

Third Place Prize: Grade 7-9
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Grade 7

CONTROLLED

The control law has been enforced since 2019. The law states that the population of animals must be controlled. In the forest, a red fox with her pups quietly run in the shade as the burning light of the afternoon sun hits their heads till they reach their destination. The mother lets her three children run around in the shallows of the river as the mother drinks from the stream.

The law says that the population must be controlled so once the offspring of the overpopulated species is old enough they will dispose of the older or weaker animal.

The limit for each animal is 10 000 000. She hears splashing and looks up. There running in the river is a mother bear with her cub. Ever since the law came out the animals had to hide from the grey men more than they were before. The Grizzlies have been over the limit since 2019.

The bears run across the water but got cornered. The fox rushes her pups into the grass. The grey men look at the bears and notice the cub has mucus dripping from its nose and cloudy eyes dark and scared. The mother fox follows her pups into the brush and soon after hears a gunshot. She winces as she hears the angry and sad growls of an older bear. Her smallest pup looks up at her with worry but the mother just licks her son and motions him to play with his siblings. The bears are not the only ones over the limit.

The family almost makes it back to the den when they see a grey man throw a bucket of meat on the designated food area. The law says that any weak or disease-ridden animals that won't infect any more animals and are not usable, will be put in.

Feeding areas for other animals so feeding is controlled. They skipped dinner. Most of the animals that are under 7, 000, 000 will stay in grey men nests like elk and otters. The family have a burrow in a hill. The mother pulls a dying spruce branch over their burrow. They fall asleep quickly curled around each other.

The golden sun rises as the foxes rise too. They see a grey man throw more meat on the pile. The pups run to the pile as the mother slowly walks behind them. The mother tracks and kills a squirrel. The law concludes any animal that kills more than 10 animals a year will be controlled. The mother rarely ate from the pile.

They went to a clearing where other foxes brought their young to play. It had been about two hours until they heard tiers coming from the lush forest. The foxes scatter into the bushes but the mother fox is pinned down with a net. The humans scanned a barcode on her skin.

They said, “number 1973144, spouse killed for overpopulation 2020 May 15th”. The human continued “three offspring one male two female born 2020 May 15th”.

The pups look at her and she gives them a goodbye lick. She had been older so she had been high on the list of expendable foxes. She had also killed over 50 squirrels and 23 rabbits. She did not want to be controlled and she wanted to be free and hunt, not lazily eat and sleep. She lost her spouse because people wanted things to controlled. She curled up with her pups and fell to the

eternal sleep left with memories of the family she loved and a life before and after control.