

Kaitlyn J.
Buckeye Local High School
Photography



Rilee D.
Buckeye Local High School
Photography



McKenna D.
Buckeye Local High School
Photography



Jada W.
Edison Local High School
Photography



Raeni K.
Indian Creek High School
Art



Kaylee S.
Edison Local High School
Drawing



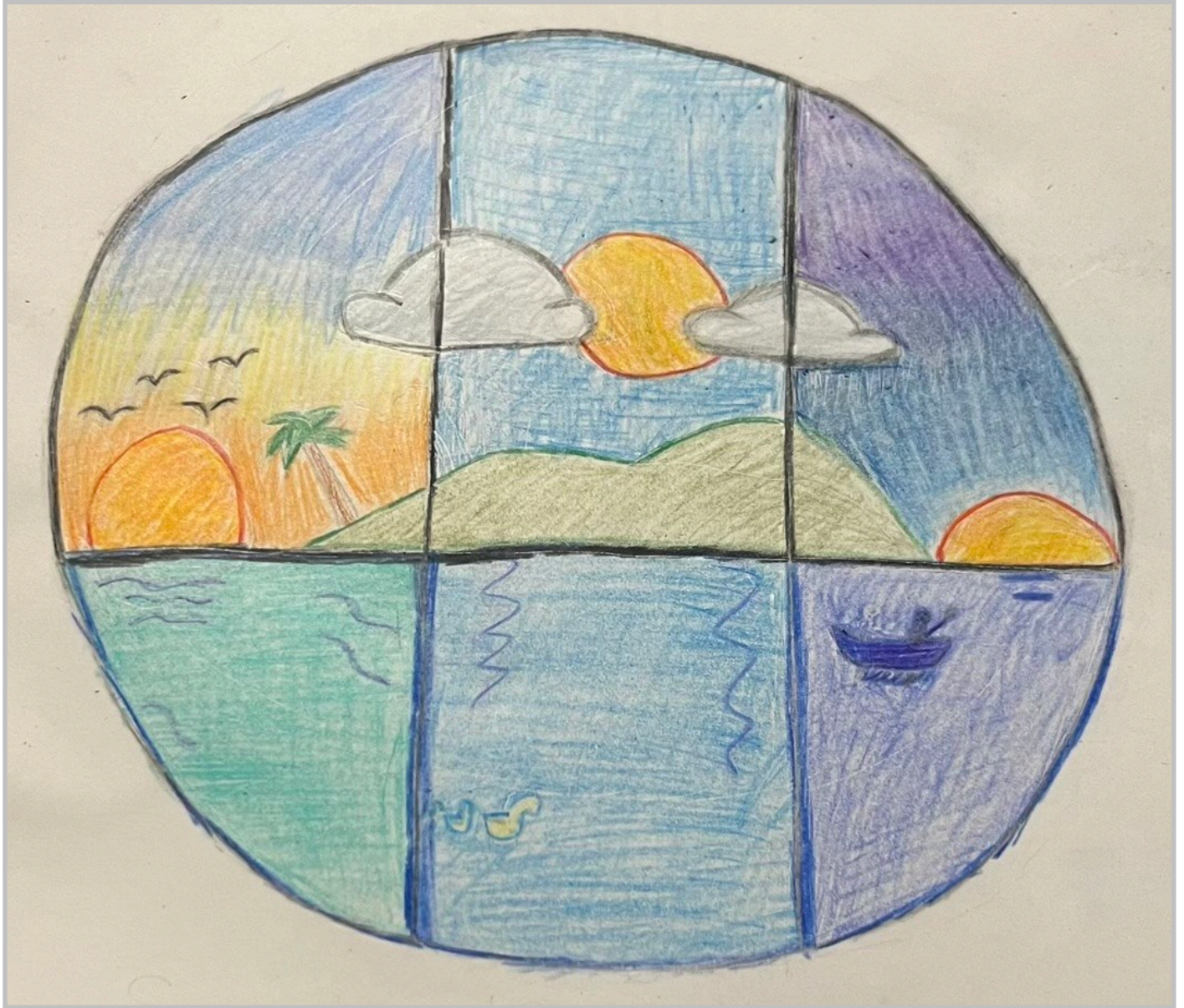
Jahmiah B.
Steubenville High School
Drawing



Baylie J.
Toronto High School
Drawing



Katie P.
Edison Local High School
Drawing



Emelyn B.C.
Steubenville High School
Poetry



Loren C.
Toronto High School
Poetry

Whispers of the Night

In shadows cast by the pale
moon's glow,
Whispers of the night begin to
flow.
Through rustling leaves and dis-
tant breeze,
A symphony of secrets, the dark-
ness frees.

