



INCITE 2018

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J. D. Wilson

THANK YOU TO OUR INCITE JUDGES



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Krystal Lunardo is the Founder, Editor-In-Chief, & Art Director at *Dauphine Magazine*

Dear Creative Nonfiction Writers,

There is nothing a great story can't fix. There is no time better than now, and no power greater than the possibilities that flow from the tip of your pen to paper. I—a journalist—and you—a nonfiction writer—are one and the same. We value storytelling at its most raw. We take life experiences, draw inspiration from significant events in the world, and turn them into evocative pieces. The realm of creative nonfiction is rich and compelling and prompts the younger generation of writers to engage, to write and to create meaningful discussions of world issues. The genre affords you the freedom to transform important messages into masterpieces that can be both appreciated and elicit the desire to create change. So, I hope that you will find inspiration in the pages that follow to carry out your obligations as creative nonfiction writers. This collection is filled with innovative and heart-wrenching works of art, passionately written by today's youth. This publication is the beginning of a shift in this generation's world of writing. A story can be a catalyst for change, and it starts with you, a pen, a piece of paper and a passion to write your truth.

Sincerely, Lauren Knowles

Preface

Clikbait, sharebait, retweets, likes. In a world in which Facebook is the news gatekeeper, in a world in which we are more willing to share news than read it, and in a world in which fake news is real news, how do we encourage students to understand the world and their place in it? Headline surfing has always existed, but now the headlines and articles that are most widely read aren't even from media outlets. We get our news from social media. Our shared political and social values are being shaped by what we casually share and retweet...hoping for likes.

The silver lining? We love stories.

In our classroom we can inspire imaginative thought and encourage creativity, and we can do this while pushing our students to read about and question the motivations, actions and decisions of real people: from politicians who tweet to women who declare 'me too', we certainly are living in interesting times, and now, more than ever, we need our youth to be empowered with knowledge and independent thought.

Creative non-fiction encourages students to engage with the real world. People and stories become immortalized in art; poetry, paintings, novels and photographs take on lives of their own, but they are inspired by the stories of the world beyond our schools' walls. Let us use this genre to empower students to learn stories about refugees, missing and murdered women and the growing impacts of technological advancement. Let us use this genre to push students to investigate and challenge facts, explore the media, and come to their own conclusions. Let us use this genre to teach empathy. Let us use this genre to motivate creativity.

This year, students were asked to select a recent or current event - local, national or global - and use it to inspire a piece of creative non-fiction. We thank Krystal Lunardo, Creator and Editor in Chief of Dauphine Magazine and her sister, Lauren Knowles, VC alumnus, Class of 2017, for sharing their insights as a publisher and a Ryerson Journalism major respectively to the winners of this year's InCITE publication. We thank Tristan Bronca, VC alumnus, Class of 2009, Editor for the Medical Post and freelance

writer, and Brendan Kennedy, Toronto Star investigative reporter, for their contributions in the panel discussion. We thank Jan Wong for sharing her work and her heart in the world of creative non-fiction writing. We thank the English educators who facilitated workshops and shared their expertise in non-traditional modes of reading and writing. And we thank those teachers who participated and who will use what they learned at this conference to engender in their students a passion for exploring themselves through creative non-fiction.

The world is our classroom.

Christine Doyle | Sally Mastromonaco, Co-Chairs
CITE Conference 2018, Villanova College



VILLANOVA
C O L L E G E

The World Is Our Classroom:
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THIS YEAR'S COVER ART

Congratulations to Juliet Quinton, Grade 12 of Villanova College, winner of our 2018 INCITE cover contest for her illustration. Here is Juliet's artistic statement:

Physical or emotional, everyone at some point in their lives feels trapped; as though they have no control over the situation they are in. When faced with adversity there are always two options to act upon: one, do nothing and allow the issue to overtake you, or two, fight back. My drawing depicts force because the woman in my artwork is fighting against the impossible—trying to break through the ice she is trapped under. Water is the most powerful force in the world, and she finds herself submerged within it, desperately trying to escape. This depicts force not only because she is trying to break the ice, but because it forces whoever views this image to understand her struggle and situation. Before I began the construction of this piece, I had many other ideas focusing on natural force, force of love, force of thought, and force of mystery. In this piece, I tried to combine as many of those as I could. Along with her physical struggle, I also wanted to point out her internal struggle. Notice how her hair is almost perfect, her face is beautiful, but there is no visible ice on the canvas—that is all implied. The biggest type of force in this image is the pressure that she has put on herself—to look beautiful, to hold her breath, and keep pushing. Yet now, she is at her breaking point. None of the beauty can save her now. She must break through the ice that she has created—the ice that only she can see, which blurs her vision and slowly drowns her.

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Red Dresses: The Impact of Indigenous Women on Canadian Culture

Deep within the hard soil of Canada, red dresses lie. As fragile as a child's bones. As strong as the bullet of a gun. As frayed and torn as an autumn leaf. As red and pure as Canadian blood. These dresses represent a history of strength, the resilience of Indigenous women forged over generations of hardships, the ongoing tragic mysteries.

The REDress Project is a powerful movement started by Jaime Black, a Métis artist based in Winnipeg. Jaime started the project because of her interest in feminism and Aboriginal social justice. Until September of 2015, the project's website collected red dresses from the community, which were later placed in public places as a visual reminder of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. The overall goal of the project is to encourage reflection across Canada on an issue that in recent years has become more and more visible in our country and in the faces of Indigenous families. A heartbreaking example of these disappearances is the case of Jennifer Catheway. In 2008, on Jennifer's 18th birthday, she called her mother from Grand Rapids saying that she was on her way home. She was in the car with a few of her friends, one of them her cousin. After a few days, Jennifer's family and friends had seen no sign of her. The girl's worried mother reported her daughter missing to the RCMP, only to be met with disregard from the

police. “Oh, give her a week. She’s on a drunk,” the officer said. Willie Starr, Jennifer’s brother, noted that when Amber McFarland went missing later in 2008, hundreds of strangers rallied together to look for her. The extensive search by the police was shocking to the Catcheway family, who had not experienced nearly the same respect. As of today, Jennifer has not been found and the RCMP is treating her case as a homicide. However, witnesses have come forward and the teen’s family stays in touch with the RCMP, determined to find their daughter’s killer. Fortunately for Jennifer’s family and the families of other missing and murdered Indigenous women, Canada’s Aboriginal community is standing up and addressing these topics. It is on a mission to spread their message.

The Internet and social media have become a nation-wide web of support for suffering Indigenous women and those standing up for their rights. Back in 2014, a hashtag on social media was gaining momentum in the Indigenous community and beyond. Indigenous women were standing up to violence and showing that they refuse to be victims by posting pictures of themselves holding up a sign with the hashtag, #ImNotNext. Later that year, Savannah “Savvy” Simon, part of the Mi`kmaq tribe of Elsipogtog in New Brunswick, created the #SpeakMikmaq social media campaign because she could not find any resources around the city for people speaking the Mi`kmaq language. Savannah is overjoyed that the campaign has reached and influenced so many non-native people, something that she never thought would happen when she started posting with the hashtag. She is, to this day, active on social media and on YouTube, where she posts videos about topics surrounding Aboriginal people in today’s society and other aspects of her everyday life as an Indigenous woman. Savannah continues to inspire her devoted followers everyday as if she was speaking to them in person.

The Internet has been the leading platform for Indigenous expression in recent years, but Indigenous women have been using more traditional approaches to connect to the world for centuries. Kenojuak Ashevak has been a role model for Inuit artists ever since she was discovered in 1958. Her priority

has always been her family, and she has said that it is for them that she makes her art. She moved to Cape Dorset so her children could go to school, and her paintings are now displayed around the world. One of Ashevak's most well-known paintings, *Enchanted Owl*, was used on a 1970 postage stamp to celebrate the centennial of the Northwest Territories. This was not the first time that a female Indigenous artist would be an inspiration to other women in Canada today. Emily Pauline Johnson, born into the family of a British mother and native father, was a poet and performer in the 19th century. Pauline performed poems in front of sold-out crowds. She connected with the women in the room because her poems were relatable, yet powerful and engaging. One of the most striking elements of Pauline's performances was that for half of her time on stage, she would be dressed in an elegant evening gown, reciting beautiful, innocent poems, then would subsequently change into a traditional Indigenous dress and her poems would become more bellicose and harsh. Kenojuak Ashevak and Pauline Johnson are only two instances of influential Indigenous women in history. If these role models continue to inspire later generations, what will the future of Indigenous women and girls look like?

Recently, we have seen evidence of members of the non-native community lending a helping hand to Aboriginal people around them to help shape the future of Indigenous culture. For example, in a partnership with the Native Women's Association, Isabelle Picard is leading a two-week course for Indigenous women on how to be better leaders in their everyday life. The course, which takes place at the Université du Québec à Montréal, focuses on different roles women take on as leaders and the challenges they will face. As a group, they examined different female roles in native culture and in history. Jazz Aviation, a Canadian airline, partnered with Northern Lights Aero Foundation at the Elsie MacGill Northern Lights Award Gala in Vaughan, Ontario, to offer a \$5,000 award to Canadian Indigenous women studying aviation. International Women's Day brought roughly 300 Canadian delegates together to discuss issues surrounding the future of Indigenous women

during the Fifth National Indigenous Women's Summit in Toronto. The diverse group included First Nation, Métis, Inuit women, youth, Elders and grassroots representatives who spent two days having discussions, listening to various keynote speakers, and partaking in workshops. The future of Indigenous women cannot be foretold, but it can be protected by showing support for Indigenous people in our country in any way possible.

Light is being shed on the pain of Indigenous women and their crucial role in the foundation of this country. Coalitions such as the REDress project and the #SpeakMikmaq campaign are opening Canada's eyes to issues surrounding native women and their families, building bridges between Indigenous culture and the greater Canadian population. They are bridges of reconciliation. They are bridges of strength. We cannot assume that history has weakened Indigenous woman when it is Indigenous woman who continue to change the course of Canadian history.

When You Leave, There's Nothing Left of Me

Dr. Duncan says there are things that, when combined, can change a person's life, and not in a good way. Everyone becomes more volatile and aggressive during their teenage years. And teens become especially hostile when their parents get divorced. The absolute worst is the death of a parent. Teens who suffer from all three become so emotionally distant that they become incapable of speaking about it. That's why Dr. Duncan told me to write it down.

There was nothing usual about that day. School let out early because of mudslide warnings, but no one ever takes those seriously. In California, there's hardly ever enough rain to make the windshield wipers move, let alone create a mudslide, though it had been raining for three days straight. Even if no one took the warning seriously, I still had to be picked up. Dad was away with his new wife in Cabo, so Mom had to leave work early to pick me up. Her boss understood, but said he wouldn't pay her for the hours she'd be missing. Since she had the rest of the day off, we went grocery shopping before heading back home. (Microwave bean burritos are our most frequent purchase. Mom works late hours, so for her dinner break, we just eat whatever is fast and easy to make. As soon as she is done eating, 'Hi ho, hi ho', it's back to work she goes.)

In the car, Mom turned the key in the ignition, but it wouldn't start. Mom began a stream of muttered curses and complaints: "If your father hadn't been late with the support payments... Stuck with this rust bucket... Damn this car..." Blah, blah ... blah. It was the same thing I'd been hearing

for months. I lifted the headphones up from around my neck and pressed ‘play’ on my iPhone. “Believer” by Imagine Dragons is my favorite song. It lets me get away from my life and slip into the music.

I turned away as mom whacked the dashboard, trying to beat the car awake. She was trying to say something to me, but I didn’t need to hear it. I cranked up the volume to block her out. I stared out the window and watched as each drop ran across the glass. It was the most relaxed I had been in a while. As time went on, rain began pouring down, pounding incessantly on the car.

Looking forward, I saw the windshield wipers going double time. Mom squinted through the fogged glass, moving her lips. I could make out the words “headlight” and “not working” on her lips. We should have taken it as a sign, but we passed the turn that would have led us to safety, and merged onto the highway. The other light flickered, and went out. I lowered my headphones and peered ahead, trying to make sure mom didn’t go off the road. It would have been easy to do, as we were at a narrow point in the road. To one side was a sloping hill, and to the other was a steep cliff. Mud and rocks tumbled down the hill. A few seconds later, the headlights flashed back on. Assuming all was fine, I raised my headphones back up. Mom shrieked, then whacked me several times, pointing at my seatbelt and the door. I thought I must have done something wrong. I asked her what she was talking about, but couldn’t hear her response over my music. I pulled down my headphones and heard a rumble like thunder coming from the hill. Mom dove across the car, scrambling at the door handle. When she couldn’t get it open, she reached back to her door and released the auto-lock. She then lunged back across the car to fling open my door, shoving me out of the car.

For a second, I didn’t understand. Then I saw an ocean of mud coming at us, complete with rushing islands of fallen trees.

As my head hit the ground, I could see the fuzzy image of the car skidding on mud and spiraling towards the cliff. I pushed myself to my feet, trying to stop the inevitable. As I took a step forward, commanding my legs

to propel me after her, they disobeyed, collapsing me back to the ground. As black spots swarmed my eyes, I could see her shoving at her door, which looked like it had been jammed shut by the rushing mud. As I choked out a warning, I was swept forward by a wet, slippery current. It smashed me into a tree trunk, which I clung to for dear life. I had lost sight of the car, and of Mom. Still clutching the tree, I snapped my head around, trying to locate the car through the mess of fallen trees, mud, and endless amounts of water. I spotted the car just as a wave of black mud swept it off the cliff. I let out a shriek, reaching out with one arm as though I could grasp her from 50 feet away. A tree branch hurtled towards me, and I blacked out.

I woke in a hospital bed surrounded by beeping machines and flashing lights. I could feel a stinging sensation from my arm, which turned out to be a tube hooked up to a morphine drip beside my bed. Nurses were running around frantically outside my room, wheeling gurneys with mud-covered humans choking for air.

My first thoughts weren't "What happened?" or "Where am I?"; They were "Where's Mom?" And "Did she manage to escape the car?" Though not meaning to, I voiced these concerns aloud. A nurse came to my side and told me Mom didn't make it. She told me that even if she had survived the fall, she would have drowned from the tons of mud that fell on her. Shockingly, I didn't even cry. All I did was stare blankly at the wall, feeling completely alone as the morphine carried me off to sleep.

When I awoke again, my father and his new arm-candy wife, Sandra, were hovering over me. The thick odor of sickly sweet perfume filled the room. Sandra dabbed at her eyes with a horrendous pomegranate-pink handkerchief. She was wearing an expression of fake sympathy. When she saw me looking at her, she put on a big show of pouting, saying, "It wasn't her time... So young..." between sobs. Father patted her on the back and kissed the top of her head.

Right then I hated Sandra and my father more than anything in the world. If they had paid my mom the support payments, or if one of them

could have picked me up from school, this wouldn't have happened. If the lights had been working in our car, mom could have lived, and I would still have her with me. My heart would forever have a hole in it, one which could never be filled. Now, the only desire I had was to inflict on them the pain Sandra and my father had caused me.

But I now realize it wasn't their fault. It was mine. I was the reason we were on the road. She had to pick me up, take me home, watch over me. I was the one who turned up the volume on my iPhone to tune her out. If I had just listened to her, she could have gotten me out long before she did, and she could have saved herself, too. If not for me, she would be alive. And now that she's gone, there's nothing left of me.

Is Water Free?

Freedom, something we all will wish for yet not many of us have.
Freedom, to say what our hearts desire.
But that begs the question: should we have a limit to this?

When does saying what you want lead to the opposite of freedom?
Our thoughts vary, our emotions differ, but is being free to lie, cheat and manipulate freedom? Should we prevent this hate speech from surfacing?
Would that jeopardize the freedom we have?
Is this a trade we have to make in-order to gain more freedom?
The freedom to be free from this deception?
But can we really ever be free from lies?

Can we lie to protect someone?
Do we want to know the absolute truth?
Reveal things that people have kept secret for so long?
That's it. Secrecy. What is secrecy?

Is it keeping things, information away from one another?
Should our government have secret plans or projects?
Would this jeopardize our freedom?
Is this just another price we have to pay in order for more freedom?
Does the government need this shroud in order to protect us?
If our government fell, would we lose our freedom?

Would we gain freedom?
Would we be free from all these rules and regulations the government imposes on us?
Could the loss of something so fundamental come at a cost of our freedom?
Would ruthless people take a leadership role?
Hitting restart on the process?

So many questions.

Is freedom a fact?

Is freedom just another variable?

Are we just adding hot water to a hurricane in by asking this?

No.

We need a definite.

Something that can't be questioned.

Something fair.

No.

Everything should be questioned.

Nothing is entirely true.

If we let ourselves go blindly and question nothing will be right.

If we allow us to be pushed and molded like water we will never be able to make change for better... or for worse.

Water.

Water is a liquid.

It can be shaped into the shape of the container it is held inside.

When it is overwhelmed to a point, it rises in the form of steam.

It gathers together and when it is ready to return, when it is no longer overwhelmed it falls.

Back to Earth in rain.

The same can be said about water if it is unable to operate.

It turns, recedes back into a solid state waiting to be prepared, ready for more action.

Water has a choice.

We deserve one as well.

We all need time to relax and refocus ourselves before we do too much exertion.

I can feel the questions leaving me.

I can feel the stress and anxiety evaporating from my mind.

Water.
Water is the answer.
Be like water.
Be free.

The Junior Employee

Annita stood on the front steps of her new workplace, her face lit up in excitement. She had realized her dream-- to work for one of the top companies in the world: Apple.Co. She couldn't help add a small bounce into her step as she walked into the HR department, ready for her first day.

Having recently finished her MBA in computer science at MIT, Annita knew that she was a hard worker, through and through, and she was determined to prove it to her colleagues and managers, using whatever it took.

