

First Place – Middle School/ Fiction

The Power of Belief

By Madison Fields

A chilling howl pierced the air. It was the sound of a hunt, not of prey, but of wolf. A brown female ran at full speed, carrying a black and brown pup, dodging trees and shrubs. A large masculine, silver male ran beside her, throwing worrisome glances every so often to his mate, Soulchaser. Together they ran away from their pack, their history.

“Storm, I think we’re losing them” the dark brown female, Soulchaser, said between her teeth. Her dark green gaze locked into a nearby cave. She ran, towards it, her long legs moving gracefully over the dry terrain. They crawled up the rocky slope, hearts pounding, showering pebbles below. They reached the cave and, adjusting their bodies to the small space, lay down. Soulchaser gasped, setting Earth, the pup, down.

The pup crawled over to her mother and fell asleep. Soulchaser nuzzled the pup. “My dear pup, you shall live in peace now.” She curled around her pup as her mate, Storm, curled around her. Storm whispered in her ear, “I told you that, by the will of the pack of Everlasting Moons, I would get you away from that horrid place.” Soulchaser rolled her eyes. “Storm, you know that I no longer believe in the Pack of Everlasting Moons. All they have done is give me this cursed dark pelt and let my pack drive me away,” she growled. Silence followed. The beating of hearts was all to be heard as, at last, Soulchaser fell asleep.

They awoke in the night, hearing a bush rustle. Storm crept out, his fur bristling as he saw what was happening. A loud crack suddenly sounded, and Storm fell to the ground, writhing in agony. Soulchaser felt her heart stop. One word flashed through her mind...*Hunters!* Her paws were frozen with fear as she heard another whine from Storm and ... approaching footsteps. They stalled, and Soulchaser ran deeper into the cave, her green gaze glowing. She silently cursed the Pack of Everlasting Moons for the curse they cast upon her. It was her dark pelt that had made her become despised by her pack. She also cursed them for letting the hunters come upon them in the dead of this sinister night.

Another tremor of fear rocketed through her when she heard nothing, not the whine of Storm nor the crunching footsteps of the hunter. It seemed as if that had all ceased to exist, which in truth, was right because if there was no sound from Storm... Her heart leaped, and sadness washed over her like a black wave. She walked out of her den, seeing a pool of blood. She

whined and crumpled to the ground, staring at the pool of blood. "*Storm is dead?*" she thought. "*He saved us, knowing his life would be taken in the process.*"

She lay there that night, waiting for something, death even, to take her away. Earth soon came out of the makeshift den. "M-mother?" she asked, trembling. Soulchaser then realized she couldn't die. She wouldn't leave her pup defenseless. She got back up, ushering Earth inside the cave. "Storm is gone. It is just you and me now," she barked. "I have to hunt now." Earth started to whimper a question, but Soulchaser held up a paw to silence her pup. She would answer questions later.

Soulchaser padded into the forest as the silhouette of a silver wolf stepped in her path. "Storm?" she asked, astounded. The male nodded. "You must believe in them." His form steadily faded, leaving no trace. "Who?" she asked, to the air. As if in answer, the moon shone brighter. "Storm? No, you can't go," she howled, running through the forest. The wind buffeted her fur as if to signal Storm's presence was still with her.

Suddenly, a deer stepped in her path. She gasped, but instinct took over, and she dove for its windpipe, crushing all chance of survival for the deer. It was soon dead, and she glanced at the moon. "*I believe,*" she thought, "*You will guide and protect my pup and me.*" With that, she took the deer home with The Pack of Everlasting Moons guiding her paw steps.