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windscript

The Magazine of High School Writing

Volume 35 2019

SWG!
Saskatchewan
Writers' Guild



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The Best in Poetry and Prose from High School Students in Saskatchewan Visit us online: skwriter.com

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MANDATE

The Saskatchewan Writers' Guild is a not-for-profit membership driven organization that strives to sustain and enhance an environment in Saskatchewan where writers and all forms of writing flourish; to promote the well-being of all writers; and to advocate on their behalf. The Saskatchewan Writers' Guild gratefully acknowledges the support of SaskCulture and the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust fund.



WINDSCRIPT HISTORY

Windscript has been publishing the best of Saskatchewan high school students' literature since 1983 and was created by Victor Jerrett Enns, Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild from 1982 to 1988. His enthusiasm and determination kept the magazine alive in its first two years until permanent funding could be found.

For twenty-one years, the magazine was distributed free to all high schools and libraries in the province. By 2004, funding sources were no longer available and the print publishing of the magazine was replaced by electronic versions on the SWG website.

In 2011, due to popular demand from students and teachers, as well as offering it online, the SWG was once again able to publish this magazine for promising young writers in print form.

SPECIAL THANKS

Thanks to Printwest for their donation in printing *Windscript*.

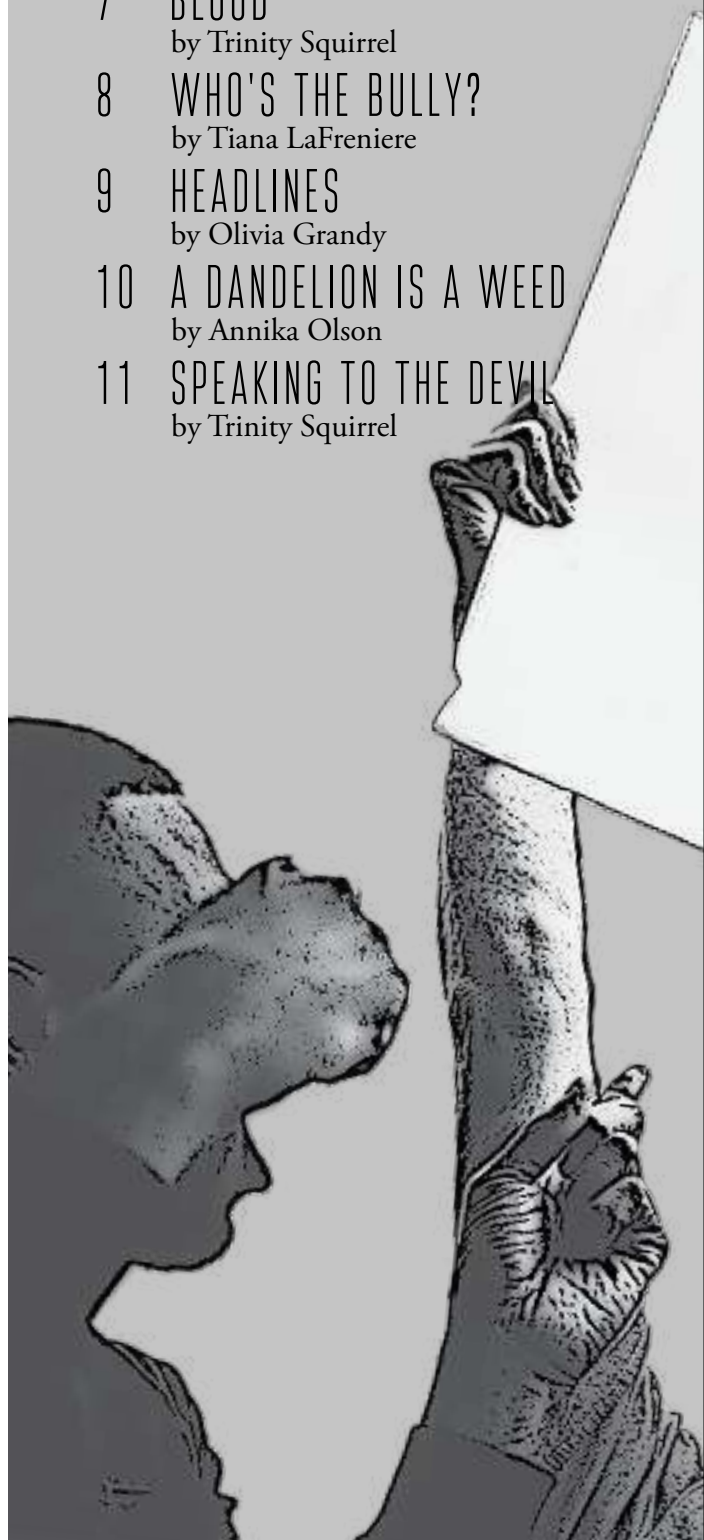
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EDITOR'S FOREWARD

Dearest readers, prepare to be whisked away by writing as crisp as Saskatchewan winters, warmed by prose better than soup on a frigid day, and savour poems bursting with growth, justice, and preparation for the future to come. This is *Windscrip* Volume 35. With over one-hundred entries this year, my job as editor was challenging, but more than that, it was rewarding. There is a fierceness in these young voices that shows their determination for change, for their voices to lead us to a better, more inclusive future. All of these pieces ask what it means to grow, to enforce change, to love ourselves and others—questions that have been asked over and over again throughout the years. But these young writers ask these questions with originality and vigour. Themes within the work include

raw considerations about the complicated nature of relationships with ourselves and others, difficult personal and social issues, coping with loss, small changes that have memorable outcomes, and the way our landscapes, weird and often cold, ignite a need to make an impact on the world, to be heard above all other noise. I found myself delightfully surprised with the techniques these writers brought to their work, and how the energy of the work demanded my attention, their presence loud. This loudness was comforting, reaffirming what I already knew: these young writers will continue to write important pieces that make the future an inclusive, loving, and diverse place. I was even more impressed with the care and eagerness these writers had while revising. Each writer taught me new lessons in writing, inspiring

me with their considerations of their craft.

A huge thank you to the SWG for giving me this opportunity; to Stephanie Campbell for her incredible design skills and guidance; to Cat Abenstein for her leadership, valuable advice, and endless support; and to Yolanda Hansen for her excellent problem-solving skills and direction. Lastly, I would like to thank all of the writers for all of their dedication, hard work, and courage. It was a great pleasure and privilege for me to read all the submissions to *Windscrip* this year, and to work with these sharp and perceptive young writers. Congratulations to you all! The future of writing in Saskatchewan is bright. Enjoy!

Tea Gerbeza
Editor



A MESSAGE FROM THE YOUTH POET LAUREATE

Adolescence is one of life's most electric experiences: bursting with energy and potential. Poetry is an incredible way to give form to these forces and, in doing so, create a deeper understanding of self. The possibility for understanding that can be created through poetry is truly limitless—its power to expand the world around us, unbridled. I had my first publication experience when I was in high school and I still think of that moment as an important step toward the career that I've chosen for myself. To all the contributors, thank you for sharing your light with us and letting us into your world. I hope this publication will inspire you to keep pursuing the elusive something that lives in the poem. For the good of our culture, please continue to harness your creative energy; I look forward to hearing and reading you for many years to come.

Alasdair Rees
Saskatchewan Youth Poet Laureate
2019 - 2020

AWARDS

JERRETT ENNS AWARDS

The Jerrett Enns Awards recognize excellence for high school student writing in poetry and prose named in honour of Victor Jerrett Enns, Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild from 1982 to 1988. A third award for art was discontinued in 1996. Today, the poetry and prose awards continue to be presented, as well as an Honourable Mention in each category.

CURRIE-HYLAND PRIZE

The Currie-Hyland Prize is awarded for excellence in poetry to a high school writer living outside Regina or Saskatoon. This award was established in 1992 by the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild and the literary community of Moose Jaw as a tribute to Robert Currie and Gary Hyland in recognition of the literary excellence they achieved in their many published works, and to acknowledge their commitment and generosity to their students and fellow writers.

AND THE 2019 WINNERS ARE . . .

Jerrett Enns Award for Poetry:
TRINITY SQUIRREL, "Blood"

Jerrett Enns Award for Poetry, Honourable Mention:
SOHILA ELGEDAWI, "Drunk"

Jerrett Enns Award for Prose:
REBEKAH FEHR, "Brighter Flames, Deeper Scars"

Jerrett Enns Award for Prose, Honourable Mention:
SAMANTHA LERAY, "A Sticky Situation for Canada"

Currie-Hyland Prize for Poetry:
ANNIKA OLSON, "A Dandelion is a Weed"

Currie-Hyland Prize for Poetry, Honourable Mention:
JARRAD STARR, "Cheesy Poutines"

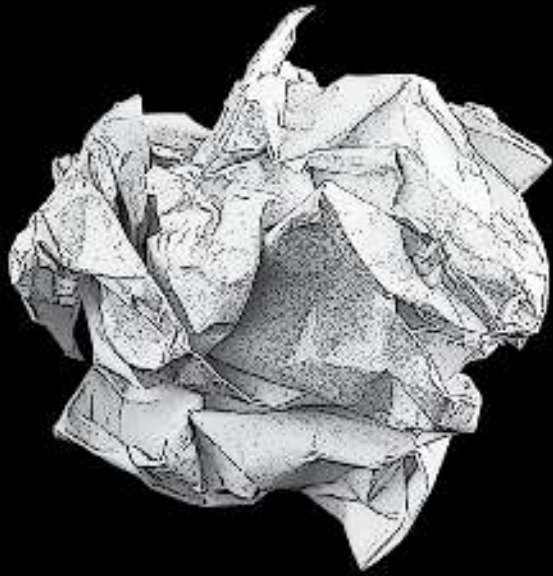
THEY LABEL US AS
SAVAGE BECAUSE OF
OUR LIKENESS
SO WHY SHOULD WE
FIGHT IT WHEN WE'RE
SURROUNDED BY
VIOLENCE?



BLOOD

BY TRINITY SQUIRREL

Anger fuels my passion but my passion's drowned in vices
 I sedate 'til I'm passive, my heart's as dark as night is
 Whether on the reserve or inner city, I stay where it's lightless
 That doesn't mean I need your pity, I don't seek your kindness
 You just have to hear me out and take a look from where my mind is
 Imagine a man who causes a drought but provides for you through the dryness
 But then he comes and takes your well and spouts that his action's righteous
 Taking advantage of a crisis, and all of the people blinded
 To the slyness of the ways in which he promised guidance
 "You will always be provided for and this agreement will be timeless"
 But now to even touch your water, you need to buy a license
 The devil bought our land but peace of mind is priceless
 So we just give our thanks and suffer in our silence
 Taking drugs to numb this pain because we'd rather be mindless
 They label us as savage because of our likeness
 So why should we fight it when we're surrounded by violence?
 Rural road borders keep the natives in the country
 Angry old farmers shoot before they see us running
 Liberals try to solve all our problems with their money
 Conservatives claim that we got what was coming
 Neither plastic nor words can heal the generations of scars
 It takes action, not swords, but the kind that men pull from their hearts
 We shoot for the stars because we live beyond our means
 Doomed from the start but that won't take the smiles from our cheeks
 I cannot stand idly by while my people are killed
 With healing comes time to cry but these feelings remain here
 All of these deaths being justified because peace is not real
 Stuck with these cards in life that evil powers deal
 We're all siblings under the sun, it's so much deeper than races
 But unfortunately our forefathers can't look in each other's faces
 Without exchanging seething hate or seeking out cases
 These bullhead old men destroying us within like we're vases
 Court-ordered appearances with lawyers in corduroy laces
 I've lost more friends to Dojack than Shakespeare's coined phrases
 Faces stoic, breaking inside, on the surface we're fearless
 Egos much stronger than the fragility of our spirits
 There's jib in the streets and kids sleeping without sheets
 Yet ignorance will have people believe that there's peace
 Cracked concrete streets keep the thugs in the ghetto
 As long as we're out of sight, the hood is our memento
 Oh Canada, the land of the free
 Where colored men don't have character to cops in the street
 Your name at the top is the last thing they'd want
 You're profiled before you even get one chance to talk
 My stomach hungers for justice as the government fumbles the public
 We run from this numbness, we protest but nothing is published
 Iniquity's permitted so nothing is trusted
 Victims to the system, your honor busted



WHO'S THE BULLY?

BY TIANA LAFRENIERE

The halls of this school are walked in
Walked in by liars cheaters and betrayers
I feel the effect their words carry
Words reflected off walls
Yet no one knows the consequences

Notes written on paper are thrown at me
the words four eyes chub attention seeker repeat on the page
The boy sitting across from me gets them too
I don't know what his notes say
I can see he knows he should ignore them but he doesn't

He throws his own note at the Front Seat Boy
I know Back Seat boy is hurting
It's written all over his
slumped shoulders red eyes and head down
Front Seat Boy hurts so bad he throws notes at the Quiet Kid

Everyone keeps quiet about what their notes say

Who's the bully?

The Quiet Kid gathers all his notes
Throws them in the trash
The bell rings and people shove each other to leave
Quiet Kid gets his head shoved into the garbage

In an instant Quiet Kid isn't so quiet anymore
He cusses at Below Average Girl for moving too slow
His words written in the air

Who's the bully?

