

INSIGHT

2022



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Insight 2022 Dedication



Mrs. Michelle Cordaro

This year's Literary Magazine is dedicated to Mrs. Cordaro. One of the first teachers that incoming high school students have, Mrs. Cordaro goes above and beyond helping her students adjust to the new environment and setting a solid foundation for their high school careers. She is welcoming, engaging, kind, and highly respected in the Haldane academic community. We congratulate her on the new upcoming addition to her family. Thank you for everything, Mrs Cordaro!

Table of Contents

Address To A Broken Hearted Nation by Caroline Cates	Pages 7-9
Poem by Fiona Shanahan	Page 10
Poem by Walker Tinsley	Page 10
Poem by Christian Ferreira	Page 11
Artwork by Molly Siegel	Page 11
Poem by Anonymous	Page 11
Death of the West by Ezra Beato	Pages 12-15
Artwork by Harrison Sassano	Page 15
Artwork by Fiona Shanahan	Page 15
Open Up by Keira Shanahan	Page 16
Artwork by Carmela Cofini	Page 16
Artwork by Elijah McKelvey	Page 17
Artwork by Quin Carmicino	Page 18
Artwork by Robbie Baker	Page 19
Anti Gravity by Chase Coulson	Page 19
Finnley the Fishstick by Cassie Kubik	Page 20
Artwork by Blake Bolte	Page 20
Green Goblin Gobbles Up Green Grass by Milo Pearsall	Page 21
Artwork by Emilia Osborn	Page 21
Artwork by Samuel Bates	Page 22
Apricot by Walker Tinsley	Page 22
An Anxiety Attack by Camille Maglio	Pages 23-25
Hunger by Louis Ferreira	Page 26
Bunker by Robbie Baker	Pages 27-34

Circus, Red, Mariana by Shea DeCaro	Pages 35-37
Artwork by Samuel Bates	Page 35
The Unspoken Rules of Womanhood by Helen Chiera	Pages 38-39
Artwork by Felix Schmidt	Page 40
Headlines by Stephen Robinson	Pages 41-43
Artwork by Robbie Baker	Page 44
Poem by Ezra Beato	Page 44
Artwork by Maya Osborn	Page 45
The Fair by Amelia Alayon	Page 45
Winter by Chase Coulson	Page 46
Artwork by Fiona Shanahan	Page 46
The Boy of Gold by Percy Parker	Page 47-49
Artwork by Scotia Hartford	Page 50
Artwork by Molly Siegel	Page 51
Fantasy Story by Iain Starr	Pages 52-55
Artwork by Caroline Cates	Page 55
Ghost Story by Violeta Edwards	Pages 56-63
Artwork by Gabby Perilli	Page 63
Artwork by Robbie Baker	Page 64
Poem by Chris Coronel	Page 65
Artwork by Sofia Wallis	Page 65
Artwork by Quin Carmicino	Page 66
Artwork by Percy Parker	Page 67
I Am No Longer by Percy Parker	Pages 67-68
The Garden by Keira Shanahan	Page 69
Winter by Louis Ferreira	Page 69

Great Green Meadow by Stephen Robinson	Page 70
Artwork by Quin Carmicino	Page 70
Artwork by Ashley Sousa	Page 71
Splintered Chaos by Chase Coulson	Page 72
Artwork by Betsy Cates	Page 73
Artwork by Ella Ashburn	Page 74
Artwork by Jeremy Hall	Page 75
The Snikerlanthope by Fiona Shanahan	Page 75
Artwork by Ashley Sousa	Page 75
Western by Brendan Shanahan	Pages 76-78
Artwork by Gray Cardoso	Page 78
Many Faces of Rose by Rose LaBarbera	Page 79
Mondrian Makeup by Samuel Bates	Page 80
Artwork by Samuel Bates	Page 80
Artwork by Elijah McKelvey	Page 81
Sharps and Linens by Elijah McKelvey	Page 81
Artwork by Molly Siegel	Page 82
The Banker in the Theater by Camilla McDaniel	Page 83
Artwork by Rhys Robbins	Page 83
Makeup by Rose LaBarbera	Page 84
Sundown by Jackson Twoguns	Page 85-89
Artwork by Ella Ashburn	Page 89
Bone Soup by Chase Coulson	Page 90

Address to a Broken Hearted Nation

The static of the microphone pierces through the vibrant chatter of the plaza. Followed by a silence, heavy with anticipation. I step forward into the light and smile.

“Hello everyone! I want to begin by thanking you all for joining me here today. The events of this day and everyday forward could not have come about without the motivation and support of each and every one of you.”

Eyes in the crowd lean into me, they already know my words to be true, and yet hearing them, they seemed captured by their own resilience as if discovering it for the first time. Sun light bounces off of the reflecting pool that stretches down the center of the crowd; illuminating the people with a gentle glow. The sea of faces crowds my line of sight, and I know many more watch from their homes, or gather around a screen with their friends, or hear my voice on some distant radio frequency.

“As you all are aware, our nation has gone through extreme societal, emotional, environmental, and economic turmoil as we have struggled to design a system of support that is truly democratic and just. For far too long our citizens have been terrorized by the plagues of human failure. The countless deaths, divorces, acts of aggression, dehumanization, and repetitive structures of domination that suffocate our society make it impossible for us as a whole to embrace an ethic of love in our lives.”

Among the breaths of the crowd I hear a release, an exhale, a recognition of the painful truth of these words. What had been hidden in each of their hearts, festering out into their lives, was finally acknowledged.

“We have been tricked into accepting complacency, as it so often appears comfortable. While the reality persists that our nation’s core values have prioritized material greed and short term satisfaction over the health and long term well being of our spirits.”

My eyes catch on a face in the crowd. A child, probably around the age of six or seven. The little girl stares at me. Her big brown eyes blink back emotions far too big to fit in her small body. They leak out of her. Steam rising out of her ears, boiling with anger. She’s mad at me, she’s mad at her family, she’s mad at herself, she’s mad at this world. The tiny hairs along her neck are raised, perched with anticipation. She is afraid. Afraid of the unknown and afraid of the only life she knows. Her knuckles turn white, her palms sweaty. Clenched fists grip onto the hope that this is not all there is. Her fingers are getting stiff from trying to grasp something that does not exist. Her knees are locked, straightened, but not stable.

Anxious movement flutters through the crowd and I lose her.

“There are no words I can say, or any one individual can say, that will fully encompass the extent to which each among us has been harmed. So today I invite you to join together in the community to listen to one another and to mourn what has been suffered. At the same time, I can say with full confidence that we are deserving and capable of better, should we choose to do so. So I also invite you here today to celebrate as our nation comes together to choose to do just that.”

A clap starts somewhere in the crowd and steadily rises, engaging more and more as they are encouraged by one another, my smile widens. I take a deep breath and exhale as I regain their attention.

“Today we initiate the official beginning of the Love Ethic Devotion. This program is one that has been in the works since the beginning of our existence on earth, a light in the minds of all of our greatest thinkers, social advocates and representatives. Founded around the core principles

laid out by bell hooks, our nation is to be shaped by the rehabilitating power of true love and as she wisely said, 'There can be no love without justice.' With an emphasis on care, affection, responsibility, respect, commitment, and trust, we will redesign the basic principles of our establishments. We will work to expose and uproot the many systems around us that do not prioritize these values and exchange them for opportunities of social growth. We are redesigning our schools, businesses, governments, prisons, families, institutions, and relationships, to nurture the spiritual growth of ourselves and one another."

I glance back to the area where I first saw her. The sun catches on something, sparkles, and I spot her, a purple clip in her hair. Something in her has changed. She is still scared and she is still angry, yet she is hopeful. It radiates as she patiently soaks in my words. She believes, not in me or what I'm saying, I am just a person and my words have no weight without action; yet, she believes in the light inside of her, she believes that it is real and tangible and can be made into something beautiful. She believes that what lives and breathes the joy of life within her, is strong enough to achieve great things within every person. She has not accepted defeat. She has not accepted less. She believes that if I make my dreams of righteousness a reality, she can do the same for herself and the world around her. She believes that I believe in her. And through this unity she and I and the rest of our nation, can achieve great things.

By - Caroline Cates

Red tears across the human mind like a paper bull,
 Delicate, but visceral in its purpose.
 Red tastes as tart as berries,
 As thick as the blood that runs through veins.
 Red moves in a slow prow, l,
 Teeth gnashing and eyes flashing.
 Red is powerful and confident,
 Moves in a sashay, with red heels going *click-clack*.

By - Fiona Shanahan

My dog had let me know
 Her strange disposition told me
 The impending storm yet to show

But she hadn't let me know
 The way she would get scared
 Information only time could show

Providing her comfort with snuggles
 I did it without having to think
 Now she's dreaming and snoring
 On her favorite blanket colored pale pink

By - Walker Tinsley

There once was a dumpty doo He wanted to ride the choo choo

Zoomed so fast they lost some gas
 The shneezeeleeze almost blew right on the choo choo
 The wackattack came on the track watta ron the wed wibbon
 The speed on the track almost made them compacted
 Kaboosh kabam kapowawow the track blew right from underneath the choo choo

By - Christian Ferreira



MOLLY SIEGEL

The crispy winter air against my skin feels as if I might give in.
 Pain and suffering we endure,
 it is no excuse to be unsure.
 Restless spirits feast on you,
 dragging you to dullness.
 The cotnotts cling to your skin, causing you to spin.
 You try to gain control, you begin to roll.
 Tears crawling down your face,
 itching you to embrace the pain within.

Anonymous

Death of the West

The wild was dying. The year was 1898, the relentless advance of civilization continued with its merciless trek. Where there was one only the silent wood, and the hushed words of outlaws, now was erected towns, and chanting soldiers. In the small town of Edgewood a den of villains, hive of degeneracy, and as some called it the last free place in Montana. The old men of the town remembered the old days, before the relentless advance. Once there was nothing but a small dirt road, eroded and nonexistent in parts, and no one but the most seasoned outlaw knew of it. Now however the road was well traveled and a railroad was built, and even the most established law abider was known to stop by every once and a while.

In the old "single bullet" tavern, Marcus Mcgee sat. Its walls were rickety and rotting, the beer served almost rancid, and so strong it burned to drink. He sat there most days, reminiscing about the old days of speed and glory. He had ravished the land and gone by many names, some called him a devil a demon, but they only said it once. Riding upon whatever steed he could steal, racing across the Montana hills he forged a path of blood. Now he waisted away, drinking and whoring in the last place of filth west of the mississippi. He was a changeless and stubborn person, ever since he was a child. His mind had not changed with the years, only his face. Once unmarked and free from wounds, his visage was one marred by scars, blemishes, and all manner of wounds. Across his face lay an eyepatch, rugged and worn its latches hardly held together. His beard was unkempt and dirty, matted together, many a passing traveler believed him to be a homeless vagrant. He killed people over such slights, but he always reminded them beforehand, he may be a vagrant, but he did have a home, even if it was rotting. The only feature on his face, unchanged and unmarked, was his one eye, and yet it remained his most sinister feature. His eye was a light grey, small and pathetic, and yet it remanded a terror. There was nothing behind that eye, no care, no hope, only the relentless push back, the care for only himself, the care for only his survival.

After his 6th whiskey, Marcus left the old tavern, stumbling and drunk, freezing in the cold and snow. He collapsed only a few moments later on the porch of the general store, and in his drunken delirium he began to dream. He was on the open plains, winter had died away, and he felt the warm embrace of summer upon his skin. There was no patch on his eye, and he breathed. He breathed the fresh air, here he was free, immortal, even in the height of his escapades, the deepest depth of his insanity, there was always some lawman chasing him, but here there was nothing but the wild expenses, an anarchy, he could breathe. And then he saw it. A great beast of steel and

steam came charging towards him. He saw the great plains wither before him, he felt chains upon his hands and saw bars rise up in front of him, he tried to take breath, and yet he could not, he tried to scream in anger, and yet he could not speak. He felt only cold, only pain, justice was done, justice upon him, he shivered, and shivered knew nothing but the cold.

When he woke he was still in the snow, freezing, and close to death. No one had bothered to drag him to shelter, and why should they? For all his years he killed and stole, from the innocent, from the guilty, and from all inbetween. It was at that moment, lying in the snow close to death, looking up in the dark sky, he was alone. He was the only person in the world, he was alone. Nothing mattered but his freedom, he was alone. And so it was that he stood up, and began to run to his cabin. He ran the cold off, forcing himself forward. He thrust himself through the rickety door of his cabin, sat upon his bed, and devised a plan. His way of life would remain, no matter what, no matter how many died, no matter what it took, he would remain. He grabbed his revolver, and his rifle, and began to plan against the world, and in his insanity and delirium, he truly believed he would accomplish his task.

He made his move when the snow had melted. The harsh frost of winter had died, and the relentless push of civilization was nearing. Every day he would walk, until he found the railroad construction site. At first it took hours, just to hear the sounds of trees being felled, and iron smashing nails. Now however, the sounds could be heard from the town itself, and by all estimations, it would be finished in a few weeks. There was a general jubilation upon hearing this news, as most celebrated their elevation to the end of the horrid isolation, McGee however, simply planned. It was said that on the final day the great train carriage would come on the tracks, and the railroad executive would make a speech announcing the completion of such a long project. It would be on that day that he would strike.

The night before the completion McGee dreamt one more. He stood at the door of his family homestead, a great building, built by his grandfather, Mark McGee. It was a beautiful land, lush and fertile. It was far from the freezing cold of the north, and blistering heat of the south. It was a place of green grass. Wild horses and buffalo migrating across. And in this small isolated place was the cabin. It was there he saw himself in the cabin, just a kid, sitting around with his father. And then the knock, that knock on the door that would change his life forever. He wanted to scream, to yell, to tell his father to not open the door and yet he could do nothing. The door opened and everything changed.

His father fell to the ground, his face warped and bloody beyond recognition, a tall man stood over him, rusted lever action in hand. His fat partner walked in slowly, looking around, eyes passing over him as if he did not exist. His childhood self could do nothing but stare in horror, and fear, paralyzed by the sudden violence. The men searched the homestead, tearing apart drawers, cabinets and even floorboards until finally one of them said in a gruff sounding voice; "I've found it". He pulled from under the floorboards a box, old and weathered, the wood had begun to fall apart. The other man walked over, apprehension in his eyes, he threw open the box. Inside was a treasure, gold and jewels, worth at least a small fortune. The tall man smiled, their work had been accomplished, the fat man grinned as well, unable to take his eyes off the money. As they began to walk out the tall man turned to McGee's younger self, and asked his partner "do we kill him?" "No," said his partner, his eyes still fixated on the treasure, "he will die alone anyway, no point in wasting a bullet." They were wrong however, he would survive, and no matter what, he would continue to.

Suddenly his dream changed once more. It was less than a decade after his father had been killed, he was standing in the town square of a nameless town. His hand rested on his revolver, as he calmly observed his surroundings. Before him stood a man, his face busted and his eye bruised. He was wearing a peruvian poncho, and an old fashioned cowboy hat. He was at his revolver as well, knees bent ready to kill. A crow flew overhead, waiting to feast on whoever was slower. And as a tumbleweed slowly rolled past, McGee drew his revolver, and shot first. It was the first time he had been killed, and one of the few times it was justified. This however, was the point of no return for him, for now he was an outlaw, and that would be all he ever was.

