

THIS IS FLAMMABLE.



GRASSON 11/3

THIS IS FLAMMABLE

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Iowa City Public Library

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the very first edition of **This is FLAMMABLE**, Iowa City Public Library's very own youth lit mag. Everything between these covers was created and written by local middle and high school youth in an effort to have their voices heard.

From the magazine's beginning, we recognized that youth wanted to focus on and bring light to environmental issues and wildfires. Contributors said that time is ticking down, that there are flowers growing in Antarctica, and that their favorite animals were already endangered. This edition is focused on wildfires. The writers and artists presented here were not just interested in bringing these issues to wider attention. They wanted to advocate for change. The articles and art in **This is FLAMMABLE** have been carefully curated with the hope that our audience will go out into their communities and enact change—because our Earth is beautiful, but time is running out.

THANK YOU

We would like to thank all those who made this magazine possible, including but not limited to: our contributors, without whom this work would not be possible; Sydney Thibodeau for keeping our editors on track; Iowa City Public Library (particularly Victoria, Caty, Hannah, and Victor), for providing us the place, space, and safety to produce it; 1 Week Critique (particularly Adam) for providing programming, guidance, and support; our readers for making this work meaningful; and the Earth for hanging in there with us while we try to do better than we have. We are immensely grateful to you all.

DEDICATIONS

17/18ths

To the amazing Victoria Fernandez
ICPL TEEN SERVICES LIBRARIAN

1/18ths

To Adam al-Sirgany
1WC & ICPL VOLUNTEER

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ARTIST & EDITOR BIOGRAPHIES

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FRIEND AFAR

BY ROWAN R.

In my heart, I hold a snapshot of you, not as you are now, but as you were, to me.

Polished smooth from years of use, wiped clean, of your imperfections and all that remains is how I wished you were.

What I hold, is not you, for it is not but good.

You were a bad influence, but still, I remember you as good.

Everything must go, but why so soon?

I found you so Interesting, when all was dull and drab, if you had stayed

I may have even learned to love you.



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WITNESS

BY ROWAN R.

The breeze runs through my leaves, making a lovely rustling sound. I sway ever so gently. Watching the days pass by, one by one, they come, and go. Spring, summer, and fall, I grow, and prosper. The storms blow and growl like an angry dog, but still, I stand, like a sentinel, on watch. Standing guard over my ancient hill, the river runs fast, as I remember when it was only a trickling crick. The other trees, no more than saplings to me, sometimes they live a while, but most of them don't last the relentless winter. The winter strips me of my luscious leaves and freezes my branches, but still, I prosper. It will be all for naught, when the fire comes.

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FATHER, OH FATHER

BY ROWAN R.

Father, oh Father, just the other day, I did experience such feelings of dread, so much so that I feared someone surely must die, or already has, and lo and behold you just the next day should fall ill.

The icy hand of death doth creepst ever closer, as it would for any man, but only slower.

Shy, shy away father for there is work yet to be done, and you have not yet seen your youngest ride a bicycle, or venture from the nest on their own.

Fight dearest father, for I am not done with you yet, and death shall not come for you as long as you fight.

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DRAGONFLY FEET

BY JAMIE THIBODEAU

Once brightpurple gorgeous flowers crunch to the touch of a curious kid. Brown delicate leaves destroyed by mere dragonfly feet. Environment beat. Fire was the only winner. A blowout victory 600-zip. Agents come in with help that just makes it worse. Band-aids on ash don't transform them back to trees. Public apologies don't do shit for the environment. Saying sorry doesn't make the fire stop. Raging orange flames rampaging the once mighty séquoia trees. The sleek redwoods now black and gray.

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AS THE WORLD BURNS

BY LEONEL-LUCIA MORALES

As the world burns around us, they tell me to make a better tomorrow, though tomorrow never comes as the moon climbs up the sky replacing the sun tomorrow turns to today and today we do nothing but sit and watch as the world burns around us; and slowly turn to ash.

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STINK PIT

BY GRAYSON ALBRIGHT

TRIGGER WARNING: IMAGES OF DECAYING ANIMAL BODIES AND GRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS OF ROT.

