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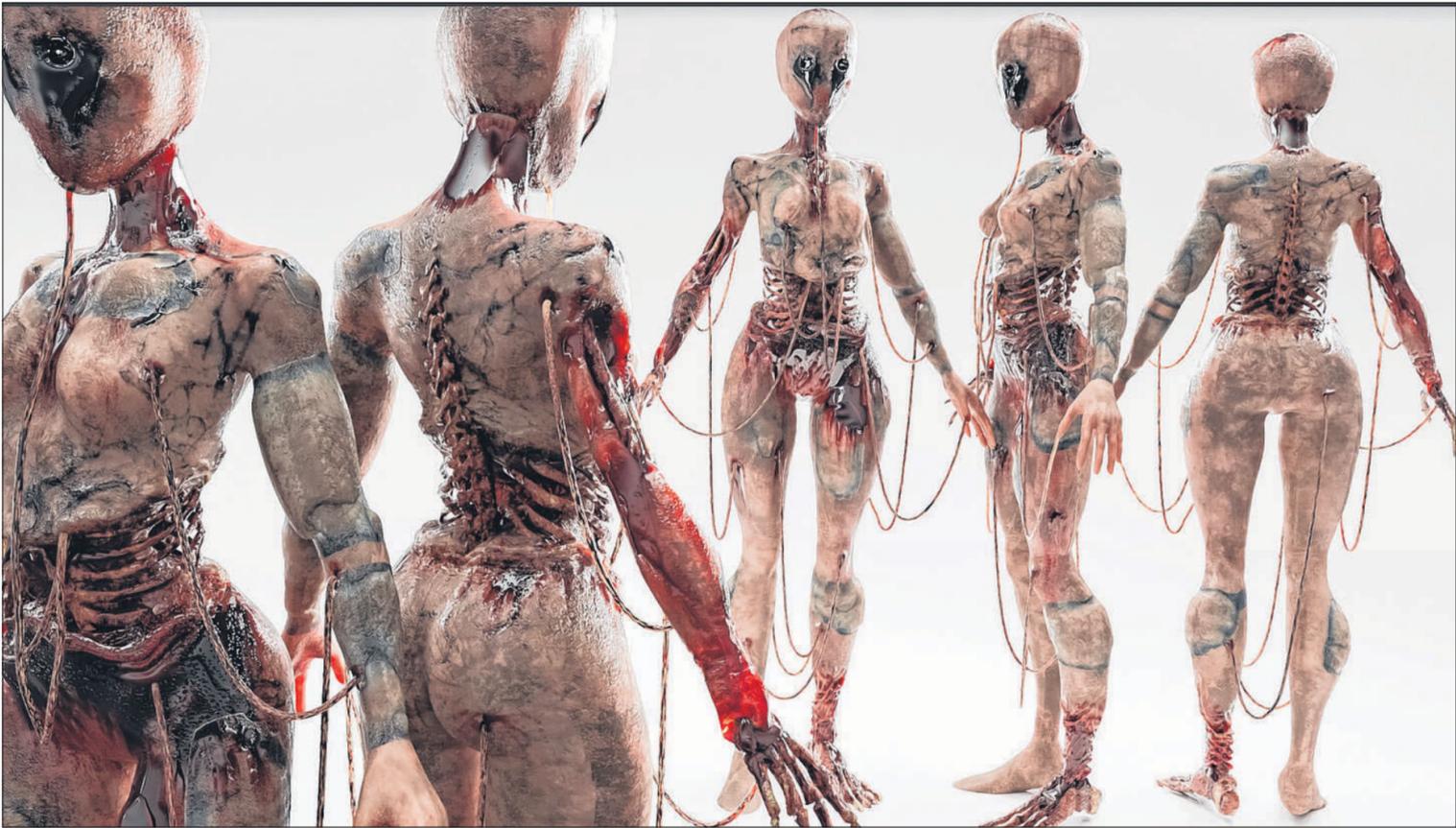
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Neighbor & Classifieds

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"The Husk" by David Petratos of Prospect Heights

First place, Visual Art — 'The Husk'

Judge's comment: This haunting figure evokes strong emotions while raising questions about the fragility of our bodies and alluding to a dystopian narrative. The artist displays a mastery of materials in this figurative sculpture that sets this piece apart from the other submissions.