Her first two weeks of work were thoroughly enjoyable. She was in the Research and Development Department, and her colleagues were beyond friendly. The manager was very generous in helping Annita adapt into a new working environment. Annita sorted through and researched many components of code necessary for an outstanding iPhone experience for users worldwide. She loved her job.

Annita was born with the natural talent of computers. It came easily and smoothly for her. As a result, when she was asked to reread and revise the code for the latest IOS update, she was shocked by her revelations.

Annita squinted at the lines of code her screen. Something was wrong. If she was correct, then the system would be purposefully slowing down the peak performances of older phones, such as the iPhones 6, 6S, 7 and SE. A decade ago, when the first iPhone came out, Apple promised its customers that most iPhones would never require any battery replacement. Today, it seems that old batteries cannot provide enough power using the processor. Even if slowing down the speed of the iPhone was done to prevent unexpected shutdowns, Apple had no right to hide the truth from its customers in such a way.

Annita sighed. No. It wasn't possible. Apple was one of the successful companies in the world, and with that success came with the ability to earn its customer's trust. Annita let out a sigh of relief, having somewhat convinced herself of her company's credibility.

However, throughout the remainder of the day, Annita could not shake off the feeling that there was something amiss. Was she believing in the truth, or what she wanted to believe in?

Later that night, Annita came across the customer forums.

The responses she received confirmed her earlier theory: many customers found their iPhones slowing down after updates. Each generation of iPhones, in fact, have 80% of the same functions as the ones previously released. However, because of the slowness of the older phones, many customers might have had to spend even more to purchase a new one.

Part of her knew that she should ignore this issue: she was only a junior employee with much to learn. Perhaps it would be better to focus on her own job and mind her own business.

But perhaps it was her own business. As an employee of Apple, she had a certain level of responsibility over the task.

She paid a visit to her manager the following day, showing her concern with the accuracy of the code. The manager smiled at her condescendingly.

"I understand that you are a junior, relatively new to this company, so I understand the questions you may have about some of our systems. We have many proficient employees from a plethora of backgrounds. You still have a lot to learn."

Annita knew she should put the issue behind her as she was told, yet she couldn't. It wasn't right. "It seems that there is not a lot of attention going towards our current customers," Annita protested. "Right now, Apple is spending almost all of its time and money promoting new iPhones rather than making sure the old iPhones still function as well."

Her manager's voice hardened. "This issue is not part of your job. The company would like you to stay out of it."

She had to pursue the matter, even if meant that it could cost her.

The following day, presented her opinions to the vice-president, yet his response was no different than her manager's.

At her department, her colleagues seemed to distance themselves from Annita whenever she broached the topic, often politely trying to change the subject of the conversation away from it, as if they saw her as a sort of trouble-maker. She began to feel ostracized from her group of colleagues.

Soon after, Annita received a notice from the HR department several months later, firing her from the job. There, under the eyes of her colleagues, she began packing her belongings.

She knew she should feel ashamed, or at least a little embarrassed at being fired, but she didn't.

Instead she maintained a calm demeanor as she exited the room, knowing in her heart that she had done the right thing.

As she walked away from the building, her mind was completely blank. She felt lost in life, as if the path before her was obscured by fog.

She knew that she should be concerned for her own future: the Apple company had not given her any references. In a few weeks, she would not be able to afford her apartment rent.

What was next? To find a job to make a living? Or do something more, like founding her own company? This company would not be as big as the Apple empire, but it would be trustworthy and respectful brand, capable of benefiting each and every one of her customers.

Six Months Later...

For the fifth time that week, a woman with chestnut hair sat in the dim light of a 24-hour internet cafe on a cold and empty street. Despite her young age, wrinkles on her face matched the ones on her dress. It was not easy not start her own company at the age of 25, but it was growing fast.

She hummed a tune to herself as she squinted at the computer screen.

Then, a small smile came to her face as she read the first headline of NBC news on the screen: December 28th, 2017--Apple Faces Legal Action for Deliberately Slowing Older iPhones. The story had hit TV morning shows and local news, and had broken well past the tech press. It seems that a lot people had already believed that Apple slowed down their phones for the promotion of their newer generation of iPhones.

It seemed that Apple was going to have a difficult road back.

As a former junior employee of Apple, she nevertheless hoped that the company would be able to rebuild trust with its customers.

Stand up

Sometimes the bravest thing you can do is make a stand

This is the story of Aly Raisman, a young Olympic gymnast. Raisman has mesmerizing beauty, from her luminous brown eyes to her sleek brown hair that cascades down her back in a high ponytail.

When Raisman was just 15, during an early morning gymnastic practice, the abuse started. Excruciating pain consumed her back and heels, like a fire roaring through her body, incapacitating all her limbs. Raisman's coach saw her in pain and suggested, "You should see Nassar. He is a good doctor, and you should consider yourself lucky he would work with you."

Once she got home, Nassar was at her door. Based on what her coach said, she let Nassar in. Raisman found his treatments odd and uncomfortable. She felt helpless. Nassar had complete control over her. Later that night, she cried. Her tears masked her face, her chest heaving as the waves of pain consumed her stomach. Her eyes were raw, on fire. Her chest was an open wound letting the excruciating pain come in.

The next day, her eyes were stained scarlet red as she went to her early morning gymnastics practice again. The mundane hours went by as she could only think about the night before and ... Nassar.

Another night, Aly received a knock at the door. Nassar said, "I thought you could use a massage." Aly learned his massages were invasive and terrifying. A wave surrounded her, drowning her until her lungs were on fire. Sparks of fear soared across her body, soaking all the respect she had for herself into thin air.

That night, tears dashed across her cheeks. She felt powerless. Nobody should feel powerless, she thought. That was when she decided to see a differ-

ent doctor for support.

All the other doctors she saw made her feel completely comfortable, unlike when Nassar would “work” on her. She realized what he had done to her was sexual assault. He made her feel uncomfortable and touched her in ways she did not agree to. She had to stand up, and Aly Raisman did stand up. She made a big difference to a lot of young women.

Raisman found out that Nassar had abused more than 60 young women. She wasn’t alone. Nassar had done too much. Raisman and an army of survivors of sexual assault came to stand up. Earlier this year, Nassar was sentenced to 175 years in prison. Aly delivered a powerful speech to her abuser in court, letting the fear that plagued her for years flow out as she told Nassar:

Larry, you do realize now that we — this group of women you so heartlessly abused over such a long period of time — are now a force, and you are nothing,” she said. “The tables have turned, Larry. We are here, we have our voices, and we are not going anywhere.

When facing injustice, you can’t let it swallow you whole, eat you up while the excruciating pain consumes you. You have to fight, harness the pain and let it dance through your body as it becomes hope. Women for centuries have experienced extreme injustice in many forms. All men and women can do something about injustice. They have to stand up!

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Let's Talk About Aliens

[Author's Note: This story is told by fictional characters, however, the story they're talking about is completely nonfiction. The article for the actual story is cited below.]

[Live TV turns on.]

Hey, everyone! I'm Cassandra, and this is Jack. Say hi, Jack!

no

Welcome back to another episode of
Aliens - The Investigation Goes On.
Are you excited?

uh

Great. Cue the music!

wait no i—

[Theme song plays.]

Aaaaand we're back!

hmp

[*Whispers.*] Jack, stop frowning.

stop smiling.

Anyway, we've got quite story to uncover.

[*Yawns and stretches his arms.*]

[*Glares.*] Jack.

what

Let's get started.

This encounter has been titled—

wait

What?

when was this?

I don't know exactly, but—

you don't know?

It didn't say in the article. But I think it was recent. Like a day ago.

lemme see the article

[Passes the computer.] Here.

[Reading.] it says this happened in 2004.
the *article* was published a day ago

Oh.

get your eyes checked cass

I'm going to continue.

This encounter has been titled "Out of This World." A-

by who?

[Takes a deep breath.] The person who had the encounter.

[Scoffs.]

What?

nothin'

Fifty-three-year-old navy pilot David Fravor came across a strange occurrence while flying a fighter jet on a routine training mission off of San Diego. His colleague was in another fighter jet, on the same mission. They were one hundred miles into the Pacific Ocean when, all of a sudden, their mission was redirected to investigate an unknown aircraft that was spotted on radar.

why were they on a mission? what
was the mission?

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, Jack, I don't know.

what do you think they were doing?

I don't know.

what do you know?

More than you.

harrumph

The aircraft, once spotted by Fravor, was hovering at around eighty-thousand feet, then dove towards the sea, stopping at approximately twenty-thousand feet over the water before dropping from radar. When Fravor caught up to the aircraft, it was floating fifty feet above the surface of the ocean.

To quote Fravor, "It was just moving around—this forty foot long white tic tac looking thing, with no wings."

[Giggling.]

Jack. No.

[Still giggling.] "this white tic tac looking thing"

That's what Fravor said.

who?

The navy pilot! The one who saw the white
tic tac looking thing!

[Full-on laughing.]

Christ.

Fravor said, "It was a clear day with a blue background and it [the aircraft] was perfectly white. We didn't see any windows, no form of propulsion—nothing. Just a big white object."

a white tic tac looking thing!

Jack!

[Scrunches his nose in disgust.] I think you need one of those

What?

a tic-tac

[Ignores Jack.]

you just won't admit the truth

"It was rounded on both ends and had a cylindrical body which rounded in, same front to back. I couldn't tell what it was made of, it was bright white but it wasn't reflecting a bunch of light."

The two fighter jets descended towards the aircraft, but it quickly flew up towards them, passing the pilots at about 12 000 feet.

He said, "I literally chased the thing and it started to mirror us, it was like it became aware we were there. I cut across to see if I could get closer and it rapidly accelerated and disappeared. Within a matter of a second it was gone."

What do you think of that, Jack?

oh, you're asking for my opinion now?

Well, yeah. Do you think it's aliens?

...nah

Nah? Why not?

i mean, how do we know what he's
saying is true?

There's a video recorded of the aircraft.
Another airplane was soon sent to check
out the situation, and they took a video.
Here, I'll show you. [*Hands Jack her phone
with the video pulled up.*]

[*Video finishes.*] hm

Convincing, right?

y'know, cass, there's this really brilliant thing
called editing

The video was from 2004, Jack. Editing wasn't that
good back then.

it's just a regular aircraft. not aliens.
and lots of editing

[Rolls eyes.] It can't just be a regular aircraft,
and we already ruled out editing. Look, in the
video, the aircraft is just hovering, see, and then
bam! It just darts to the left, just like that! Did
you see that?

i have eyes, yes

If you think about it, that's a large distance
covered in such a short amount of time.
It's incredible.

meh. i've seen better

Jack. I don't think you understand how fast
that thing travelled. And what's more, look
at the aircraft. Do you see the exhaust fuel?

the what?

Where the exhaust is coming out from.

no. i don't see it

Exactly! Normal aircrafts have an exhaust flue,
that's the indication for how they move around.
But this aircraft doesn't have one!

cassandra calm down—

Humans don't have that kind of technology,
Jack. And not a single human body could
ever tolerate accelerations as fast as that.

editing

Fravor knows what he saw, and the other
people there saw the same. They're all in
good health, they're sane, they don't do
drugs—

that's something a person who does
drugs would say

How do you know, Jack? Do you do drugs?

[Silence.]

I think it was aliens.

i think cassandra's head is gonna blow
from how wildly she's gesturing

That's impossible.

this whole encounter is impossible.
unless, you have, like, more info. do you?

No...

yikes

[Breathes audibly in and out.]

Well, that's it for today's episode! Hope
you enjoyed watching, and we'll see you
next time. Right, Jack?

[Sarcastically.] what if we die. what if one
of us gets abducted by aliens?

Are you mocking me?

am i?

[Rolls eyes.] Next episode, we'll be going outside
to try and find our own evidence about aliens.

oh, uh, cass, i'm probably gonna be
sick in bed next time

You can predict your own sickness?

...yes

All right Jack, I'm going home now.
See ya tomorrow!

hmph

[Live TV turns off.]

Source:

Daniels, Hugo and Emily Saul. "Fighter pilot chases UFO, urges world leaders to take the threat of aliens seriously." Fox News, 2 Jan. 2018, www.foxnews.com/science/2018/01/02/fighter-pilot-chases-ufo-urges-world-leaders-to-take-threat-aliens-seriously.html

The Voice of a Nation

Dear Mr. President,
I hope you're doing well.
I know I'm not,
ever since you left me to dwell
on my identity that was starting to rot.
If you don't know what I'm talking about
have no fear,
'cause I'm about to shout
and make some things crystal clear.

It all started in 1948.
your friends in Europe
thought they'd intimidate,
as they handed me over to Balfour
who decided to discriminate.

They killed my people,
They let some flee,
Like they were all debris
of a mistake that wasn't meant to be.
However, there were some brave souls
Who decided to stay,
Though they knew they were "in the way".

Eliminated quickly,
While some gave in
to the life that was forced upon them.

Some neighbours resisted
Poems and speeches were written
But it all just left a twisted...
knot of history, never to be forgotten.

You might say,
Years have passed since.
But despite the delay
You will find it hard to convince
The dignified olive trees
That stand upon me.
They are, along with my monumental stories,
The poles that secure my sanity.

They might have changed my name
Rubbing salt on my wound
And besmirching my fame.
But all the same,
Lines should be drawn
Even if you think my people are gone.

I never asked for this.
I did not want to be taken away
and find myself the next day
In control of foreigners
Who wanted to rule,

Leaving me feeling like a fool.

I would've loved to share,
but all they wanted to do
was try and scare.
It was so unfair.

You say you follow a peace process,
But I am sorry to confess,
That I see no harmony.

Years and years passed by
With me sitting there.
Watching all my tears dry.
I was stuck behind bars.
I needed help.
I looked to the stars.
I used to yell and scream.
Waiting for at least a beam
of hope that might help me
realize my freedom.

As I waited,
I started to notice, unanticipated
changes that were made to me,
and I wasn't allowed to disagree.
My folks couldn't live or visit.
This kind of did it.
They couldn't pray in my mosque
or go to my church.

My language was nearly gone.
And my magnificent flag had been acted upon.
A strict border was set around me.
Guarded by soldiers I didn't recognize.
They all seemed to want to claim me,
but I wasn't about to sympathize.

Despite all this,
I've always thought I could cling
onto the one thing
I was sure was mine:
My capital,
The place where it all aligned.
Surely nobody could possibly take that away?
Turns out, the truth was astray.

Again.
But I also realized
That it didn't have to be.
It was never my fault.
Quite frankly, it's yours,
Mr. President.

So I'll say this once and for all.
I'll let my voice bounce off the walls
of the cell in which you locked me.
I won't care if you find this radical.
But Jerusalem is Palestine's capital.

The Long Way Home

I watched in wonder as millions of crystals danced in the sky before gently descending to the ground. The pure, white snow blanketed the surfaces below and dusted the small plane window with delicate flakes. In the distance, tall buildings shimmered with lights, illuminating the dark blue sky.

As I stepped out of the plane, I felt a rush of cold air surround me. My fingers turned into icicles while my breath created puffs of white clouds in the dark night air. Three years ago, I would have complained about the weather. Instead, I now embraced the frigid cold and the winter wonderland before me.

It had been three long and painful years since I had seen such a beautiful sight, a sight even more beautiful than I remembered. I welcomed the cold bitter wind, so minor a discomfort compared to the nightmare I had survived in Syria. How fitting that coldness should now provide me with warmth.

Approaching the airport entrance, I glanced upwards at the giant sign ahead - Welcome to Canada. Vivid memories came flooding back to me, dousing me with wave upon wave of regret. Leaving Canada was the most life-changing event of my life. A decision made by someone I now barely recognize – a young and painfully naïve teenaged me.

~*~

I had convinced myself that I wasn't good at anything. I wasn't the smartest kid, a star athlete or a talented artist. Everyone seemed to have something they were good at. Everyone except me. I was simply another face in the crowd. Not especially attractive or popular, I made my way up and

down the school hallways every day feeling remarkably unremarkable. With my brother away at college and my mother working long hours, I felt lonely and forgotten. I began to isolate myself, spending most of my time locked away in my bedroom. Family and what few friends I had slowly drifted away as I spent more and more time on my computer making online friends.

It was these so-called “friends” who introduced me to what were essentially hypnotic propaganda videos. Blinded by a false sense of belonging, I mindlessly spent hours and hours watching and re-watching these calls to action. I was mesmerized.

The videos drew me in. These, along with my new friends, convinced me that I could be better off, that my life could have meaning, and that I could belong. All I had to do was heed the call and join the cause. Encouraged by these promises and feeling I had no better options, I planned my departure from Canada.

~*~

After locking my suitcase, I looked around the house one last time in a final goodbye. I still remember hesitantly picking up a small photo of my family, contemplating whether to take it, before gently placing it back on the dining room table. I closed my front door for what I believed would be the last time before climbing into a taxi.

The ride to the airport was surreal as I stared out the window passing familiar buildings in my neighborhood. I told myself that I was nothing to this town. No one would miss me. I convinced myself that I was setting out on an adventure to start a new and better life.

Standing in front of the airport entrance, I pulled out my phone. Boldly, I typed out the last message I would send before leaving Canada.

Mama, I've left to join ISIS.

My finger hovered above the send button as I reread the message. I could feel my heart pounding as I finally pressed the button. Hurriedly, I

powered off my phone, tucked it away in my pocket and headed towards the crowded entrance of the airport.

I wish I had known that the videos I had watched, photos I had seen and stories I had been told were all lies. Foolishly, I believed them when they told me that joining ISIS would give my life meaning and purpose, that I would belong. I would give anything to turn back time and rewrite history. It wasn't until I arrived in Syria that I realized that everything was a lie.

