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Best Midwestern High School Writing: A
Celebration and Recognition of Outstanding
Prose

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The Crimson Freddy

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Jones College Prep

Chicago, Illinois

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Freddy ran; his red hair shone like a sea of fire. He wore corduroys that sang when he moved, a symphony when he ran. He loved running. He ran and jumped, closed an eye till his hand caught the sun and set it free. He felt bad that he touched the sun, because the sun sent a belly-wrenching animal in his stomach. An animal with no claws, no eyes, and no ears was loose in his stomach; it beat its diamond-covered head on the walls of Freddy's stomach. So, Freddy sat. Felt the throbbing in his stomach, the animal he hadn't chosen to name yet because it was so mean, it didn't deserve a name. He ran himself to the hospital, to a room with bleached sheets, a bleached doctor with shiny teeth saying they had to get in his stomach to cut out the animal. The doctors were nice, giving the animal a name, appendix, saying he *had* to come out. As Freddy lay asleep his parent's voices drifted in, beneath the door.

"He just ran, could you believe it?" said his mother. Her shaky voice, Freddy could tell, shook her body like a crumpled leaf, shaking the air surrounding her, turning her organs into the beads of a maraca, her body into the wooden shell. Her voice was merely the product of her instrument.

"Yes, I believe I can," said his father. No descriptiveness to him. He was a blank page. "But why on earth would the boy reach for the sun? I'm sure he doesn't think that he could even graze it. Ha!"

All at once Freddy stood straight up in bed. The animal inside him cried, it fought, and beat its head. Freddy fought the fire inside him. Fought the flames that called out to roast his nameless father. He stood, feeling the animal's roar become his, the flames creating a heated swell rise to Freddy's head, carrying him. The animal in his stomach was going crazy; it suddenly grew claws and eyes and teeth. The animal wanted out, but so did Freddy. His head pounded, he was getting too hot, and he reached for the door, feeling claws where his nails should be. He wrenched the door forward, found the stony face of his father, looked him square in the eye, opened his cotton-dry mouth and said, "I touched it. I touched the sun, and it gave me this." Freddy exclaimed pointing to his stomach. As he pointed the monster broke free. Freddy felt the pain shoot from his body, almost like stars. Freddy saw the monster loose, it was on fire, and it ate his father clean from where he was standing. Freddy felt that he did well with the sun's gift, or at least he hoped he had, because he was on the floor, closing his eyes.

Freddy now had a head of raspberries. The color was ripe; it shone as if it was full of juice on the sunniest days. The girls loved him, swiping at the chin-length locks. The waves would wind around their fingers and they would sigh. As Freddy sat with a harem of fawning girls, the other boys played rugby. They pushed and shoved; they cut their hair short and treated the girls like a different species. Freddy made friends with the sun's children, the blonde haired girls. The blonde girls' hair shining was nothing in comparison to Freddy's, but they wouldn't dare say a thing, they loved Freddy too much. The boys' resentment for Freddy grew, it grew inch by inch, as the girls clothes became shorter and shorter. Their anger grew into a pair of scissors. It grew into rope. It grew into tape. Most importantly, their resentment transformed into hate. Hate that spit fire.

"We'll get 'em good." Seethed Tom. He was the leader, the horniest of them all.

Tom's hand coiled around the rope like an anaconda around a panda. Tom approached Freddy's lanky figure, he touched the boy's freckled skin, the warmth speared through his hand, climbing up. Tom felt a change coming over his body; he didn't want to touch the sun's boy. Tom suddenly hated himself, so he worked quicker, working the braided rope over both the boy's arms. Wrapping it faster and faster, the sweat beading and dripping. Tom worked, but the sun beat him with its glare. Tom attempted tying the ropes, but the ropes slipped out of his hands. They were dripping with sweat, taking four more sweaty boys to tie the ends. Freddy never once fought.

"We got you now!" panted Tom. His shirt stuck to his body, deciding to take it off was probably a choice he shouldn't have made.

"So?" exclaimed Freddy. Freddy was dry as the desert.

"Now we're going to cut your hair," sneered Tom, panting. The tape they had to silence him was useless because Freddy was already quiet. The scissors would be useful, if only Tom's sweaty grip could tighten on the handle. The other boys panted with him.

Using two hands, Tom gripped the sides of scissors and cut. He cut jagged lines, straight and side-to-side. The strands fell, they fell onto Tom like fire embers, burning his feet. When Tom thought he was done, he looked down, seeing that he had shrunk. He was in fact melting. The strands of Freddy's

hair were soaking up Tom's body and became plants. One by one the other boys' bodies followed, and without much wait, Freddy had undone the loose rope, and was eating the juicy raspberries.

