

Alternative United Voices



Vol. 3

Fiction and Poetry

2018

Alternative United Voices – Volume 3

A compilation of short stories and poems from the students of
Montreal's alternative high schools

Cover art by Bishop Johnston

An Alternative United publication

Organized by Colin Throness



Find out more about Alternative United and read the publication
online at alternativeunited.ca

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the alternative school teachers and staff for their encouragement and support with this year's publication, in particular Pamela Bussey and Lise Kuhn for spreading the word.

A big shout out to Nick "The Librarian" Warren and Caitlin O'Brien for their help judging the contest. Winners will be announced at alternativeunited.ca.

Thanks also to Craig Olenik and the English Montreal School Board for their support.

A very special thanks to John Commins and Christine Lachance for their incredible generosity.

Finally, a big huge thanks to all the students who participated this year.

Printed in June 2018 by



Stories

It's a very small slice of life that is still, as of yet, unexplained. According to metaphysical statistics that I'm going to invent right now, there's a 0.000000000001 aspect of our world that we don't understand. This miniscule riddle is the only thing we can't explain—it's beyond physical proof. It's beyond the triangles and the speed of light. It's beyond the microscopes, the test tubes and the labs. Languages can't even grasp it.

In the past we've called this mysterious force god or various other ominous titles. The reason we can't explain it is because, as humans, we're unable to actually perceive anything in a purely objective fashion—we can't see things for what they really, fully and truly are. We see the scenes unfold, but these very eyes we look through automatically falsify the whole thing. Our memory of a scene only distorts it further. And our retelling of those moments are just flickers of what actually went down. And then there are dreams... What's up with those?!

Humans are by nature made up of stories. Stories make up the fabric of our minds and our lives. Our stories are how we navigate a world that rarely makes sense and that we can't even completely prove exists. We all seem to be collaborating on this plane, this circle, this sphere, this planet, and we're pretty sure we're all looking up at the same stars around us. But who's to say this universe isn't as made up, or fictional, as our dreams.

This my friends, is why I love me a good story. Thank you for sharing yours.

Colin Throness

The Hub

- Lau Pich, Untitled – 6
Anonymous, The Spy – 7
Anonymous, I Get Stepped On – 7
Chris Vincelli, Why? – 8

Options

- Cameron Potvin-Chion, Sweet Pea – 9
Chrissy H – I Still Love You – 15
D'Angelo Bosco, Systematic = Problematic – 17
Anonymous, Drugs – 18
Hercules Konstas, The Foolish Dragon – 19
Jada Madeleine, Boxes – 24
Janis Walters, Untitled – 26
Jasmin Cohen, Untitled – 27
Kelzy Daveluy, Dear Cadbury Mini Eggs – 29
Kyllan Michel, No Emotion Adventure – 30
Massimo Di Vagno, Untitled – 31
Myaka Dunkley-Burry, Chérie – 33
Nikolas Haggerty, Lady Bug – 35
Sajjaid Ali Syed, Untitled – 40
Samara Allison, In the Walls (5:23 AM) – 41
Samara Allison, Ode to my Ex – 42
Sarah Klopot-Mahar, Gun Violence from the Perspective of a
Student that Was Affected – 43
Shane Keith, Agent Diggum – 45

Venture

- Ranika McDonald, Work, Eat, Sleep, Repeat – 47
Ranika McDonald, You Are my Sunshine – 48

Elizabeth House

- Aaliya Hassan, Do You Know What Love Is? – 50
Nyla Gittens-Rose, Life is Hard, but God is Good – 51

Vezina

- Blue December, Doctor Monster PhD – 53
Blue December, Not Be Okay Together – 55

Focus

- Calvin Clarke, Death's Left Hand Man – 56
Jade Collin, The Unknown – 61
Dylan Hawkins, Who I Really Am – 66

Outreach

- Anonymous, Solace – 70
Callum McNeill, Somewhere Else – 72
Ireland Clarke, Alike – 74
Jaime Amoretti, Choose or Chosen – 75
Joshua Ramsay, On Fire – 77
Wesley Reece Fredovitch-Valade, Loving from a Distance – 84
William Orrell, A Handful of Coins – 89

Mile End

- Leah Poszwaylo, New Beginnings – 91
Megan Esposito, The Everyday Struggles of a Wealthy Family – 97
Michael Munro, Lights Out – 100
Rachel Labelle, A Friendship Comes to an End – 102
Rachel Lazerman, The Final Memory – 107

Perspectives II

- Curtis Coombs, Still Breathing – 110
Danica Agnellini, All Alone – 113
Darren McGinn, How I Met Joey Kidney – 115
Kyle Grondin, Unfinished Business – 116
Saryna Wilken-McGinn, Mystery Letters – 119
Sibila Brienza, Ready to Go – 122
Tommy Aceto, Dreamer – 123
Zach Bray, The Unforgettable Festival – 125
Art by Maria Tzevelekos – 126

Untitled
By Lau Pich

Suffocated by my own mind of nonsense
Why couldn't I see the death in her eyes
The tears I shed seem unreal
Am I crazier than I thought?
I'm starting to doubt my own sanity
My impulses take over at times
I am surrounded by the lies I tell myself
Bloody knuckles dripping side to side into an endless dream of
reality

Days feel like hours going by so quickly
Even time can do good things for you
The sadness you cause me is vital to my core
Eyes soulless without remark for the rest of the world
Ramen mixed with tears of sorrow
Walking through streets of violence and rage
Keeping her in roar calm
The whimper of my fallen peers like whispers to my ears
Spewing guts all over the metro floor
Strangers care, but my voice is slurred
Shattered wine bottles breaking my hand
Cursing my mother to a bitter end
I see nothing without rose coloured glasses
Drugs keep me sane to a point I die
These eyes I see through bones with whites of nothing
I'm lost in your eyes of diamonds.

The Spy
Anonymous

Clack clack, clack clack, clack clack.
Skateboards clap on the sidewalk.
Sounds of spring. On a warm flat roof.
Time is the culprit.
Alone, in the dark, no wind.
Twist it up, burn it down.
“Don’t talk to me like that.”
I don’t believe these rules work here.
I disappear.
You’re always in abusive relationships.
“Don’t you understand?”
One childhood memory at a time.

I Get Stepped On
Anonymous

I get stepped on
All over
They walk on me
Jump
Sometimes danced on
I get stepped on.
I get dirty
I provide a service
Maybe keep their feet warm
But
I get stepped on.

Why?
By Chris Vincelli

You said you loved me, but you lied

I don't know why

I cried so many times.

In my mind

You were always mine,

You forgot about me

from time to time.

The pain in my body

was so very high.

Like a rollercoaster

crashed inside.

I don't know why

It chose to die

And when I tried to help

You pushed me aside

Why?

In my mind

You were always mine,

You forgot about me

from time to time.

Sweet Pea

By Cameron Potvin-Chion

My twin sister died when we were only sixteen years old. I lost my dad and my other half to a machine, a machine with four wheels and a radio. It's been three years since the accident but it feels like it was yesterday. I used to wish I died with them, because when you do not want to feel, death can seem like a dream. Though once you've seen death, like, really seen it, dreaming about it is absolutely ridiculous. Since graduation I didn't know what to do with myself. Without school as a distraction, I found myself sitting in front of my window, barely talking. I just wanted to study the view from my window, I wanted to study it until I had it memorized. I'd often reminisce about the accident, making it the only thing on my mind. As I was thinking I remembered my mom telling me about someone who was coming over, so I decided to wash up. As I was running the bath I heard a splash coming from the tub.

“Is that where the hand grabbed your arm? Ms. Darcy?” My doctor was talking but it wasn't quite connecting. “Yes,” I replied. “Would you like to tell me what happened afterwards?” “It... it said something to me.” “What did it say Darcy?” “It said ‘You let her go, you let them die.’” I looked my doctor in the face, my voice monotone. “I see” said my doctor. “Then, I took the scissors off the counter next to me, and tried to get my hands loose. That's how I got these.” Then I showed him the gashes that ran up and down my arm. “Ms. Darcy, your parents and I have been talking and we believe you need some space, somewhere far from here, a place where you can go and clear your head, while allowing yourself to rest” “Where?” “We were thinking the Elizabeth Rosemary Institution, a very darling place. Me and your mother both think you would just absolutely love it there. They offer silent

reading programs, along with art and writing. You're even allowed to socialize with other patients there." At this point I didn't even care where I was going, a quiet place might be good for a change. I could hear my mom talking to the doctor outside of the room.

"Is she crazy, Doctor?" I could hear the strain in her voice, trying to keep herself from crying. "Mrs. Montgomery Darcy is just fine, I'm going to send her file to the doctor at the institution and she will properly diagnose her. Though I'd like to go back to what you were saying before, about what you had heard at the house, the night of the incident." "Yes... Well, I was preparing dinner when I heard a scream upstairs, so I rushed up the stairs, knowing it was my daughter and then I walked in and saw... I saw my baby... She was lying in the tub, and the water was a crimson red. Her wrists were sliced open. I called 911 as soon as I found her. I thank god every second that I found her in time. I don't know what I would have done if I had come in too late"

I finally arrived at the institution, and the only thing they handed me after getting me set up was a book. It was a journal, for me to keep a diary.

Dear Diary,

Or should I say dear doctor because neither I nor anyone other than my doctor would want to read this, and that's because he's the one that asked me to write it. I don't want to write this to just anyone, so in order to enhance in my mind's image of a friend, I will be writing down a few boring facts about myself. I don't want this diary to be a plain old diary, I want this one to be my friend. I shall call my friend Stevie.

Dear Stevie,

I'm currently in my new room unpacking, and the girl sleeping in the bed next to me turned around and started talking to me. "Groovy bag. My name's Stella." "Oh, thanks, I'm Darcy" "Darcy, it's a pleasure to meet you." She

was talking while she was laying on her belly, legs up in the air behind her, playing with her pigtails. "Well aren't you just a jar of sugar," I said. "You betcha. Traditionally I would show you around, but I'll let you settle in and update your journal," she said, holding up her little book to show me she had one too.

Dear Stevie,

So today, Stella introduced me to everyone, I got called every name in the book besides my actual name. From New Girl to Sweet Pea. The first girl I met was Cheryl, and she was just pure crazy, always trying to escape. She had absolutely no filter but supposedly that's what makes her so much fun. Then I met Ruth, and she has permanent imaginary friends. One is a six foot kangaroo, and another one a little gingerbread man that just sits on her shoulder, of which I had the privilege of being introduced to. Then the nurses did their rounds, giving us all the pills we were supposed to be taking. Then I got back to meeting people. I also met Rori. She's part of the staff. She was one of the girls that keeps watch while we shower, just in case we would try to hurt ourselves. I also met lacy, and she had burns and scars all over her body, but I didn't think it would be right to ask about them. Last but not least there's Douglas or 'Doug' and he's the maintenance man.

Once we were back I our room asked Stella about Lacy's burns and scars. She explained to me what had happened. When she was eight years old her parents would beat her for years. Well eventually she got fed up. One night she started a fire and killed her parents. She almost burned alive but she doesn't remember what happened. She's been here ever since. We got ready for bed, and before I went to sleep, something came to me. "Hey, Stella? You still awake?" "Yeah, what's up?" "Well, I just wanted to know, what are you in here for?" "Me? Oh. I'm a pathological liar." And that was it. Complete silence. The next morning I felt gross and I wanted to take a shower. So I got in line to get in the shower, and

that's when Ruth fully explained to me that they had to watch us shower. Finally, it was my turn.

Dear Stevie,

I've never felt so violated in my life. Stevie don't ever let anyone watch you bathe because you'll be a changed woman. I don't think I can get used to this.

Today is my first day meeting with Doctor Hazan. I don't really know I feel about it. After waiting she finally calls me to come in. "Hello, Darcy." "Hello, Doctor Hazan." "How are you fitting in here?" "At first not so much but this place is growing on me. Don't get me wrong, I'd like to get better so that I can leave." She chuckled. "I kick in my sleep a lot. They call me the yellow haired ninja. Well, hey, it's better than the new girl!" "Do you really believe that that hand grabbed your arm and talked to you?" "Yes, how? Explain." "Explain what? Explain to a doctor that the laws of physics can be suspended. That what goes up may not come back down. Explain that time can move forwards and backwards from now to then and back again. Anything else specifically you want to talk about?" "Well I was just thinking and have you ever confused reality with a dream or when you just got paid but still shoplifted, or been blue, or thought your train was moving when you're really just sitting still? You don't have to answer that." And I walked out.

Dear Stevie,

Doctor Hazan got pretty straight to the point today. She didn't waste a minute. Also, on Friday, my ex-boyfriend came to the institution and we went out and had an amazing day—we got ice cream and saw a movie. As soon as we got back, he kept going on and on about running away to Canada and how I am not crazy and don't belong with these insane people. I answered to him that maybe they aren't the most sane or best looking or smartest people, but

they are my friends and I love them. I ended off by saying that I wanted to run away with someone but just not him. He ran off shortly after.

Cheryl pushes me out of bed with the other girls and reads a page in my diary “I’m not a great tragedy compared to all the girls here! Every day, it feels as if these girls are characters in a silly play.” I screamed out angrily, “Stop reading that book!! It’s private!” Those were just notes that I wrote down, it wasn’t necessarily a thing that I meant. “I am so sorry!” I cried out to the girls.

They all left.

I went back to bed.

The next morning Cheryl was gone. Absolutely gone. I looked everywhere for her. She had run away. I found myself feeling depressed. I would stay in bed most of the day. Didn’t write to Stevie any more. I didn’t really talk to anyone, until I did. Weeks had gone by and I felt better, things were going great. Everyone forgave me.

When Lacy had a break down and she was locked in “the room,” I came and slept outside the door to comfort her. I sang her a song: “Why does the sun go on shining? Why does the sea rush to shore? Don’t they know it’s the end of the world? It ended when she said goodbye.”

Dear Stevie,

I’m getting out in a month. I am sorry that I haven’t been writing to you. I’ve just been trying to get better and I’ve been pretty busy but when I was singing that song, the only person that was on my mind was Cheryl. In fact, she filled my mind so much that I wouldn’t be thinking about the accident anymore.

She came back... Cheryl was back!

I couldn't believe my eyes. I went to see her room and she said to me, "I told you the truth, I didn't write it down in a book. I told you to your face, and I played the villain like you wanted." I answered now, "Why would I want that?" with tears filling my eyes. She answered softly, "Because it makes you the good guy, Sweet Pea. I told them I wrote it so that I'm the bad one while you go back to sweetness and light." I kissed her right there. The nurses took her from the room, locking her in. She's dead.

Declared healthy, sent back into this dangerous world, recovered from psychosis. Was I even crazy or was I just lacking attention and certain emotions that I should have felt? Being crazy isn't being broken or hanging on to a dark secret. It's like being an extreme of emotions or persona, like having next level imaginary friends tell lies and enjoying it. Never wanting to grow up. My friends weren't perfect but they were my friends. Most of them were out. Some of them I've seen, some never again, but there isn't one day that my heart doesn't find them. My heart will forever belong to the girl who called me Sweet Pea.

I Still Love You
By Chrissy H

I was nine when they took me away
And said my home wasn't safe
They took me to a strange place
And said my mom couldn't raise
My brother and I
I wanted to cry
I didn't feel alive
To remind you again I was only nine
While you were at home with some guy
Who was beating you, I thought you were going to die
I wanted you to leave
I pleaded and I pleaded
You bled and you bled
But you wanted to stay
It felt like you didn't care we were taken away
Our whole lives changed
I started to feel raged
I felt trapped in a cage
People asked what I did wrong
When not once did I ever do wrong
People had me thinking was it me?
Is that why I couldn't be
With my mom
Did I do something wrong
I felt so weak
I felt defeat

Sitting in a bed that wasn't mine, wondering if my mom was
getting beat
When I was young I would try to get in the middle
But I was young and so fu*king little
I didn't like being the referee
But I felt the need to take one for the team
I wasn't gonna watch my mom get beat
What is love if he doesn't love if he didn't love?
What is it? If it isn't true
Do you understand what I went through?
I was scared of men, because all I thought they did was abuse
I would cry at night
Beg for a better life
Who's ever watching save me please?
Make it just a bad dream
But I never woke up
This was reality
I think back and I just wish you would have chosen us
Wish you didn't make a fuss
Maybe our worlds wouldn't combust.
We were helpless
We needed you to help us
Six years later you got me back
My heart will never reattach
It took me this long to regain the strength I have today
But I forgive you
No matter what you're my mom and I love you

Systematic = Problematic

By D'Angelo Bosco

“G” you tell me to be me, but when I release, you freak. You tell me to be lean and clean but what I do doesn’t seem to be keen, you shut down dreams, you place us at the scenes of several delinquencies without proof or reasoning. Even though we know the deal, you refuse to keep it real. You believe we are ignorant due to your arrogance, and when we try to take a stance you repress us with an iron hand. Yet you claim to hate the man. This seems to be something I’ll never understand, LIKE DAMN. Stand out but don't shout. Have a voice but don’t make noise, do we really have a choice if our beliefs are left a void, unheard, unrecognized? Please realize complaints may sound juvenile but the systems turning up the dial for their “foreseen” mile in order to keep us under for a while. You say “be accepting” but it’s you who denies change in times. You remain stagnant in your mind and all you spew is lies as you claim to be different but deep down inside all the things you try to hide. Always acting like you’re on our side. Now you wonder why we foster hate and get high. It’s a result of your despise. Do you feel pride? I’m just tryna grasp a bit of light on this game you play with our life. You say we can reach great heights but you push us to the bottom and leave us to our strife. And yet something you still don’t get is why we carry knives, well we wouldn’t need to if you’d STOP INTERFERING with our lives. We alive because WE’VE strived for every dime and all we want is to control our time. You say not to manipulate but somehow you’re allowed to choose our fate. But why can’t you say this to our face? Now it seems that in the common case a child is nothing but a disgrace and if we are told this everyday our minds become malleable like clay. Even though we know this isn’t the way we hope, and some pray. For a change to come about somewhere, somehow, someday.