Soon after my arrival, I knew I didn't and couldn't ever belong here. Adherence to set rules and restrictions was harshly and cruelly enforced. Conformity was a must. Any deviation from rules and expectations was punishable with torture and even death. In constant fear, I felt helpless. Witnessing violence, death and destruction on a daily basis was as equally mind-twisting as it was soul crushing. I lived in what seemed like the depths of Hell. This was not where I should be. Joining ISIS had provided me with neither purpose nor meaning. I did not belong.

I had made the biggest mistake of my life. I had to escape and find my way home.

~*~

My eyes quickly scanned the crowd of people. Looking around, I saw little children jumping in excitement as they anticipated the return of their loved ones. Family members embraced one another, smiling and laughing.

I stopped in my tracks when I saw her. My mother was standing in the middle the crowd, her eyes nervously scanning the stream of people flowing from the doors. Slowly at first, I made my way towards her. As if my body began moving on its own, I found myself running. Time seemed to slow as I reached her, her arms circling to embrace me. I felt warm and safe, as if she was protecting me from the harshness of both winter and desert storms.

It wasn't until I looked up that I realized I was crying. Hot tears were streaming down my face, blurring my vision. Although I could barely see her,

I knew she too was crying.

Stifling my tears, I realized I wasn't crying because of the suffering I had endured for three long years.

I cried because the people I had left had missed me and cared enough to rescue me. I cried because I had left the place where I belonged.

Teary eyed and holding back sobs, I managed to whisper,
"Mama... I'm home."

Milk

Author's note: this piece has been inspired by the issue of homelessness, specifically of immigrants, in Toronto which has recently been brought to the attention of the city because of the extreme cold weather conditions. By channeling the innocence and empathy of a child, we will be able to make a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable members in our community.

I hate March. It's the time of year when it's still so cold that it feels like you walk into a wall of ice when you step outside, but the pretty white snow is gone and all that's left is the slush on the side of the road. I remember squishing the slush beneath my boots before leaving for school that morning. When I got there, just like every morning, I was immediately comforted by the heat being pumped out of the vents in the hallway, but just like every morning, the comfort was ripped away from me the second I walked into the class. The window in the back of the classroom was always just so slightly cracked open, so it let all the freezing air flow inside, leaving us to shiver at our desks.

We all shuddered in silence, because no one dared to say anything to our second grade teacher, Ms. Garber. She was old and mean and probably needed the class to stay freezing cold so her icy heart wouldn't melt. Someone even said that they once saw her washing blood out of the mug she keeps on her desk. Every day we would cower behind our books, hoping that she wouldn't call on us to answer a question. If we were lucky, when she wasn't glaring at us with her beady eyes, we could quickly glance at the clock and check how far away lunchtime was.

Lunch was the best, not only because we got a break from Ms. Garber's wrath, but mostly because Andrew came. Andrew worked at our school

and we never really knew what he did there, but we do know that he handed out cartons of milk every lunch. Standing in the warmth of the hallway in a straight line was the sweet escape from the class that we all so desperately needed. When it was finally my turn to get my milk, I was always welcomed by the yellow of his teeth that came through from his boyish grin. Seeing the light reflect off his slicked back hair and cigarette ashes dusted in his scrappy beard was always a comforting sight. Without failure, every day, he asked me about Gertrude, my guinea pig, or how my brother was enjoying high school, or even how my day was going through his thick accent.

Returning back to the cold classroom was challenging, especially after we had a taste of snug freedom, but at least we knew that the day was half way done and we could go home soon. This day was different though. My mom would usually pick me up and drive me home, but today, she had to stay later at work, so my grandfather was going to come. When the bell rang at the end of the day, we ran out of class as quickly as our small, eight year old legs could take us to the playground outside. It was chilly, but my friends and I played with each other for what felt like hours until one-by-one, their parents came to pick them up and go home. I was having fun. Then my last friend's father came to take her home.

I waved goodbye to her but it quickly sunk in, I was alone. I remember seeing the orange colours from the sky reflect off the grey snow. It was getting dark outside, so I slumped on the pavement in my snowpants, watching people come and go. None of them were my grandfather. My head was spinning with worry. I don't ever remember being so scared. Maybe he was in an accident on the way here? Maybe he had a heart attack like Sandra's grandpa did? I guess you could say I was a nervous kid. Before I knew it, my vision was blurry as my eyes flooded with tears. I decided to look around for him. Maybe he was waiting for me at the wrong part of the school? I ran to the back of the building, inhaling the crisp air. I felt my tears forming icicles on my cheeks. And that's when I saw him.

His torn jacket was blowing in the wind, his ripped gloves digging

through the school's garbage bins. He drew bottles and cans out of the bins and dropped them with a thud in his bag. His movements were hasty and aggressive, and the usual glow that he had in the hallway at lunch was gone. Instead it was replaced by trail of grime he left wherever his dirty fingers touched. He came upon half a bruised banana and devoured it with the blink of an eye, without even thinking twice. I knew it was him, but I didn't want to believe it. I felt the pressure build behind my eyes and the blood rise up my face.

Why? That's all I could think. And before I knew it, my words poured out of between my lips the same way cold air poured into our classroom between the glass and window pane.

"Please stop, it's dirty," I shrieked. "You're going to get sick." I didn't want him to get sick. Who would bring us milk if he got sick?

"This is where the animals eat. You're not an animal so stop. Stop. Why are you doing this? Why? Just stop! Why?" I felt like my words just reflected off of his back that was turned to me because he didn't stop, so with every sentence I got louder and louder until I knew that he had to have heard me.

He turned around slowly and silently. My world stood still.

"Leave," he whispered. The power of his silencing voice shook the earth beneath my feet. I stood paralyzed, staring at his warm eyes, that unlike usual, were bloodshot and wet. My grandfather's headlights blinded me in that moment, and I ran towards his car, climbing in the back silently. I didn't say a word the entire ride home. I was too perplexed, too confused, to vocalize what was on my mind.

The next day at school, when lunch finally came around, everyone eagerly lined up outside. When it was my turn, Andrew didn't ask how my day was like he used to, he just quickly glanced to the side and retrieved my 2%. I pulled out a brown paper bag from my backpack and handed it to him. I'd been working on it all night before. He took out a cookie, smiled and had a bite.

"Thank you."

Running from His Snow-White Eyes

The floor was cold and damp, even with the sticky humidity of the air coming through the open window. I cleared the small wooden table in the corner of the hospital room. This was the first time in weeks the room hasn't been overflowing with patients. Since the Buddhists started the machete massacre and the military started opening fire on villages in Myanmar, the hospital had been overrun.

I looked out the window at the little piece of beauty that comes with the sunset. It felt like there hadn't been a piece of happiness in this hospital since I landed in Bangladesh. I'm always running here. Running to help a small boy with gunshots. Running to help stop an old, weak woman from bleeding out. There's always somewhere to be, someone to help.

There was a desperate need for people with medical knowledge to help with the patients at the Cox's Bazar Hospital. I'd just graduated from medical school and I wasn't ready to start an internship,, so I came to Bangladesh to do what I could. In my time here, I've seen over three hundred and seventy thousand Muslims from Myanmar. Some whose houses were burned to the ground, leaving them completely scorched. Others who'd been hacked apart by machetes. They'd barely made it out of their home villages alive.

"No internship in Canada would have been like this," I mumbled under my breath as a bell went off through the hospital.

"Another wave," I yelled as I ran into the hallway to a medical cart.

There've been waves of people seeking refuge and medical attention every couple of hours for weeks now. I didn't know when I would go home;

my two-week trip had turned into a one-way ticket. I couldn't imagine going home and leaving now, I just couldn't. They needed help, and lots of it.

As I thought this, an older woman—a nurse—ran passed me, knocking my shoulder violently. As she ran, she turned around and yelled at me to follow her. I did exactly as I was told. I've learned not to talk, here, just listen and work. There is no time to talk. Time is too precious.

I ran down a small, cramped hallway covered in medical karts, injured patients everywhere. I couldn't help but feel sick to my stomach running passed them, just leaving them there. I followed the nurse through the plaster halls; I couldn't help thinking how tired she looked. I wondered if that's what I looked like? I wouldn't be surprised. I hadn't had a good nights sleep in days.

The nurse ran fast, and I struggled not to lose her in the swarm of people through the halls. As I ran, I heard babies crying, children screaming, and—worst of all—I heard people praying for the ones they lost, the ones we couldn't save. I pushed those thoughts out of my head while I ran.

The nurse ran through a small doorway. I stopped at the door to see six young children huddled up in one small corner of the room with whom I assumed was their father. A run-down-looking woman held a small infant in her arms. The baby was wrapped in cloth, and it was easy to see he'd been badly burned in a fire. His burns weren't just visibly noticeable; the smell of his burnt flesh stuck to the air like fleas on a rat. Sadly, the infant wasn't the only one in need of serious attention. As I look at the other children, I could easily see they were severely malnourished and struggling with sickness. I look at the nurse I followed here. She looked back at me, sad and empty.

"Run to the kitchen and grab fruit and water for the children," I said as calmly as possible, feeling my voice choke, "then I want you to tell one of the head doctors that I'm starting an examination of the infant. I want to see what the extent of his injuries are, but I need a doctor now." She nodded blindly, tears in her eyes, and ran to do as she was told.

I worked fast as I examined the little baby boy. His mother, Khurshida Begum, said the small boy's name was Rohingya. I sat with Khurshida when

the doctor came, and she told me how everything had been such a panic once the military started to shoot. They'd forgotten Rohingya was asleep. Her husband had gone back in to get him, but he'd already been severely hurt. She told me about her son's eyes. How they were almost whiter than snow after the fire, and how they seemed to seal shut. When I examined him, he had third-degree burns covering open skin. He'd been slashed with machetes and had minor gunshot wounds. I wasn't surprised that his eyes were sealed shut after that. That thirteen-month-old baby had undergone so much trauma..., none of it was minor.

I was assigned to overnight care for Rohingya, but the second I stepped out of that room I broke down. The tears were hot on my hands as I wiped them away and ran towards the night care table. Anyone would've cried looking at that boy; he'd gone through the worst of genocide and survived.

That night, when I sat by his bed to monitor him, I prayed. I'd never much believed in God since I stepped foot in this hospital, but that night I thanked God a million times for saving that boy. I prayed until I could barely speak for that boy to live. I listened to the wind blowing against the window bars; it seemed like the settling sound of music. I closed my eyes to listen.

I heard a small grunt-like noise, one unlike the wind. It was faint, but it was there. I looked down at Rohingya, and his eyes fluttered open. For a brief second, all I could do was stare into those little snow-white eyes. And then I ran. Ran to get someone, anyone that could keep that small boy alive.

Inspired by: Kitwood, Dan. "Rohingya tales of terror emerge from Bangladeshi hospital wards." The Globe and Mail, 13 Sept. 2017.

Capital Punishment?

The voice of the priest performing the last mass for the two prisoners is in my head as I walked through the cells of the Fannie Bay Gaol. Officially named Her Majesty's Gaol and Labour Prison it stopped its operations on September 1st, 1979. The prison, we're told by the tour guide, held and lepers, refugees, criminals, and in later years women. When I lived in Darwin, my house was a 10-minute walk from the old prison, which now serves as a museum. As I toured it with my family, there was talk of Jerry Koci and John Novotny, who were the last men executed there. Jerry Koci and John Novotny were post-war immigrants from Czechoslovakia who were having trouble making a go in Australia and decided to return to Europe, but they didn't have the money or the means to do so. They agreed to steal a taxi and drive to the southern states to try and raise money to leave. Unfortunately, George Grantham, a well known local taxi driver, ended up shot dead. They were sentenced to death by a hanging at the Fannie Bay Gaol. Before their hanging, a priest conducted a half-hour mass in their cell. The gallows were located in the infirmary, and as soon as I walked in, I got an intense, eerie feeling. I could immediately imagine the scene: the two men standing under the wooden bar seemingly resigned to their fate, the 10 people present watching with anticipation as the executioner pulled the lever. Then all of a sudden the scene faded away, as if in a movie. I will never forget the feeling of terror and sorrow that seemed to fill the air. It was almost suffocating. Strangely enough, if you had asked before the visit, I would have said that capital punishment was a just punishment.

"Public Murder," that's what Arthur Lucas and Ronald Turpin heard protesters call out while they were sitting in their cell awaiting their death.

The two shared the same cell, ate the same last meal and shared the same fate on December 11th, 1962. The executions of Arthur Lucas and Ronald Turpin were the last done in Canada. Both men were convicted of killing police officers. Arthur Lucas killed an undercover narcotics agent, and Ronald Turpin killed a police officer when they pulled him over for a broken tail light after fleeing from the scene of a robbery. At Toronto's Don Jail they were hung back-to-back and then buried side by side in unmarked graves. However, before they were killed they were informed that they would probably be the last two people executed in Canada. In response to this Turpin replied, "Some consolation." Even when it was still legal, the number of crimes that resulted in the death penalty dwindled. For example, before 1859, 230 offences were punishable by death including stealing turnips (Munroe). In 1865 murder, rape and treason were the only offences punishable by death. Then in 1961, the government sorted murder into capital and non-capital offences, with capital offences being the murder of police officers or prison guards and violent and planned murders (Munroe). Although it was officially abolished in 1976 for Canadians at large, the National Defence Act still permitted the death penalty for Armed Forces. In 1998 the death penalty for was armed forces abolished.

Four witnesses and a half an hour of jury deliberation, that's how Frenchman, Peter Cartcel, was convicted of murdering Abraham Goodsides in 1749. They were traveling on a crowded boat in a high-stress environment when a dispute started between the two after Goodsides insulted Cartcel, provoking him to stab Goodsides to death. The trial took place in Halifax. It resulted in Cartcel getting the death penalty. This was the earliest recorded use of the death penalty. Governor Edward Cornwallis, who was the English colonel in charge of establishing Halifax, was worried by the murder. He used the power he had within the government to create, run and control courts in order to make a "general court" that was made up of him and six councillors. The trial took place in a warehouse, which was one of the only buildings finished on the shore. However, none of the representatives of the court had

any legal training. As well, Cartcel had no one to fight the case against him or look out for him such as a lawyer.

There are many different views on the death penalty. Some people believe that the death penalty is justice “not immoral, barbaric or vengeful, just fair.” (Russell). Whereas other people believe that the death penalty is an easy way out for criminals and that “a lifetime of incarceration is a [more] suitable living hell.” (Russell). While researching the death penalty, I came to realize that my initial certainty toward to the penalty began to wane. In some cases, I could see myself agreeing with it and in others I believed it was unfair. Why should we have the right to decide who lives and dies? But then again you could ask the question: If murderers believe they can decide who lives and who dies why can’t we use their beliefs against them?

In the case against Peter Cartcel, I believe that he didn’t deserve the death penalty. He had no lawyer or representative. The jury only spent half an hour deliberating and no one in the room had legal training. Many, many years later Joseph Chisholm, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, found that the trial that was held for Peter Cartcel, “fell far short of ideal justice.” It’s said that if the trial would have happened today or if he had proper legal representation, he would’ve escaped the gallows and gotten a less-serious offence of manslaughter.

Arthur Lucas was a pimp and a career criminal from Detroit. The undercover narcotics agent was not his first kill, and if he had not been caught I doubt it would have been his last. This is one of the cases in which I understand and maybe even approve the use of the death penalty. However, the trial went through the court at a rather fast pace which could be seen as concerning. The person defending both him and Ronald Turpin was said to be inexperienced (Alamenciak). It was certain that Ronald Turpin shot the police officer that pulled him over while he was fleeing from a robbery but the evidence against Arthur Lucas wasn’t completely fool proof. So, even though I agreed with the death penalty’s use, that would only be if it was certain that Arthur Lucas committed the crimes.

Before this, my views tended toward pro-capital punishment, but now the lines seemed to have blurred and I don't know whether or not I could be put into the for or against group for this topic. If I went back to the Fannie Bay Gaol now that I have done all this research, I don't think I would react any different. There are so many things to consider. Are they guilty?; were they provoked?; was the trial fair?; what did the perpetrator do? The topic of bringing back the death penalty has come up many times. In 2013, a public opinion poll showed that 63% of people wanted the death penalty to be reinstated. It's a very serious issue that should not be taken or talked about lightly.

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Caleb's Requiem

It was raining the day of Caleb Santiago's funeral.

It was like the sky wept for him, too; large raindrops splattered the umbrellas of the funeralgoers despite the typical Orlando summer heat. Four people walked through the storm to Accalia Santiago--the mother of the boy who the sky wept for. She was staring dazedly into the cemetery in front of them; rather, at the empty grave where her son would be laid to rest soon enough.

Caleb and the four others experienced the same tragedy; they were complete strangers when they entered the bathroom of Pulse Nightclub. When they left, however, all of them were irrevocably changed beyond repair, and it only felt natural that they helped each other through the transition from human being to victim in the eyes of the media.

That's why Accalia asked them to attend the funeral, she explained to them after sharing tense and uncomfortable hugs. "I..." Accalia paused, thinking of what to say next. "I need to understand what happened that night. The doctors all say that I blocked the memories out of my mind because I can't process them right now, but I'm about to put my baby boy in the ground and I need it to feel real because... otherwise it'll never feel real."

Danny, Angel, Barbie and Deb all looked at each other carefully, while Accalia stared at them in turn. Danny was the one who spoke first.

~~Denial~~ Danny Martínez

~~We all sat down on the stone steps to the church, soaked from head to toe and not caring one bit because Caleb was infinitely more important than getting wet. I took a shaky breath, and looked over to the expectant face of my boyfriend's mother.~~

Caleb smiled brightly back at me as he led me off the dance floor, the lights pulsating in a myriad of colours around us. Opening the door to one of the bathrooms, he immediately went over to one of the large sinks and began to wash the sticky beer off his hands and shirt. Shaking his head, he laughed musically. "I can't believe that guy spilt his drink on me! Just my luck... the first time in a gay nightclub and I'm covered in booze."