When he woke from his dream, he felt an irie calm, one he had never felt before. As he slowly stood up and holstered his revolver he knew today was the day. And so he began to run, bursting through his old rickety door. He ran straight to the closest horse, there was a man on there, who turned in confusion upon seeing the strange man running at him. He did not have time to react, and before he knew it, he had been shot, and his lifeless body fell from the horse. McGee raced away, following the tracks, determined to intercept and stop the train before it even reached the town. He would never be captured, he would survive, no matter what. As he rode he could hear it, its horrible whistle. He could see it soon after first the steam resigned far above the trees, and then he could see it, just like in his dream. A beast of steel and iron, faster than any horse. Soon he was riding parallel to it, and then he jumped onto its side, climbing upon it. Men rushed from the interior guns pointed at him "what are you doing!" one yelled "get off the train." There were five

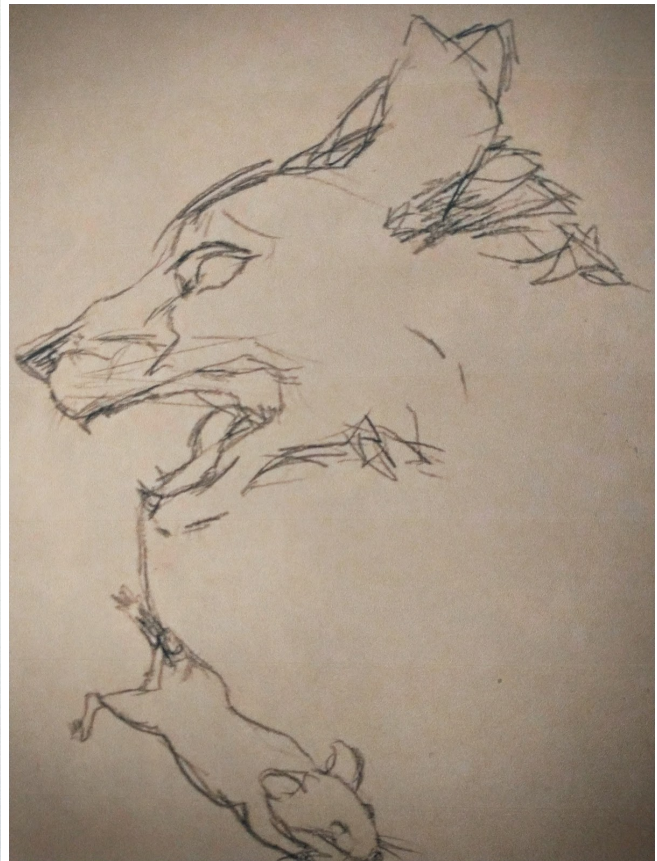
of them, a lot but he had faced worse odds before and so with one final burst he raised his gun. He did not even get a shot off, for the men on the train had killed him. Afterall, to what level of insanity would a man need to be to convince himself he would be able to fight a train by himself? To stop beneficial progress simply for his own gain? As his body fell from the side, his final thoughts were, perhaps after all this time, in his attempts to be free in his evil, and to escape justice and survive, his crimes had finally caught up to him. Perhaps justice had finally been served. And so the five men on the train looked around, confused, as to why a man had attempted to hijack the train. After all, no one knew of the gold and jewels hidden on board.

THE END

By - Ezra Beato



HARRISON SASSANO



Fiona Shanahan

Open Up

To the birds outside my room:
Sing louder, stop mumbling
Put your beaks against my door and shout
Scratch at the door knob
Chant through the cracks
Beat a rhythm into the walls,
And make your wings more wood then muscle
Wings that rattle, heavy with splinters

Speak up, I can't hear you
Your words are draped in gauze
What is there to bandage?

To which the birds reply:
Why won't you open the door?

By - Keira Shanahan



Carmela Cofini



Elijah McKelvey



Quin Carmicino



Robbie Baker

Anti-Gravity

By - Chase Coulson

Chorus:

“I’d like to make amends thanking you just for having me,
floating out my mind feeling it’s antigravity,
chaos in my head thinking it’s just all a travesty,
still floating everywhere falling down into depravity,
gotta fight the sorrow so my heart just doesn’t atrophy,
waiting all the time because of you just please don’t lie to me,
you’re the only one but your words they don’t get through to me,
but it’s not like you care, you just want more opportunities.”

Finnley the Fishstick

**Finnley the floppy, fat fish flies fast through the water.
Fearlessly following his friends.
Fin flying fast.
Finnley spots a fisherman.
Finnley flips and flourishes through the water.
Finnley flails toward the fisherman.
Flipping, flopping, flailing, falling.
Finnley fell into the net.
Finnley became a fishstick.**

By - Cassie Kubik



Blake Bolte

Green Goblin Gobbles Up Green Grass

He likes to gobble up green grass
 It's almost like he's a goat
 I can't believe he does with a guitar in his throat
 He doesn't like gloves and doesn't like gaps
 He eats his grass with some his grapes and doesn't eat them whole
 He really hates ghosts and can't stand guns,
 but he'll always go for a great goose chase
 Gym class his not his favorite cause the teacher's
 name is gus and he doesn't like running or chewing gum
 In general he gives back to the geese

By - Milo Pearsall



Emilia Osborn



Samuel Bates

Apricot

We only asked for each other
 Our feelings reciprocated— we tried to smother
 All I knew is, it had to do with your mother
 While you had remained in denial
 I held little faith in the chance of a mistrial

I wish to forget my one that got away
 Though fond memories in spite betray
 It isn't our fault ignorance is taught
 All the same, it's a shame we got caught
 My senses not forgot the sweet scent of apricot

By - Walker Tinsley

An Anxiety Attack

I looked down at my blackberry flip phone and tried to unlock it; pressing the small buttons with my fingers but I keep mis-pressing as my hands started to shake from the cold. My mother is supposed to be here by now. Reality was now shifting to the fears and worries in my brain. I began to feel more and more anxious as time passed sitting under a tree outside of the school and decided it would be best to walk home before the local drunks came out and started to creep around. I was only five or six blocks from my house so it wouldn't be too long before I came home but my parents didn't like me to walk by myself as we lived in a crappy area.

I guess I was too late though, the forbidding animals of the night started to lurk onto the streets hunting for needles and barking up legs for money throughout the city. I picked up my pace keeping my head down trying to ignore the feeling of my conscious telling me something wasn't right.

I saw out of the corner of my eye a man standing lazily at the end of the block next to a few trash bags and I grew smaller at the sight of him. I was still far away but there was a choking stench of cigarette smoke, his hands were so frail-looking but I could tell that he wasn't weak since no one stood at the corner of a block alone at this hour unless they were looking for trouble. As I looked at the ground I realized I was now right next to him, standing waiting to cross the street when he opened his voice in a menacing tone. " You know, a young little boy shouldn't be out here. Someone could easily just grab you by the arm and take you". In a flash he grabbed my arm so tight I felt like he was digging through my skin into my bones. I stood paralyzed under his grip, I wondered if that meant he was going to do the same to me? My eyes rose to see his face and saw his bloodshot eyes that gave off frustration but had a yellow smile that was so peculiar. I knew at this moment that if I didn't escape there was no going home, no seeing my mother, no nothing. I kicked him as hard as I could in the stomach and pulled away from his gripping hands and began to run. I felt the adrenaline rush through my body and kept repeating to myself, " Faster, faster." I felt that I could fall over at any second as my legs no longer had control over my body and were just going as fast as possible. I passed through the tenebrous alley and peered over my shoulder to see the man running at me laughing, saying for me to " run faster" as he was going to take me away. My terror mounted with every step as his pounding steps grew closer and closer, I knew now it was over. He was so close, I could practically feel his outstretched hand trying to grasp me

and his breath against my body. I ran around a corner into an alleyway and realized I was now trapped against cold brick walls. There he was standing over me now, looking furious. I couldn't look away from him, something about me feared that if I looked away from his face my life would be over. His fury twisted into a wild laugh, for each step he took closer I took on back until I hit the back of the wall. He stopped inching closer and kept laughing, it was such a sickly laugh. He sounded like he belonged in an asylum and I was his little toy of amusement. "Don't worry little one you shall now belong to me and I've got some friends that are coming soon to see if they would like to keep you". He grabbed me and began to pet my hair and took his dead-looking hands inspecting my face. I started to like to shake like a scared dog with tears streaming down my face as he kept on rambling. I shut my eyes and practiced what my therapist told me, deep breaths, and remembered my brain was just twisting into my fears. I wanted to remember that I create fake realities when I grow anxious. I just kept wishing my mom would wake me up from this sick dream, and I thought of what she would tell me to do in a situation.

The realization came to me of the classic saying "stranger danger", and I knew I had to get out of the situation and protect myself once and for all. My fear rushed to my heart and figured that if I don't keep fighting I'll no longer have anything and thought to myself whilst he kept on taunting me. I realized if I distracted him I could run past him out of the alley and back onto the ominous streets. I looked down by my foot and saw a crumpled soda can and kicked it to the wall which startled him. I made my run. I ran past him and started to sprint away to turn and see that he was no longer following me. I didn't bother to slow down though and ran back to my house.

I finally arrived at apartment thirteen and slammed the door shut behind me. I feel as though I could still see and hear the man's presence and that unnerving laughter filling my mind. I decided it would be best to lock the doors and windows to be safe. Something still wasn't right, my mom was still late. I looked throughout the apartment calling for her to get no response except for the tv that was left running in my room.

The light from the rooms glared through my windows like a mirror as I got water from the kitchen sink, and everything in my mind froze. I looked up into the window, he was here. He was standing right in the corner of the kitchen toying with a knife and kept looking up at me and then back down to play with the knife again. I don't understand. I swear I locked the door and windows, he wasn't even behind me when I was running home but now the room is growing colder, being filled with his presence. I was shaking so hard to the point where my jaw locked up

and I began to sweat through my onesie. I couldn't even yell even if I tried. The glass fell out of my hand which broke me back into reality and when I looked back up into the window his reflection was gone. I didn't want to move and turn to see him hiding somewhere in here hiding, I felt my stomach turning and the sweat was now beading from my forehead. I turned swiftly in a panic to only see that he had vanished. I sighed with relief that I must've been imagining things and decided to go lay down in my bed and wait for my mom.

I threw the soft covers over my head and turned the volume up on my tv to let something distract me from my racing mind. I turned in my bed to face away from the doors and turned my light out. I figured if I could fall asleep this dream would all be over in the morning.

My eyes slowly fluttered open and shut repeating a dazed cycle like when you are too sleepy to wake up and I felt my mother's hand combing through my hair. She was humming a lullaby, she usually does this when she finds me asleep late after she comes home from work. This usually puts me right back to sleep, but my mind was awake now pouring relief from the thought that I was going to be kidnapped earlier. I stretched touching my mother's arm in the dark and I said, "Your arm, Mom, it's so cold and tough are you okay?" She didn't respond but held my hand tighter, that grip felt so familiar like the man from before. I tried to pretend as if everything was normal but my heart was picking up its pace now, and my hand grew clammy against her skin. Maybe it was cold out and she wasn't feeling good. I tried to listen to her lullaby to shake off my nerves but the tone of it changed, it wasn't calm or relaxing it was different. The tone was deep and harrowing just like the man from before. I turned my head to look for my mother, only to realize my truest fears, it was indeed the chilling man from before.

By - Camille Maglio

I rub my hands together.

It's been two days in here. Two days of waiting, Two days of sitting, Two days of silence.

I look out the frosted window and my breath stains the glass. It's white outside, a prison, And it hasn't changed. Temperatures have gone below zero and the wind won't stop blowing.

I slouch backwards into my container, The metal is cold but better than nothing. Digging into my pocket I take out the last of my mints. I've been using them to stave the hunger pangs.

Tossing them in my mouth I let it melt and freshen my breath. If only there was somebody to talk to right now. I shove the container in my coat pocket and begin to fix my posture. Legs bent and held by my arms as I enter a fetal position.

I haven't gotten to drink in two days, My mouth remains dry and parched. Another day and I'll die here. Nobody would find my body, at least not a fresh one. I stretch my toes in my shoes and continue waiting. The sound of silence permeates the container. Only to be interrupted by the sounds of my body. Rumbling stomachs, painful groans, slow sniffing.

I should have stood more, All the sitting probably made me atrophy. The lack of nutrition would help with that as well. I continue waiting in the silence. Another groan from my stomach hits me, worse than the ones before. I can feel myself dying here.

Eventually I wind up the strength to stand up crouched, unable to stand without hitting my head on the roof. That same white void, Why did I expect it to change? I slam my fist against the lodged door. It's so futile, Just an ant trying to steal something too big.

I shove my face in my hands and sit again. Sore from staying still so long, As if I were bed ridden. I tried my best but I keep getting stomped on. If only I could just scream that I were here, If only somebody would come for me, Be there for me. But nobody is arriving. Just more and more snow collecting. I shouldn't have come here, I should have just died in the cold with dignity. But instead I'm here rotting like an old piece of fruit. Being forgotten like some sort of discarded toy. I scream, hitting my fist against the door over and over, As if my protest would sway the unfeeling cold.

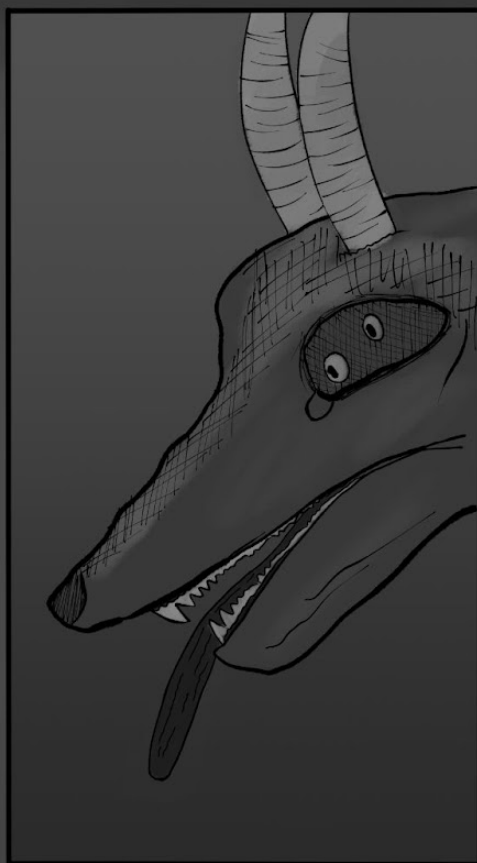
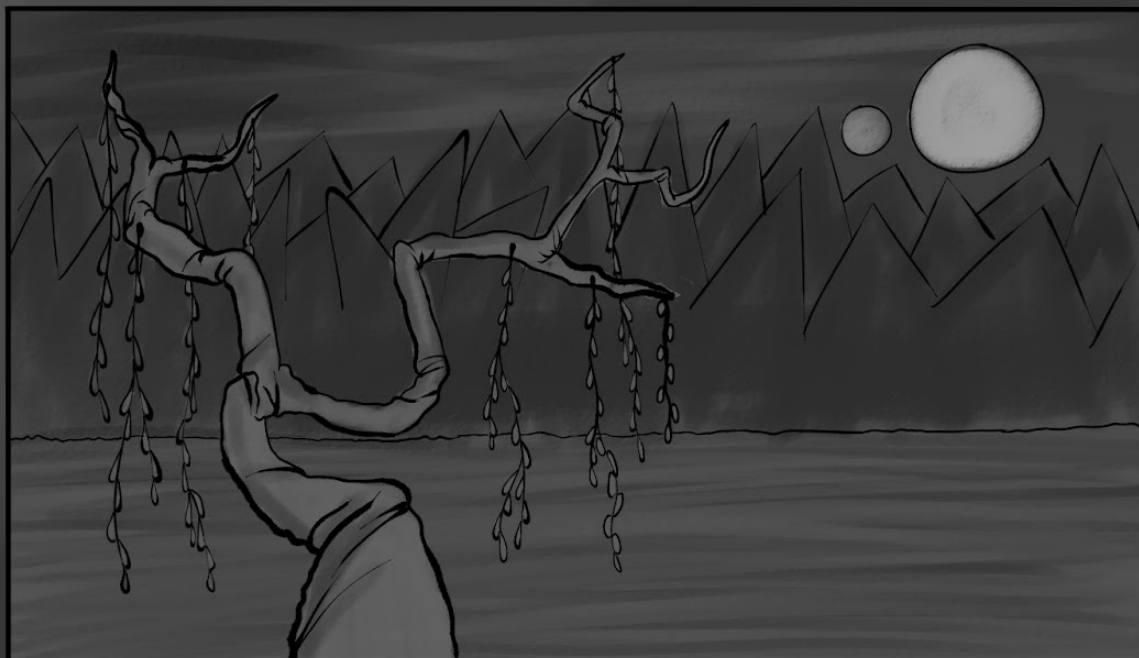
I curl up and bring my arms into my long sleeves.