The hallway is a scary place to roam
A group of five girls stand at some lockers
Two and two
One girl stands to the side but she's still labelled
Popular

The Smart Girl wanders the halls with books in her hands
She's called a low life by the whispers of Popular Girls
all of them walking clichés

Smart Girl calls Below Average Girl cruel names
Dummy freak dirty

Who's the bully?

Below Average Girl turns towards the Jocks
She tells the Bench Warmer of the football team to stop
trying so hard
He turns to Fat Kid tells him to move
so he can have some sun

Fat Kid turns to Scrawny Kid
Scrawny Kid flinches and slithers past
him Fat Kid grabs the collar of his shirt
I've seen more meat on a piece of chicken
Scrawny Kid turns to me

The hallway pauses

Who's the bully?
I gave these kids their names



BURNT OUT KIDS
CRYING IN BATHROOMS NOW,
DYING ON CAMPUS NOW

HEADLINES

BY OLIVIA GRANDY

"Mass Shooting Claims the Lives of 9"

Oh God,
the flashing headline darts
a punch to my heart.
Burnt out kids
crying in bathrooms now,
dying on campus now—
yet, here I am
watching my teeth glisten under bright elevator lights,
rising floor by floor, removing
myself from the tragedy, going home. I'm safe
in this superficial headspace of privilege.
I'm silent, not a word spoken for the suffering,
my own light glows fluorescent
beyond the shooting's reality.

A DANDELION IS A WEED

BY ANNIKA OLSON

Hoping to experience sunshine and fresh air
dandelions, like all else, start out as seeds.
A dandelion explodes through the earth, declares
that its life will flourish once freed.

It's surrounded by bright grass and singing winds,
compared to dark soil, the exhausting suffocation of freedom,
the clinging dryness of complacencies.

The stabilized soil reflects infinite uncontrollability,
the dandelion understands its power, acts upon it, creates mobility.
With great courage, the dandelion opens up to the world,

a yellow that resembles the sun,
its stem stands tall, contains the presence of someone.
O dandelion, inspire others to become like you,
O dandelion, grow into the most beautiful hue.

A new life rises as the atmosphere glows with vivacity.
Bees buzz around with full fervency,
nature maintains its role of observance,
life thrives with the sparrows.

The sun helps dandelions grow,
the moon encourages change,
the rain vitality,
the dirt used to be home.

From bloom to destruction,
the beginning to the end

in a utopia turned asylum.

The golden yellow, now a dirty ochre.
The strong stem, now weak courage.

The earth misses her protection,
the animals crave her ambience,
the wind desires her resilience,

But she's gone.

She was so much more than beautiful,
she was so much more than a weed,
a dandelion implanted into the earth
for the purpose of displaying her worth.

All who witnessed her life thought nothing
of everything she was,
believing like all the rest:
she was a yellow object used for commodity.

In the end,

She was the one to appreciate her own efflorescence,
she was the one to notice her own virtues.
Eyes that laid upon her took advantage, called her a weed, left her

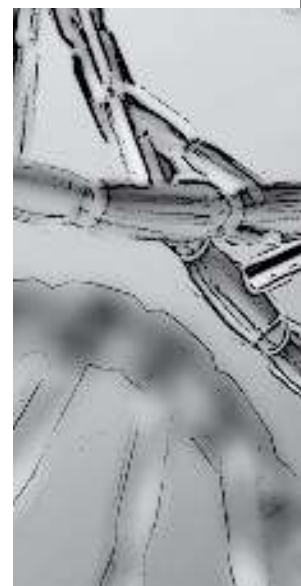
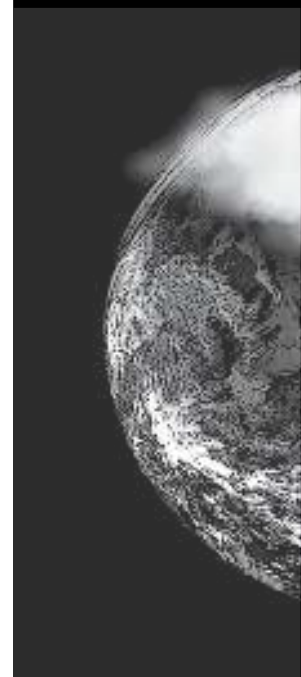
to believe she was an object.
She let her soul be robbed of its worth.

She was named a yellow weed, weighed herself down
became grounded like the rest of us.
She was gold, but they pursued a soul theft.

The dandelion was a soul.

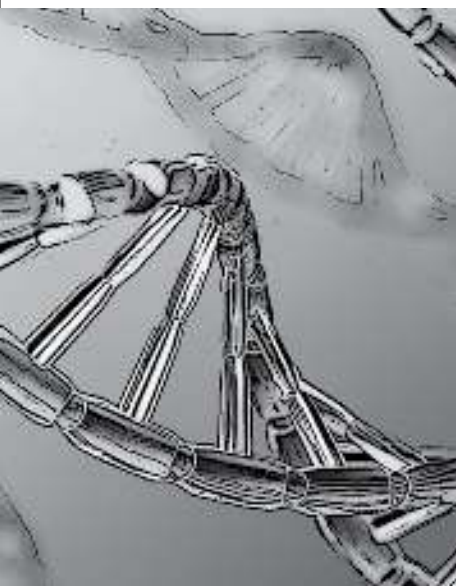
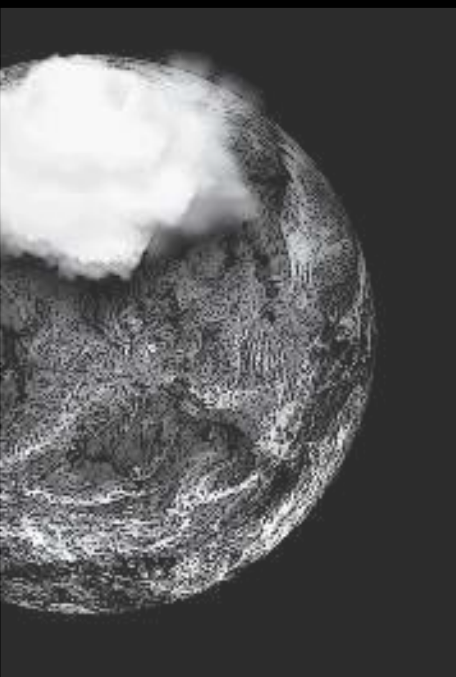


THE EARTH MISSED
THE ANIMALS
THE WIND DESIRES
BUT





LOSSES HER PROTECTION
S CRAVE HER AMBIENCE,
SIRENS HER RESILIENCE,
T SHE'S GONE.



SPEAKING TO THE DEVIL

BY TRINITY SQUIRREL

They systematically silence our masses
So, I run my mouth with pride until my vocal cords languish
My words cut deep into my inherited anguish
Surviving genocide, the people left cannot determine right action
I speak my mind and count the time since this injustice has passed us
Then they give us some pocket change, hoping it gives us the answers
Yet languages go extinct faster than tornadoes cover Kansas
And landmarks are desecrated thoughtlessly like the ignored deforestation of our planet
Problems go deeper than the surface in today's climate
The root of this particular problem is found a few generations back in my ancestry
My cousin's biggest concern is clicking his heels without scuffing his sandals
Children learn through monitors and only memorize every tinsel town scandal
They escape through the screens while the environment is strangled
Traditions forgotten, seeds of knowledge unplanted, and spirits abandoned
Kids live vicariously, their wishful thinking become the new balance
Balance between false realities and yearning for the absence of their mantles

DOUBLE HELIX

BY CASSIOPEIA RAYCRAFT

Abuse is not hidden within your matching blue eyes
You do not carry it in your genes
You do not have to file through each DNA strand to rid yourself of her
You will be trusted as the one he can fall asleep beside with no fear
So even when your breath rises and falls at different rhythms,
it still rhymes.
Trust is peaceful breathing with his arm tucked under
your waist and hair spilled over the pillow.



BRIGHTER FLAMES, DEEPER SCARS

BY REBEKAH FEHR

Love is a burning thing. It's only a simple line often hummed without thought or consideration by the crowds that ebb and flow through the streets as they go about their own lives. They should be happy to be so oblivious, I know all too well the agony of a fire-charred heart.

Then, there are those who speak about heartbreak and complain that they will never shake off the pain and that they will never love another ever again. I always scoff at that pathetic line. A broken heart is practically a single raindrop compared to the deluge I slog through every hour of my life. Ever since that day.

The next person who walks into those people's lives will become the mortar that will join together the ragged edges and their heart will be as good as new. Those insignificant people appear many times in a person's life and they are a dime a dozen as far as love goes. Even now I hardly remember the girls who came and went before her. Those who mended my heart when they arrived and fractured it again when they left. I've had my fair share of those.

She was different. I knew that the moment I saw her face, although it wasn't the brown hair or her green eyes that did it. As startling as they were, green eyes are in fact common enough. Instead, it was the way she struggled so valiantly to hold in her laughter when I screamed "son of a motherless goat," trying to hold in the curses at the sudden pain in my poor trodden on toes. I knew even then, as she lost the battle and burst into gales of laughter that somewhere off stage left, there was a chubby toddler nocking an arrow to his bow and eyeing the two of us.

She was my light that shone so brightly in this world made of shadows. I knew and yet somehow did not know the danger that she represented. She was fire and I was the helpless moth that only wanted to find its way home.

I was so naive at first. I truly thought that she was just like the others. I thought that she would come and go, like the others did, leaving behind a tiny imperfection to mar the once pristine surface of my heart. I gave my heart willingly and I thought she would give it back. I was heedless to the fact that she was fire and while fire can crack things, that is simply not what it does best.

Fire burns.

I gave her my heart and, in the beginning, she kept it safe and warm, like a hearth fire against a cold winter's night. Then came the day that defined the rest of my life. It split me in two with an unbridgeable chasm. There were two distinct parts: before and after.

Before and after the fight.

I came home to tear stained cheeks and anger. She was mad yelling about how her friend saw it happen.

"She saw you today! You thought that it would be fine, that you could step out on me and I wouldn't notice? How could you! I thought that you loved me! You liar!"

My heart stopped in my chest and my fingers curled around the small box in my pocket.

"What are you talking about? I haven't done anything!"

"Sure you haven't," she scoffed, "and there's a perfectly good reason why you were standing nose to nose with another girl, breathing hard and staring into her eyes?"

"Well..."

Her shrill voice cut me off in an instant, "Of course there is! Why wouldn't there be? I'm sure that it was all just a misunderstanding!" She screamed. Her scream was so angry that there were no words to it, it was pure fury given voice. When her eyes dropped back to my face, they darkened in anger, then brightened only by the glinting of tears. We locked eyes and for an instant the world paused. I opened my mouth to apologize, although for what I wasn't sure, and then she ran. From the couch, across the floor, she brushed past me as she hurled the door open.

Before and after those tires screeched their panic at their inability to stop.

I followed her, regret filling my heart at the words I'd thrown her way, pain at her mistrust spreading cracks through my heart and into the very foundation of our relationship. She ran from me as I called her name. She didn't realize that she'd entered the road, her vision blurred by tears so that the difference between sidewalk and street too subtle for her to notice. A car rounded the corner fast as she reached the middle of the road. It was too late to stop, the back end of the car rising as the front end dropped. Brakes fully engaged as the driver shoved himself further back into his seat, trying to stop the car by the sheer force of his will. It wasn't enough. None of it was.

Before and after the love of my life bled out in my arms.

She and the car made contact at the end of that desolate street, but human flesh is no cushion against the plastic, steel, and power of a car. In an instant, blood vessels ruptured, ribs shattered and when her skull found the pavement, it, too, fractured.

Cuts allowed her blood, now free from her veins, to escape her body entirely. It pooled around her even as my feet moved faster to carry me to her side. I lifted her head gently to rest it in my lap and regretted it when her lips formed a ring around her gasp of pain. Distantly, I heard shouting, but the words were lost to me at the sight of that flame still flickering in her eyes, that flame that appeared whenever she fought for something and for an moment I had hope. That hope buoyed me even as the shouts became sirens and hands reached out to pull her away from me.

Before and after the last flickers of her dying flame burnt my heart to ash.

As they moved her, her hand lifted a fraction and the light in her eyes flared before it disappeared entirely, just as her hand fell back onto the pavement. I wondered for a second where the light had gone, but then the answer became brutally clear. A fire came to life in my heart, not the gentle, merry, crackling thing that warmed me from the inside out when we snuggled on the couch—no—this was a bonfire, an eager devil that found all the fuel it needed in the muscles of my heart. Scorching pain filled my chest, and it lingered in the sterile hospital halls and the impersonal funeral parlor. It followed me home and when the pain finally gave way, it left behind numbness and something far worse.

Before and after the guilt began to strangle me and rip any hope of recovery from my life.

Guilt is not something that responds to reason, although that was irrelevant because in this case reason and guilt were saying the same thing. Investigators, therapists, family, friends, all of them tried to say that it wasn't my fault. They were all lying to me because I knew better, there were so many things that I could've done differently that day. I should know, I've thought about it enough. I could've explained what had happened that morning to her calmly. There wouldn't have been a fight and she would've been safe. I could've followed her more quickly. I could've been there for her. I had pulled some stranger from a car's path earlier that very same day, so why couldn't I have done that for the woman that I loved? No, despite what they all said I knew better. I could've saved her.

