

# windscript

The Magazine of High School Writing Vol. 41, 2025



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Windscript is produced by the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild (SWG). The SWG 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 SWG serves a membership spanning the entire province of Saskatchewan in Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10, which encompasses the unceded territories of the nêhiyawak (Cree), Anihşināpēk (Saulteaux), Dakota, Lakota, Nakota, and Dené Nations, and the Homeland of the Métis Nation.







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MANAGING/POETRY  
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BRANDON  
FICK

If you are reading this Editor's Note, then you have chosen to read *Windscrip* 41 and support the next generation of Saskatchewan writers. On behalf of the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild and the talented students in this volume—thank you! Sustaining something for over forty years, let alone a literary publication, is no easy feat, and in these challenging times it is crucial that outlets for artistic expression continue to thrive. Young people face a rapidly changing, technological, polarized world. They struggle. They are resilient. They have a voice. *Windscrip* is a home for that voice, a home that needs to be cherished.

Readers will notice recurring themes in the poetry and prose. Heartbreak and longing for love and social acceptance. Insecurity and anxiety mixed with defiance and authenticity. The traumas of war, historical injustices, and migration. Nostalgic recollections. The beauty and power of nature. Common threads are woven through work that comes from all corners of the province. But truthfully, as editors, an eye for themes was not our first priority—we simply sought the best writing. To all those published, congratulations! We hope this is just the beginning of something much greater. To all those who submitted, congratulations on putting yourself out there. As I can attest, submitting is scary and rejection can be painful, but as writers, we must take these risks.

I give a big thank you to the Guild for believing that I could take on this role, and having my back when necessary. *Windscrip* has always been a collaborative endeavour, so I must also thank Associate Prose Editor Kelby Cottenie for their hard work and being a thorough and clear communicator. Shirley Fehr provided the excellent layout and design, and of course, none of this would be possible without the help and support of Cat Abenstein.

I was a high school student not so long ago, and while aware of *Windscrip*, I was not quite brave enough to submit. So I am grateful that our paths have finally crossed, and in the process, I have become acquainted with the future of Saskatchewan writing.



ASSOCIATE PROSE  
EDITOR  
KELBY  
COTTENIE

As an editor, working on *Windscrip* is one of the opportunities that's brought me the most excitement. I find working with youth authors presents an excellent opportunity for all my favourite parts of the craft—compassion, collaboration, enthusiasm, and creativity. The care and passion that the authors brought to their pieces, and that made editing with them a joy, will come through abundantly as readers tour the wonderful selection of writing in this volume.



Our writers tackle ongoing injustice, staggering loss, and heavy emotion, but they also bring us stories of love, of the intimate and personal, those moments that remind us why we keep going in the face of whatever difficulty looms. The stellar poetry, imaginative fiction, and thoughtful nonfiction engages with all this and more, and it is an honour to present them in *Windscrip*t 41.

My thanks go out to our authors for their hard work throughout the writing and editing process and for being a delight to work with. Thanks also go out to my Managing Editor, Brandon Fick, for his excellent editorial work and guidance, as well as Cat Abenstein and the entire SWG team for this opportunity and all their support. Finally, thank you to our readers, who will surely bring the same enthusiasm to reading these pieces as students brought to writing them.



## YOUTH POET LAUREATE DASH REIMER

Ah, what a joy it has been to read the work of these young writers in this year's *Windscrip*! I remember when I started writing poems with the intent to share them with the public. I remember how exciting and scary it felt to weave pieces of myself into the words and then put them out into the world, knowing that they no longer belonged to just me but now they held belonging for every person that read them. It is a scary thing to move across the line between our rich internal worlds (and believe me, I know writers especially have rich interior lives!) and the lush external world we live in. It's an act of trust and belief that there is something and someone worth connecting with out there. Thank you so much to all the young

writers that have believed that about their writing and *Windscrip*, and all the schools that will receive and read this magazine.

