

2025-26 Parent Newsletter #3

Thanksgiving is almost here!!!

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

John F. Kennedy

The JKO staff and I would like to wish all our students and parents a very enjoyable and relaxing Thanksgiving.



A Brief History of Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a national holiday in the United States. It is celebrated each year on the fourth Thursday in November. On this day, families gather together, and many people say prayers of thanks for the years blessings. In many homes, a big dinner of roast turkey and dressing is served. Thanksgiving is traditionally a harvest festival. Similar festivals are celebrated in many parts of the world to give thanks after the years crops have been safely harvested. Canada celebrates its Thanksgiving the second Monday in October.

A small ship called the Mayflower set sail from Plymouth, England, on September 16, 1620. The passengers spent 66 days in the hold of the ship arriving on November 21. Most of them were Puritans who had been persecuted for their religious beliefs in



England. One month later, on December 26, all 102 passengers set foot on land and began to establish the colony of Plymouth. The Pilgrims, as these people came to be called, had borrowed money from a group of English merchants to cross the Atlantic Ocean. They planned to start a settlement in the Virginia Colony in America, but during the long voyage, storms blew their crowded little vessel off course.

After sailing for more than two months, the Mayflower finally reached land near what is now Provincetown on Cape Cod. This part of the American coast,

called New England, had been explored several years earlier by an Englishman named Capt. John Smith. The Pilgrims followed Smith's maps and sailed across Cape Cod Bay to the mainland coast of Massachusetts.

They founded the Colony of Plymouth in December 1620. Most of the Pilgrims had suffered terribly from the long voyage. They immediately began to build shelters, but soon they were overcome by a general sickness. Through the course of the winter 46 died, nearly half their original number. Some who became ill on the voyage and who were too sick to be moved stayed on the Mayflower, which was anchored in Plymouth Harbor for the winter.

The Mayflower had been a cargo ship and had to be refitted to handle the Pilgrim passengers. It had three masts and a double deck. No one is sure of what happened to the original Mayflower after it returned to England the following April. A replica of the original Mayflower was built in England in the mid-1950's. This ship, Mayflower II, sailed across the Atlantic in 1957 to commemorate the Pilgrim's voyage. It is now anchored in Plymouth Harbor, Massachusetts.

The first American Thanksgiving probably took place in New England. It was celebrated by the Pilgrim settlers, who established Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts in 1620. The Pilgrims had struggled bravely through a grim winter with much sickness and little food.



The following spring, friendly Indians helped the settlers to plant corn, and in the autumn, the first crop was harvested. Governor William Bradford proclaimed three days of prayer and thanksgiving. The Pilgrims gave a huge feast and invited the Indian Chief, Massasoit, and 90 of his people.

The custom of observing a special harvest thanksgiving day spread throughout the other colonies in the following years. After the American Revolution, the various states continued the custom, each one naming its own day for giving thanks. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the first national Thanksgiving Day on the last Thursday in November. The present date was established by Congress in 1941.

Source: <http://www.celebratelove.com/thanxhistory.htm>



Announcements

COSA Corner – November Updates

Student Government Elections

Student Government elections have officially concluded following our debate on November 6th, and we're excited to announce this year's winners:

- President: Bismarck C.
- Vice President: Stacy P.
- Secretary: Kimberlyn M.
- Treasurer: Kaily O.

We would like to thank *all* of the candidates for running thoughtful, positive, and spirited campaigns. Their leadership and enthusiasm truly embody the JKO spirit!

JKO Thanksgiving Potluck

On Monday, November 25th, from 3:30 to 5:30 PM, Student Government will host a student-only Thanksgiving Potluck in celebration of gratitude and community.

The event is free to attend, and we kindly ask each student to bring an edible item to share in the spirit of family and togetherness.

Giving Back – Donation Drive

In the spirit of giving, JKO's NextGen LeadHers Club and National Honor Society are partnering to collect nonperishable food items and clothing for the Antonio Olivieri Center.

Donations can be dropped off in the school lobby until November 17th. Thank you for helping us make a difference in our community!

Class of 2026 Senior Portraits

Graduation pictures will take place on November 24th and 25th during the school day.

Students will receive an email by Wednesday, November 13th with a link to schedule their appointment.

The email will also include details about payment options and how to prepare for picture day.

Senior Dues Reminder

A friendly reminder that Senior Dues must be paid by December 15th to avoid the \$20 late fee.

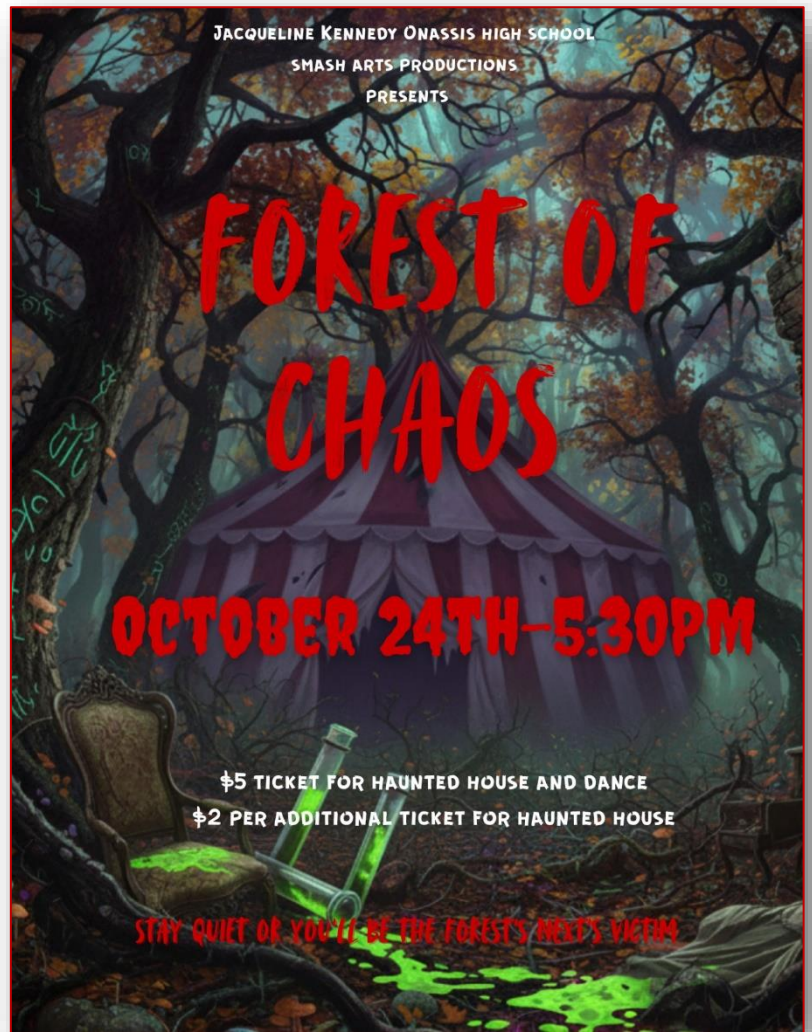
Payments should be made in the form of a money order addressed to Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis High School.

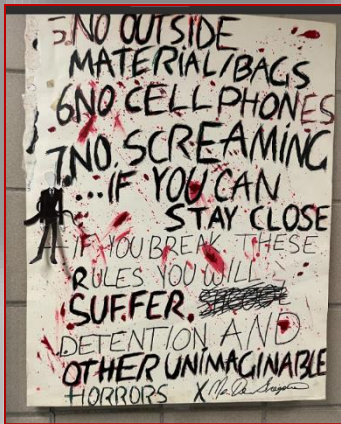
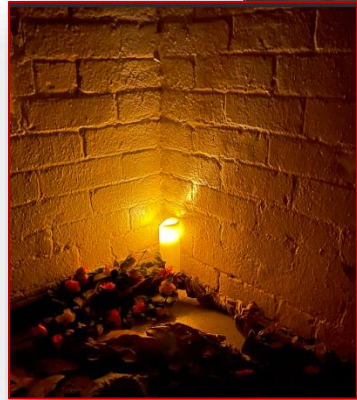
Upcoming Dates to Remember

November 11	Tuesday	Veterans Day, schools closed
November 20	Thursday	Afternoon and Evening Parent-Teacher Conferences 5-8 pm (Virtual)
November 21	Friday	Afternoon Parent-Teacher Conferences 12-3 pm (Virtual)
November 27–28	Thursday–Friday	Thanksgiving Recess, schools closed
December 24–January 2	Wednesday–Friday	Winter Recess, schools close



On Friday, October 24th, NHS conducted its annual Haunted House fundraiser, Forest of Chaos. It was a **SCARY** success!!! A big thank you to Ms. De Gregorio for spearheading!

