



THE DOGWOOD

an art & literature zine

Parker Memorial Library, Dracut MA

Issue 3 | September 2025

Librarians' Choice Contest Winners

Summer Reading 2025 Writing Contest			
John Dahlgren	<i>Commander Canine</i>	3	
Summer Reading 2025 Photo Contest			
Camryn DeAngelis	photo	4	

Table of Contents

Alissandra Maily Te	<i>Knowing that I lost him</i>	5
Chloe Cadieux	<i>Peek-a-boo I C U</i>	8
William Ly Yinvannara	<i>Cannae</i>	9
Mason Dextrateur	photo	13
Paul Crowley	<i>Yes, I Love You</i>	14
Anja Cadieux	<i>Nature@itsFinest25</i>	15
Libby Okuda	<i>Fight or Fright!</i>	16
Mason Dextrateur	photo	24
Jasmine Blake Marquez	<i>I Miss You</i>	25
Alissandra Maily Te	photo	27
William Ly Yinvannara	<i>Fruit Basket</i>	28
Camryn DeAngelis	photo	29

Summer Reading 2025 Writing Contest Winner

John Dahlgren

Commander Canine

A nervous retriever stood quietly in an alleyway as rain poured down onto the streets of a rural neighborhood. As the pharmacist dog shivered in the dark, a deep voice whispered loudly to him.

“You got the package?” the voice said.

“Sure do, man,” said the golden retriever, whose name just happened to be Scotty.

“Good,” the other dog continued, “because if you didn’t, the deal would be off. Oh, and by the way, make sure you weren’t followed. ‘Cause that would be, um, unfortunate.”

Scotty responded, “Nope. Just give me the money so we can get this over with.”

The source of the voice handed over the bag of cash, and Scotty then dropped the container on the ground. The other dog then said, “If anyone ever hears ‘bout dis, you’re gonna regret ever being born, alright Scotty?”

Scotty walked away without even responding, when he took out his communicator. “Alright officer, I got the source of —”

Before Scotty could even finish his sentence, blinding headlights came up behind him, with what seemed to be a Doberman with small ears inside an old Human car. That would be the last thing Scotty McBark would see.

Welcome to Metrohound City.

Summer Reading 2025 Photography Contest Winner

Camryn DeAngelis



Alissandra Maily Te
Knowing that I lost him

My love
My baby dove
The one I pushed and shoved for
What did I fight for?
I used all my heart and soul
To win nothing at all
I lost all my happiness and faith for all
Even for myself
For someone I can't erase
From my mind to my heart
I knew we'd part
I knew it from the start
I hope he's happy without me
Let all our memories perish beneath me
Without leaving a trace

Chloe Cadieux
Peek-a-boo I C U



William Ly Yinvannara

Cannae: Rome's Worst Military Failure, Hannibal's Masterpiece.

The battle of Cannae (216 B.C.), situated near the south-eastern Italian village of Cannae (hence the name) was a pivotal battle during the Second Punic War. After the battle, the Romans were forced to tailor their strategies to match Hannibal's, ultimately winning the war. By this time in the war, the Romans had already lost a series of catastrophic engagements between them and the Carthaginians; the Battle of the Trebia (218 B.C.), Lake Trasimene (217 B.C.), and many others, to name a few. Yet, the Romans were still confident in themselves, and were stubborn, refusing to listen to the advice of Fabius Maximus, suggesting avoiding engaging Hannibal directly. "Rome had temporarily adopted a cautious approach...avoiding direct engagements...in favor of attrition. However, this strategy proved unpopular among both the military and the Roman citizenry."² Such stubbornness, however, would prove detrimental to the Romans.

It is 216 B.C. Throughout the winter and spring, the Roman army and the Carthaginian army remained opposite each other. But neither side made a move. "It was not until the season was advanced enough for them to get supplies...that Hannibal moved his forces out of the camp near Geronium."¹ Hannibal, seeking to goad the Roman forces into attacking him, went to the nearby town of Cannae, and seized the citadel. The Romans were distressed since they not only lost a supply hub, but the position that Hannibal controlled also had control over the surrounding districts of Cannae. The Romans, anxious to meet Hannibal in the field of battle, continued sending messages back-and-forth to Rome, trying to reach a

collective decision on what to do. They stated that "if they approached the enemy, they would not be able to escape a battle, as the country was being pillaged and the temper of all the allies was uncertain."¹ The senate in Rome reached a decision: to give the enemy battle as they wished.