It was fascinating reading through this collection of work in comparison to the year I was the Associate Poetry Editor of *Windscrip*—Volume 39, 2023. Volume 41 holds such a strong focus on story and the sacredness of human experience. One theme that so often holds true throughout all the work with young writers I've done is that discussion of the expectations put upon us and our desire to break free and choose for ourselves who we'll become. My hope would be that all the well-worn paths of those who have gone before us feel comforting to you as you all tread your own routes towards the homes and communities that you are carving out of your stories.

Thank you for sharing your words with me and letting me belong in these worlds for a moment!



# Award Winners and Honourable Mentions

## Jerrett Enns Awards

**Poetry Winner:**

Emily Neufeld – “Baby Fat”

**Honourable Mention:**

Cole Allen – “The Weight of War”

**Prose Winner:**

Bella Pinay – “When the Night Comes”

**Honourable Mention:**

Justine M.H. – “The House Across the Coulee”

## Currie-Hyland Poetry Award

**Winner:**

Zayden Mack – “Sour Apples and Cinnamon”

**Honourable Mention:**

Jhan Lorah – “My Configuration of Heaven”



*Windscript* has been publishing the best of Saskatchewan high school students' literature since 1983. Created by Victor Jerrett Enns, Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild (SWG) from 1982 to 1988, *Windscript* is produced by the SWG with support from SaskLotteries and SaskCulture.

Thank you to the following schools for participating in  
*Windscript* Vol. 41.

**A.E. Peacock Collegiate**  
**Beechy High School**  
**Bert Fox Community High School**  
**Canwood Public School**  
**Dinsmore Composite School**  
**Grenfell High Community School**  
**Kamsack Comprehensive Institute**  
**Langenburg Central School**  
**Lanigan Central High School**  
**Lucky Lake High School**  
**Luther College High School**  
**Marion M. Graham Collegiate**  
**Maymont Central School**  
**Regina Huda School**  
**Rocanville School**  
**Swift Current Comprehensive High School**  
**Walter Murray Collegiate**  
**Whitewood School**

Jerrett Enns Poetry Award Winner

# Baby Fat

by Emily Neufeld

I have this recurring dream of reaching deep into my throat and pulling out this unending ribbon that unravels all the weight I've ever known and it's a deep sticky red and it burns on the way out in the best way possible and then maybe I wouldn't feel like a fraud when I put on nice dresses maybe boys would like to look at me and I wouldn't hate fitting room mirrors maybe the sight of bikinis wouldn't make me cry and maybe I'd like the way I looked cause I wouldn't be that chubby little girl anymore.

I always flush that ribbon down the toilet.



# Expectations

by Erika Hertlein

I am not what *they* want me to be,  
too much of this, not enough of that,  
my clothes never fit, always clash.  
They try to make me fit into their boxes,  
but I'm spilling out the sides,  
splitting the seams of my dress,  
punching through the plastic,  
too wide, too wild,  
too *real*  
to be packaged inside.

They tell me: You must be soft  
but not a pushover,  
strong but not a bitch,  
beautiful but not provocative,  
quiet but not too dull,  
smart but not too proud.  
Walk a greased tightrope of expectations,  
above the fangs of a beast.  
They tell me this is life.

Well, I want to be seen,  
but not just for my looks.  
I want—I will be—*felt*,  
in my truth,  
my power,  
my *pain*,  
I will be what I want to be.



Jerrett Enns Prose Award Honourable Mention

# The House Across the Coulee

by Justine M.H.

The house across the coulee was vacant for many years. But there was a ghost in that house; Bethany Rivers had seen it with her own two eyes. Bethany was an only child, and her parents were often busy during the summer, leaving her to run wild with only her imagination and the gentle breeze to keep her company. The trek to the house was not long, only fifteen minutes on foot. She did not take the dirt road but instead crossed the fence into the pasture, greeted the cows, and crossed the dam to the other side of the stream. From there it was a six-minute walk through the trees, and then she would climb the steep hill to the junkyard.

The abandoned yard was unkempt and overgrown—a proper jungle. The grass came up to her waist, and there were all sorts of treasures. Now, she climbed into the front seat of an old Ford, pretending that she was a race car driver. She jerked the old steering wheel wildly, commentating the whole race. Soon, she threw her arms up and whooped—she finished first! Her russet eyes were bright with exhilaration as she pushed the door open, leapt out of the truck, and jumped up and down. That had been a close one! It was then that Bethany saw the curtains in an upstairs window of the old farmhouse flutter. She caught a glimpse of a shadow moving behind it and halted.