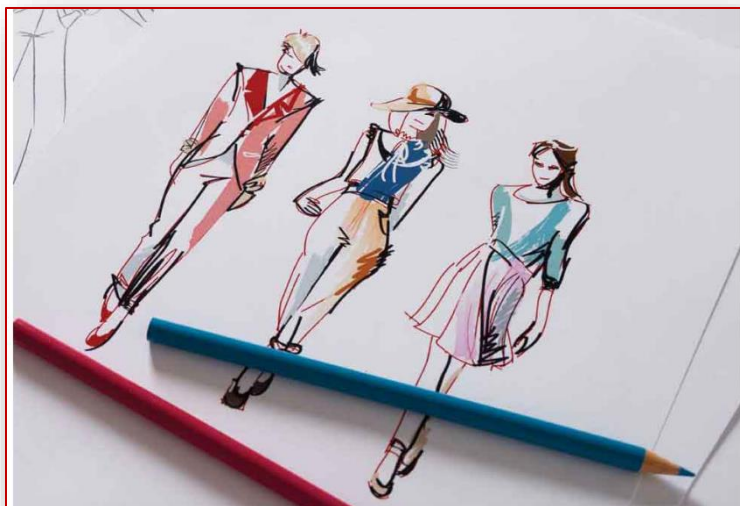






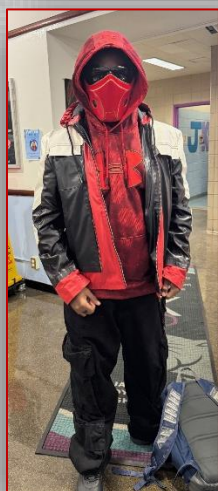
A message from Ms. D Gregorio:

Fashion Design students presented their first collection made from newspapers on October 21st. Ballgowns, Mermaid dress, Kimono with some creative accessories- a jellyfish umbrella, a sword and a constructed from scratch fan! We can't wait to see the next innovative collection from this talented group!





See Costume Day
Pics below...



JOIN YOUR COHORT'S GOOGLE CLASSROOM!

- Class updates
- Important school information



- Trip Opportunities
- Scholarship & Internships

CLASS OF
2026- [drl3nbh](#)
2027- [5koifdu](#)
2028- [z2emh5t](#)
2029- [6xx6bsnm](#)



And the winners of our Student Council elections are...

President: Bismarck Contreras

Vice President: Stacy Puma

Treasurer: Kaily Ortiz

Secretary: Kimberlyn Mejia





HIGH SCHOOL FAIR

Recently, Ms. Kadison spearheaded JKO visits to the high school fairs of Horace Greely (IS10Q) and The Tommie L. Agee Education Campus. A big thank you to the students who attended, Ms. Kadison, and Ms. Garcia for making this happen!!!





On Wednesday, October 22nd, many JKO students attended a trip to view the Lion King on Broadway. It was a ROARRRRING adventure!!! See pictures...

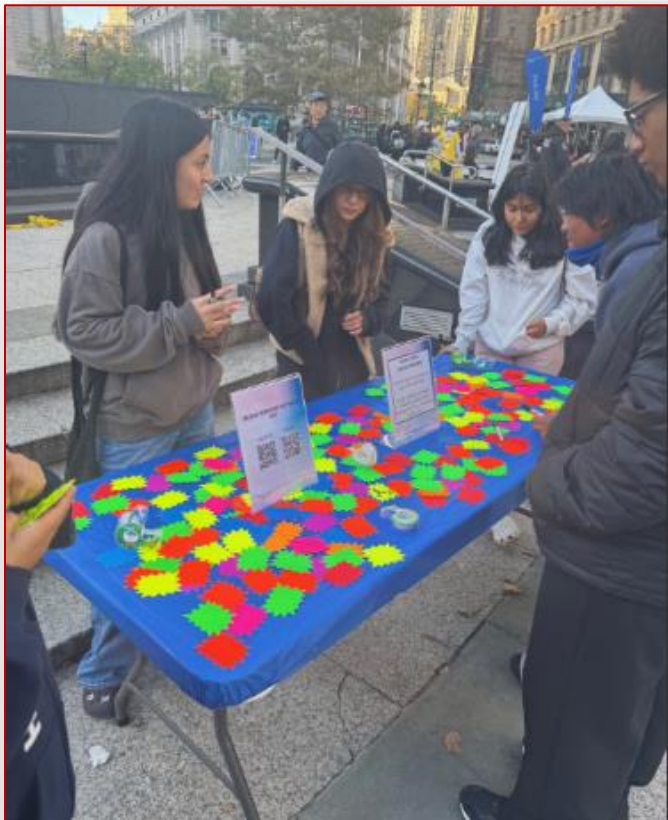




Ms. Okwabi:
T1D Walk for a Cause

On Saturday, October 18, members of Student Government joined over 1,000 participants in the T1D Walk from Foley Square over the Brooklyn Bridge — over an hour, 3.11 miles, and 10,000 steps later, they finished strong with smiles all around!

A huge thank-you to the administration for supporting this meaningful community service opportunity and a special recognition to Stacy Puma, whose leadership shined throughout the event. ✨





On Wednesday, October 8th, our VE students engaged in a Virtual Enterprise International AD Futures Competition. The theme was gun violence awareness. The kids did AMAZING!!! A BIG thank you to Ms. Newell for spearheading this!!!

Students:
Nico Flores
Damian Hernandez
Serenity Mcfadden
London Potter
Jei Ana Thomas
Viannay Palafox
Evelyn Zeferino
Valeria Torterolo
Jean Chimbo
Faiza Ramia
Delinda Vega



GALLERY OF AI TIM BURTON CREATIONS



Studio Art Fall 2025
Ms. De Gregorio

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

HOW CAN AI BE USED AS A COLLABORATIVE TOOL TO ENHANCE PERSONAL ARTISTIC VISION WHILE MAINTAINING THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE ARTIST'S ORIGINAL IDEAS?

STUDENTS WORKED WITH A PHOTO REFERENCE OF THEMSELVES TO CREATE THEIR SELF-PORTRAIT CHARACTERS IN THE STYLE OF TIM BURTON.

THEY THEN WROTE A STORY ABOUT THEIR CHARACTER. AI WAS USED FOR IMAGE GENERATION, FOCUSING ON WRITING PROMPTS, AND STORY REFINEMENT.

PERIOD 1

SPOOKY TEYO

Young **Teyo** was a peculiar child, all wide, yearning eyes and limbs that seemed a bit too long for his small frame. At the age of nine, he was mesmerized, not by bright toys or sugary sweets, but by the melancholic hum of a **music shop**. It was there, behind a fogged-up pane of glass, that he saw it: a sleek, black **Yamaha DX7** electric piano. The instrument wasn't just beautiful; it seemed to *glower* with an uncanny, silent energy.



SPOOKY TEYO PT. 2

Little did Teyo know, this was no ordinary synthesizer—it was **Accursed!**

The piano had once belonged to an **old, wizened composer** who was notorious for the vile bargains he'd struck in his lifetime, trading his very soul for musical brilliance. When the Devil came to collect his due, the old man perished mid-composition, and the infernal DX7 was sold at a dark auction. Now, it sat in the local shop, waiting for its next, unwitting owner.

Teyo, driven by a destiny he couldn't name, saved every penny until the day he finally carried the cursed instrument home. He was going to buy it and become the **Spookiest Piano Player** the world had ever known.

SPOOKY TEYO PT 3

The Demon's Bargain

The moment the piano was plugged in and its first, ghostly chord was struck, the Devil himself materialized. He didn't appear in a pillar of fire, but as a towering, impeccably dressed creature of shadow, his smile a rictus of greed.

"A bargain, boy," the Fiend hissed, his voice like the grinding of tombstone against tombstone. "That instrument is my property. Surrender it, or surrender your talent for a taste of true, dark power!"