I give up. Might as well just wait again, Worked two days. Maybe it'll work another.

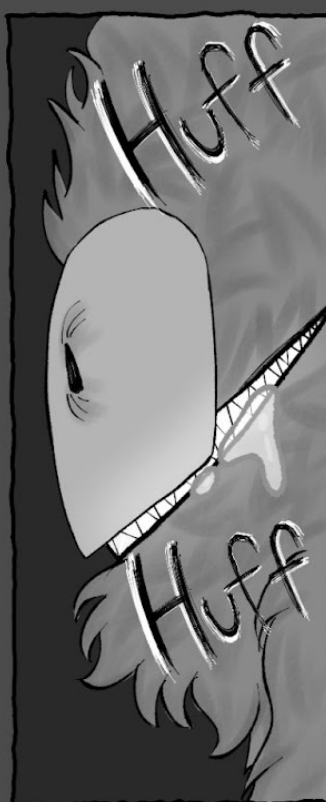
I close my eyes, Maybe if I try hard enough I'll forget the hunger pangs.

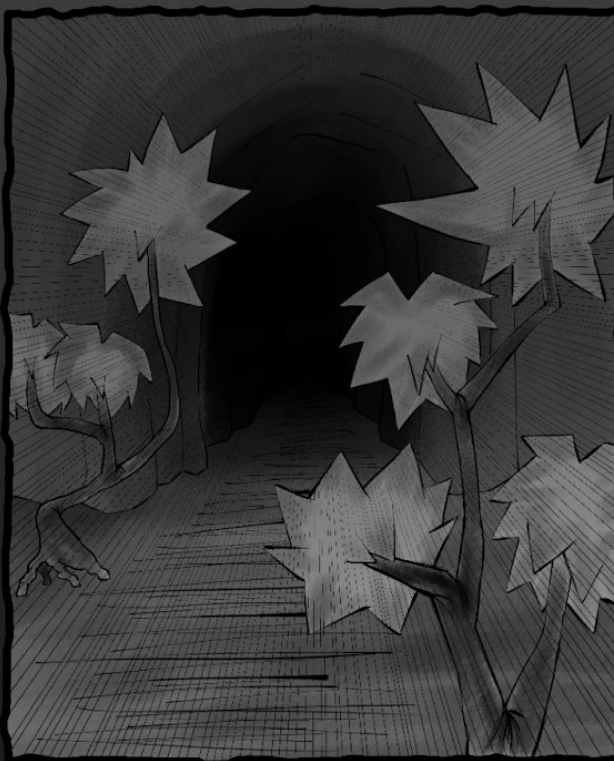
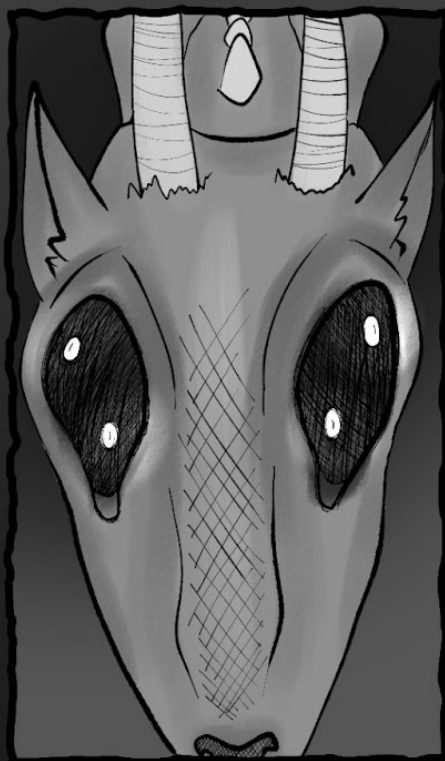
I just want to go home

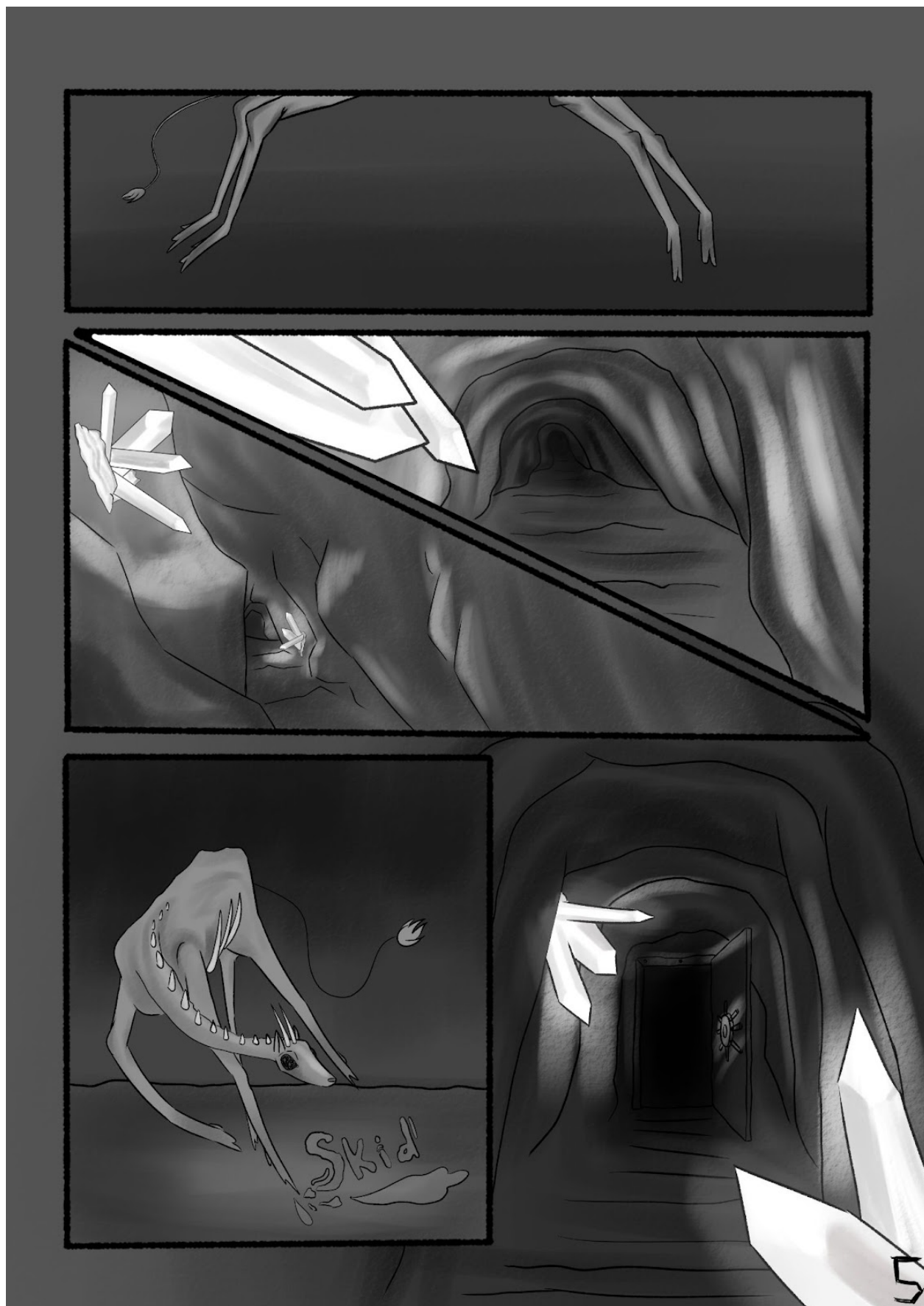
By - Louis Ferreira



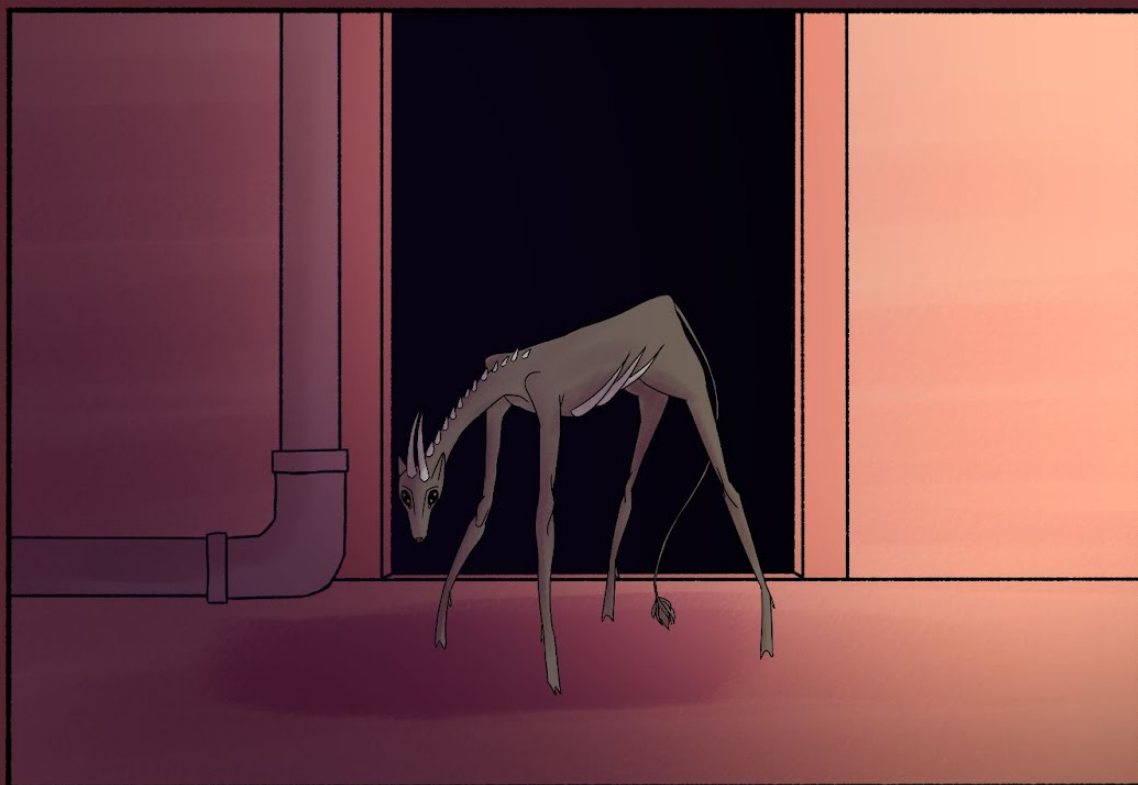














By Robbie Baker

Circus.

In a circus
There is always a ringleader.
Their entrance is grand
Bright lights beaming
Gleaming on them.
Teeth sharp and quick
Tongue wet and ready
They guide the freaks to their act
And watch with great amusement.

The audience sits in awe.
The elephants can truly balance
The man is quite small
The woman has a beard
It must be a dream.

Ah,
The best for last Flying trapeze.
Leap
Flip
Release
Splat.

By - Shea DeCaro



Samuel Bates

Red

There's something so ominous about the stars.
 About the creaking of the floorboards while your ears are the only thing that work.
 The wind outside is that of gentle waves.
 Did you make them?
 Your tears moving moons
 Making tsunamis
 Hailing over snow
 Was that you?
 No, it couldn't be.
 Frankly, there are too many in the world for you to be special.
 Nobody hears you
 Sees you
 Knows you.

Distant scratching.
 Cats
 Mice
 Birds
 Rats
 What is it.
 Was that you?
 Picking at the knot in your stomach
 It's a mystery what's inside.
 Are we human?
 Is this real?
 Is there blood inside
 Or is there
 hollow
 Cold
 Nothingness.

At times it feels like a scantron.
 A
 B
 Or C?
 But be wise.
 Once you decide you truly can't reverse it.
 Maybe the itching of our skin is just the inside trying to leap out.
 Maybe we're tigers
 Or turtles
 Or little
 Teeny
 Voles.

By - Shea DeCaro

Mariana

On the sea-floor
There's no sound.
Just the water
Pishing
Swishing
Moving
But the sand is so soft.
The ship groans
Its joints held by the pressure of the deep.
Fish waltz through the windows
Gallantly avoiding the rusted edges
Dark corners
Unopened suitcases
Untouched silverware
Cracked bones.
Where are you?
Lying in bed
Caressing the eels in your deep sleep
Telling stories to sharks under your silk bedding
Praying to god before drifting away?
Where were you?
Dancing with strangers
Perhaps enjoying your final meal
Playing chess?
Nevertheless,
I don't think god has heard you.
Unless it was the prayers you made while looking at the water
Hoping one day the unknown would be familial.
The prayers you made at 3am
When you felt that there were too many voices over yours for god to hear.
Is it peaceful?
Living in the trenches.
Singing songs to starfish.
Did he hear you?

By - Shea DeCaro

The Unspoken Rules of Womanhood:

We Get it, You're a Woman :/

I'll never understand the sadistic pleasures of teenage boys. There's a chemical reaction from hell that forms bubbles of malice in their testosterone. It's not the kind of snide remarks of girls that are sugar coated in falsehoods— the talking behind your back kind of gossip that you thankfully never hear— but that ambitious, tormented, mocking. I suppose they have the balls to do it... or at least they're growing them.

Boys are expected to act this way. Boys will be boys. Boys will be loud, obnoxious, invade your personal space, rip away every ounce of safety you may have felt in your own skin. I am dumbfounded now, looking back with the gift of hindsight, at how I would be constantly shunned based upon my appearance, yet also objectified for those same, supposedly egregious flaws. Society taught me to fear boys, but also to chase them. I was made to run into the lion's den and be torn to shreds— it never helped that I always teetered the line between too ugly to date, but my breasts were large enough to fear being raped.

The audacity of young men who refuse to open their eyes and ears— sitting like ADHD-ridden kindergartners as basic etiquette is explained to them. Maybe I wouldn't constantly fear assault if men listen when they are spoken to. If you can't say your 'pleases' and 'thank yous', how ever are you able to understand 'no'? But that's alright, because boys are stupid. Girls are clever little things. We give little girls all sorts of talks that little boys needn't pay any mind to, for little boys are not valuables fathers keep clutched under their arms, nor objects of influence to be slid across long, mahogany tables to seal a particularly lucrative business agreement. They will grow up, if bred well, to hold this power over a future generation of little girls. They need only to know the words of these universal fears to instill into their young daughters, not to check around every corner for large men with wandering eyes themselves. By the time these girls are teenagers they've internalized the 'You're going to step out looking like that?' lecture and the 'If you ever get pregnant' spiel. They should be smart enough to cover their drinks and stay in a pack— as long as they can handle unoriginal mocking about how their public bathroom ritual is akin to that of a flock of migratory birds.