Celebrating the Arts

District 214/Daily Herald Community Art & Writing Contest winners

Daily Herald staff report

Here they are:

Visual Art

Judged by Liz Schrenk

First place: David Petratos, Prospect Heights, "The Husk"**Second place:** Bridgett O'Grady, Rolling Meadows, "Kate"**Third place:** Danielle Onesto, Arlington Heights, "Life Versus Death"

Prose

Judged by Bill Leece, retired English and journalism teacher

First place: Harry Trumfio, Arlington Heights, "Slingshot"**Second place:** Linda Sinard, Arlington Heights, "We Are His"**Third place:** Martin McGowan, Arlington Heights, "Last Sunrise"**Honorable mention:** Janani Venkat Ramanan,

Wheeling, "Masquerade"

Poetry

Judged by Jan Bottiglieri

First place: Martin McGowan, Arlington Heights, "Luncheon in South Garden of the Art Institute of Chicago"**Second place:** Julia Pedersen, Arlington Heights, "Two Erasers"**Third place:** Courtney Lang, Arlington Heights, "The Oracle"

First place, Prose — 'Slingshot'

BY HARRY TRUMFIO
Arlington Heights

During a rainy lunch time, Jason sat at a table in the school cafeteria with his two friends, Bill and Sonny. He said he had an idea that he had been thinking about for a while. Pulling a picture of a slingshot from his pocket, he showed it to his friends.

"How about we each make one of these and then see who's the best shot."

"Cool," Sonny replied.

"Let's do it," Jim said.

Bill mused, "It might take time to find a good branch."

"How about in a month we do a shoot off. That'll give us time to find a branch and do some target practice," Jason responded.

The boys agreed that Saturday, April 1st, would be the day.

Saturday morning, the air was fresh after an evening thunderstorm. Jason planned to hike in the forest preserves near his home in quest of a branch. He reasoned tree limbs would litter the ground, given that high winds caused the loss of power during the storm. He knew the forest path would be muddy, but he decided to go, anyway. Before starting out, he stopped in the garage and picked up a bow saw in case he spotted the perfect Y branch.

Sloshing along the forest path, he scrutinized the fallen limbs. Splashing through puddles; his gym shoes and socks became squishy wet. Someway into the forest, finding no success, his muscles tensed; frustration bubbled, but he pushed on. Finally, Jason eyed several fallen limbs near a line of oak trees. He reached down through the wet leaves and flipped over a large limb. Rivulets of water showered his clothes. Undaunted, he surveyed the limb. Suddenly, his eyes

popped with excitement. He jumped about, mud sprayed from his shoes, and he sang out, "Yes! Yes! I found you." He ecstatically sawed off the Y shaped branch. Flowing with enthusiasm, he happily splashed through muddy puddles as he ran all the way home.

Breathing hard, he returned the saw and bounced up the back stairs and into the house. He removed his shoes and threw them in the utility room sink. Jason then bolted up the stairs to his room and placed the Y branch on top of the heating vent to dry out.

After school on Friday, he ran his hands over the oak wood and deemed it dried to proper hardness. He carried the Y into the garage and, using his jackknife, carved notches on the top of each arm. Then he cut two rubber strips from an old bike inner tube and looped them around the notches, tightly wrapping each band with dental floss, thus securing them to the arms. He cut the tongue from an old shoe and fashioned a leather sling to hold ammunition.

Jason showed his handiwork to his father. Tim said he did a marvelous job, but cautioned Jason about doing harm with the slingshot. Dad said in a serious tone not to hurt the things that Mother Nature had given to us.

"Sure, I won't, Dad," Jason replied, thinking his father meant animals and birds.