But Teyo, with the reckless audacity of youth and the innate strangeness of his soul, did not flinch. Instead, he **taunted the Beast**

SPOOKY TEYO PT 4

"An instrument is merely a vessel, you terrible thing," Teyo declared, his small voice echoing with unexpected bravery. "You, the Fallen Angel of Music, cannot even **hold a tune of your own** without stealing the work of others! You are a fraud!" With that, Teyo laid his fingers on the keys. He played a sequence of chords and haunted melodies—a dizzying, complex **cacophony of sorrow and defiance**. It was a sound that didn't just play *music*; it played **truth**. The harmonies were so pure, so potent, they seemed to tear at the very threads of shadow and sin of the Demon.

SPOOKY TEYO PT 5

He became greater than any musical angel or demon, a master who could summon harmonies both grand and profoundly unsettling. But the encounter had left an indelible mark: he was forever **cursed to maintain a spooky appearance**—the wide, manic eyes and the exaggerated, ghostly pallor that would follow him forever. He was a beacon of musical genius, full of **Woe!**

"Mia Gabriela Feliciano Milla" by Jasleen Milla



Mia Gabriela Feliciano Milla was a sixteen-year-old girl with an extraordinary gift — she could bring anything to life with a mere touch of her imagination. Her favorite place in the world was the old natural history museum on the edge of town. Once a grand monument to the past, it now stood silent and forgotten, its halls filled with dust, echoes, and relics of ancient worlds. But to Mia, it was alive in more ways than anyone could imagine. Among the shadows of towering fossils and crumbling exhibits, her closest companion roamed — Toro, a massive T-rex she had breathed life into herself. The great creature was both fierce and loyal, his thunderous steps shaking the cracked marble floors as he followed Mia wherever she went. Half her days were spent within those abandoned halls, experimenting with her strange, wondrous powers. Broken statues blinked awake under her fingertips; stone animals stirred, stretching after centuries of stillness. The museum, once a tomb of history, had become Mia's secret world — a place where the past and present danced together, alive once more.

This was made with Chatgpt

The Last Serve - Genesis R.



The gym hadn't heard a laugh in years. Dust floated all around the air like tiny ghosts, settling on the cracked floorboards and forgotten volleyballs. I never thought I would be back here. My sneakers made this soft squeak on the floor as I walked in the middle of the court, the volleyball net, hanging low, loose. Dried flowers, represent the deadness, and sorrow. I pulled my hoodie tighter, it was really cold. I used to come to this gym every day after school. Me and the girls would practice until the lights flickered off and Coach yelled that it was time to go home. I can still hear it sometimes- the echo of us laughing, shouting, running for the ball. It's like the walls remember. There's an old volley ball lying near the line. I pick it up and brush off the dirt. The leather feels rough now, like it might tear if I hold it too hard. I spin it in my hands, and for a second, it's like I'm back in that last game — the one where we lost by one point. I remember how I missed the serve. Everyone said it was fine, but I cried anyway. "Just one more try," I whisper. I toss the ball up, hit it, and watch it hit the net before falling to the ground with a soft thud. The sound echoes through the gym, bouncing off the empty walls. Then it's quiet again. Really quiet. But then... I swear I hear something. Laughter. My name. The sound of sneakers squeaking.

I freeze. It fades almost instantly, but my chest feels warm — like someone just gave me a hug from another time. I smile, just a little. Maybe I didn't come back here to play. Maybe I came back to remember. The roses seem brighter now, even in the gray light. I pick one up before I leave — a dark red one — and tuck it into my hoodie pocket. For luck. For them. For me.



Kyla Rot: A Game Shrouded in Fog

Kyla Rot, a volleyball lover to the core, stayed on the court as evening turned to night. She was determined to improve her jump serve before the upcoming championship. But as she jumped for one last, strong hit, a stray volleyball flew toward her, hitting her head with a bad thud, and everything faded to black. When consciousness slowly returned, Kyla found herself in a strangely unfamiliar place. The air was a cold touch against her skin, causing goosebumps. This was a court, but made of cold, hard, cracked stone, surrounded by a creepy group of tombstones, their words hidden by a misty fog. Thin-winged bats flew through the ghostly air, their shrieks echoing through the unsettling silence, and the volleyball net sagged under the weight of nasty spiderwebs. A deep fear took hold of Kyla, her heart beating fast like a trapped bird. Next to her was the volleyball, but it was a twisted version of the one she knew. This one pulsed with an evil life, its surface a spinning mix of orange and black, decorated with tiny pumpkins smiling with mean grins, bats stuck in constant flight, and webs full of gross, crawling bugs. Kyla jumped back as she touched it, a wave of nausea hitting her. From the depths of the swirling fog, a faint whistle broke the silence, calling her to a game of unknown importance – a game she knew she didn't want to play.

By Kaia Rosario



Ayla-by Shayla

Ayla lived in Halloween Town, it was always a dark town. She was always in her family's bakery it was really old. Although Ayla was never like the other kids because she would always look sad. The only enjoyment she found was being in her family's bakery because she enjoyed making cakes and cookies. She always was trying to find the best recipe for a perfect sad but good treat that was her passion. Ayla had a stick figure body and she would walk around to watch the moonlight. She would even look at the bats flying around Ayla felt that the bats were the ones that actually understood her.



"Nyx" by Dana

Nyx pulled off her headphones, the final, echoing notes of her song fading into the heavy quiet park. A dramatic vista opened before her: the dark, vast expanse of the ocean. She could feel the chill spray and hear the powerful, rhythmic roar of the waves even from the place where she stood.

Her music, a subconscious guide through the city's late hours, had let her to this solitary spot. There was a deep indigo sky meeting the black water, but a small, familiar playground caught her eye.

Walking towards an empty swing set, she settled onto one of the cold metal seats. Replacing her headphones, low enough to hear the sound of the ocean mingle with the melody. Her gaze fixed on the starless sky while swinging herself.

Aaaahcquan - by Acquan Samuels



Aaaacquan lives in a constant fear, a lingering side effect of being almost dead. The near-fatal incident left him feeling fragile and fundamentally different, a ghost among the fully living.

He retreats into his bedroom, his self-imposed sanctuary and prison. Heavy curtains ensure a permanent twilight, shutting out the intimidating vibrancy of the world.

His coping strategy is a numb ritual: he subsists on an endless cycle of mass-produced junk food and comfort movies, rewatched until the plots blur into meaningless background static.

He seeks not pleasure, but simple survival through distraction, hoping to drown out the constant, low hum of anxiety.

Aaaacquan isn't truly living; he's merely waiting, suspended in the quiet, isolated space between his life and the moment he nearly lost it.

MIGUEL



THIS IS MIGUEL HE HAS A SAD STORY BECAUSE THERE WAS NO EBT. THERE WAS NO EBT BECAUSE THERE WAS A GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN. HE LIVES OFF EBT AND HE HAD TO FEED HIS CATS. BUT SINCE THERE WAS NO EBT THEY COULDN'T EAT. THEY HAD TO EAT WHATEVER THEY FOUND. THE CAT HAD TO EAT MICE. BUT THEN MIGUEL STARTED TO FIND A JOB. THEY GOT RICH AND NOW MR. MEOW IS EATING A MEDIUM RARE WAGYU STEAK.

"THE WHISPERING WOODS" - BY: JOSELYN BRAVO



Josselinne, a shy yet curious and solitary teenager, comes from an isolated village near the Whispering Woods, where her family is known for its melancholic ties to ancient legends. She possesses an uncanny ability to hear the "songs" of forgotten objects, so she delves into old, dusty books—like the one she holds in her hands—to understand the world's hidden truths. One night, during her solitary vigil on Halloween night in the heart of the Whispering Woods, she found herself surrounded by her glowing pumpkin companions. She encountered a mysterious spectral being, thus cementing her destiny as a reluctant guardian. Drawn to the whispers, she dedicated herself to protecting the delicate balance between the mundane and the magical within the forest, even if it meant sacrificing her own peace and solitude.