It almost feels foolish to be afraid of teenagers with no power. Not yet grown, no longer boys, but that is somehow the most frightening stage of the lifecycle of man. We often claim that children are unnecessarily harsh and without filter, but they are free of genuine hatred and ignorant

prejudice. Adolescent boys are tall, strong children, who have just learned the basics of hatred and are giddy with glee to unleash it upon the world. They learn how to derive joy from making the weak bleed and the broken cry; armed with the tools a short life of entitlement gives to men. They aren't clever with their quips by any stretch of the imagination, but they group together and laugh and mock— it's a force overwhelming enough to give into, to try fighting back, to defend yourself, but there is no winning an argument against those who can only speak in outdated slang and howling, voice-cracking laughter.

I used to wonder what it would be like to join their ranks. As a child, I often fantasized about being accepted by boys, being their friend, accompanying them to football practice or to video game play-dates. They weren't fond of me. I can admit now that it was silly to try and act like a boy when it was obvious I would never be one, or at the very least I wouldn't be swept into a friend group with people who obviously derived pleasure from teasing me. Little girls were no better, but as we grew up they stood with me in solidarity against our collective fear. The boys I used to chase as a child are grotesque to me now, and the girls I used to resent for assimilating to the culture of little boys are people I now hold in esteem. Now I've come to the realization that I was always afraid— maybe not always afraid of boys, but always afraid of death.

I'm not sure if I'll ever stop fearing assault. I receive it verbally, emotionally, but luckily never physically. I suppose that is why I shrink away from boys my age. We are only children, but we are no longer walking through the brightly-colored halls of elementary school. I don't feel safe being alone. I don't trust any man who approaches me when someone else cannot be beside me. I've had this fear of attack ingrained in me, ever since I was a child, ever since I started puberty myself. If malice and hatred rushes through the hormones of young men, then a primal fear of death flies through that of young women. I was not a woman when I was eight and ovulating, I was not a woman when I was thirteen, no matter how many times my newly-developed curves were mistaken for those of a college student. Now, at seventeen, I'm afraid to be a woman. I don't want to be alone in a world that has been designed to eat me alive, a world where my screams for help will fall upon deaf ears. No one is going to come save me— do you know why? Because boys will be boys. Boys will be boys, and I'll be running from them all my life.

By - Helen Chiera



FELIX SCHMIDT



THIRD GREAT WAR FIGHTER PILOT, FORMER LAWYER, CLAIMS TO HAVE SEEN ALIEN OBJECT IN SKY; NATION IN PANIC

December 8th, 1918

So read the newspaper dropped on Prime Minister Elliot Crowley's desk by MP John Townshend. He paced frantically back and forth, glancing every few seconds at the PM.

"I mean, what are we supposed to do with this?" he asked, his tone anxious, "when it was one of them, we could dismiss it. 'It's a crazy. Pay him no heed.' But it's three of them now. Three! This one's a lawyer, God help us! We just finished one war and now the whole country thinks we're tumbling right into another. And this one with aliens! How are we possibly going to respond?"

"Who says we have to respond?" said MP James Hartley, sitting in a leather armchair in the corner, "There's a new media sensation every week. Let's let it die down. Responding will only exacerbate the issue."

"I don't care if it lasts a week or a month or a year," answered MP Townshend, "This type of story can do real damage. And the elections are only a few months away. We must either unequivocally deny these claims or say they're true and make a big display of dealing with them."

"And why in God's name would we say they're true?" asked MP Herbert Mitchell, chewing on a cigar in the seat across from PM Crowley.

"Why wouldn't they be?" answered MP Townshend.

"Because aliens coming down from the sky is ludicrous. It's the stuff of cheap science fiction novels. You know--we all know--why these men can't be believed." responded MP Mitchell.

The men were silent for a moment.

"So what do you propose?" asked MP Townshend, "How do you call into question the word of a lawyer with three children? The son of an earl? We know saying that they went into the war sane and came out of the war crazy isn't an option. That was our war. Admitting you drove a generation of men to insanity certainly doesn't help your election chances. So where does that leave us?"

PM Crowley cleared his throat. The room was silent as the men turned intent gazes at him. MP Mitchell, whose mouth had been opening to respond, shut it immediately. PM Crowley opened

his desk drawer and took out a cigar, weighing his next words, letting anticipation build in the room. At last he spoke:

“It seems to me we don’t have too many choices. Here’s what we know: The gentry class is the least likely to buy what these newspapers are selling. They’re also perhaps most likely to believe this alien fiction if we tell them it’s true. We’ll be alright regardless. It’s the laboring class we must worry about. If the perception that the war didn’t end when the War ended, that our so-called victory was a pyrrhic one, becomes widespread--well, gentlemen, I don’t have to tell you how they’ll feel about that. If we dismiss these claims, the vast majority would be split into two camps: belief that we’re lying, that we’re incapable of dealing with, that we are capitulating to, the alien menace, and belief that we’re telling the truth, and the realization that thousands of men are returning home shell shocked because of the war we started. Then, there’s the alternative. We say the men were not mistaken. We are taking active steps to combat the threat. We stage a few attacks. We staged a few victories. We stage a war, relatively bloodless and over quickly, which overwhelms our alien foe and forces them to surrender. We’ll have won another war, this one without the protracted conflict and death and shellshock.”

MP Townshend nodded.

MP Hartley chuckled: “So we’re really going to do this, are we?”

MP Mitchell looked at PM Crowley: “Do you really think this’ll work? I don’t need to tell you, if the public catches any wind of this...”

PM Crowley took a puff of his cigar: “Depends on how we execute. But yes, this can work.”

GOVERNMENT CONFIRMS ALIEN WAR IMMINENT; PUBLIC PREPARES FOR ANOTHER WAR

December 10th, 1918

That night was cloudy. It was past midnight when bombs--long, thin, pointy bombs of a strange green metal, bombs that couldn’t be mistaken for anything of human manufacture--fell from the sky onto London. Residents staring from their windows saw glowing orbs drifting across the sky. In the streets below, General Richard S. Everyman--tall, handsome, in his early thirties, waving a large British flag, designated the leader of the war effort by the British

government--charged across the pavement, an infantry armed with cannons and machine guns behind him.

“Fire,” cried General Everyman. Cannons and machine guns erupted behind him. “They can try to destroy our great nation, but they never will. The will of the British people is too strong. This alien scum thought they could just walk all over us, well, they have another thing coming. We’ll teach them the same lesson we taught those krauts: don’t mess with Britain. ” Conveniently, a nearby microphone happened to record the speech and broadcast it to every radio in Britain.

The battle raged on through the night. The infantry and the glowing orbs exchanged fire. One by one, the orbs dropped from the sky, crashed onto the pavement. They shattered as they hit the ground, as if they were made of glass. By 5 a.m., the remaining orbs drifted away. People rushed outside and to the roofs. They threw tomatoes in the direction of the retreating glowing orbs, lifted the soldier into the air.

***ALIENS SUCCUMB TO STRENGTH OF BRITISH MILITARY,
AGREE TO RETURN TO HOME PLANET***

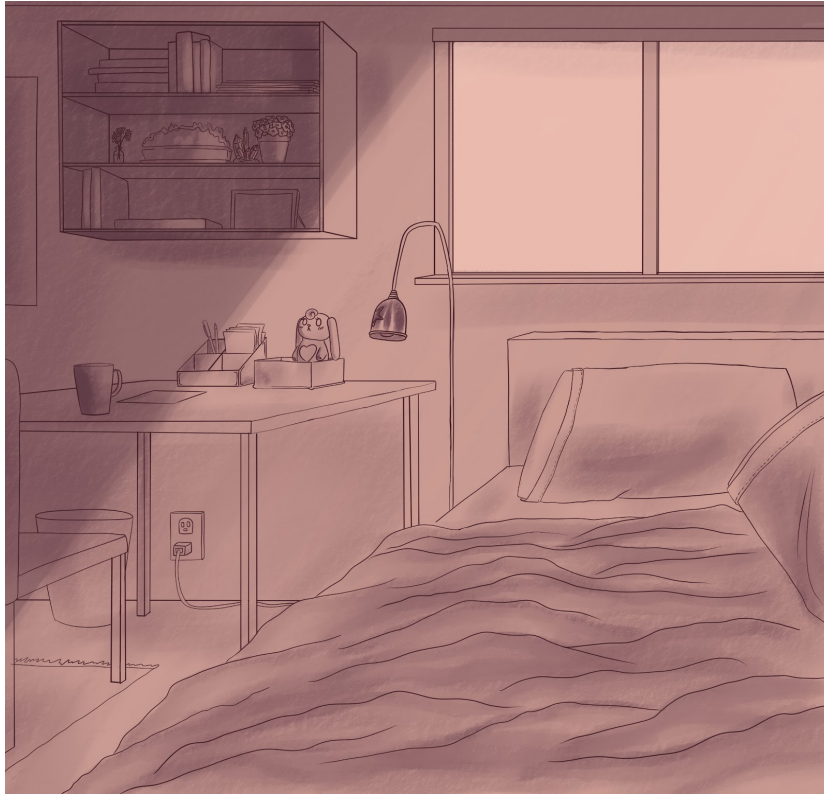
March 1st, 1919

Celebrations arose spontaneously in the streets as the news spread that Prime Minister Crowley had successfully negotiated a treaty with the alien ambassador. PM Crowley hadn’t given an inch. The aliens would have to shut down their space program and their military entirely, and send the British government payments of millions of pounds each year for the next hundred years.

Later that year, the governing party was reelected with 98 percent of the vote. Memorials immortalizing the war sprouted up across the country. General Everyman publicly refused to take a sixpence for his service, instead asking the British government to use that money to help his wounded comrades.

“Serving this great country, protecting her from harm, that was payment enough,” he told reporters, wiping away a tear.

By Stephen Robinson



Robbie Baker

The clouds like boats sailed across the sky
 With size unseen they marched forward
 An eternal march around the world
 Until that day that all man dreads
 When the sun so red and brilliant
 Turned to a hue of hellish pink
 And as mankind gazes forth
 And all look to the sky with terror in there eye
 The clouds stop moving
 And disappear
 And thus a horror grasps all
 And fear strikes fast upon the hearts
 The final thoughts of people
 Like the first thought of all when born
 Was fear an unknown, and all faded away

By - Ezra Beato



MAYA OSBORN

The fair is wonderful place,
 For some like Cady.
 I hate the fair, I hate the ferris wheel, I hate the scary rides, and I hate the gross food
 It all makes me sick to my stomach

Walking around the dirty grounds I see a pink striped stand.
 Cotton Candy, Cotton Candy!
 The man cries out, children surrounding him
 "2 bucks a piece" he says to me
 And there I am with cotton candy in my hands

It's spun sugar is delectable, it melts in my mouth, like taking a bite out of a cloud
 Nothing here will ever compare
 I want to sit and eat cotton candy forever

But Cady breaks me sweet sugary daze when she takes my hand
 She leads me to a rollercoaster, a million times taller than my tiny stature
 My stomach starts turning and my guts tie in knots
 I sit on the hard cold seat and all I can think about is my wonderful
 Cotton Candy

By - Amelia Alayon

Winter is a long slumber,
A plunder, deep into the cold down under,
Winter lives with blue, and blue with your mind,
As winter turns to glue, and sticks to you on your climb,
Winter turns tears to ice, freezes sadness and spite,
But in the end, winter feeds your craving for daylight.
You can't escape the winter, the winter clings on to you,
It talks about walks in the snow with blocks and blocks of truth,
Winter gives you a break, winter gives you time to take,
Winter can be a blessing yet a curse all for God's sake.
But truly winter is a friend, one you have till the end,
A friend that takes the time to spend,
All day, all night, all christmas, and all the cold weeks with you to then come back the next year
and do it all again.

By - Chase Coulson



Fiona Shanahan

10. The Boy of Gold

PERCY PARKER – HALDANE HIGH SCHOOL

He always wore that stupid green hat. When he was making a point, he would tear it off his head and fervently run his other hand through those tousled brown curls.

That's one of my first memories of him, from all the way back at the beginning. He was his passionate self from the day we met. But not before he tried to shoot me.

I came across him drinking from a stream in a clearing of Sherwood Forest, his back to me. The dusk light streaking through the trees turned his skin golden.

It was a Sunday night, and I was hiding from my family. My father had found me kissing another boy behind the schoolhouse last month, and every Sunday became the day of praying for me. Punishing me. I was going to hide in our yard, once I wandered into the forest, I just kept walking. Forward and forward, pretending I didn't have to ever turn back. I'm sure I couldn't have been more than half a mile away from the house, but the fact that it had started getting dark made the embrace of trees ever so much tighter. Dusk was like a warm blanket draped over my blackened shoulders. I remember thinking maybe it was better than home.

A 14-year-old boy covered in bruises and sinful desires, wearing his grey Sunday suit and looking for an escape. That's who Robin startled at as he turned to see me. That's who he slid his bow off his shoulder and pointed an arrow at.

I stumbled back, put my hands in the air.

"I am Robin Hood. Keeper of Sherwood Forest. King to the poor, enemy of the rich. Speak now, tell me who you are." His voice still retained the squeaky fluctuations of adolescence, and yet somehow it pierced the air with its power.



"I'm Alan. King of... nothing. Eldest son of the Dencourt family."

He squinted at me, still aiming his bow at my chest. "What brings you to my woods?"

I scoffed at that. "They aren't your woods. They aren't anybody's. But I live just half a mile east of here." Later, I'd come to know that they were his woods. Maybe not legally, but in spirit. The secrets of Sherwood were known only to Robin. Back then, he didn't tell me that. I'd have to learn it myself. He just stared at me coolly, waiting for an answer. He always was so relentlessly patient with me, with everyone. I suppose it was part of his charm.

"My family hates me and I don't want to be around them."

He stared at me. "So you're running away?"

"No! I'm just hiding... momentarily."

He finally lowered his bow, slinging it back over his shoulder. "Why don't you run away?"

I shrugged. "I can't." I hadn't ever considered it. It was just a given in my life that I would stay. I would live at home, working for my dad in the shop until he died, and then I'd take over. I'd become like my dad, staring at woodwork until any humanity he might have once had became so deeply buried that no one ever saw it. The frowns would build up like calluses on my skin, and my life would never mean anything. Just like my dad. That was how it worked. I couldn't fathom anything else for myself.

"Why not?"

"I... I can't just give up on my life because I don't like the direction it's heading in."

He stepped closer to me. We were probably around the same age, but I was almost a full head taller, and bulkier. How did such a tiny guy project so much confidence?

"It's not giving up!" He took his hat off, then, and indignantly ruffled his hair, walking closer to me still. I could have counted his freckles. When he whispered to me, I could feel his breath brush against my skin. "It's building your life up with your own hands. Everyone deserves a life that's their own."

I didn't trust myself to say anything, staring into his green eyes as I teetered on the edge of forever. They were always so hypnotic. It really felt like being seen. Like he understood something inside me that even I didn't. "Come, Alan Dencourt. Come see what you could run to. Visit where we rest."

"We?" My voice sounded raspy and breathless.

He stepped away from me, breaking the spell, and pointed over the stream and into a section of trees much thicker than where we stood. "My merry men and I. At least let me give you a tour." He put his hat back on, nodded like a conclusion had been reached, and started to walk.

I didn't follow. "No."

He turned back. "Why not?" His catchphrase. I'd hear it a million times more. But in that moment, I didn't have the right answer.

"I'm not ready." I turned and started to run back towards where I came.

"I'll be here until you are, Alan Dencourt," he shouted after me. I still remember how those words echoed in my dreams when I finally found sleep that night.

When I'd gotten home, my father was sleeping in the parlor, an empty bottle on the floor beside him. I truly can't remember most of what happened after that, only that I didn't tiptoe softly enough.

I only recall laying in bed, covered in fresh bruises, and realizing how easily I forgot the pain when I thought about the way Robin looked at me- how he'd turned me to gold with his gaze.