"I still can't believe it's your first time here," I replied immediately, gazing at my new boyfriend as I leaned back against the counter. Caleb was only just eighteen, and I was the first boy he ever pursued a relationship with--this fact scared me, but after three months I was desperately in love with the boy and couldn't imagine anything else.

When we first heard the gunshots, we were sure it was a part of the music--that is, until we heard the screaming.

Then everything was a blur--I hid with Caleb and three others in a stall for a while, but when Caleb's mom came running in to try and find us, Caleb moved to the front of the group to get to her. That's when the first shots were fired through the door and into the bathroom.

I closed my eyes.

Deb reached around to hug my shoulder as I spoke, but I immediately shrugged her off, looking away. Accalia was trying to make it feel real for her, but it felt too real for me. Caleb did not die for me, I think, even though I knew the truth was the opposite. He didn't deserve to die, not when he was so young and pure, and nothing about him thinking his life was worth any less than mine was okay. And nothing about any of this is okay anymore.

Accalia let a single tear escape, looking over to Angel. "Can you go next, please?" she said gently, her motherly tone of voice making the bouncer of Pulse melt.

Anger Angel Ortiz

"I didn't know Caleb," I mumble immediately, rubbing the back of my neck nervously. "I was a bouncer, so I only knew the regulars. He was new." He was young.

I got shot in the shoulder as Barbie, one of the performers, dove with me for cover. I was in survival mode by then, barely feeling the blood seep from my shoulder. I grabbed another girl shaking on the floor on the way, and I dragged her and Barbie into the bathroom. We found two teens in one of the stalls, and the smaller one screamed when we entered. "It's okay," I heaved, even though nothing was okay. "My name is Angel, I'm a bouncer." Barbie cradled the other girl as I showed the two boys that I was armed only with pepper spray and a walkie talkie. They let us into the stall, and the girl sobbed and shook uncontrollably as she huddled into Barbie. I crouched on the toilet, my huge body unable to fit with them on the cold, tiled floor.

"CALEB?!" a frantic voice yelled somewhere close, and the little guy stood up, scrambling over us to get to the woman calling him.

"Mom," he said, breathing out shakily. They embraced, and the other guy climbed out to talk to the woman as well.

As soon as I finished talking, I got up and walked a few paces away, staring into the distance. Something animalistic and raw boiled up inside me. I turned and punched the wall beside me several times. I looked at the blood pooling around my knuckles, and I knew it should've hurt, but all I could feel is the anger that comes with knowing that fifty-nine people died to satisfy some sicko's need to unleash his hate on human beings. I went back, sat down, and immediately Barbie began talking rapidly.

Bargaining 'Barbie' Jones

That guy Caleb's mom was shaky and near-hysteria when she walked into the bathroom, but as soon as she saw Caleb and the other guy were okay, she calmed down. I had never seen a mother so worried purely for her children. They sat in front of the stall and talked in hushed voices, not daring to speak any louder in case the shooter heard them.

"Are you okay?" Caleb asked his mom, clutching her hands with the kind of desperation that reminded me of a documentary on antelopes I saw once.

The antelopes were being hunted like prey, and so were we.

I know this because when the first shot was fired into the bathroom and the girl we dragged in with us started crying again, the shooter immediately fired eleven more shots through the door without hesitation.

"I never understood why he died," I finally murmured after a long silence. I didn't tell Accalia that for weeks after it happened, I prayed to God to return him to us. I even prayed for God to exchange my life for his. I didn't think I'd ever understand why it happened to someone so good.

Depression Deb Acosta

I stopped crying long enough to look up and see the aftermath of what had just happened. The first thing I noticed was that I was drenched head to toe in blood, and I couldn't help but think of that scene from *Carrie*, and I began to laugh. I knew in the back of my mind that I was hysterical, and that the shooter could come back if they heard me, but again--I was hysterical, so nothing much mattered to me at that moment.

When I finally came to my senses, all I saw was Caleb lying there, motionless. Everyone else was fine. Why was everyone else fine? Why was I fine?

Because of Caleb.

I saw now that none of us had a scratch. The boy that didn't know us shielded us from bullets, and all any of us could think was that we were alive because of him.

"There's... so much I want to say to him," I told Accalia. Tears freely streamed down her face now, as well as mine. "I want to tell him thank you, and I want to ask him why this happened because I feel like maybe he'd have an answer."

"No one has an answer to that," Accalia murmured, standing up to enter the church abruptly.

Acceptance Accalia Santiago

"Thank you all for sharing the whole story," I told the four of them sincerely after the funeral, my eyes welling up with tears. "You've made it all feel less like a bad dream and more like real life." Danny and I soon found ourselves sharing stories about Caleb as Angel, Barbie and Deb listened intently.

**

As Danny listened to Accalia tell childhood stories about Caleb, he watched a lean and sinuous stray dog pad along the soft grass outside.

It made him remember when he learnt Hebrew as a child. He smiled softly--the word for dog in Hebrew is Caleb.

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Untitled

That feeling you get when someone's gaze lingers too long
The feeling of pure terror
Because you know what happens next
You can't defend yourself
Cause you need the job
And even if you didn't what would you do
You're alone

And after
Your body becomes your enemy
Because it hurt you
Because it made you feel like a nothing

So today we wear black
To support those who couldn't fight back
Who became terrified to walk down their street alone
No one protected them i
So now we will



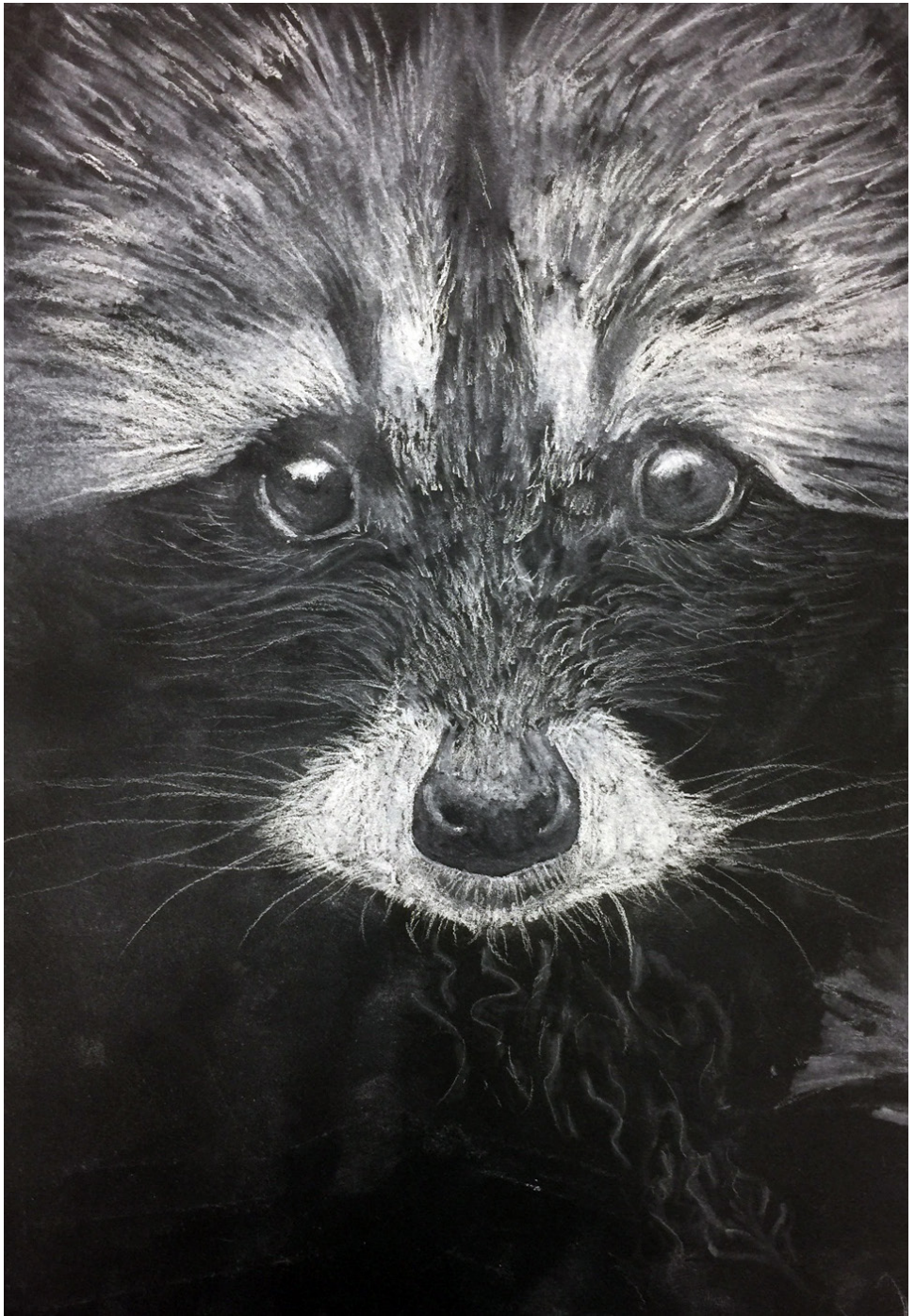
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sam basek



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Anthropophobia - Fear of People

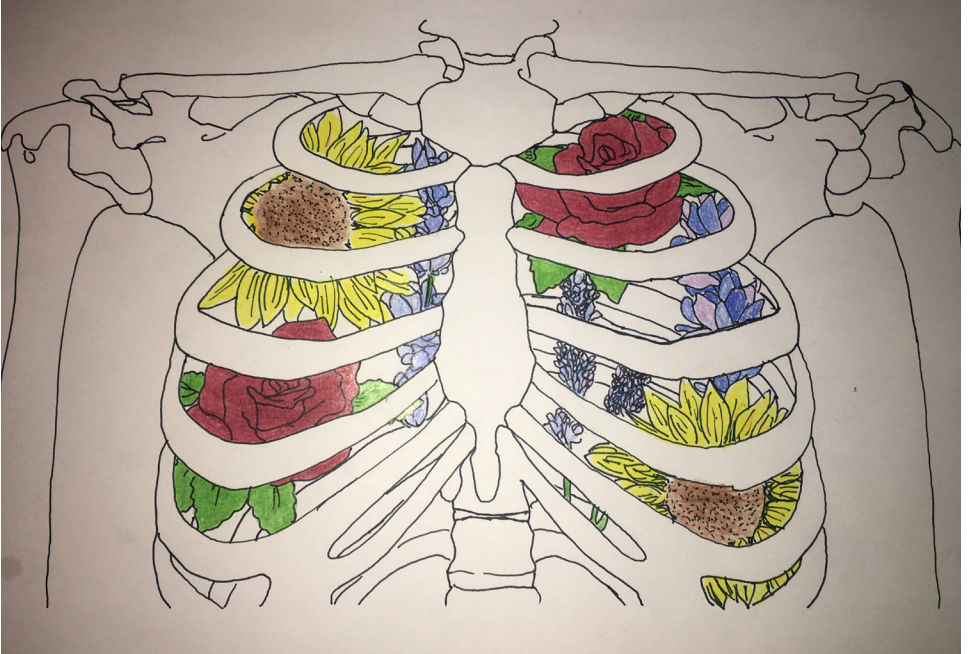
aylin amasya



archie mullins



carly chapman



caroline leys



colleen glynn



gj verellen



maggie higgins



brianna mascan

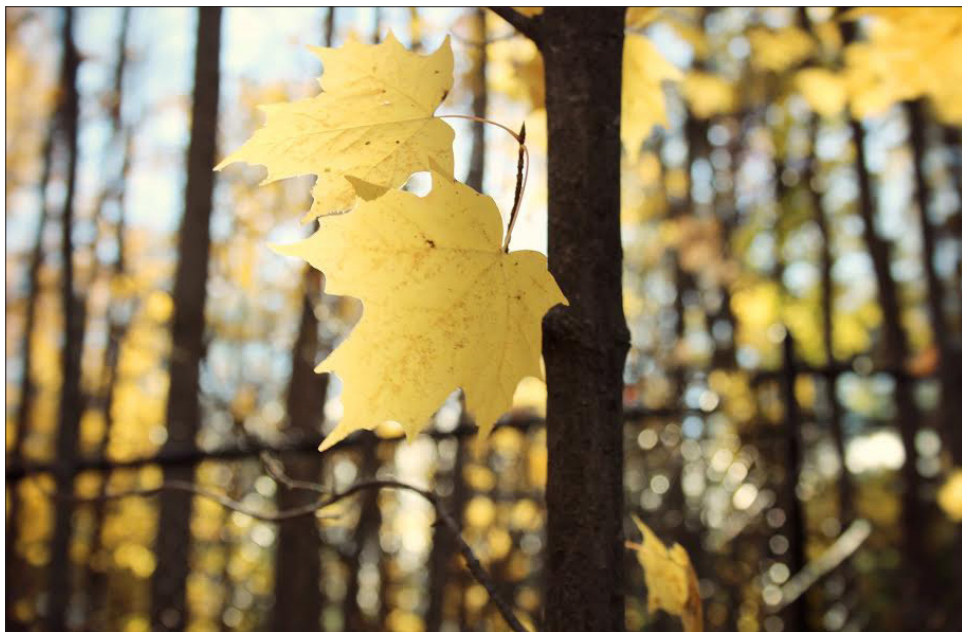


Philophobia - The Fear of Love

malesha sirimanne



lauren capuzzmati



mira cantor



sarah fusco



maddie wixson



jake keslick



liliana garber



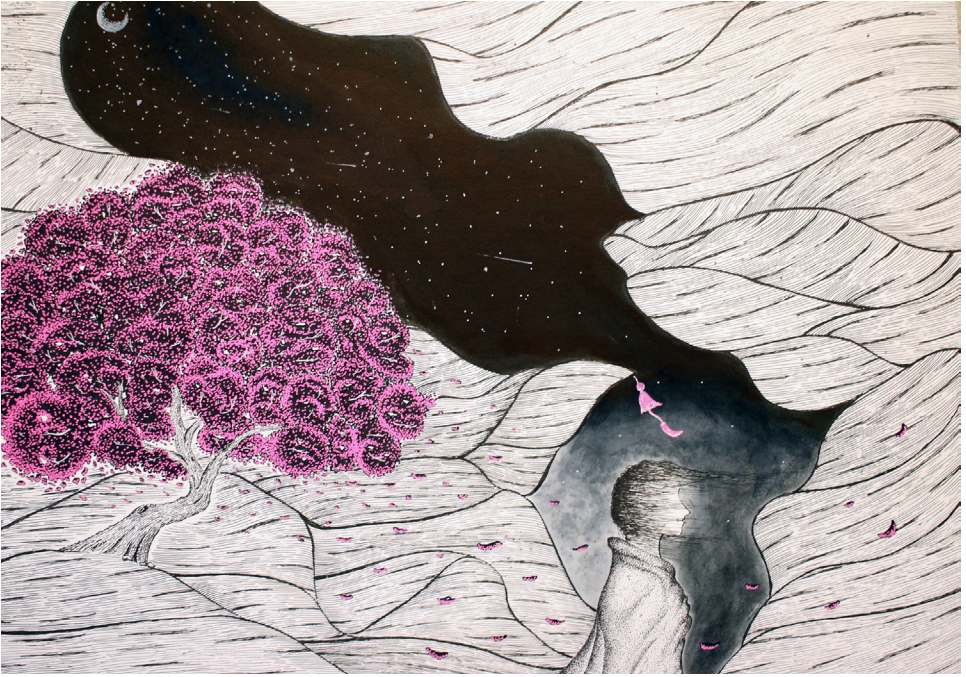
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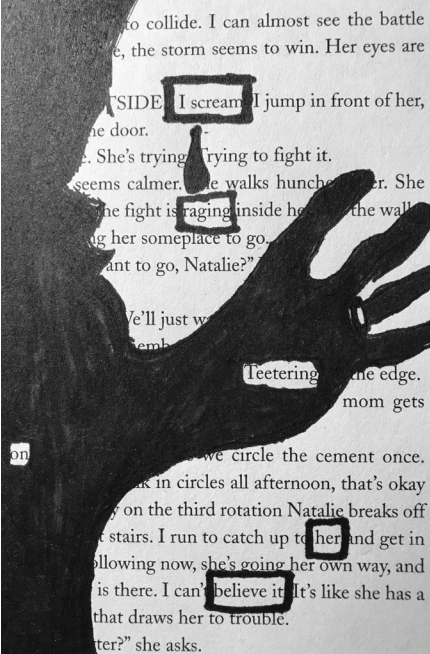
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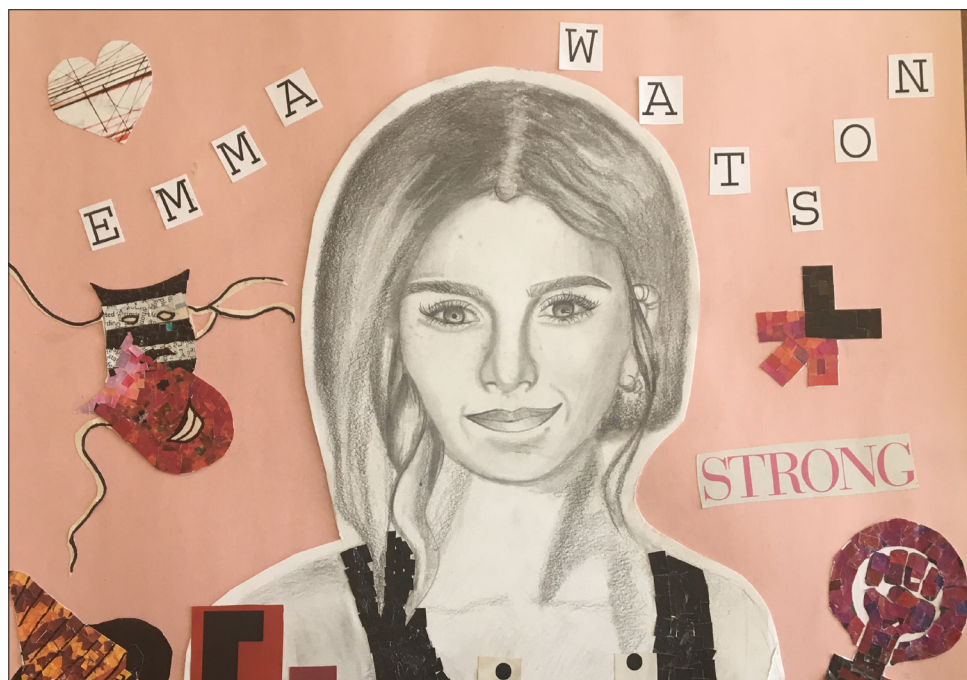
lily christou



maria li-chin



brynn mercer



selenalee



olivia drag

Subzero

I can't quite remember when I stopped being able to feel my arms. My fingers barely twitched when I willed them to, and I could feel every contraction of my heart as it tried to push the thick blood through my body.