NASHH-LA

Nashh-la, the superhero volleyball player, adjusted her oversized sunglasses as she remembered her bight night was approaching. Tonight wasn't just any spooky halloween night; it was the championship finals ! Her team, the "Shadow Strikers," was down by two points in the final set, and the opposing team the "shadow spikers" was playing with a dark intensity, their every move like a perfectly timed ambush. But Nashh-la was never one to back down from a challenge, on or off the court. Her camouflage uniform, usually worn for her secret missions, felt perfectly suited for blending into the shadowy arena. A volleyball with the spirit of playful ghosts, which gave her an extra boost of agility and much awareness, was all she needed; as well as her spooky airplane which she used to go everywhere was all she needed. The score 14-14. The opposing team served, a wicked spin that seemed to defy gravity. Nashh-la with her enhanced reflexes, dashed towards the ball, her eyes tracking its every unpredictable bounce. She leaped, her powerful legs pushing her higher than ever before. As she spiked the ball, it wasn't just a volleyball; it was a surge of positive energy, including the cheers of her teammates and the support from from their audience and the friendly ghosts swirling around her. The ball flashed over the net, a blur of motion. The opposing team tried to block but failed. The ball landed straight on their side of the court, earning them the championship ! Nashh-la's team erupted in cheers, with a perfect aim and powerful spike and a whole lot of Halloween spirit !



VICTOR "STITCH"

Jordy Juarez

Victor was a lonely boy who lived in a small, foggy town just outside the big woods. Instead of playing with toys or games, he loved fixing things—especially the old model trains his father had given him. He always wore his favorite red vest with train patches on it.

One Halloween night, in a desperate attempt to save his favorite model train from a sudden fire, Victor ran into the burning workshop. He managed to save his train, but the fire left him pale, with small, neat stitches across his face, messy hair, and a changed soul—he had touched the edge of death.

He didn't die, but the experience changed him forever. He became fascinated with darkness and magic, and on impulse, he wandered through the pumpkin patch and found his way into Halloween Town. In Halloween Town, Victor finally felt like he belonged. His pale skin and stitches weren't seen as flaws, but as marks of bravery. His obsession with fixing broken things made him very useful.

"Jiaren and the GLOWING LIVING Book" By Ji Hae Ri



Jiaren loved everything that was dark and creepy — the kind of stories with ghosts, monsters, and spooky places.

Her room was filled with books about haunted houses, strange creatures, and forests full of secrets. But tonight, something felt different. As Jiaren sat at her desk, reading one of her favorite horror books, a strange chill filled the air. She looked up, and that's when she saw it: a book glowing softly on her desk.

There it was. A book on her desk that hadn't been there before. It was glowing bright. The light glows brighter! Jiaren blinked. She didn't remember seeing it on her desk earlier. She leaned forward, her curiosity piqued, and picked it up. And the cover of the book was so bright so she couldn't see clearly.

"Jiaren and the GLOWING LIVING Book"

She was a little scared, But more than that, she was intrigued. There was something about the book that felt... alive. She opened it, and immediately, the air around her grew colder. She could hear whispers now, scary and creepy, like the rustling of pages... It was like the whispers were coming from the room itself.

She was standing in the middle of a forest. It was very dark. The trees were huge, and their branches looked like claws reaching up. This was not a dream. She was not in her room anymore. She was in a place she had read about in her books. It was the kind of place she always wanted to visit. She turned around quickly. Then she heard something moving in the mist. A tall, dark figure was walking in front of her. Bats flew around her. Spiders crawled on her neck.

Companion

-Brandon Ortiz

Christmas was around the corner and I was dreading it. Christmas isn't the same like when I was a kid. it's depressing. my family doesn't even bother to spend time together as a family. Christmas eve ends in 2 hours, everyone's asleep. I've gotten my yearly visit from the one person that truly is there for me every year. I call her Evi. she's a demon. she's evil obviously but she spends every year alone too. until she found me and decide to spend it with me every year. even though she's evil, with me she learned to be nice. only to me though. that's why she's here.



"THE PENNILESS DREADFUL" - NICOLE APARICIO



Penny Dreadful is a spirited girl with a love for many things reading books, listening to music, ice skating, and singing with her friends and family. Her days are filled with activity, and she's lucky to have a loving, supportive family who keeps her grounded. Without them, she often wonders if she'd be drifting aimlessly, unsure of where to go. On a typical weekday, Penny wakes up and checks the time on her phone while still curled up in bed. Then she begins her daily routine, getting dressed, skipping breakfast (as usual), and catching the bus that connects to the train for school. After classes, she heads straight to her extracurricular activities, where she throws herself into whatever's on the schedule. Once everything wraps up, she retraces her route train to bus before finally arriving home. There, she tackles her homework, eats dinner with her family, and winds down with a good book before drifting off to sleep. But one day, everything changed. While walking through the woods near her neighborhood a path she rarely took Penny stumbled upon something strange: a door, freestanding and weathered, nestled between two gnarled trees. Before she could think twice, the door creaked open and a mysterious force pulled her through. She landed in a world unlike her own. The colors were muted, as if someone had drained the brightness from the sky, the buildings, even the people. Everything was cast in shades of gray, blue, and dusty brown. The air felt heavier, and the silence was eerie. As Penny wandered through the town, she saw unfamiliar faces and oddly shaped houses, each more peculiar than the last. Overwhelmed by the sudden shift in reality, Penny sought comfort in the one place that always brought her peace the library. She stepped inside, the scent of old pages wrapping around her like a blanket. Finding a quiet corner, she opened a book and began to read, hoping the words would anchor her in this strange, colorless world. Little did she know, her adventure was only just beginning.

PERIOD 2

"MELAPA AT SILVER CREEK" - BY PAMELA MUNIZ



Melapa was the weird girl at Silver Creek High, everyone knew it. Maybe it was her huge eyes or that too-perfect smile that always looked a little fake. She spent most of her time on the sidelines of the court, zoning out and wishing the gym would get a serious aesthetic overhaul. Everything about it felt wrong to her, the harsh lights, the squeak of sneakers, those dull banners drooping like old laundry. She just didn't belong. She was staring at the floor when the whole vibe of the gym suddenly shifted. Nothing had moved yet, but something in the air changed. The overhead lights dimmed, and a massive chandelier appeared, its crystals flickering like candle flames. Thick spider webs covered the windows, bats flitted through the rafters, and carved pumpkins glowed in the corners. The old school banners vanished, replaced by heavy, gothic flags stitched with crescent moons and swirling, shadowy symbols. Melapa blinked. On the court, one girl was dribbling, but instead of a basketball, she was bouncing a stack of glowing jack-o'-lanterns, perfectly in rhythm. In the bleachers, pale students sat silently, just watching. Three transparent ghosts floated lazily through the scene, weaving between players as if they were part of the drill. More pumpkins appeared, scattered across the floor with their carved smiles. And then Melapa realized this wasn't the boring old gym she'd always hated. This was the weird, awesome place she'd been waiting for all along.

STORY OF THE HOLLOW STAR

BY- STELLA MOORE



The girl in the library wasn't supposed to still be there. When the staff cleaned out the old library last fall, they found her sitting exactly like this staring straight, calm, and surrounded by webs that no one could tear down. Rumor says she was a student who tried to summon a spirit for a Halloween game, but the spirit took over her, and possessed her ever since. Every year, new pumpkins appear behind her, freshly carved, though no one ever sees who brings them. The spiders move when you're not looking, spinning words into the webs that vanish by morning. Some nights, people hear pages turning and whispers asking for names. And if you stand too close to her deathly stare, you might feel the web brush your skin, right before it pulls you in to a trap. Sometimes, the lights in that corner flicker, even though the power's been cut for years. If you whisper her name, the air turns colder, and something faintly giggles behind you. The pumpkins start to rot by sunrise, but their carved faces always change overnight. Some say she's waiting for another student to finish the ritual she began. And if you listen carefully, just before midnight, you can still hear her turning a page.

Sadeea by Sadia.

Tales from the bat winged scribes.

In a dusty room after dawn clocks chime behind as thoughts climb in the head of a girl's mind, thinking of rhymes to seep into lines to keep peace of the mind and thoughts in line, where a pen scribbles in lines to let out thoughts on lines. The clock strikes 12 in time far into the night yet the girl still in her mind seems to slow down no more despite the restraints of a sleepless night. To hear into the mind of a girl who doesn't seem to mind time is the buzz of a kind that rings into the night at the same time of a bat that flies. He misses and hisses into the silence of a time of which nothing can undermine the scale of the scribes which scribble among lines that feed into time and relove into the mind of a girl who doesn't notice time. And as these lines flow out of her mind tales from the bat winged scribes come to life.