I can feel myself rotting, piles of festering bodies sinking into the defaced earth beneath me, flesh slipping off brittle bones. Maggots and worms eat away, slipping past muscle and tissue, digging deeper. It's sweltering, wet and humid with blood and body heat, Fur matted against my body with bile and viscera. I am omnipresent, body and mind sucked into the black hole that is my instincts, I am fighting to escape but rot and decomposition slip through my paws like sand. White mold, angelic and soft mixed with shiny black rot, smelling sickly sweet poison. Thrown away by a god that has already forsaken me, blazing orange fur snuffed out from the shot of a bullet, heart strings ripped to shreds by the force of it, dragged by the one who gave my purpose and drooped down to hell in a pit of tortured souls. and as I reach up to the heavens, maggots drilling into my flesh, crawling their way to my brain, fueling the fire that is agony. I make one last prayer, shouted up to the empty sky above, nobody around to hear it, those parasites eating away at me reach my supple mind. My body deflates, husk dipping down infected and impure, **rotting**.

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ORANGE INFERNO

BY GRAYSON ALBRIGHT

Spark, crackle, eyestraining, flashing blues and pinks slowly giving way to sharp oranges, piercing my retinas and making my skin crawl. I stare up at the world, so much bigger than I. The sky lit up in orange, like the flowers that had been growing by my den. But this time the petals, instead of brushing softly against my fur like usual, burns, licking at my tail and singeing my fur as I run, like I've done so many times before but this time it felt different. I screech in a painful mixture of fear and agony. I can feel the forest floor beneath me turn to ash as I run, desperately searching for the safety I used to feel in my den, before it was meaningless ash like everything else. Ahead of me is just as burnt and sparking as the forest behind me. Blinding orange devours the forest surrounding me. I see rabbits thumping and squealing for their kits, soft fur scorching. Foxes yipping, fur blending into the blazing forest beyond. It's hot, hot, HOT. I spin around in desperation but all I see is the same blinding, burning, **SCORCHING**, orange inferno.

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A RAINLESS STORM: A SHORT STORY

BY EDDIE KEENE

Every year around the same time, my girlfriend and I spend a few days at this campsite. There's usually nobody here when we go, so it's nice.

"What's my beautiful Kayla sketching today?" My girlfriend, Mia, plops down next to me, crossing her legs.

I point to the deer in the distance. "Her."

"What do you do when it moves?"

"I use my imagination."

She carefully leans her head onto my shoulder. "It looks beautiful."

"The deer or my drawing?"

"Both," she laughed.

"Thanks," I closed my sketchbook, "are you hungry or did you just want to see what I was doing?"

"Well... it is almost six..."

Her nose received a boop before I climbed to my feet. "Alright, I only brought peanut butter sandwiches though."

"Food is food," she admitted, "but can we get something when we're driving back tomorrow?"

"As long as you pay."

"Deal."

An hour after we ate the wind started to pick up. Trees whooshed and bushes rustled. I figured it would rain.

"Did you bring your phone?" I asked Mia who had a book in her face. Damn book, she should be looking at me instead.

"Yeah, it's in my bag, why?"

"Can I check it? I want to know if it'll storm."

"Mhm... wait, no," she met my eyes, "sorry babe, I actually used it up last night."

"Seriously? What were you doing?"

"I only had a few more episodes of this show left, I wanted to finish it!"

"A few..." I rolled my eyes.

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“Y’know, I bet it won’t even rain.”

“It better not.”

“I think you were actually right,” I say, lying on my back scratching nail polish remains off my fingernails.

Mia spun around to look at me. She’s reading more of her dumb book. “What do you mean?”

“Earlier, you said you bet it wouldn’t rain.”

She frowns, “It’s literally thundering outside?”

I nod. “It’s been thundering, though.”

“Hhhmokay, let me read now.”

“Only if you play a board game with me afterrr,” I pleaded.

“Alright, I just want to finish a few more cha”

BAM. Lightning blasted down, cutting her sentence off. “Wow,” she started, looking worried, “that sounded close.”

“You think it hit something?”

Mia put her book down and stood up. “I’ll go check.”

After unzipping the tent, she stepped out, turning her head around slowly. “I don’t see anything, I think we’re good.”

I gave her a thumbs up.

“I also don’t really feel like reading anymore, so I guess we can play a game.” The thumbs up doubled with a grin, which made Mia chuckle.

I opened my bag. “Long or short?” I asked, holding out two options.

“Short, please.”

Near the end of the game, Mia paused. “Do you smell something?”

“Nope, I don’t have a sense of smell, remember?”

She laughed a little, but it didn’t seem very cheerful. “Right.”

“Do you mind if I check outside again?”

I slump down, “Awww, but we’re almost finished!”

“Please?”

Her expression is really making me feel uneasy.

“Fine, fine. I doubt it’s anything, though.”

She took no time getting up, while I waited, watching her unzip the door yet again. A breeze of hot air passed by. Huh?

“Kayla...” she started quietly, “Kayla we need to go. We need to go now!”