Drugs Anonymous

It all starts off with just one drug...
Then it turns into you liking the high...
Next thing you know you don't feel it anymore...
Then it's onto the next drug that will give you the high
You're looking for...

Then it gets to the point where it becomes a part of your
lifestyle...
Doing anything in your power to get high...
For some they believe it's a coping mechanism...
For others they have just slipped into the wrong crowd...

But after a while feeling even worse from the withdrawal...
You wanna make a change...
You wanna be able to go a day without popping all those pills...
But you've become addicted to all these substances...
Once you come back to reality it destroys you bit by bit...
Everyday feels like it ain't worth fighting...

The deeper you fall the more out of touch with reality you
become...
The more your grades start to slip...
You lose more and more people because they can't watch you
destroy yourself...

The Foolish Dragon

By Hercules Konstas

Once upon a time, there lived a peasant farming family, with a mother and two sons. The two sons didn't get along well together; the younger one was smarter and prettier than his older brother, who was very envious of him. When they grew older, things became worse and worse, until one day, as they were walking through the woods carrying firewood, the older brother grabbed his younger sibling, tied him to a tree, and went on his way with the logs, hoping that his younger brother would starve to death on that tree.

However, by chance an old hunchbacked shepherd passed the tree with his flock. Upon seeing the bounded boy, he stopped and asked him, "Tell me boy, why are you tied to that tree?"

"Because my back was so crooked," answered the young man.

"But it has cured me, and now my back is as straight as a washboard."

"Then I wish you would bind me to a tree," exclaimed the shepherd, "so that my back would be as straight."

"If you will untie this rope, I will tie you up with them as tightly as I can," replied the boy.

As soon as the deed was done, the young man drove off the shepherd's sheep, leaving the shepherd tied to the tree to regret his foolishness. After some time, the young boy became known throughout the kingdom for his deeds of trickery, to the point that it had even reached the king; and his majesty was filled with curiosity to see the man who had managed to trick everybody in

the kingdom. He ordered his guards to arrest the young man and bring him to him.

When the young man stood before the king, the king spoke to the young man and what he said to the boy made the hair on his back stand up.

“By your tricks and lies that you have played on the citizens of this great kingdom, you will, by law, be executed. But on one condition I will spare you. Bring me the flying horse that belongs to the great dragon. Fail this and you will be burnt alive on the pyre.”

“If that is all,” said the boy, “you shall soon have it.”

So the boy left the king’s castle and made his way straight to the stable where the flying horse was tethered. He stretched his hand cautiously out to seize the bridle, when the horse suddenly began to neigh as loud as it could. The room in which the dragon slept was just above the stable, and at the sound of the neighing he woke and cried to the horse, “What is the matter, my treasure? Is something hurting you?” After waiting some time the young man tried again, but it neighed even louder, and the dragon woke up in a hurry and called out to know why the horse was making such a racket; but when the same thing happened the third time, the dragon lost his temper, and went down into the stable and took a whip and whipped the horse. This angered the horse, and when the young man stretched out his hand to untie him, he made no further fuss, and allowed himself to be led quietly away. Once clear of the stable the young man sprang on the horse’s back and galloped off.

When he returned to the king, expecting to be done with the affair, his majesty said, “The flying horse is all very well, but I want something more. You must bring me the bed sheet with the little

bells that lies on the bed of the dragon, or I will have you torn apart by wild horses.”

“Is that all?” answered the boy. “Then it will be done.”

And when night came he went away to the dragon’s house and climbed up onto the roof. Then he opened a little window in the roof and let down the chain from which the kettle usually hung, and tried to hook the bed covering to it and draw it up. But the little bells all began to ring, and the dragon woke and said to his wife, “Wife, you took all of the bed sheet!” and drew the covering towards him, pulling, as he did so, the young man into the room. Then the dragon flung himself on the boy and bound him fast with cords, saying to his wife as he tied the final knot, “Tomorrow when I go to church you must stay at home and kill him and cook him, and when I get back we will eat him together.”

So the following morning the dragon’s wife grabbed the young man and reached down and grabbed a sharp knife from a counter to kill him. But as she untied the cords to get a better hold of him, the boy caught her by the legs, threw her to the ground, seized her knife and quickly cut her throat, just as she was about to do for him, and shoved her body in the oven. He then snatched up the bed-sheet and carried it to the king.

The king was seated on his throne when the boy appeared before him and spread out the covering with a kneel and a deep bow.

“That is not enough,” said his majesty; “You must bring me the dragon himself, or you will be hanged.”

“It shall be done,” answered the child; “But you must give me three years to do it, for my beard to grow so he may not know it is me.”

“So be it,” said the king, dismissing him.

And the first thing the young man did when his beard was grown was take the road to the dragon’s house. On the way he met a beggar, whom he persuaded to change clothes with him. Dressed in the beggar’s garments, he went fearlessly towards the dragon’s home.

He found his enemy before him, in his house, very busily making a box. The boy addressed the dragon politely, “Good morning, your lordship. Do you have but a mere helping of bread to spare?”

“You must wait,” replied the dragon, “until I have finished my box, and then I will see if I can find one.”

“What will you do with the box when it is made?” inquired the child poised beggar.

“It is for the young man who killed my wife, and stole my flying horse and my bed covering,” said the dragon.

“He deserves nothing better,” answered the beggar, “for those sound like ill deeds indeed; still, that box is too small for him, as he is a big man.”

“You are wrong,” replied the dragon. “The box is large enough even for me.”

“Well, the rogue is nearly as tall as you,” replied the beggar, “and of course, if you can get in, he can. But I am sure you would find it a tight fit.”

“No, there is plenty of room,” said the dragon, tucking himself carefully inside.

As soon as he was well in it, the young man clapped on the lid and called out, “Now press hard, just to see if he will be able to get out.”

The dragon pressed as hard as he could, but the lid never moved.

“It is all right,” the dragon cried; “now you can open it.”

But instead of opening it, the young man drove in long nails to make it even tighter, wrapped it in chains and a lock. Then he put the box on his back and brought it to the king. When the king heard that the dragon was inside, he was so excited that he would not wait. Like a child on Christmas day, he broke the lock, removed some of the nails and lifted the lid just a little way to make sure the dragon was really there. The king was very careful not to leave enough space for the dragon to jump out, but unfortunately enough, there was just enough room for the dragon’s giant mouth; and with one snap the king vanished in his wide green jaws. The young man then soon after married the king’s daughter and ruled over the land, but what he did with the dragon, nobody knows.

The End

Boxes

By Jada Madeleine

In a strange town there was a strange girl. She was in a box, people would say. Bleached short hair, brown chocolate eyes, pale porcelain skin, she was quite thin. She made her own clothes, rags and patches sewn on by herself. Her parents worried, they thought she was a freak and that she was completely weak. This one strange girl had no friends, no acquaintances not even a lover. School was out of the question, she despised everything about it. One cloudy day, after school she went home and raced down to her box. Picking the perfect fabrics, buttons and strings, she loved making strange things. There was barely any light, one dusty light bulb was just right. This one girl never ate, never slept, she simply stayed in the box, away from all havoc in life. The following week she didn't attend school she stayed in the box again, maybe the neighbors thought she had chickenpox? Kids after school would throw rocks at her house but that didn't matter, she had a plan, a great plan that would have her banned from the strange town. Her mother detested her own daughter, and her father hated her guts, they both thought she was nuts. One cold, shivering night the girl went upstairs into her parents' bedroom, she roamed around a bit touching their family portraits without her in it, they were sleeping of course. She took both of her dreadful parents downstairs into the box. It'd been a whole week, her parents weren't at work, she never went to school. The house was quiet, a bit eerie as well, no sound of a single soul. Since her parents went missing, people were wondering where the parents of the crazed girl disappeared to. The cops finally went to their house a couple of days later. One went in and saw a pin and was confused. Multiple pins were all around, still no sounds in the house. The police followed the pins which lead them to a door. They feared for the poor family. They opened the

door to enter the box. Pins all down the stairs, they followed them once again. A police officer screamed and it sure wasn't pretend and all feared what had happened to the girl's parents. They saw the sinister smile from the girl in the box.

The End

Untitled
By Janis Walters

I remember the first time I flew,
The nerves and excitement now a faded memory.
I remember what it was like to feel the wind graze against my
beautiful bright wings,
The sun on my body.
You see, flying for a bird is everything.
We evolved to have wings and not hands for a reason.
My wings, a gift from God to soar through the winds and provide
protection from the elements are now taken away,
Clipped, they call it.
A way to make it harder to fly away from this captivity to freedom.
Oh how I yearn for the bright blue sky, or the sunflower yellow
sun.
A small fraction of the sky is all I get in this prison.
A constant reminder that I'm not where I should be,
Had I gone east instead of west maybe I wouldn't be here,
Gawked at by onlookers,
Trapped inside of this metal cage,
No foliage, nor treetops.
But alas I must accept I'm just another wild caught bird.

Untitled
By Jasmin Cohen

Jenny was the quiet girl, the one that never spoke
Thus, it hadn't made sense, when I had seen her smoke.

It was at a party really late at night
We had all just finished watching these two guys fight.

Jenny seemed really stressed
Which I couldn't understand,
She was so well dressed
You'd think she'd have been a man.

We made eye contact across the room
Little did I know we'd be together soon
I got a drink, trying to forget the glance,
When a girl approached me and asked me to dance.
Soon it had been enough 'dancing is not for me' I said
You could say she took it quite rough
That's when Jenny approached me, drink in hand
'Take this' she said 'and lets go to la la land'

So I did it, what harm could it cause
We were only seen breaking one or two laws
It was strange though, almost right away,
There was a tingling in my hand that I couldn't keep at bay.

I woke up in a room
Somewhere in the house

To see Jenny on top of me
Taking off her blouse.

I don't think she noticed
That I was awake
She continued to focus
On taking the cake.

It's never really mentioned in the media
Because men are so demonized
All the news stories that they feed ya
Yeah the men are always penalized.

They say girls can't rape,
Well I'm telling you now that wasn't my fate.
Lying here naked and bare
Never again do I believe,
I'll breathe real air.

Dear Cadbury Mini Eggs,

I'm writing you this letter because I love you so dearly.

Let me introduce myself,

My name is Kelzy.

I live on an island called Montreal.

It's where I get my Cadbury Mini Eggs,

Until they sold them all.

When I walked into the store to buy my Cadbury Mini Eggs,

It was scary,

I couldn't even stand on my legs.

No more Cadbury Mini Eggs?!

This can't be it really!

So as soon as I got back home,

I sat on my handy-dandy computer chair and started typing,

I couldn't help but notice that other people too have been noticing.

Cadbury Mini Eggs aren't around all year round??

How's that?

Why's that?

I'm sure you have your reasons.

Cadbury Mini Eggs are so good,

But I guess it's dry season.

So I guess it's until next year,

Until you'll be near.

Although you give me acne,

I love you Cadbury Eggs... Mini.

Sincerely,

Kelzy Daveluy

No Emotion Adventurer By Kyllan Michel

I have been killing monsters for a long, long time. Every time I go to the guild they give me a new quest within seconds. I get about fifteen quests per day, so that I don't have much time to sleep, but the quest I received today was bit weird.

The quest was to slay the princess or make her fall out of love with her fiancé before the wedding which is in one week. I set off to go kill her because that's what I'm used to. Ten minutes later I climbed up the castle, there she was one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. I threw a knife at her, but only managed to cut her face. I had to act fast. Within three seconds I rushed and covered her mouth before she could scream.

I whispered in her ear, "I give you two choices: do not marry your fiancé or die by my blade." When I let go of her mouth she tried to let out a scream and...

Her body dropped. Blood was on my face, the floor, everywhere. I jumped out the window and made my escape. I got back to the guild and showed proof that the job was done and got payed and immediately was given another job to do.

My job as a cold killing adventurer never ends.

Untitled
By Massimo Di Vagno

YOU made me laugh,
YOU were the light of my life
YOU made me
Into a better person
YOU changed!
YOU are no longer
The same?
Outgoing person
YOU used to be.
But rather a memory
Of YOUR former self
Yes,
YOU changed.
Hard to believe...
But YOU changed!
YOU barely see me,
Am I a ghost?
When you speak it seems as if
The universe and everyone around.
Are the cause?
Of YOUR suffering.
What happened?
To the once happy
Person
YOU used to be?
Where has my
Best friend
Gone?
All OUR memories

No longer
Seem to exist.
Gone in the wind!
We were inseparable
Invincible!
Why has that gone away?
Where have you gone?
Why?
Why leave?
What happened?
Where did she
Go?
I want my
Best friend
Back.
YOU changed!
Yes!
Hard to believe!
But
YOU changed!
One day
When
Friends are
No more
YOU
Will REALIZE
Those who were there
For YOU
From the beginning
Will be gone.
Yes!
YOU changed.

Chérie
By Myaka Dunkley-Burry

Soft, she was so soft.

Her skin was as soft as a baby's butt.

Her hair was fluffy, like a poodle.

Her voice was gentle and timid.

Her smile was cute, like a gummy bear.

Her personality is charming and sweet.

Her name is Ashley; the softest girl you'll ever meet.

Ashley is special, and the sort of girl that everyone loves/wants, she makes you feel safe and secure. She doesn't see it though and is constantly disagreeing with me.

One day, I ask her, "Why are you putting yourself down?" She looks at me, alarmed, and gets up to walk away. I grab her by the hand and whine for her to tell me. "I want to help you," I say, pouting. She cracks a smile as she sits on my lap and hugs me. "Stop being so cute." I look away, flustered. "I'm not," I say quietly. She laughs; a sound that is so contagious that you can't help but to laugh with her; happiness is what I'm feeling. She hugs me while making baby-like sounds and then giggles. How did it come to this? This was supposed to be a serious discussion, but yet here we are, being two big softies with each other. I adore her, and she adores me; the perfect match some would say. I start playing with her fluffy hair. It's so curly, I can't help think that maybe she's secretly a poodle. I open my mouth to speak, looking down at her hands, and repeat the same question as earlier. This time she doesn't try to run away but simply says, "I deserve it." I look up and meet her eyes. Confused, I say, "Why do you think that?" She doesn't reply but when I look at her eyes again, you can see just

how much emotions they hold; sadness and fear, mixed with hurt. She looks like a lost kitten. I pull her in for another hug and she hugs back so tightly, I gasp for air asking for her to loosen up. She complies, crying. She takes a deep breath and tries to calm her sobbing. She fails and starts hiccupping. I grab her gently by the face and force her to look into my eyes, I take her hand and place it on my heart. We stay like that for a while.

After a couple of minutes of just staring at each other, Ashley has finally calmed down. She takes a shaky breath and chokes out the words: “Never leave me. You make me want to live.” Her voice is desperate yet quiet, as if she’s scared that I would reject her. I cuddle up to her and give her my signature gummy smile. “I will never leave you, my chérie” she looks confused. “Chérie? What is that?” “In France they would say ‘ma chérie’ meaning ‘my sweetheart.’” I beam. She looks surprised and flustered. Suddenly she tackles me into a bone crushing hug, laughing and screaming, “I love you.” She flashes me the cutest smile I have ever seen. I whisper back “I love you too,” gummy smile full on display.

Lady Bug
By Nikolas Haggerty

Ocean, who is also my girlfriend, is the person who made a significant and positive impact on my life. The reason being that she is absolutely phenomenal, she is so caring and really warm hearted. She has always been there for me and always keeps me motivated.