Stars above, like diamonds
gleam,
Illuminating dreams unseen.
Mysteries dance upon the air,
A tapestry of enchantment, rare.

The night, a cloak of velvet deep,
Where secrets rest and lovers
weep.
Softly it sings its lullaby,
Embracing all beneath the sky.

So let us wander in the night,
Explore its depth, embrace its
might.
For in its darkness, beauty lies,
Whispers in the night, a sweet
surprise.

A Gentle Rain

Upon the windowpane, a gentle
rain,
Falling softly , relieving nature's
pain.
Each drop, a messenger from the
sky,
Whispering secrets as it passes
by.

The earth rejoices, the flowers
bloom,
Cleansed by tears from the heav-
ens' womb.
A symphony of pitter-patter, a
soothing sound,
As raindrops kiss the thirsty
ground.

Leaves dancing in rhythm, trees
sway in delight,
Under the spell of this magical
night.
A moment of peace, a calm re-
lease,
As nature finds solace, her wor-
ries decrease.

So let the rain wash away your
fears,
Allow its touch to dry your tears.
Embrace the calm it brings with-
in,
A gentle rain, a cleansing din.

Wings of Freedom

In skies of azure and clouds so
white,
A creature soars with effortless
might.
Its wings opened, a majestic
sight,
A symbol of freedom, in flight's
delight.

Through mountain peaks and val-
leys low,
It glides with grace , as if to
show,
That boundaries are just illusions,
you see,
When you spread your wings and
set yourself free.

Oh, to be like the birds in the
sky,
To break the chain, to learn to
fly,
To leave behind the worries that
bind,
And embrace the freedom that
you find.

For within us all, there lies a
spark,
A desire to roam, to embark,
On a journey of self-discovery,
To spread our wings and truly be
free.

So let us take flight, with hearts
ablaze,
And soar above life's dull maze.
Like the birds, let us find our
way,
In the vast expanse, where
dreams hold sway.

Ka’Nayiah W.
Steubenville High School
Poetry

ME

In the depths of doubt, you'll find your might,

Embrace the challenges, take flight.

With resilience as your guiding star,

Conquer the battles, no matter how far.

Believe in the power that lies within, Unleash your potential, let it begin.

Embrace the journey, both highs and lows, For greatness blooms when passion flows.

Embrace the whispers of your heart, Let courage guide, set fear apart.

In every step, let purpose shine,

Inspiring others with every line.

Unleash your potential, let it begin.

Embrace the journey, both highs and lows, For greatness blooms when passion flows.

Embrace the whispers of your heart, Let courage guide, set fear apart.

In every step, let purpose shine,

Inspiring others with every line.

So let your dreams be bold and true,

The world awaits, it needs you.

You have the strength to make a change,

Go forth, dear soul, and rearrange.

Cheyenne J.
Edison Local High School
Fiction

Loonie Lennie

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Rob tossed a crumpled-up ball of paper at the back of my head, causing Ms. Clancey to do her typical sigh in disappointment. He was one of my best friends, so I didn't mind. I miss Rob. I uncrumpled the paper as Rob got assigned his second lunch detention of the week.

“Hey Lenn u hear that, I think I hear some one saying your name”

He sucks at grammar. I just re-crumpled the paper and shoved it into my pocket while silently laughing to myself. He was always trying to mess with me. The unit four test got handed out and we all began writing. When I got to number six, I became slightly frustrated while searching my mind for the answer. Then suddenly, I heard it. I hate that noise. It was muffled and unintelligible, sounding like people from far away having a conversation, audible but barely. I could barely hear it. I began to think that maybe Rob had overheard my name be brought up in the conversation between our classmates, but when I looked around to see who'd be getting an F, no one was talking. Everyone was silent with their heads facing their papers, furiously writing away, even Rob, surprisingly.