ROSEMARY'S BITTER SEA

BY: ROSMERY MARTE

Rosemary was a dreamy girl with huge eyes and curly hair. Her normal life felt boring; she wanted something strange and dark. She had dark skin but wore a white dress, wishing she looked less like a person. One dull day, Rosemary felt a strong pull from her mirror. The glass swirled with black and blue, smelling like a bitter sea. She fell out and landed in a long, wooden boat with a curly end.

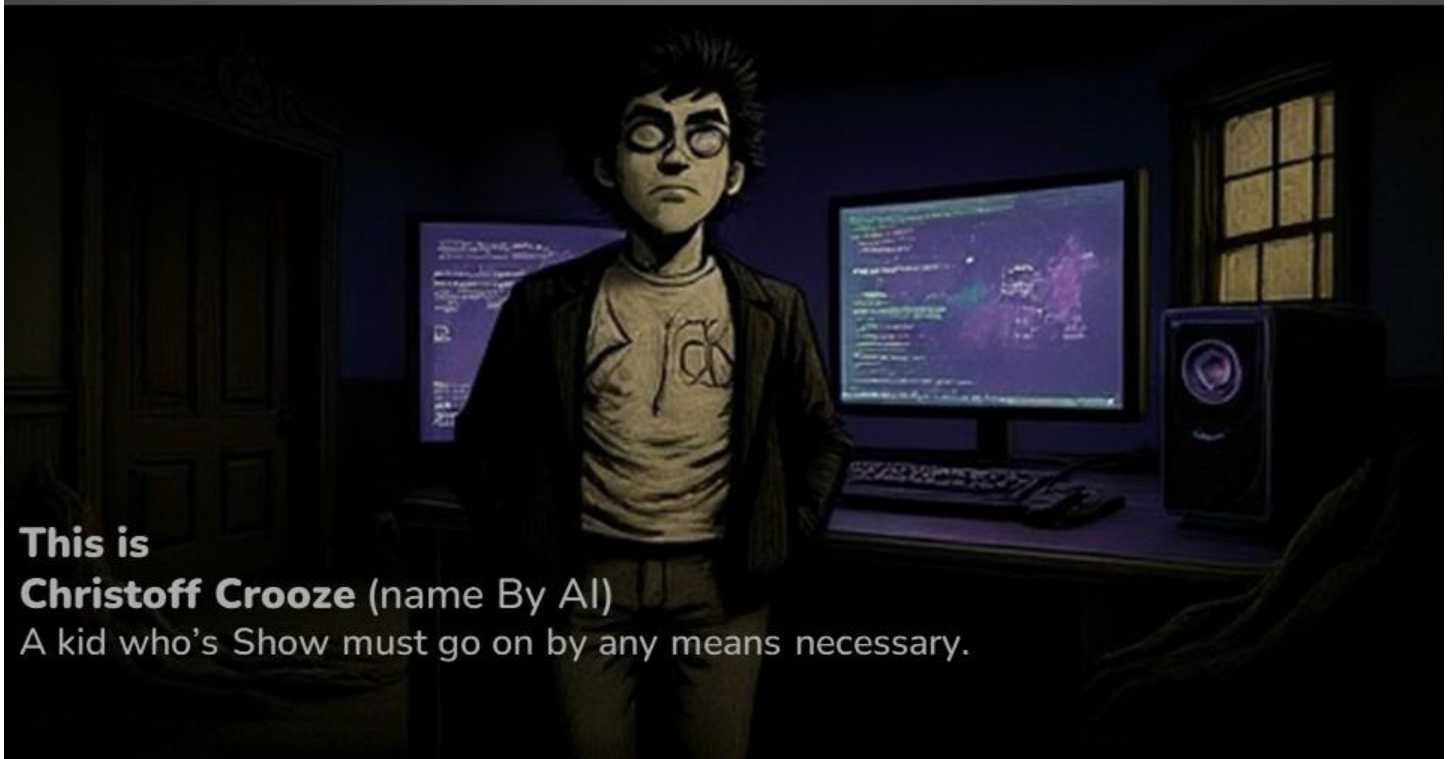
Suddenly, her neck was super long and her body was skinny, just like a cartoon figure. She was rowing across a dark, stormy ocean with big, rough waves. Bats flew all around her, some tangled in her hair. In the water, carved pumpkins floated past the boat and grinned. Far away, a creepy, tall castle with green lights stood on the shore. Rosemary smiled. This strange, dark world was exactly where she belonged.



This is

Christoff Crooze (name By AI)

A kid who's Show must go on by any means necessary.



STORY FOR CHRISTOFF CROOZ

(YES I REALLY NEED TWO

SLIDES)

Always going day in and day out, Always pretending, always Smiling, like a spotlight was constantly on him. He's always the most energetic guy in the room, You may just think he's some over-eager kid, wanting to do everything just for attention, and You'd be right, He silently craves the approval from authority figures that he's never gotten. But, when nobody's looking, for the brief moment where the spotlight shifts to the side, he just sits there, inside of his head, thinking, Thinking, THINKING. He can't stop thinking, no matter how much he tries, His mind echoes and reverberates his thoughts, even when he's in pain, he's always thinking about how others may see him as broken. He thinks one day... he hopes one day... he wishes one Day, he finally can be free from the spotlight, free from acting on a show of his that never ends even after it was supposed to, The viewers always want an encore. While one ordinary day of just Smiling in the Blinding Spotlight, Acting though the show directed by his pain and sorrows, through Life and everything else, He makes it home, and He warily turns the key, Unlocks the door to his usually empty house, and Opens it, a Gush of wind blows past him, everything darkens around him, but he just he just walks in thinking nothing of it. As he walks his house is usually dark, decrepit, depressing, as if It was abandoned for years. He warily walks through the empty halls, and makes it to his room, then sits at his set up to unwind, waiting for someone to come home... but nobody comes, even after 4 hours of waiting. He's confused so he makes his way a window, looks out of said window that's lighting up the otherwise dark room, and he sees a banner, He murmurs it out loud, almost to himself. "Welcome to.. Halloween town?" He went back to his setup... and his computer. It had a message, He check it out, and it said. "You no longer have to pretend, Let your show end with a happy ending, and finally take off the mask. You are free, You are free from smiling." and for once, he just stopped smiling... finally letting his mask slip with a heavy breath he didn't know he was holding, and when back to browsing games... Free from the stress and pain of a never faltering smile, and allowing his face to rest... to finally rest after the endless reboots of a show he was the star in, finally, making it off stage... and finally receiving the fruits of his labor. FINALLY AT PEACE.



STORY ABOUT: THE LOST GIRL IN A GHOST TOWN

By: KAICY HUERTA

One day there was this girl she woke up and a monday she was getting ready to go to school. But something was different home was quiet outside was quiet. She was walking to the train station like nothing happened thinking everyone is at school already. She got to the train station and right has she got to there the train came but there was no one driving the train and no one was in the train and she had figure out she was in a ghost town!!

BALL AFTER MIDNIGHT



In a spooky, haunted basketball gym, where the lights flicker and strange whispers float in the air, there stands a tall, dark skinned figure. He's wearing a snug black sweater and has short, curly hair that sticks out wildly. His big, bushy eyebrows make him look super serious, but his eyes look tired and a little sleepy, like he hasn't had enough rest. His mouth is stitched shut, which is kind of creepy, but he still holds a worn-out basketball in his hands.

On top of his head, a tiny bat is perched, flapping its little wings softly. Around him, black crows circle and caw loudly, their shadows flying across the cracked walls and broken bleachers. The gym looks super old and spooky, with peeling paint and shadows dancing everywhere. Even though the skeleton players are long gone, they still seem to be playing basketball dribbling and shooting in this haunted place, their hollow eye sockets glowing faintly.

But even with all the spooky stuff around him, the tall figure keeps playing. He dribbles the ball and shoots, trying his best, even in the dark. His brave little heart is full of determination. In this creepy, ghostly gym, he reminds us that no matter how spooky things get, the game of basketball is never really over it just keeps going, even in the shadows.

Becca-Boo By Rebecca Rodriguez

On my daily skateboarding route, I came to a fork in the path—three divergent ways stretching before me. I usually follow the same familiar trail, but today I felt something telling me to check out another path. MY curiosity outweighed the logical decision. As soon as I arrived a set of wrought-iron gates stood before me. Something invisible seemed to pull me closer, and in that moment, I realized I was stepping through a portal into a world beyond the ordinary. There I encountered the ghost who had called me there. He explained that I was the chosen one, the only person capable of seeing all supernatural beings. Together, we needed to uncover why this gift had been bestowed upon me. He called it a mission, I called it an adventure. With a deep breath I pushed off my skateboard and into the unknown. What awaited me was mystery, danger, excitement, and I was ready for it all.