You think it hurts when your heart is fractured? At least you still have a heart. I have a hole in my chest, soot-stained and streaked with tears. I will never be the same and I will never love again. Because love is a burning thing and I have nothing left to burn.

HER LONG HAIR SLID
DOWN HIS CHEST AND HER
HANDS HELD HIS, FINGER
THREADED WITH FINGER
MY HEART ACHED, MY HANDS
SQUEEZED INTO FISTS,
AND THE DESIRE TO
ESCAPE BECAME STRONGER
AS MY MIND FILLED WITH
ANGER AND JEALOUSY.

A PARK BENCH

BY KYLE LUO

My heart broke when I saw it. There she was, Amy Gerstein, on the park bench, leaning against him. Looking out from my balcony facing the park, I was struck. Amy was everything I could dream of in a girl: cute, funny, mature, a little weird, and knew me from the inside out. She was the one who comforted me when I was depressed, who cherished me in a way that no one ever did, and the recipient of all the small little emotions that I could not express to anyone else. Whenever I was with her, I felt fulfilled to a point where I just wanted time to slow down so I could relax and enjoy more of her company. I became used to her smile, her smell, and her hugs that could suddenly make me feel better regardless of my mood. The times of us knocking on each other's doors and venturing out into the city by ourselves were my most unforgettable and prized memories. But I would have never imagined the reality to unfold the way it did, but there she was, and there I stood.

"Hey, I brought you some food," Amy waved a to-go box in the air, "You have been studying for the whole day, you should eat something, and I don't want you ordering fast food again."

Her smile emerged from the memories, and I was unable to resist the urge to think about her, no matter how hard I tried. I looked again at the park bench, and the smile there in front of me seemed all too familiar, only it was brighter and happier with him. Her long hair slid down his chest and her hands held his, finger threaded with finger. My heart ached, my hands squeezed into fists, and the desire to escape became stronger as my mind filled with anger and jealousy. Unable to withstand the pain any longer, I hurried inside.

Inside my house, the stink from my sweaty shirt filled the air, but I didn't care. I sprinted towards my room, hiding my emotions as best as I could. I pulled open my bedroom door, stepped inside, and slammed it shut. I looked down and took off the shirt I was wearing. It was a white shirt with a blue logo that Amy gave me as a gift months ago. Then, the realization hit me. Everything I did with Amy was long beyond the extent of a traditional friendship. Despite us both enjoying that type of closeness, Amy never thought of me the way I did her.

Unknowingly, I had invested so much into this relationship, much more than the relationship of best friends would allow. The naïve boy I was also meant that I would never realize the love I long sought was always around me until it became too late.

I stared at the shirt and could no longer resist the pain, I didn't know what to think or do, and I just stood there staring at the floor. Eventually, I collapsed onto the carpet, eyes closed, and breathing heavily, my mind was blank, and sleep was my easiest way out.

I awoke smelling my own odour, my clothes soaked in sweat. I threw the shirt that Amy gave me into the laundry basket and washed away the marks of dried tears from my face in the shower. When I stood in front of the bathroom mirror, the reflecting image of myself seemed as if nothing had happened to me. Only I knew that deep inside me, something began to change.

I pulled a new outfit out of my closet and put it on. I made the decision to go to Amy and tell her how I felt because I knew that she would understand me. When I arrived at her apartment, it took me three tries to muster the courage to ring the doorbell. After a short delay, the door opened, and Amy greeted me with a smile.

"Hey, aren't you supposed to be doing homework right now?" she asked.

"Something happened and I really need to talk to you."

"Is it about this afternoon?"

I nodded.

"Come in," she said, following a moment of silence.

I walked into her apartment and noticed that nobody else was home. We took our seats on the couch in the living room. I felt uneasy, phrasing my words carefully while Amy sat patiently.

"What I saw this afternoon, I hated. As a friend, I should be happy for you, but I just can't help but feel jealous. I feel stupid for not knowing all this time, but I like you. I want you really bad, just for myself," I confessed.

Amy shifted uncomfortably in her seat. "You know telling me this is only going to make the whole thing more awkward, right?" she replied, "I have a boyfriend now."

"I know, but I still wanted to say it, I wanted to tell you how much I care,"

I said with certainty, "I want to face my feelings, not to hide them." The room fell silent. Amy stared at me for a long time until she responded, "Can you give me some time? I'll come find you later." "Okay."

The doorbell rang. I knew who it was, for the same bell was rung by the same person like this hundreds of times before. Except this time, I didn't know what to do. I slowly crept to the door and turned the knob. Amy's familiar, unforgettable face appeared behind the door. Suddenly we stood eye to eye and I was struck with memories again. Amy smiled at me, "Do you want to go to Tim's?" she asked.

"Uh, sure," I replied. I wasn't sure if I was ready to go, but I had to be as Amy's eyes were determined. We drove to the Tim Hortons nearby, the one that we frequently visited.

The atmosphere was tense in the line-up, and I tried to break the awkwardness, "I think it's my turn to pay."

"We can pay separately," she replied. My heart fell into my stomach. Amy and I always took turns paying for food or entertainment—it was our way of treating each other.

We ordered and sat down by our usual spot, the corner seat adjacent to the road. For a long time, neither of us spoke. I became nervous from the silence as, usually, Amy and I never ran out of topics to talk about. I consciously avoided eye contact with her, staring down at the red rectangular table and drinking out of my cup to cover for my nervousness. Finally, she spoke, "Is there anything you want to say? I am super busy this year, so we might not have a chance to go out again for awhile."

Indeed, Amy has a boyfriend now. Given the feelings that I had for her, our relationship and theirs could not coexist, and this decision, to Amy, was beyond obvious. But it was sad to see our relationship come to such an abrupt end.

Knowing that this was my last chance to say how I felt, I let my emotions erupt into words and spoke of what I had failed to acknowledge that entire time, "From the beginning, you

were always there for me. You have been with me during my highs and my lows, when I succeeded and when I failed. You gave me the courage to continue and be myself, despite what others thought of me. You have become so important in my life, and every time I think of you, I feel warmth in my heart. I feel motivation that pushes me to be better." I was surprised by the words that came out of my own mouth, but I knew they were sincere.

"I feel the same way, but, not in *that* way," she replied quietly so that no one else could hear.

"I know that we can still be friends if I choose to hide my feelings, to pretend to be happy for you," I looked into her eyes, "but I don't want to pretend, I don't want to hide my feelings. I am scared that I'll lose control of myself when I'm with you as a friend. I'm scared that I'll always want more."

"I understand, but you know it's hard for us to even be friends now, right?"

"I know, and I am ready to accept that," I replied, except I knew that I was far from ready.

For the rest of the night, Amy comforted me as usual. We went over the crazy experiences and the late nights that we had together, the memories that I would have to deal with in the future to come. She moved away just a few months after that night, and that white shirt she gave me was cleaned, folded neatly, and hidden at the very bottom of my pile of messy clothing.



A TORN CANVAS

BY SAMANTHA LERAY

I was the one who divorced her.

Finances played a usual suspect between our growing distance, as one would expect. The deception began months ago, when untraceable purchases made in thousands of dollars began spotting over the regular bank statements.

"Woah, what was this for?" I asked, tilting my reading glasses back to perch on my forehead.

She turned to me, her clenched hand still submerged in the glass she was washing, "I just needed some extra cash for Julie, you know, for her broken leg."

I furrowed my brow in confusion, "When did she break her leg? Vera, you never told me that."

"Oh, just last week. Yeah, she slipped on the ice I kept telling her to get rid of on her porch." Vera paused before adding, "I'm sure you'll get plenty back in your next art show."

She was right about that. Why didn't I believe her? After all, my work was beautiful! Warhol's works were amateurs compared to my scenes of melancholy and joy. How could people appreciate modern art when it's just a blank canvas that sells for thousands while I spent thousands in hours sculpting landscapes? I would change that. My paintings would sell for millions.

I did earn back the lost funds that weekend. An online buyer purchased my *London Rain* and *Purple Essence* paintings within the last hour of my gallery opening. Yet, I couldn't shake the skin crawling feeling that something was just ... off.

More instances of Vera requiring an emergent influx of cash began to sprout: she needed a filling fixed, her car began to "sound funny" and needed repairs, and her father grew ill with a strain of pneumonia I hadn't heard of before. With each case, I would fume back to my office and toss paints at half-finished pieces from Picassos to Pollocks. Some nights I would only open the door hours later to a plate of food that froze over from my cold shoulder.

After an art show of selling only one painting, I sat her down.

"I just don't think I can do this anymore, Vera." I opened, numbly.

"Wh-what? What do you mean? Do *what* exactly?" I watched her shoulders stiffen, the tension seizing her body.

I clenched my fist in irritation, resisting the urge to slam it against the table. "Don't play stupid with me! We haven't been making a decent income in six months, *especially* with all of those transactions you've had out of the goddamn blue! Something is wrong with you, and it needs to stop, now! After all, what do you do in the house all day on the weekends when *I'm* the one trying to make a living for us? You're probably looking for attention from tons of other guys out there just because I can't take myself away from work all the damn time! Or have you already found that?"

"Excuse me? How dare you accuse me of cheating on you when I work my ass off for us, too!" Vera countered, the desperation in her voice rising like the mercury from a scorching July.

"The trust I once had in you is gone. I'm done, Vera. Pack your things and stay at Julie's or whatever. Just leave."

I was prepared for a longer fight complete with shattered dishes to go along with the marriage. Yet, she just stood and walked calmly to our bedroom for a suitcase I had believed to be empty. She looked at me one last time, the blonde waves in her hair bordering the watery depths of her eyes that were threatening to spill over. And with that, I was left without my partner, my lover, *my wife*.

And I was the one to blame.

I spent the next few weeks painting dozens of landscapes and portraits that all seemed to have an inkling of Vera within them. So many women had the dainty nose she always tried to cover, or the sea-green eyes that resembled a striking jade. Each and every sunset, valley, mountain range, and beach held a hint of the lavender she loved so much.

Some days I would venture from my dim studio to find a surprise from Vera.

Divorce papers sat in a folder on a Tuesday.

One Thursday, she left her wedding ring, the alexandrite with a purple tint catching my eye on the dining room table. "An alexandrite for her Alexander," she would say.

On a Sunday was her house key, and still attached was the dragonfly keychain I'd given her on our third date. This was the last piece of me that she owned. I realized then, clutching the crystalized wings

of the memento, that I had made yet another terrible mistake.

Just then, it occurred to me that Vera had left some of her most prized possessions at the house, including her grandmother's heirloom: a glass sparrow crafted by her grandfather. In my drowning regret, I gathered whatever I could of hers throughout the—no—*our* house.

By the time I reached the basement, I had moved the piles of Vera's things into the living room, from her reading chair, family cookbooks, to the jewelry she had spent a decade collecting. But in the far corner of the darkened basement sat the Christmas tree and dozens of decorations that I never understood the purpose of. I admired the plastic evergreen branches and grasped at the artificial needles hoping for Vera's touch to scrape by me once more. Out of desperation, I tipped an unsteady leg of the tree, causing it to tumble in a blur of dark-greens. As plumes of dust exploded into the air, I noticed a splash of color tucked away behind the tree's plastic branches. Waves of familiar tones rippled above the still surface of ... a canvas.

Time didn't stand still for me. I peeled through layer after layer of oils and acrylics stained in colours I've mixed countless of times.

London Rain stared me in the face as I sifted through rows and rows of artwork that I sold over the span of months. Yet, they all lay before me in my basement.

"Pick up, pick up!" I whispered into my phone as it dialed Vera.

"Yeah? What do you *want*, Alex?" She picked up on the third ring, her voice a stranger in that tone.

"Spill it. Everything."

A prolonged silence screamed from the receiver in Vera's realization.

"The damn paintings, *my* paintings," I urged her once more.

"I ... I'm sorry you had to find out this way. But, your art just isn't ... *good*."

"What the hell do you mean?"

"Alex, your paintings suck," Vera said with utter blatancy. She paused, choosing her words carefully as if to still hold my emotions intact. "Take an actual look at them, see them from everyone else's perspective rather than that of a so-called master." How dare she talk to me like that, especially after all I had done for her, for *us*? I hung up on her, too infuriated and exhausted to argue back.

I stared at *Purple Essence* and *Arsonist*. I looked, and I felt all the pure sorrow, agony, and fury that I had splashed into each scene. Faces of the people I imagined entire lives for were only featureless plates of grey flesh. The lives I bled for them only husks in the bleak wasteland I had created.

If anything, my work reflected my sadness. A pang of uneasiness that I hadn't consciously interpreted bubbled above the oils I cemented my fears and worries into. I realized there, facing my believed successes and the dead phone line, that my negativity had painted itself. As ignorant as I was to the beauty I perceived, I was also blind to what I had done to my wife and all she had offered me, all the support she gave me when she bought my paintings. I pushed her away, locking myself in my cavern as I pondered how much I could profit from the next piece.

She sacrificed her world for me, and I could only give back a mess of a landscape and a torn canvas.

POTENT DISTRACTIONS BY MICHELLE GALL

How lovely
and how lonely it is
to spend a bittersweet night
in mistakes.

Maybe her wistful mind wished for a grand evening
splashed in shots of vodka and laughter
but with one more sip, she took it too far
to shield herself from her own pain.

Could she have hidden it better?
What began as a friendly gathering of acquainted pairs
became lost in the crowd of swooning lover
she could barely make out through watering eyes.