Freezing to death is a strange sensation. It's almost peaceful in a way. It felt as if each part of my body was slowly disappearing limb by limb. My sense of time had become lost and I sat dazed, staring at the dying flame in the middle of the makeshift cave.

I slipped off my glove and clicked the power button on my phone twice. Nothing happened. I stared at the back of my hand. The skin was cracked and purple. I tried the power button again but my fingers refused to move. The phone slipped out of my frozen hand and hit the snowy ground with a loud thud. I reached for it, but the cold had paralyzed my hand and made my fingers tingle. I brought my hand close to my face and examined it, taking in the strange sensation of the frostbite, and marveled at the awe of my visibly translucent hand.

"Jonathan!" Pat's brows were furrowed with concern, "What are you doing?"

I looked up at him and my brain snapped back to reality. Quickly, I put my glove back on and inched closer to the fire.

It was only earlier that day when we were speeding around the mountain on our snowmobiles. We were almost at an altitude of nine-hundred and eighty when Dave's snowmobile ran out of fuel. We didn't know how to get back down the mountain, and in a place like Mont Gosford, the

cell reception was terrible. We'd decided to stay on the mountain for a bit and wait for help to come. Pat thought it would be a good idea to dig a cave to take shelter in, so for the next few hours, we clawed at the snow with our gloved hands. We took turns watching for any other snowmobiles that might pass us. When it was my shift, I sat on my snowmobile in the frigid weather and looked up at the starry night sky. The moon was perfectly round, and light reflected off of the icy mountainside, creating a cascade of lights in the snow. I thought about Ada and little Izzy sitting around the dinner table, waiting anxiously for me to walk through the front door. It was almost midnight when Dave called me back to the cave.

"There's no point in watching. No one's coming."

"But the police...our families must have called someone by now."

"They don't even know where we are," Dave's voice trembled. I could tell that he was just as worried as I was. Dave's wife, Lorie, had died a few months ago and he was left with his crippled mother-in-law and two infants.

Pat, on the other hand, sat quietly in the corner, curled up against the snowy wall like a terrified child. We found a few twigs and started a fire. The smoky air filled my lungs every time I breathed. We used the rest of the twigs to cover the entrance of the cave so that the wind wouldn't get in. Every now and then, a gust of wind would knock the twigs down and blow out the fire. I tried to stay awake to make sure that the fire wouldn't go out while my mind drifted in and out of consciousness.

My body didn't have the strength to move, and I began feeling claustrophobic inside the small cave. I tried to focus on Dave's dull snores and felt a pang of jealousy.

How could he fall asleep while we were freezing to death? I thought. I glanced over at Pat. He was drawing little jagged circles with his finger in the snow. He probably felt me watching him, and looked up to meet my gaze.

"We're going to die out here, aren't we?" He mumbled.

"I don't know. Maybe someone will find us." I tried to hide the shakiness in my voice.

“Yeah, find us dead,” Pat answered. He let out a long sigh and went back to drawing circles in the snow.

I squeezed my eyes shut. I don’t remember falling asleep, but my mind wandered into the cold abyss.

I jolted awake from the sounds of the howling wind. It sent a chill down my back and made my body shiver. The cave was dark except for the thin slivers of moonlight that slipped through the entrance. The twigs covering the entrance of the cave had been pushed aside, but the fire was still burning.

That’s strange. I thought.

I tried to stand up, but it was as if my body had fallen into a strange hush. I focused on moving one leg at a time, but my mind and body had seemed to become two separate entities. I tried again, unsuccessfully, to stand up. Slowly, I dragged my limp body to the entrance of the cave and fell face first into the snow. The wetness seemed to wake me up, and I managed to get onto my feet. I stumbled a few steps forward before landing back in the snow. In the distance, a tall, dark figure stood at the edge of the brush of pine trees. It was Dave.

“Dave?” I called out, but he couldn’t hear me. I tried again. “Dave? Are you okay?”

He yelled something back, but it was muffled over the sounds of the wind. I trudged through the snow towards him.

“Lorie! Lorie, I’m sorry. It was all my fault. Please come back!” He shouted at the trees.

“Dave!” I placed my hand on his shoulder and he spun around. He’d taken off his ski mask and his face was streaked with frozen tears.

“Where’s Lorie? I need to talk to her.”

“Lorie’s not here. She’s dead,” I whispered.

“No, she can’t be. She was right here. You don’t understand, I saw her with my own eyes!”

“She’s not here. It’s the cold. It’s getting to your head.” I wrapped my

arm around him and led him back to the cave.

Nobody really said anything after that. We sat in silence as the sun came up and turned the sky pink. In the distance, the sound of a helicopter cut through the air. We rushed outside to see an SQ helicopter landing a few hundred meters away. It was like a Christmas miracle. A few minutes later, two police officers holding blankets came rushing towards us.

On the helicopter ride back, Dave didn't look at me. His eyes were fixated on the snow-covered hills. He was as pale as a ghost. I leaned closer to the window and looked down at the blurring landscape. It was only for a second, but I could swear that I saw the figure of a woman moving in the trees.

lamplight

it's saturday night and I'm sitting on the curb
pale yellow light filtering through the night air from the streetlamp above
and she's sitting next to me
silent and wooden, hands clenched like a jaw in pain

it's saturday night and I feel like this skin doesn't fit.
air thick with that city smell, Toronto's mix of lingering weed and white paint
TTC exhaust and brick and high-rise door hinges
I breathe and nearly choke on the sob that wants to escape

she is silent and I know she's more angry than scared
but I'm so damn afraid.
she'd wanted to go back, confront the men
who had huddled in the pooling shadows at the side of the unlit street
their jeers lit by cigarette ends and the glints of glass bottles
as my shoulders bowed inwards beneath their voices like a tree in the wind
her spine turned sharp and straight

they had mouths open wide and jagged around commentary
and it felt like they were stripping our skin back with every word
as if we needed another person's opinion on our bodies
as if we're not fifteen with only each other and the pale, round moon
baleful above us, enough radiance to give us outlines
and the shine of the whites of their eyes

they yell and I can feel her bristle beside me
but this is-- there is bravery and there is foolishness
and beholden in the night is danger for every woman
so I wrapped one burning hand around her wrist

and kept my pace steady, quick
dragged her, unresisting but furious, along beside me

until we stood and then sat under the roundness of the lamplight
with it spread like a broken yolk around our feet
interrupted by the spread of our shoulders
her slim knees casting oblong shadows on the paved road

when I look, her neck is one long line, a study of indignance
and I want to apologize but I don't know how.
I don't know how to tell her that there is this fear in the pit of my stomach
ingrained in the way our mandatory self defense lessons at school
dictated to us all the places we could not belong
parking lots, anything underground, anything dark, anywhere alone

I don't know how to tell her that my sister taught me
how to hold my keys between my fingers like claws
and she never had to tell me why.

so I don't.
and it's just us and the quiet
as quiet as it gets here
on that curb that saturday night
feeling so goddamn done
with the streetlight flickering above us.

I turn my head
and the curve of her cheek shines gold
the sweep of her hair dark along one shoulder
mouth twisted in righteous anger
darkness wrapped like a shroud along the curve of her spine
body bent forwards like she's protecting herself

my shoulder touches hers
and I know she knows.

we're fifteen
and I need you to understand

that this is one moment among thousands
and it doesn't feel like it's getting better.
it feels like there are thousands more to go.

but I am so tired
of being scared
in my own city.

and I worry always
about her standing there alone
going back with nobody's hand around her wrist
all vulnerable and female
the night air whistling sharp against her cheekbones

because there is no justice here
for angry women.

A Change of Thought

“12 years old with massive cysts on her belly and the owner says that she can barely walk. Be careful ‘cause her veins may be collapsed. Cover the entire I.V before bringing her in.”

These were the words that took place in the most exciting yet harrowing moment of my life. I was 15 years old, nearing the end of my veterinary medicine co-op and was about to perform an euthanasia on a cat. I envisioned leading a regular checkup or a post-surgical appointment, however, it transpired that I was going to conduct an euthanasia. Nothing irritates a cat more than having his abdomen poked around with, but this one did not even flinch. The owner’s face displayed nothing but despair and concern as the vet administered the Euthosol.

It is experiences like these that have shaped my thinking. Just a year ago I thought the only way to be kind to animals was to make them better, be it with medicine or love. Now I realize, sometimes the best outcome could mean ending their suffering. And sometimes ending their suffering could mean the ending of a life. However uncomfortable we might feel about this, we must remember that it is their suffering and not ours. Only by being empathetic can we realize this.

Recently the law protecting physicians and nurse practitioners from any liability was passed on June 6, 2016. This comes after years of controversy of how ethical this procedure really is. The government have a year to finalize the rules and stipulations which is likely to include guidelines of when it is viable to euthanize someone who is terminally ill. Ironically, Canada has been labeled a country who has one of the worst track records when it comes to protecting animals. There are in fact no laws which protect animals from their

pet owners and therefore no way of determining whether someone is euthanizing their pet for convenience or for valid reasons. According to Canadian laws, animals are considered private property and what happens to them is at the owner's discretion. After a meeting with a woman at a vet clinic in Halifax who wanted to get her elderly dog put down so her children could get a puppy, Angela Welburn, an equestrian veterinarian in Halifax began to question the laws surrounding euthanasia. She believes that animals should have the chance to be rehomed before being euthanized. Dr. Bernard Rollin, a philosophy, animal sciences and biomedical sciences professor also stated that there should be a greater emphasis on ethics during veterinary schooling. It is interesting how the government has now put into place a law that protects Physicians when administering euthanasia. How about a law which protects animals from vets who do not even question this act? The Carnegie Animal Hospital, located in Nova Scotia does not refuse anyone of this service. When questioned, their response was, "We feel that ... it's their (the owners) decision."

"The CVMA (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association) believes that euthanasia is not desirable as a sole means of population control, but recognizes that euthanasia is still necessary for unwanted animals that cannot be placed in new homes."

In conclusion, it has taken us over 20 years to implement a law that protects humans and medical practitioners with the act of euthanasia. How long will it take to apply the same law and ultimately the same importance to animals' rights?

Finding a Home: An Immigrant's Story

June 29th 2016

The watch read half past one.

A 5 o'clock meeting may seem like a good idea, but 5 in New York means the middle of the night in Baghdad. He stepped out of the office, the dry heat of the Arabian summer hitting his face, the thousandth time just as devastating to the senses as the first. He arrived fifteen minutes later, sweat clinging to his body.

"Good night Mr. Ahmed."

"Good night."

He always made a point to exchange greetings with the two young men who stood guard outside the concrete compound throughout the night, framing the padlocked door with oversized guns. The climate controlled apartments provided some much needed relief, and he breathed it in, filling his lungs with the cool air.

1:55 a.m

There was still time. The flight was scheduled for 8, the transport car wouldn't be here until 7, and the military escort until 7:15. The UN jet would take him to Istanbul, and from there, a 12 hour flight to Toronto. He turned on the TV, tuning in to the only English news channel that he could manage to get a clear signal from. The anchor looked like she was saying something important. He fumbled around for the remote, and turned the volume up.

A bombing. Istanbul. Ataturk International Airport. Probably nothing serious.

It was serious.

He jumped off the sofa, and grabbed the phone.

This was a flight he could not miss.

Winter 1985

The ringleader, a tall man named Khalid whose hair was already beginning to thin, stood on top of a red shipping container. The protestors had gathered in the square at the end of the Friday prayers, while there were still people out and about the narrow streets of Abbottabad, a small, hilly city on the footsteps of the Himalayan mountains.

The college students were protesting the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan, which gave more power to General Zia-ul-Haq, who had taken control of the country 6 years earlier in a bloodless military coup, deposing Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, and declaring martial law. Two years later, Bhutto would be executed, and ul-Haq would resume control of the country as Prime Minister, and now, President. (Aziz)

Saeed Ahmed, a nineteen year old student studying Business and Commerce at the local university, had been among those who had organized and called for the protest. He had watched as his country fell to the rule of a military general who banned political parties, cancelled elections, and established the first Federal Shariat Court, designed to push Islamic law onto the citizens living under the previously secular government. (PBS)

“I watched as this dictator pushed a hardline version of Islam into our country, giving more power to religious leaders, who abused the texts of our religion to try and exploit the weak and the poor. I despised watching extremism rise in my country, but there wasn’t much any of us could do under the harsh rules of law at the time” (Ahmed)

The police came pouring into the plaza, followed by a wall of stone-faced soldiers. Word had gotten out about the small, peaceful protest, and

criticism of the General was treated as an assault on Pakistan and Islam itself. The students soon found themselves under attack, batons and shoes finding their way to any exposed flesh. An overzealous officer, hurling insults at the top of his lung, managed to find the scared teenager's stomach with his fist, and ran off into the crowd, eagerly searching for his next victim.

Amidst the cries for help, Saeed managed to find a break in the line, escaping with a few of his friends back towards the safety of the university, thinking to himself how the people who were supposed to protect their rights had become the ones who took them away.

Summer 1989

"When can you start?" The man with the blue eyes wore a dark suit, the kind of suit that told everyone around him that he was most definitely not from here.

"Now," replied Saeed, curtly. He was older now. He had gotten a job, fresh out of college, involuntarily working for an Arab construction company that exploited desperate young men in order to turn a profit.

The man in the dark suit laughed. He thought it was a joke.

"Why are you laughing?"

The interview had been scheduled for 10:15. Twenty minutes in, they hired him on the spot, a young man from an uneducated family in a room full of brand name degrees and expensive neckties. By 11, he was at a desk, working for the first time with the United Nations.

The fact that the interview was even happening was a testament to what can happen if you run into the right person at the right time. It was three days earlier, seeing his best worker discouraged and beaten down, that Saeed's manager had agreed to submit for him a job application to a highly lucrative post in the United Nations field office in Quetta, right on the border of war-torn Afghanistan. This was the kind of job that could change someone's life, but it was beyond Saeed's reach. He had no connections to the industry, and definitely lacked the resources it took to wiggle his way into

international diplomacy. In his mind, Saeed knew he was the right man for the job, but poor villagers didn't work for the United Nations.

"I felt truly blessed to have this opportunity present itself. I impressed the interviewer with my dedication to the work, and he especially liked the fact that I respected the organization and its values. He hired me on the spot when he realised that I was willing to start work right away, even though I had not officially quit my old job yet. It was my motivation and willingness to work harder than anybody else that got me the job, and everything after it. I didn't come from a family of means, and in Pakistan, the lower class does not have access to opportunities like this. I thought to myself that I would not waste this chance, and that I had to make something out of myself." (Ahmed)

Autumn 1996

The heat in Haiti was different from Pakistan. It was denser, sticking to your skin and slowing your every step. It was the kind of heat that made it impossible to work.

The previous summer had been a blur of events. It started with a letter from New York, read aloud to him by his boss and mentor, Mr. Martin Barber. Saeed Ahmed, the 30 year old office worker, whose patchy facial hair had finally grown into a spectacular moustache, had applied for an international field duty assignment on a whim, and had been accepted to go to the United Nations civilian aid mission in Haiti. He had rushed to get a passport, the first to do so in his family. Their definition of a well travelled man meant someone who had ventured a couple of villages further than his predecessor. But Haiti was something else.

He spent that summer reading up on the country and enjoying the brief time he had left with his fiancée, Sadia. He knew that the U.N worked in difficult countries and nothing exemplified that better than Haiti. Like the Pakistan of his youth, the country had been torn apart by conflict started in 1991, when Lt. General Raoul Cedras had taken control of the nation in a military coup, ousting President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The country spent

the better part of the next decade embroiled in fighting, amongst various trade embargos and peace negotiations. (Press) Not exactly the nicest destination for a vacation, but exactly the kind of place the UN worked in.

It was his first day on the job, and he was within spitting distance of the office when he first saw it. Smelt it really. The scent of a decomposing body was one of those things that permeated your entire being, coating your mouth in a taste you couldn't ever quite wash out. An unholy concoction of rotting meat and feces, an experience that most would agree they could spend a lifetime without. Within a stone's throw of the UN field station, a woman in a purple dress, her head cut cleanly from her neck, left to rot amongst a pile of garbage. And to all around her, business as usual.

"It's all part of the job. You're going to see some things that you wish you hadn't. But that's what will drive you, what will motivate you to put in those extra hours, to work harder than ever before, because that is when you know most of all how much help the world really needs." (Ahmed)

July 1st, 2016

It took 4 hours of calls, but he had done it. A UN plane was arranged to take him from Baghdad to Brazzaville, in the Congo. From there, a connection to Addis Ababa, then to Edinburgh, and finally back home. Four flights over 28 hours across three continents and four languages, all to get here. Canada.