On the way home from school the following week, Jason filled his pockets with stones. At home, he dumped his ammunition into a pile not far from the big, old hickory tree in the backyard. Opening an old can of red paint and used it to paint a three-ring target on the tree. He smiled, remembering how his dog Rags, a big, old floppy guy, would make a bee-line for it and let flow a steaming stream of hot, yellow urine, soaking the base of the tree's

trunk.

One morning, however, Rags didn't answer Mom's call for breakfast and the family never saw him again. Jason knew his dad was trying to make him feel better when he told him that some animals feel it's their time. When they do, they go away so their family will not see them die. Jason accepted his father's explanation and thought that it was a kind thing that Rags did. It was strange, Jason thought, that after Rags ran away, two tree roots surfaced, looking somewhat like shaggy dog paws.

Jason practiced every afternoon after school, wanting to win the slingshot competition. He grinned when stones ripped off pieces of bark inside the target, causing the tree to bleed amber tears. He ignored the fallen shards of bark that lay curled and lifeless at the base of the tree.

One afternoon, Mom walked into the backyard as Jason was shooting at the tree. "Jason!" she said, "I hope you are not hurting that tree. It's been a good friend to our family through the years. We love the tree. It's a wonderful place to relax and read under its branches in the summer, have picnics in its shade, and in the winter, we use some of its twigs in the fireplace. Maybe it's not a good idea to shoot at it."

Jason responded, "Dad told me I shouldn't shoot at animals or birds, so I think the tree's okay. Anyway, the bark will grow back."

"I hope so," Mom said, ringing her apron as she walked back to the house.

One day, after he had fired a large stone smacking the target, the word "Enough!" reverberated off the back of the house and throughout the yard. Jason lowered his slingshot, looked about the yard and back toward the house, but saw no one.

See PROSE on PAGE 2

First place, Poetry — 'Luncheon in South Garden of the Art Institute of Chicago'

Judge's comment: This poem achieves what is, for me, one of poetry's most important functions: it freezes in time a moment, as experienced by the writer, in a way that makes that singular moment available to everyone. It allows us to inhabit that moment, in that place, with those who were there, and gives us the time and space to consider and appreciate that moment as if we lived it ourselves. Thanks to lovely details about the "splashing/crashing water," or the secretary slipping on her sandals and the construction worker swinging his helmet, we feel present in the garden. The brief line "No kiss but near miss" carries the poem's emotional undercurrent — in any moment, how close may we be to connection?

BY MARTIN MCGOWAN
Arlington Heights

I lunch among strangers gathered to the sound of splashing,

collapsing water spears not quite drowning the sirens, motors on Michigan Avenue.

Prone upon the pool edge, arm over eyes,

a barefoot secretary rests before return to work.

Matching her across the water, a tee-shirted construction worker lies,

yellow helmet domed on chest,

clapsed hands behind head.

We rest in mottled shadows of dwarf trees bearing orange berries.

Shafts of water topped by smooth knobs shatter

as they fall, splashing.

One vainly seeks to touch a reaching bough.

Wind aids, pressing down the branch,

but pushes too the water spout

-scattering spray

away from the branch.

No kiss but near miss.

The secretary sits up, slips on her sandals and strolls away.

In the breeze, smooth liquid tops flow to glass tresses;

soldiers, spears, dissolve to fleeing

naiads bending,

diving to the bubbles below.

Pivoting on his butt, the worker plants his feet,

swings helmet onto head and saunters off.

Wary sparrows alight carefully among the thorny branches overhead,

Bold pigeons with rainbow necks and shoulders

click along the pebbled walk seeking crumbs.

NC

Movie guide

Four stars: superior. Three: good. Two: average. One: poor. D (drugs), L (language), N (nudity), S (sexual content), V (violence). Ratings by Film Critic Dann Gire, unless otherwise noted; AP (Associated Press), WP (Washington Post).