She stared at the farmhouse with newfound curiosity. Bethany had never entered it before. She was always content to play amongst the grass and junk, but there was a ghost inside, and it had been watching her.

Since summer break began, she played in the junkyard almost every day. How had this escaped her? Should she investigate?

It took her approximately two seconds to decide, and seven more to work up the courage to walk up to the back door. It was a rickety farmhouse, washed almost bare from years of exposure; however, Bethany could see



remnants of white and red paint. Despite its state, it proudly stood two storeys high, but the trees around it had long since surpassed its height.

She held her breath and turned the rusty knob. The door opened with a groan loud enough to wake the dead. Her heart pounded against her ribs as she tiptoed into the house. She exhaled as she looked around the small porch. There was a wooden counter with a large basin and water faucet in front of her, with cupboards above. The paint on the inside of the house was more vibrant than the exterior, but even it had begun to fade. Her nose wrinkled; the house smelled of stale mildew and mothballs. Olive green wallpaper had started to peel off the walls of the porch, and the cupboard doors hung crookedly.

She ventured further into the house, finding the kitchen. There was a small propane stove and cracked linoleum-covered countertops. The house was still; Bethany felt like she had trespassed on sacred grounds. To the right of the kitchen was a dining area with a small mahogany table and six chairs. Behind the table was an empty china cabinet, its glass broken. She crossed the room and continued through the doorway ahead into the living room. Two red couches looked like they had been chewed through by mice, and an off-white rocking chair sat by a soot-covered hearth.

She was about to climb the stairs when she heard a door slam above her. Bethany jumped, her eyes widening. The ghost sounded angry. Bethany's instincts told her to run, but instead, she walked up the staircase as quietly as possible, gripping the rickety wooden rail tightly enough to give her splinters. She paused at the landing, gathered herself, and walked down the hallway.

She cleared her throat. "Hello?"

Her voice did not echo throughout the hall, but she felt it cut through the silence. There was no response, but all the doors in the hall were ajar except for the third one on the left. She approached the door, bit her cheek, and knocked. There was a faint rustling sound from within. She knocked again and the room went quiet. Bethany took a deep breath and opened the door.

She only made it one step before something barrelled into her. Bethany's feet were swept out from underneath her, and she let out a loud yelp as her back made contact with the hardwood floor. She blinked, staring up at the small boy who stood above her. He held a butter knife in his left hand, and his brown eyes were as wide as an owl's. Relief enveloped Bethany, but accompanying it was a small twinge of disappointment.

There was no ghost, only a *boy*.

She raised an eyebrow. "That knife ain't . . . isn't going to do anything."

He only stared at her.

Bethany sat up, bracing her hands behind her. She was too curious to be angry. "I'm Bethany Rivers. I live across the coulee," she added after he didn't reply.

The boy didn't even blink.

When he stayed quiet, she sighed and placed her hands on her hips, frowning. "Don't you talk?"

He looked sorry as he shook his head and then opened his mouth. Bethany leaned forward with a mix of horror and fascination as she realized that he didn't have a tongue. No, he did have a tongue, only it was unusually shaped.

"Oh." Her tone carried a combination of shock and curiosity. She thought for a moment, then said, "Well, can you write?"

She studied him. He looked nine, just like her, and she knew how to write. He nodded slowly, his grip on the knife finally relaxing.

She smiled. "Let's find you some paper."

It took some searching, but Bethany managed to produce three sheets of paper and an old pencil from a broken desk in a bedroom across the hall. She sat down on the floor and motioned for the boy to follow. She offered him the stationery and he took it.

"What's your name?" she asked.

He wrote out "WALTER" in elegant letters.

She was impressed. "You sure have nice writing, Walter. It's good to meet you."