I could still hear the muffled conversation all day. I caught a few words like “time” and “it,” but not nearly enough to figure out the subject, if there was one. I still don't know what they were saying. It seemed to get a little louder every once and a while, eventually to the point it sounded like about 10 people talking just a few steps behind me. At some points, I would get so occupied trying to figure out what or who it was that Rob and Alec, my other friend, had to snap me back into reality about ten times by lunch. Rob was just wondering why I wasn't taking part in our normal hijinks, but Alec seemed genuinely worried. During lunch, Alec kept pressing me to tell him why I was so distracted today, but I wouldn't. He barely took “nothing” for an answer and didn't stop asking until we had to leave. I wonder if he would have believed me if I told him that I thought I was hearing voices in my head.

By the end of the day, I decided to go to the nurse's office, claiming I was just hearing ringing; although, all she could do was give me earplugs and call my mother. It seemed like the voices were getting louder too, to the point I could hear them through the plugs. I think I also started seeing things. I kept thinking I could see someone's face in the window out of the corner of my eye, but every time I turned to look, there wasn't anything that could even be mistaken for a face.

When I took the earplugs out, they were almost twice as loud as before I put them in. I can make out a few sentences now, something about it being time for "it" to happen. I wondered what "it" was, or if I wanted to find out. The hallucinations were starting to gradually get worse as well. At one point, I thought I saw a cat in distress but when I tried to pick it up to help it, It just wasn't there. I can't fall asleep. Instead of eating dinner with everyone like usual, I just said I was having a bad day and wanted to eat alone. I wasn't lying. Mom was a little skeptical, but no one put up a fuss.

While I was in my room the hallucinations started to get unbearable. I can't fall asleep. I tried to put on my headphones and play some loud music but that just made the visual ones so, so much worse. I can't fall asleep. I tried to ignore them and just eat my dinner, but the feeling of the pasta slowly turned into that of maggots: mushy, wiggling larvae. I can't fall asleep. I knew it was just a hallucination, but I spit it out and fell backward onto my floor in response. The floor felt almost moldy or wet, but I knew it was dry. I was looking right at it! It was dry! I was looking at it, right?

I can't fall asleep. Then I felt a sharp sensation like something in my pocket was stabbing me. I pulled it out, and it was a crumpled piece of paper. I can't hear anything but the voices anymore. I just broke down crying. I laid there sobbing into my carpet, and at some points, I couldn't tell what was real and what wasn't. I can't fall asleep. Why can't I fall asleep? Mom came in when she heard the thud. She called me an ambulance. I just can't fall asleep.

Cheyenne J.
Edison Local High School
Fiction

The Yellow Flower

When I woke up, I couldn't tell where I was at first. All I could see was a blurry ocean of grey masses and desaturated greens and browns. Sharp jagged objects dug into my back from the ground, urging me to sit up. I ran my fingers along the ground, through what I'm assuming was dead grass and loose pebbles. My nose was frozen and I could feel it start to run. As I shifted to try to get into a warmer position, something sitting afar to my right caught my eye. It was a splash of yellow—an eerily bright yellow, close to those put-on warning labels. Before I could think I could feel myself start to crawl toward it. The sensation of the sharp stones digging into my knees and hands made me want to quit, but I couldn't. It didn't feel like I was in control anymore. The closer I got, the more precisely I could see it. It was a flower. I could tell you every detail of each petal, unnaturally plastered against the blurs of a lifeless backdrop. When I reached it, I simply sat on the ground and went to pick it up. However, my infatuation with the flower clouded my mind as I accidentally overextended my arm and ran it into what felt like a stone that the flower was resting on. The sudden impact managed to knock my mind free of the flower's grasp as I began to run my hand across it to discover what it was, it was tall and I could feel the remnants of moss that must have been scratched off recently. My hands glided towards the top, getting closer together with every passing moment, and then I felt an engraving. I brushed my finger over it what must have been a hundred times before I could tell what it was. As I pieced together what it read, I froze. "Here lies: Charlotte Vince" There was more underneath it but I stopped trying to make out what it read. I was in the graveyard. I began trying to remember why the name was so familiar, and in doing so realized there were many other questions I should have been asking from the second I woke up. When did I pass out? Where was I before I did? Who am I? Why can't I remember my own name?