Picks
"Apollo 10½: A Space Age Childhood" — NASA scientists accidentally build the lunar module a little too small for an adult so they recruit an elementary school student named Stan to test it out on a top secret mission to the Moon in Richard Linklater's nostalgic, animated look at 1969 Houston. On Netflix. AP. (PG-13) S. 98 minutes. ★ ★ ★

"The Batman" — In director Matt Reeves' oh-so-serious film we finally get a fresh, complex and inventively retooled Batman movie without a powerful, quirky antagonist constantly overshadowing the Dark Knight and his alter-ego, Gotham City zillionaire Bruce Wayne, played by a gaunt, scarred and haunted Robert Pattinson. In theaters. (PG-13) D, L, V. 176 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ½

"Belfast" — Writer/director Kenneth Branagh's most jubilantly personal movie yet — about growing up in Belfast during the religious political conflicts of the late 1960s — begins as a classic horror film and ends where a classic immigrants drama would normally start. In theaters and on demand. (PG-13) L, V. 97 minutes. ★ ★ ★

"CODA" — The hearing daughter (Emilia Jones) of deaf parents (suburban native Marlee Matlin and Troy Kotsur) begins to chafe at her family's dependence on her in this sweet, funny tale — and this year's best picture Oscar winner. In theaters and on AppleTV+. WP. (PG-13) D, L, S. 112 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ★

"Cyrano" — Joe Wright's lush adaptation of Edmond Rostand's classic play "Cyrano de Bergerac," starring Peter Dinklage as Cyrano and Haley Bennett as Roxanne, feels like it was made by people who are in love. In theaters. AP. (PG-13) L, V. 124 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ½

"Encanto" — Colombian girl Mirabel (Stephanie Beatriz), who is the only one in her family without super powers, turns what is perceived as a weakness into an asset in this animated family fantasy from Disney. In theaters and on Disney+. (PG) 99 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ½

"Everything Everywhere All at Once" — A Chinese immigrant laundromat owner (Michelle Yeoh) trying to file her taxes takes extreme shape with cosmic, metaphysical digressions in an antic, anarchic and yet affecting movie with the spin cycle set to supercollider. In theaters. AP. (R) L, S. 139 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ½

"King Richard" — Controversial new Oscar winner Will Smith disappears into Richard Williams, the father of tennis greats Venus Williams and Serena Williams when they were just a few talented kids trying to break into the elite sport. In theaters and on HBO Max. AP. (PG-13) D, L, S, V. 148 minutes. ★ ★ ★

"Licorice Pizza" — Paul Thomas Anderson's ninth film is a charmingly loose love letter to Southern California's San Fernando Valley of his youth. The coming-of-age love story of Alana Haim and Cooper Hoffman electrify the film. In theaters. AP. (R) D, L, S. 133 minutes. ★ ★ ★

"Nightmare Alley" — Guillermo del Toro's parable stars a con man (Bradley Cooper) who meets his match in an icy psychiatrist (Cate Blanchett) when trying to swindle the rich. In theaters. (R) L, N, S, V. 139 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ★

"The Outfit" — As a blandly unassertive Chicago tailor of men's bespoke suits, Mark Rylance does not initially command attention. That all changes when he's tasked with stitching up the son of a mobster who uses his shop for communication. In theaters. WP. (R) L, S, V. 105 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ½

"Parallel Mothers" — Two women (Penélope Cruz and Milena Smit) meet in a maternity ward and their lives become inextricably linked in Pedro Almodóvar's gentle but penetrating film. In theaters. AP. (R) S. 122 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ½

"The Power of the Dog" — Benedict Cumberbatch and Jesse Plemons play polar opposite rancher brothers in Oscar-winning director Jane Campion's masterful vision of the West. In theaters and on Netflix. AP. (R) S, N. 126 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ½

"Turning Red" — In filmmaker Domee Shi's richly layered, thematically bold feature-length animated Pixar film, 13-year-old Mei Mei wakes up one day to discover that she has turned into a giant red panda, triggered by strong emotion. Her predicament turns out to be a magical inheritance that she must learn to control in this smart coming-of-age movie. On Disney+. WP. (PG) L. 100 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ★