Freddy now had a job in life. He was a model for the shampoo line, *Chili*. He never lost his love for his sun. Freddy slept when the sun slept, waking only when the sun did. Freddy woke to quickly walk by the ocean, and see his love rising over the white-capped waves. It happened that as often as Freddy appeared, a woman would as well.

Freddy never noticed her as he always had to close his eyes, as to fully appreciate the sun's warmth, but this woman stared at Freddy's beauty at any chance.

Freddy was once interrupted from his sunbath with a tap on his shoulder.

"Hello," said the woman, "Whew, I've been meaning to say that, and now I have. Good bye." And on the last note she fled. Running faster than she ever had.

Freddy hadn't much of a chance to care, because the second upon opening his eyes the sun paralyzed his eyes, granting him a momentary blindness. The woman ran so quick that when Freddy turned his head both ways, he saw no one. He stood with such an urgency he almost fell, quickly looking up to the sun, which truly was a hardship. He understood now, the sun had talked to him! After years of waiting, watching, and feeling the sun's touch, she finally chose to speak to him.

That night, as Freddy prepared a picnic basket for next morning, Rãñã picked out clothes to wear for tomorrow morning. Freddy delicately placed packages of the ripest raspberries, grapes, chili peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, and cherries between the delicate folds of a pillow-soft afghan. Rãñã rehearsed her lines for the millionth time in the morning, choosing different ways to stand, to touch, to glance. She rehearsed her breathing. She even rehearsed her run, the one she would run away from him with.

The next morning was meant to be monumental for the both of them, but the rain would prove otherwise. It pounded the beach, scarring the bumpy waves of the sand. But Freddy knew his sun would come, so he came at his usual

time. He squarely sat, with his picnic basket to the left of him and shut his eyes. He felt pellets of rain on his cheekbones, almost feeling his eyelashes and freckles mesh into one. The water beaded on his hair as it would a plant. Rãñã instantly spotted Freddy.

Rãñã was thinking how odd she would've looked if she talked to him right now, with this pouring rain surrounding them, but upon seeing the basket at his side, ran to him. Freddy felt the presence behind him, felt its warmth, knowing that it was the sun he turned. He opened his eyes and there stood Rãñã.

Freddy saw her ethereal skin, a glow that could never be tampered with by the Rain's children. Her bright yellow clothes were in sharp contrast with her skin, but the heat was coming off her waves. Waves that wrapped around Freddy like a blanket, like the sun! Her hair sprang around her in curls, spring and soft as new buds, haloing her gentle face.

Rãñã truly looked at Freddy now. He had gorgeous hair the color of ladybugs. Freckles bombarded his skinny face, tumbling like a waterfall down his empty chest, leaping onto his arm, shooting onto his legs. They were placed in the oddest formation, and Rãñã could surely see images among them at this very moment. His eyelashes were the same as his hair, curling around almond shaped eyes.

As their eyes examined each other, Freddy began to breathe harder. He extended an arm, a hand, his finger, and reached, he grazed her leg and let out a great big breathe of air that challenged the winds of San Francisco Bay. The clouds slowly began to slither away, as the sun pushed past them to view what was happening on the beach.

Freddy stared at his trembling hand and then to sun woman's eyes. Fire. There was a fire in her chocolate eyes that his toes, his hair roots, his teeth, his skin, they all *felt*.

"Hello," worked its way past Freddy's numb lips, "I'm Freddy."

Rãñã smiled, a smile that rendered Freddy deaf, blind, lost, and confused. Freddy found himself again; he saw the gentle tremor in her skin, the opening of her mouth.

“Rãñã.” She said with the utmost confidence, like she practiced in the mirror. Freddy rose to her height and then higher; causing the smell of raspberries and fire to ascend upon Rãñã’s small nose.

“Rãñã, you are the sun....” whispered Freddy into the woman’s tender ear.

“Yeah,” Rãñã snorted, “My parents like to think that I’m sunny, so they named me Rãñã, meaning sun in Hausa.”

Cupping her full cheek, Freddy said, “With good choice.” Closing his eyes he felt the sun’s rise on his back, and the true sun’s child warmth on his front. Freddy was engulfed, and he had never been happier.

Freddy had spent many years chasing for the sun, from first touching it, to fighting for it; Freddy had finally captured a hint, and it was more than he could have ever wanted. So Freddy reveled in his appreciation and the love the sun gave him.

After many years exploring the surfaces that the sun graced, Freddy and Rãñã came back where they had met and sat.

The folds of their skin now resembled raisins, so they sat on the very beach they had met, holding hands. Eating raisins.