

2024 High School Winner: Ryan Merrill

An Olive Branch

My palms sweat, my head aches
My eyes strain at the paper on my table
I can't see the last question – my heart is an avalanche
I hear my classmate whisper C, she keeps me stable
She knows me, she knows I am able
But that day, she offered me an olive branch

My toes curl, my stomach churns
My eyes strain at the number on the scale
I can't eat my next meal – I just want to detach
I talk to my partner, he tells me to exhale
He loves me, he knows I'll prevail
That day, he offered me an olive branch

My face's wet, my hands fist
My eyes strain from the conversation downstairs
I can't move – some people are just not a match
I listen to my teachers, they may not be millionaires
They tell me priceless advice, they know, I know, they care
Every day, they offer me an olive branch

My limbs grow everyday with the branches people give me
I am an endlessly growing, thriving tree
Today I give an olive branch to those who are in need