends and I decided to go up to Fort McClellan and play our favorite game: hide



Carter Stremmel, age 16, The Donoho School

and seek. Our rules for hide and

simple. 1. The hiders have 5 minutes to go from home base to hide anywhere in the Fort.

2. After the 5-minute time frame, the seeker has an hour to find everyone.

3. When/if you are found, you must help the seeker look for others.

4. If the hour runs out, you must return to home base in the Medical Mall parking

Once we get to home base, I grab the hat of names (which we use every time we play hide and seek) and start to pick out a name. Reaching in slowly and in an overly dramatic way, I pluck and unfold one of the seven slivers of paper with my friends' names. I read out the name on the paper: "Olivia!"

After a couple of minutes of banter, and putting everything together, Olivia closes her eyes as we all begin fanning out in

different directions, and the 5-minute "hiding" clock starts.

I immediately go to the barracks right next to the Medical Mall, hoping she will walk right past me since it's so close. The 5-minute timer goes off right as I get there, and I am left alone to sit in this cold, damp, pitch-black barracks.

Patiently waiting, I hear Olivia's footsteps outside the barracks come closer and I start to panic. After about 10 seconds of silence, I hear her footsteps slowly patter away. She had run past me.

Fifteen minutes before the timer goes off, however, I begin to hear the footsteps of several people outside, and soon I realize I'm the last to be found.

I hear whispering and a loud creaking as the group of people slides open the metal door and comes into the barracks with their flashlights. They're happy they found the last person, and I'm happy I don't have to sit in this cold and damp barracks anymore.

However, as we prepare to leave, the metal door slams shut in front of us. After tugging on the door with no success, we begin looking around with our flashlights for another exit. As we look around, we start to catch a glimpse of smoke rising throughout the room.

We panic and begin coughing as we continue trying to find a way out. We tug punch at boarded up windows. We scream for help. None worked in our favor.

Becoming more and more nauseated and woozy, I try looking around to find comfort in my friends around me. I knew that this could be the end, and I wanted to seek solace in my friends.

However, as I'm looking, I noticed there are only five figures around me. Falling unconscious and helpless to the cold, hard ground, my last thought is where was Olivi

## 3rd Place 'Butcher Baker of Alaska'

Andrew Davidson owned a successful bakery in Anchorage, Alaska, in the 1990s where he sold danishes, donuts, and other pastry products to everyone in town. He and his family were well known as well as respected in the business community. Along with the busy schedule of his

bakery, he also had a loving wife and two

children, but he always found downtime. In his downtime, he often flew his plane to a remote area in the woods of Alaska and hunted for wolves, caribou, and other large game. But it wasn't enough for him to be satisfied. He needed more, something to hunt,

Andrew was doing the usual, working at his bakery, when a woman came to the bakery for an order. She needed three danishes and four cream horns. It was an order that needed to be dropped off at her house the next weekend. This young woman goes by the name of Annie. Annie was only 18 years old when her life would be changed forever.

She had given Mr. Davidson her home address and her email information that same day. So what Andrew Davidson does, on his way home from the bakery, he takes a longer route home than his typical route

He drives by her house, but he parks his car a few blocks away so it's not noticeable. He sees that her windows are open and she is on the first story of the house. He plans this so meticulously that he searches her window for a screen cover; she does not have one.

After he searches the house for security measures and things of that nature, he remembers something that he had forgotten that is a key part to this story: Her parents aren't home next weekend. It's just her and her friend. This gives him the perfect oppor-

tunity to strike two birds with one stone. The following day was a Saturday, so he takes the day off to go "hunting and fishing" or that's what he told his wife. His wife was taking over the bakery for that day so he was

He takes the plane to a small one-room cabin he has in the woods. He has the perfect plan for any serial killer. He'll take the pastries to the house but slip some pills in the

pastry so the two girls are defenseless. The next weekend came and he took the girls their pastries and they were grateful. Night fell and it was the time to strike. The wife and kids were at her mother's house so this was perfect. Her window was unlocked

and it was perfect. While they were in the kitchen, he climbed into her room and hid. They return to her room and he takes his pastry knife and stabs the two girls, killing them both. The friend's body was found in a river in six months, but the other was never found and no one knows where she is.

— Marlee Hedgepeth, age 14, Alexandria High School

## Honorable Mentions - High School Division

## 'Dan and the Spirit'

Walking into a movie theater in Manhattan, I saw Dan. He was a short, 14-yearold boy with blond hair. I sat down beside him because the movie theater was packed and that was the only seat not taken. I really didn't think much of it, but Dan

started to twitch. It was more of a jerky movement. I called for a medical team because I thought he was having a seizure. The medical team came over, and as soon as they got there, he stopped twitching. Dan acted like nothing had happened

to him. I leaned over and asked him, "Are you OK? Where are your parents?" Dan answered, "I came without my par-

ents, and what do you mean by, am I OK?' I told him that nothing happened and kept on watching the movie. I kept my

eye out for him the rest of the time, but in about 20 minutes, Dan got up and left the I woke up the next day and couldn't

work that day, so I got dressed and headed

stop thinking about Dan. I had to go to

out of my house. While walking to work, I saw Dan again on the sidewalk. I walked up to him and saw that his hands were doing the same twitching that I had seen the day before. Dan exclaimed, "Hey! I remember you

from the movies yesterday. How are you doing? I told him, "I am good."