He thought back to his first trip here, 18 years ago. It had taken him three tries to get a visitor's visa, and when he arrived at 4 in the morning, he couldn't find accommodation anywhere in Toronto, so he went down to Niagara Falls and stayed there for his whole trip instead.. But all of that was in the past. He checked his watch.

7:30 a.m.

He still had time. The citizenship ceremony was in 2 hours, and the

drive was an hour forty-five. Cutting it close. Too close. He had waited far too long to waste this opportunity. It had been 12 years since his family had moved to Canada, and after two decades of living in walled off compounds in remote outposts, it was comforting to have a place to call home.

The path to citizenship had been a long and slow one. It had taken years of paperwork. It's hard to fulfill a three year residence period when you spend most of the year away from home. He had lived in countless countries, as had his family, each one of his three children hailing from a different corner of the globe. But they had all managed to find a place they could call home in Canada.

"My decision to come to Canada was based on ideals. Throughout my years working at the U.N, I grew to appreciate diversity, tolerance, cooperation and peace. When my wife and I eventually decided to find a permanent home for our children, we considered several options. But from my first trip here, almost two decades ago, I knew that Canada was a place that shared my values, a place of friendliness, where one can live side by side with people of different origins and opinions, all without the conflict and hatred we see in other countries. When I got my letter, telling me that I was to be sworn in as a Canadian under special consideration in a ceremony with the Lieutenant Governor on Canada Day, I was overcome with joy. It is with great pride and honour that I call myself a Canadian." (Ahmed)

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Free

Foreword: In light of the Me Too movement, and more specifically the incident involving the USA Olympic Gymnastics team doctor, I have written a short story adapted to a sport that I enjoy. The movement began on Twitter in October of 2017, in the hopes of raising awareness for victims of sexual violence. As the movement grew, high profile celebrities tweeted their own stories to the hashtag #MeToo. One of the larger scale stories that captivated me was the story of Lawrence (Larry) Nassar and his sexual abuse of female gymnasts under his care, many of whom were minors. His victims first began coming forward in September of 2015, much before the Me Too movement. Although the story became higher profile in light of what was happening on social media, as other gymnasts started coming forward to share their stories about Dr. Nassar. He has since been sentenced to 60 years in federal prison after pleading guilty to child pornography charges, and 40 to 175 years in a state prison in Michigan after pleading guilty to the sexual assault of minors. These charges will be served consecutively.

I rounded the corner and there it was, staring at me, mocking me. I was tiring, but knew I couldn't slow down, not now, not ever. I refused to let this hill beat me. I was in fourth place now, but I had to pick it up soon. In and out. Anything less than first place would be embarrassing; I'd show him, especially after last time. Still I fought against the hill, up, up, up; each foot digging deeper and striking harder into the dirt beneath my spikes. I wouldn't give into that heavy feeling of being pushed back down when every cell in my body was telling me to go up. My heart pounded as I tried to keep my breath steady. "FASTER" his voice boomed in my mind, "YOU'RE USELESS." His words repeated themselves like a broken record. I snapped out of my daze and continued to pump my arms as I passed the girl in third. Her face showed an expression of pained confusion. It looked as if she was going to hurl, but then

again, I'm sure I didn't look much better.

"Keep going," I whispered to her, "You can do this." She turned her head towards me whipping her silky blonde braid against the wind, surprised but evidently grateful for my words. In and out. I took in a deep breath and refocused my gaze to the top of the hill. I was almost there. From where I was you could see the 3 kilometre mark approaching, meaning I had 3 more kilometres to pull off a win. Almost 300 girls trailed behind me; I could never imagine what he would do if I was one of them. Then I saw him, our eyes locked and a chill came over my tired body. I could immediately tell it was him from the way he hunched over the brigade that separated the race trail from the outside world. His depleting brownish, silvery hair wasn't visible under the toque he wore, the same one he always wore. I watched his fingers, they were interlocked and I knew what he was thinking. His rough hands gripped each other so tightly, I could see from here how white his knuckles were. I passed the mark and knew I had to keep on going, faster and faster. If he saw me in anything less than third I'd pay for it this week. That all-too-familiar feeling began to come over me, the frigid air burning against my exposed legs, my fingers tingling as I watched my breath create clouds in front of me just before I ran through them. Nothing felt worse than the cool winds of late November on an open wound. We began exiting the trails, and knowing I'd be back there in about a kilometre I thought through each corner and tree and hill that could indicate distance; anything that could help me win.

"YOU'VE RUN FASTER IN TRAINING! LET'S GO!" My head snapped in his direction when I heard him yelling. For a moment, my whole body seized; all of my muscles flexed and I could feel the tension building up. His lips began to form a small smirk as he kept eye contact with me and shook his head. I clenched my fists but my face grew hotter. I simply nodded in his direction, biting my lip to hold back any comment that may have popped into my mind. Attempting to calm myself, I blocked out all of the outside noise - parents cheering for their kids, coaches yelling encouraging words; all of it faded as I became completely engulfed in the race. I had to

be strategic now; if I slowed even a little I'd be done for, but if I sped up I wouldn't have enough energy to sprint the last 200 metres in order to win.

I began settling into my place. We were running on grass after exiting the trails but I knew the entrance would be ahead; maybe under two kilometres. The two girls in front of me began shoving, both refusing to give up their spot on the thin patch of grass. Pavement surrounded the path, providing only enough room for one body at a time. Body. I wondered what theirs had been through. I kept my distance, knowing that if I let it play out I'd be able to pass them both soon enough. Let it play out, it'll be over soon enough. They were making comments at each other, but I couldn't hear them over the ringing in my ears; that always happened when I ran this fast. It always happened. I pulled my long sleeves farther down my arms, realizing that we had already made it back to the entrance of the trails. This is it, I thought, you pick it up now or you lose everything. Lose. I'd become accustomed to the loss of some things. My strides became longer and faster. With every step I felt the finish; it was within reach. The girls in front of me were no strangers to the race, they picked up just their paces as I did, but I knew I'd catch them on the hill. In and out.

We were nearing the last kilometre now, my legs could feel it. Some feelings are better when never felt at all. I huffed but refused to give in. This race was mine, no matter what the hill could do. In all its glory it stood; a mountainous slope ready to put any runner to the ultimate test. Bring it on, I thought. It's going to take a lot more than that to drag me down. Then it began, the three of us embarked higher and higher, but I soon became a lone warrior. Nothing could push me up but my own two legs, legs that I could no longer feel. They moved without instruction, powered, no matter how much or how little I wanted them to. I reached the top and began my descend, the wind swept past me as I glided down the hill making me feel as if I was in flight. Never had I felt so alive. Then, as suddenly as it had appeared, the trail disappeared and the finish line could be seen. In and out. I was sprinting now, my legs not letting me down, they were made for this; I was made for this. A

smile spread across my face as the finish line drew closer, only 50 meters away. He was there, but I could neither see nor hear him as my heart pounded and I tried to steady my breath. I was a champion, but more than that; I was free.

The Ocean of Knowledge: Net Cruciality

There's an ocean of knowledge
I can't point out to you where
Some will offer you a map
That will never get you there

Because this ocean lives only
In the moist soil beneath our feet
It is a tune that can't be understood
Ev'ry crashing wave a new beat

Some simplify, they call it the web
That will trap and imprison our youth
Some insist the information highway
Will break the speed limit of the truth

And anyone may drink if they wish
Though I have heard it is rather salty
And anyone may salivate their mind
No matter if what they spit is faulty

The first drop of this ocean fell long ago
When primal humans first raised their new voices
With each new word their little puddle did grow
Until rowing through thought was their only choice

And through papyrus and stone and paper and ink
This puddle grew and became a great lake then sea
And through Gutenberg and Turing and Berners-Lee
The sea flooded and the ocean was finally free

Now some want to cast a net over the great waters
And revoke their neutrality
But without its freedom the ocean ecosystem
Loses all vitality

For the ocean never was truly neutral
It rolls and crashes and screams
And does its very best to present
Knowledge on our screens

“The Stranger in the Photo is Me”

I always loved to look at my family's old photographs. Rarely placed in albums, our photos were secreted away in shoeboxes, storage containers, even an old box that was once filled with Polish vodka. We have all of my mother's childhood photographs, but only one of my father. Photos were always a vessel for a good story, and for the most part was the only way I could visualize the parts of my family that I had never known. I had learned to recognize my grandfather's smile, or my grandmother's tortoiseshell glasses, from square polaroids.

I find myself going back to old photographs these days, as I try to rediscover the joy I see in the faces of my favourite pictures. Looking at the people I know, my mother, my father and myself, I always find that I think about how long it's been since I saw my dad smile like that, or looked at my mother's face when she laughed, or since I've seen myself falling into the arms of giggling friends. Where did these people go? When did we stop being these people? Sometimes I think I can pinpoint the answers back to certain times. Diagnoses. Fights. Funerals. But the truth is that these people still exist somewhere, and can be dragged up from the past by the right joke.

I remember as a child being frequently followed around by yellow Kodak disposable cameras, my parents obsessed with capturing my every moment. Looking at them, I can tell from the sometimes-blurry outcome that this was before the time when you could take 40 photos to make sure that one turned out the way you wanted. I miss that sense of immediacy, how that was the only picture you could have of that exact moment, in that exact pose, in that exact way.

Finding photographs of me is not difficult. My life has been constant-

ly documented by the people I love. Finding this photograph necessitated sorting through stacks, watching bald me become curly-haired me become wavy-haired me. Watching pink dresses turn to navy blue skirts to jeans to navy blue skirts once again.

I get the privilege or curse of watching my parents grow older, how I can see them without worry lines and grey hair. Watch how they dance around kitchens and kiss on boardwalks. For a moment, I get to live their life before me.

Ironically, the photo that I chose was taken with my first cell phone at my grade 8 graduation. I'm standing with my teacher in our local community centre. Our graduation was held there not for pomp and ceremony, but because this was the first time it had rained on a graduation date for 5 years, and this was the best backup they had. My mother is behind the camera, and I am laughing because she can't figure out how to work the buttons. This is the second time I ever saw my father cry.

I lived that day feeling like what I was living was becoming the past all too quickly. The first place I truly felt like I belonged, where I was the happiest I ever remember being, was slipping from my fingertips. My teacher, who remains a friend to this day, was at the time my closest confidant. My life was hard. You wouldn't expect it, looking at the upper-middle-class white girl graduating from a private school, but looking at it doesn't change its reality.

You don't look at this girl and see her dying mother. You don't see that she hated the dress she was wearing, that she only bought because it was the only one that fit her awkward body. You don't see the clash of her hope and fear for the future in her eyes. You get to see her happy. Brilliantly, blindly, briefly happy.

This photo doesn't haunt me as much as it invokes this strange longing inside me. To go back. To climb back into this photo of a happy kid and live there forever. You'd think I'd want to go back to offer some sage advice to younger me, but I don't have anything to give her. I want her life to stay the same for selfish reasons so that I can revisit her memories. I want to dance in

kitchens to Taylor Swift with her. I want to go to the CD store with her and wonder again why the hell a CD store would be selling Meatloaf. I want her to remain encapsulated in my mind.

I try to run back to her so many times. Call old friends, write letters, draft emails. I converse with old writing teachers or librarians, and they all remind me of how brilliant our shared past was. So why can't I see myself in any of their descriptions?

My childhood wasn't always easy, but for all its hardship, it was a happy one. At this point, I had no idea that dying mothers could actually become dead mothers. I didn't know that I would become one of the few people my own age to have outlived one of their own parents. I was blissfully unaware that what seemed to be a shattered life to me had no effect on the world outside of my own bubble. I didn't know how isolating grief could be when met by others' expectations for your actions. And I didn't need to. In this photo, I still believed in some semblance of a happy ending. Not all rainbows and butterflies, but with at least a couple thrown into the mix.

The me in this photo is like a person you see on the street who you recognize but can't quite place. She hasn't heard herself crying alone in an empty house after her father left for work.

I didn't know how my life would become this crushing mixture of joy and pain and laughter and sorrow. I didn't know, and I couldn't have expected myself to.

In so many ways, the fundamentals of me and my life have changed from that of the girl in this picture. But she isn't really gone. Her hope still niggles at the back of my brain, small but relentless. I cannot advise my former incarnation but to tell her to hold on to her hope, and to hope in turn that it will carry her through. She will in time learn to celebrate her strangeness. She will learn what it is like to become a stranger. Or perhaps what it will be like to become known.

Chrismukkah

Every couple years or so during winter break, my dad, mom, brother and I drive a few hours north to the town of Sault Ste. Marie to visit my dad's huge, Italian-Catholic family. If there is one thing the Soo does well, it's Christmas, and the Guarascio family is no exception. Each year, we step into my Aunt Donna's house and are immediately engulfed in the feeling of Christmas: carols playing in the background, meatballs simmering on the stove, white Christmas lights on the tree. We bring some things of our own that don't exactly match the house's Christmas vibe: wooden dreidels, homemade latkes, and a little silver menorah. Then, the Chrismukkah celebration can officially start.

I love visiting the Soo during the holidays, and my relatives on my dad's side are now all extremely welcoming and open-minded about my family's observance of Hanukkah. But celebrating winter holidays in the Soo wasn't always such a smooth experience.

In the winter of 1996, my dad brought my mom to meet his family for the first time. His parents were conservative, traditional Italian immigrants who took an immense amount of pride in their culture. It went without saying that they expected their son to remain Catholic, and marry an Italian-Catholic girl. So, it was a bit of a surprise for them when he introduced them to a non-Italian, Jewish girl, and shared his decision to convert to Judaism.

During the first year or so of my parents' relationship, there was quite a bit of tension with my dad's side of the family. They definitely weren't against Judaism, but none of them had ever met a Jewish person before, and they just didn't understand what exactly it entailed. However, there was one member of

the family who, through it all, embraced my mom's beliefs with open arms.

My Nonna Chiara was the exact image of everything you'd expect an Italian grandma to be: loud, affectionate, stern but endlessly cheerful. She doused herself with Chanel No. 5 and would spend hours in the kitchen, cooking delicious Calabrese food. When she met my mom for the first time, my Nonna did everything she could to understand what the whole Jewish thing was all about. She ate matzah on Passover, learned how to play dreidel on Hanukkah, even fasted (for a couple hours) on Yom Kippur. My Nonna truly had an appreciation for the Jewish religion.

We were all devastated when my Nonna passed away. She was the glue that held our family together. Realizing just how much of an impact she had on our family, my mom was inspired to write a kid's book about a Jewish family with Christian relatives, called Nonna's Hanukkah Surprise. The main characters of the book were a Jewish girl named Rachel, and of course, her Nonna. We were so happy that we were able to honor Nonna's memory, and our relatives in the Soo were beyond thrilled. My Aunt Clare asked if, while we were in Sault Ste. Marie for Christmas, my mom was interested to do a reading of the book. She immediately agreed.

We weren't really aware that my mom wasn't going to be doing the reading in an actual bookstore. That's how we found ourselves in the basement of our family's Catholic church after one Sunday mass, eating lemon bars and slices of panettone while my mom set up a projector for her book's illustrations. We were really unsure how the reading would go. Would a Catholic congregation really be interested in hearing a Hanukkah story? I seriously doubted it.

When my mom did the reading of Nonna's Hannukah Surprise, I'm pretty sure most people didn't get any of the Jewish references, but it didn't matter. By the time she turned the final page, everyone was tearing up. We were all remembering the beautiful, strong woman who loved her family more than anything, no matter their culture, identity, or religious beliefs. My brother and I spent another hour in the church, teaching old Italian ladies

Hanukkah terminology and the rules of the dreidel game. I think many people, myself included, truly realized something that day: making an effort to be as unprejudiced and open-minded as possible towards other people's beliefs really does help us, not hurt us. Since that year, we all followed Nonna's lead, and still to this day put in our best efforts to combine our religious celebrations into one huge Chrismukkah extravaganza. We eat chocolate gelt and decorate the Christmas tree, wrap red and green presents and light the menorah. For dinner, we serve meatballs, panettone, and yule log cake, alongside latkes and matzo ball soup. We have huge games of dreidel (that tend to get super competitive), and the shouting and laughing is almost on par with the volume of the blaring music from the Christmas radio station.

I think it is now more important than ever before that we make a conscious effort to learn about different people's points of view. The world is so polarized right now. Sometimes it feels like we aren't even speaking the same language; with all the "fake news" that is constantly being spread, everyone has a different set of facts. Obviously it's unrealistic to think we can forget our own biases and opinions, but I think there is a lot of value in taking a step back and at least trying to understand the opposite viewpoint. Because let's be honest: Hanukkah and Christmas may be fun on their own, but Chrismukkah is the only holiday where you get to eat latkes and watch Elf three times in a row.

Respect Your Elders

Korean social etiquette is responsible for the death of 250 innocent school children. What is wrong with that statement? Nothing factual. The world turns its attention to South Korea for the winter Olympics, yet its senses are dulled. The Olympics tend to have a soporific effect on the voice of the skeptic; we overlook problematic shortcomings of the host country, distracted by pageantry and pomp. In this time of international joy and community, arguably one of South Korea's most triumphant moments, I am reminded of one of the most embarrassing and tragic events in Korean history, and the problems it reveals about Korean society.

On the 16th of April, 2014, students from Dawon highschool boarded the Sewol ferry, which travelled from the southern city of Incheon to Jeju island. Just as the ship began its breakfast service, it made a sharp turn to the right—causing an overloaded cargo bay to tip the vessel.¹ In an accident of this nature, one hopes that any human casualties would be a product of the unforeseeable or extraneous—accidental. It is particularly disheartening to learn that in the case of the Sewol ferry disaster, the deaths were result of human negligence, and were almost certainly preventable.