"I'm ashamed to have to call any boy of mine such a pansy," were the words shouted into my face a week after I met the golden boy in the woods. The words smelled of alcohol and sweat, and were followed by a door slam that shook every part of me.

I looked around at my bare room. Robin's voice came to me again. "It's not giving up. Everyone deserves a life that's their own." I thought about the screaming. The shaking. The bruises. The anger. I thought about them in comparison to standing by the stream with Robin Hood. My father's fists. Robin's smirk. Was it even a question?

I left.

That fateful day. The day I laid down the first brick in the life I wanted to build.

I remember running outside before I could lose my nerve. Was I really leaving home? Home. I couldn't call it that, could I? It wasn't home, it never had been.

I turned back towards the house that raised me. I didn't know what kind of goodbye it was. Was I leaving for a day, a week, a year... forever?

All I knew as I turned away once more and flew into the forest was that I wouldn't miss it.

I found the stream quicker that second day than I had on the first. Anticipation was my compass; desire gave my feet wings.

When I got there, I thought I was alone. Just as I felt the panic from his absence pulling me down to Earth, a voice called to me from a tree. I looked up, and there he was, stealthily perched on a branch like the words on the tip of my tongue always threatening to fall.

"I knew you'd come," he said.

"I'm running away, Robin Hood. Show me where you and your- your merry men stay."

His face lit up in a grin that would become my whole world. He grabbed the branch he was sitting on and swung down, landing gracefully in a crouch. "Follow me," he'd said, shooting into the deepest part of the forest with me right on his heels. We weren't boys, we were colors, darting between trees and over rocks in air that swelled with laughter.

When we reached the place that would soon be the truest home I'd ever had, I felt my heart skip a beat. It was fantastic. A huge clearing in the middle of the red-orange-yellow autumn woods. There were a handful of huge canvas tents spread out, with at least twenty children milling about, playing games and running around. Some of them gleefully called out to Robin, dashing over to us and giggling as they took turns trying on his hat and he teased them. He was in his element, they all were. Maybe I was too.

I breathed in the welcoming air and felt the bliss that surrounded me stick in my throat, filling my eyes with tears. I'd never found somewhere so full of joy in my life. The only tent that I could see into was full of makeshift beds on the floor, and no, they weren't particularly luxurious, but they looked a thousand times more comfortable than the stiff bed that I'd spent my whole life sleeping in. It all seemed like a place where a boy like me could belong.

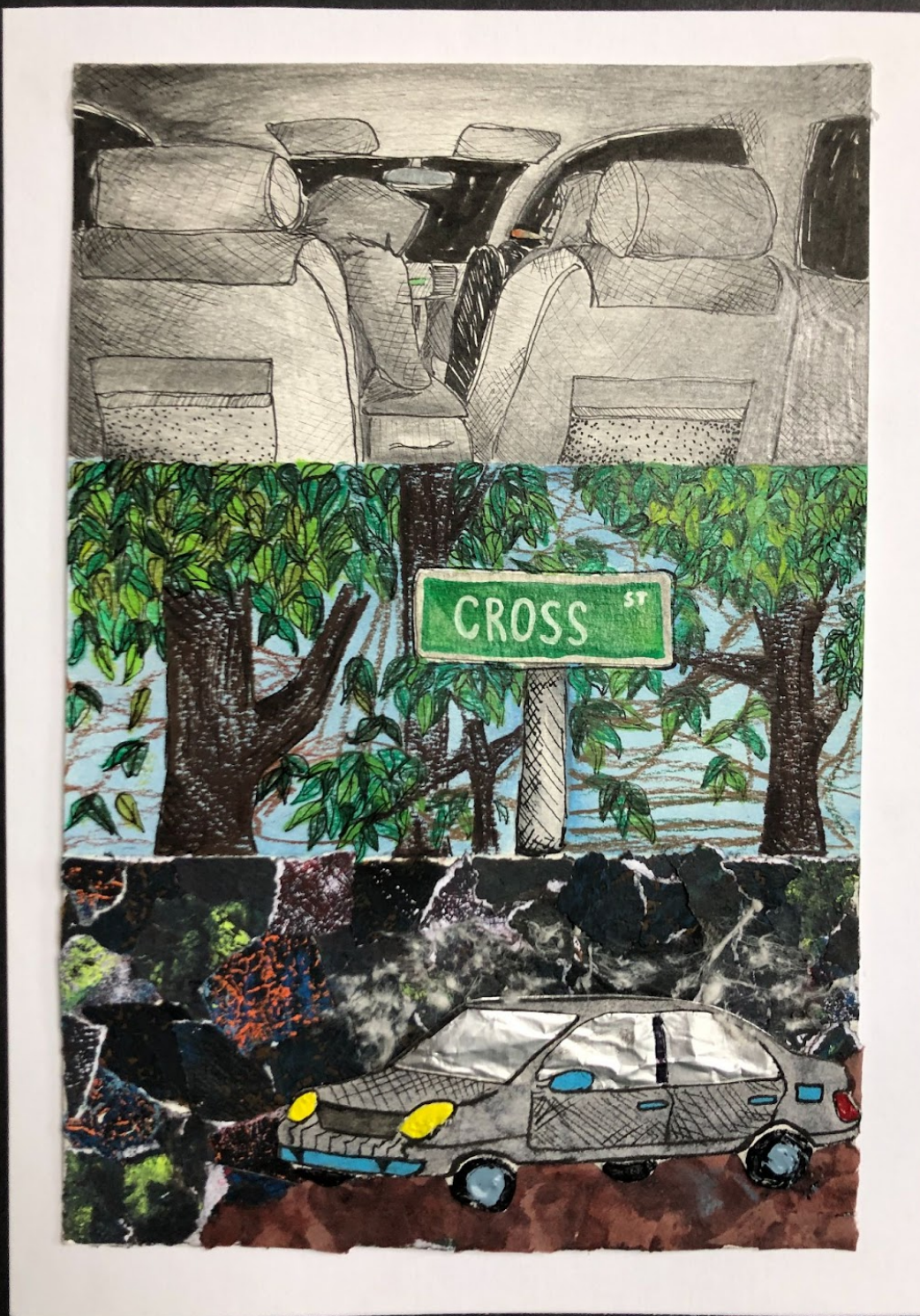
I turned to Robin, who laughed at the look on my face. "Welcome home, Alan." He grabbed my hand and squeezed it.

It was far from the first time I'd noticed how beautiful a boy was, but that moment was the first that I let myself think about it without the word shame burning my heart.





Scotia Hartford



Molly Siegel

It all started many years ago at the assassssination of the King and Queen. On that fateful day, dark energy swirled in the air around them while they were onstage. In a sudden burst, their hearts stopped and their lungs filled with poison and burst outward towards the crowd. His shiny crown fell to the dirt, the bright gold materials contrasting with the overcast gray nightfall.

Their world fell into war. With the human population against themselves. In their little glimmer in time, the population of the humans plummeted from over two billion to only one hundred thousand. The forests were destroyed. The wood used as fuel and the blue sky replaced with the black of smoke. Humans went from large communities to becoming scattered across the territory over the course of the forty year war.

Fifty years after the humans had lost the fight, the magic of the world had practically disappeared. Only one person possessed the power to use it. Now an old man, he spent his years a recluse away from everyone else. He hardly ever even spoke. Living in a small house on the outskirts of the village, he lived a peaceful life in his hut. His passion came from his nice little garden outside, filled with various fruits and flowers popping with color, to contrast the brown wood stain of his house on the hill.

The wizard was sitting outside, looking off his hill out into the sunset. He had an unobstructed view of the red and orange colors disappearing behind the high hill tops far away. Up from beyond the hills and far away, he saw what looked to be a dragon flying his way towards the village. It was made of bright impenetrable scales, bright red like the color of the sunset. Its wingspan is almost sixty feet wide.

Within minutes of the first sighting, it had now reached the village. With a large huff, the dragon shot fire out of its gaping jaw as though someone were firing an extremely large flamethrower. The orange flames shot through a small building full of unsuspecting people and burned down instantly. The dragon continued to ravage the area. All the small, flammable wooden buildings caught fire instantly and blazed in the sun. Those inside are incinerated and unrecognizable.

Looking from his distance, the wizard bolted from his cozy spot outside and ran to gather belongings to save. He quickly slid on shoes and ran through his small home, trying to collect all that truly mattered to him, which was most of his belongings. The roars between the dragon and the dying people in the distance were indistinguishable. The flapping of wings quickly became louder. Suddenly his home had erupted into flames and the creature flew onwards without a second thought. The flowers and plants he spent decades of his life growing in seconds turned into ash alongside the sides of his house. *Thud*. A wooden beam fell from above on the ceiling and onto his head, incapacitating him temporarily.

Awoken a little time later, the sounds of impressionable cries came from the sky away. He lifted the beam off his body and limped as fast as he could outside. He on his way grabbed his magic cane, handed to him from his deceased father before him. Collapsing on the outside, he rolled down the grass hill. Picking himself up and looking over, the only place he ever loved was in ruins. It was burning a giant fire and sending tons of black smoke into the sky like a signal fire.

Years seemed to have been wasted in a flash as his life came to a crashing halt. Looking over his shoulder, he could see the same fires spreading throughout the neighboring little village. The innocent beings were eradicated painfully. He was the sole survivor. The dragon flew off into the distance away towards the mountains.

There was nothing for him here now. His small life of recluse was lifted away from him, pulling away the curtain revealing the life he hardly had. Sitting amongst a cut tree stump, he pondered what he could do. He had never gone on any adventures before and never wanted to. However, there was something building inside his heart that he hadn't felt before, and his anger and grief found a way to reluctantly pull himself up again.

Walking through the ruins, he found some abandoned horses and rode one of them towards those mountains. To get from where he was to the high white mountains, you would have to walk through something nicknamed the Dark Forest. This forest was made up of endless trees doused in the fog. The fog was thick and never changed or went away. Trying to overcome a severe lack of bravery, or energy, he pressed his body close to the horse and rode forwards into dark uncertainty.

The last minutes of glow from the sun turned to cold black darkness. The cold dense air felt like breath as it blew into his face. Lost within a new world, the familiarity of his surroundings was gone as the horse brought him into new territory. Looking around through the shadows, the surroundings all looked the same like a pattern. The ground was flat with trees the same type, size, and age all equal distance apart like a grid. Precisely every fifteen feet the horse would make a small leap in the air above roots poking out of the ground from the left. The pattern went on for miles in all directions. It looked from his perspective as though he were running the same distance on loop forever, with no progress being made. The stagnant reliable source of the planet's two small moons made for a source of light and hope for the wizard on this dangerous quest.

The wizard lost all track of time. His clothes were wet from the hours moving through the rain and fog. All of the sudden, after hours without interruption, the horse had sharply stopped. Almost thrown off the creature, he was in quite the shock. Looking down, he saw that the reason the horse had stopped was because of a body lying in front of it. Stepping off the horse's back, the wizard grabbed his cane and slowly crept towards the man lying on his back in the dirt. The mysterious man on the ground hadn't seemed to be breathing at all, and blood pooled out of his chest. Walking in the distance in the early light of the morning, the wizard took very cautious steps forward. He stood inches away from the body, and slowly bent down towards his body. Suddenly, without warning, the body let out a loud ache and lurched his torso upwards. They exchanged glances.

"Take the map." the mysterious man says and falls back down, finally dead in the dirt.

Looking at the map, it happened to be pointing in the same direction that the wizard was trying to get to in the mountains. It seemed that this man was on a similar journey but failed. Without time

for a proper sendoff of the body, the wizard had to leave him in a pool of his own sweat and blood and rode off on the horse before the animals could get his body too.

Trying to read while riding, the map portrayed a landscape of the forest and the mountains in the sky on old parchment paper. Finally into the mountains he sent. Approaching the edge of the mountains, reaching the top where the dragon lived seemed impossible. It stretched out all the way to the sky. Not to mention the mounds of thick white snow that had been building on the rocks. Nevertheless, he and the horse pressed forwards.

After many tiresome hours of walking through the snow on the outskirts of the mountain, they needed a break. The problem was there was nowhere to safely stop. The climb to the mountain's top was skewered, with it being a steep climb. The snow made the ground very slippery and there was not much room for good footing. The wizard looked over the edge of the mountains and saw a giant fall all the way to the bottom. The higher they rose, the thinner the air was getting. They had hardly any food or water, and the horse was ready to fall over. They were both freezing cold walking through the snow and wind for so long. They could see their own breath blow away into the air and frost started to build up on their hairs.

With death from the elements seemingly inevitable, the wizard lost all hope. The wizard never learned any spells for keeping you warmer. Finally, running on the small amount of energy he had left, he read the map one last time and realized they were on the verge of where they needed to be.

The cave of the dragon's lair was up right ahead. The snow faved a way to the darkness coming out from the cave's entrance. Slowly walking inside the cave, the dark energy in the air was present. It was a feeling nobody else living had quite felt before. It was the distinct atmosphere and senses one would feel entering a kind of hell. The only color he could see was the black radiating on the walls. Until he walked in deeper through the mountain's cave and could see the pile up ahead.

There were the many corpses of a pegasus piled along the wall. The white fur was starting to fade along the dark black void that is the cave. Symbols of pride and hope were on their side in a pile like food being stored for later. The feathers were starting to fall off the wings and onto the cold stale ground.

Suddenly, the loud snorts of the beast echoed through the walls coming from the distance. Stepping slowly ahead was the mighty dragon. The same one that destroyed his home and had ravaged the village. Emerging from the darkness, the wizard realized that its wingspan took up almost the whole width of the cave. The wizard looked the dragon straight in the eyes, and saw that its eyes were dark and black. The wizard took out his magical cane, feeling ready to slay the beast.

He pointed the cane at the creature and said the magic words, but to his surprise, nothing at all happened. Suddenly, without knowing what to do next, he went on defense. The dragon shot its

fire breath out of its mouth. The walls burned like an oven, nearly hitting and killing the wizard. When people are subjected to harsh colds for too long, their body's stop working properly. For the wizard, actions he thought were simple were becoming increasingly difficult. He could not run as fast as he thought he could and wasn't nearly as agile as he needed to be. His mind had a hard time thinking straight and he was now struggling to remember the magic words.

The wizard tried once again. Nothing happened. After another couple attempts, he somehow had gotten the spell right, and bright waves of turquoise colored energy beams flew out of the cane and into the face of the dragon. Standing his ground, he watched the spell do its magic. He remembered that he had actually never used this spell before in real life to attack something.

With the power drained out of it, the dragon fell on the ground. After making sure that it wouldn't get up again, the wizard and the nearly dead horse got close enough to use its body heat to live. They burrowed against the body and wings of the dragon's big red scales. Now his mission was accomplished and faced his fear. Feeling satisfied but tired, he waited up in that cave mourning those in his town that had died until he would have to fight the future yet to come...

By Iain Starr



Caroline Cates

ASTORIA

I crawled out of my coffin a week after I was killed. It took an hour of digging and scratching my way out. I don't know what happened in between all that time. It all happened so fast from the exile to the murder, yet all I remember looking back on it was that it was fall. And that I was wearing a bloody awful frock. But no one could hear me when I cried out for help. Or see me. So I ran, ran through the golden leaves until I could get to safety. And from there on I learned to survive by myself.

After I was killed, I traveled the world. Experiencing the millions of things that the world had never let me even think of. Yet with every coming autumn I would always without an exception end up in Silver Lake, Boston. Silver Lake was a small town that I was supposed to escape to with my best friend.. Sadly I died before we could leave. So I was utterly gobsmacked when I first landed right on top of a pile of stones. Since no one can see me, no one seemed too disturbed. But it hurt more than you would think.