It was obvious why he was there
to make half-hearted amends
with a girl who no longer loved him.
When she left, he had no choice
but to find a lover at the bottom of a bottle
where a desperate group of hearts waited
aching for anyone to love them.

She was stronger than the rest
Smarter—she could walk a straight line,
unharmful by the foul magic of liquor.
She tempted them to make wrong decisions,
fed them potent drinks that corrupted
their impressionable minds, a sin
when they agreed.

A dysfunctional bunch they were
now laced in cigarette smoke and childish 2AM banter.
They were all aching in their own ways
aiding their pain quickly, drunkenly, desperately





DRUNK

BY SOHILA ELGEDAWI

1. A gold fog where we dance until dawn opens her eyes and watches us until our bodies resemble the waves hitting the shore.
2. Drunken feet led by drunken minds looking with drunken eyes for love that makes us sober enough to live.
3. Goofy smiles on tear-streaked faces. Although our eyes cry, our mouths say different.
4. Harsh reckless decisions make us invincible and yet we wonder, "How fast can we die?"

SPACE

BY TEAH LENNEA

waves of dizziness crasH over me
blue and blinding
pull the air out of my lungs
all alonE i struggle
through the darkness
of a sky with no stars
i scream
but
no one Listens because
no one can hear
a scream
from sPace

MARKED

BY KAYLA HUYGHEBAERT BELSHER

It was quiet. Quiet for the first time in what felt like hundreds of years, when really it had only been a few months. My wife, Alice, had come to the train station to pick me up and seeing her was like coming up for fresh air—as if I had been drowning ever since I stepped onto the battlefield.

The drive home was peaceful, in a loud and rough kind of way. The racket of the wheels hitting every little rut and hole in the dirt road mimicked the sound of guns firing. It set my teeth on edge, and made me want to tuck away and hide each time we bumped down the road. It was Alice that made the journey amicable; she knew I was nothing but a bundle of nerves, so she sang to me, her sweet voice quiet and harmonious as she sang along to “I’m Always Chasing Rainbows.” She periodically placed her hand on mine.

Looking out the window at the empty pastures filled me with a feeling I didn’t know how to describe. I was so thankful and gracious that my home had remained untouched from the ravages, death, and destruction that had consumed the familiar meadows of France. Although I knew I was safe, I couldn’t shake the feeling that something was going to happen. It always began like this—the quiet eerily growing and engulfing anything in its path before a single shot is fired and everything starts all over again.

Fire, smoke and wrath began to fill my view of the peaceful prairie beyond. All I could see were thousands of soldiers fighting for their lives and their country; my friends who had grown to become my family yelling and screaming, begging for it all to stop. Others ran into the fire thinking God would save them, as if anything could save them. I wanted so badly to forget everything that I had seen the past few months, forget what I had heard, smelled, touched. Beads of sweat formed on my forehead. My chest tightened as if something was crushing me and I could feel my nails digging into my palms.

“Are you alright?” Alice asked softly as she placed her hand on my knee, causing me to jump.

I swallowed hard and wiped my brow. “I—I’m okay,”

I stuttered, forcing a smile. She grinned gently back at me and returned her focus to the road.

Breathing deeply, I repeatedly told myself I was okay—that I was okay and that I was safe. That I was okay and safe for the first time in months. Still, glances out the window at the wide and empty pasture haunted me with sights of grotesque and awful memories. Memories of my best friend, Allan, dying right before me, his howls of pain and agony filling my head. The ear-splitting explosions eradicating everything within a hundred-mile radius.

The constriction in my chest sharpened with every breath I took, and I started to shiver. *You’re okay*, I told myself. I’m okay, I’m okay, I’m *okay*. But am I? Would I ever be able to shake these dreams—no—these nightmares? Would I ever be able to escape these bloodcurdling memories that have imprisoned me? Annihilation and murder flooded the land before me, bodies scattered around as if thrown away, holes and craters strewn haphazardly over the prairie. I can no longer distinguish between what was, and what is. My fists clenched so tightly, I could almost feel my skin begin to tear. To my right, men are fighting and dying, running into the flames thinking that they’re invincible. To my left, Alice still sings ever so peacefully, only now it’s all so much more complicated to let her voice take my pain away.

I was there. I was fighting, wounding, and killing everyone in my path. But I am here, I am here. I am in the car with my wife driving to our home.

No, no, I am in the tank and I am destroying everything in my path. Dismantling the fences, houses, families that get in my way. Slaughtering a little girl who only wandered into the street because she dropped her dolly while running away, running away from me.

“Andrew?” Alice’s voice sent a shiver down my spine and I realized just how hard I had been breathing. “There’s a bottle of water by your feet, please drink some.”

I did as I was told. The lukewarm water flowed down my throat and reminded me that I was here. I am here.

THE BEAST

BY TEAH ANGELSTAD

As I lay in the rays of the sun
with the soft tide of ocean Prozac touching my toes
A suspicion of a threat lingers on me
The beast runs down the beach
of my subconscious

As I climb to the summit of MT Vyvanse
I feel an avalanche's rumble
I've faced so many before
but this one is the worst I've witnessed
The beast sits at the peak seething
He's responsible for this disturbance

I'm running through the field of fears
He's closer than he's ever been
His breath smells of childhood trauma
His teeth are discolored with the death
of my loved ones

I fall back into my bed with clean sheets of melatonin
I toss and turn in my sleep
There are footprints outside of my room
A knock, "Honey, are you ok in there?"
I close my eyes. My mother tucks me in.

I open my eyes to the sight of the beast

A PEACEFUL AFFLICTION

BY BREANNA BJARNASON

If there were a million butterflies
packed neatly into the sky
making a world of brilliant colour
surely, I would never cry
until I look in your blue eyes
upon the sunset and white clouds
and I would miss our summer sky
surely then, I would cry
yet as winter breaks
hold me dearly; hold me tight
for soon our summer love will die
butterflies die, too
as do the stars at night
foolish then, for me to cry

ACHES OF GROWTH

BY OLIVIA GRANDY

The supple twilight ebbs through my bones,
far from all haven, far from home.
Dark eyes but green soul,
I'm raw in all that I do not know.
Why do we kiss, kill, or do both at once,
and follow the light until it burns us?
Soon I will flourish, only losing petals, never my stems.
I embrace the earth's chaos, discover the season's rhyme.



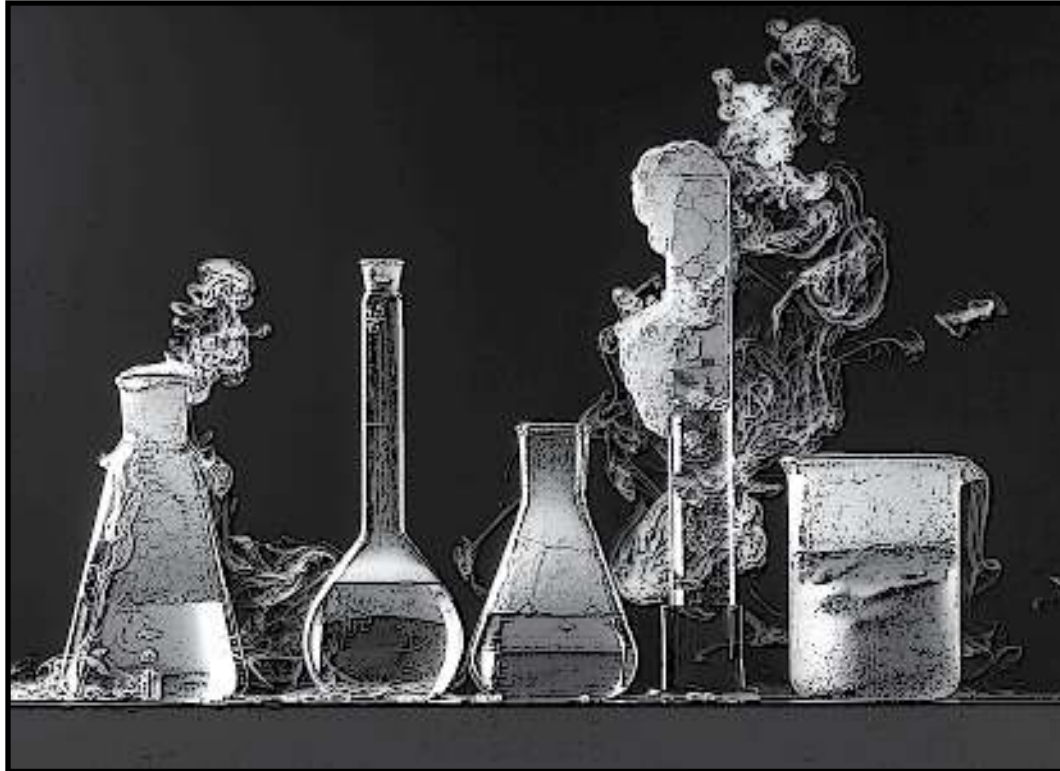


POEM FOR DEVEN

BY KAYLA HUYGHEBAERT BELSHER

I live in a perpetual state of numbness and bad dreams,
We all share quiet words that mask our internal screams.
Out on the street, all the people whisper.
They never saw, nor heard his silent whimper.
“You hear about Deven? Such a shame.”
Yet not a single one tried to douse the flames.
We saw the signs; he gave us warnings.
“It’s just Deven” and now we’re mourning.
Big city kid, too cool for our little town.
We built him up—they tore him down.
“One more drink won’t do any harm.”
If only we’d sheltered him from that storm.
A family surrounded by drugs and violence,
Forced to endure the pain in silence.
Putting first the chase for their high,
His life unraveled in the web of lies.
All his life, they caused him suffering,
Little did they know, it sent him plundering.
At first glance, we had judged him wrong,
Gentle and tender he was all along.
“Here comes trouble” is what we said,
Never had we been more misled.
Humble, passionate, talented, caring,
That was Deven, especially with his swearing.
We became your family, we took you in,
No questions asked on where you’d been.
“This is how you actually do it,” typical Deven,
Show them your way up there in heaven.
Drive your car, windows rolled down,
Drive far away from this old ghost town.
Get out of here, follow your heart,
Chase your dreams, and smoke a dart.
In another world, you’d be okay,
In another world, you’d fly far away.

THE SUPPLE TWILIGHT
EBBS THROUGH MY BONES,
FAR FROM ALL HAVEN, FAR
FROM HOME



Monkey See, Monkey

BY KARLEY STANGEL

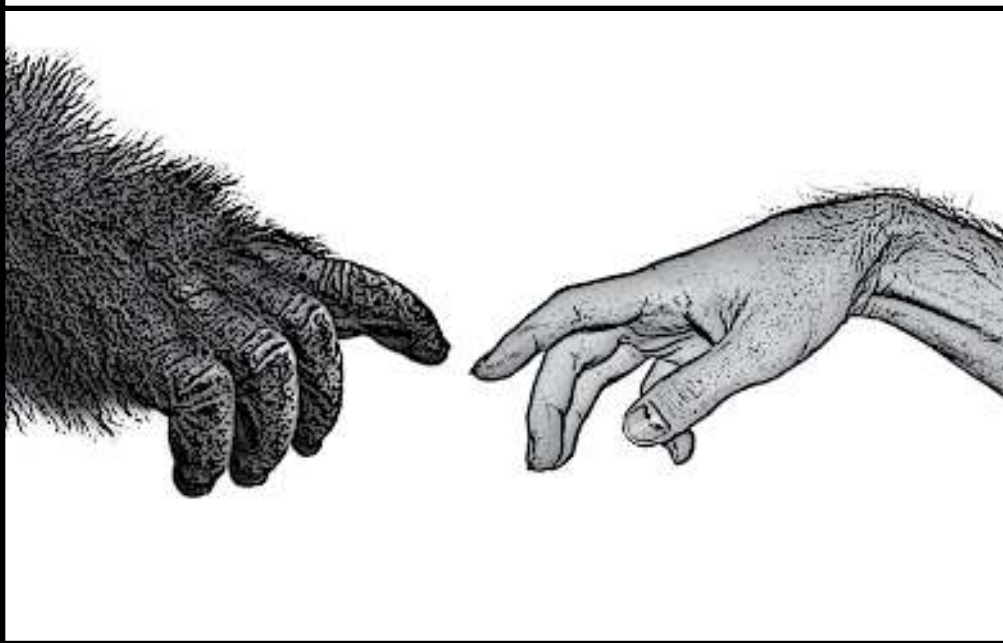
It has always amazed me that our entire way of thinking can change in a split second depending on who we are with and the time we are with them. Often, our views are influenced by others without us even noticing that they are. The people we are surrounded by affect us every day. The way we talk, the way we laugh, the way we dress, the way we eat. Everything we know how to do came from other people who learned from other people, who learned from the people before them. Like one gigantic chain of “Monkey See, Monkey Do.” To think that the way I write the letter “z” is different from someone else simply because I was taught by my third grade English teacher, Ms. Harris, that my “z” should have a line through it. A calligraphy decision she was taught and then passed down to her students. My laugh—which has changed from a giggle to a cackle, then to a silent cry, then back to a giggle—has been modified without my even realizing it just because of the different laughs I hear throughout

the day. My interests have gone from boy bands to DIY flip-flops, followed by scrunchies and elastic bracelets only because that’s what everyone else found interesting, too. And sure, those things are just fads, but isn’t it neat how you are made up of so many little things? All based on everyone else that in the end you aren’t just you, but you are everyone else, too? It’s like a part of everyone else lives inside of you. So, I guess in a way everyone is just made up of each other. But sometimes, we allow ourselves to be so easily influenced by those around us that we can occasionally get caught up in who we are trying to be rather than who we should be. Sometimes spending too much time with the wrong person can damage you. Sometimes the people you think will be by your side forever aren’t meant to stay. And other times, it’s better off if they don’t. People have such an impact on us every day, and no matter how hard we try, we will never understand why one person affects us a certain way, and another does not. Still,

our minds can only be molded by others if it wasn’t strong enough to hold its shape in the first place.