The senate decided to send both consuls to battle. The Romans fielded eight legions, with each legion consisting of 5,000 infantry and 300 cavalrymen,¹ excluding Rome's allied divisions. This was highly abnormal for the Romans, as they would normally deploy four legions, numbering 4,000 infantry and 200 cavalrymen. But no amount of manpower could stop Hannibal, and the Romans were, unfortunately for them, still convinced that Hannibal was a small needle in the lion's paw.

Hannibal's army was numerically less: including Rome's allies, Rome had a whopping 80,000 troops fielded, compared to Hannibal's 50,000. However, Hannibal had two things that went in his favor: firstly, though the Romans had numerical superiority, most of their troops were levied, with little experience – in contrast to Hannibal, who had an estimate of 10,000 superior veteran Libyan (African) infantry.³ Secondly, Hannibal had the famed lightning Numidian cavalry; in addition, his cavalry was numerically superior to the Roman cavalry. These assets would prove decisive in the upcoming battle.

But the battle would not happen yet; the Roman army (under the command of the two consuls) marched towards the Carthaginians, and spotting the Carthaginian

camp the second day, they set up camp “at a distance of about fifty stadia (A/N: about 4 miles in modern units) from them.”¹ Consul Aemilius (Lucius Aemilius Paullus), being the more experienced of the two consuls, believed the terrain was flat and with little forestry, which would give Hannibal’s cavalry much room to maneuver. He instead advised luring Hannibal into unfavorable terrain, where the Romans could crush him with their superior infantry. But Terentius, second Roman consul, contradicted Aemilius. Terentius was a stubborn Roman. Possibly believing Hannibal was still not that huge a threat, he advocated marching straight at Hannibal and trying to break through his lines.

After days of arguing, the day came for battle. Unfortunately, because of the alternating command practice the Romans used, in which one consul would have the army for a day, then the other, Terentius commanded the army. He “Chose to deploy in the area because he thought the hills near Cannae on one flank, and the Aufidius River on the other, would offer his...cavalry a chance to hold their ground as the infantry battle would be decided.”³ He hoped his cavalry could hold out until the massive infantry mass broke through Hannibal’s center. Hannibal, however, deployed his troops in a loose, flexible formation. He shaped his troops in an arc/crescent shape, facing outward, with his lighter, less experienced troops in the center, his veteran Libyan infantry on the wings of his infantry, his heavy cavalry commanded by Hasdrubal on his left flank, and finally the famed lightning Numidian cavalry on his right flank.³

The time for battle has come. As said previously, the Roman army was deployed in typical ancient fashion: infantry

in the center, with skirmishers in the front and cavalry on the flanks; the consuls were positioned in places deemed critical, with the consuls placed on the flanks with the cavalry. With the troops deployed, the battle commenced.

At the start of the battle, Hannibal’s heavy cavalry rushed to attack the Roman Latin cavalry, while the Numidians charged the Roman cavalry and the Roman infantry mass advanced into Hannibal’s convex arc. As the Roman infantry pushed forward, Hannibal’s Spanish and Celtic legions began slowly falling back; however, the impact of the heavily equipped Roman infantry against the weaker, more lightly armored Celtic/Spanish infantry soon began to show, as Hannibal’s infantry slowly began to break. The Romans, seeing this, pressed on the advantage; but this was a trap played by Hannibal. As soon as the Roman infantry mass pushed further into the Spanish/Celtic line, the heavily armored African (or Libyan, often used interchangeably) infantry swung around and enveloped the Romans on both of their flanks and began cutting them down. Meanwhile, the cavalry *melée* was just beginning to wrap up; Varro’s (Terentius) Latin Cavalry was routed, and he narrowly managed to escape, whilst Aemilius was killed in combat. In addition to the loss of a consul, Servilius Geminus, proconsul (assistant consul) was also killed in action.

The outcome of Cannae was disastrous. As with many other ancient battles, the casualty reports are often mixed depending on the writer. For this purpose, I will use Polybius’s. ~70,000 Romans were killed, with a further 10,000 captured, with only Terentius’s routed detachment and a couple thousand men escaping, compared to Hannibal’s

roughly 6,500 casualties. In addition, Hannibal turned several of Rome's southern Italian allies against her, which was even worse.

