

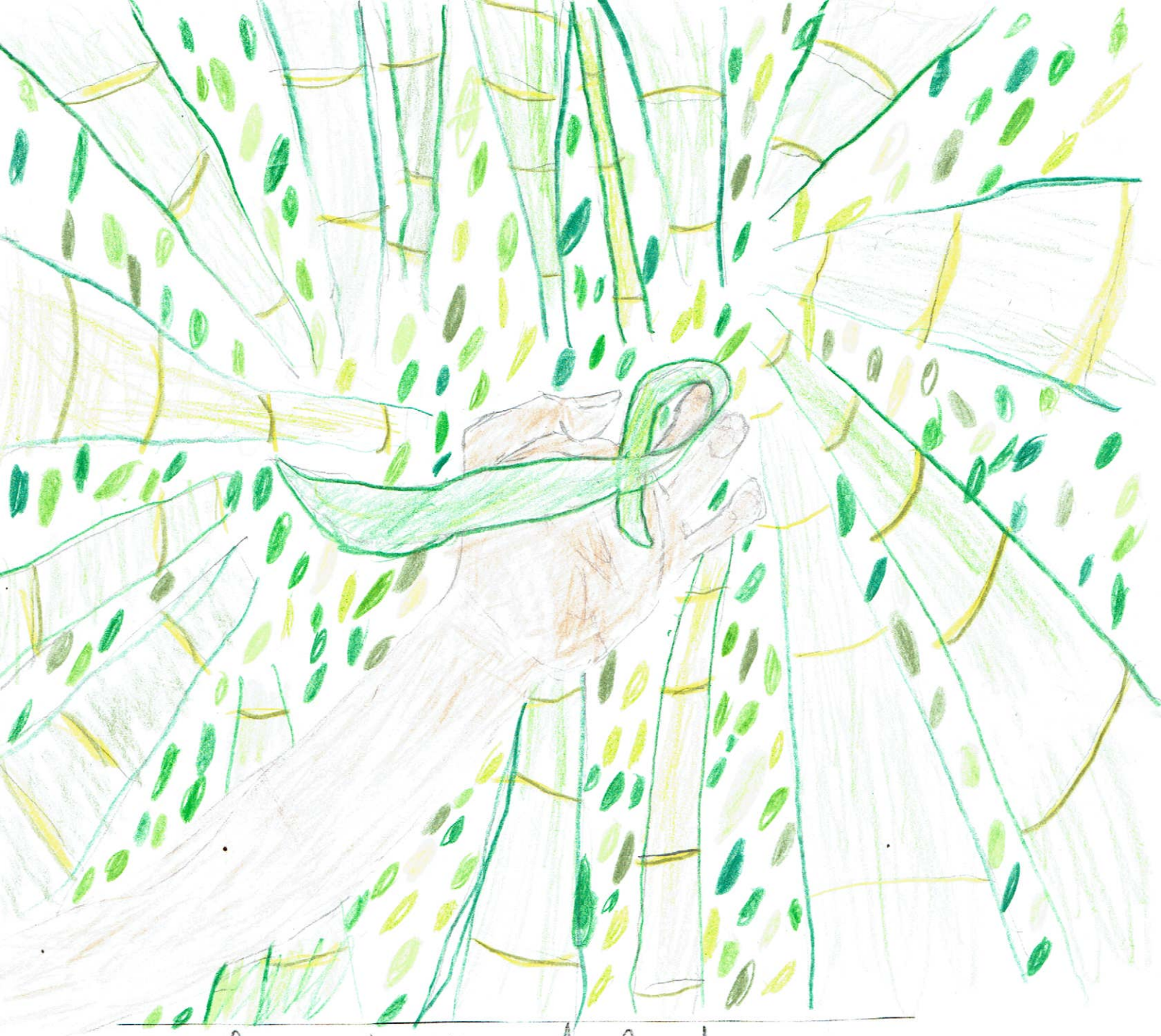


The  
Bamboo Forest

By: Mary



"A day at my favorite place!"  
I think while looking up at the  
bamboo leaves - sun gleaming through  
the branches. Shaded from the mid-  
July sun, I lie on my back, watching  
the forest sway in the light breeze.  
What would I do without the  
bamboo? Lying here all day is the  
best!



I reach up and pluck a leaf, twirling it around my finger.

Then I let it slowly unravel.  
"Peaceful," I think, "just peaceful."

Over the years, this forest has been a magical land, a fort, or a hide'n'seek getaway, but today it is just my thinking place. I smile up at the leafy canopy.



Thwack! my heart skips a beat!  
What's that? Thwack! Thwack! Chunk!  
I see a man as big as a bolder clearing  
a path to get me - with a machete!  
What is he doing here?



My heart pounds, faster and faster,  
I am frozen in shock and  
am holding my breath, then...  
Scream.!!!

The man with the machete looks at me with surprise. "Didn't know you were here. I'm just cutting the bamboo down," He says as he holds up a frond and cuts it to bits.



"No please, stop!" I plead.  
"Don't cut it down!"

"Gotta," he chuckles, "County orders; cutting down all the invasive species."

I'm relieved that he isn't trying to machete me but, oh no! He is cutting down my magical hideaway.



I back away and watch as one by one, each stalk of bamboo falls and disappears. My mighty friends who have heard all my whispered secrets and plans now collapse if in little. A lump rises in my throat.



I walk back to the bamboo graveyard, which was once so full of beauty and peace, and let out all my tears-watering the stubble-filled ground. I lie on my back for what seemed like hours.



When I finally open my eyes, the sky is filled with many colors.

I can see the sunset, something beautiful that the bamboo used to block. Maybe this can be a new kind of favorite place.