But how do you know the difference between someone who will make you or break you? They all start off the same don’t they? Remember that day we met at the park while you were walking your dog and realized that our love for chocolate ice cream wasn’t the only thing we had in common? Or that weekend you spent at the lake house where you ran into someone else on the beach and all of a sudden it felt like you had known them since kindergarten. Or maybe, it was that day outside the band room in second period when you made small talk with the Chemistry “nerd” from period five, then exchanged numbers and ended up texting each other all day and night for the next week until you met up again at school. Every one of us experiences that moment in our lives where everything clicks into place and you just know that this person you found is another

**I WILL TRY TO GRASP SINCE OUR PATHS DIVERGED
LONG AGO ... SHARING IN THE SPIRITS OF PAINED
SOULS AS IF WE WERE BROTHERS**



25

Who?

extension of yourself, and you want to have them in your life until the day it ends.

Now, wait a minute. Think back to that certain day. The day all of it clicked into place and you met the person that was going to change your life forever. Would you take it back? Would you decide you should walk your dog later in the day just to avoid the park? Would you quickly throw on your swimsuit and hit the waves instead of taking a walk down the beach? Would you quit band all together just to avoid the one day you had a small talk that turned into big talk, changing you forever? Can you confidently say that no matter how or what this person has done to change you throughout your life, that you wouldn't take it back? Some people would. As for me, I haven't quite decided yet.

Live For

BY TRINITY SQUIRREL

I live for this feeling

But a piece of me dies each time I see that look

That look of pitiful love as I stumble into the room

Pity for the excuse of a distant memory that I know you peg me as

Love that you can only hope I will try to grasp since our paths diverged long ago

I live for this feeling

Locking lips with the rim of my cup as if it was a long-lost lover

Sharing in the spirits of pained souls as if we were brothers

But they're only strangers that I see when we're all short on funding

Drowned out melodies conceal our internal cries throughout the night

I live for this feeling

This position I'm in is genetic and the only birthright I have

My vice and my blood being the only connection I have to my dad

Father and son, two wastes of potential folded under pressure and hung up on sin

The weightlessness of giving in and the embracing of heavy gin

I live for this feeling

The lessons I seem to forget after I've spilled my soul onto the floor

They give me reasons to quit but my weakness always wants more

More distance between me and this existence

The pacing and exhilaration of disinhibition

I live for this feeling

Priorities

BY ANDREW ADAIR

I do believe that during times of desperation, in moments of instinct brought forth by situations forcing one to consider what they will stand to lose and what they will strive to keep, there are circumstances when we are required to make drastic choices, and we discover more about our prioritization of the attributes of our lives than we thought we knew. Often times we can shock ourselves with the revelation of what we *really* hold dear, but then again, we can also find these conditions to be affirmations of what we already knew we cared for beforehand—increasing them by tenfold. Of all of this, I am sure. Although, I myself was enveloped in sheer stupefaction when it occurred to me, late one summer night, that these times, times when one finalizes their ideas of what they believe to be important need not be in times of desperation. These situations are often, but certainly not required to be, dramatic incidents of woe and split-second instinctual choices; they can also be times of quiet astonishment and an overshadowing feeling of ease.

While at home, I remember how I allowed myself a brief period of escape from the hectic nature of my work, my cases and their tasks that had yet to be fulfilled. I knew I wouldn't be gone from my desk for too long because my deadlines ensured it. There was work to be done and I knew it; its importance to me was a concept I

was well acquainted with. In terms of priority, I was all but certain that I held my work in high regard. I had asked my son to find something to do, to hang out downstairs perhaps. I explained to the boy that his silence and absence from my presence for the next few hours were crucial, and he had reluctantly accepted, staring at me for a few seconds before nodding his agreement. Was I aware of how disappointing this was to him? Did I know that the necessary project I had to complete could have waited long enough to make the most of mine and my boy's weekend together? For me, the project was what I needed to do; it was much more vital to me than spending indispensable time entertaining the whims of someone who didn't understand the entirety of my legal profession and the magnitude of my work's importance.

And so I spent hours out-working even myself. Feeling burnt out, I decided to permit myself a walk in the woods near our home. While my time away from my workspace provided a change of scenery and allowed for my body to get as active as it could, I was hardly free from my thoughts. Throughout my walk, my mind was still plagued with decisions that had to be made, with things that I needed to get done, with my job. The sun was beginning to set, although I had barely noticed. The abundance of trees and leaves I passed failed to grasp

a significant piece of my attention, for I could not let my mind drift from the tasks waiting for me. This break felt more like an instance of procrastination as it did not relax me, and it certainly didn't feel right.

I turned around to go back, and for the first time on my entire walk, I genuinely looked at my surroundings. The lake was a miniature body of water, one that I knew was there, but didn't realize how notable of a depth in the woodland it was. At first, my seeing this was only a reminder of the notion that I had not only gone too far on my walk, but also had spent far too much of my time away from my home office. However, this thought was soon replaced with the ideas and the emotions that flooded me as a result of observing the lake. My earlier thoughts of work deadlines, my perfectionist views and my taking for granted time with my son, were all substituted for the exact opposite. I was beginning to feel things as a consequence of truly *looking* at something I had seen many times before, but now in a much different light—contrasting feelings of gratitude, awe and even a kind of joy.

The tree lines surrounding the lake were beginning to become engulfed with the darkness brought forth by the setting of the sun. While everything blended together in the uniform shadow, the lake was aglow. The orange and red sunlight that had

dyed the sky above was reflected in the liquid below, offering a beautiful peace. Everything I saw, from the lake to the sky, held fantastic colours, the kinds I would usually only be able to see in pictures. This natural phenomenon was something that awakened in me a sort of primal reaction, drawing me and my senses to this scene even more.

While I was in this awe-induced trance, it dawned on me that I was no longer thinking of my work, no longer frustrated with myself for taking a break. The stress and pressure no longer found sanctuary within me, no longer clouded my judgement under the guise of important things to be done. Rather, I found myself thinking of better things, relating this experience to the very most basic aspects of my life that I enjoyed and was passionate about. I found myself thinking of my son. I thought of my child alone at the house. I thought of how he would have loved to see this sight himself. That thought was the only part about this that I found less than desirable; I couldn't share this with him, or anyone, now. So, I watched the sunset on the lake by myself—not once did I worry of the work to be done, or the supposed time I was squandering because I knew I wasn't wasting it. I knew I wasn't misusing it. The time I had spent watching this beauty was time well spent; although, I couldn't enjoy this experience fully without my son also watching. I had suppressed his desire to spend time with me and paid a price for it. All for my work that I had believed was so vital. It was then that I realized what was really important, and it was in these moments that it was reaffirmed for me, not from desperation and strife, but these moments, serene and incredible. Seeing a true beauty, an amazing phenomenon, but seeing it alone is as effective as being forced into a decision. I was now certain of my most important consideration, and this couldn't wait. I walked towards my son, my priority.

I walked home.



I EXPLAINED TO THE BOY THAT HIS SILENCE AND ABSENCE FROM MY PRESENCE FOR THE NEXT FEW HOURS WERE CRUCIAL



THE TREE LINES SURROUNDING THE LAKE WERE BEGINNING TO BECOME ENGLTFED WITH THE DARKNESS BROUGHT FORTH BY THE SETTING OF THE SUN WHILE EVERYTHING BLENDED TOGETHER IN THE UNIFORM SHADOW THE LAKE WAS AGLOW



DOWNPOUR

BY OLIVIA GRABBY

Our maps turned to dust many years ago.
 Now these moments we abide
 the doubts and the highs
 of nights spent with hopeful eyes
 searching for the aftertaste of dusks
 that were once ours. Our delicate freedom
 captured in our tears.
 It's the downpour we feel,
 the rain in our eyes,
 the storm swallowing us whole
 while we swirl with naivety,
 dance with our enemies.
 But in time these moments will become sacred
 within us. Expansive places will have been created.

WHO ARE WE?

A G

Sweating, shaking, screaming, and nothing more. That was all she ever woke up to. Her parents didn't care. They sat still at the table drinking from empty cups, supping at empty plates, looking at each other and nothing else. Sweating, shaking, and screaming, she untangled herself from the sheets that smelled of musty, forgotten things, and long-fallen tears. She never found herself hungry, but made herself eat bites of bread long gone stale and drink yellowed milk, choking on the taste of ashes.

"How long?" she asked into the void of the black and damp basement, but no sound returned the gesture, nothing except the furnace's slow hum. It might've been the furnace, or it could've been the swell of her fear, the blood pounding in her head. She didn't know which.

"How long were we here?" She asked again.

"Who are we?" the basement asked in response. A dumb stumble backward sent her into the hard, open barrel of the



HOW LONG?

RAVE FOR US

BY SEIJA LIIMATAINEN

clothes-drier, which was coated in rust. Even as pain came, she did not feel her face change, she was too tired and cold to feel anything. She did not understand her sleep. It was unclear to her if sleep truly even existed. Even though she woke every morning, the passage of time was nonexistent. Nights lasted minutes or years here. Closing her eyes made no difference, the time was not there, and neither was sleep.

"Who are we?"

Every day she sat at the kitchen table and wept, her parents still not moving to help her. They were as she always remembered them: perfect in the window's awful yellow light.

"Who are we?"

The basement's chant was rhythmic, the utterance of the words shaking her like a blow to the face. Everything felt like a fever dream, no matter how small the task, whether it be sweeping the floor aimlessly, or trying to make

her bed; or how slow her movement, walking, crawling across the floor to her parents. The words the basement hummed burned her, and everything felt like a rush. In the dining room, the wall-paper was peeling, the air hung sticky and sour, too warm for anyone to bear. So here, now slumped in their melamine chairs at the table and leaking sweat, her parents breathed quietly. Then:

"Who are we? Who are we? Who are we? Who are we?" they shrieked. Lines of that awful yellow glow slipped through the bottom of the basement door. The basement's cries vibrated in her ribs, the noise now as much a part of her being as her eyes and her ears.

"WHO ARE WE?"

She finally knew the voice.

She stood in the basement, brittle overgrown weeds tugged at her pant leg, with moss and mold for a carpet. At the end of it all, there she was. Three times, there she was. Once for her pain, once

for her sorrow, and once for the last of her being. At the end of it all, beyond the grass, the weeds and the stones, was a pit, long and narrow, empty. She looked at all the versions of herself standing at the end of the room.

"I am we. And this is a grave for us," one self said.

"No," her other self told her, "it is a grave for us."

Watching her selves climb into the pit, she felt relief, or possibly great joy, and once they passed, the void above her became a terrible yellow light. The fever-dream left her, and finally she felt at rest. Upstairs, she heard her parents' desperate voices calling her name, calling for her to return. Without another word, the girl fell to the moss, the damp, cold floor, and felt herself smile.

When she awoke this time, she felt a sheet cover her, but she did not open her eyes. And this time, she did not scream.

THE WILLOW MAN

BY EMILY ZBARASCHUK

The Willow Man was the one who followed me. His fingers were long and crooked, his knees bony, and his hair the colour of corn silk. Sometimes he dressed in plaid and a straw hat; other times a suit and fedora. But no matter how he dressed, he always kept his eyes downcast, allowing my imagination to fill in the blanks. I knew if I met his stare, his stony gaze would kill me. That's why I never tempted him to look at me. We shared an unspoken agreement, a deal: he would keep his distance and I would keep mine.

He never gained interest in the others around me, never stalked anyone else. He was, if nothing else, loyal. Any attempt I made to break our bond was futile. I could not outrun him, as he followed me everywhere, constant as a shadow and as real as a nightmare before waking. I could not leave him, for he was always with me. And I could not dismiss him as a figment of my imagination—he was far too real for that. He was my constant companion, the threat of his deadly stare controlling my every thought.

But he's gone now. I've made sure of that. He'll never haunt me again.

You would've killed him, too, if he had chosen to follow you, to make a deal and then break it.

On the day our deal fell, his presence had been cold and clammy against my skin. Rather than being refreshed in the summer's dense heat, the contrast between hot and cold unsettled me. Regardless, all was normal until shortly after noon that day, when his tranquil presence started to boil.

His stare ...

My hands shook, my heart raced, my stomach churned. Carefully, I glanced over my shoulder.

There he was, in the corner of my eye, waiting ...

I whipped my head forward before his eyes could catch mine. I spent the rest of the day staring at the ground and whispering, "Don't look back. The Willow Man is watching you."

The next day was the same: his gaze fell heavy against my back and I refused to look at him. I walked through the streets, whispering, "Don't look back. The Willow Man is watching." I rode the bus, muttering, "Don't look back. The Willow Man is there." Other people looked at me strangely, but it didn't bother me—I envied them. No one followed them; I was alone in my tortured existence. A torture that continued for the next three weeks.