So a couple of years ago in day camp called Benny Camp is when I technically met Ocean. The reason why I say “technically” is because I always hung out with the guys so I never really talked to the girls that much. However I did hang out with them a bit and I was also pretty shy and still am a bit. So the next year of day camp she wasn't there as for many others. As I get older, the more I was introduced to social media. On July 23rd I noticed someone new in my messages, and it said “tbh you're cute, ik its random lol.” I remember the exact words because it was so cute and random like she said. So from that day on we kept talking nonstop, getting to know each other and it was amazing. I also remember the first time we called and it was hilarious, we thought it would be like a couple of minutes because it would be so awkward but instead it lasted four hours!!! It would have been longer but Nathan, my brother, told me to shut up because he was trying to sleep.

So with all the talking we had been doing, I finally told her I liked her. So many questions were going through my mind like how would she respond? What if she doesn't have mutual feelings? A minute later which felt like hours she replied and said, “Aww omg I really like you too!” So once she said that I was so relieved

like so much weight came off my chest. After all of that, we wanted to meet up in person so we started making plans and then I started to get nervous because it was actually going to happen. You see how in movies they practice to see how they introduce themselves, well believe it or not that was me.

So the night before I was going to meet her and after texting her goodnight, I was in the bathroom, looking in the mirror and saying different lines on how I'm going to approach myself. I practiced like ten times and then I went to bed thinking about the next day. It's the next morning and I woke up with a tingly feeling of happiness. Of course I felt this before, but this was special. The plan was to meet her at Cavendish mall... that is not what happened. I was walking towards the 104 bus stop that takes me there, when I get to the corner, I saw it drive by and now I'm freaking out. I told her that I missed the bus and I'd be walking, I felt so stupid.

As I'm walking she asks me where I was and since I was a bit far she said that her mom would pick me up. So I stopped where I was at the corner, just after Cavendish, Chester, and as cars pass by I'm trying to spot her out. So I'm facing the road and I see this white car turn on the street next to me but I didn't pay attention and so I'm facing the road and then I hear a honk from behind me. I turned around and at the same time I told myself to be cool and chill. I see her mom wave at me, I wave back and enter it and there she was. My soon to be girlfriend sitting there, looking really pretty with her cute dimples and amazing smile. I couldn't stop blushing on how stunning she looked. The plan to go to the mall was canceled so we went along the Lachine canal near where she

lives and sat on a bench. When we sat down conversation was flowing really well and I was surprised because I thought it would be awkward but it wasn't. As we are talking, we both turned and looked at each other and daaamn. The sun reflecting off her eyes was so beautiful, it was light brown and it was reflecting like how the sun reflects off the water... Sparkly.

As I'm looking into her light, brown eyes, in my head I was saying to myself "kiss her," and holy hell it was tempting. Also I wasn't trying to scare her or mess anything up. We kept talking more and more, then she giggled and said "Don't look back." So with my nosey self I look back and it's her mom with her phone out to take a pic. We started giggling and her mom says, "You guys ready to go?" In my head I said no because I was really enjoying myself. We got up and started heading towards the car. The conversation was still going and at the same we were talking, we got in the car and the top of the car where the door frame is, is where I hit my head but I didn't say anything so I kept my cool. We are soon arriving to my house and it's such a bummer that it ended so early but I had a great time with her and it was really nice to meet her mom.

Fast forwarding to August 18th, today is the day Ocean and I started dating. Ooof, was I so happy. It was funny because the plan was to meet her at a park near her house, ask her to be my girlfriend and then get that first kiss with her. That's not what happened once I met her at the bus stop, she was smiling as she was approaching me and I gave her a hug, she smelled really, really good. We then walked to the park and sat down on a picnic bench while watching the kids play. The day was perfect as well, the sun

was out, there was a cool breeze but warm as well and you heard the birds chirping which made it really nice. We are talking and talking and then we stopped, it was pretty awkward. Under her breath she said, “Is there something you want to ask?” as if I forgot, but really I'm a shy person. I knew I had to ask, but I was nervous to do so.

I felt so stupid and trust me I wanted to, but like I said I'm just really shy. “Yes,” I replied. “Ocean, will you be my girlfriend?” With that beautiful smile of hers she said “yes” and then she asked me the same question, I'm assuming you know what I said. At this moment I was supposed to kiss her but like I said I was so shy and it made me stall for a bit. Then out of nowhere I just said, “You know what, let's do this.” I gently caressed her right cheek until I could get a grip, I pulled her in close and then kissed her! The best one ever!!!

From that day on till now we have been together. I love her so much and she really makes me happy, I enjoy every second with her. She makes me feel warm inside. Still to this day when I think of her I get a tingly feeling. She really inspires me to do better and always work to my full potential, she encourages me, she is there when I need help, she looks at the bright side of things when I'm upset and she has so much positivity it's unreal. To be honest I never really had a real, long lasting girlfriend so this was a lot for me. Then again, I'm Ocean's first boyfriend so it's probably even bigger for her. Obviously as a girlfriend she gives constructive criticism that I might not like that but she is being honest and I really admire that.

Ocean is a girl who loves adventures, like she doesn't even need to physically go she can make adventures with her imagination. I've never met a girl who was so crazy about little creatures. More specifically, she really loves ladybugs. She is a very friendly, different, spontaneous girl with a huge passion for the beach and nature. The cutest thing about Ocean is how she loves the movie Moana; she danced to the songs and she was so into it. With that being said I hope by now you got the point that I love her very much. If I can say anything to her and she knows this, I would say, "Thank you so much for commenting and messaging me directly because if it weren't for that message we wouldn't have met and I would have missed out on such an amazing girl like you."

Unfortunately, this story doesn't have a happily ever after. On February 12th Ocean and I broke up. Right before Valentine's Day. It was tough for me because although we both called it off, it still hit me. It's now April 11th. I wrote this before for an assignment and I came across this and decided to use this. The time I spent to this assignment was well spent. There isn't a second that goes by that I regret writing this because she is still the greatest person I have ever met. I still love her very much and always will. I still think about her deeply and sometimes I want her back.

Untitled
Sajjaid Ali Syed

Was a young kid was always broke never rich but always got my ways around it.

Felt so lonely during the time with my clique it made me feel independent and sick.

Money isn't nothing but a habit that keeps me running like a machine and a fat kid.

Grinding never stops makes me feel so lavish because I got my family behind my back to see me cash in.

So all my life I can't try bad things that will leave me to bad habits.

Never got the chance to please my parents because I'm such a bad kid.

So I changed my life around, just like I said "cuz" I was living savage.

Try me now and I'll show you how I keep it "stacking."

My name is "Sajj" I'll always keep it one hundred, take my word if you want to bring that cash in.

In the Walls (5:23 AM)
By Samara Allison

Do you hear it in the walls?
The screams, the banging
BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!
Everything feels like a dream, but is it really?

Wake up, make up, smoke up, and sleep.
Then it goes all over again, again and again.
Do you see the moonlight shining, baby?
He grabs me close, touches me, kisses me...
It's like I'm falling in the snow,
He said he'll never let me go,
I will never be alone.

Now we're in the room,
He doesn't have to tell me he loves me—
But do you hear it in the walls?
The screams, the banging.
That's my baby.

Ode to my Ex
By Samara Allison

He said he loved me, oh well that was a lie.
I couldn't believe it, I feel like I've just died.
How could you have done this? I looked right into his eyes.
Did he not know he was a miracle to my life?

True love doesn't come without any LOYALTY
Did you forget the words called "ROYALTY?"
Don't talk to me like you didn't do it—
We all know you blew it.

You will miss the kisses that I gave,
But too fucking bad, take that to your grave.

Gun Violence from the Perspective of a Student that Was Affected By Sarah Klopot-Mahar

The first lockdown I remember was in elementary around third grade. At first it was exciting but as I grew older I started to have them more frequently so I started understanding that these were not for my excitement, they were to protect us from a serious scenario that could actually happen so we would know the drill. School shootings were also something that came more frequently the older I got. My name is Catherine and I was one of the students that had been a part of the mass shooting in Florida.

It all started off like a regular day. My mom dropped me and my brother off at 8:30 a.m. Everything that day was fine until the fire alarm had went off, which led to a few teachers leading their students out of class. But during that time is when we started hearing shooting, a constant sound of bullets hitting the floor and screams of scared students. All I could think about was my brother and my best friend Becca, if they were safe and if I would ever even see them again. I didn't want to believe it but my worst nightmare came true. The scariest thing I could think of is death and the couple minutes you have before you die, the time waiting and the fear building up in my body I've never felt so terrorized, frightened, alarmed, and intimidated all at once. I would never wish this upon my worst enemy.

There I was crouched next to the art closet sitting with the rest of my class. After two minutes I had suddenly come out of shock and decided to message my mom, my brother and best friend Becca telling them I loved them and trying to type as fast as I could just in case these were my last words. My mother was the first to respond she was terrified for her babies. I knew she was on her way the second she saw that text. The next two hours I was still, just sitting there until we got the okay to get up. They ended

up catching the shooter and arresting him. We put our hands behind our heads and walked out in single file lines. I reached the field and all the terrorized faces I saw was unbelievable. Everybody was crying and in shock. All the parents waiting for their children were in the parking lot.

I saw my mom and brother hugging each other next to her car I ran so fast toward them. I had so much relief when I was there hugging the two most important people in my life, and the fact that it was finally over gave me even more relief. After I finished talking to my family I went looking for Becca. I saw her family waiting for her but I didn't see her anywhere. The last classes were coming out now and I was praying that she'd be walking too. I prayed she wasn't still in the school laying on the cold floor, dead. This would destroy me forever. My best friend from when I was just a baby wouldn't be there for me anymore. Everybody was already out and I had to put the pieces together and believe the obvious. I had the biggest ache in my heart and my stomach turned so fast I threw up. Throughout time I know it will get better for me, but for now I need to figure out a way to live with this huge weight on my back.

Agent Diggum
By Shane Keith

December 23, 1984. Agent Diggum parachutes from a good old American-made jet. What awaits him in the large city of Moscow frightens even the most fearless of agents, but for Agent Diggum, it's light work.

Novak Diggum

Age: unknown

Height: about 18 inches of pure unadulterated bad ass

Weight: around 10 pounds

Nationality: Mountain Feist

Beautiful brownish blonde fur.

Yes he's a dog...

Diggum was trained at the highest level of the D.O.G. initiative. Started by the Americans, they thought it was necessary to use man's best friend to become man's worst enemy.

Now, flying through the air, he was amazed by the sight of the city and he already knew where he had to land to get the most intel on the enemy... and the most food. His mission was to infiltrate the Russian "government" to destroy them from the inside.

He landed right outside the home of Nikita Khrushchev, the Russian dictator at the time. He whined and barked until someone heard him. He was really smart about his barking as well. He barked with just enough decibels so that only the children in the house could hear, and about two minutes after Nikita Khrushchev's daughter, Rada Khrushchev, came outside and saw him. She ran inside with him and begged her father to keep the

sweet little puppy, but this was all a part of agent Diggum's master plan to kill the Russian dictator in his sleep!

After a couple months living with the family he realized that he had completely forgotten the mission because all the food was too good. On the night of March 22, 1985, agent Diggum snuck into the dictator's room and proceeded to rip out his jugular. The dictator's wife quickly realized what had happened and threw Diggum across the room in a fit of rage. Diggum quickly rushed to lock the door so she couldn't escape but the reinforcements barged in looking for the screams. Diggum was now in a really bad position. With enemies from in front and behind, all he could do was think about his wonderful owner back home, sad because he was going to die.

Suddenly, something was shot through the window. It was a smoke grenade! In all the commotion the Russian soldiers shot randomly not only killing themselves but also the first lady. In all the smoke, Agent Shilo burst through the same window, grabbed Agent Diggum and flew away using his DogWings (invented by the Americans). Diggum got home and was praised for his great courage and amazing spy skills.

To this day Diggum resides in Montreal, Quebec, living a very happy life. Or is he undercover on another mission?

Work, Eat, Sleep, Repeat
By Ranika McDonald

Work, Eat, Sleep, Repeat

I was four years old, running around the house in my birthday suit, as my mom chased me because she wanted me to take a shower. And you then came home from work. I ran into your arms. You picked me up, threw me in the air, caught me and squeezed me in your arms. I felt safe with you because you were my safety blanket.

Work, Eat, Drink, Sleep, Repeat

I was ten when I started to realize that you didn't walk as straight as you did when you used to wake up in the morning. I brushed it off and tried to hug you, but you didn't feel the same as you used to anymore.

Work, Eat, Drink, Smoke, Repeat

“You're always with your boys!” my mom yelled so much it would become toxic to my brain. I tried to brush it off, but I couldn't look at you the same anymore. Crazy how the first one to be your safety blanket is also the first one to break your heart.

You Are my Sunshine
By Ranika McDonald

You are my sunshine,
The one who is supposed to be my only sunshine.

You make me really happy,
Especially when my mind is nothing but cloudy and gray.

And I don't think you truly know how much I care for you,
I'm going to start praying to god that; that sunshine doesn't want
to go away.

Now you must be wondering why I call you my sunshine,
You probably must think it's absurd that I would relate someone
to the sun,
But have you ever realized that the sun is beautiful from far away
but then the moment you get too close to it you automatically
burn?

I got too close,
Now I'm burning.
I got too attached to all the sunlight you were giving me,
I forgot to even look out for myself.
I forgot to put on sunscreen,
I even forgot to put on my sunglasses.

I fell so deep for the sunlight that I even slept in bed with this
sunshine.
The warmth of you made me feel safe.

I wasn't cold,
My mind wasn't cloudy,
I was just burning slowly and I didn't even realize it.

Now I need to learn how to let that sunshine go,
Because I don't think this sun wants to keep me warm anymore.
Hopefully you can find someone who cherishes the amount of
warmth you bring just by smiling,
Or even when you laugh.
Hopefully you find someone that makes you shine brighter than I
have,
And as much as it hurts to say this:
I hope that this person makes you happy,
That's all I ever wanted for you anyways.

Do You Know What Love Is?
Song by Aaliya Hassan

Love is like the lotto you lose more than you gain.
You share your heart with someone that's the test of having faith.
You would want to trust them you don't want to play games so
both of you confuse about what's in each other brains.
Appreciating what you have is the only reason
Because when it's not available that's when you feeling useless.
It will never last forever if it's about the cuteness
But nothing last forever so that line kind of foolish.
Everybody want to love but they don't know what love is.
We just keep on loving like we only want to party.
We show up when it's fun but never when it's boring.
Whenever you tell a lie that's when they think you're honest.
Moment you tell the truth that's when you on their watch list.
You said we'll last forever but even couples break their promises
Can you tell me what love is, because I'm quite a bit astonished
Can somebody show me love? Everybody want to love but they
don't really know what love is.

Life is Hard, but God is Good
By Nyla Gittens-Rose

I once almost ended up dropping my daughter's stroller with her in it going down the stairs in the metro.

Who suddenly sent that man to run to come and save her?

Afterwards, I felt lost and confused and was very depressed. What if that man wasn't there? What would have happened if...?

I spent the following days caressing my daughter, spending time with her and showing her that I appreciate and love her with all my heart. I had previously made plans with a few friends of mine and had to cancel them, that's how hurt I was. I wouldn't want anything happening to her, no matter what. I felt guilty. I felt ashamed. I felt as if I were not parenting in the right way. Who wouldn't feel like that?

"Thank God nothing happened to her. God is good!" I said to myself.

Most Christians leave life in the hands of God, but I've always asked myself, what if he has no control? What if he doesn't know what to do with my life? I know that a lot of people think like that, but the truth is God is always good.

He may not know everything, but he does his best.

We are blessed to be waking up in the morning. We are fortunate to be alive and to be the people who we are today.

I was privileged enough to be sent a beautiful daughter.

Days get tougher, we don't get any younger and so we suffer, which leads me to think of my philosophy: Life is hard, but God is good.

When you hear that a plane crashed, there's always a story about a person who was supposed to be on the plane but didn't end up going on it. What coincidence is that?

Everything happens for a reason and He already has everything planned out for each and every one of us.

The real question is, how are we going to make it in life? How are we going to change the next generation into a better one? How are we going to succeed and better ourselves? How are we going to make a difference?

Before we even think of changing life in general, we need to start by thinking of ourselves. We need to start loving ourselves and appreciating the work that we've put into ourselves. If we don't, how do we expect others to love and appreciate us? We also need to start doing the right thing for ourselves, whether it's for our health or for our emotional and mental wellbeing. We need to find ways to be comfortable with ourselves

Even though God is taking care of us, that doesn't mean that we can't structure our lives in the way we want.

I am going to leave you in your thoughts: are you happy with the way you are?