Mia’s eyes were wide in horror. I didn’t see it until she moved, that giant pile of orange flames. I think I stopped breathing.

She kept yelling at me, “Kayla, get your bag!”

I was so wrong, this is definitely something. How much is on fire out there? Did the lightning do that? Are the animals okay?

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“Kayla!”

A bag and shoes fell onto my lap. Mia yanked me up and helped me put them on. Smoke smacked us in the face, making it hard to keep my eyes open.

I held Mia’s hand tightly, if I lost her now I would die for sure.

We’d been running for a little when Mia stopped abruptly, no forewarning. I almost let go of her hand, why would she stop?!

“The car, I think it’s the other way!” she yelled. Oh my god, we’re going to die.

“We can’t—” —I coughed—“go back that way, though!”

“Let’s try to go around!”

“But—” I tried to protest, except we were already moving again.

It was so hot, and I couldn’t stop fixating on those horrid flames. Tears blurred my eyes and wouldn’t drop.

A fox suddenly appeared, darting past us while carrying a baby in its mouth. We aren’t alone. There were rabbits and birds and a little squirrel too.

“Shoot!” Mia cried, having me look ahead again. There’s more fire, a dead end. We turned with the others.

I tripped over a branch or something, making my legs give out. Mia tried stabilizing me, but we both ended up on the ground anyway.

The tears in my eyes finally let go and plummeted down my cheeks. Mia was crying too. We wrapped our arms around each other. We’re gonna die. We’re gonna die. We’re going to die.

I felt myself being pulled onto my girlfriend’s back. She resumed the run.

My face stayed buried in her hair until she stopped again. I didn’t want to lift my head, I figured it was just another dead end, but Mia was coughing so much trying to say something, so I did, and through the smoke I saw the concrete. The parking lot!

She found it... We’re safe now.

I watch the fire from the car window. I should be happy, but it’s destroying everything in there, all the life.

Mia starts the car.

“I love you,” I whispered.

“What?”

“Thank you.”

As we pull out, a group of deer run out of the trees. I kinda doubt it, but I’d like to think one of them was the same deer from earlier.

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“FLAMES ARE LIKE TONGUES”

BY MAZZY SLEEP

Flames are like tongues licking a plate clean
while trees wait to be wed
in bridal veils of smoke:
till death do us part.
Unstitching the seam of the green,
lifting the cover
to see what lies beneath.

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RETURNING TO EARTH!

OLD DISEASES TRAPPED IN (MELTING) ICE CAPS!



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LIMB BY LIMB

BY REN P.

My limbs fall apart
As if they were never together in the first place
The branches around me fall into the fire
My body is consumed by roaring flames
I cannot move
I can only stand and burn
And watch as everyone else cremates
Everything in its windy path seethes a rich amber
The color of fall leaves
My leaves fall and scorch to ash
The whole world burns red
Limb by Limb I burn to ash