Since no one could see me, hear me, or touch me I was left isolated. That's kind of a bother but I like being alone. I was never allowed to be alone back when I was a princess but I really do enjoy being my own best friend. But I have been placed in this specific place millions of times, I remember when it was still a castle, then a museum, then an apartment, then a hardware store.

So like clockwork there I was, falling on top of what I assume is the worker of the shop.

"Jack in the box Jesus! Where did you just come from?!" said the wiggling shape beneath me. I jumped up. Bollocks! It's been decades since someone saw and touched me. The fellow stood up from where I had been "dropped".

"I am bloody going bonkers. Can you see me?" I waved my hands over the stranger's face. He stepped back.

"Of course I can see you, I am not blind. Where the hell did you drop from?" the bloke said. I finally looked at him, he was wearing a red flannel shirt, and a backwards cap. He had deep blue eyes and dark hazel hair sticking out everywhere. He was tall and he wasn't hard to look at. Yet there was something familiar about him. Like as if he was an old friend from another life.

"Hi?" I have not interacted with anyone for years so I was rather nervous about what to say. Oh and you know I was completely losing it since I HAVE NOT INTERACTED WITH ANYONE IN YEARS!

“Who are you?” he all but yelled. People walking outside turned around and looked in through the shop windows.

“I am Princess Astoria. The exiled princess of Great Britain. But please call me Ari. And you are...?” I stuck out my hand testing if he could touch me.

“What uh... I am Theo. Theo Danes.” he awkwardly shook my hand. I felt my jaw drop. Danes, Danes was the last name of my best friend who had sacrificed everything to help me run away. This is too much. I started hyperventilating.

“Are you alright?” he reached out a hand to steady me. That’s the last thing I remember before I fainted.



THEO

When the crazy lady dressed turned purple and then fainted, I freaked out. I was putting out my hand to sturdy her, so I had enough time to catch her. I lowered her into the floor and sat next to her.

Astoria had long, red, and curly hair. The awkward position she was in made it look like her hair was going everywhere. With her long flowy dress she looked like a renaissance painting. She was gorgeous, in a way that seemed just so untouchable. Like an angel. I think it might have been the vintage all white dress, layered on top of white sweaters.

This was just so confusing. One moment I was counting the money in the cash register, then the next a human dropped on top of me. Then this crazy lady introduces herself as the exiled princess of Great Britain.

The wind hit the door shaking the bells outside. The crisp night looked lovely outside with all the dimmed lights going through the streets. The leaves were softly trailing through the streets.

“Where am I...?” a drowsy whisper came from the floor. I leaned down.

“Welcome back, I am Theo.” I reached out a hand. She took it.

A minute went by of us just staring at each other.

“I know you are a stranger, but can I tell you something?” Ari asked, sounding slightly bewildered.



ASTORIA

THREE WEEKS LATER

The coffee shop was filled to the brim. People were chattering and someone was laughing. I went over by the coffee machine next to the register, where I assume Theo was getting some change.

“Good morning, fancy a cuppa, mate?” I offered, smiling.

“Ugh, it's way too early for this British slang.” He whined. After weeks of becoming Theo Danes' friend, I had learned what a great guy he truly was. But mornings were not his virtue.

“I will take that as a yes.” I said as I got two mugs. “Do you want me to go serve those people?”

He nodded his head then collapsed on top of the register. So much had changed. After I fainted I told Theo everything. From my time as a princess, to my time as a ghost. We researched and created experiments to see what has changed. We created scripts to try and casually see if anyone else could interact with me. Imagine my surprise when we came to the conclusion that other people could see me, hear me, and touch me. I can't believe it but we think that I might have become human again. It was like I was just waiting for the other shoe to drop.

“Good morning! What can I do for you ma'am?” I asked the stern looking woman. She had an updo of gray/silver hair all kept together with a pencil. She kept her eyes on the book in front of her as she responded.

“I will take a cup of coffee. Black.”

“That will be a quid,” I said, grabbing my small notepad and placing it in my apron. She took a sharp gasp and turned to me. I took a step back. She had vibrant blue eyes, that I could swear pierced my soul.

“Do I... Do I know...you?” I stuttered out.

“I...Well I have waited for this moment for quite a long time.” she responded before bursting out laughing. The sound of her laugh chilled my bones. It was biting and bitter. That's when I recognised her. I knew I had to go but I couldn't move.

“Well I am sure glad you finally joined us.” the lady said with a sly grin. Out of the corner of my eyes I saw Theo stepping towards us. That is what threw me into action. I tried to motion with my hand under the tall tables for him to move back. I would not let her hurt him.

“Meridith, let's take a walk.” I asked as calmly as I could mustard. Her eyes stayed fixed on mine.

“I'd rather not, thank you,” she snapped.

“Oh I am sorry, but I wasn't asking.” I pushed her up and dragged her outside. I tried to get a glimpse of Theo but I knew that Meridith would see me. I wrapped my arms around me as I felt the cool morning breeze.

“Nice weather, right? Do you remember back when we were kids and we would spend days jumping up and down on the leaves? Ah, that was probably one of my favorite memories.”

“You were such a selfish prat back then, always stealing all the good crunchy leaves.” she said lightly. “And you know what...”

“Why did you kill me?” I interrupted her. I tried to appear strong but I was shaking. “I...You were my sister. I trusted you. And you killed me!”

“You were leaving!” Meridith shook as she yelled.

“You don't understand, I was suffocating in that place! I was the eldest, I was expected to be perfect. I tried everyday to be better but nothing was enough. Nothing! I was locked in my room all day until I had to go to a feast where I was treated as an object! Nothing more than an object. And you know what they did!” I didn't mean to but I was sobbing.

“Are you kidding? I went through all of that too!” I could see the pain in her eyes as she spoke.

“But why did you kill me? I just don't understand.”

“Because you were leaving me. You said we had to take care of each other and you left with a friend. You took your things and ran. But I swear, I didn't mean to kill you, you were just ignoring me and I got angry. I didn't plan to. You were just there and I grabbed the garden scissors. “I didn't mean to...I promise,” she said as she cried.

“But...how could you?” I asked.

“I didn't mean to. But I tried to make it better. I went to the town witches, and paid them to curse us. I was so surprised they could hear me through the sobs but they did it. They made you into a ghost until one day we would be reunited again. It's the reason I am here too. I needed to tell

you that I was sorry. But now you are human again. So you can live the life you always wanted to.” she begged. Or at least it sounded like she was begging.

“What about you? Will you stay with me?” I tried to calm down.

“Well I completely understand if you hate me forever. But I just wanted to talk to you one more time.”

“One last time? Where are you going?” I didn't know what to say but I didn't want her to go.

“I completed my task. I got to see you again. Now it's my time to rest.” she said, lowering herself down to the sidewalk.

“No, no I just got you back you can't go! Come on!” I yelled falling on my knees and holding her.

“I lived a long time. It's my time. But before I go, I need to know, how was your life? Were you happy?” Meredith whispered. It was like the life was being drained out of her. But she seemed at peace.

“I was happy, I traveled the world. I did everything we talked about wanting to do.” The tears were coming in harder.

“I am so glad to see you be so chuffed. What will you do now? I saw how that barista was looking at you. He's a real bev.”

“MEREDITH! The nerve.” she giggled as I whispered yelled at her. “Well I guess nothing ever got past you.”

“I want you to be happy, Astoria. I want you to live and experience everything with the people who love you. And I want you to know that I am sorry and that I love you”

“I forgive you, I really do. And I love you. You are my sister after all. I will always love you.” I murmured. And with that she was gone. Nothing was left except the pretty brooch she had on her head. I picked it up as I got up and walked back to the shop.



THEO

I was worried sick about Astoria. She looked so scared when she left and she was gone for like an hour. I was minutes away from calling the police. Then she walked in.

“Where were you? Are you alright?” I almost yelled as I ran towards her.

“I am fine, I just got into a little kerfuffle,” she said with puffy red eyes. I stared at her. She rolled her eyes.

“Do you mind if I go up to my room and just collect my thoughts for a minute?” she tried to give a lopsided smile. Her eyes didn't meet mine.

“Yeah of course.” I said.

I offered my guest room to her the day she collapsed on top of me. I inherited the whole building so I offered her one of the many unused guest rooms in the apartment complex. I made sure she rested, ate, and drank food. Then at night when I closed up, we talked in the living room. Astoria told me all about being a princess and then a ghost. I didn't believe her until I researched her name online. Apparently she was exiled from her county because she was too outspoken, but was shortly killed by her sister Meridith. She didn't tell me any of this, just alluded to an accident.

I told her she could stay with me as long as she wanted to. She refused until I proposed she worked in the shop exchange.

When I was a kid, my mom raised me by herself since my idiot of a father left her. She worked 3 jobs to try and provide everything I ever wanted. Since I was an only child I learned to be by myself and not need anyone. But I was always rather lonely. So, having someone around was fun. I honestly think I talked with her more than I have talked with anyone for years.

“Bye Theo, see you tomorrow!” waved Mr and Mrs Wending. I have lived in Silver Lake all of my life. Our small town had all types of interesting characters and I care for every single one of them. Except maybe Ronald down the street. He needs to stop parking in my spot, I swear I will drop kick that little hooligan.

“Hey Theo, how was your day?” asked the store clerk.

“Yeah, I'm fine. I'm great. It's a big, gross, smiley and sunshiny day for me,” I rolled my eyes. I did have to keep my reputation as the grumpy young(ish) man of the town.

“Ah, there is the Theo we all know and love,” he chuckled. “Alright Theo, good night. I will see you tomorrow.”

As everyone gathered their stuff and left, I made a cup of tea, grabbed a slice of Boston Cream Pie, and closed up the shop. I walked up stairs and heard a whispered sob come through Astoria's room.

"Hey, I brought you tea and some pie," I knocked on the door.

"Come in"

The room was dark, only being lit by small candles. She was curled up in the bed wearing one of the shop's tee shirts with her big curly hair tied up in a bun.

"Bring that food, please." Astoria said sitting up

"Oh now I understand why you keep me around." I said, placing the food in front of her. "How are you doing?"

"I don't like talking about how I got murdered." she said, taking a bite of the pie "Gosh darn that is some proper good nosh, innit?"

"What?"

"Good food." she said stuffing food into her cheeks. "Anyways, my sister killed me before I had a chance of escaping. We got into a bit of a squabble while I was trying to get into the carriage. Meredith grabbed one of the garden scissors and stabbed me. The lady who I was talking to, that was her. She apparently cursed us so one day we would be reunited again. She made sure I got to live the life I always wanted. I..."

She choked up and started crying again. I awkwardly patted her in the head.

"I just... I never knew I would be so absolutely gutted about her leaving me. I have spent thousands of years hating her and now I just can't stop crying."

"What do you mean? Is she is dead?"

"She is gone, she disappeared in my arms. But she looked at peace. She finally gets to rest." at this she seemed to calm down. "I want to be happy. Even if it's just for her, I want to be happy."

We laid down in the bed for a few more minutes.

"She said you were good looking," Astoria murmured.

"As she should." I rolled my eyes. She giggled.

"I want to stay here," she whispered, "If you let me, I want to stay with you and work at the shop."

“Then you are an official member of the coffee shop.” I said “Look, I mean it when I say that you can stay here as long as you want. And if you want to stay here forever that’s okay too.”

Ari looked over and smiled at me.

“Won’t you get tired of me?”

“Astoria, from the short time I have known you, I can confidently say that you are my best friend. And if I do get tired of you, well I will just have to sell you out to one of those indie journalists. You are a princess after all.” my cheeks hurt from smiling. She giggled again.

“Can you believe how lovely the trees look?” she said. “I don’t think I will ever love anything as much as I love fall.”

“I agree.” I agreed not looking away.

By - Violeta Edwards



GABBY PERRILLI



Robbie Baker

The world is a terrible place,
It's full of pain and suffering,
People fear responsibility,
There is hope though,
Among a small group,
Those who latch on to childhood,
These people sit among the clouds
They live past the pink in a sunset
In a fantasy world
So never let the world hold you down
Let your imagination run wild and free
Don't wait for dreams to come true...
MAKE THEM HAPPEN

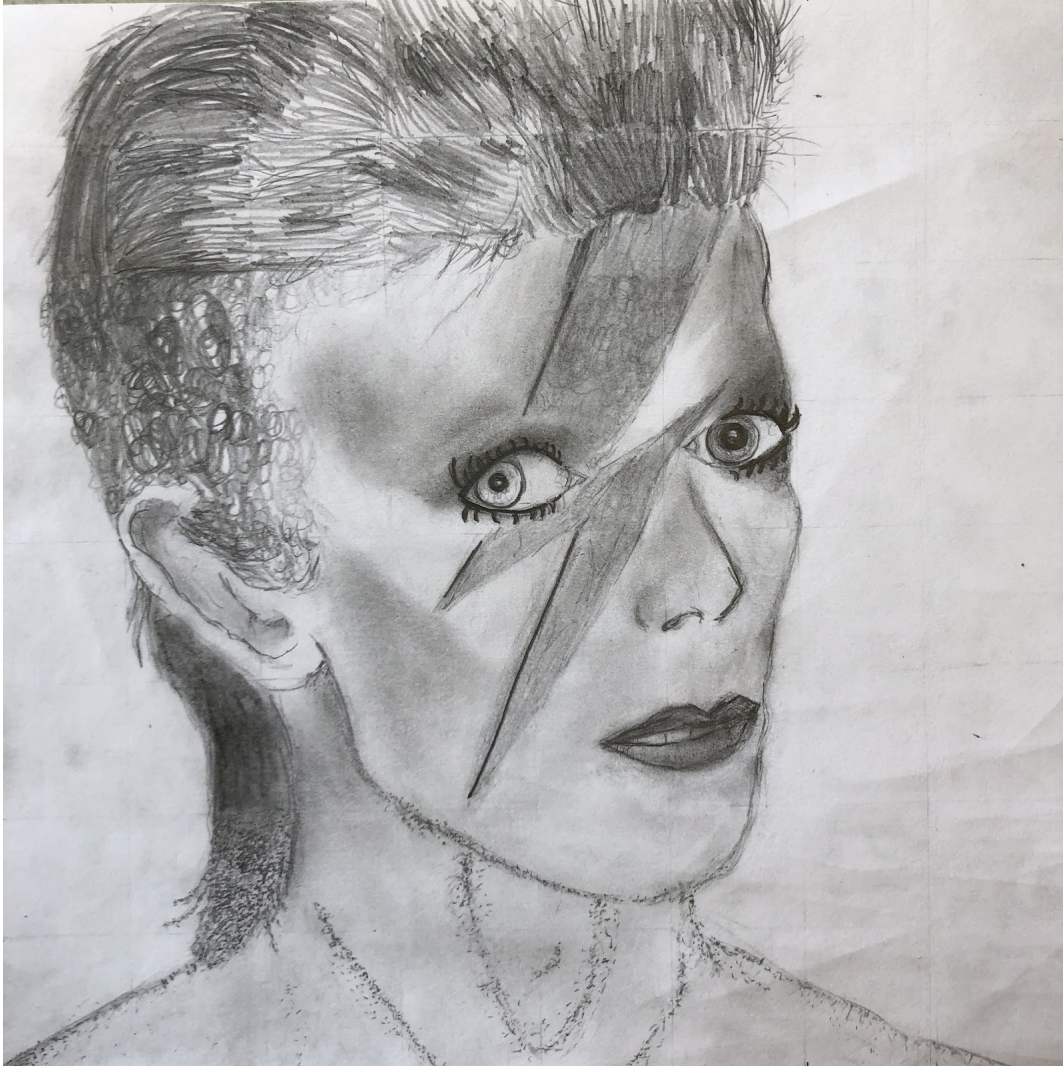
By Chris Coronel



Sofia Wallis



Quin Carmicino



PERCY PARKER

I Am No Longer

Percy Parker

omnia iam fient quae posse negabam- everything which i used to say could not happen will happen now

I am no longer the little girl who hated how she looked in a bathing suit.