Doctor Monster PhD
By Blue December

It's like the end is coming and the doctor's saying
Why, why are you like this
But how is it ok, for me to be this way
In a world of darkness
But in the end
The doctors and monsters
Are all the same, in this game

Doctor, Doctor
I want to go home
Leave me, Leave me
I don't want to be alone

Doctor, Doctor
Tell me what I gotta do
Help me, Hold me
I don't want to be like you

It's like you said it's in my head taking over and bleeding red
Losing my mind and sanity isn't very much new to me
Breaking in and taking up all my chemicals

But in the end
The doctors and monsters
Are all the same, in this game

Monster, Monster
I wish to go home
Save me, Save me

I'll always be alone

Monster, Monster
I'm finally moving on
Hear me, fear me
I don't want to be alone

Monsters, doctors are all the same
Picking, fighting to change your brain
Making the words you say like knives
Wishing, wishing you can take your life

Doctors, Monsters
Dear god please go away
No one, No one
Wants you to come and stay

Doctor, Doctor
I want to go home
Leave me, Leave me
I don't want to be alone

Monster, Monster
I'm finally moving on
Hear me, Fear me
I don't want to be alone

Not Be Okay Together
By Blue December

You're hurt, we're all hurt but we don't show it.
You cry, yeah we all cry but we don't know.

You hurt the others around you not knowing that they have pain
as well.

You laugh with them about it not knowing that their pain puts
them in a cell.

You're dying and you know it but it's not the only story to tell.

Your pain you should always show even if it scares you as well.

'Cause you don't want to end it all but you don't see no other way.

Maybe we can work together and Not Be Okay Together.

Death's Left Hand Man By Calvin Clarke

Truly this was going to start out like any other story but I want to skip to mostly where I died and what kills me but first the name is Orion by the way.

It happened on a Saturday, it was a weird one tho, the house had this empty feeling to it and my roommates left earlier than usual, they usually left at 7:50 am or so for some training or their contracts either as familiars or mercenaries, even though this was somewhat normal for me as I was always the last one to leave. The place still had a presence in it, and with it accompanied that empty feeling. That's when I realize there was one of the voided in the house. "Well shit," I whispered to myself, I grabbed my shogun and oberons blade and jumped to the ceiling. I was now looking down into the living room, immediately cloaking my presence, I waited a few seconds before seeing her blue eyes scanning the room, she seemed to look right at me. I noticed something on her neck, a silver ring; my thoughts instantly went to "She is an omega!" How many shadowed have died fighting this thing and without noticing I dropped my cloak... "SHIT!" Jumping off to the side as she jumped at me whilst letting out an inhuman screeching and punched a hole roughly the size of a one-doored fridge through the roof. "Now I know why you're an omega." "Thank you, not a lot of your pals know why I am an ome—" "I DON'T GIVE A SHIT!" was my reply. After interrupting her I continued with, "I only gave two shits and the first one is about how much you're gonna pay to repair the roof and secondly that I am going to kill you." But first... tossing my shogun rifle onto the couch below and planting oberons blade in to the ceiling I decided to stretch out, damn well knowing she would charge at me and she did. "Hey what's that on your face" I shouted! "What?" she replied

with a confused expression on her face. All the while continuing to charge at me. She was quickly stopped her with a “MAH FIST!” as my limbo clone who was traveling at the speed of darkness knocked her through the ceiling. I found it funny how the Limbo clone got the first punch in and I got sloppy seconds. “Oh did I forget to mention I have cyborg arms?” I paused as my mind wandered to past events.

“Please continue with the story, sir,” said the Executive who was interviewing me, demanding a full report on how I caused such significant collateral damage. Sigh, fine ok, so from there her head was lodged in the ceiling, her body hanging like a lifeless corpse. I went in for what I thought would be the final kill, failing to take into consideration how fast she was. She pulled her head out and jumped onto my shogun and took a shot at me which I casually side stepped. It looked like she was going at the speed of dark matter, approximately fifty-four meters per second which was slow as molasses. “Ten minutes left. Let’s get a move on,” said the Executive. “FINE YOU ASSHOLES! Jesus!” Ok, so what happened then was a second voided was waiting outside. It sensed trouble, and came to her aid. It launched itself onto the roof, and thrust a spear through the back of my neck. I hung there as they drained me of flow and stole my gear, finally ending my life. Thinking the job was done, the voided departed.

There was one thing, well two actually, that brought me back from the void. Firstly, was my contract with DEATH, the promise of immunity for helping him kill off immortals and reaping their souls, helping them pass on. Secondly, sheer rage and unadulterated wrath. The talk with death went something like this: “So I'm dead, huh?” It nodded. “So what’s next rebirth, heaven, hell or purgatory?” It shook its head, NO. It never said a single word throughout the entire conversation, only nodded and pulled

out a contract. It was written right there in red ink or something red, perhaps that was just my rage blinding me. I couldn't read it, it was written in some weird language. I thought to myself "Screw it!" and signed on the dotted line. Within seconds I could read it, that being the language of death. It said, "Congratulations, you hereby sacrifice your humanity and flow. You are now the contractee of death, and are granted immunity from it." My first thoughts were, "Well shit, maybe I should ask the details of a contract before I sign it next time." I had an uneasy feeling as a bubbling tar emitting a white glow and fog enrobed me.

I noticed that I started going transparent and just like that I was home, with my body still hanging from the ceiling. It seems that when I get sent back I am sent back with a new body and I can only half die in a physical sense, whereas my flow spirit goes back to the wedge. The first thing I did was grab my backup gear and went on the hunt. The bastards thought they could kill me! Now this is where we get to the collateral damage. I tried tracking them with some luck, as I followed them I called for backup. The crews E.T.A was only five minutes, but I couldn't wait. I was still pissed about the bastards stealing my gear and god knows I wasn't going to pay for the hole in my roof. First thing I did was check my flow cell reserves, they were about at half which meant that I was running low on flow for all ten cells. I went to scout the place out but the area was covered in trees. All I wanted to do was go in and obliterate them, but I kept telling myself, "Don't make a scene, don't make a scene, don't make a scene." It didn't make a difference about what I told myself, I was seeing red and I grabbed Odin's wrath.

"Wait, you named your sniper Odin's wrath?" said the Executive. "Yeah, I modified it to shoot electrical rounds." Anyway, I killed off some of the surrounding guards and rushed

in. I planted a block of C10 on a pretty heavy duty door. C10 was designed to take out heavy carrier ships and tanks with grade 30 armor, so I didn't think the door was gonna cause any problems. I set the C10 up with a 10-second timer. The resulting explosion sent debris from the base, even a gas tanker, flying into the city. The damage was immense, so much so that the city would never fully recover. "Hell, was so much C10 necessary?" said the Executive. "That collateral damage is on you!" "Not now man," I responded. Anyways, so I was met with a barrage of bullets, almost like a firing squad. Lucky for me I was able to dive behind the still somewhat standing gate. I peered around the corner and saw a crudely made copy of my shogun, this sent me into a frenzy. I HATE when my stuff gets ripped off. I remember clasp my chest feeling my heart thump faster and faster until all I remember seeing was a crystal like heart in my hand, jagged and reflective, my unresponsive hands slowly crushing it.

Before blacking out I seem to remember a blood like substance flowing through my fingers like a river. When I awoke, opening my eyes, I was sitting on a red chair next to a lamp and staring at an ancient looking TV. My mind and body separated, I looked around and spotted a figure standing off in the distance. He looked like me but with a more crazy maniacal like smile on his face. I looked to my right and saw nothing. Like usual I turned back to face him and he now adorned a hooded white trench coat, black pants and a red shirt. He reminded me of death, the same skeletal features. Getting up I didn't say a thing I just stared; it felt like hell was going to break loose! So I— "Time's up. We need to get going. We'll call you back tomorrow and continue on from where we left off" said the Executive. "Ah, ok. So I can go home now right?" I asked. "Yes," was all it took for me to rush the door. Out front, I was happy to be free, but continued to wonder where

the voided were and what happened to them. Who would they kill next?

Epilogue

Executive: “So tell me about this girl.”

Unknown: “Not sure, she doesn't seem to be hostile. She seems to be very docile and she is showing readings of some flow animal within her: a snake type.”

Executive: “Keep an eye on her I want a full report Wednesday.”

Unknown: “Sir, yes sir.”

End of Chapter 1

The Unknown
By Jade Collin

It was a dark and stormy night. Everyone was asleep except me and my sister, who were the only ones up. We were both sitting in my room telling ghost stories. My sister was telling me a story about a ghost that comes late in the night, between 2:30 and 3:00 a.m., and would drag me from my bed before slowly possessing and killing me, turning me into the next phantom.

It was around 3:00 in the morning, and she had just finished her story when we began to hear footsteps coming from the basement. The basement door was locked, so I wasn't scared. I thought it was all a part of my sister's elaborate plan to get a fright out of me. But the footsteps began to grow louder. There is literally no way in except the basement door, but it was locked. Nobody could have gotten in or out without a key!

All of a sudden, the basement door slams open.

BOOM!

We began to hear louder noises coming closer to us.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The sound came up the stairs, then stopped at my door. The door suddenly creaked open and footsteps began to come closer and closer to me and my sister. Then it all stopped, so we just went to bed. The noise started again this morning. Things started changing – I think I even saw my mom floating over me covered in blood when I woke up. I thought I was dreaming until my sister saw it too. My bed sheets were covered in blood. I didn't know whether to be scared or to cry. I ran to my dad's room to tell him what happened. He came running to our room thinking someone

was hurt. He didn't see what we saw, he thought we were pranking him.

I woke up the next morning and everything seemed to be fine. Nothing really strange happened. Then I got a phone call from an unknown number. I answered and all I heard was screaming. Whoever it was, it sounded like they were all muffled, but it also sounded like the call was made from inside our house. I couldn't hear a word they said, all I understood was, "I see you... I'm coming for you..." I ran to my sister to tell her, but she was on the phone. The person who called me called her as well, but this time they told her, "You're next... be afraid." I couldn't sleep, everything was getting to me. I felt like I was just imagining things. I went to go see if my sister was okay. Then I asked her if she wanted to check out the sounds coming from the basement to help put my mind at ease. She agreed to come down with me, even though I knew she was frightened from all of the eerie sounds we had been hearing.

We cut the locks on the basement door and as we were slowly walking down to the basement, we began to hear a creepy laugh. My sister turned white and quickly dashed back up the stairs and into our room. I went to see if she was okay, but I couldn't find her, all I heard was that creepy laugh coming from under her bed. I slowly lifted the bed skirt and what I found gave me goosebumps. It was a creepy porcelain doll... or so I thought. I picked it up and examined it closely. I then realized something odd... the doll looked exactly like my sister, even down to the three freckles under her left eye. The doll was so creepy, almost lifelike. I gently and apprehensively put the doll down on the bed and went to go look for my sister. I couldn't find her anywhere, so I came back in the room. The doll was nowhere to be seen. I felt a bone chilling sensation, like the one you get when you feel like

someone is unknowingly staring at you. I slowly turned around to see the doll standing behind me. In its hands was my sisters head, removed from her body. Her cold, dead eyes staring directly into my soul.

My jaw dropped. I closed my eyes and pinched myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming. I opened my eyes when I heard the sound of footsteps walking towards me. The doll and the head of my sister had vanished, not even a speck of blood was left where the doll once stood. Suddenly, I heard my dad scream. I ran towards the sound but nobody was there. A quietness had permeated the house. My family was nowhere to be seen. Then, the footsteps I had heard before, sounded from below. They were coming from the basement. I wanted to figure out what was downstairs, but I was so exhausted and my eyes started to feel heavy. I couldn't keep them open and slowly, I began to fall asleep.

Next thing I knew, I awoke upside down tied to a chair. I knew I couldn't wriggle free from the bonds, so I tried screaming. It seemed no one heard me. I gathered as much breath as I could and screamed at the top of my lungs until I began to feel dizzy. Did it work? Did someone hear me? I heard footsteps coming from upstairs and they slowly started getting louder. Whoever it was, was coming down to the basement. Then it stopped. All I could see was a bright light. A crashing sound came from the basement window...

BOOM!

The glass shattered everywhere. Someone had thrown a Molotov cocktail through the window. The fire crept slowly throughout the room. Through the flames, I saw silhouette and heard something I will never forget. I was suddenly released from the bonds tying me to the chair. The doll I had seen with my

sister's head appeared and began to laugh, "HAHAHAHA!" I heard it whispering incantations, attempting to bestow a curse on me. It sounded as if she was trying to snatch my soul from my body. I resisted and tried to square up to the doll. I thought to myself, "It's just a porcelain doll, right? I doubt it knows how to fight. Maybe if I just kick it, the doll will shatter." I took a step forward, and kicked the doll as if it were a soccer ball. It actually worked!!! The doll broke into a million pieces, and a black smoke rose from its ashes. I needed to find a way out of the basement. I could barely make out the sliver of light coming from basement window. I could feel my lungs filling with smoke. I crawled towards the window and dragged myself out, sputtering and coughing like a flooded engine.

I ran to the pay phone down the street. I dialed 911 as I watched my house burn to the ground. I swear I could see the small shape of the doll and hear its menacing laugh through the crackling sounds of the flames. The police arrived and questioned me about what had happened. I told them everything from the creepy sounds I heard coming from the basement to seeing my sister's decapitated head being held by the evil doll. They thought I was nuts! I pleaded with them to believe me, but all the evidence of what had occurred had been destroyed in the fire. They claimed they received an anonymous tip and photos, giving great detail about how I had killed my whole family and set fire to the house.

The police read me my rights and dragged me into the back of the police car. They took me straight to the insane asylum, not even giving me a chance to defend my explanation. I wasn't lying! Someone had to believe me! I'm not crazy!

It's been 3 years since I've been locked away. I barely see sunlight and long for human contact. I pace around the room, screaming about my innocence. This morning, they told me I had a visitor coming this afternoon. They led me down the dark hall and when I peered through the glass to see who had come, I saw my sister and what looked to be the porcelain doll held tightly in her grasp...

Who I Really Am
By Dylan Hawkins

Disclaimer: This story is fictional, nothing in this story is real, it is completely fake.

They say kids with a traumatic past tend to repress and block out memories, but the opposite is true, at least it was for me. I remember every single vivid detail of every horrible thing my parents did to me. I remember this one time when I was six as punishment for acting up, they poured boiling water on me. I'm fifteen now and things never got better. For those of you that are thinking why I didn't go to the police, it's kind of hard to do that when your father is the police captain. Deep down in my gut, I always knew something wasn't right but I don't know, I just... I just never questioned what it was.

This all started about a month ago, a few days after I turned fifteen. I never had many friends growing up, mostly because my parents told me to never talk to anyone. Also, I'm an antisocial dill weed, but I digress. One day at school, after the final bell rang indicating that the day was over, this kid, who I never even looked at, came up to me and introduced himself. At the time, I was baffled by what he did, but looking back on it, I am so grateful that he did this because if he didn't I would have never found out the truth. His name was Chris and when he came up to me, he just started talking to me like we were old friends. He asked me a couple basic questions like what's my favorite colour and how old I was, things like that, but we ended up talking for like half an hour, it was the first time I actually felt like a person.

Over the next few days, Chris and I became really good friends. We actually had a lot of our classes together, so we spent most of our time goofing off in class. At the end of the week, we

decided to walk together as we were leaving school. Up until this point, we would mostly talk about him and his life, but as we were walking, he stopped in the middle of his sentence and said, "I've just been blabbering on about myself. Tell me about you." To be honest, I was a bit caught off guard. From the look on my face he knew that I was surprised, but I told him that my life wasn't that interesting and that I spend most of my time in my room because I'm not allowed to roam around the house. After I said that, Chris just looked at me like I was crazy, he was really surprised by what I said. I continued explaining, "You think that's weird? Just listen to this," and I told him about my childhood. The look on his face when I finished talking was horrified mixed with disgusted, but before he was able to say anything, we were in front of my house. We said our goodbyes and I went on inside.

The next day in science class, the teacher told us that we had project coming up and that we would be working in pairs. Naturally, Chris and I teamed up, he said that I could come to his place this weekend and we could work on it. After he said that, I realized that I was somehow going to have to convince my parents to let me go. Let's just say I had my work cut out for me.

Later that night, as I was having dinner with the despicable trolls I called my parents, I told them about the project and I also told them that I had to go to Chris's to go to work on the project. They did not like that and there was a lot of screaming and slaps, but I finally managed to convince them after I told them that it was a mandatory project. They weren't happy about it, but agreed that I could go.

Saturday came and went. I went to Chris's house and when I got there, I noticed right away that his house and my house looked really different. His yard was well kept and the house itself looked nice and taken care of. I walked up to the porch and knocked on

the door. When Chris opened the door, he had an upset look on his face. He told me that his parents just told him that they were moving away next Friday. I was so sad after I heard this; my one and only friend was moving away. After we gave each other a bro hug, (dudes don't hug for real, I don't know why, we just don't), he showed me around his house and introduced me to his parents. His mom and dad were actually really cool. His mom was a journalist for the local paper and his dad was a therapist. They were nice and welcoming which threw me off. I've never had my parents act this nice. After introductions, Chris and I went up to his room to work on the project.