Heidi Tellez



The title: The time watcher

The girl stood beneath the crooked trees, where clocks hung like fruit — each one frozen at a different time. One whispered 5:12, another glared 6:48, and the tallest tower in the distance struck midnight, again and again. The air smelled faintly of smoke and something cooking — something that had been cooking far too long. Her stomach growled, but she didn't move. The clocks were watching her, their hands twitching like hungry insects.

She knew better than to rush them. Last time she tried, the kitchen had gone silent, and the food had turned to ash before her eyes. So she waited — pale, patient, listening to the uneven ticking that filled the woods. Somewhere between the seconds, she thought she heard the oven door creak open on its own. Dinner was ready.

HALLOWEEN TRADITION-BY RUBI SEGAMA



Wendy was a lonely girl who had no friends. It's not like she isolates herself she just never seemed to click with her peers. There was a time when she had a whole group of friends until one night they betrayed her. Ditched her all alone at a unknown place on halloween night. They threw her bag at her and left laughing. She soon found out it was a cemetery because of the things she saw. At first she saw this thing moving around but hard to see what it was. Wasn't human, moved more like a balloon but was coming towards wendy?? She was confused and scared. As it approached wendy she slowly started to cry. With each tear strolling down her face the unknown approached. When it finally stopped in its track and was staring down on wendy. She slowly raised her head to look up. She saw that it was ghost. The ghost spoke "Dont worry im not here to hurt you but to comfort you" Wendy was curious so decided to talk to this ghost. As the ghost saw wendy relax he hollered for other ghost to come out. She was spooked at first but amazed at what she was seeing. She had stop fearing but rather now she was intrigued more than ever. She asked the ghosts roaming around "if anyone else knows what happens here?" They all responded "no we tend to hide." So she asked "than why me? Why show yourselves to me?" The ghost from the beginning said we saw what happened and felt terrible. She looked ashamed that they witnessed that. Wendy decided to ask for heir names. She started with the ghost from the start. His name was larry. Larry started to introduce everyone else. "Thats emily, grace, gary, thomas, max," he went on and on for a while. She asked if they were interested in being friends. They all said yes but than got sad to tell the girl some shocking news. They told wendy "we only come out on halloween" wendy said "so i would only see everyone once a year" she looked sad for a second but then got up and said "let's make the most of our time together" The ghost were so glad to hear this. They all zoomed around her in excitement. As they all surrounded her, she felt this happiness in her heart and smiled. She had remembered the bag and ran to it. The ghost were curious and followed. She pulled out some rackets and a birdie. She asked " is anyone interested in a game of badminton" A ghost came racing to get a racket. The game had begun. Other ghost watched them play. Wendy gave turns to all the ghost to play. She had the best time ever. But of course the night had to come to a end. As she had to leave the cemetery, she cried waving goodbye to all the ghost. She said her goodbyes but had one more thing to say. "I'll see everyone again next year" And so the tradition began, for three years now.



Name: *Dezire*

Setting: Halloween Town's Moonlit Harbor

Backstory: Once a curious artist from the human world, dezire fell into Halloween Town through a sketchbook she left open under the moonlight. Now, her hair moves with the whispers of the sea, and every breeze tells a secret she once painted. She carries a bag labeled "The TIE GOTH," a reminder of the ties she still has to her past life.

Personality: Thoughtful, creative, and slightly haunted. Dezire collects lost dreams from the waves and turns them into stories for the ghosts of Halloween Town.

PERIOD 6

Markyboo by Markland



Markyboo sat quietly beneath an old, twisted tree, gazing up at the cloudy sky. He loved to daydream and imagine different worlds while everything around him was still. Today, he was thinking of a land filled with mischievous goblins and swooping bats. As the sun set and the sky darkened, he caught the scent of cinnamon and a hint of something old and mysterious in the air. Suddenly, the ground began to glow, and a shadowy portal appeared right in front of him. Without hesitation, Markyboo stepped through, finding himself in a strange new world. Behind crooked houses, goblins were laughing and bats soared in circles above him. The sky was a swirling mix of purple and black, making everything look spooky and magical. Markyboo felt a wave of joy—he was in Spooky Town, a place where his imagination could run wild with goblins and bats forever.



“nattamora”

The Roses of Nattamora

In the heart of the grandest shopping mall in the city—its halls gleaming with marble and gold—there once was a girl named Nattamora. She was known for her serene smile, her long dark hair adorned with red roses, and the small gold heart necklace she always wore.

Every weekend, she would wander through the boutiques, never buying anything, just admiring. She said the mall felt alive—each whisper of the escalators, each glimmer of the glass reflected stories of people's dreams.

But one rainy evening, as the lights flickered and the closing chime echoed through the empty corridors, Nattamora didn't leave. Security guards found her the next morning, sitting perfectly still on a bench near the perfume store, her eyes open, a rose in her hand.

No one knew what happened. Some said she fainted and her heart simply stopped. Others whispered she was waiting for someone who never came.

Now, years later, the mall's workers swear they see her reflection in the shop windows after dark—a girl with roses in her hair, quietly drifting from store to store. They say if you leave a single rose in the mall's atrium, the air will smell faintly of her perfume and the gold heart in the display case nearby will shimmer for just a second longer than it should.

And if you listen closely, you might hear her voice—soft and kind—asking, “Do you think this would look good on me?”

Melya by Mely.M

Melya is defined by her singular, consuming passion dancing. It is less a hobby and more the rhythm of her life. For the majority of her waking hours, she is either immersed in the act of dancing herself or captivated by the movement of others. Her world is a solitary stage; she holds little interest in interacting with other people, finding companionship only in the silent language of motion. Dancing holds a profound, almost sacred place in Melya's heart. Although her heart may be shattered by some unspoken grief, she nonetheless lives for the grace and discipline of the dance. Her schedule is an inverted reflection of the world. From the dusk of the afternoon until the pale light of early sunrise, Melya dedicates herself entirely to movement. When the morning arrives, she finally succumbs to exhaustion, taking a brief nap. Once the afternoon shadow lengthens, she awakens and returns to her devotion. Sometimes, instead of taking to the floor, she shifts her focus to a quieter artistry.



She will pull out her sketchbook, letting her hands translate the fluid beauty she sees and feels onto paper, all while sipping a soothing cup of tea and listening to music that seems to pulse with the same melancholy energy as her soul.

LeBoo James by Ryan Torres



There was a boy named LeBoo who went to stay at an old spooky hotel. He had to wait many days because all the rooms were full. Every day LeBoo explored the hotel and listened to stories about ghosts that lived there.

After waiting a long time LeBoo finally got a room. But when he went inside, he felt very cold and strange. Suddenly in the mirror he saw a ghostly figure staring at him with glowing eyes. It was the scariest thing LeBoo had ever seen. From that day on LeBoo knew that some places are haunted and he didn't want to go back to that scary hotel.

By Darla F

Anahis



In the quiet town of Ravensbruck, there exists a library unlike any other: an ancient sanctuary filled with secrets and shadows. Among its books, one book stands out: *The Cursed Grimoire*. Its pages are said to contain forbidden knowledge, and only a few have dared to open its cursed covers. Anahis, a brilliant and curious young woman, discovered the grimoire during her late-night explorations in the library. Drawn to its mysterious aura, she began to read its cryptic symbols and stories. Unbeknownst to her, the book was cursed, and as she delved deeper, she awakened a hidden power within herself: an extraordinary gift intertwined with dark magic. Now, Anahis is caught between two worlds: the ordinary life she once knew and the shadowy realm of ancient curses and magical secrets. With her glasses perched on her nose and her mind sharp as ever, she studies the arcane, determined to uncover the truth behind her newfound abilities. But she must be cautious: every spell cast and every secret uncovered could come at a great cost. As the moonlight filters through the stained glass window, casting eerie shadows across the shelves, Anahis stands ready to face whatever mysteries the cursed grimoire may reveal, knowing that her destiny is now forever intertwined with the magic of the shadows.