I am no longer the girl who skipped every lunch because she knew once she was skinny, she would have friends again.

I am no longer the girl who spent recess hiding with a novel, her spot on the playground becoming a lifeboat she didn't think she'd ever be brave enough to leave.

I am no longer the girl onstage in Mary Poppins feeling her heart freeze as a girl's hair fell onto her shoulder and she felt something she never had before. No, I am no longer her, but her heart stayed there. A heart that was so afraid.

I am no longer the girl walking home from play rehearsal in the rainy dark after googling the definition of the word "bisexual".

I am no longer the kid drowning themselves in tears after finishing "Sissy" by Jacob Tobia and feeling a question mark next to the word "gender" emerge in their heart.

I am no longer the kid pressing their face against the cool glass of a car window and hearing their dad say "but you use she/her pronouns, right?" and watching the world fly by and choking on the word "yes".

I am no longer the kid looking at the boy next to him in biology and trying to mirror how he sat, how he walked, how he smiled, wondering why they wished their skin would melt off and turn into his.

I am no longer the kid learning that it's possible to love a girl so much that their heart aches and they can't even think sometimes, they just have to lie on their bed and feel all the doors inside of them fly open.

I am no longer the kid getting hit in the face with a volleyball and being told through poisonous laughter that if they want to be a boy, they shouldn't cry.

I am no longer the boy blurting out to his family that he is a brother, he is a son, and they have to live with that. I'm NOT, but I still wonder what it meant that when I looked up, my mother was crying.

I am no longer the boy tearing up an unsent love letter as he cries and the world cries with him, feeling the word UNREQUITED rise up from the ground and swallow him.

I am no longer the boy feeling like a shadow as kids at school throw things at him, as he writes the words F*CK YOU over and over again in his notebook but is convinced that he's too invisible to say them aloud.

I am no longer the boy convinced that no one could ever want him, that no one on Earth had ever needed him. He thought he must be replaceable. I know better now.

I am no longer made of stone.

I am no longer swallowing my words.

I am no longer the shadow of a boy hiding behind the body of a girl.

And yet I am still screaming.

I am still shaking my hands fanatically as I stare at myself in the mirror at night and wish beyond everything to fall out of my body and into a better one.

I am still recovering.

I am still scared to show my scars.

I am still wishing I could say "I'm sorry" and hear "I'm sorry" back, for everything in the past, for all of it.

I am still fluctuating in and out of my mind.

I am still learning how to feel safe when I'm alone with myself.

I am still I am still I am still.

Just.

A boy.

The Garden

You hold the pen
 Like you're about to inject the ink
 Straight into your hands
 To sew roses into your skin
 I can see your fingers twitching

You walked into the room yesterday,
 "When I die" on your lips
 Maps sketched across your arms and an adventure on your tongue
 The petals caged your face, and we were excited
 "Whatever you've done, it's working."

The flowers were gone the next morning
 Bare, angry stems cutting your hair instead
 Lines marking your cheeks from where the blooms used to be
 Like a blueprint of a house that aged

I ask
 The rose you hand me is wilted, and pale
 When I tuck it into my hair, you say I look like a nymph.

By Keira Shanahan

Sticking in the snow.
 Stained and colored red.
 Standing on a pole.
 It's a human head!
 Some poor elf chose to leave.
 When Santa would say no.
 So for capital punishment!
 His head would have to go!

The bones were turned to soup.
 The skin would bind fresh books.
 And his pinky toes would make great fish hooks!

So if the yule man comes.
 And if he chose to stay.

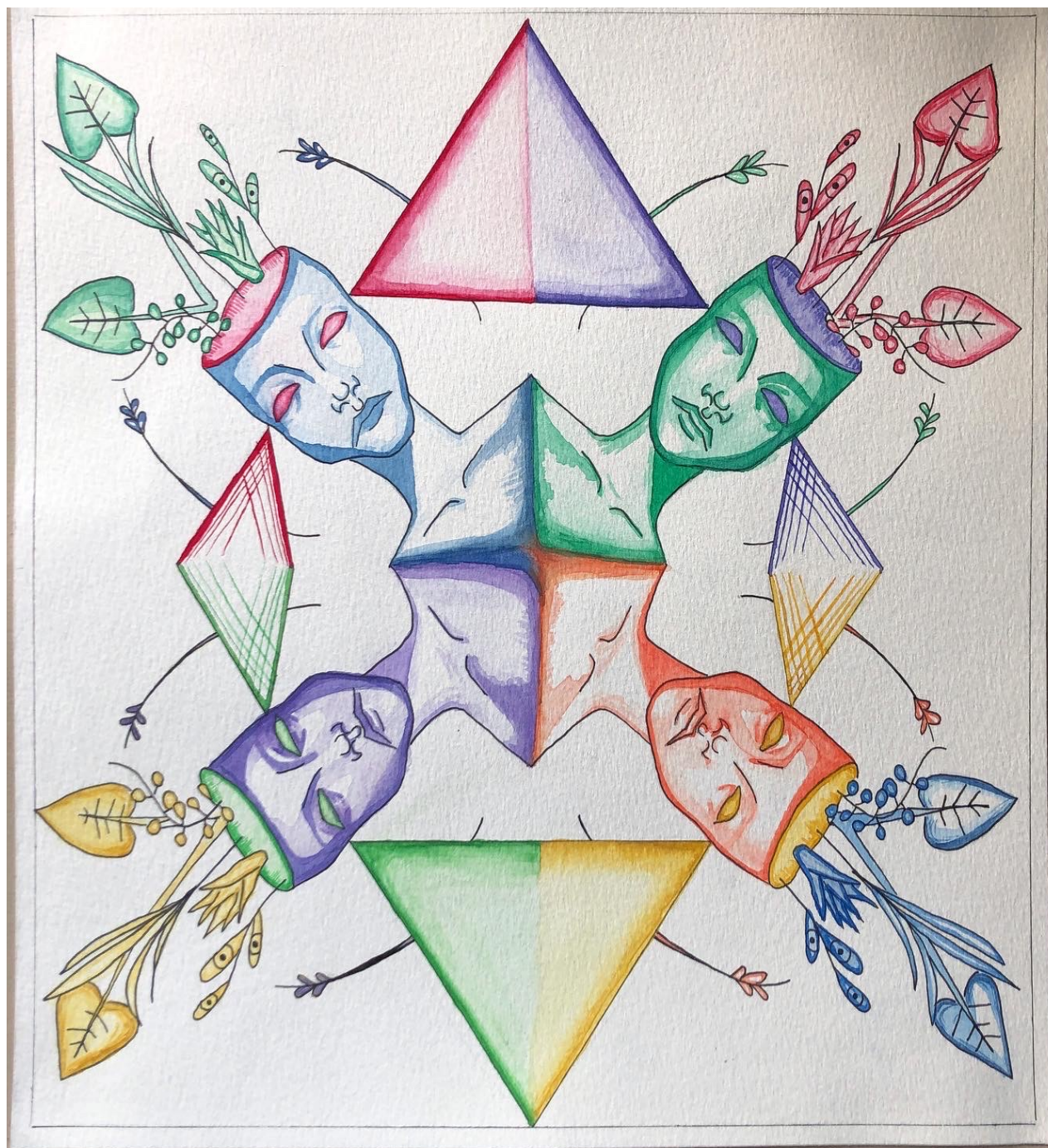
By - Louis Ferreira

Herded from the great green meadow
Last time seeing the clouds with snow
Ahead comrades killed in a single blow
Killed for the pink meat that's below
Their skin, and I, a frightened helpless steer
Having nothing left besides my fear

By Stephen Robinson



Quin Carmicino



BETSY CATES

SPLINTERED CHAOS:

Chaos is a friend of mine,
 He dresses in suits of shatter glass,
 Brings back the **terror of time**,
 And tells stories to his puppets about the past.

His **distracting pink eyes**,
 Leads you **into clouds of butterflies**,
 But even tho he is so blind,
 He can still see the sea of your hidden lies.

He likes to hold the world in the palm of his hand,
 Holding consciousness as his compass.
 He likes to crack your soul into different lands,
 Leaving your mind ablaze, sunk in an abyss of darkness.

Chaos seems to adore bottomless pits,
 Those that hold his endless wit,
 His ability to force you with no force at all, just to quit.

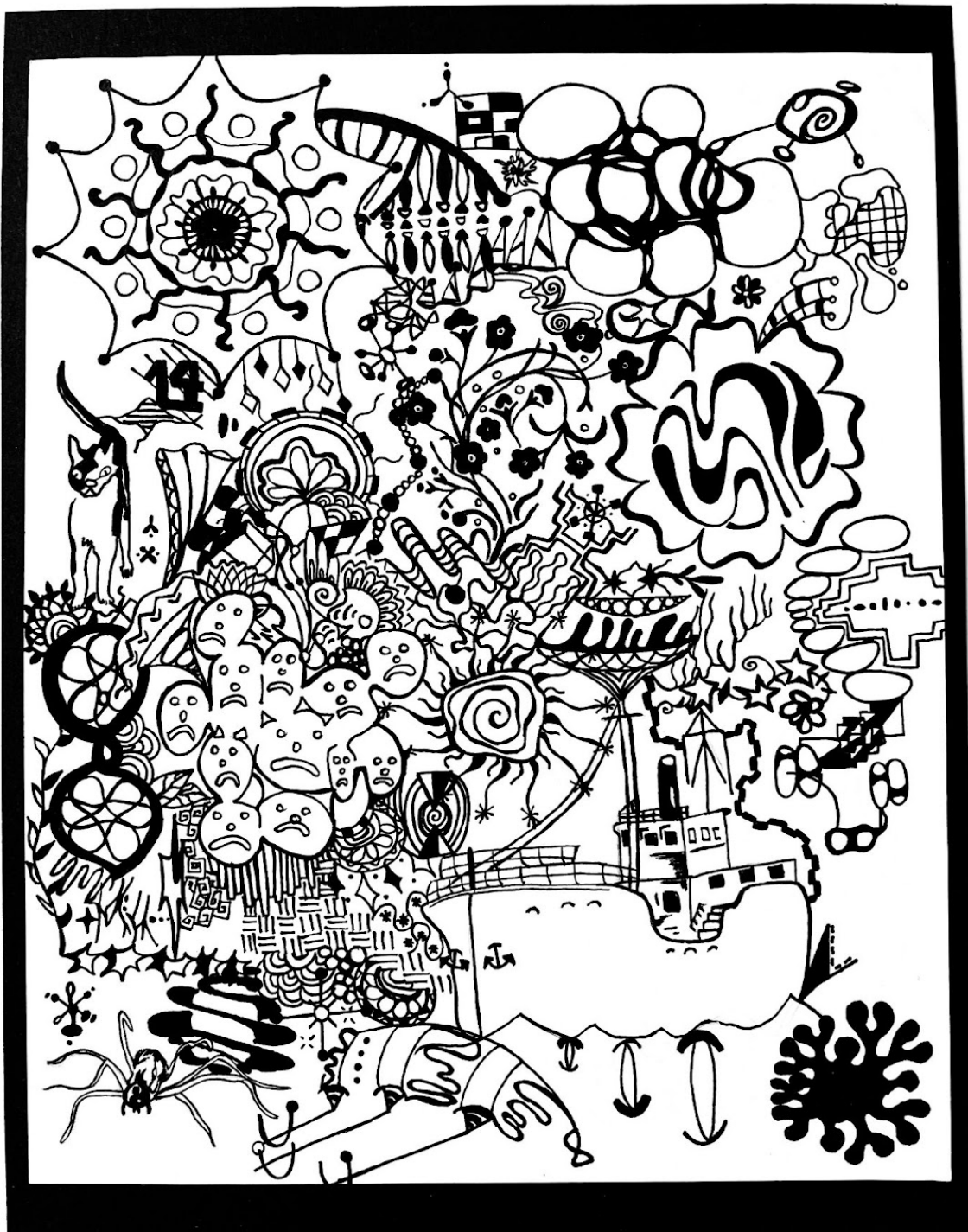
But in the end Chaos is not alive,
 He turns to an It as you read through pages of lies.
 Chaos is a novel of dry rusted cries,
 A symbol whose eyes glow like fireflies,
 Whose look shimmers like sunlight,
 Whose corruption breaks like suicide,
 And whose influence brings about mental twilight.

Chaos is a tool, your tool.
 Chaos has made us fools, such fools.
 Chaos has turned us to ghouls, vicious ghouls.
 But think of Chaos like this: A beast you tame to achieve a peaceful bliss.
 A Remedy.

By - Chase Coulson



Quin Carmicino



Ella Ashburn



Jeremy Hall

The Snikerlantholope.

The Snikerlantholope,
Eats bifferbuns and cherrylips.
Calls out to the children,
Who swims in the Nuckerwims.
The Snikerlantholope,
Waits until one wades too deep,
And pulls them deep under,
To where they fall asleep.

By Fiona Shanahan



ASHLEY SOUSA

Boris was taking another one of his strolls around town. It was about 7 PM, and the sun was just starting to set. The saloon was loud and rowdy, as usual, and so was the bar. Pretty standard. The mining area was too, or so he thought until he noticed a translucent neon green mist oozing from it off in the distance. As the sheriff with no major fights to break up and nothing to do, he decides to make sure everything is okay. Taking his horse, he began the quick ride downtown to the rocky cave leading down to the mines.

As he approached, the green mist would grow thicker and the stench would grow more intense.

"Anybody there?" Boris hollered into the depth.

"Hey, Boris!" It was an instantly recognizable voice.

"Gert, what on earth are you doing down there?" Boris had a touch of concern in his voice but knew that Gert, being his best friend, could probably take care of himself.

"I think I just struck it rich!" Even Gert, who is typically emotionless, couldn't hide the excitement in his voice.

"By surrounding yourself with unidentified green mist?"

"Not unidentified, just not well known. And I intend on keeping it that way. If We can keep this flea-bitten mineral a secret -"

"Hold on. A mineral? You mean, you discovered something new?" Boris interrupted excitedly.

"I think so! It's like nothing I've ever seen before." Gert took another good look at it. "Haven't seen anything with such a glow like this." Gert admired it with dollar signs in his eyes.

"Well, it sure smells terrible. Please, wrap that up in something. I smelled it all the way from town." Boris had his shirt over his nose.

"All the way from town? Shucks, I guess you really do get used to it when you're down there for a while." Gert showed no signs of gagging, while Boris was struggling to keep his lunch in his stomach.

"Don't worry, it doesn't smell too bad. It's usually worse. Anyway, there's a ton of it down here! In this secluded area. We could extract it and play it off as something rare!" Gert was getting more excited by the minute.

"That sounds like a great idea, right after I go to throw up."

The sun was beginning to set, so they both decided to call it a night then and there, and to wake up the next morning and start the mining.

The next morning, Boris and Gert stood in front of the mine. It was very early, so no one else was there.

"Better cover your nose and watch your step," Gert mumbled as he stumbled across a few rocks in the dark environment. Boris realized he has never been down here before. After stumbling on numerous unidentified objects, he saw a glow in the distance.

"Ah, here it is! Just needed to gather a bigger load for experiments later." Under the glow, Boris now realized Gert had a wheelbarrow and put his gloves on. The material was surprisingly light considering how dense it appeared and how potent the smell was.

"Alright, let's get this out of here. Don't want to be in here for too long -

As they emerged from the cave, they were met with a beautiful sunrise. They were also met with 4 outlaws holding revolvers at their heads.

"Hand it over y'all, and nobody gets hurt," one of the outlaws said.