The rest of the day was us just working and talking, and occasionally Chris's parents coming up to check on us.

That night when I got home, my mom and dad started interrogating me, asking me questions like, "What did they ask you?" and "Did they mention us?" Really shady stuff like that. When they finished hassling me, they told me to go to my room and go to bed. As I started walking up the stairs, I saw them go down into the basement. They always were down in the basement, but I never knew what they were doing because I wasn't allowed down there.

Later that night, while I was rolling around in bed, the thought of the basement haunted my thoughts. The fact that I wasn't allowed in the basement started to raise questions in my mind, questions that I was about to find the most horrifying answers to. I decided to sneak into the basement to find out what they were hiding. It was around 2 a.m., so I knew that my parents were asleep. When I walked up to the basement door, I noticed that there was no lock on the door; "The dummies never lock it," I thought to myself. I opened the door and started walking down the old wooden staircase, which scared the crap out of me.

When I got to the bottom of the staircase, I started to look around. It looked like an old detective's office. There were so many files and one of those boards with strings attaching pictures to each other. I started to look around. I opened up one of the files and started reading it. What I read was unbelievable. I don't want to go into the details, but the basic details were that few hours after I was born, the monsters I called parents, kidnapped me. Not building it up or anything, but they kidnapped me! I was horrified. I honestly didn't know how to react, I just stood there looking at the file, reading it over and over again. Once the shock finally passed, I knew I had to get out of the house, so I ran up the stairs, packed up my things and hopped out the window.

I wandered around for a while trying find a place to go and I remembered Chris was moving out of the town in a few days. I knew that was my best chance to get out, so I walked over to his house. When I got there it was like 4:00 a.m. I knocked on the door and, surprisingly, Chris and his family were still up. They let me in and I told them everything. They were as shocked as I was. I asked them if I could hitch a ride with them a few towns over so I could get a head start on my "parents" and they agreed.

That's where I am now. Chris and his family dropped me off a few towns over just like they said they would. I'm still looking for my real family and I know the monsters I called my parents are going to be on my trail soon, so maybe it's time for me to hit the road. I don't know if I will ever find my real family, but I will never stop trying to find out... who I really am.

Solace
Anonymous

From loss
I learned of nothingness
That parts of you won't stick around forever
That sometimes even the grownups don't know what to say

From the alleyways
I fell in love with my imagination and getting up to no good
Hurling pinecones down from treetops
From wherever the nightmares couldn't reach me

From doctors
I was reduced to a collection of floating diagnoses
And I became a disorder first, person second
They seemed to forget that I was more than a problem to fix

From love
I found solace in other homes, other people
A special fondness grew for those who could make me feel whole
Overlooking that their warmth sometimes turned fire hot, or ice cold

From addiction
I realized that ignorance can be bliss
Until it ripens to a poisonous rage, and rips through a family
When they fail to console the inconsolable

From chaos
I knew peace
But I didn't expect it to feel as unsettling
As summer feels to me now, after everything else has died down

From longing
I look to the west coast
The desert and sea where I see myself
In a house with a garden, green like a rainforest

Somewhere Else
By Callum McNeill

A busy classroom rings out noises to my ears,
My eyes are pointed down.
They all speak and joke and laugh, as I try my best to drown them
out.
I hear nothing.
My mind isn't here, not in the class,
It's somewhere alright, somewhere I want to be.
A voice calls out to me.

My mind dances with thoughts of that somewhere,
It teases and ponders,
And creates new ideas while I sit here,
Without a clue of where I am on my paper.
I don't want to be here, I want to be somewhere. Somewhere that
isn't here.
The voice calls out to me.

Somewhere is where I don't think of all this; about the world.
Somewhere is where my friends are, and their friends would be
there.
To greet and cheer for me.
Somewhere is where I'm not me,
I'm someone...I'm something I want to be.
Something that isn't me, or you, or even human.
The voice calls out to me.

Somewhere I could be covered, from head to toe, in a suit.
A suit that would let everyone know that I'm me,
But I'm not me.

Somewhere I can draw, and talk, and cry, and laugh, and smile,
Outside of my actual skin.
I've been somewhere before, but I'll never live there,
I can only visit.
The voice calls out to me.

My ears wake at last, I can hear the voice once again
“Are you stuck on a question?”
“I guess I am...”
The work seems like nothing when other people do it,
Whenever we try it, we stop, we forget how.
When the voice leaves, I'll work again,
But my mind keeps drifting back to that somewhere.
The somewhere I want to be.
This time, there's no voice to call out to me.

Alike
By Ireland Clarke

Muse before the eyes of the mirror.
She has eyes like a dear, calypso light delight.

Sit down, lie down, look there, look here,
Stop,
Do whatever you want.

No need for deeds
What's the point of needs,
It's not sit there and look pretty,
It's look at me with all your beauty.

Choose or Chosen
By Jaime Amoretti

Nothing is going right for me. Seeing my life circle this vicious path makes me want to rip at my eye sockets. Let me buy a rocket and go to space so I don't have to face this reality. I'm always trying to achieve irreality which could lead me towards fatality.

Walking around my group home, where trust is nowhere to be found, a war between two gangs (the teens and the staff) is highly palpable. Tension and hatred infest this place. Casually leaving the group home I feel free and alive outside, for a span of one hour before I get to school. I am loving the sound of the cars rolling by and the bird whistles like never before. I can't stress how much I want peace in my life. Instead I am judged for being who I am, making it impossible for me to find happiness. People say I choose my own outcome but I find that the outcome chooses me.

I arrive at Metro Snowdon and waltz out, dragging my feet on the floor due to my damn sprained ankle. I leap onto the bus, my mind spinning on the awareness of the light dimming at the end of the tunnel of my life. It is as though a black hole is lurking; the inevitable path of me becoming a bum. "Loser" as my dad would call it. Reality is hard to deal with but being constantly reminded that you're a piece of shit and worthless scum, that's even harder. Looking out the window, I notice the kids running around in the schoolyard. I would give my heart, my soul, my everything... to get back to the way I was. I despise who I've become. I hate the way I make my mom feel. I detest my uncontrolled actions. I feel as if a curse is upon me by the devil. I can see him laughing by my side, watching me deteriorate in this "fuckery" of a world.

Beaconsfield and Coronation, I've got to get off. I look down towards the school, appreciating the sense of being safe and respected in it. I find my way to the front door and scoot into class. Two minutes later, I see an inch of his forehead popping in through the door opening. My fists clench, my jaws lock, and I turn my head with a fake smile. "Jaime, can you please come to my office?"

I lumbered down the hall and sat down. After ten seconds of dead, uncomfortable silence he starts in: "You have appeared suspicious with Aaron today. I will need you to let me conduct a search of your bag." Already having cooperated last week with this nonsense, I couldn't stand the thought, so I left, feeling discouraged and angry at having been falsely accused of carrying drugs on me. I keep my cool and walk out of the school, carefully creating no such thing as drama. Anger overpowering my consciousness, I start bashing at this tree.

I had blacked out. Sitting on the cement ground, my tears dropping, my veins swelling in my hands, I realize that my father was right all along.

On Fire
Joshua Ramsay

Someone told me I was on fire
I said I don't know if you mean literal or allegorical
Like my body in dire need
I need some water just like a seed
I'm on fire please
Someone said "Geez, you on fire, I don't understand drop that
ball, stop and roll"
And that's cause your lazy ass Underground sitting
Dre ain't gonna dig you up
He won't fix your tibias or fibias
I didn't get fixed up I sat here through rain
Just wallowing in the pain
But none of it was in vain
Someone set me on fire
Now I'm rejuvenated sorry this is a little belated
You might of been in the game a while
But you'll only last one more mile
I'll go all day see I've been playing with a medicine ball
That's why I won't drop your ball
'Cause you play with kids more than MJ shit
Maybe that was a bit too literal
Basically I mean I won't drop it
Even when assholes try to pop it
Guess I'll switch to the metaphorical
Or how about the philosophical
Maybe even a little metaphysical
People will say I'm the shit
That'd be meaning bull me
Yeah I'm feeling a little childish

Even in life has no trainer
That's fine I'm not a complainer
This shits a no brainer
That means we're all a little wild
But me I am much more than mild
There was this one kid Kyle
I told him off cause he was an idiot
He said "Fuck off! You just don't get it"
Then I let loose
And my name was the only thing he ever wrote
Don't worry at your own neck
Because he left the noose on the ground
He was just illiterate and I made him learn the name
He wouldn't even be able to write a note
Suicide was not an option for him
You see he wasn't a boy scout
He does Nazi
He learned my name 'cause I looked Aryan
He thought he'd be able to say he knew me when
So he could try to feed off the fame
Then they think words will hurt me
But I get into this current
And they're unable to deter it
So here I stand when they try to make me hurt
I'm just here on fire
They'll make me a bust 'cause I don't drop and roll in dirt
I stay here burning
Trying to find what it is that I'm yearning
Just trying to live off what I'm earning
Here I stand unfazed by the flames
I'm not dazed not even a little
I ignore the haze, I've been played more than a fiddle

I always found myself stuck in the middle
I'm not even Malcolm
I just sit here a twiddle
My thumbs I don't ignore it when I'm called a bum
I'm just not that brittle
I might be here right now
Looking at big cities like wow
A lot different from my small town
I'm not gonna go down
No matter the blow
There's a lot of people here sure
But when they think all their brains blurr
Mostly cause they all slur their thoughts
Into a shapeless blot
All these people but they all so uncreative
Not one of them is motivated
So they get so easily baited
Then they go and hide away they're so gated
They seclude themselves and get sedated
This shit makes me so frustrated
No I don't believe any of this was fated
It's just determination
If this were to somehow seep our nation
Then I think we could find salvation
But they just wanna watch the world burn
I keep getting scorn
Since the day I was born
It gives me agitation
I don't see the correlation
With my actions and your dictations
I saw someone take my exact same notation
Even did it in the exact same location

And they get recognition
And I get reprimanded
Now I'm basically branded
Wow now I'm practically stranded
Just cause I went through adversity
Doesn't mean I'm troubled
I'm still gonna go to university
You need to be humbled
'Cause you stand and try to lecture but you just bumble
So keep your conjecture
Yeah I'm not perfect
It's a fine line (Vegas)
Nothing is flawless
Speech is lawless
I can come here and make you feel solace
Or I can give you solace
I can incite inspiration
Or put you into desperation
All these people think I'm soft
Then I look 'em in the eye
Then they fuck off with a scoff
That is until I pop off
I grab them and they hurt
They put the burnt skin to the dirt
Maybe next time think about somethin'
I'm on fire, gotta fight fire with fire
That's why I'm here writing this
Do not take this as a diss
I just won't stop
Once I do it'll be when I drop
That's why I keep going off topic
Just trying to extend it

To avoid ending it
This isn't about anything individual
If it can burn I'm about it I'm on fire
That means everything except things biblical
Slim walked into church once
He burst into fire
I'm on a level higher
Been on fire since the first lyric
The big man just didn't wanna hear it
You're just a guy in a fairy tail
Now don't let my ideas offend you
Don't let it bend you
This is just a song I can say what I want
I can do anything want
Here is something real
That I think a lot of you will feel
We can all relate
To something that happens in a current date
Inside of our state
Take Hitler
Now take Voldemort
Basically the magic version of the previous mister
Yet he's less hated than that bitch Umbridge
She's so bad you wanna lock her in a fridge
Thing about Voldemort
Is he would lose in court
Whereas the lady
Would treat you like a baby
She would be condescending
Given punishments just because she doesn't like your style
She would never be understanding
She only liked that one suck up Kyle

It's all about that unfair power usage
The kind that would think you a nuisance
She'd like to watch you plummet
Right into a pit
She doesn't wanna see you thrive
You're being carried into that cemetery
And being buried alive
So slim don't be scared to die
Now the woman in the fridge is trying to barter
Come on I thought you were a martyr
You are quite cynical
I hate it you really are a hypocrite
Now you made it personal
I don't relate to "he who must not be named"
I relate to this ass who I'll make sure is maimed
Now i try to be rational
You know being factual
But people decide by being emotional
That's why sometimes I stop caring about being sensical
I just try to be fantastical
Like a pyromaniac
I enjoy fire that's why I'm on it
I'm gonna put it on a plaque
Too hot for Umbridge
Now she's hiding in a fridge
For all you who don't get it this is Harry Potter
And now everyone else is looking like fodder
Even though they're all plotters
They gonna try to put me out
But I got the key to open Davy Jones locker
You'll need to try a little harder
You aren't a very good killer

No you are not iller
I got the spark I got the fight
Running through a park at night
All cause I had to ignite it
I didn't mean to I opened my mouth
Then bam instant combustion
They tried to give me a clout
But these people need a lesson
They prioritized Grammys
Over their own families
Now I think that's blasphemy
Then they try to tell me I'll never get it
But I don't need a critic
I don't need to edit
I'm my own most annoying backseat driver
Maybe that's 'cause I don't have a license
That doesn't matter
Because I am a striver
I may be on fire
That's cause I'm solar
The only reusable energy
So please get off me
I won't change
No that is not strange
I just adapt
I won't stop until I burn up or until I snap

Loving from a Distance

Wesley Reece Fredovitch-Valade

Friday, January 6th 2017, precisely at 12:03 p.m., I finally came face-to-face with the love of my life, after three years of talking through social media. It was so unreal, never have I ever thought this day would finally come. Elaha, my first long distance girlfriend and I have always tried to make plans to meet. Sooner than later, I hoped. We had to wait a couple of years before meeting because I didn't have the opportunity to go to Toronto, where Elaha lives. We had a lot of history together. Our relationship back in 2014-2015 was pretty unstable, since it was the first relationship for the both of us, and we were both still young. Our relationship lasted from December 2015 – December 2016. Precisely on December 24th, 2016, we stopped speaking to each other.

After Elaha and I commenced speaking to each other again, I found out I was going to Toronto a couple of days later. Elaha and I were still in love with each other but we were not officially dating, again. On January 1st, 2017, around 8:30 p.m. - 2:30 a.m., my uncle and I drove from Montreal to Toronto in his container truck. The nights of January 1st to January 8th, I lingered at my cousin's apartment thinking of Elaha and what we would do together, how I would feel, and everything in between. Now, let me get to the story when I finally met my long distance girlfriend.

It was the day. It was the day I was finally meeting my long distance girlfriend after three/four years of communicating through social media. I was extremely tense. I had knots in my stomach and I was a little bit shaky. My alarm went off at 6:00 a.m. and was labeled, "MEETING ELAHA." Wow, I couldn't believe this day was actually here. Being six hours away from the love of your life and not being able to see them on a daily basis for so long is pretty dreadful. Anyways, let me continue to the story. The

instant I got out of bed, I silently tiptoed to the balcony and went out to smoke a joint. You must be asking, why would I have smoked a joint before meeting my long distance girlfriend? The reason I smoked the joint was because I knew how nervous I would be and the marijuana would calm my anxiety level down, and it did so. After that, I began washing myself up, fixing my hair and making sure I look alright. Our meetup place was at Burger King, the Burger King that was right across the street from my cousin's apartment. When I arrived at Burger King, I took a seat all the way in the back, nearby the washrooms because it was more serene than the front; where it was pretty packed. After a couple of minutes, I received a text from Elaha saying, "I'm across the street from Burger King." I immediately glanced out the window and saw her from a distance. I stood up from the chair and sprinted into the men's washroom. I took a seat upon the sinks countertop and gazed at my appearance in the mirror. Man, she is actually here, I cannot believe this. I then took a couple of deep breaths before exiting the washroom. There she was, standing by the table where I had placed my jacket down. I sauntered unhurriedly towards her and bundled my arms around her waist from behind, holding her waist loosely. She turned herself around, and in revelation, she said, "Oh my god! How are you?!" From that point on, we decided to take a seat and spend our time at Burger King for a little while before heading back to my cousin's place, as was planned.

As we entered inside of my cousin's apartment. It still felt so unreal that I was with Elaha in person rather than texting her all the time. Elaha looked so breathtakingly beautiful in person, much better than she does in pictures. Do not get me wrong, her pictures are very stunning too! I swear, I fall more in love every time I see a picture of her. We both took a seat on the 'half-moon'

couch. I then took ahold of the remote for the plasma TV and put on Netflix. I remembered Elaha telling me how she dislikes horror movies. I thought, if I played a horror movie, chances are she would be horrified and snuggle into my arms, so I played a horror movie. I played the movie *The Den*. *The Den* is a pretty frightening movie. It is based on a video chat website called *The Den* and the main actress in the movie discovers a murder throughout the website. Eventually, the main actress and her friends all get murdered. Anyways, back to the story, I was pretty sure Elaha would be frightened because there are plenty of jump-scares. She did get scared and snuggled into my arms, just as I had hoped. I felt extremely edgy to wrap my arm around her shoulder as her face nudged into my shoulder, near my chest, just in case she would feel uncomfortable. I was overthinking a bit, to be honest. I was mainly focusing on making a good impression, at first, until I did feel comfortable. When the movie was over, I asked her if she was hungry. She said she was. We both decided to go to the Tim Hortons which was right in front of the apartment. By the time we arrived at Tim Hortons, I waited aside as she ordered her food. I still could not believe my eyes. She is so gorgeous. Her figure is so... perfect. She is sure everything I looked in for a girl; amusing, intelligent... just kidding, beautiful inside and out and her heart was pure gold. I hoped that Elaha would feel the same for me after this day was over.