Yet the Romans did not surrender; though the battle of Cannae was indeed a military humiliation for the Romans, it also forced the Romans to switch gears—realizing Hannibal was in fact, a big deal, they re-adopted the Fabian strategy⁴ while focusing on other theatres of the war, such as Spain and Sicily. The Romans focused on attacking Hannibal's allies, forcing him to run around trying to defend them. However, when Hannibal showed up, the Romans would miraculously disappear; an oversimplification of the Fabian strategy, but I digress. This eased the pressure Hannibal put on Rome, and allowed her to, as previously stated, focus on other regions of the war, eventually marching onto Carthage herself.

Hannibal's victory at Cannae was one of the most famed battles of all time; even modern-day military officers still dream of achieving something relatively similar in greatness. However, this was only beneficial in the short term. By inflicting such a crushing defeat on Rome, Hannibal forced the Romans to reassess the situation and adapt to him, eventually leading to the defeat of the Carthaginians. One key factor in this is that Hannibal did not march on Rome after the victory; he assumed (as many others would) that the Romans would surrender—but that's not what Romans do. This move was so questionable, that one of Hannibal's commanders were quoted saying:

“So the gods have not blessed one man with every gift. You know how to win a victory, Hannibal, but not how to use it.” - Maharbal.

Cannae was Hannibal's finest battle, but it did nothing for him in the long term. The Roman indomitable spirit prevailed, and as the Romans do, adapted. And with that, I conclude.

FOOTNOTES:

- ¹ Polybius. *The Histories*, Book 3, sections 106–118. Translated by Evelyn S. Shuckburgh, *The Latin Library*, <https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/historians/polyb/polybius3.html>. Accessed June 3, 2025.
- ² "Battle of Cannae (216 BC)." *World History Edu*, <https://worldhistoryedu.com/battle-of-cannae-216-bc/>. Accessed June 3, 2025.
- ³ Wright, Andrew. "Cannae in Military History and Theory." *Military History Online*, <https://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/Ancient/Cannae>. Accessed June 3, 2025.
- ⁴ Fabius's strategy of not engaging Hannibal directly, rather containing him in an area, inhibiting his abilities.

Mason Dextrateur



Paul Crowley

Yes, I Love You

When I awoke on this early morning,
The Sun was masked by clouds chock full of rain.
My mind relentlessly, slowly burning.
I repeated my heart's ageless refrain.

As the Robin sings so sweetly low,
Through the open glass, it spills on me
A song that I, by heart, by now, should know.
Although I can never repel or flee.

Such is the way I restart each lonely day,
Repeating a simple required chore
That slashes through my grief, now I am brave,
Breaking out of slumber's enclosed door.

To enter into a sunny embrace —
Bounded, surrounded by your grace.

Anja Cadieux
Nature@itsFinest25



Libby Okuda
[Fight or Fright!](#)

This short story is set in a tiny town by the name of Specter Point. Specter Point is a town known for its ghost stories and strange happenings. One year, Abbey Blair moves into town, cutting ties with her best friend, Lily Vera, and Lily's sibling, Orla Vera. Abbey eventually befriends Anna Cory, Elle Lennox, Bea Samra, and Alder Ito. They have a normal school experience until kids start disappearing. Worried, they organize to go out into the woods to try to find them. In this story, they've been in the woods for a day or two, with no luck so far finding the kids.

ABBEY

There's a weird feeling in the air.

Abbey feels ridiculous thinking it. She's never been one for superstition, but here she is, in the woods, looking for ghosts. *It's probably just the situation*, she thinks. All in all, it was a pretty freaky time.

Accompanied by her new friends, she continues.

ANNA

There's danger around them.

Anna isn't sure why, but she feels a vague feeling of dread as they search. Maybe it's just the area, but she doesn't think so. Specter Point is known for its ghost stories, and Anna has always suspected they aren't entirely falsities. *Well*, she thinks. *No use in stopping now! All we can do is keep going.*

Surrounded by the trees, she continues.

ELLE

Something isn't right.

Elle doesn't tend to get as caught up in the ghost stories

as other Specter Point residents. She prefers to get all the facts before she goes around spreading superstition. But, now, in these woods, she might be starting to believe them. But they're deep in the woods already, and they *have* to save, or at least find the missing kids.