"West Side Story" — Director Steven Spielberg has remastered a masterpiece in this joyously bold and revisionist take on the beloved 1961 musical classic about forbidden love between members of two rival teen street gangs in New York City. In theaters. (PG-13) L, S, V. 156 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ★

"The Worst Person in the World" — At 29 going on 30, Julie (Renate Reinsve), the woman at the heart of Joachim Trier's coming-of-age film, is in the thick of trying to discover who she is in life and love with varying degrees of success. Oscar nom: International. In theaters. AP. (R) D, L, N, S. 128 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ★

"X" — This gore-spurting, porno-slasher story set in a cottage in the middle of nowhere Texas in 1979, involves a small group of independent filmmakers shooting a porn movie in this meticulously crafted, atmospheric tribute to horror tales of the '60s, '70s and early '80s. In theaters. (R) D, L, N, S, V. 105 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ½

First place, Prose — 'Slingshot'

Continued from Page 1

He called, "Mom, is that you?" No answer. He shrugged his shoulders and went back to his target practice.

Pulling back the sling pouch to his ear, he aimed and fired. A loud groan shredded the air as the projectile ripped off another chunk of bark. Suddenly, a limb swung down, plucked the slingshot from his hand; two branches scooped Jason under his arms and squeezed him tight.

He yelled, "Hey, what the heck?"

More limbs descended, enveloping Jason in a leafy shroud. Air oozed from his lungs as twigs and leaves invaded his nose and climbed down his throat as a large limb lifted him and thrust him against the tree trunk. Pain bolted through his body; fear shot up his spine. "Stop! Please stop! You're hurting me!" But the tree didn't stop. Jason wanted to scream but couldn't. Volcanic terror erupted as he felt himself sucked deeper and deeper into the cellulose fibers of the tree. His heart pumped sap,

his arms and legs became a crook halfway up the tree trunk. Branches sprouted from his extremities. Black burls appeared, looking much like eyes and an open mouth. A graveyard silence fell over the yard.

The silence ceased when his mom called for Jason to come in for supper. She worried when he failed to come. He was never late for supper. Elizabeth hurried into the living room and told her husband Tim of Jason's failure to come when she called.

Tim dropped the evening paper and said, "I'll get that darn kid."

He ambled into the backyard, calling Jason's name. However, no response from Jason. Dad walked near the stones Jason had accumulated and glanced up into the hickory tree. To his surprise, he noticed Jason's slingshot dangling from a branch. Tim thought it strange that his son would throw his cherished slingshot up in the tree. He called again, a black crow cawed and flew from a large branch. In the meantime, Elizabeth telephoned Bill and

Sonny's parents, but to no avail. Bill and Sonny joined Tim. The three scoured the neighborhood, but Jason was nowhere to be found.

Tim returned home and called the police. It was a small town and two officers quickly arrived at the house.

Elizabeth told the officers in a halting voice, "That was ... before, before supertime over ... three, three hours ago. Please ... please ... find him."

Harry Thompson, an officer and a friend, said, "Don't

worry, Lizzy, kids sometimes just get lost when they're looking for something or maybe he just fell asleep some place.

However, at 1 a.m., Officer Thompson returned to the house and reported that they failed to find a trace of Jason, but he said with assurance that they would resume the search in the morning.

A year after Jason disappeared, Tim sat in the shade of the old hickory tree. He liked to sit there on Saturday afternoons and read. He didn't

know why, but it made him feel closer to his son. A gust of wind rustled the hickory leaves. Tim glanced up from his book, cocked his head, when he thought he heard, "Dad, me and Rags are here." Tears flowed into his eyes. For the first time, he noticed burls on the hickory's bark. The thought occurred to him they look much like a boy's face. He shook his head and shrugged, thinking perhaps he had been reading too many Stephen King novels.

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Submit a nomination online at www.villageofschaumburg.com (search Volunteer of the Year)

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