Vivian G.
Edison Local High School
Fiction

Once upon a time, there was a young girl named Lily who lived in a small village surrounded by a dense forest. She loved to explore the woods and often went on adventures by herself.

One day, while wandering through the forest, Lily stumbled upon a hidden cave. She cautiously entered the cave and discovered a beautiful crystal that glimmered in the dim light. She picked up the crystal and felt a strange energy coursing through her body. Suddenly, she was transported to a magical world filled with strange creatures and beautiful landscapes.

The first creature she met was a talking rabbit who introduced himself as Thumper. Thumper explained that Lily was the chosen one and that she was the only one who could save the magical world from an evil sorcerer who was trying to take over.

Lily was hesitant at first, but she soon realized that she had no choice but to accept the challenge. Thumper led her to a group of rebels who were fighting against the sorcerer's army. Lily joined the rebels and used her newfound powers to help them defeat the sorcerer and restore peace to the magical world.

After the battle was won, Lily was transported back to her own world. She returned to her village, but she was no longer the same girl who had left. She had gained confidence and strength from her adventure and knew that she could take on any challenge that came her way.

Jamie B.
Edison Local High School
Fiction

Forgotten Civilizations

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This is a story about 4 long forgotten civilizations and how they almost fell to ruin. The forgotten civilizations were a series of societies with a complex set of rules known as the cardinal ordinances, which was formed by the gods of the realms to keep peace in the universe. Among the forgotten civilizations were four major kingdoms. There was the Kingdom of Arkadia, home to the Humans, who weren't as strong as the other kingdoms but made up for in ingenuity what they lacked in strength, the Kingdom of Leechard, home to the Leecario, a species of fish-like creatures who could survive both in water and on land, with a great advantage in the water, the Moonglow Dynasty, home to the Shadow Elves, a species of dark elves who gained heightened senses and abilities in the moonlight, and finally the Mahagaran Empire, home to the Oni, a species of demons who possess large horns which grant them various abilities.

The great swordsmen of the four major kingdoms of the overworld came together to form an undefeatable alliance and fought to enforce the cardinal ordinances. One day, they were fighting against a rogue Oni named Oversius who had violated a cardinal ordinance by killing its fellow Oni and gathering their horns to gain power. The battle was close but to their luck, they managed to break off one of Oversius' horns, this heavily weakened Oversius and the Oni swordsman harnessed the extreme power in the horn to finish him off. They celebrated their victory and the Oni swordsman realized that the horns' power could be used to aid in fighting more enemies. The other swordsmen were against it because they thought it was wrong to use something that came from the death of so many innocent Oni. The Oni swordsman was still convinced that the power could be of use and so he decided to use it in secret.

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The next few battles went swimmingly as the horn gave the Oni increased power but after some time of using it he started to feel different. When he looked in the mirror, he almost didn't recognise himself, his horns were growing longer, his skin turning darker, and his figure starting to grow. He decided to stop using the horn as he thought it too dangerous. Their next battle would be against a Shadow Elf that had violated a cardinal ordinance by using dark magic to gain eternal youth in exchange for countless innocent lives, the people called them Zagreus.

This fight was particularly hard as this Elf was extremely strong, even in the sunlight, and night was drawing near. They had expected to finish the fight before nightfall but for reasons only the Oni knew, they were much weaker than usual. As night drew nearer, Zagreus only grew stronger, but the swordsmen were beginning to learn his habits and the battle was looking up. Then, night came and, much to their despair, it was a full moon. This gave Zagreus supernatural powers and nobody except the Shadow Elf swordsman, who was also empowered by the full moon, could keep up. They tried to fight but it was futile, Zagreus dashed behind the human swordsman and landed a devastating blow which, with just his fist, sent him flying 40 feet into a tree. The human coughed up blood and all the swordsmen despaired in realization that they were too weak. The Oni swordsman, against his better judgement, decided to use the horn's power one last time.