So, with the wind howling around her, she continues.

BEA

The trees are whispering.

Bea's always been a fan of creepy things, but this is getting to be pretty weird. They could swear that the rustling in the leaves was saying something, warning "*Danger! Danger! Turn back!*" But even with the dread setting in, Bea feels something else too – an insatiable curiosity, a desire to know what lurks in these trees.

They don't stop. They continue.

ALDER

Alder is worried.

But then again, he usually is. Even more so than usual, in these woods, looking for kids *who are probably dead, what if we have to bring back their dead bodies, what if we fail, what will we do?* They suppose there's no use in panicking now. They're too far into the woods to turn back, and anyway, they don't think they could live with themselves if they just left these kids who *could be alive* in the woods to die. All his friends are here. They've all come together to find the missing kids. They can do this.

In this dark forest, he continues.

BEA

Noise surrounds them.

Endless people, with voices they recognize but words they don't. All of them, calling out to them with a name that isn't theirs anymore. Taunting them, telling them that they never believed them, calling them the wrong things, the wrong words, the wrong name. Friends, family, teachers, everyone they have ever known who has supported them suddenly breaking their trust in an instant. It's like being stabbed, they think. To have everyone turn their back on you, all at once. A million betrayals in the span of a few seconds. There's no place to go. They are surrounded by everyone they have ever loved, and they have never felt so alone.

But as they stare into the eyes of the people surrounding them, they realize. Something is wrong here. Suddenly they start noticing imperfection after imperfection. Eye colors, freckles, scars, birthmarks. The minute details are all wrong. What they're seeing isn't real, it's just an illusion, concocted by some malevolent force to hurt them. They stand up. And then, they wake up.

They're in a forest, the one they were in moments before, but a different place. Before they had blacked out, they had been with their friends, but now they find themselves alone. They don't know where they might be, but they suppose that there's no use in waiting. They run into the woods.

ALDER

They're running.

They don't know why, but they know that they are and they have to be, or something is going to happen and then they'll die and all their friends and family and everyone will die and it'll be all their fault. So, they have to be running. He can hear his friends shouting. Yelling at him to run faster.

Telling him that he's stupid and worthless and he's never belonged and he never will. They feel tears sting their eyes and hear their dad's voice echoing in their head, calling them weak, and useless and *why are you crying? Men don't cry.*

People are yelling, telling him to respond, asking him why he isn't saying anything, and he wants to talk but he can't, he can't make a sound, and he's still running but he doesn't know how much longer he can, and he's going to let everyone down and everyone who ever called him stupid or worthless or weak or useless will be right and he'll be alone forever and he'll never belong. But suddenly, amongst the chaos and the screaming, they hear a voice. It's a voice that's already there among the voices but somehow feels more real. "*Alder! Alder, wake up!*" So, they do.

He's in the woods, still. Bea is there, holding his shoulders like they've been shaking him. "Bea! I- I- oh my god! What the hell! What the hell is going on?"

"I don't know! Did you have a weird nightmare vision also? I think we have to try to find everyone!"

"Okay, well, um, let's go then!" The two friends rush into the woods.

ANNA

Voices echo.

(stupid annoying weird loud emotional stupid)

(why are you even here? get out)

(god, why do you talk so much? you're so dumb)

She can feel them pressing in on her. Every time she'd ever tried to be nice or make friends or just existed and someone had yelled at her or made fun of her or made her

leave or spread rumors about her. She never did anything to them. She never did anything to them! She *never* did *anything* to them! Maybe if she wasn't doing anything, it was she who was the problem. Maybe there was something fundamentally wrong with her and she could never fix it no matter how hard she tried. Maybe she was doomed to an existence of getting rejected and insulted forever, and everyone who ever called her their friend was just stringing her along to taunt her, and she would be alone forever. It would be her own fault.

Maybe she should talk less. If so many people think so, maybe she really is just annoying. The voices seem to agree with her, bullies morphing into her friends as she thinks, standing tall above her and *laughing*. It hurts so bad to see all of her friends turn on her. To know that they all, really truly don't care about her, and she'll never be able to find anyone that does. She sinks to the ground until she hears voices. The same, but different. As she hears them, she realizes that the voices of her friends she was hearing before were all wrong, the pitches and tones incorrect. The figures looming above her morph back into bullies, and then disappear entirely. She wakes up.