This accident was characterized by ineptitude. While totality of the circumstances elude us, certain facts indicate missteps by the crew of the Sewol. An inexperienced junior officer, and not the captain, had been at the helm while the ship passed through an area with volatile currents, and closely clustered islands.² Additionally, the cargo freight was improperly secured,

1 "What We Know about Sewol's Sinking." ABC, www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-17/south-korea-ferry-disaster-sewol-what-we-know/5397570.

2 "South Korea Ferry 'Steered by Inexperienced Third Mate.'" BBC News, BBC, 20 Apr. 2014, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27087243.

and shifted around as the ship capsized.³ Yet, it would be overly punitive to claim that these unfortunate mismanagements of the ship were completely responsible for the death of the passengers. It would also be irresponsible to ignore the evidence of malfunction of the Sewol's navigation system, for the purposes of prosecuting the crew. Their crime rests not in failure to prevent the accident, but in failure to remedy it.

As the ship began to take on water, and the crew realized that sinking was inevitable, the ship's announcement system did not advise—as one would assume—to safely evacuate. Rather, passengers were told to stay put.⁴ As the students, confined to their rooms, were subjected to watery deaths, the captain and crew abandoned the ship, and with it, their responsibility for the safety of their passengers. The Captain, Lee Joon-Seok, was tried for murder, but only convicted of gross negligence.⁵ As per a testimony by one of the few surviving passengers at the captain's trial, the announcement system instructed passengers to remain where they were, and not to panic. This act by the crew was deplorable, I doubt that many would dispute that. On this point, I shall not elaborate further.

The disaster's essential question for me became: Why did the students make no effort made to escape the ship? They obviously knew they were in danger, for many sent texts which initially called for help, and eventually, bid their loved ones farewell.⁶ Anyone who has spent ample time around Koreans knows the problematic answer to this question: in Korean culture, blind deference to the authority of an adult is expected. This tradition originates from the influence of Confucian philosophy on Korean society. A key relationship

3 Park, Madison. "What Went Wrong on Sewol?" CNN, Cable News Network, 15 May 2014, www.cnn.com/2014/05/15/world/asia/sewol-problems/.

4 Board, The Editorial. "Opinion | Duty and Shame as the Ship Sank." The New York Times, The New York Times, 22 Apr. 2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/04/23/opinion/duty-and-shame-as-the-ship-sank.html.

5 "Captain Responsible for South Korean Ferry Which Sank, Claiming 304 Lives, Is Jailed for Life after Court Rules Him Guilty of Homicide." Daily Mail, www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3058436/Captain-doomed-ferry-sentenced-life-prison.html.

6 News, CBC. "If I Wronged Any of You, Forgive Me': South Korean Student Texts from Doomed Ship." CBCnews, CBC/Radio Canada, 17 Apr. 2014, www.cbc.ca/news/world/south-korea-ferry-disaster-texts-from-the-doomed-ship-1.2612734.

in Confucian teaching is the deference of son to father—a deference that extends from any younger member of society to any older member.⁷ Elders are axiomatically taken to be wiser, and therefore must always be obeyed by their juniors. This conception manifests itself in many pedantic behavioural traditions among Korean families: it is considered very rude to eat before an elder at the dinner table, to assume a leisurely posture around them, or to use only one hand when pouring an elder's beverage. Informal language and dress are also considered greatly inappropriate in the presence of an elder.

As an individual of Korean decent, but never raised in a traditional Korean household, these traditions seem rather quaint and antiquated. Allow me to clarify. I understand the importance of being respectful, and am not opposed to that element of Korean tradition. Yet, I find it logically impossible to justify unquestionably following the orders of another based on a characteristic as arbitrary as age. Why should age be a major determinant of value? In fact, it was one of the Dawon students who sent the first call for rescue, via text, while his elders remained stagnant, and failed to take heroic action. Age is a biological quality no more controllable than race or gender, and we vehemently reject the idea that either race or gender should grant any person automatic authority over others. In fact, we deem these practices as bigoted: racist and sexist. Why does the same uproarious rejection of bigotry not follow with ageism?

The superiority of seniority in Korean culture harms its citizens beyond single events such as the Sewol disaster. Korean children and young adults find themselves worked relentlessly by their parents. Malcolm X, who once claimed that education was a passport to the future, would find himself, as a customs agent, unimpressed with the documentation of Korean students. The education culture in Korea is, and I do not use this expression lightly, deeply broken. Students are forced, by their parents and teachers, to study rigorously for hours on end. The average school day finishes as late as 11

7

Montoya, Daniella. "The Five Relationships of Confucianism Are Father and Son." Academia. edu, www.academia.edu/28703668/The_five_relationships_of_Confucianism_are_father_and_son.

p.m.⁸ Further, the work is banal and pedantic: performance on standardized tests is prioritized over development of creativity or critical thinking skills. I do not imagine that many students are particularly enamoured with this education process. In fact, South Korea has the highest suicide rate amongst its youth, certainly a reflection of stress and anxiety.⁹ Despite the evident distress induced by interminable schooling, there is little in the way of protest among students, given that the enforcers of the educational regime are teachers and parents—elders. Students are punished for voicing criticism of a system which harms their health. Is the goal of education not to raise thinkers who are able to challenge the problems they face in the world?

If it is considered social deviance to stray from the orders of an elder, how will positive change ever transpire? Complacency is the cancer of progress. My uncle's experiences working in Korea capture this issue perfectly. As a former NHL player (the first ever Korean), and assistant coach of the minor league affiliate of the Detroit Red Wings, my uncle, Paek Chi-sun (known to me simply as uncle Jimmy), is an experienced hockey authority. For that reason exactly, he was hired by the Korean Olympic Committee to coach the Korean Men's National hockey team for the four years leading up to the Olympic Games in Pyeongchang. When he inherited the team, they were, excuse the expression, a sorry bunch. Hockey was essentially a non-sport; the Korean team inhabited the lowly C pool of the international rankings. The roster spots were filled not based on talent, but on the nepotistic whims of management. In the words of my uncle: "When I first experienced Korean Hockey the seniors would get all the ice time, order the younger players to carry their bags, pick up pucks, basically do all the work". Unsurprisingly, as soon as playtime was delegated based on skill level, the team rocketed up into the prestigious top competition division of international hockey (also featuring Canada, the United States, Sweden). Even after proving his competency

8 Sistek, Hanna. "South Korean Students Wracked with Stress." Al Jazeera, www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/12/south-korean-students-wracked-with-stress-201312884628494144.html.

9 Singh, Ana, et al. "The 'Scourge of South Korea': Stress and Suicide in Korean Society." Berkeley Political Review, 23 Oct. 2017, bpr.berkeley.edu/2017/10/31/the-scourge-of-south-korea-stress-and-suicide-in-korean-society/.

as a coach, my uncle was still subjected to backlash from older members of Korean hockey management while trying to enact programmatic changes. I shudder to imagine the implications of a dictatorship of seniority in fields where the stakes are much higher than winning or losing hockey games. Uncorrected miscalculations by senior officers in the military, finance, or nuclear power management would undoubtedly spell disaster.

I found it rather disappointing that in the aftermath of the Sewol's sinking, no news outlets or social commentators made the same arguments or observations which I have offered above. I was not, however, surprised. In my experience, the voices which challenge the status quo most often emanate from the youth. In Korea, where such voices are so forcefully suppressed, it is perhaps unsurprising that none have arisen to question the age hierarchy. Who can blame them after all? Were I living in Korea right now, I would likely be labelled a blasphemous deviant for writing as I have, even by those of my age. Were I aboard the Sewol, would any students have heeded my warnings? My frantic efforts to escape would be met with emphatic shaking of the head and crossing of the arms. Why would I be trying to escape? Survival surely is an undertaking far too trifling for someone of my age. Better to leave it to the elders.

Thank You, Victoria

We ran through the corridors, stumbling over bullets shells and complete silence. The school seemed isolated, but we knew that we had to find the hiding children and teachers quickly. The first room we ran into was heart-breaking; there on the blood splattered floor lay the innocent, once hopeful bodies of at least six school children and one teacher; from what I could tell in her arms was also the body of a small boy. She was found huddled over all the children, as if she were acting as a human shield. On her nametag read Victoria...thank you, Victoria. As soon as we began to sweep the room, we heard the ruckus and movement of children within the closet. We reassured them by telling them that we were there to protect and save them. We had to pry the closet door open, because there was no key to be found. Once the closet was able to be opened, were eleven children...and they were alive. Each had tears streaming down her face, some crying for their moms, one child cried to me and said that he didn't want to die before Christmas. I reassured them we were going to return them safety, and that they will see their moms soon enough.

Thank you, Victoria.

Thank you, for saving eleven lives in exchange for yours, for treating each child like your own kid, and selflessly sacrificing your body to comfort and shield the children who have just perished.

Thank you, Victoria.

I heard him coming down the hallway yelling, "Here comes the gunman! Here comes the gunman!" I knew I had to do something and I knew that I had to think fast. I grabbed as many children as I could, and one by one I stuffed each one of them into the closet; each one was crying and calling

out for someone...someone to save them. I heard the door handle start to turn, and heavy boots clunk outside the classroom door; it was like hearing death walk towards us, with his big unregretful boots and soulless, heavy body. I knew that all I could do was shut the closet door quickly and lock it. So I did.

I realized that I still had six children to save, one whose name was Dylan. Dylan was the only autistic boy in my class, and the one who was the most attached to me; I tried to open a cabinet as quick as I could, but it was too late. My heart into a pit of anguish and despair. Not only for me, but mainly for Dylan. So I grabbed him and I hugged him and I told him that I loved him, and that everything was going to be alright. I love you, Dylan... and everything is going to be okay, Dylan. The other kids all surrounded me as I comforted them as well. "Everything will be fine children, just stand behind me, and don't move...I love you all very much." I tried to reason with the gunman, but he would not listen. The gunfire commenced.

The sun was bright, the snow was glimmering, and my tea was nearly ready. Everything outside was quieter than it usually had been on such a beautiful and snowy morning. I watched as the icicles dropped their melting ice onto the tip of my windowsill. Although the snow was sparkling against the sunshine, something didn't feel right, the air coming in from the window was frozen and silent. The phone rang. "Margaret, turn on the news right now! It's Max's school...it's Sandy Hook...it's your son, he's in trouble...there was a gunman...or a shooting...I don't really know the details, but you have to go make sure he is okay...

I hear the dial tone as I let the phone drop to the floor. As soon as my good friend, Shelly, had told me what was going on and to watch the news, I dropped the phone along with, my cup of tea so fast that it shattered across the kitchen floor and I began to shed my regretful tears. I didn't even bother to grab my winter boots or coat, I ran out the door and to the car as fast as I could, because I knew deep down in my heart that my baby was there and alive. As soon as I got to the school, it was complete chaos. Screaming moth-

ers, angry fathers, and weeping children. I tried to seek out Max for myself but he was nowhere to be found. I looked everywhere; I knew he couldn't be gone, I just knew that somehow someone would save him or make his own way out. My own helplessness crept in like a predator creeps onto its prey... silent but deleterious. The moment I felt I was starting to become hopeless, I was hopeless, and so was Max when the shooter decided to take his defenceless and innocent life. I could hear him in my head, crying for me, like he did if got scared of the dark at night and needed me to come and lay with him. I would always reassure him that monsters weren't real, his biggest fear, or so I thought. Monsters.

From the corner of my eye I could see one last group of school children being escorted out by a group of swat members. I heard him. His voice was the same as when he was scared at night. I saw him, he expressed the same emotions as he did when he thought he saw a shadow of a monster, when really it was his stuffed dinosaur. I ran up to him, as fast as I could. One of the swat officers pushed me and ordered me to stay back, just until they figured out who each child was. I was desperate to see my child; one of the officers recognized this, and so we ran towards each other.

He was safe.

Someone saved Max from the monster. Thank you, Victoria.

Mama's Helper, Papa's Little Girl

Silence crept in like cracks in the waters of a frozen pond. The weewoos of the police cars drowned out the screams of the audience that had gathered. Actually, it didn't sound like there were many screams. It was more like everyone had come together to form a choir of pain. I looked over at the spot where my lifeless, motionless body now lay. A pool of crimson surrounded me. My blood didn't gush out in a constant flow, but rather in time as the heavy beating of my heart slowed to a minute tap. The red against my brown skin was actually quite calming. One might say soothing. A psychopath might say beautiful. Am I a psychopath? Yes? No? Maybe. The man with the blue eyes and kind face still had his gun pointed at me. I walked over to him but I couldn't feel the ground against my feet. Weird.

I'll take you back. Back to before. I'd woken up that morning in my little, dainty room to the smell of freshly-baked bread that attacked my nose and the sounds of crispy bacon popping against burning oil. If I tried hard enough, I could sniff out the deep, dark smell of Papa's coffee which he never drank without sugar. It tasted disappointing, if I must say. Mama said to go get some eggs so we could all sit together and have a big breakfast. We hadn't done that for a long time. Papa always had work. Mama made sure I didn't wear dark clothes. Mama made sure my hands were visible. But Mama can't make people not hate me.

I skipped along to the store, a song in my heart and a dance in my step. A smile played on my lips. Mama had promised I could help cook. I thought of Papa and how he would swing me in the air when he tasted my meal. I was lost in thought when the car pulled up. The blue man stepped out. He seemed alarmed, but I couldn't understand why. I saw his kind eyes and his

lips move. His words didn't quite register, and I was made to ask, "What can I do for you?" I didn't understand why he yelled. I only wanted to explain. I just wanted to show him the money, to explain about the eggs. To show my hands as Mama said to. I thought he'd be glad to hear I was Mama's helper and Papa's good little girl.

I stepped towards him to explain, and then I felt it. The pain. The blue man's kind eyes turned hard. There were loud yells and louder pops. Were those the cracks of eggs? No, I hadn't bought them yet. And the pain? I didn't know which hurt more. The pain from the crimson tide flowing from my side, or the pain of imagining Mama and Papa's broken hearts. Numbness. I slowly slid to the ground. His eyes turned kind again, a last-minute, way-too-late realization of his mistake. A split second where, above ingrained hate, he saw me simply as a girl. Someone's child. A human, like him. Vision and clarity one moment too late.

I walked towards him and slowly caressed his face. A slow, tingling and burning sensation raced through me. It felt as though the devil came out and licked my back seductively before retreating to its fiery home. I slowly realized that I didn't feel hate or anger for this man for taking something precious from my Papa and Mama. I felt sadness. He was a man no different from any other that makes mistakes. How much more ironic could it be that I pity my murderer?

The Glass Between

I'm tipsy by the time I enter the restaurant. I couldn't do this night sober. Henry told me I should be more patient with her. I should. I see Irene in the corner motioning over a waitress, and I notice how beautiful she looks. She's beautiful in the way older women are with her long neck decorated in pearls. I want her to have lipstick on her teeth, I think, and this thought immediately catches me by surprise. She notices me in the doorway and smiles wide when she sees me. Her teeth are white and lipstick-free. I'm embarrassed I thought that.

"Hello sweetheart," she says smiling with her mouth. Her voice is melodic in that older southern women way.

"Hi," I say. I inwardly cringe at how timid my voice sounds. I clear my throat.

"I ordered for us," Irene smiles. "Don't worry, I know exactly what to get." She winks at me. I pull out my chair and wait for her to start talking.

"So, how is my son?" she says. "I barely see him anymore." She was laughing, but I could sense her underlying tone.

"Good. Henry's just been so busy," I reply. She nods.

"Yes, and well with a new baby and everything. I saw the photos," she pauses. "He's gorgeous."

"His name's Ben." I smile thinking of him. "We're finalizing everything on Tuesday and he'll be ours."

She nods. Her lips are pressed so tight it almost looks like a grimace. I glance around the room just noticing my surroundings. The restaurant is beautiful and tasteful. There's a glittering chandelier that cascades from the ceiling so low I feel as if I could touch it. I've always hated the look of

chandeliers, but this one looks expensive, and somehow with the neutral walls it manages to avoid being trashy. The people are the same. It's like that scene from that cartoon where the pets look exactly like their owners. Except everyone here looks exactly like the inside of this restaurant: tasteful, elegant, white. It's only then that I realize I am the exception to that rule. I wonder if they notice.

"Such a shame about your trouble having kids, but such a blessing that you guys are still having a child," she says. My eyes shift back to her face. "I mean it is a little ..." she pauses as if selecting her next word carefully, "unconventional, but I guess so was your marriage." I look down.

I touch my arm nervously, and I start rubbing it as if it is cold. I keep nodding. I keep smiling.

I think she senses my discomfort because she quickly continues. "Well, I mean we obviously don't care, but others found it quite exciting that we had an oriental woman joining our family," she laughs.

I keep nodding. I keep smiling.

"Of course," I say.

The waiter sets down plates of food, and Irene smiles graciously at him. I don't recognize anything.

"And now an African American grandson. Well, I just didn't know our family would be so multicultural." She laughs again.

There's a rumbling outside of the restaurant. Everyone seems to collectively notice this as well, as they shift up in their chairs to see what the commotion is outside. Irene turns her head, trying to see out of the window behind her.

The street outside is swarming with people. It's too far to see individual faces, so it's like the crowd is all one mass body of shouts and chaos.

"What's going on?" I ask.

"I assume they're protesting something or other," she sighs, waving her hand towards the window as she dips her fork into some type of shell fish.

"About what?"

She exhales again, lowering her fork. “Well, that police officer was acquitted and the man he shot was black so naturally...” she trails off. It’s as if the whole restaurant’s conversations about the protest outside go along similarly. They start to explain, they pause, and then they trail off. These conversations seem to leave an uncomfortable silence in their wake.

I nod quickly as if I remember watching it on the news, but I can’t remember the last time I ever watched the news at all.