He pulled it out of his bag and instantly he felt a change in himself. Zagreus dashed at him at insane speeds but he dodged it with ease and launched a counterattack. Zagreus blocked it and the two began to swap blows at incredible speeds, so much so that the other swordsmen could barely keep up. Zagreus began to speed up as he started taking the fight more seriously, the Oni began to fall behind and in order to beat Zagreus, he fully absorbed the horn, in an instant the air grew cold and everybody, including Zagreus, felt a terrible chill. The Oni began to move at speeds which none of the other swordsmen could comprehend and began to overtake Zagreus with ease. The Oni threw a punch at Zagreus and in the blink of an eye, Zagreus was thrown 200 feet into the air. The Oni jumped up to his level and flicked Zagreus, which sent him flying at sonic speeds into the ground, killing him instantly.

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The other swordsmen began to celebrate but when they approached the Oni, they felt a murderous energy. The Oni looked at them and the Shadow Elf saw an intense bloodlust in his eyes. The Oni they once knew was gone. He approached them and the human tried to give him a high five but the second he touched him the Oni smashed his arm in pieces. The Oni didn't stop there though as he went on a murderous rampage against his former comrades. He killed them all with ease. This violated the cardinal ordinances and he went into hiding, killing Oni and absorbing their horns to amass more power. With the swordsmen gone, there was nobody to protect the realm and it fell into chaos.

Three years later, the Oni had grown extremely powerful and went to each of the 4 Great Kingdoms and killed their respective leaders, claiming the title of Supreme Overlord for himself. This ushered in an era of despair and darkness.

100 years later, a rebellion was growing and in it was a young Shadow Elf who was named Perci. Perci decided to join the rebellion after the orphanage she had spent her whole life in had been destroyed by the Supreme Overlords soldiers. She wasn't particularly good at fighting nor was she the brightest bulb in the box but she tried her best. Persi wasn't like other Elves though, as she did not benefit from the moon. All she had from her parents was a pendant with a bright purple gem in the middle. Perci loved the legends of the great swordsmen of the cardinal ordinances and aspired to be like them one day. She doubted she could ever be like them though because she was just too weak.

Every time she tried to help with the rebellion, she ended up messing up and putting herself in danger and needing to be saved. She was done with being weak and useless and began to train, she trained for hours at a time every day but made seemingly no progress. This devastated her and she began to cry while clutching her pendant when she heard a cracking noise. The pendant had begun to crack and she tried to stop it but in her crying panic she only made it worse.

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The gem crumbled to the ground and Perci desperately started picking up the pieces when she noticed a metallic object sticking out of one piece. She pulled it out and it looked like a small disc, when she turned it over it began to expand and turned into a small pocket watch, when she pressed one of the buttons it began to glow and a flash of light overcame her sight. She felt herself begin to drift from consciousness and she fell to the ground.

When she awoke she was floating in what seemed to be some kind of void. She called out to the void, trying to find out what was going on, and then the void started to fill with bright stars and three robed figures appeared before her. She asked who they were and what was going on and they explained to her that they are the gods who created the cardinal ordinances and they had been waiting for her. She was confused and asked why they would be waiting for her, a weak orphan Elf. They laughed and told her that she's more than just a weak, orphan Elf and then they told her that she was a direct descendant of the Shadow Elf swordsman from 100 years ago. They explained that 100 years ago, after killing the swordsmen, the Supreme Overlord went on to slaughter the families and destroy the bloodlines of the swordsmen to ensure that no one could stand against him but Perci escaped her fate because her parents had sent her to stay with a friend for a while after hearing of the deaths of the other families. This astounded Perci and she couldn't believe what she was hearing. Her? A descendant of the legendary swordsmen? How could that be? She was too weak. They told her that she was not simply weak, but that she had just been looking for strength in the wrong places. She was not a simple Shadow Elf but instead she was a rare kind of Elf called a Sunfire Elf. These Sunfire Elves appeared once in 100,000 years and Perci was one of them. They explained to her that she did not draw her power from the moon but instead drew power from the primordial magic of the realm and all she needed to do to harness it was to attune with nature. They then told her that they did not have much time left as it took much power to appear to her and they had grown weak from the chaos and terror plaguing the realm and that she must defeat the Supreme Overlord and save the world. She wanted to ask more questions but in the blink of an eye, she woke up back in her room.