Something had happened. Something had annulled the deal. That was why he was looking at me: I'd wronged him, and now he was going to kill me. But what had I done? And what could I do to stop it—to stop his tortuous stare—for good?

When he started following me, he planted the idea of murder in my head, and that seed thrived in the flurry of fear his stare whipped up in me. It quickly took root, and soon I was plotting his death. It wasn't a hard decision. After all, his death was the logical choice—I was merely protecting myself from his stare. Besides, I knew his weaknesses, his strengths, his patterns. Killing him would be easy if I waited for the right time.

It was August 9—today, I believe; I've lost track of time in this prison cell—at nightfall. The moonlight faintly illuminated him and his sinister smile. My whispered chants barely kept him an arm's distance away, and I knew this was it. I needed to act. No matter the outcome—his death or mine—I would be free from his stare. I took

a deep breath, slammed my eyes shut, and flung myself at him.

When I grabbed him, he tried to struggle, but his high-pitched scream only made me squeeze his throat tighter. Even as his friends tried to pull me off, I didn't let go. The Willow Man deserved to die.

And he did. I felt him meet death when his body went limp, and at this, I calmly stood up and walked away, keeping my eyes firmly shut so that his unblinking stare couldn't reach me. Hurt me.

Moments later, muted red and blue flashes appeared, and I was arrested. I'd expected this, but I would be fine. The Willow Man was guilty, not me. The police would understand, and they would release me. I kept my eyes shut during the drive to the station, and I didn't open them until they dragged me into the interrogation room.

That's where I am now, in this brightly lit room. I've been here for hours, sitting in a chair, resting my hands on the table in front of me as I wait for the door to open. Across from me, a blurry mirror hangs on the wall, reflecting white walls bleeding into cold tile—everything is white. Everything is the colour of innocence. Silence hums in the background until a staccato *click* interrupts. The door swings open beside me, and a man steps into the room. I leap to my feet.

"Sit in the chair, Argus," he commands.

I oblige. He'll know the truth in a moment.

The police officer stands by the door, one hand on the knob. I relax knowing I'll soon be free.

"Do you know why you're here?"

I reply calmly. "Because I killed him."

The man narrows his eyes, "You mean *her*."

My heart skips a beat as I note the mistake, "I killed The Willow *Man*," I say, then add, "but I'm innocent."

"You call *this* innocent?" he asks, throwing papers on the table.

When I finally look down, I'm met by a photo of an unfamiliar face, charcoal hair instead of ashen blond, round face instead of long ... and cold, dark eyes, frozen in a stare worse than I could ever invent.

"I didn't do this. I killed The Willow Man, not *her*. I've never seen *her* in my life." I'm terrified, they think I killed a person I've never touched. "She is not my victim, The Willow Man is."

The police officer looks uneasy. Like so many, he's skeptical of The Willow Man,

but I'll convince him of his mistake in the end.

"I killed a man," I protest. "It's The Willow Man's blood on my hands."

"You killed this woman, Olive —"

"I killed a man," I repeat firmly.

"You killed—"

"*I killed him, damn it!*" I shout as I leap to my feet, incredulous. "You don't understand! He was following me and about to kill me! Day and night, he stalked me! He *deserved* death!"

The officer avoids my gaze and it infuriates me.

"Look at me! Look me in the eyes!—*why aren't you looking at me?*" I pull at my hair, staring angrily at his downcast eyes. "Look at me or I'll *make* you look!" I threaten, grabbing the chair and hurling it at his feet.

He jumps away, hand flying to his belt. "Sir," he warns.

I step back, cursing. It was foolish to act out ... If he thinks I'm insane, he'll never believe what I say. I close my eyes, take a breath, and collect myself. I even pick up the chair and return it to its feet.

I am civilized.

I am sane.

I am innocent.

In a quiet voice, as if to a child, I whisper to him, "You're not The Willow Man. You can look at me. I promise I won't kill you."

My offer is sincere, but even so, he backs away, quickly twisting the door knob and leaving the room. All the while he avoids meeting my gaze, unreasonable fear flashing in his eyes.

I sigh and slide to the floor, my back slouched against the wall. They don't believe me. The only consolation is that The Willow Man can't find me here. He's dead. And they're lying about the woman. Made a mistake, mixed up the files. They must've. It's a man I've killed. It's The Willow Man. He's dead, he's dead, he's—

There's a creak as the door opens, tearing me from my thoughts. The police officer, in his haste, didn't close it properly. I could escape, but I won't because this is the perfect way to earn their trust. I will wait until he returns—

Someone taps my shoulder. My eyes dart to the mirror, taking in the door's reflection. The doorway is absent. Nothing is tapping my shoulder — *was that the rustle of clothing?* — nothing is there. It's been a long day, and I must be imagining things. After all, the mirror shows reality, and in that reality, no one is there ...

The tapping persists ...

I slowly turn my head to the right.

Long face, silky hair, shadowed eyes.

"Long time, no see," The Willow Man whispers as he meets my fleeting glance.

**DON'T LOOK BACK
THE WILLOW MAN IS
WATCHING YOU**

SOUP IS BEST SERVED ON A COLD DAY

BY SARAH RADKE

There is nothing like the cold Canadian winters and the way that the wind bites your cheeks and the cold nips at your toes. For the longest time now, I had been hearing on the radio that winter was coming, and it was going to start with a big storm. For the past few years, I have found that making a pot of soup on the first snow helped to cut the cold and warm my house. That day I left work early. On my way home, I watched the leaves blow in the cold winter wind, the orange and brown dancing across my car windshield. I knew the storm would be coming tonight.

Stopping at the Superstore on the way, I rushed inside, the smell of produce and bread filling my nose as I stepped into the warm building out of the cold. I grabbed a basket and headed to the produce aisle. Looking around, I saw the multitude of pumpkins and squashes around the vegetables. "Might as well get what's in season," I muttered to myself. With my off-handed comment, I managed to catch the attention of the older women standing beside me. She leaned over and said, "You know, winter is supposed to happen overnight this year." She was wearing a red hat that complemented her white curly hair.

"Yes, it's supposed to snow over five centimeters tonight. You know if you don't like the weather in Saskatchewan, wait five minutes," I responded.

The woman smirked, "You know what they say about the first snow of the year?"

"It's usually really cold?" I asked. The older woman stared at me and said, "Oh, no, haven't you heard of that old French folktale,

that one about how mysterious things happen on the first winter's night?" She waited for me to respond. When I didn't, she continued, "It's all because of the magic in the first winter's wind. Shadows follow you around in the dark, you start seeing mysterious figures in the snowy wind. Most people just think that it's their eyes playing tricks on them, but those darn things are real!" She took a moment to look me over, then leaned in close and whispered in a serious tone, "Last year I could have sworn that I saw shadows in the winter snow! They looked like people following me, but when I would turn to look ... I was the only one walking. They change things in your mind. Make you see people who aren't there, hear children laughing, make you feel like there are bugs crawling up your legs."

I did my best to look shocked as she told me her story, a small sliver of doubt in my mind that anything she was saying was true.

"I think I am just getting old. But if I were you, I would still keep one eye out for anything out of place," she warned, laughed and walked away. I continued shopping about the store, my thoughts wondering on what that old woman had said to me—dismissing her story from my mind—until I found all of my ingredients for soup, then proceeded to check out. The wind bit my face as I rushed out of the store. It was almost as if the wind had gotten worse while I was shopping. With my hands full of bags, I ran to my car.

By the time I drove home, the snow had just begun to fall. I walked into my small house and set the ingredients on the counter next to the sink. I could hear the wind blowing outside mixed with the laughter of children. Curious, I looked out my window into my backyard to see my only son, Josh, playing happily in the falling snow with a group of his friends. They were playing ball hockey. I took the ingredients out of their plastic bag and washed them for cutting. I was happy that I had made it home safely from the store after my strange encounter with that old woman and did not see any shadows or hear any children laughing other than my son and his friends. I placed a pot on the stove, and prepared to cut up the carrots. I felt the bumpy texture of the carrot as I chopped it into small pieces, adding it to my pot with some water and chicken broth. Then came the celery. As I was cutting, I could feel the wind shaking my small house and hear it howling outside. Looking out my window again, I was surprised to see the amount of snow falling. I stopped chopping the celery and went outside to call the boys in. They responded with the typical, "one more minute, we need to finish the game!"

I returned to chopping, but when I came back to my cutting board, the celery was nowhere to be seen. I looked underneath my counter and around the kitchen, but with no luck, I dismissed it from my mind. I grabbed another carrot from the bag and once I cut into it, I felt something long and skinny slide across my feet. Looking down, I saw nothing more than my maple leaf socks. I placed the knife on the carrot and pressed down, and from it came a terrible sound: a hissed scream. The carrot had turned into a big orange snake. The serpent's head toppled off the cutting board and into the sink. I screamed in terror and confusion. Concerned as to what I should do with this beheaded snake on my cutting board, I did the only thing that seemed logical: I grabbed the limp body of the serpent and placed my knife on top of it. The feeling of its long, narrow, cold, and scaly body under my hand felt good. What felt even better was the feeling of the knife as it cut through the meat of the snake only to hit a hard bone. The crunching sound as the knife passed through the bone to the cutting board was almost addictive. The strange feeling that something or someone was watching me,

cheering me on, pushed me to cut deeper. Then a voice told me to add it into the soup.

The pieces of flesh, bone, and skin fell into the pot, just like a carrot would have. Its juices ran down the cutting board into the pot and turned the soup from a light yellow to a deep brown color. Returning to cut the rest of the vegetables, I felt something long slither by my feet once again, but this time I saw it. It was the small green body of another snake. This must have been what happened to the missing celery. I instinctively grabbed it and watched the small animal wiggle and squirm in my hands before I placed it onto the red stained cutting board. Crunch. The animal stopped squirming.

The soup was bubbling by the time I heard my boy and his friends come into the house. They removed their toques, mittens, and jackets, and sat down at the dinner table. Their cheeks rosy pink from playing outside and stomachs rumbling from the game. I took bowls from the cupboard and placed them on the table, then put the soup in the middle with a ladle. The boys happily filled their bowls with the brown soup and ate. About halfway through their meal, one of the boys commented on how he enjoyed the different taste of the soup. He explained that he had never tasted anything like it before, the crunchy texture of the carrots and the chewiness of the meat.

"I don't think my mom has ever made anything like this before," he said, "what's your secret ingredient?"

I looked up from my bowl just in time to notice something long and orange quickly move along the floorboards of the dining room and into the hallway. I put on a small smile and looked at him and replied, "Snakes." The boy paused for a moment with a look of confusion, but then everyone at the table began to laugh.

"That's kind of funny," he said, slurping the rest of the soup from his bowl.



CHEESY POUTINES

BY JARRAD STARR

At
Hockey games
I eat cheesy poutines with
Gravy poured on sizzling hot fries
With yellow melted cheese so when you eat
Your hot cheesy melted sizzling fry poutine it'll taste
Like nuggets of gold peeled and cut into slices then fried into
Comfort and smell you'll see golden melted cheese with hot gravy
On top of the sizzling fries, when you hold this basket of comfort it would
Be freshly made with warmth against the cold, the only way for the core to be
Warmed so the longer you hold the poutine the warmer your heart gets, replenished from
The heat of the basket

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE AN EPILEPTIC

BY JENAI PETIT



I was diagnosed with epilepsy at four years old. Not long after that, I was prescribed medication called Valproic Acid and Keppra. However, they didn't work for me; my seizures persisted. My doctor tried another drug called Lamotrigine, which worked and kept my seizures stable for two years, allowing my brain to train itself to overcome them.

As I went through school, I never felt normal. I always felt different and out of place because I was constantly pulled from classes to go to appointments. Once, I had to leave about three quarters of the way through class. People whispered and rolled their eyes at me, probably thinking I was skipping out early for my own pleasure. They glowered at me until I made it out the door. I went to so many appointments that I don't

think anyone understood that what I was going through was real. When I came back to class the next day, I would get snarky comments like, "So another appointment," "How was the doctor?" or, "Must be nice to always go home early."

I felt like a fracture in a bone, unwanted and causing people pain just because I was different. I convinced myself that I was flawed. So many people asked me what epilepsy was that each time the words came out of my mouth, it felt rehearsed: "Epilepsy is a brain disorder, it comes in numerous types and there is a large series of symptoms like shaking hands, staring, chills, nausea and fatigue." The type I have gives me "absence" seizures—they make me stare off into space as if I'm asleep and no one can wake me up. I also get very chilled, fatigued and

feel nauseous after a seizure. Worst of all, I could not remember anything during the seizures, which is why they are called “absence” seizures.

Over the summer of 2012, I spent seven days in a hospital bed with EEG cords glued to my head. The doctors wanted to figure out my seizures and how to stabilize them. One test that I had to do was blow as hard as I could on a paper towel. Even this small act caused a seizure. After that, doctors checked the recordings of my brain to see if I still had a spot in my left hippocampus, which is the part of my brain that my seizures came from. I have some scar tissue there, likely from the seizures, and I remember crying so hard after the several tests that I couldn’t breathe. It was as if the oxygen in the room vanished. My mother’s eyes teared up as she tried to comfort her little girl. The nurse asked me what was wrong, and through the gasps for air that just wouldn’t reach my lungs, I huffed a response, “They said they were going to fix me, not make it worse!” My nurse teared up as I gasped again. I mean who wouldn’t? Here was this little girl laying in a hospital bed, hoping that her brain would be fixed and it wasn’t.