There is a sharp bang on the glass of the restaurant door, followed by more chants. People in the restaurant jump, and some stand up as they look warily at the offender. The light of the restaurant illuminates the face of a young African American boy. He can’t be older than sixteen. He’s a child. He bangs once more, then seems to get consumed by the crowd.

I shift my gaze to the faces in the restaurant. Their eyes are wide and mouths pursed. The women are clutching their pearls as if some agitated protester is going to run in and snatch it from their neck. I’ve heard about these protests. About protestors avenging young black men who had died at the hands of police. I wasn’t oblivious. I wasn’t naïve either. I mean, after all, I’m a Chinese woman in the south. I know people can be cruel or even innocently ignorant, but I’m not on the streets protesting. I think of Ben. Would he want to be in these protests when he’s older? I try to stop myself from drifting to a darker thought, but it whispers in the recesses of my mind. Could he become the death they’re protesting?

Everyone inside seems to shift uncomfortably and then sit down again nervously laughing to one another.

I don’t know what comes over me, but I stand, walk to the glass door of the restaurant and look out. I don’t even bother looking back at Irene, but I can feel her gaze on the back of my neck.

I place my hands on the glass. The coolness makes it almost uncomfortable, but I keep them there. The protesters are no longer one big nuclei swarming the roads. I can see their faces. I watch them. I stare in horror and wonder as their necks strain to release the chants and as their veins press

themselves up against their skin. It looks like they might burst. As if the veins themselves hold their anger. A type of anger that can't be contained any longer. A deep-rooted type of anger. A multi-generational type of anger. I understand this anger.

I felt it at eight-years-old when some classmate pulled the corner of his eyes at me and cackled. I felt it at twelve when someone shrieked "ancient Chinese secret" at me when I walked home from school. I felt it at seventeen when Bryan Carter told everyone he wouldn't date an Asian girl. I feel it when I talk to Irene. The anger. The shame.

I wonder if Ben will feel like this.

I remember the first time I held him. I cried and wept as if it was I who gave birth to this perfect child. My hand cupped his head as I shielded him in my arms. I remember thinking about him as a boy, as a teenager, as a man. The idea of anger fillings his veins in such a visceral way horrified me.

I know Ben will feel us.

I watch in shock as the police, equipped with full riot gear, start to push up against the crowd forcing them back. The protesters retaliate. The whole scene feels unreal, as if I'm in a movie. The police begin to spray something into the crowd and I watch in horror as protesters collapse. They fall back into each other like dominoes. They shout louder.

I push on the glass door.

Interesting

You are very interesting,
I say.

Observation: his eyes light up
a machine,
a power button catalyst
triggering
various in-built functions,
Indeed an interesting life form in these locker lined high school halls.

To be studied in its natural environment.

Observation: fond of physical closeness.
Sits on cafeteria table,
hand near my hand,
face near my face.

Social behaviour: has a group of close associates
They're loitering
around the edges of my vision.

Opinion: shameless.

An observed characteristic:
unaware of body language or

expressed wishes of anyone
outside their association.

Scrapes his chair closer,
nudges my foot under the table.
Leans forward,
straight eye contact.
Attempts to feed me
a nacho from his bowl.
I crush it to pieces.

Opinion: YEAH.

Observation: subject hollers to associates across room.

Laughter.

Observation: favours use of dehumanizing swear words at a higher frequency.

Observation: I am referred to as 'bae'. They go somewhere else on their own agenda.

Field study end.

Abstract: This study will delve into the 'rude teenager boy' and their somehow normalized but wrong actions with human researcher and human subject, stop treating me like a kitty and I'll stop with you lab rats. Objectify you with no objection, publish you in pin up poses with statistics censoring eyes, paste you in shirtstorms and-Wew that was kinda off topic. Anyways...

Hypothesis:

When they realize
A mutation may occur in brain
He will apologize profusely,
Performing prostrating bows
Until his redeemed soul glows
With the golden light of gender
Equality-

No, won't work like that at all.
It's hopeless.

Little One

It's me... Nice to see you. I have missed you. Have you missed me? Oh, come on, don't pretend like you haven't. It's me! You know, the wielder of dark, quiet insult that creeps through your mind, the slither of disgust that kisses the back of your eye when you look in the mirror. I sometimes even have enough power to move your arms and make you do bad things...I can make you do whatever I want...because you cannot tell me no. You haven't missed me... Yes, you have. You need me. After all, I am part of you. What was it that poster said? "You are not your mental illness"? Well I am here to tell you not to worry, that cannot separate us. I am going to be with you for a long, long time, little one.

I hop off the YRT three blocks away from my house. It is not that the other two stops aren't closer to my house, I just know that I can burn more calories if I walk the rest of the way. Plus, that would be my punishment for eating an afternoon snack today. I do not care that it is -13. The cold wakes me up, and the snowflakes are beautiful. They fall in slow motion and land as if descending into a sweet, blissful sleep. They are so tiny. I wish I could join them, but instead I am stuck here in this miserable town. I have three assignments due in the next two days; I was considering talking to my prof, but I doubt he would care about issues I am having. I probably wouldn't have explained it well enough anyway. Maybe it just is stupid and selfish. I mean, who am I really to be despondent when so many other people have it worse? As I walk, I watch my feet kicking up the soft blanket of white, thrusting the sleeping snowflakes out of dormancy. Wake up now, wake up. Fall somewhere

else, but do not settle here. It has been so long since there was anything but cold, desolation. What happened to spring? Where did all the birds go? I guess the groundhog saw his shadow after all. I don't blame him for being afraid of it; shadows can be so much bigger than we are. I would hide too.

We do like hiding. It would be a disaster if someone were to find out that I was living with you! You are such an incredible host, little one. You give me all I need to grow strong. In return, I give you what you need to work towards the perfection you crave; critical criticism (which comes from a place of constructive advice), then action to make improvement. You do understand that I am here to make you prettier and better by showing you everything you need to change, to be happy. Little one, you lack so much. I am just glad I am here to help you.

The wind bites my nose as I, looking for my keys, fumble through my purse. The door opens with a thrust of my shoulder. When I enter, the pleasant aroma swirls around me in an almost warm embrace. Comfort. I miss that. I head upstairs, past the kitchen to start my homework. I am too stressed to think about food right now. I am not even hungry. Plus, I always feel prettier, more comfortable, when I have less around my waist, when I am just a little bit smaller. I open my textbook and begin to read. This week's psych assignment is on the chemicals of the brain and their function. I am studying dopamine and chemical imbalances. I know that only the "dumb" people take psych, because it is "not a real science," but math and science are not my thing at all, and I kind of enjoy psychology. It is a bit of a relief to know that there is a logical explanation for always being unhappy. Plus, it is also fascinating. A birth of knowledge comes with every page I read. I have often wondered who else lives up there; in my brain of course, aside from me. Who else scans my thoughts, whispers secrets that only my self-esteem can hear? Who is my brain? Why, is it like this? Is it really three pounds and 15 centimeters in diameter? I control that? That is a lot bigger than I thought.

I live in many different places, little one. One of my favourite spots is on your optic nerve which connects to the back of your brain. I get a bird's eye view of everything you see. I consider myself a filter. Your eyes are our lens. Did you know that I can even gain control of you by distorting what you see? I mean think about it: if I were to reach down and choke your optic nerve with my two hands, you would see a distorted image because I am showing you something that I want you to see, and with every ill thought you think of yourself, you feed me and help me grow. At this rate, I will soon be too big to fit in your brain.

It is the end of January, "Bell, Let's Talk" day to be precise. We have a presenter coming to our psych class. I am not excited. All they ever do is tell us that we are not alone, that it is okay not to be okay and all that stuff. I always get mad because their descriptions of depression and other mental health issues seem so accurate, like they know somehow. I mean, not that I would know. I am not "sick." I am just stressed, which causes weight loss, mood swings, and unhappiness. I am perfectly fine. Most first years go through this anyway. I sit and listen to her story and how she wished that she had access to resources earlier. She goes on and on about how degrading it is to live with a mental illness and that there is no shame in having one. 1 in 4 Canadians...but I am not that one in four, right?

Sick? Little one, you are NOT sick, that is ridiculous. Why do you even question believing a single word that woman says? Look at her. She is not thin, nowhere near perfect, and she clearly has let go of all control, nothing is in her power! Do you want to lose the control we have over you? She cannot truly be happy! This is all a trick to make her feel better! She just wants you to "accept" what you are so she will feel better about not being able to fix herself! How dare you even question that. Disgusting, pathetic and small you are. What would you be without me? What would you be! Nothing. That is

what you are until you fix what you are. You should hate yourself...worthless and puny.

I tell myself that I am fine; I do not need help. Besides, it does make me happier to think that I have control over my weight, to think that I can just disappear into these mood swings and drown in my depression. But...the less I weigh, the smaller I am. The more I disappear, the more hidden I am. The farther I sink, the more far-gone I am...

What are you trying to say, small one?

I think hard to myself... I... I do not want this anymore.

You what?

I do not want this anymore

What do you mean you do not want this? You cannot fix yourself without me! You cannot do this by yourself!!

You are right. I cannot do this by myself.

I approach the lady after the presentation. I know that I cannot do this anymore. I cannot be on my own anymore. I cannot do this on my own. Maybe I am sick, maybe I do need help, maybe I am not alone. The presenter has kind eyes, emery black traced with thick eyelashes free from makeup. She smiles. I breathe in. She asks me how she can help. I breathe out, and with my exhalation comes the burning words I have wanted to say for so long: "I think...

Don't you dare...

“I may... need help.”

Her hand, warm and comforting, finds its way to my forearm,. She sits me down and we begin to talk. Relief grows inside of me, comfort finally returns to me. I hear that little voice in my head begin to shrink.

You are nothing without me! You need me! You cannot fix yourself on your own!

But I am not on my own, I do not need fixing, and I do not need you... little one. And no, I will not miss you.

Editorial : Figuring out Fentanyl: The “Modern Plague”

When you hear word ‘plague’, what automatically comes to mind? Maybe some historical examples, such as the Yellow Fever or the Black Plague, or life-threatening medical epidemics, like Zika or Ebola. You might be surprised to learn that the source of what New York Times is calling the “modern plague” can be found in your city, neighborhood, and medicine cabinet.

The recent dramatic increase in deaths from opioid addiction and overdose is leading to a medical crisis that killed “64,000 Americans in 2016” alone (Katz, 2017). The lives of all people, no matter the age, socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnicity are at risk of falling prey to the opioid drug epidemic that has “no face” (Katz, 2017). With the overprescription of opioids in North America, patients are becoming more dependent on the opioids to heal their non-chronic pain.

Times have changed. Doctors used to be advised to not prescribe opioids to their patients due to their addictive tendencies. However, after only prescribing for people with “advanced cancer, severe injuries, and major surgery” (Anderson, 2017), doctors became accused of not being attentive enough with pain patients. As a result of the loosening of prescribing regulations, in the span of 1995 to 2015, “more than 138,000 people died from overdoses related to prescription opioids” (Anderson, 2017) in the US. With over-prescribing, comes over-dependency and increased tolerance. Without a prescription, addicted patients will turn to street opioids, such as heroin or counterfeits. This is where the real problem lies: fentanyl, an extremely potent

opioid, that is finding its way into street heroin and painkillers from manufacturers overseas. Most drug users are unaware of the added fentanyl and its deadly potency, as “an amount smaller than a few grains of salt can be a lethal dose” (Katz, 2017). The death toll is rising and drug overdoses are “the leading cause of death among Americans under 50” (Katz, 2017).

Vancouver has one of the worst opioid addiction and overdose problems in North America. In a desperate attempt to serve the vulnerable residents of the drug-ridden neighborhood of East Hastings, Liz Evans came forward and created InSite, a supervised injection facility. They use a harm-reduction model for recovery and safe drug use. Some argue that programs and facilities like these help fuel drug addiction further and give drug addicts a safety net. However, the 2015 stats on InSite’s website show that 1,781 overdose interventions occurred there in one year alone. These interventions save lives and create opportunities for more long-term healing. In New York City, they have needle exchange programs similar to InSite. Studies have shown this program leads to “increased admissions for addiction treatment and detoxification” (Gupta, 2017). Other overdose recovery kits like Narcan, that comes with the reversing drug naloxone, are being carried around by citizens, police officers, bartenders, and even drug users, implying that the threat of overdose is almost as common as an allergic reaction.

At The Corner Project in New York City, they have a safe injection bathroom with a timer, clean needles, and an intercom system. This bathroom reduces both the occurrence of overdoses and infection. Moreover, the privacy and security of this bathroom -- rather than “an abandoned building, car, or public bathroom” (Gupta, 2017) -- leaves the dignity of the person with an addiction intact and effectively reduces stigma. Professionally run needle exchanges and safe injection sites have been proven to help drug users feel more comfortable seeking help. These recovery programs don’t make users quit cold turkey, allowing for users to safely open up about their addiction -- a vital first step to the recovery process.

Three quarters of new heroin users started with prescription narcotics,

according to CNN. Three out of every four. More cities needs to follow New York and Vancouver's example. We need prescription policies and drug recovery programs that help reduce stigma, open dialogue about the realities of addiction, and reduce the number of victims claimed by the "modern plague."

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Ignition

A year ago, when I met elite government official, Joseph Wilmington, he had superiority over the natives seeping from his pores. As Wilmington and Cecil J. Rhodes toasted to The Native Bill, I finally understood the strong bond between the Englishmen. They were united by their unjust belief in white above all.

When I approached Wilmington to discuss The Native Bill, he presented it as an opportunity to teach the “lazy natives” in Zimbabwe a work ethic. This was a common tactic for the government to use. They tried to convince English reporters, myself included, that they were helping the native population to disguise their true intentions. The Native Bill resulted in forcing the natives into the wage-labour market and increasing the control of the power hungry government, leading to a decline in the quality of life for the already struggling natives.

The politicians were soaring when the bill passed. To celebrate, a few of the leaders raped Asha, a young native, who was being held down like an animal being prepared for slaughter. I grieved internally for the agony of girl, who I saw from my window. Mr. Joseph Wilmington was horrified and used his authority to stop the inhumane actions of his colleagues.

I was shocked, only a few weeks had passed since my initial meeting with Wilmington, where he had boasted about “teaching the natives their place.” It was not exclusively myself who was astonished by Wilmington protecting a native. When the men released Asha, she was frozen, stunned for a moment before she fled. I cannot imagine how strange and conflicting it must have been to be rescued by one of her oppressors, the man responsible for the Native Bill.

The rapists reported the matter to Rhodes, who reportedly described them as “decent white men simply trying to tame a beast.” Rhodes was furious with Wilmington for publically defying the official stance and abandoning their beliefs. Rhodes felt personally betrayed by his close confidante’s actions and pursued revenge. He publicly addressed Wilmington, humiliating him in front of his peers to encourage his subordination. Had Wilmington not possessed a high status the punishment would have been much more severe.

Soon after, I accompanied Wilmington and other officers on an official visit to a native community. There he spotted Asha and strayed from the group to follow her. I saw both fear and fascination in her eyes as she led him away. Wilmington explains that he followed her because he was curious why he had risked his reputation for a stranger. In broken English, Asha described their conversation as “fire”. Never would I have thought that a native girl would use the word fire, a substance of the highest value in the native communities, with an Englishman.

Wilmington continued to meet Asha in private, ironically dismissing laws that he himself had created. As their connection grew, Asha’s skin melted away from Joseph, exposing to him the human she had always been. The relationship gave Asha joy, something that was severely lacking in Zimbabwe native communities.

Eventually, Asha became pregnant with Joseph’s baby exposing their relationship to both the English and native communities. After the baby was born, Rhodes came to the native community on an official visit on which I was the reporter. When Rhodes saw the baby he began shouting at Wilmington, declaring that the baby was an “abomination”.

I saw him clench his fist, suppressing his urge for violence. Rhodes was undeniably brilliant and understood that if he were to harm that child the English would turn away from him. After all, the child was half like us; therefore by government logic it was half supreme and by extension untouchable by Rhodes.

During Rhodes' rage I witnessed an extraordinary transition in each of the natives. They began to stand taller as they fed off of Rhodes' outrage. Each of his cries powered their strength. The cowering women inched closer to the most feared white man hoping to inhale the smoke of his downfall. This was the natives' first victory against their oppressors. I could feel the warmth of their glowing pride.

It is appropriate that Asha gave birth to the first half-white half-native child as her name translates to the word "hope". I saw her child restore and become the symbol of faith in the once desperate society. The child sparked a fire in each of the native's souls, giving them the light to imagine a free future.

We must not let the government extinguish the fire within us. We can use this newfound courage to facilitate change. The baby proves to the supremacist, what most of us have always understood, that we are all human, all equals. We need to use this opportunity and the focus this child has captured to ensure that all are treated justly. This may be the first victory of the natives, however we will not let it be the last. We will not stop until the divide between the communities has been conquered and we are all living in a better Zimbabwe.

Congratulations to this year's winning entries and honourable mentions:

Grades 7/8

1. *Stand Up* by Bella Melardi
2. *The Voice of a Nation* by Aman Serhan
3. *Red Dresses: The Impact of Indigenous Women on Canadian Culture* by Isabelle Barker

Honourable Mention:

When You Leave, There's Nothing Left of Me by Chloe Comeau

Grades 9/10

1. *lamplight* by Norah Peebles
2. *Caleb's Requiem* by Em Merchant
3. *The Long Way Home* by Kiara Chong

Honourable Mention:

Running From His Snow White Eyes by Celeste Frank

Grades 11/12

1. *The Glass Between* by Thai Judiesch
2. *Free* by Sofia Beraldo
3. *Mama's Helper, Papa's Little Girl* by Michelle Joe-Ezigbo

Honourable Mention:

The Stranger in the Photo is Me by Lucy Farcnik

Thank you to each of our contributing students. Thank you to the teachers who encouraged our aspiring authors to write their stories, essays and poems.