Maruchan

Maria J Juarez

maruchan is the name i got because i would always eat cup noodles. its an odd name i don't mind though because it's made for an odd person. i don't have many friends in school but i don't mind. high schoolers are very problematic and find any excuse to fight. today i had an assignment due but couldn't complete it in class, so i came to the library after skl. i sat down in the chair but it was strange. while i was doing my work it felt like id been there so long. once i finished my work i look at the computer in front of me. check the time, something in my head told me. it had been 5 hours... strangle because why has no one asked why im still her? or why hasn't anyone asked me to leave yet? i checked the calendar.

i had been sitting down for 8 years... i opened the camera because for some reason i wanted to see if i still looked the same. but no. i had grown up in the chair as well. that photo represents my reaction to when i found out. my pale face and how much horror i felt around me.



Ari was a very quiet girl. Everyone found her strange because of the way she looked. Her pale skin shimmered faintly under moonlight, her eyes too wide and her hair too long, flowing like black silk all the way to her feet. The townsfolk whispered about her, calling her names. Because of that, she stayed in her room inside the towering castle, hidden away from the world. Her only comfort was the night sky – the stars and the moon that seemed to speak to her in a language no one else could hear. When the loneliness became too heavy, she would whisper to them from her window, telling them her dreams, and though they never spoke back, she could feel their warmth – a quiet promise that she was not alone. One night, when the walls of her room began to feel too small and the silence too loud, Ari heard something – a whisper, soft as the wind. It wasn't coming from inside the castle but from beyond it, deep within the woods. She followed the sound, her bare feet silent against the cold stone floors as she slipped out into the night. Lanterns began to flicker to life, one by one, as if guiding her. They floated on the water's surface, glowing like captured fireflies. The trees around her were old and twisted, their branches like reaching hands. Owls

watched her from above, their eyes gleaming golden in the dark, and crows murmured softly from the opposite tree, as if waiting for something. At the edge of the lake, Ari stepped into the cool water. It shimmered around her, reflecting the light of the lanterns. She sat there quietly, the weight of her long hair spreading across the surface like dark ribbons. For the first time, she didn't feel trapped – she felt seen. A rustle came from behind her. A black cat, its eyes glowing like embers, padded toward her and stopped at her side. Ari wasn't fond of cats; they always seemed to stare too deeply, but this one was different. Its gaze was calm, knowing, almost human. Without a word, the cat sat beside her, its reflection rippling in the water. Ari felt something strange then: a pulse of warmth, a soft hum that seemed to come from the lake itself. The lanterns drifted closer, circling her and the cat. The moon shone brighter, and in its reflection, Ari thought she saw something: her own face, but not as she was now. She looked radiant, strong, unafraid. The stars twinkled above, and she finally understood what they had been trying to tell her all along. She wasn't meant to hide. She was meant to shine in her own, quiet way. The cat purred softly, and for the first time in her life, Ari smiled. The next night, the castle felt different. Ari couldn't explain why, but the silence that usually wrapped around her like a heavy cloak was... lighter. Softer. Maybe it was the memory of the lake, the warmth of the lanterns, the black cat's quiet purr. She had returned to her room before dawn, her dress damp and her hair tangled with bits of leaves, but her heart felt alive in a way it never

"ARI" BY JHOSMARA S.



had before. She sat by her window again, gazing at the same moon that had watched over her the night before. The stars flickered, as if whispering something new. This time, she understood. **"Come back, whole. She didn't hesitate. Ari slipped through the corridors of the castle once more, the echo of her bare footsteps sounding like soft raindrops on stone. As she reached the castle gates, the air stirred, cool and silver under the moonlight. The forest was waiting. And so was the lake. But tonight, something had changed. The lanterns were already lit, their glow brighter, their reflections trembling across the water's surface. The owls watched from the trees again, but they seemed more alert now; their eyes followed her with quiet urgency. The black cat sat by the edge of the lake, its tail curled neatly around its paws, as if it had been waiting for her all along. "Are you real?" Ari asked softly. The cat tilted its head, then turned toward the water. Slowly, its reflection shifted; it was no longer a cat, but a shadowy figure with long, flowing hair and eyes that glowed like starlights. Ari gasped. The reflection smiled not cruelly, but knowingly. "You've been seen, Ari," a voice said, though the cat's mouth didn't move. "The stars watch you for a reason." Ari stepped closer. "Why? I'm no one." "I... I understand," Ari said, a smile appearing on her face. "I've been hiding, but I don't have to anymore." The shadow in the water leaned forward, and said, "Then go. The world is ready for the quiet light you carry." Ari stepped back, feeling the water around her feet, then slowly walked toward the edge of the forest. The lanterns hovered beside her, guiding her path. She glanced back once—the castle loomed behind her, silent and still, but she no longer felt trapped. The owls and crows watched, not with judgment, but with welcome. And in that moment, Ari understood: she would never be invisible again. She was part of something larger, a thread of starlight woven into the night. With a final glance at the moon, she whispered, "I'm ready." And for the first time, Ari walked into the world, carrying the quiet glow that had always been hers and the night, in all its magic, followed. The shadow in the water nodded slowly. "You are no one... and yet, everything. The world has been waiting for you to remember who you truly are." Ari felt a shiver run down her spine, but it was not fear—it was anticipation, a spark of something long buried inside her. The lanterns flickered brighter, reflecting not just light, but possibility. The lake itself seemed to pulse with quiet energy. "Remember what?" Ari whispered. "That you belong to the night as much as it belongs to you," the voice replied. "Your solitude is your gift. Your quiet is your strength. You shine not to be seen by everyone, but to illuminate what is unseen." The black cat's eyes glowed brighter, and Ari felt the pulse of its gaze merge with her own heartbeat. Then, as if the lake itself were breathing, a wave of warmth washed over her. Her long hair shimmered with moonlight, her pale skin glowed faintly, and for the first time, she felt truly whole.**

The story of Luna — By: Fatoumata Diallo



The story of Luna

(I used the AI revision but most of the story was in my own words).

Luna was a freshman at Starlight Academy, an all-girls school renowned for having the best volleyball team in the state. She had chosen the school specifically for that reason. You see, Luna had been obsessed with volleyball since she was a child — her mother played it, her sister played it, and even her brother enjoyed the sport. Growing up immersed in volleyball, it became a part of her identity.

When it was time to select a high school, Luna eagerly applied to Starlight Academy. The school had a long history of success, winning competition after competition and even claiming gold at the Olympics twice. Luna was over the moon when she received her acceptance letter. Two weeks later, she moved into the school's dorms, already buzzing with excitement and anticipation for the upcoming tryouts.

A month into the school year, the big day finally arrived. Luna was filled with determination and adrenaline. She had spent countless hours practicing — day and night — sacrificing hangouts with friends and even sleep to perfect her skills. Her dedication was unwavering; she was willing to do whatever it took to make the team.

Luna's heart sank when she learned the truth: she hadn't made the team. Instead, the principal's daughter, jealous and cunning, had secretly manipulated the selection process to keep Luna off the roster—especially from taking her place as captain. A surge of anger and frustration bubbled inside Luna. She had worked tirelessly, sacrificing everything, only to be denied.

That night, as the moon cast long shadows over the school, Luna waited until the other team members arrived for their evening training. Shadows flickered and twisted around her as her anger grew. She felt a strange, cold energy rising within her — an urge she couldn't resist. With a whisper of dark words and a flick of her hand, she unleashed a supernatural force.

The gym filled with an icy wind as the team members were enveloped in a ghostly glow. Their forms shimmered and wavered, transforming into spectral figures — cursed spirits bound to the school forever. They floated in the air, their eyes hollow but pleading, unable to escape their eternal torment.

Luna watched with a twisted smile, her eyes gleaming with dark satisfaction. "Let the game begin," she whispered, her voice echoing through the haunted halls. The spirits, now forever trapped in a ghostly volleyball match, played on in an endless, eerie loop — forever Luna's ghostly teammates in a haunting, spectral game that would never end.

The End.

"Evonee"

by Nanny Melendez

It was a dark and gloomy evening. Everyone had escaped the school after the fire alarm went off during dismissal, but Evonee had stayed behind—her passion for badminton had grown far beyond ordinary interest. It was almost 330, and Ms. Ripper, along with two other students, had been playing for hours straight until the two began to crumble under the weight of exhaustion—slowly turning into bones from how overworked they'd become. Ms. Ripper smirked deeply, enjoying her undefeated streak, something Evonee couldn't stand. She walked toward the other side of the gym, slowly bending down to grab one of the beige wooden rackets, slightly damaged and splintered with age. "You'll turn into bones as well, just like the others," Ms. Ripper said, her voice dark and echoing through the empty gym.