Back to the story, Elaha asked me if I wanted anything. I declined because I was not that hungry, plus, I did not want her spending her money on me. She is such a sweetheart, the thought of her wanting me to get something meant a lot to me, even though it was just a little something at Tim Hortons. I did not want anything from her. Elaha's presence is all I ever wanted, all I could have asked for. However, Elaha did buy herself a little meal.

She bought herself a bagel and cream cheese along with a French Vanilla coffee. We headed out of the Tim Hortons and headed back to my cousin's. On our way back to my cousin's, she was walking ahead of me until I finally caught up to her. As we arrived back inside of my cousin's apartment, we took a seat back on the couch, this time on the opposite edge we sat on before. This time, I decided to play an amusing film on Netflix. We watched A Haunted House 2 starring Marlon Wayans. During the whole movie, we were in full amusement, giggles and chuckles being heard throughout the movie.

The movie ended around 4:15 p.m. Elaha only had to leave at 5:45 p.m. because she had a relative's birthday party to attend at 7:00 p.m. We decided to talk, no electronics distracting us or anything. Well, we took plenty of photos together to capture unforgettable memories. I told Elaha to scooch closer to me, and she did so. I finally had the guts to bundle my arm upon her shoulder. After a couple of moments of taking photos and videos together, I decided to place my phone aside and just talk. We were on the topic of life, stating how amazing it is and how there is so much to live for etc. We were also confronting how unbelievable it was that we finally met and how we both did not feel as nervous as before. Now, I felt like I was home. We cuddled closer, meanwhile we had our peaceful moment; her arm wrapped around my waist and her head leaning against my shoulder, my arm wrapped around her shoulder, her free hand and my hand over her shoulder intertwined securely together, and my free hand upon her thigh. It was such an indescribable feeling being with the girl of my dreams after all these years. Man, I am so in love.

When the room went silent, I felt her lips press against my neck, setting small pecks against it. I felt a shiver go through my chill-up-spine and goosebumps appear on my arms. I did not want

her to stop. It felt so pleasurable. I wish we had more time to go further in our passionate moment, but sadly, we did not. Plus, we were in the open at my cousin's apartment, my cousin could have walked in on us!

Sadly, it was time for Elaha to leave. It was 6:00 p.m. We both were standing in the hall as she was putting on her boots and coat on. I remembered I purchased Elaha a little gift; Victoria Secret perfume, Kat Von D matte lipsticks and much more. I went into the guest bedroom, taking ahold of the bag with her gifts in it and bringing it to her. I kept going in for a hug multiple times as Elaha was about to leave, then sadly, the door shut. In an instant, the door has closed on the both of us. I missed her immediately.

A Handful of Coins
William Orrell

It's cold. The bus is late. It's four o'clock and the sun, obscured by a blanket of cloud, is already low in the sky. The heavy glass windows of the bus shelter, rendered opaque by fog and decades of late night graffiti, are blocking my view of the intersection. Still swiping back and forth aimlessly across my phone's home screen, I poke my head out into the angry winds of late January and squint into the storm. The snow is coming down hard and thick. At this point the bus is eight minutes behind schedule, and so am I.

I see a man trudging down the sidewalk, snow past his ankles. He's short and wiry. I retract my head back and shake the frozen precipitation from my hair. Six seconds later he stumbles into the shelter, shivering violently. Despite the weather, he is wearing only navy blue sweatpants, a deep brown turtleneck, and a pair of heavy black boots. He looks at me with wide bloodshot eyes, wearing an expression halfway between trepidation and desperation.

I think I know what's about to happen, but I wait. I realize that my headphones are silent; I must have paused the music at some point. I look away, keeping him in my peripheral vision. He shuffles toward me, slightly too close. He is shorter than me but I'm seated.

“Un peu de monnaie...”

I'm silent for a few seconds. I have a toonie and seven quarters packed into my wallet. I let my headphones down around my neck and reach into my inner jacket pocket for my ragged leather billfold. As I pull it out there's a sharp pain in my left temple. The second bony fist connects with my jaw and several coins tumble to the ground. My wallet, now empty except for my bus pass, debit card, and faded ID, is wrenched from my grasp.

I open my eyes and the thief is already sprinting back into the snowstorm. I stand and walk out, dumbfounded, a dull throb pulsing through my skull.

I look towards the intersection. The bus is nine minutes late.

New Beginnings
By Leah Poszwaylo

So I started a riot. Looking out on the street from the top of the roof was kind of funny. Everyone down there was acting manic. It was kind of beautiful actually. Seeing the somewhat peaceful buildings surrounding the crazy street almost like it was caging them in. I saw fire, cars flipped over, people punching each other for no particular reason, there's fire trucks and police cars. All because of me. It looked like people were having fun, except for the people that are getting hurt.

I'm looking up at the stars, it's a clear night, and here in the city it's always hard to see but tonight it seems pretty clear. It was peaceful up there. The warehouse was quiet except for maybe a rat running around looking for food. I was enjoying myself at that very moment and I didn't care about the consequences. I needed to get out of there. I decided, go big or go home.

My name is Bruce, I'm a 42 year old man, I hated my life. A couple hours before this happened I was a businessman. I was the head of the news company until I was told I was going to be fired because there was a new, younger, better looking news man who knew how to work computers better than I did.

But at least I had a wife and kids right? Well no, I divorced my wife because she found out I was cheating on her with a girl who I had fallen in love with.. And then I found out that girl was just playing me for my money, and fucked me over for my brother. My life was as chaotic as this riot outside, and I didn't even care. I just wanted to start my new life.

I was alone. My friend who is also named Bruce actually—people at the office would call him buddy just so we didn't get mixed up—he met me here at the warehouse. He helped me out

with what went down at the office. He was a guy who's just like me. We were basically put in the same situation as each other so it worked out.

I had a little portable radio that I was listening to. They found out it was me and buddy who spread the rumours. I hope he gets here soon, we knew we were going to have to be ducking from the police pretty soon. Of course, we weren't stupid people. I mean, maybe starting a riot was pretty stupid but fuck it! I wasted most of my life in school, studying, and then right after I started working. I wasted my teenage years and my twenties. I didn't get incredibly drunk, I didn't rebel. Those are supposed to be the best years. That's why fuck it. I wanted to do something like this. Actually, I needed to.

And like I said, me and Buddy were pretty smart, it's not like we would do this without a plan for afterwards. Buddy always used to tell me how his grandparents had a big house on a farm in the outskirts of France, and this house was given to him when his grandparents died but never could visit because of work. Now the land is abandoned and he hopes that he and I could fix it up. I thought it would've been pretty cool if you want me to be honest, starting a new life. Since I used to live in Quebec, my French is pretty good and I think I could make do in France. I need some practice though, I had been living in New York for a couple of years.

Our plan is to go to Miami where my ex-wife has a boat. We're going to take a boat to Cuba, and then Buddy knows his sister has a little plane that was passed down to her from her grandpa. She spent years fixing it up and since she just got her pilot license she can finally fly it.

It's been three days of straight driving and we finally reached Miami. While I was walking to get supplies, I saw an old friend outside the store. We all called him Bugaboo. He was begging for money and he didn't look too good. I remember back in the day he's the one who helped me get the job at the News Station in the first place, so I felt like I owed him something. I decided to invite him along with Buddy and me.

When we finally get to the old vacation home, the boat is right there. There was some repairs that had to be made and luckily Bugaboo knew how to fix it. Finally we were off sailing to Cuba.

Two hours pass and now you could just see blue. Buddy and I were out on the deck watching the waves while Bugaboo was taking a nap when suddenly he walks slowly up to us. He looked very scared, and then tells us that our boat is filling up with water. It's slowly getting lower and lower into the ocean so we grabbed our life jackets and jumped off the boat watching it sink down into the ocean.

It's been eight hours and it's dark outside. We saw a big boat go by but unfortunately it didn't see us. I was cold to the bone, and hungry. We had been swimming for a while, and an oil plant appeared ahead of us. It was something to rest on for a while, but we needed to figure out how we were going to get warmer or else we would've died of hypothermia. I suddenly remembered seeing something on TV where oil is a good way to keep your body heat inside so we took the oil and rubbed it all over our bodies.

The sun was starting to come up, and it's come to a point where we were getting delusional. We were starting to lose hope that anyone would find us. Bugaboo decided he would swim to

shore. I didn't think he would come back. I was sure he was going to die.

He has been swimming for about an hour when he spots a boat out in the distance. He starts to swim towards the boat and it was a nice couple who were celebrating their anniversary. They rescued him and insisted on bringing him in to hospital but he remembered that Buddy and I were still out there, going to die. He realizes that he can't tell the couple about them because by now our faces will be all over the news, and they would've definitely called the police. That's when Bugaboo does the only thing he could think of. He took the anchor of the boat and struck the couple over the heads, killing them and throwing them into the ocean.

Zooming through the ocean. Bugaboo manages to find the oil plant where we were. Nobody asked questions on how he got it, but by the blood stains on the floor we kind of figured out what he did. I wasn't mad, we were in a life or death situation. Now we can relax until we get to Cuba. The boat luckily had enough food for the three of us and as a bonus there was beer. Sitting out in the sun in the middle of the ocean, and this boat was nicer than the one that we had in the first place.

Ten hours passed and we reached Cuba. We decide to jump off the boat and swim to the shore just in case anyone has reported that a boat and two people had been missing.

We are a couple days late to when we said we were supposed to meet Buddy's sister so we catch a cab to her place. It seemed like the cab driver wasn't too happy, we soaked up his seats and made the car smell like sea water.

Buddy's sister welcomed us with relief. She was so worried that something happened. Her hospitality was great. We were off

to a rocky start but I'm starting to think things are going to turn out the way things planned. Buddy's sister, Lori, made us a big meal and let us take showers. We ended up spending a couple days there because we were so tired and sore from what we had just gone through and Bugaboo came down with the flu. The news was saying they were still looking for us and they had suspicions we went to Cuba.

And the day to get to France finally came. We packed up everything that we needed. Clothes, food, etc. We didn't know how long it was going to take to find this house in France. Lori even insisted on bringing a gun just in case. Since they were on to us, Buddy, Bugaboo, Lori, and I took her car as soon as possible to get to the plane. Everything was all set up and ready to go. I was so excited to go to France and start a new life, and me and Lori have been getting along really well these past couple days. I think she liked me. She's was gorgeous too.

We put our earphones on and waited for the engine to start running. Then out of the blue, we saw four cars coming down the dirt road. As they get closer we realized that it was the police. We were all in a panic and Lori ends up starting the engine just in time to take off, but not in time to survive.

The police with their guns drawn out, shooting at the plane ends up putting a bullet straight through Lori and Bugaboo. Buddy, filled with anger and grief that his sister just died right in front of him takes Lori's gun from her back pocket and started shooting at the police, but ends up getting a bullet straight through his head.

I was sitting there with terror, frozen, unable to move, unable to speak. They grabbed me and threw me to the ground and

started beating me up. And then they put the handcuffs around me and threw me in the car.

This is when I start my new life in prison.

The Everyday Struggles of a Wealthy Family
By Megan Esposito

“I know, I know, I’m doing the best I can,” says Jessie.

Every day is a struggle for Jessie and her family. It all started right after her husband passed away. It had a huge impact on the family and it had been so hard every day. Hanna wakes up when she suddenly hears speaking at 3 o’clock in the morning.

“Mom, is everything ok?” asks Hanna.

“Yes, everything is fine, I must have been talking in my sleep again,” says Jessie.

Hanna quietly closes the door and walks back to her room. Her sister Stephanie is awake and asks why Hannah was up so early. Stephanie and Hanna find their mom speaking at 3 a.m. often. Hanna has been having trouble falling back asleep because she’s pretty horrified by her mom and she’s trying to figure out what is going on. She watched the sunrise and waited to wake up her siblings.

“Jacob, Alessandro, wake up it’s time for school,” screams Hanna

It's a daily struggle. Jacob and Alessandro are having a really rough time without their father around. The boys used to be so close to him. After Hannah and Stephanie rush to get ready, they run downstairs to make breakfast and lunches while their mom is asleep. It has been pretty hard for her to wake up on time to fulfill her responsibilities. It’s the same thing every day for the girls, but they know that if they don’t step up, things are going to fall apart.

Once the children leave, Jessie wakes up and does her usual routine. She heads downstairs and makes herself a nice warm cup of coffee and grabs a muffin and then sits back down in her

backyard. She listens to the birds singing and watches the clouds go by. The sun peeks out happily from behind the clouds and shines onto Jessie. She sits there quietly with her long black hair up high in a ponytail. She doesn't feel like she has anything that she needs to take care of so she sits outside all day. She sits here and talks to her husband. When Hanna walks in she hears a voice. So she quietly listens in and hears her mom.

“Oh it's so hard without you here, I'm so bored and I know you're around. I can see it and feel it. You keep me company all day. I love it. Would you like anything to eat or something to—”

“Mom, we're home!” yells Hanna.

“Oh lovely, I'm happy to see you guys. But Hanna, would you mind cooking dinner tonight. I've been busy all day and I'm super tired,” says Jessie.

Hanna is furious. “No, Mom, this is getting out of hand. I am not going to cook dinner again, all I do is take care of everything and everyone and I'm starting to fail and—”

Jessie cuts her off. “Hanna, I don't care. Do what I have asked you to do now.”

Hanna refuses to listen to her mom. She continues to argue with her back and forth until Jessie just gets up and leaves. “I'm leaving with Dad. Have a good rest of the night,” says Jessie.

Hanna looks at her with shock and that is when she realizes something is not right and they need to get their mom help. The situation is getting really bad. So Hanna sits down with Stephanie and the boys. The boys don't understand what is going on. Stephanie is getting worried but Hanna is trying to comfort her as much as she can.

Hanna reaches out to a family friend and asks for help but the family friend completely blows her off and tells her she doesn't have time and how she has been trying to help for a while. So Hanna comes up with an idea to try and persuade her mom into leaving the house. She tells her that there is a new ice cream shop and how she deserves to go out on a shopping spree. But that isn't too convincing for Jessie. She expresses how she would prefer to stay home with her husband. Hanna then begins to tell her that her dad isn't real and how he's not here, which makes Jessie angry but then she also tricks her by telling her that the father told Hanna that he wants for Jessie to go out and live without him there and that even though it is going to be hard, he wants her to stay strong.

That is what does the trick. The next morning Hanna and Stephanie see their mom in the kitchen for the first time in months with a big smile on her face. She then asks, "Breakfast anyone? I made a whole lot of food. Eat up." Hanna and Stephanie look at each other with joy and run to get their brothers.

"Get in the car everyone, we're going out today, I have a whole day planned for us. We're going to eat out and have some great dessert, go shopping and then take a drive to the amusement park. Hope you guys are well rested, we have a long day ahead of us. Dress comfy." It's the happiest they have heard Jessie in months. It's already starting to get better and everything is surely getting back to the way it used to be.

Lights Out

By Michael Munro

Winky had been busy all day taking care of his Bish. He had already made seven ham sandwiches for it because if it didn't eat one every three hours, it would fly across the house screaming like an angry baby. All of Winky's neighbors really liked him because of his confidence, and they respected him, but they have no idea how he ever got his hands on a pet that happened to be a mix of a bird and a fish. The truth is, Winky didn't know either. But he had just missed the three hour mark, so his Bish was pretty mad. He walked around the house looking for it, which proved to be really difficult because there was a power outage affecting his house and all the houses on his street. He carefully walked into the living room and his Bish flew in out of absolutely nowhere and hit him right in the face. That's when Winky got fed up and decided to go for a walk. But not before leaving a ham sandwich for his ridiculous pet. As he got outside, he took the time to gaze ahead of him. He lived on a notoriously creepy street: it was unimaginably long, and had the exact same number of houses on each side, all facing each other. But Winky's house was right at the end of the road, looking straight ahead at it. The road led right to his house. It also didn't help that the sun didn't rise there, and the sky always looked eerily cloudy and dark. But Winky wasn't scared of anything. He believed that if you didn't give a reaction to something scary, you became stronger. He began to walk down the road.

He looked at all the houses he passed. Taking notice of how they all looked the same. But he had to stop at the only one that stood out. Outside, it looked like all the other houses. But the living room was brightly lit, unlike all the other houses that lost power and were dark. But that wasn't even the weirdest part.

