

## *Her Gift*

*I have stood in the midst of a forest fresh with life and beauty, the likes of which only the most honest and graceful of sensory language could possibly translate. I have smelt the whisper of the fall season to come as the surrounding leaves recite hushed prayers into the gentle wind, for their journey is not unlike the descent of Persephone herself. I have felt the faint kiss of Mother Nature against my skin until my cheeks blushed a hue the autumn apples would envy as they ripen on the outstretched fingers of their trees. I have felt the chill of the dead, macabre leaves- the spirits that rise from the ground to scatter wildly on a chilly All Hallows Eve night. I have run my outstretched fingers along the indents of a carved, orange gourd; its bumps and freckles like goosebumps across its hollow hide. These were the very thoughts that enraptured my mind one beautiful autumn afternoon. Walking along the barren ground, feeling as forlorn and weary as the very trees that overhung the surrounding area, I heard Nature herself calling to me through the wind, which was translated through the snickers of the leaves. Following her voice, I stumbled upon a shallow, green pond. Its surface was nearly covered with cattails and thick, yellowing lily pads, as if hiding a deeper secret or meaning. I sat on a nearby rock, it having been smoothed over by the beatings of the weather and its history of other curious onlookers. As I gazed upon the gentle waters, I heard the bugs become accustomed to my being and so settled into their familiar hymnals, singing in the oncoming evening as it crept over the mangled limbs of the trees. My gaze rested on the largest of the lily pads, its center a pomegranate red, cascading outwards until its color faded to a darker green. As if entrancing me with its wonder and mystery, a large, white koi fish gracefully emerged from underneath the shade of the lily. The waning sunlight caught on his ivory scales and glimmered across the surface of the stilled water. A dance was to ensue, and I the lone and humbled audience. Another koi followed suit and greeted her partner with a flirtatious yet elegant wave of her tail fin. They swam around each other, their slender bodies bending towards the other, creating a shining, rippling orb in the middle of the otherwise serene patch of water. I became filled with a new breath and quietly let out a sigh of both happiness and gratitude, for I felt the divine sense that Nature herself had granted me this present of elegance and beauty. She had led me to that very spot in hopes that I would serve as the audience for a harmonious waltz between the two gleaming, picturesque creatures of the pond. My spirits having been lifted, I smiled and thanked the dancers in a short bow. Any passersby must have found me daft, but I felt the overwhelming sense of gratitude for the visions I had come to witness. With the strength from an old day gone and the knowledge for the next to come, I make my exit from the beauty before me, for I have felt Mother Nature herself grant me a gift magnificent splendor, and it is one I intend to embed into my memory, like the memories and thoughts the leaves whisper to any being willing to listen.*

Title: "Her Gift"

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Biography: Megan McHugh is currently a sophomore at the University of Georgia, majoring in Publication Management. She attended DeKalb School of the Arts for high school, where she discovered a deep and profound love for writing. She has had her work performed on stage at the Horizon Theater and has also had a few of her works published in literary magazines for Georgia Perimeter College and The Wren's Nest Publishing Company in Atlanta, where she has also taken part in an internship the summer of the Junior year in high school. She finds harmony and solace with the arts and nature, and jumps at any chance she may find for combining the two.