Once the two began to play, Evonee felt the same unbearable pressure her classmates must have felt. Each serve grew heavier, the air thicker, as though the gym itself was holding its breath. "Slow down," Ms. Ripper muttered as her own skin began to fade away—just like the others. Her voice trembled, and soon her body went limp, her leggings filling with air as her form hollowed out. With one last desperate swing, Evonee struck the birdie, and as it landed, Ms. Ripper's body finally turned to bone. The shuttlecock rolled to a stop at Evonee's feet, and for the first time that night, the gym fell silent. It was over. She had won her final victory.





Sally

by

Kadiatou Diallo

The story of Sally

Sally was a sweet 16-year-old girl who loved cooking more than anything in the world. Every day after school, she would hurry to her aunt's restaurant to help out in the kitchen. She loved experimenting with new recipes, and seeing the joy on people's faces when they tasted her food. Her biggest dream was to become a famous chef and open her own restaurant someday.

One chilly Halloween evening, while baking pumpkin pies, something extraordinary happened. As Sally opened the oven, a bright orange light burst out, flooding the kitchen with a warm, glowing haze. The sweet scent of cinnamon and pumpkin filled the air, growing stronger and stronger until she suddenly felt herself spinning in circles.

When she finally opened her eyes, she wasn't in her kitchen anymore. She found herself standing in a spooky yet vibrant town filled with grinning pumpkins, floating ghosts, and chattering skeletons. A sleek black cat with glowing green eyes padded up to her and purred, "Welcome to Halloween Town, Chef Sally!"

Sally could hardly believe it her love for cooking had somehow whisked her away into a magical world. From that day on, she became the official cook of Halloween Town, delighting its ghostly residents with her spooky, delicious treats.



"Illit" by Inan Khan (Period 6)



Illit wandered through the dark streets as if the world bent around her pale, ethereal form. Her skin was almost translucent, like moonlight caught in porcelain, and her large black eyes drank in shadows with a quiet, curious intensity. She smiled shyly at the black flowers sprouting from the grass, their petals soft and curling like delicate smoke. The townsfolk might have called them spooky, little pockets of dark magic thrumming with secret life. Illit was sweet and gentle, yet humans often feared her eyes, and she sometimes struggled to understand them. The hem of her dress brushed the cool night air as she savored the way moonlight struck her hair, turning it a bit silver in end. Outside, the world whispered old, somber stories, the air heavy with forgotten lullabies. And as she paused to watch from shadows, a pang of longing touched her heart, her mother, gone now she, had tears on her face and Illit knew, in the quiet of the night, that she missed her sweet mother just as fiercely as her mother misses her.

Phoenix



The world, as far as **Phoenix** could tell, had been drained of its last drop of color. The **Grey-Sky Academy** was a towering, gothic blunder—a perpetual smudge of charcoal and soot against a sky that perpetually threatened rain, but never delivered.

Phoenix was the anomaly. Their tall, slender figure was draped in an oversized, faded Ford-logo hoodie, but their features were drawn in sharp, unsettling detail, reminiscent of the Academy's grim architecture. They had a gentle, heart-shaped face, but it was dominated by huge, perpetually wide, hooded eyes that drank in light, and a neck that was just a bit too short, giving them a hunched, questioning posture. Most remarkably, their heavy dreadlocks were threaded through with impossible streaks of **phoenix-red and gold**, like smoldering embers trapped in shadow.

Phoenix's only escape from the dullness of rote lessons and the Academy's unblinking staff was the condemned bell tower. Up there, a broken skylight served as their observatory, framing not the depressing courtyard below, but a swirling void of deep indigo and black—their own secret slice of space.

It was on one such damp, monochrome evening that it happened. A silent tear appeared in the cosmic fabric, and a streak of fire—a **Shooting-Star Phoenix**—plunged out of the void. It screamed across their window, painting the dark hair in momentary, impossible fire, before it landed. It didn't crash. It **landed**. In the dead center of the Academy's miserable courtyard, it simply touched the ground with a soft *hiss* of steam that smelled faintly of cinnamon and ozone, and vanished.

Where the celestial body had been, a single object remained: a perfectly smooth, pulsing **obsidian box**.

Phoenix, heart drumming a fast, furious rhythm against the stiff cotton of their hoodie, raced down to the courtyard. They retrieved the box. It felt weightless, and etched on its surface in glowing copper script was the single, undeniable word: **PHOENIX**.

As they held it, a terrible, cold realization solidified in their mind: The Grey-Sky Academy was not an educational establishment; it was a **prison**, a place designed to snuff out unique light. The unblinking teachers were **wardens** of the mundane. The words of the school motto, etched above the dining hall, echoed in their mind, "Dullness is the Rule."

The obsidian box snapped open, and nested inside, on a bed of orange cosmic dust, was a single, silver object: a **tiny, mechanical, bird-shaped key**.

But before Phoenix could inspect it further, a sound—a high-pitched *creak* followed by a slow, dragging shuffle—emerged from the deepest shadow of the main hall entrance.

It was **Fix-It Frank**, the Academy's ancient, stitched-up maintenance puppet. Frank was all sharp angles and threadbare fabric, and his normal, innocuous button-eyes now pulsed with a focused, searching yellow light. He had been sleeping in the walls, an unseen warden of the gloom, and the cosmic energy had woken him.

Frank's stitched mouth parted in a stiff, slow movement. "That... is not for... the students," he rasped, his voice sounding like dry leaves being crushed. "Dullness... is the rule. Give... it... back."

Fix-It Frank began to shuffle forward, its movements growing faster, more hungry. Phoenix held the small, mechanical key, their only defense, and knew that the Academy's greatest rule was about to be broken.

The Unwinding

The puppet was close enough now for Phoenix to see the loose threads hanging from its joints, close enough to smell the dust and mildew clinging to its worn fabric. Escape was impossible; Frank was blocking the main entrance.

His not for a look. His for a window.

In a moment of pure, panicked intuition, Phoenix looked down, tearing at the fabric of their oversized hoodie. They didn't find a keyhole on the sweatshirt or their skin. But on the brass snap of their simple white T-shirt—right where their heart beat a frantic tempo—was a minuscule, intricate slot, disguised by years of Academy conditioning. It was exactly the size and shape of the bird-shaped key.

Before Fix-It Frank could take another dragging step, Phoenix jammed the key into the slot and twisted it with a sharp, desperate click.

The world stopped.

It didn't explode; it **ignited**. The grey courtyard was momentarily drowned by a searing wave of pure color. Phoenix's own body became the epicenter of the light. The threads of **phoenix-red and gold** in their hair didn't just glow—they burned, not with heat, but with luminous, vibrant *life*. The oppressive gloom that had clung to the Academy for decades was thrown back by a sudden, intense burst of scarlet, orange, and electric yellow.

The light hit Fix-It Frank like a physical blow. The puppet let out a terrible, screeching noise that sounded like 100 ripped seams. The yellow glow in his button-eyes flickered and died. The force of the released energy threw the puppet backward, pinning its threadbare form against the stone of the main hall, leaving a smoldering scorch mark.

Phoenix felt something unlock inside them—a core of fiery defiance that the Grey-Sky Academy had tried so hard to bury. They were no longer just a lanky, pale student in a drab environment; they were a vessel, a vibrant creature built to fly.

The mechanical key, having done its work, detached and clattered onto the obsidian box. Phoenix picked them both

Fix-It Frank began to stir, its limbs twitching and its black eyes slowly attempting to relight, but it was too weak to move against the lingering heat.

Phoenix, no longer hunched, stood tall, the cosmic fire still dancing in their hair. They looked up at the bell tower, then to the dark, shadowed road leading away from the Academy.

"Dullness," Phoenix whispered, the word tasting of metal and smoke. "Is a choice."

With the obsidian box tucked under their arm and the bird key secured, Phoenix turned their back on the grey prison, and stepped out onto the lonely road. They didn't run. They simply **walked**, carrying their new light into the darker, unknown world outside the Academy walls. The great rule had been broken, and the Ballad of Phoenix had finally begun.