There weren't even any lamps or light bulbs in the room. It was also dark outside, so there was no sunlight either. Absolutely no possible source of light. So Winky knocked at the door to get some answers. Nobody answered. So he let himself in. But the inside of the house was nothing but an old staircase leading way down. Winky wasn't scared. He never was. So he proceeded downstairs. The descent lasted fifteen minutes, but once he reached the basement, Winky looked back and saw only ten stairs behind him. There was a window in there, and somehow you could see the houses outside from it. And for some reason, that house was lit up too, and so were the all the other houses. Weird. Obviously Winky wanted to go outside again and get a better look. But he couldn't. Because there were no stairs leading out of the basement. It didn't look like there ever were any. The window was gone too. Everything was gone except for the dark surrounding Winky. He couldn't even see or feel the ground he was standing on. Winky tried his very best to stay composed and calm and rational and... Anything but afraid. He wouldn't be Winky if he felt afraid. But he was afraid. So he wasn't Winky anymore. His head felt like it was getting bigger and heavier, his legs looked like those of a bird, his arms turned to stubby little wings and he couldn't breathe through his mouth anymore. But he was outside again. But he didn't care. He started to feel really stupid. All he knew is that he wanted a ham sandwich. He wanted one badly. If he didn't get one right then and there, he would scream.

A Friendship Comes to an End By Rachel Labelle

I was soaked in disappointment, and sadness. Everyday seemed to be harder to walk through. I felt like I was stepping in puddles that got bigger and muddier; it got harder and harder to walk through, it felt like a stormy cloud lingering over me every step of the way. Until I realized it wasn't the end of the world.

I thought I had the most beautiful friendship with this girl named Sophia. I thought she was genuinely nice, and very understanding, caring person. She was so beautiful. We ended up doing everything together, almost like twins. We had some of the same clothes without even knowing, we had the same friends, we had mostly the same opinions and thoughts. We had the same mind set, so I thought. We threw parties together, we went everywhere together and I am not going to lie we had a great time together. I supported and protected her as much as I could, and showed her I cared a lot, but some issues occurred that I had to speak up about.

I was seeing a guy named Max. I had a special relationship with him, so I thought. Max was Sophia's best friend she introduced us. I don't think she liked max and I being together; she would make little comments to make me believe so. Max found another girlfriend while seeing me and Sophia is the one who told me. He walks into school acting like I was nobody the next day at school. He said "Hey" to Sophia but walked right passed me. So I respectfully told Sophia, "Look, I respect your relationship with Max, but I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't bring him around me since he did me wrong and dirty in the way that he did." She said, "Okay I completely understand." I truly felt sad, and confused by his actions.

A few days passed and Sophia started to bring Max around me in school and outside of school like our conversation never happened. I didn't do anything but I felt some type of way! I felt like someone just slapped me in the face, felt like I was being betrayed in a way but I let it slide, I didn't want to start drama for nothing. Maybe a day later, Sophia started ditching me to go hang with Max and another guy at my school who did me wrong. I was truly angry!! I was angry, I wouldn't do that to her! I would always put myself in her shoes to see if she'd be happy or sad about a situation, but it seemed she didn't do the same for me. We spoke about it, she told me she was sorry and it wouldn't happen again, that it was miscommunication. I cared about her a lot so I accepted her apology.

A few weeks went by and we threw a party at Sophia's house. I got so drunk with her that I lost my phone. I am the type of person who is addicted to her phone, so I was a bit confused when I didn't go home with my phone. That night, I knew for a fact I didn't go outside. The next morning I went to go look for my phone at Sophia's house. The three people who were there last night were there in the morning. I asked everyone, "Has anybody seen my phone? I think I lost it!"

So the three people helped me search for my phone. Everybody said they didn't see my phone, so I start panicking because we couldn't find it. Sophia told me she was going to clean her house to look for it, I said "Okay." It turns out, that same night I lost my phone, the same night we got drunk, she slept in the same bed as Max. When there were three other single beds to sleep in. Few days went by, and she still hadn't cleaned her house! So I was feeling kinda aggravated, because if someone lost an expensive phone or even a basic phone I would be looking

everywhere in my house for it. Out of respect and also because it's MY house. So I let it slide once again.

My uncle wasn't too happy because he bought me the iPhone 6. So a week later he sent Sophia a message saying "Hey, can you please spread the word that if any one finds Rachel's phone there will be reward \$\$\$. No questions asked." Sophia never replied but the same day he sent the message to her she messaged me not too long after asking to hang out. I felt like my gut was turning, telling me something fishy was happening. I didn't assume anything. We got to school Monday. Sophia and I were looking at the board where teachers leave good compliments that students are achieving. I am not going to lie, there were a lot with my name on it. Sophia turned around and looked at me while saying "I'm a little salty about this situation. I'm a little angry because I always hand in my work before you, I always do all my work."

I was speechless, I didn't know what to do, what to say, or what to even think when I heard her say that. I felt like right there I should listen to my gut feeling and realize she isn't the type of "best friend" I thought she was. After school I was speaking with one of my good friends who had a thing with Sophia in the past. He was basically telling me he was into me and would want to try things out with me but I turned him down for Sophia. I didn't think she would appreciate me going for a guy she was one time with. #GirlCode.

So after that I needed to distance myself. I felt like I needed space to think, to reflect on our friendship, a lot of the things she was doing or did, I wouldn't do to her. She didn't think twice about how I would feel.

The next day at school, we spoke to each other. I mostly spoke about how I felt. I felt like the whole time she was showing

me fake support, fake love. I felt like she wasn't putting herself in my shoes, like I did for her. Wednesday we went on a trip the day after I confronted her. I felt nervous about how things would go between me and her so I prepared myself to be alone all day on the trip or spend it with a teacher, but Sophia acted like nothing happened and invited me to sit with her and have conversations. So I thought; okay today is going to be an alright day. She might be showing me she is a real friend a "best friend." The rest of the trip went well. Until we got to school the next day, I noticed she was ignoring me, my gut was telling me something was wrong. I ignored it and went on my way, but then she saw me and didn't say anything like she didn't know me or I was a ghost and invisible. One of the teacher's, Simone, came and talked to me and told me Sophia wanted to sit down and talk with me, Simone and another teacher Angela. I accepted to sit down and have a conversation. I didn't know if it was a good idea or not because I was angry, Sophia was most likely angry as well.

We got in the classroom to talk. We all sat down. Simone and Angela had written down rules for me and Sophia to follow while we talked. We started off well, I mean we started a conversation while being civil but it went south real quick once she tried to say I was fake. It went south real quick because I was the least fake person she had around her. I was so angry, I was getting hot. I had to tie up my hair. I was angry because I was always there for her. When I had a problem in the past I went to her and told her straight up about how I felt. I always gave her support, and true support. I was angry because she was always acting like she was innocent, she never did anything wrong by the book. I've heard it so many times "I won't do it anymore" that I was fed up of talking to her. As I saw it, her actions were speaking louder than her words.

It was difficult to handle reality. I loved our friendship. I thought it was a friendship I needed in my life. I mean temporary people give us permanent lessons. Lessons are important but I thought she was good for me but she wasn't and I needed to realize it and experience it for a reason.

Now I need to move on and focus on myself.

The Final Memory
By Rachel Lazerman

Consumed by my loss, I don't notice the hardness of the pew where I sit. I am at the funeral of my dearest friend—my mother. She finally lost her long battle with cancer. Everyone came. Everyone, including William, my eldest brother. He was very distant from Mom. So were Christina and David, my two other siblings. They were all way too busy with their families and own lives. They barely visited Mom, they probably didn't even call. Then there was me, 21 years old, working and still in school. When Mom fell sick I made looking after her my first priority. I took it in honour and pride. Be there for the ones who had been there for you. Mom always said this.

As the casket bearers enter the funeral service, my heart drops. At this point I realize that when death takes your mother, every part of you breaks and completely shatters. There is no way of putting my soul back together.

The hurt is so intense, I find it hard to breathe at times. The tears burst forth like water from a dam, spilling down my face. I feel the muscles of my chin tremble like a small child and I look toward the window, as if the light could soothe me.

As I drown in a sea of grief, I close my eyes and take a deep breath. I imagine she is sitting right beside me and we are laughing about some little funny thing. We always found a way to laugh about everything, it was a great way for us to cope through hard times. She is hugging me and I sink into her lovely long beautiful hair. I can feel her heart beating and the rise and fall of her chest.

So vivid and real. She whispers into my ear; you are my love, pride and joy.

As she disappears into nothingness, her beautiful face is the last to go. A gentle smile graced her lips as she let me know that everything was going to be okay.

As we head to the cemetery, the overwhelming sky is filled with gray clouds, reflecting emotions. It is as if I feel everything at once and then nothing at all. Blankness. Numbness. Nothing.

The awful hollowness threatened to engulf my mind, body and soul.

It took me a few years to realize what an extraordinary influence my mother had been on my life. Why is it only after death that we realize what we had lost? We really need to appreciate love more, and the important people in our lives.

This same night I return to my lifeless house. What a sad house. I lay on my bed supine and stare into nothingness. Guilt strikes me at a lonely hour and in my heart, I retract all the bad things I ever said. They were never a reflection on you, Mom, only on my inner demons. I'm truly sorry for all the bad I have caused, and all of my self-absorbed actions. I am sorry if I never became the daughter and person you always wanted me to be. I am so sorry, Mom.

It feels as if this regret will stay with me forever.

I close my eyes and I see her again. This time in our memories we share together. Vivid, clear edged, bright as a colour print, flash, evoke memories, memories stirring. She is beautiful. Her large liquid brown eyes held such an intelligence and serenity.

She was kind hearted and generous. She was the strongest person that I knew, and it was a privilege getting to know her. The most loving, all giving, honest and true. Protector, nurturer, teacher, friend.

The sweetest softest melody comes so tenderly to my ears as I relax and feel heart-warmed. It is Mother singing to me, she always had a beautiful voice. Her soft voice gives me the strength to smile again. She always leaves me strong. Though her loss is felt to my very bones, she gave me the world and I couldn't ask for more.

Her endless warming singing voice is triggering all of our beautiful everlasting memories, and in that moment I fall into a deep sleep knowing how beautiful life is. A beautiful last memory lingers. I realize the importance of memories, and how we should make as many of them as possible with the people we love. It is the only thing that will be left of them, and we will want to celebrate their lives when they're gone. Memories are the only way to bring someone back to life.

I love you, Mom, with no beginning, no end.

Still Breathing
By Curtis Coombs

The smell of the passing rainstorm allows me to breathe. The slow trickling of the water is music from the heavens, soothing. The rain, drowning out the piercing pain, is clearing the blood from my skin. I have the winning feeling of being alive after a war, yet I am dead inside. I had been nothing more than a pawn. A machine. Abused and tortured by immoral leaders to fight and sacrifice my mind, soul, and body. I'm still breathing.

I'm someone with great ambition with the will to overcome the loss of my people and regain honour from our predecessors. I have a burning passion to give birth to a nation with proper traditions and an everlasting future of peace and harmony.

Residing in the jungle, we are—or should I say *were*—one with nature. I was very happy in my community harvesting vegetables, climbing trees, and swimming in the sea. Whatever we took from nature, we gave back to keep the balance. But with the increasing noise and disruption of the “selfish-man” taking away from the jungle and not returning anything, our lifestyles have changed. The leader Patwan said the “selfish-man” has only one goal: to destroy everything in their path. Patwan had the whole community preparing for battle. Making shields and armour, reinforcing homes, building walls, etc.

It isn't hard to convince my people. All you need to be is respected, and they will follow. Patwan had every man, woman and child believe that the encroaching “selfish-man” would have nothing but death in their eyes when they arrived.

I think I'm the only one that noticed that we haven't been returning what we were taking from the jungle. I could not disagree with Patwan because I was not knowledgeable when it

came to the “selfish-man”; but one thing I knew for sure, you can not have peace if you are not peaceful. Preparing to fight and disrupt our communal nature wasn't going to bring the change we'd been looking for. *What if the “selfish-man” were kind? Or was attempting to free us from our immoral leaders? If this were true I'd, without a doubt, help them take down Patwan.*

The moment the “selfish-man” discovered our community, the men from my village went charging, face on. The battle was way more intense than I had thought it'd be. Blood, gore, the lack of mercy my people had... I didn't know we were capable of it. The “selfish-man” seemed only to be defending himself; killing only those who attacked. The scared women and children were being left untouched, but Patwan kept giving orders to charge and to keep fighting.

I discreetly approached their leader, open palmed, unarmed. I asked, “What are you doing here?”

The man simply said, “We are exploring. Looking for human life. We do not wish to harm you.”

I ran as fast as I could to Patwan to tell him the incredible news. He didn't even let me finish what I had to say, when he yelled: “You are now a part of the enemy and against us!”

I couldn't believe my ears. Shocked. Instinctively, I pushed Patwan to the ground. Accidently, he hit his head on a stone and died. This had confirmed to all of my people that I was, indeed, an enemy. Rage in my peoples' eyes, they rushed towards me. Women and children were entering battle with me as their target. Forced to fight my own people, as they continued to fight with the “selfish-man”, there was so much killing. The battle had turned upside down with no one on my side.

After the killing died down and the strongest, most aggressive of our people were dead, broken and wounded, I laid on the mud in the heart of where the battle had taken place. That's when I realized it was raining. I'm not sure if it was the pain or the memories rushing through my throbbing head, but I had a vision of myself playing in the rain, in the same, exact spot I was in. Laying there with my eyes half open and my body half numb, I saw my community destroyed. With my last ounce of strength I yelled then passed out.

When I awoke, stood up, and looked around, my community was empty. Empty homes and hollow corpses. No life, no balance.

The smell of the passing rainstorm allows me to breathe. The slow trickling of the water is music from the heavens, soothing. The rain, drowning out the piercing pain, is clearing the blood from my skin. I have the winning feeling of being alive after a war, yet I am dead inside. I had been nothing more than a pawn. A machine. Abused and tortured by immoral leaders to fight and sacrifice my mind, soul and body. I'm still breathing.

All Alone
By Danica Agnellini

The door slammed shut two inches from my nose... I'm terrified, I start to feel my legs tremble, the palm of my hands sweating, full of confusion and wondering how? How in the world does the door slam shut? I'm all alone, no one around, not even breeze of wind in the room. I go to open the old creaky door, it's not opening IT'S LOCKED!! I start to scream in panic, as loud as I can while pounding on the door with my two fists, as hard as I can. Like my life depended on this very moment.

After what feels like hours, I remind myself: Ok Danica. Calm down. Breathe. You'll be ok. Stop stressing. Think. Think. What can I do? Crawl out the window and fall four stories down? Break every fragile bone in my body? Or just sit here uselessly until someone finally realizes I'm missing? It might take hours, days maybe even weeks...then I use my brain, for once. I realize I have my phone in my purse, sitting on the wooden chair in the corner. I run over; grab it and rummage through, digging out my makeup bag finding my phone at the bottom. Immediately, I dial my mom's phone number. I put the phone up to my ear, it rings once. It rings twice. Beeeep... I take the phone off my ear and look down at the black screen with the bright green battery sign right there, bright and noticeable.

My heart sinks to my feet and I instantly start to panic. All the worst scenarios possible go through my head. Pacing back and forth across the room, I start to wonder, what if no one comes to save me? What if I'm stuck in here forever? I wipe a tear dripping down my cheek.

Then I hear something. I get up off the dusty floor, wiping off my hands onto my pants. I quietly walk over to the locked

door and put my ear up against it. I start to hear voices coming closer and closer. My face lights up with the biggest smile. As happy as I was, I had one thing to start doing.... I start banging on the door, screaming “help!!” at the top of my lungs but the footsteps and voices pass my door moving further away. Until I don’t hear them anymore.

“I give up!” I walk away from the door. Enraged. Making my way back to the chair, where my junk is scattered, I throw everything off and sit down, aggressively. The minute my butt touches the old wooden chair the foot snaps, causing the whole chair to collapse leaving me to fall and hit my head against the steel shelves behind.

From that moment on I don't remember anything, other than waking up in my bed in a panic sweating, shaking and shook up. As I look around my pitch black room, I came to realize was this all a dream? Was this not real? I lay my head back onto my pillow, I pull my bed sheets over my head and bury myself, falling back asleep.

8am comes around and my alarm annoyingly wakes me up like every morning, time to get up. I fling my covers off of me, toss over to my bedside table where my phone is, turning off my loud alarm. I get up and put my feet onto the cold wood floor, slipping on my fuzzy pink slippers. I get up off my warm, cozy bed and walk my tired lazy self over to my bedroom door to make my way downstairs where I can smell my mom cooking up some breakfast. I go to grab my door handle and... It’s locked.