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She was very confused but decided that she would try to attune with nature to harness her power. She went out to the forest and sat down in the shade. She had no idea how to attune with nature so she decided to just observe the wildlife and the beauty of nature for a while. After hours of sitting there, she felt no different and felt discouraged, so she decided to go home for the day. On her walk back, it was strangely quiet, she couldn't hear anything, not even the sound of the dead leaves crunching beneath her feet. She looked down and to her surprise, it wasn't that she couldn't hear the leaves crunch, the leaves weren't crunching at all. When Perci walked, she somehow avoided crushing the leaves, she thought to herself that maybe this is the result of her attuning with nature. She decided to try attuning with nature in various different ways such as climbing trees, swimming, and playing with the wildlife. As she did these, she felt herself steadily becoming stronger, and she gained many new abilities such as speed, strength, night vision, she could communicate with spirits, and she could walk on the surface of water.

After many years of training, the rebellion had grown large enough to attempt to retake a kingdom. They chose to take back the Elf kingdom first and after many hard fought battles with the Supreme Overlords Oni army, they managed to drive out the enemy and with the help of the greatest mages from all the races, they cast a giant barrier around the kingdom to protect it from the Oni forces.

They continued to fight against the Supreme Overlords forces and managed to take back the other two kingdoms and place barriers around them. 4 years after the war had started, the final battle was ready to begin. They launched an attack on the Oni Kingdom and fought their way to the capital where the Supreme Overlord resided. When they arrived, Perci went to the castle alone and fought through the last of the enemy forces to reach the throne room.

Perci opened the door and instantly felt a horrible chill. The Supreme Commander stood inside and Perci asked why he had done all of this. He explained to her that he had been denied what he wanted until he took it for himself by force, power, the world.

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In an instant he appeared behind her and asked her what she wanted, "Power, freedom, or could it be?" He started to smile evilly "Your family?" He began to laugh and Perci tried to attack him but he dodged it with ease. "How do you expect to defeat me when you are so weak?" She realized that she must stay calm and not lose her head as that would weaken her. They began to fight, attacking and dodging at sonic speeds. They were a complete match in terms of power, and no end was in sight. It was then that the voice of the gods came to Perci and told her to focus on his horns as that is where his power comes from. She began to target his horns but he continued to dodge her attacks. She feigned an attack to the legs and when he dodged she instead attacked his horns and she managed to hit his horn. A small crack appeared and he seemed to get slightly slower. This made it easier to attack him and she started to land more and more blows making more and more cracks.

After a while, she could see a little more light in his eyes. She started to hear a different voice in her ears but this time it wasn't the gods, it was the Oni. He pleaded with her to help him as he didn't want to do any of this, that the power corrupted him. She continued to fight with the Oni and after hours of fighting, she landed a decisive blow on his horn and it cracked and broke off. He scrambled to grab it but she stomped on it, smashing it to pieces. The Oni screamed out and began to shrink. She smashed his other horn and he fell to the ground and shrank to a third of his former size, his skin brightened, and his murderous aura disappeared.

He got back up and looked around and then looked at Perci. Tears began to form in his eyes as he thanked her for stopping him. He apologized profusely and explained the whole situation to her and told her that he would not be alive much longer as without the power, 100 years of aging would catch up with him and he would die. Before he died though, he gave her a key and explained that in the treasure room, there was a chest containing the swords of the 4 Legendary Swordsmen. He asked her to give them to people she knew she could trust and bring order back to the realm. He then fell over and began to turn to dust. With a solemn face, he faded away. Perci went on to find three worthy warriors from each of the three other races and together they brought order and peace back to the realm.

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-The End