Bea and Alder are there, sitting next to her in a patch of grass in the woods. "Anna! Ok, so, we think everyone is having, like, weird nightmares and we all got spread out in the forest, and, um, I think we have to try to find the others!" Bea exclaimed. Without a question, they run into the woods.

ELLE

She feels like her skin is being peeled away. Like every part of her that makes her her is being taken away, *removed* until she is nothing. She can't even do anything. She is frozen

in place, fighting, but unable to move. All she can do, as pieces of her are pulled away, is watch. A screen of memories surrounds her. Dinner parties when she was little, but not young enough to still feel free, and not old enough to accept who she was. She can hear them, calling her the wrong name and the wrong gender, and it hurts so much. She feels guilty for being angry at them. It's not their fault, they hadn't known better because she hadn't told them.

The memories fade, and she realizes she can't even remember her name anymore. She searches desperately for anything about her, her hobbies, where she goes to school, what she likes to wear, her friends, her family, her favorite color, food, animal, anything, *anything*. She comes up empty. She feels tears welling up in her eyes, as she knows, truly and surely, that she is nothing anymore. She is nobody and she will never be anybody again. In an endless void, she weeps. Except, then she hears something. Voices, shouting a name that sounds ever so familiar. In a flash of light in the endless darkness, she realizes it's her name, and those voices are the voices of her friends, and she knows who she is again. Elle wakes up.

Her friends are around her. She's in the woods still, but a different spot than before. "Oh my god, what's happening?" she shouts.

"Long story short, everyone's having weird nightmares, we have to go find Abbey!" responds Anna. They run off to find their new friend.

ABBEY

Orla stands before her. "Good to see you again," she mocks.

Abbey sighs, "Hi, Orla."

"You know, you really hurt my sister. You were their only friend, and as soon as something bad happened, you turned your back on them. You made her feel like she was nothing. You made her feel like she was worthless. And now, you've got all these new friends. They all suffered terrible nightmares because of you. My friend here helped out with that."

She points at a large spiked ghoul with many piercing eyes.

"One of the spirits of the forest. They tend to like me. But, enough about that. I have a question about your new friends. Do they know, Abbey? Do they know how quickly you'll stab them in the back if something doesn't go your way? I do. Once this is over, they will. You're going to be all alone. Forever. I'll make sure of it. It's what you deserve. For a while, I really thought you were Lily's friend. I even thought that maybe you could be my friend. That one's on me. I should have realized what you really were from the beginning. A cold, cruel, backstabbing coward. People say I'm mean, but I'll never be half as bad as you, because at least I don't trick people into thinking I'm their friend.

"I hope you know that when I hurt you, it'll be what you deserve. I'll be showing some restraint if I don't rip every bone out of your pathetic little body. The only reason I might let you live so I can make sure you'll never be happy again. I think death might be too much of a mercy for someone like you. Someone who gets close to people, just to hurt them.

"But, enough chatter. Your "friends" are all here, trying to wake you up. They're all going to be so sad when

they find out. Might as well speed it up for them.”

Orla shoots a spiked vine from her hand straight into Abbey’s chest. And, it passes right through her, without leaving a mark.

“Oh, hell. Dream realm, I forgot. Well, the more the merrier!”