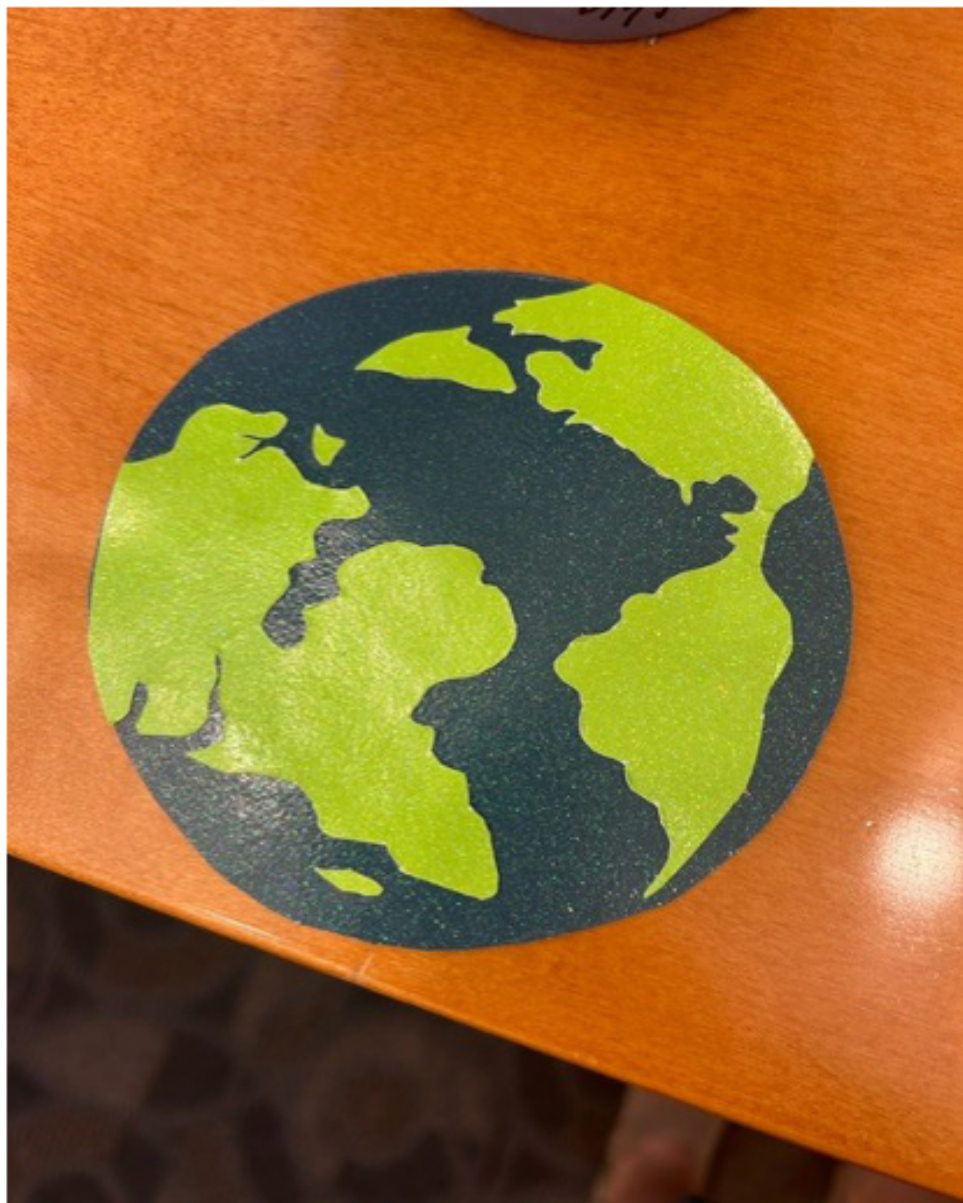
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WILDGRASSES

BY REN P.

The wildgrass
cut back by flames
tangled with the land in a cycle
that's life and death
wildgrasses grow green and yellow
While the fire grows red and orange
Angry flames eat everything in reach
Prairies burned to nothing but ash
The ash no longer helps
The land we no longer take care of
No longer takes care of us

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ARTIST & EDITOR BIOGRAPHIES

ROWAN R.: On the brink of obscurity, with a great many ideas but no determination to follow through.

According to our editors, ANNA PLATTE is an incredible poet, runner, visual artist, and cellist.

JAMIE THIBODEAU is a 15-year-old poet from Iowa. Her main goal is to get out there with this lit mag and get experience in cooperative writing.

LEONEL-LUCIA MORALES is a 15-year-old who lives an average life. He has two dogs and two turtles. He loves to draw, write, and sing. He is currently working on more poem content and can't wait to show it to you all.

SYDNEY THIBODEAU allegedly lives in a crab boy with her familiar, Constantine the Crab. Her only sustenance is crab meat and crab juice.

GRAYSON ALBRIGHT is a trans, queer author, poet, and artist. This is Flammable is his first published work so far. He finds a lot of inspiration through music.

EDDIE KEENE has written various stories over time. He recently move to Iowa City a little over a year ago and fell in love immediately. Eddie has four siblings and two cats he adores immensely. Having a big family get's distracting and loud at times, but there's always room to write. drawing is also something he enjoys doing whenever he can find the time. He also happens to be a queer transgender man which influences his works heavily.

MAZZY SLEEP is a 12-year-old living in Iowa City. She has written over a thousand poems and short stories, as well as three novels and two feature screenplays. Her work has been published in Blackbird, The Margins (Asian American Writer's Workshop), The Minnesota Review, Rattle, Barren Magazine, Geist, Maudlin House, and elsewhere. Mazzy was commissioned by the Lunar Codex project to write a poem that landed on the moon in February 2024. Her poem "Heart Medicine" was named Notable Poem in the Best Canadian Poetry 2024 anthology. mazzysleep.com

SAM BROWN, told our editors: My name is Samuel Brown. You will never know anything about me other than my name and one piece of art.

REN P., 14, lives in Iowa City, Iowa.

Editor-Support Person, MARGOT WEISMAYER is exceptionally wonderfully fantastic at emotionally supporting accomplished writers. She beautifully uplifts writers into the 9th realm.