The nights that I cried myself to sleep were countless. I struggled with my education, my friendships and, eventually, became depressed. I have always had trouble with math because my medication caused focus issues. With math and my other subjects, I had a very difficult time retaining information and I needed it to be broken down a lot more than the other students. This made me different, an outsider my classmates couldn’t understand. I struggled to keep my friendships intact when I was on Keppra and Valproic Acid because I was very emotional and had daily mood swings. My friends became annoyed with my constant shift in mood, and at the time, I didn’t realize that it was medication causing the problem, so I lost some great friends. As if all of this wasn’t hard enough, I became depressed. One evening when my parents went out and my sister was at work, I sat at the kitchen counter and cried, thinking to myself that I was worthless and disgusting. There was no point in attempting to do anything because I knew I wouldn’t succeed. But one day, half way through my first semester of grade nine, I looked at myself in the mirror and saw how blue my eyes were. How long and luscious my hair was and realized, *wow, I’m not so bad!* I am not sure what changed, but I am happy that it did. Something inside of me realized complaining wouldn’t change who I was.

Before my realization in the mirror at school, I never used to care about what I looked like. My hair was a disaster, matted and messy—if anyone saw it, they might’ve thought that I didn’t have access to clean water or a brush. My outfits consisted of sweatpants, sweatshirts, and my black puma socks. I had acne and my teeth were crooked. I didn’t feel pretty, but I was getting braces soon, and straight teeth were the starting point of my new look.

I got braces over the summer of 2017 and started taking better care of myself. I went shopping and found a pink cropped hoodie and a pair of ripped light blue jeans. Before this moment, I would have never chosen to wear these types of clothes, but my new-found confidence helped me see that I

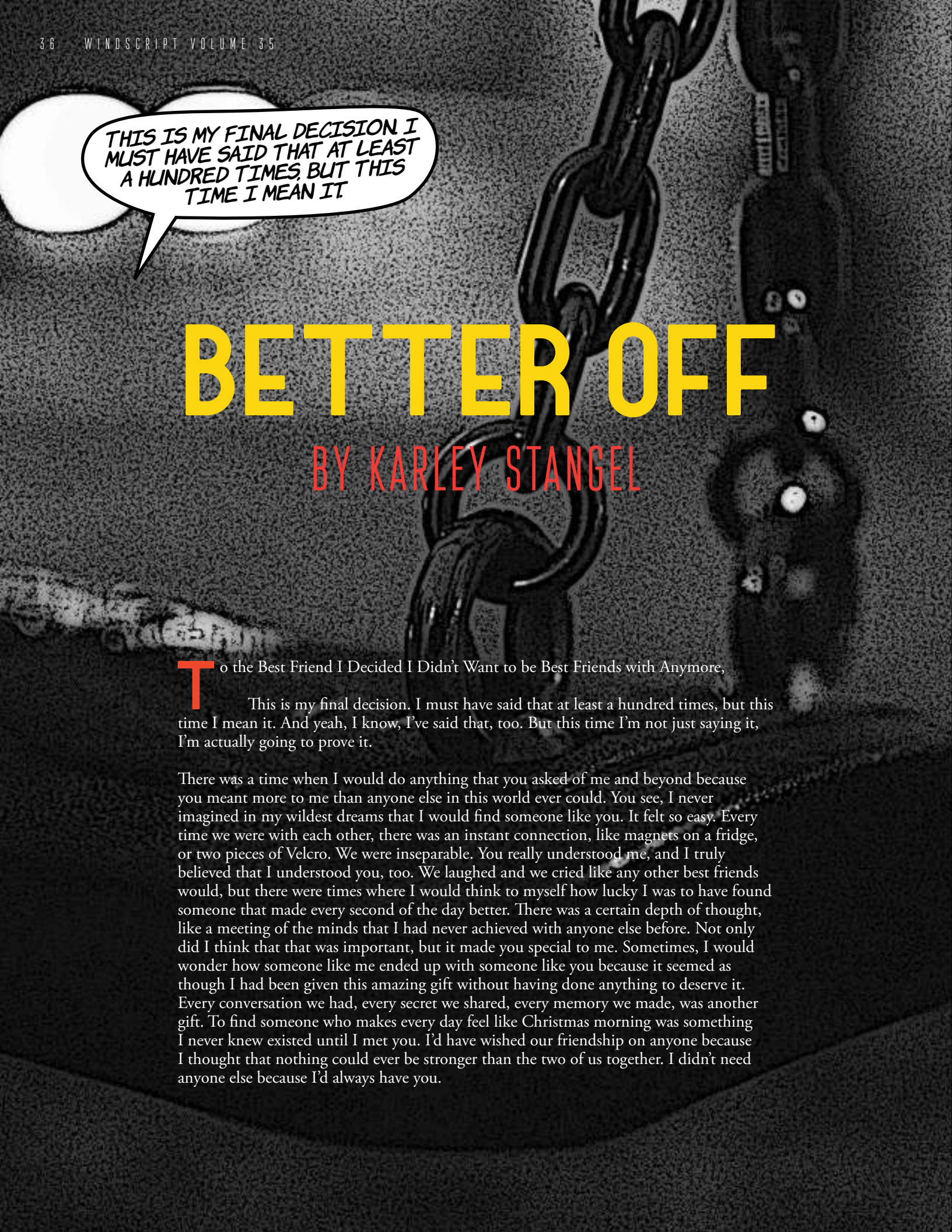
deserved to be happy in my own skin and wear what I wanted to. I even bought my first tube of mascara. Then, in grade eight, things started to look up for me. My new confidence oozed off of me, which made more people take the chance of getting to know me and they didn’t just like one thing about me, they liked most of me. Best of all, my doctor told me I could start weaning myself off my medication. I was so happy, I could finally be normal. It will all finally be over!

Weaning myself off the medication was much harder than I had expected. I got very depressed and each night I would look in the mirror and tell myself how ugly and useless I was, and how I was a disappointment. I cried almost every night. Walking home from basketball practice one night, I was waiting to cross the street, but no cars were slowing down. For a brief second, I considered stepping into the middle of the road, hoping to be hit. But I didn’t do it. I knew most of my pain was from my medication and my insecurities, so I waited until the cars stopped before crossing.

Many people say that I am one of the happiest people that they know, which just proves how easy it was to hide my pain. I was usually happy at school because I felt safe there, especially with my friends who made me laugh. Sports also helped. I took all my sadness, all my pain and put it into the sports I enjoyed. I played basketball, softball, and even tried a bit of badminton. Focusing my energy on something other than how the absence of my medication made me feel, helped me run just a little faster, take that extra shot in basketball, and be that much more aggressive in softball. However, I did have to be extra careful not to hit my head because hitting my head could make my seizures worse, especially while I was weaning myself off my medication. Other kids hit their head and their only worry was that they would not be on their phone for three days due to bed rest. I worried that my seizures would come back and I’d have to start the whole medical process all over again. Even with my sports, I cried often while I was alone. All of my peers seemed so happy, without a care in the world. *But how many of them are truly happy?* I found myself wondering.

During the last few weeks of weaning myself off my meds, I had millions of questions buzzing around in my head: *What if it’s not over? What if they come back? We tried losing the medication once before and it didn’t work, what if that happens again?* Finally, though, it was the last day of the meds, and the weaning process was over. Today, I feel a lot happier, though things still aren’t perfect, and I still have my problems, but who doesn’t? A part of me clings to the mental pain and how I need extra help, so it still feels like the process isn’t over. I don’t think it ever fully will be. My biggest win is that my smile is not fake, not anymore.

What I have come to realize is that I was never truly different. I used to say that I was God’s first and worst mistake, but I was so wrong. I was always good enough, I just didn’t see it until now, looking in the mirror and seeing how strong I am. I have always been and always will be good enough no matter what anyone says or thinks. Even though I am done with the medication, we aren’t completely sure if I am seizure free. But one thing I do know is that I am me, and I am totally cool with that.



THIS IS MY FINAL DECISION I
MUST HAVE SAID THAT AT LEAST
A HUNDRED TIMES, BUT THIS
TIME I MEAN IT.

BETTER OFF

BY KARLEY STANGEL

To the Best Friend I Decided I Didn't Want to be Best Friends with Anymore,

This is my final decision. I must have said that at least a hundred times, but this time I mean it. And yeah, I know, I've said that, too. But this time I'm not just saying it, I'm actually going to prove it.

There was a time when I would do anything that you asked of me and beyond because you meant more to me than anyone else in this world ever could. You see, I never imagined in my wildest dreams that I would find someone like you. It felt so easy. Every time we were with each other, there was an instant connection, like magnets on a fridge, or two pieces of Velcro. We were inseparable. You really understood me, and I truly believed that I understood you, too. We laughed and we cried like any other best friends would, but there were times where I would think to myself how lucky I was to have found someone that made every second of the day better. There was a certain depth of thought, like a meeting of the minds that I had never achieved with anyone else before. Not only did I think that that was important, but it made you special to me. Sometimes, I would wonder how someone like me ended up with someone like you because it seemed as though I had been given this amazing gift without having done anything to deserve it. Every conversation we had, every secret we shared, every memory we made, was another gift. To find someone who makes every day feel like Christmas morning was something I never knew existed until I met you. I'd have wished our friendship on anyone because I thought that nothing could ever be stronger than the two of us together. I didn't need anyone else because I'd always have you.

I think back to every time that we gave each other “the look”—our urgent beady eyes laughing about something that only the two of us thought was funny. Or, to put it simply: every smile we exchanged. It’s all different now. Every memory that I thought would last forever has twisted into something I don’t even want to remember anymore. As it turns out, to wish our friendship on anyone would be outright cruel because nobody, and I mean nobody, deserves what happened between us.

You started off by saying that you didn’t feel the need to apologize for anything that happened between us. Hello, red flag! I thought that after months of not talking to your best friend, you might have missed me. Guess I was wrong. So, when you proceeded to tell me all of the things you thought I “did wrong,” my entire vision of our friendship changed. I quickly caved and apologized, ignoring the fact that you hurt me. All I wanted was my best friend back. Except, once I finally got the chance to get you back, something inside of me shifted. I stopped crying and evaluated myself in this friendship. You got absolutely everything out of it: the parties, the popularity, the attention. I, on the other hand, took loss after loss, gaining absolutely nothing. Never once did I try to intentionally hurt you, when all you did was try to intentionally hurt me. Saying bad things behind my back is one thing; saying them to my face is a whole other ball park. I still get chills up my spine thinking about the night at that old swing set we used to go to, where you told me that I would be nothing if I hadn’t met you. Or, that afternoon when you grabbed my arm so hard I had marks on it for days, telling me that if I didn’t come with you to John’s party, you would make sure that I never got invited to anything ever again. You constantly humiliated me to the point where I felt that ending my life would be less painful than the way you treated me. But I didn’t go through with it. All of a sudden, the few months I spent crying over you felt pointless. Now that I have the option of having you back in my life, I realized I didn’t want you. As hard as it was for the first while, I made new friends and became closer with old ones. I know you think that I’ve changed, and just this once I’m going to agree. I have changed, but I know I’ve changed for the better. This and only this, I owe to you.

You made me realize so many important things over the years that I am thankful for. For one, you showed me that sometimes in life people are not meant to stay. They’re there to make you into a stronger person. You taught me that even when you think you know someone, there will always be ways that you don’t. You showed me that it is way more important to focus on myself because out of everyone in this world, I am the most important one. You showed me that no matter what happens, life goes on until the day that it doesn’t. Until then, I won’t waste my time worrying if the people who treat me poorly will ever love me back. You taught me that sometimes when someone says, “I love you,” they really just love the things I do for them and not the person I am. And when relationships reach that point, they are toxic. You even helped me understand that sometimes a best friend isn’t needed at all. What I need is someone to listen, someone to care, and someone who promises that in this moment, they won’t leave my side. Sadly, the only person willing to do that was me—for me. So last but not least, thank you very much for teaching me that above all, I need a lot of things in life, but I certainly do not need you.

Sincerely,

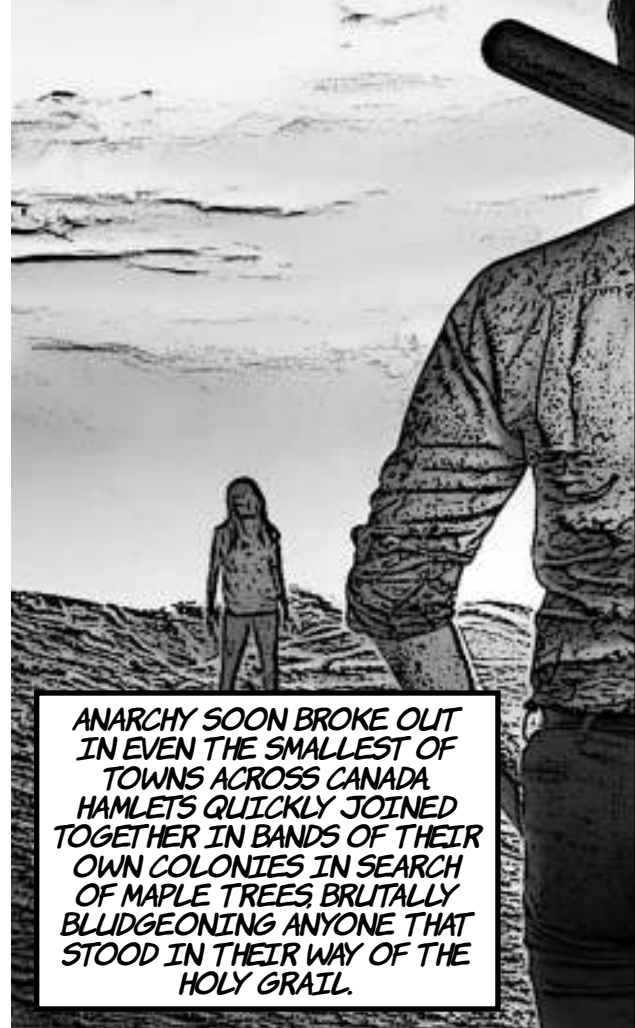
Better off.