This routine continued for the rest of the afternoon. Bethany would talk and Walter would reply on paper. He had been shy at first, but then he started writing more. It turned out he wasn't nine, but eleven. He was awfully small for eleven. She learned that Walter ran away from his papa ten days ago and had been living alone in the abandoned house for a week. His father didn't like how Walter's tongue was misshapen, so he beat him. Walter wouldn't tell her where he came from or how long he had been alone. Bethany assumed that it was far. She lived outside a small community and had never known a family with a boy named Walter.

Walter showed her a long scar on his arm, and she ran her small fingers along it, feeling the inflamed tissue. Bethany felt angry for him. She wanted him to come home and have supper with her, but he had shaken his head vehemently, so she decided that she would visit him every day.

Every afternoon she crossed the coulee and brought him food, games to play, and books; Walter loved books. The two became fast friends, and with her father away for work, Bethany found herself coming home later and later every day. She gave Walter a notebook so he could write, but one day she had an idea—she would teach him how to talk. They got off to a rocky start, but a week later, the talking lessons were well underway.

"Ahh. Apple," she said slowly.

Walter mimicked the words.

Bethany grinned.



It was a slow process, but as July faded into August, Walter was quickly learning how to speak. As the end of August neared, he began to speak in full sentences. He had a funny lisp, but Bethany didn't poke fun at him. She was proud.

"You should stay with me. My parents would be happy to have you," she told him one day as they skipped rocks down at the stream. Walter was much better at it than she. Walter was quiet. Bethany knew that sometimes he was quiet because he was used to it.

"Walter?"

He shrugged.

"They've always wanted a boy," she continued, watching as her rock skipped across the clear water five times.

"Okay," he said quietly.

Bethany jumped for joy and grabbed his hand. "Let's go now!"

Bethany led Walter over the dam, through the pasture, over the fence. Walter held her hand tightly as they reached the front door. She burst into the foyer, dragging him behind.

"Mama?" she hollered.

"I'm upstairs, Beth!"

She brought Walter upstairs to the sewing room.

"Mama, this is—"

Her mother turned and her eyes widened. "Walter."

# Sour Apples and Cinnamon

by Zayden Mack

She tastes like sour apples and cinnamon.  
A warm pastry leaving sugared lips  
and the crystals of frost-laced windows.  
Finding rusted coins in coat pockets  
and pink sunsets painting prairies gold.

She's birthday wishes and falling stars,  
gentle touches tracing scars.  
Green twirling through night skies  
and the universe in her hazel eyes.

She's hidden overgrown graveyards  
and the crumbling bricks of churches.  
She's the wafting scent of pale gardenias,  
and for once, not repressing the urges.

She's waxing moonlit walks at night  
and craving her tender presence.  
There's love in all the cracks of life  
and she taught me that in essence.

She towers over ten feet tall,  
but we're looking down at earth.  
Crunching dried leaves as they fall,  
she's more than I deserve.

She's everything I've ever wanted  
but felt I could never say,  
for the knowledge has left me haunted  
that they won't attend my wedding day.

She's sour apples and cinnamon  
and longing for a life of sin.

If this feeling will be named "impure,"  
then I'll embrace my fate of "ill."  
She's my poison and my cure;  
after forever, I'd love her still.

# Eighteen

by Angeley McLean

*Content Note: This piece contains suggestions of suicide, loss of a loved one, and grief.  
Please take care while reading.*

For the first time in months, no one is crowding him. No one takes notice of him at all, hardly sparing him a glance. It's nice, in a strange way. One of his hands is curled around a suitcase filled with almost every possession he's held dear for the last seventeen years, and the other is clutching the bus ticket he has just purchased. If he were being honest, he'd admit that if both of his hands hadn't been full, at least one of them would've been wrapped around whatever liquor he could get his hands on. Usually whiskey, sometimes rum or vodka. Whatever he thought his father wouldn't notice missing from the liquor cabinet and would burn his throat and warm his stomach just enough for him to forget the past few months ever happened, just enough to make him feel numb.

It's not quite dark out yet. The sun is setting, turning the sky to a light gold. Evan stops for just a moment to watch it.