How I Met Joey Kidney By Darren McGinn

One day when I was watching Joey Kidney videos, he announced that he was going to have a meetup in Montreal. I was so excited to meet him that I jumped out of bed. I ran to my mom and exclaimed, “Guess what, Mom?” I smiled. She said annoyed, “What?” Then I said, “Joey Kidney, one of my favorite Youtuber’s, is having meetup in Montreal.” She sighed, looking a bit frustrated, “I’m on the phone with grandma!” I begged, “Can I pleeeeeeeaaaasssssee go.” “We’ll see,” she replied, clearly unsure.

I asked my mom, dad, brother, sister and both of my friends but they all said no. I thought to myself there is only way that I’m going to meet Joey Kidney: I asked my grandma. She was my last chance. Luckily, she said yes. I was so happy!

My grandmother and I got lost on the journey to meet Joey. We took the bus and metro and also walked. Google Maps was not very clear so we went the wrong way. After walking the opposite way for blocks and blocks, I went back to my old friend Google Maps.

We turned around and found the hotel. When we finally went inside there was a women at a desk and we asked, “Where’s the event?” She gave us directions. But we got lost again! We took the elevator to the second floor. When we got off the elevator, it was dark, it smelled weird. We weren’t sure we were in the right place. We tried almost every single room and we could not find him. But in the last room Joey Kidney was there!

At this point, I don’t know why, but I became nervous all of sudden. We finally got through the line. I was going to give him a hand shake... but he wanted a hug. That was one of my most awkward hugs.

Unfinished Business By Kyle Grondin

Zander stood in front of the woods, rifle on his back, praying and dreading what he had to do, but at the same time, feeling like he was about to get a large burden off of his shoulders. He had not been to these woods in so long, and he had never wanted to return. He started reminiscing about that horrid day.

It was back when he was still an innocent kid around seven or eight years old. Zander, his mom, and dad all loved to go hunting, camping, you name it – a real outdoorsy family. They were heading out to explore the northern regions of Quebec during the winter. Before they reached their destination, they stopped at a Native gas station. While Zander’s father filled up the car, Zander and his mother went into the rest stop to see if there was anything good to eat. While there, the old Native man with his white beard, at the counter, coughed and asked, “Where are you all heading this far up north? It’s dangerous on the road this time of year.” As soon as Zander’s mom explained where they were going, the man’s face went as white as a ghost. He warned them about the Wendigos in the woods.

In Algonquian folklore, the Wendigo is a mythical cannibal monster or evil spirit, native to the northern forests of the Atlantic Coast and Great Lakes Region of both the United States and Canada. They are strongly associated with the winter, the north, and coldness; as well as with famine and starvation. Zander’s mother never did believe in the supernatural or the paranormal, so she shrugged it off, thanked the man for the drinks, and they went on their way.

Zander wished they had heeded the old man's warning. If so, his parents might still be alive.

It was getting darker. The time was almost upon him. The forest was getting quieter so he started his long walk to the cabin. That goddamn cabin where everything went to shit.

They had spent five days in that cabin with no food and no water. On the sixth day, they found Zander's mother dead. Died during the night, the cold was too much and her body had shut down. Desperate, cold, starving, Zander and his dad both knew what they had to do to survive. His dad started a fire with the last of the dry wood and his lighter, while Zander was sent to collect some meat from his mother's ice-cold corpse. It practically killed him to have to do this. As soon as his knife grazed her skin and the crimson liquid started to pour out, he fainted.

When he woke up, the first thing he noticed was the smell. As he opened his eyes, he saw his dad finishing the cooking. His eyes shot to the corner of the room where her body was now under the blue tarp that they had brought with them. He would have vomited, but he had nothing in his stomach to throw up.

Zander's dad tasted a piece of the meat to see if it was cooked. Once sure, he made two plates and brought one to Zander. Zander looked at his plate. No matter how much he didn't want to do this, he had no choice. He raised the food to his mouth, but before he could take a bite, he heard something.

It was Zander's father. He was convulsing on the floor violently, shaking and rolling on the floor. Zander tried to get close and help him, but he heard the most blood curdling screech he had ever heard, like an animal dying the most painful death you could imagine. His body started to morph in horrific ways. His arms and

legs grew dramatically, claws extended from his fingertips, his body elongated in unnatural ways. But his face... now, that was something you never forget. Only black sockets where the eyes once were, skin torn exposing his skull and teeth sharpened like a shark's.

Zander was in shock. He backed up into the corner and couldn't move. The creature, which had once been his father, was now moving towards him, snarling like a bloodthirsty wolf. "This is the end," he thought. The creature swung its long arm to hit him. Zander closed his eyes and felt a sting on his cheek. The thing's claw had dug into his cheek. It stopped. Why? Zander knew the reason; his dad had saved him. He was still alive in this thing. After that, the creature ran out of the cabin and disappeared into the blizzard.

Zander finally reached the cabin - now overgrown, in addition to the skulls that were placed on sticks on the perimeter of the property; a warning to stay away. No, he came this far to do this, and it was going to get done one way or the other. He walked up to the door and opened it slowly and quietly. He saw skulls scattered everywhere, animal and human. In the center of the room, there was the blue tarp and his father lying down next to it. Well, not his father anymore, not after all of this. He raised his rifle to its head and pulled the trigger. It was finally over.

Zander walked back down the trail to his truck when he heard that bloodcurdling scream from the woods behind him.

Mystery Letters
By Saryna Wilken-McGinn

Skye was fifteen years old when she was placed into solitary confinement. She had experienced four years without human interaction. She was charged with first degree murder. However, these were false accusations, and Skye never killed anyone. She was determined to find out who framed her, but that was difficult considering, she was imprisoned for this long.

At nineteen Skye was fully mute. One day, she received a letter slipped under her door. The envelope was sealed tight with a golden circular stamp. The letter read “Skye, I know who framed you... Write me back when you can, but don’t get caught!” The letter was written with black ink, in cursive writing. Skye felt completely relieved that someone was at least attempting to help her. But... What if the person writing is the murderer who framed me? Skye was determined to get as much information to investigate who could be writing these letters.

Four years before the court meeting and imprisonment...

Skye went to school. It was just a regular day. That is what Skye imagined. Anyhow, Skye needed to use the restroom, so she slowly lifted her small, cold hand and asked if she may use the restroom. On her way to the restroom, something did not feel right to Skye... and her feelings were right. As she washed her hands, a masked individual appeared behind her in the reflection. Her heart stopped and within an instant the anonymous person shot the most popular girl in school! No, not Skye. This anonymous shooter shot... Bryanna.

Bryanna was sixteen years of age and was supposed to be graduating. Skye never had any reason to hate Bryanna. She did not have any reason to shoot her. The only three people who knew

the truth in this case were 1) the anonymous shooter 2) Skye and 3) Bryanna, who was no longer alive to testify.

Skye was not the only one who heard the gunshots. The school went directly into lockdown but the anonymous shooter got away. The shooter must have pulled off their mask as they fled the scene. The shooter had to be from the school. Skye remembered the silky black gloves on the gun's trigger as the bullet flew through the air.

The shooter had left the gun in the restroom and Skye, in shock, picked up the gun. A 9mm pistol. Powerful. Reality began to settle, and she raced over to Bryanna's pale body to check for a heartbeat, a pulse, a breath, anything to show any sign of life left in her. Nope. Nothing. Bryanna was gone and this was not an accident, but a murder.

In about fifteen minutes, security came running in and since Skye was the only one there, with her DNA was on the pistol AND Bryanna. She was found guilty.

Skye couldn't wrap her head around everything that had happened over these four long years. Finding the true murderer was the only way she could be released. If she showed a guard or the judge the letter maybe she could be released.... But the note specifically read "Do not get caught." Why is that? This baffled Skye. I don't think that it's even possible to get in worse trouble if you're already in jail. Also, maybe police could analyze the ink and DNA on the paper and reveal who the mystery writer was. Skye sat on her bunk confused and nervous with a cold breeze on the back of her neck. She tossed the letter under her pillow and pulled her covers over her head.

The next morning, Skye woke up to the annoying breakfast sirens. As she got up, stretched and fixed herself up for breakfast, pulling her small, orange jumpsuit on, she stumbled upon ANOTHER note. She unfolded the letter and began to read: “I am the one who murdered Bryanna. But you were the perfect suspect. On the scene, I knew you’d get involved touching everything. You should know I am someone very close to you so beware. Things could get messy. PS. You will never know who I am as long as you’re in solitary confinement.”

Before she even realized what she was doing, Skye found herself banging on her door as hard and loud as she could. Her fists pounded until they were numb and she could not feel them anymore. Just as she was about to give up, the security guard opened her door. “What is all this commotion about?” Her red, bloody hands shook as she handed him the letter. Skye watched his eyes scan over the papers and then search the room for any sign of pens and paper. When he noticed there was nothing for Skye to write with, he promised to bring the letters to security’s attention. Skye fell to her knees and breathed a sigh of relief. She wept.

After what felt like ages of deliberation and retrial, Skye was finally set free. She would be rewarded for being one of the best prisoners who never really put up a fight. She was released, and as compensation, she was provided with guards and highest security. Her and her family would receive this until investigators found the real murderer.

When Skye found out the incredible news she was left speechless. But in a way that inspired her first words in years: “Thank you.”

Ready to Go
By Sibila Brienza

On a Saturday night, I find myself in someone else's bed. I'm cheating on my husband and you might ask why or just end up calling me names and that's okay. You don't know my story.

You see I adore my husband, but I never get his attention nor does he show me love. Most of the time when he comes home he never acknowledges me. Instead, he goes straight to bed and falls asleep instantly. And I sit there on the couch watching TV, alone, like always.

Months had passed since I started the affair. I never wanted him to find out, but I guess I always knew he would. And he did. My husband found out about the affair from someone close to him. He was devastated. "How could you?" he yelled with his fist clenched. Tears started pouring down my face. I couldn't speak. I was getting all choked up from all the guilt I'd been hiding for almost a year. The fact that I wasn't speaking, made him even more angry, to the point where he threw everything that was in front of him. I had never seen that side of him before. "Go in the room pack your bags. Leave—" "But where do I go?" my voice trembled. "I don't care where you go, just don't come back here. I never want to see you again!" he shouted.

I could feel an aching sensation in my chest. My heart was pounding quick, it felt like I was having a heart attack. Calmly, I laid down on the bed. On the walls around me hung the portraits of the good times when life was much simpler. But those days were gone. I guess I knew it had been over for some time.

It took me five minutes to sit back up, but I was ready to leave.

I grabbed the luggage and disappeared.

Dreamer
By Tommy Aceto

I am around seven years old, it is me, my mother, my father, my brother Bruno, and my two sisters Anabela and Bianca. It is 11 o'clock on a Sunday and we are getting ready to go to Nonna's house. I wear my best jeans, a shirt that says something witty and my Spiderman cap. I'm ready to go. I run down the stairs from my room to the entrance as I get ready to pull the Velcro off my Nike's and strap them nice and tight. My father opens me the front door by stretching his arm from the bench where he puts on his snake skin boots; all the while, the light from the sun's rays reflects off his gold chain and ugly sunglasses.

I step outside on to the welcome mat. I can feel the sun heating up the skin on my face as I squint my eyes. I kind of stare at the sun for a few seconds until I begin to see blue dots everywhere. I take a whiff of the smell of pollen and ragweed. Looking around me, I can see the dandelions blooming from the green grass in front of my house and the trails of dust from the traffic on the boulevard. It's so hot that I can hear that ringing noise coming from the sky. I walk down my concrete stairs grasping the rusty railing supporting me. I run through the grass kicking dandelions out my path as I make way to my father's car.

I can see the sun glistening off the paint on my father's white Ford. I pull the heavy door open as I slide into the middle seat in the front. I get an overwhelming splash of heat and I make sure to be cautious not to touch the metal on my seat belt. My mother then follows behind me as she takes a seat on the passenger side. I look out the window to see my dad locking the door and my worn out hockey net leaning onto the bruised garage. My dad enters the car adjusting his seat and mirrors. He rolls down his window and he drives off.

Looking out the window becomes a challenge now; the wind blowing harshly through my face. I hold my hat in place, making sure it won't fly off. My father witnesses my struggle and rolls up the window half way. I look at him and give him a smile. Even then, I can see the hairs on his goatee turning white. My father turns the dusty knob on the radio, highering the sound.

“Dreamer... Nothing but a dreamer... Well can you put your hands on your head, oh no!!”

I sing along, as do my siblings and my parents. I was obsessed with this song, the high pitch and the lyrics spoke to me as a kid, because that is pretty much all I was back then, a dreamer.

The Unforgettable Festival
By Zach Bray

The cluster of balloons escaped me.

I was prancing my way back home from the yearly town festival and as I was making my way back a strong wind aggressively blew.

The balloons flew from my grip and into the scummy grey skies.

I shook in silence and before you knew it I was running as fast I could after the balloons.

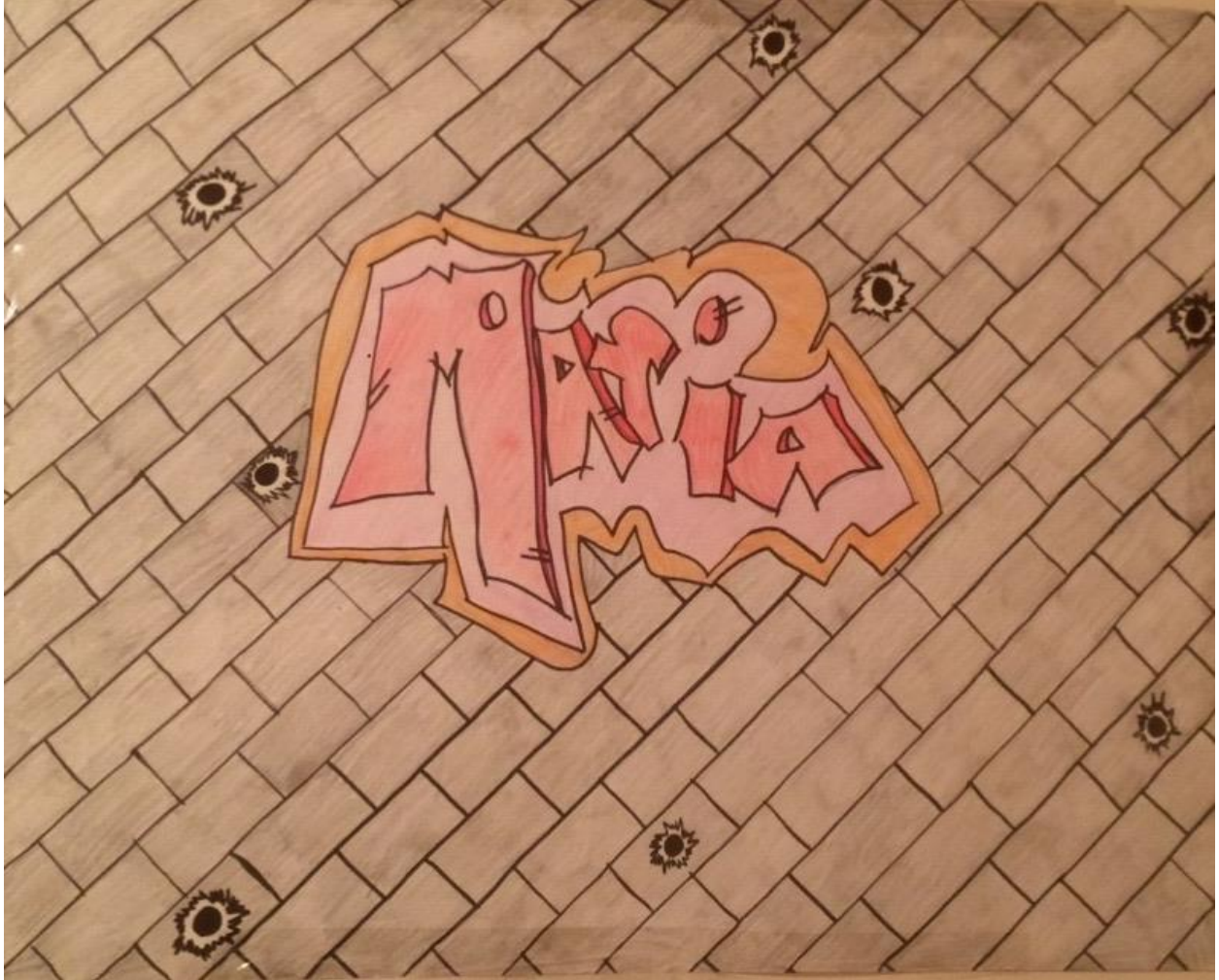
The balloons flew ever so high from the altitude they were prior.

After a while of chasing the cluster I realized they were only decaying into the distance never to be seen again.

I sat on the hard pavement questioning myself on why I didn't hold on tighter to the balloons, as tears of anger rolled down my cheeks and hit the rough cement.

All I wanted was for the balloons to return back to me.

I will never forget the day that the cluster of balloons escaped me.



Drawing by Maria Tzevelekos