BREATHE

BY CASSIOPEIA RAYCRAFT

you forced dirt down my throat.
Now I grow roses
where you tried to plant poison

disguised as weeds.



Sirens ring out in the distance, yet all is eerily still.

The streets of Ottawa are a desolate wasteland, as is the state of the rest of the nation. A great, endless plume of smoke billows above the provinces and territories, resting into a copper fog at the lowest valleys and badlands. The Trans-Canada highway is coated in a thick layer of black ice with only the light sheet of snow to fool an unbeknownst traveler. The homes of the polite are boarded with wooden planks across smashed-in windows and doors carved with Canadian-exclusive words like "Hoser," "Newfie," and "Bloc-Head."

The last bottle of maple syrup has expired. Canada has fallen.

Tensions first arose when the current Prime Minister of 2247 ignored the pleas of his Governor General and people. He pushed their protests aside, even when the annual winter stockpiling of syrup in preparations for pancakes and crepes failed as supermarkets faced hoards of sugar-addicted patriots. Every home's supply was diminishing by the hour, and with our leader's focus on the growing



A STICKY SITUATION FOR CANADA

BY SAMANTHA LERAY

southern migration of polar bears, he lost sight of our most prized resource.

The maple syrup supply only began to depreciate once the rest of the world went months without receiving word of the golden grace from their northern allies. How is a nation supposed to react when seven billion people are latched onto a dependency for its most famous breakfast condiment? Close the country's borders of course.

With one of the planet's biggest superpowers inebriated by its own lack of foresight, not only did our economy suffer, but so did most other nations'. Oil, uranium, and agricultural staples began to pile up in enormous quantities in each province, with exotic fruit and foreign items at an extreme decline. The population was starving, and it seemed that a modern-day Great Depression was in the works.

Anarchy soon broke out in even the smallest of towns across Canada. Hamlets quickly joined together in bands of their own colonies in search of maple trees, brutally bludgeoning anyone that stood in their way of the

holy grail. In an even worse turn of events, the government outlawed the life, blood, and image of our beautiful country. All maple trees were to be destroyed. As it turns out, the syrup-providing plant had evolved to produce a new, highly addictive toxin in its bark and sap. Sweet-driven parasites latched into the brains of maple-holics, mutating even the most apologetic of Canada into flesh (and poutine) hungry madmen.

Without any other option, our beloved Prime Minister opened the century old safe in the farthest corner of Parliament Hill and drank the last maple syrup bottle in reserve on Earth. It was suicide for him, for he was an incredibly sensitive diabetic, and not to mention those sweet parasites got a hold of his brain.

At this point, you're probably wondering how I fit in in all of this. I was a Canadian heretic; I despised the taste of maple syrup. I managed to stay safe within the population by retreating into hiding, surviving on ketchup flavored potato chips and melted snow.

By the time a frigid January hit the country, millions of corpses became frozen along the highways, stretching out like a hundred thousand veins. They wandered for kilometers, desperate for even the most manufactured drop of syrup. This fateful mistake by the—once—living lead to their utmost demise, frozen and never to walk again.

Luckily, I wasn't alone. Patriots from across the land banded together to spite the fallen and outshine the legacy of maple syrup. I am their leader.

We aren't sure how we want to rebuild this nation. We do, however, plan to march to Parliament Hill and rid ourselves of the few who remain that burden us; the ones who our old government created. My first decree as president of the Anti-Maple Republic is to protect my people from the lie of maple syrup. The old Canada, the nation of pride, beauty, and peace is now a wasteland of what it used to be, and I am here to fix it.

CONTRIBUTOR

ANDREW ADAIR lives in Regina with his parents and his younger brother, Aiden. He is in Grade 12 at Luther College High School. He enjoys football, acting, and video-gaming. This summer, the brothers did the SkyWalk around the outside of the CN Tower—their mom wasn't there to stop them.

TEAH ANGELSTAD is a Grade 12 student at Walter Murray Collegiate. In her free time, she enjoys wrestling, guitar playing, and writing. She writes because she loves the reactions of her readers. Teah mostly writes horror or mystery, as it reminds her of her father and the films they watched when she was young.

KAYLA HUYGHEBAERT BELSHER has always had a strong ambition for writing and writes every chance she gets. She is a Grade 12 student from Lafleche and hopes to pursue a life in the big city, hopefully being able to spend her Sunday's wrapped up in a blanket with a cup of tea and her computer to write her way around the world.

BREANNA BJARNASON has won several writing awards in contests for young Saskatchewan writers. She has also written four unpublished book manuscripts amongst numerous other short stories and poems. She enjoys classes like AP English and Creative Writing, and plans on continuing to write and participate in contests with her work.

SOHILA ELGEDAWI is a Grade 10 student at Bedford Road Collegiate. She loves to write and read creative writing. She aspires to go into medicine in the future.

REBEKAH FEHR is in the Grade 11 and enjoys writing emotional stories and poems, some of which are happy, and others that are not. In her spare time, she enjoys reading books of any genre, except horror, as she is easily terrified and often cries at her own writing.

MICHELLE GALL is a Grade 12 student at Hafford Central School. Michelle has always found writing to be a comfort and solace in her life and hopes to one day become an author so that she can share her stories and creativity with the world.

OLIVIA GRANDY is a Grade 10 student who lives on a farm south of Oxbow. She often finds herself enjoying music, playing sports, and writing about how it feels to be a teen. In the future, she hopes to pursue a career that allows her to help others.

TIANA LAFRENIERE is a Grade 12 student at Hafford Central School, and lives with her family on their farm outside the hamlet of Mayfair. Tiana serves on her school council, enjoys basketball, and will be studying early childhood development at Lakeland College in Vermillion following her graduation this spring.

TEAH LENNEA has lived in Martensville, Saskatchewan nearly her whole life and has loved reading and writing since she learned how. In her spare time, Teah can either be found at the local rink figure skating or buried under a pile of blankets in her room reading a good book.

SAMANTHA LERAY is a high school student from the small town of St. Brieux, Saskatchewan. She's written several short stories, and is currently working on her novella. Samantha is an avid gamer and aspiring lawyer, hoping to eventually find her way to law school post-graduation.

SEIJA LII/ATAINEN is a Grade 9 student from Lanigan, Saskatchewan. In her spare time, she enjoys writing and reading weird fiction and listening to even weirder music. Seija also plays the piano and draws people and objects. She lives with her mom, goldfish, dog, and numerous houseplants.

KYLE LUO is a Grade 12 student at Walter Murray Collegiate who has a passion for music and video games. Despite having a wide variety of hobbies, he manages to maintain a balance between his academic, social, and personal life. Also a perfectionist, Kyle is unwilling to settle for anything below his ever-increasing standards.

ANNIKA OLSON lives in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. She was born in Kazakhstan and adopted by a single mother who raised her with freedom and choice. This let Annika be as curious and adventurous as she wanted during her childhood, and enabled her to be her creative, open minded and free-spirited self. As Annika meets new people, she gains interest for their individual character. This reflects on the characters and perspectives she enjoys creating in her writing. Annika enjoys writing to help others gain emotional and psychological knowledge using her Instagram account @annikaolsn. She has had many opportunities and has shown extreme growth as a writer since beginning her Creative Writing 20 class at school, taught by the talented and extraordinary Mrs. Wilkinson.

JENAI PETIT is a fourteen-year-old girl in Grade 9 at Martensville High School. She is a bubbly and excited person. She loves to play softball, basketball, volleyball, and even does gymnastics. She used to write to purge herself of her feelings, but now she does it more for her own enjoyment. Jenai loves to travel, and hopes to visit Australia, Africa, every Hawaiian island, and Machu Picchu at some point in her life. Jenai's writing usually focuses on who she dreams to be when she's older and what she wants to accomplish. With her writing, she hopes to show people that even though things are hard, you can and will accomplish them in time.

BIOS

SARAH RADKE is a seventeen-year-old from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. She is currently in Grade 12 at Bedford Road Collegiate. Sarah is a musician and graphic artist. Her future goal is to attend Saskatchewan Polytechnic and complete a degree in computer sciences and one day get a job in computer security.

CASSIOPEIA RAYCRAFT is a Grade 12 student in Saskatoon. Although her sense of humour is crude, her writing captures emotional depth. She hopes to one day become a graphic designer. In her spare time, she kickboxes, and binge watches Netflix series.

TRINITY SQUIRREL is an Indigenous artist from Fishing Lake, Saskatchewan. He is intent on connecting to his audience through the power of words and emotion. He is a firm believer in the impact of human connection and the lasting impression one can make in the world around them.

KARLEY STANGEL is a seventeen-year-old girl who loves writing, singing, acting, and dancing. She sees writing as an opportunity to escape the world and create an entirely new one of her own. It is her goal that one day her writing will be known all over the world!

JARRAD STARR is a Grade 9 student at Balcarres Community School. He grew up in Starblanket Cree Nation, Saskatchewan. He does not smoke cigarettes, nor does he do drugs or consume alcohol. Jarrad is fifteen-years-old and likes to work with technology. He was born on September 5, 2003 in Regina.

EMILY ZBARASCHUK is a Grade 10 student from rural Saskatchewan with a passion for reading and writing. In her spare time, she enjoys playing piano, spending time with her friends and family, and imagining renovation plans for her parents' basement (in case she pursues her dreams of being a novelist).

windscript

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We welcome students to submit creative writing in any and all forms including poetry, prose, and creative nonfiction.

Please note that as in all writing competitions, these guidelines are important and **must be followed** in order for a submissions to be accepted.

Deadline: JANUARY 15, 2020

1. Submissions are open to Saskatchewan-based high school students.
2. Always keep a copy of your submitted work. Submissions will not be returned.
3. Writers must submit their own work directly—submissions cannot be made by a third party (such as a parent or teacher).
4. Proofread your manuscript.
5. Submit a maximum of six poems and/or a maximum of two prose works (each piece must not exceed 1500 words).
 - Do not put more than one poem on a page.
 - Type each piece in 12 pt, plain text font (such as Times New Roman, Arial, or Courier), and double space.
 - Number each page.
 - Put the title on each submission and each page of the manuscript. Do not put your name on the poems or stories themselves as submissions are selected anonymously.
 - Please format your file names as follows: magazine_title_genre (example: *Windscript_PoemOne_Poetry*).
 - Submit documents in .doc format only. Please do not submit PDF's.
6. All work must be original from start to finish. Writers submitting plagiarized work will be banned from *Windscript*.
7. In a cover letter, provide the following information:
 - Your name, home phone number, mailing address, and email
 - The genre of writing you are submitting (fiction, poetry, nonfiction)
 - The title(s) of your poems or stories
 - The name, address, and phone number of your school and teacher's name
 - A fifty-word biography written in the third person (if we publish your work, we will use this information, so be creative!)
8. Submit by email to submissions@skwriter.com. Put *Windscript* in the subject line.
9. If your piece(s) are selected, they will go through an editing process with the *Windscript* editor before final publication.

Saskatchewan Writers' Guild Author Readings Program for Schools, Libraries, and Communities

Information for Teachers and Librarians

Saskatchewan's finest writers of every genre share the distinctiveness of their own stories when they visit schools, libraries, and other public venues. The SWG makes it possible for these writers to reach students, teachers, librarians, parents, and readers around the province. People of all ages are given the opportunity to meet and listen to their favourite authors and storytellers.

Readings

All schools, libraries, writing groups, and community organizations may apply for up to two readings per program year (August 15 to June 30) by Saskatchewan Writers' Guild members. The writer reads from his, her, or their work for forty to sixty minutes and may be available for discussion afterwards.

How to Choose an Author

Find Saskatchewan Writers, our searchable, comprehensive online directory of Saskatchewan writers and their works. Please visit: skwriter.com

How Much Does It Cost?

Each group pays a host fee of \$60 per reading. The host group is responsible for other costs, including meals, accommodation, phone calls, facility rental, and publicity.

For more information and application forms please visit: skwriter.com



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PrintWest is honoured to have donated to the printing of this year's issue of *Windscrip*. *Windscrip* is a powerful tool in the writing community—it not only aids the development of capable young writers, but demonstrates the importance of education and literacy. We hope to continue with this meaningful partnership for years to come.

PrintWest salutes the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild for their ongoing pledge to supporting writers in Saskatchewan.

Corie Triffo
President
PrintWest Ltd.

WE'D LIKE TO THANK THE
TEACHERS AND
LIBRARIANS WHO ENCOURAGED
THEIR STUDENTS TO SUBMIT THEIR
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