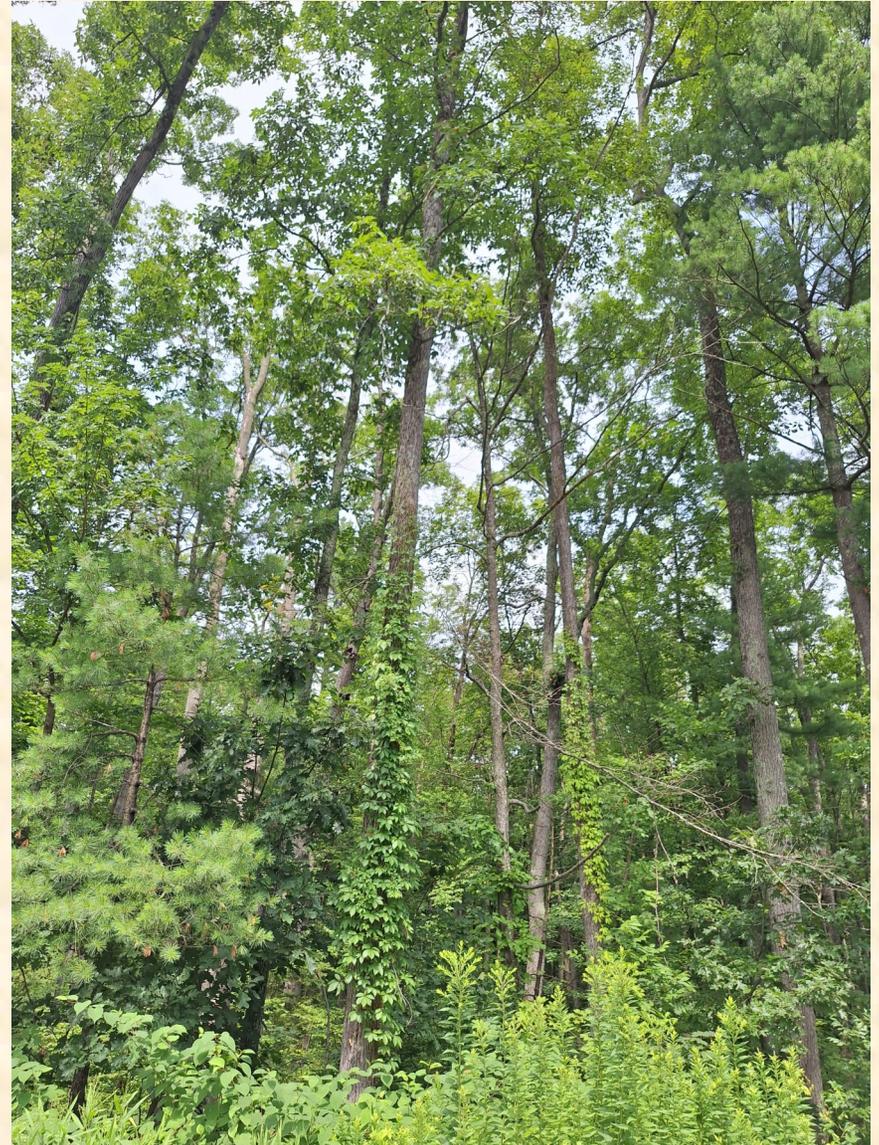
Before Abbey even has a chance to react, she’s back in the real world.

“Hello, everyone! I’m afraid I’ve got some disappointing news about your friend here.”

And then, Orla explodes in vines, wrapping everyone but Abbey up.

That night, five kids almost die in the woods. That night, they don’t.

It’s messy and complicated, but Orla doesn’t kill them, and Abbey and Lily reconcile, kind of, and maybe, just maybe, it means all of them have a chance for a brighter future.



Jasmine Blake Marquez

I Miss You

It's been almost a year.
Today I woke up almost the same as yesterday,
with no want to leave my bed.

I miss you.

I don't want to start this day without you—
though I have started over three hundred without you already.

I miss you.

I want to curl up on you
and pretend you loved me
the way I wanted
and needed to be loved.
Kiss my forehead,
rub my hair,
give me cariño
without it being a mechanical move.

I miss you.

I want to cry
and tell you my feelings and fears,
and have you comfort me
in a way that didn't make me feel lonely
or ashamed.

I miss you.

I want the door to open
and you to walk in like normal,
because you never left
and THIS is your home
and WE are your family.

I miss you.

I want a reality in which you choose us—
me and your son,
our family.

I miss you.

But that reality,
that universe,
doesn't exist.
It never did.

So what do I miss?
The made-up version of a hero
who never was there,
but a love for a figment in my imagination,
the way I have fallen in love
with so many characters in books.

You were a character I made up.
I miss who I pretended you were.

I don't know you enough
to miss you.

Alissandra Maily Te



William Ly Yinvannara

Fruit Basket

We often focus
On the final product
Rather than the process it took to make it.
Together we've weaved
Our basket of love
So tender and neat.
Who cares if it will hold
The fruits of passion we've sowed?
So long as you and I can weave the basket
I'll be content, no matter what life throws.

Camryn DeAngelis



Issue 3 | September 2025

Thank you to all who submitted pieces to this issue of The Dogwood. If you would like to see your art, be it photography, poetry, short story, digital painting, short essay, collage—anything that you'd call art—in our next issue, head to dracutlibrary.org/the-dogwood to learn more and submit your pieces.