I looked him in the eyes and saw that his eyes were bright red. Then I looked

above his head and saw a ghostlike spirit come out of his body. After this, his hands stopped twitching and his eyes turned normal. I ran back to

my house, locked every door, and skipped Since that day, I have never seen Dan again. I heard that he moved far away and

told everyone to stay away from him, or they will become possessed and haunted the rest of their lives. I haven't seen that spirit again either,

but occasionally I find myself twitching the same way Dan was twitching, without being able to stop.

— Isaiah Smith, age 14,

The Donoho School

## 'The Hunting'

ghosts, gremlins, and the creepy things that follow us in the dark. Eventually, most of us outgrow these stories and realize that they are just that, stories. Until one day when there is an uneasy sense that someone is watching you, preying on your every move, an uncanny presence felt everywhere you go. Sometimes the monsters will reveal

As children, we are told stories of

their demonic faces to you. Other times, they slowly pick off your crewmates one by one, until there are none left. The latter

was true for me. It had only been a couple of months since our launch, but there was an eerie

feeling among the other members of the A few days ago, one of our crew mem-

bers inexplicably went missing. It was very

easy to notice because there were only 10 of us on this mission, and it's out of the norm for someone to go missing in space.

I could feel the burning fire of someone's gaze at all times, but whenever I turned around, there was only emptiness. Eventually, our crew of 10 dwindled down to five. That's when it was decided we must

have a meeting to discuss these strange disappearances. There was finger-pointing and yelling, and no one could understand how this was

happening. By the end of the meeting, no blame could be placed on a single person. At the next meeting, there were only three. A few days later, two. I could feel the

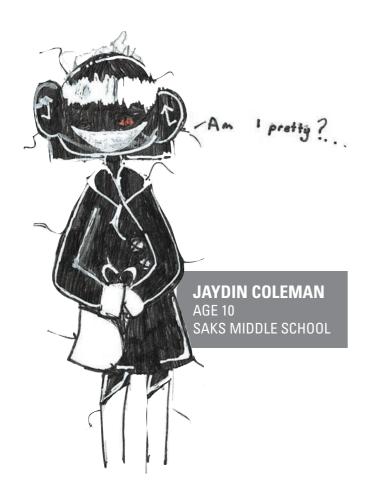
ghosts of my fallen brethren near me, surrounding me at all times. I felt despair and regret that I could do nothing to save them from their demise. I reminded myself that the mission must be

completed. So with slow, quiet steps, and a heart filled with anguish, I made my final -Slade Haney, age 17,

The Donoho School



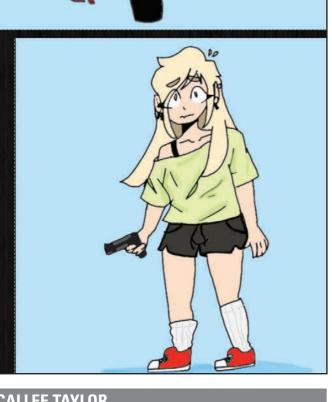
# Check out these art submissions from our Ghostwriters!



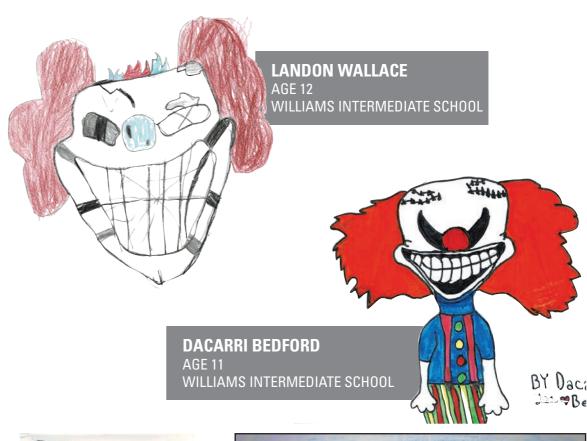


MARIE SOPHIA KAPLAN AGE 11 WILLIAMS INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL



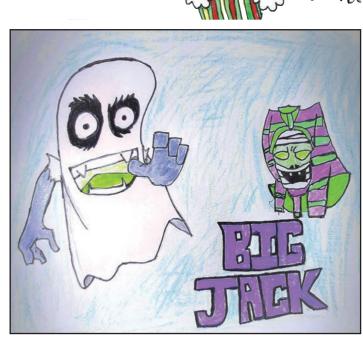


CALLEE TAYLOR
AGE 12
THE DONOHO SCHOOL





SEDONA MCCAY AGE 11, WILLIAMS INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL



**JULIAN GILMORE** AGE 5 OXFORD ELEMENTARY