Boris looked nervously at Gert. Unexpectedly, Gert threw up part of the material. When it hit the ground, it created a series of chemical reactions causing mini explosions and green mist. In the distraction, Boris and Gert sent a few bullets in the general direction of the men and then ran while they were still dizzy. One let out a scream.

"My leg! Retreat!"

As the smoke cleared, four men were sprinting away in the distance. Boris and Gert stared as they ran, feeling triumphant a bit.

"Let's get going before they decide to come back. Where you hit?" Boris was out of breath.

"I don't think so, but it's hard to feel with all the adrenaline," stated Gert, still trying to regain balance. "Let's get this back before we lose more."

Boris and Gert both gathered the wheelbarrow and the remains of the still unidentified material. The material itself was hard to hide because of how strong the glow was and how potent the smell was. The best they could do was cover it in a tarp they found in the mines and wheelbarrow it nonchalantly through town.

"There's a spot behind the saloon, a small shack," Gert pointed his finger in the direction. "We could probably hide it there in the meantime."

Gert and Boris unloaded the heavy material from the wheelbarrow onto the table within the shack. The hard, rock-like material began glowing stronger than before, and almost emitting a purplish glow.

"Well, as long as we have a lock on this door, nobody should get into it. The saloon - gowers would probably be too rowdy to notice it anyway," Boris and Gert were both not exactly known as the sharpest tools in the shed. Since it was getting late, Boris and Gert decided to go

to bed and start to inspect the material the next morning. They were debating on whether they should leave it out overnight to see what long exposure to the heat would bring, but surely someone would notice it and take it.

With the previous morning being early and the previous night being late, both Boris and Gert were exhausted and woke up late. Eager to get back to their new discovery, they met up behind the saloon, and discovered that the lock was broken. Upon entering, there was no green mineral, but... a note, from "four outlaws."

By Brendan Shanahan



Gray Cardoso



The Many Faces of Rose LaBarbera

Mondrian Makeup

Adjusting garters and naming yourself
Coriée

Putting on Mondrian Makeup, you branded
yourself an avant play

Don't you love your clustered gallery walls?
How is it down on 125 way?

Safety pinned and safety struck
Television and a synthesizer pluck

You're counting your bottles of sun gloss
and you're glossing up the sun
Would you say a blind drive is or isn't a
touch of fun?

You made up a dance and called it St. Vitus
But you called it such a drag to try and invite
us

You told me to follow an aesthetic and said
it's how you like to live
But it's betrayal to go out and paint like an
Argive

You met Michael Caine and killed a pencil
sharpener's career
Pushing papers on Vincent Price horror, you
drifted in and out of here

You said you hated poetry because it's
falsely sincere
And I had to agree since I find it so
superficially dear

Yet you and I still want to be men of letters
instead of lettered men

Do you think we started that now or back
then?

Tear up my wallpaper—I won't really care
Why don't you take a jab at coating spare
film in red flare?

You've flown off to Paris because you
wanted to feel real

You'll put on your makeup there too, livid
and unsealed

By Samuel Bates





Elijah McKelvey

Sharps and Linens

I Can't Write,
everything is cotton balls pinprick the echoing word of lover's,
"I'm sorry I can't call today."

It's not your fault I just need to clear
the dust bunnies from my brain, replace your lingering
touch with

New Sharp Sensation:
the Pinprick, it only hurts for a moment and that's only if
you do it wrong, forget to breathe. My cottonmouth tastes your tongue I'm
so tired, thirsty, lost. There's moisture on your lips but you say,
"Not yet"

If Not Now When?
When will I see you next? Smothered smoldering fever of 104°?
You have this uncanny ability to always catch my sick. I remember
this one, glass throat hollow bones desert lungs.

Have you tried New Sharp Sensation?
I've heard it does wonders for dry spells.

By Elijah McKelvey



Molly Siegel

The Banker in the Theater

The wood floor that my son's class kicked a soccer ball around on earlier in the day has been transformed into seating for the audience. I hear the whispering of anxious high school students. They can't believe how many people are here. My briefcase in hand, another undeniable reminder of the life I have chosen for myself forever. No one knows how much I longed to be on that stage, to for once be something other than an uninteresting banker. I am suddenly aware of the shadowy figure, what I could've been. I see the clock. It's 7 pm. The play's beginning now and my demeaning thoughts of my desires in life can be banished to the back of my head now. I look back, and the shadow is coming back at me. My face heats up and gets hotter and hotter, like plastic in a microwave. He wants to suck my life out of me, and give me what could've been if I followed my dreams. But I think too much, and by then it is too late. My time to make the decision is up. Even I have given up on myself. I run, and I run, out of the theater, down the streets of Cold Spring and I fling myself into the water. I am underwater and see all of the fish like me, swimming around in schools, following everyone around them. Although I have accepted that I am a fish, when I look up, I cannot deny that I want to be a blue jay flying, flying wherever I want to go, being whatever I want to be.

By Camilla McDaniel



Rhys Robbins



Makeup and Model Rose LaBarbera

Sundown

The old man decided to watch the sunrise from his back patio that afternoon. The weather outside was perfect. It was warm but not too warm, a mild yet satisfying temperature that no reasonable person would find uncomfortable. A tranquil breeze gently rustled the leaves on the trees that bordered the yard as if it were softly waking them up for the day. The grass was a lively green and freshly cut; it swayed uniformly with the breeze. Beyond the acre of grass lay the river which always caught the sunlight ascending the hill in the morning, sending little sparkles of light dancing across the water. The old man liked to watch it as often as he could, as it reminded him of the dances he used to attend in town with his wife Eleanor. Everyone would form themselves into little groups and dance with the pace of the music, gently swaying across the dancefloor like the movement of the sparkles on the water traveling down the river. Those were happy days, days that not only survived but thrived in the mind of the old man. He didn't look back at them with sorrow or nostalgia but rather joy and contentment for the fact that it happened.

The house in which the old man found himself in was his family home from years back when he was just a child. Every Christmas present, Sunday dinner, game night, Easter egg hunt, school project, movie night, and knee scrape had taken place right on the two acres that found themselves touched by the gentle breeze and the dancing sparkles on the river. The horizon of the sky behind the hill had turned into a soft yet vivacious orange, the last few brushstrokes of darkness above it melting away. In just a few moments, the sun would be up.

The old man descended the stairs of the patio and took a seat down on the grass of the back yard. He brushed his hands through the green blades; it was surprisingly soft and warm, like gliding his hands through a blanket. He took a deep breath, savoring the view and quietly wishing that the moment could last forever, that his family home and his yard and the river beyond it would stand for as long as time, beyond time even. He didn't dare close his eyes in fear of losing one second of it all. He took in the scene, listening to the breeze shake the trees and the river water gently tumbling over the rocks. He almost didn't even notice when his wife Eleanor quietly descended the stairs and sat down beside him. Neither of them spoke, as no words could have been strong enough to capture the moment.

Finally, the sun rose over the hill, flooding into the backyard and blinding the old couple. Suddenly, a bird off in the distance started to shriek. It was a thunderous and disturbing sound, the sound of a dying animal. The sparkles on the river formed into a single blinding mass as the river burned away into the rocks. The old man reached for his wife, but she was gone. His hand knocked against something and he heard a glass shattering.

The old man opened his eyes. He turned from the window in which a singular stream of light came through and illuminated the gray walls of his dingy bedroom. The old man twisted to the best of his ability and clicked off the alarm clock. Its dying screech ceased and the room was quiet again. He shimmied in his bed, trying to force his creaking joints to work with him for a few minutes as he sat up. The sound he heard was the glass of water he had sitting on a high

nightstand. He figured that he must have knocked it off reaching for his alarm. It took a few seconds for his morning grogginess to wear off, and when he finally grasped where he was, he carefully reached over for his cane which he kept beside his nightstand. He slowly inched his butt closer to the edge of the bed, trying to ease his feet closer to the ground. He silently cursed the fact that he had a high bed; it seemed like it was getting harder and harder to get up every morning. When he finally managed to get his feet on the ground, he carefully walked around the broken glass on the floor and made his way out his bedroom door and into the kitchen. Years prior, he used to sleep in the master bedroom which was upstairs, but ever since he started getting arthritis in his knees, he had a difficult time getting up and down the stairs. His daughter offered to put in a stairlift for him, but the prices listed for the lifts were outrageous. His daughter offered to pay, but he would feel too bad if he had to inconvenience her. She was already trying to work something out with the installment through his Medicaid, and he felt bad enough that she was fussing over him and his disabilities.

When he got into the kitchen, he opened up the top cabinet and slowly but shakily pulled out a new glass. He filled it with some water and then shifted around the countertop searching for his pillbox amongst all of the mail that was piling up. His daughter was supposed to come over the other day and sort it out, as she usually did intermittently to avoid a mess such as this one, but with her more stringent schedule at her hospital, she had been coming by less and less.

When he finally found his pillbox he lifted it up carefully and set it on top of a stack of unopened bills. Each compartment of the box was labeled and color coded, so he would know which pills to take on which days. He slowly turned around and checked his faded calendar that he had tacked to his fridge before opening the little green Tuesday compartment and taking the five little white pills that were inside. He carefully closed the box and set his half-full glass of water down in the sink.

It was only after his breakfast consisting of a bowl of cereal and a banana that he remembered the broken glass on his floor. If his daughter came back and saw it, she would worry about him. She would have him sit down on his couch while she carefully checked his feet to make sure that he didn't unknowingly step on a shard while getting out of bed. He didn't like to worry people, especially his daughter who was the only real person left who he had to come check up on him regularly. With some effort, he managed to get an old broom and dustpan out from behind his fridge and slowly made his way back to his bedroom. Setting down the dustpan against the wall, he slowly and carefully swept the shards of glass together and pushed them all into the dustpan. He set the broom down against the nightstand, shakily bent down and picked up the broom, and, carefully as to not spill the glass on the floor again, made his way into the kitchen and discarded the shards into the garbage.

It was only until he got into his little living room and plopped down on the couch that he let out a deep breath and relaxed. He fumbled around with the remote for a little while before giving up with the TV. There were too many buttons and even when he managed to get both boxes on and find the channel list, there wasn't much more that interested him than the news nowadays. If

he was really in the mood to watch something, he'd ask his daughter to set something up when she came over with his lunch.

She came around noontime in her blue scrubs with a sandwich box and a water bottle. She used to bring him iced tea or juice, but then she stopped, claiming that those drinks had too much sugar in them for him. He didn't see the problem, but he trusted her judgment so he always told her that it was perfectly fine.

After she got the news for him, she ran out to get some stuff from the store while he ate his sandwich. With the gentle hum of the TV in the background, he took a look outside. It was a gray day. Everything was still, with only the occasional streetcar passing by. Dark clouds loomed overhead. Something about the tranquility bothered him today. Ever since his daughter moved him down to a dingy outskirts area of the city to be closer to her, he was up at night for weeks trying to get the sound of honking cars and party goers out of his head. For some reason, even though he had been longing for quiet for what felt like eternity, it bothered him today.

When his daughter returned a few hours later, she helped him unpack his groceries before sitting down at the kitchen table and sorting his mail. He continued to watch TV.

"I saw a broom in your bedroom? What happened?"

"Perceptive as always, I see."

She waited for an answer.

"Just some cleaning. You haven't been over in a while you know."

"Sorry. Ever since that shift change, we – "

"I just handled it myself. No problem, don't worry about it."

"... You know I worry. I would be more comfortable if you were downtown – "

"I can handle myself just fine. Really. You don't need to worry about me."

"They have game nights. And exercise classes. And better food than deli sandwiches. And when you need something, all you need to do is call and someone will come and get you everything you need. You wouldn't have to wait for me to get out of work."

"It's expensive."

"I can work something out."

They sat in silence for a while. The TV continued its soft hum.

Suddenly, the old man shakily stood up and started walking towards the kitchen.

The daughter looked up over a stack of mail she just formed. "I can turn up the TV if you want it to be louder."

The old man said nothing. Once he made his way past the kitchen, he fished around a pool of keys on the table beside the front door.

"Dad?"

He said nothing and dismissively examined the keys.

"Dad. What are you doing?"

He finally noticed that his daughter was sitting at the table.

“Oh. Hi Honey. I was just looking for my keys. Jim and I always go bowling on Tuesday evenings. It is Tuesday right. Yeah, Tuesday. I just checked my calendar. The sun is going down and I’m gonna be late if I don’t find my keys.”

“Dad, you don’t – ”

The daughter stopped herself. She glanced outside. Despite the gray sky, she could see a hint of an orange tint on the horizon.

She closed the blinds.

“Dad, I don’t think you can go bowling today.”

“Huh?” He turned around, making the joint in his knee crack. “Why not. We’ve been bowling together for the past ten years. Ten years? Yeah, ten years. If I don’t show up, he’ll be wondering where I am.”

“I just talked to Jim. He said that he’s not going bowling tonight. Car broke down. It’s in the shop for a few days at least. I just met him at the store earlier and he asked me to tell you but I forgot. It was my mistake.”

“Oh, that’s a shame. I guess maybe I can just wait until next week.”

“Of course; that’s fine. There’s always next week.”

The old man started to pace around the floor. “I just expected him to call me. Or come over. Why would he not call me? Is he okay?”

“He’s fine – ”

“Apparently not fine enough to tell me in person. I guess it was too much trouble for him.”

The daughter slowly got up from the table and took her father by the hand. “Come on. Let’s talk to Jim later. I’m sure he had his reasons. Sometimes cars just break down and there’s nothing we can do about it.” He didn’t notice that she was starting to cry. “Just have a seat. We can play a game tonight. When we moved, I remembered to bring you some. They’re in the closet, just like back home.”

“Home? We’re going home?”

“No, no. This is home.” His daughter closed the blinds in the living room and turned on the lamps. “This is home.”

It was dark now. The old man laid in bed with his covers wrapped tightly around his body. The room was nearly pitch black with the only source of light coming from his window. The sky was dark now, but he suspected that it was still gray behind the mask of night. Eleanor came in and quietly sat at the foot of his bed.

“I used to love going into the backyard at night,” she whispered. She had a soft voice. “When we used to catch fireflies. I used to not go out with you and I told you that it was childish but I really just didn’t do it because I didn’t like the feeling of them crawling around in my hands.”

The old man was quiet.

“But then you made me come out there one night. Said that you weren’t coming in until I went out and caught at least one. I tried to just wait you out, but then I realized that you were

actually being serious.... I had a lot of fun that day. I promised myself afterwards that I would try new things. I think the fun part though was that I got to try them with you.”

“A lot of things are changing and... I really don’t like it.”

In the darkness, he saw only her silhouette. He reached out to touch her, but she was too far away.

“There are no fireflies in this city.”

She hushed him. “It’ll all get better. Don’t worry. I’m here. You just have to wait until sunrise.”

The old man closed his eyes. Through his window, the horizon beyond the cityscape had begun to turn orange in the morning light.

- Jackson Twoguns



ELLA ASHBURN

Bone Soup:

*Ah, the soup of bone,
Like a liquid mask,
Sewn like the cover of a book to a face with no tone.*

*Ah, the nerves of null,
The picking to a precious perfect pinnacle of a mind,
Yet ever so dull.*

*But no. Now we fight.
We boil the bones, the shine, of fright.
We form the social execution at night,
Having bone soup to quench our thirst for a peculiar blight,*

*A blight that unites,
A blight that splits minds,
A blight that Severs ties,
And Severs Spines, so many spines.*

*But that's the point of some Bone Soup.
It's that precious goop,
That swoops into your mind's coop,
And restarts the time loop.*

Ah, day 1 comes again for this group,

Ha, How I love me some Bone Soup.

By - Chase Coulson