It was autumn when they'd met; the weather was turning cooler by the day and the streets were littered with crunchy leaves the same golden colour he sees

now. Evan had just fallen on the playground. All the other kids ignored him when he started crying, but not Tom. He had offered a hand up and asked Evan if he was alright. When Evan confirmed he was fine and gave him a smile, Tom asked him to play, and the smile turned to a grin as they ran towards the swing set. They were seven then.

The bus doors fly open, and Evan climbs on with the rest of the crowd, handing the ticket he'd been holding to someone along the way. He drops into a seat behind a blonde woman who looks to be in her late thirties. No one asks him the questions everyone had been asking seemingly on repeat for the past three months. Everyone had been so concerned for him. His parents, his brother, his friends, Jennifer. Evan anxiously taps his fingers on his thighs and looks out the bus window; he feels horrible about leaving Jennifer.

They had met in elementary school. He had liked her even back then, even if he couldn't recognize it at the time because he was still stuck on girls having cooties. When he grew up a little, around twelve

or thirteen, he realized he liked her; he pretty much had as long as he could remember.

It was at a school dance when he was fourteen and Jen was thirteen that she had recognized his feelings for her. They were in the corner of the gym, sipping on spiked punch and giggling together about everything and nothing. No one was paying attention to them, not with their respective best friends dancing together in the centre of the room while the teachers and chaperones watched the clock detachedly. They stayed in that corner for almost the whole night until their friends came and pulled them away. Evan had Jen's light pink lipstick smeared across his cheek, and Tom was so busy teasing him for it that Evan didn't have a chance to point out that Tom was sporting lipstick of his own, suspiciously close to the shade that Rachel had been wearing that night. They asked the girls out a week later and had been going out since. It was kind of crazy that they'd lasted for so long in high school. Rachel and Tom were together until Tom was found dead on his bedroom floor.

Evan snaps out of his thoughts and comes back to the bus travelling miles away from his hometown and everyone he's ever loved. He lifts his hand to the cheek where Jen kissed him for the first time almost four years ago.

It has to be better this way. Never mind the fact that he's leaving her with her grieving best friend. Never mind how much he would miss her. He would have to write when he got off the bus—to Jen, his parents, maybe even to Rachel. He had to let them know he was safe, not somewhere dead in an alley, or high with the kids he had once tormented. He had to explain himself, apologize for leaving so suddenly. He had to let them know it was better this way, that if he didn't leave and things continued the way they had been, he would be the next one dead.

In a perfect world he wouldn't be on this bus; he would be home, Tom wouldn't be dead, Jennifer wouldn't be down a friend and a boyfriend, and Rachel wouldn't be locked in her room for days at a time. But this isn't a perfect world. He doesn't know what to do other than run. He doesn't know anything anymore. All he does know is that in about four hours it will be his eighteenth birthday, and he should be blowing out his birthday candles, not on a bus sitting with the knowledge he will never see his best friend again.

They say if you're friends with

someone for seven years, you'll be friends for life. Evan and Tom would never get to test that. It will be his first birthday without Tom in ten years, the first of so many to come. He feels his throat get tight and his eyes get hot at the thought. He takes a deep breath and swallows the feeling away.

Maybe he'll go back home eventually, maybe he won't. He doesn't know; he's never been that smart. Maybe if he had been smarter, he would have his best friend by his side on his eighteenth birthday instead of being on a bus headed towards a new life in an attempt to forget. Forget Tom and his death, forget the empty spot in his life that had once been filled by him.

Evan feels his eyes get heavy as the exhaustion of the past few months begins to catch up. He knows he can't close his eyes; he can't sleep until his body is too tired to dream. Otherwise, he'll see him. Tom. He'll see Tom's lifeless body in his bedroom among his football trophies and his record collection; he'll be taken back to the moment he got the call that Tom was dead. His first friend and the best one he'd ever had was gone, and he had to figure out how to live with that.



# My Configuration of Heaven

by Jhan Lahar

Heaven was in the palm of my outstretched hand.  
Danced through my fingertips,  
Creating patterns only I knew.  
Through calloused crevices, the cuts ran deep.  
In the form of a girl, her soft, comforting touch  
Radiating warmth the burning sun never could.

At times, I was lost in a trance. My eyes traced every detail,  
Tunnel vision fixated on nothing else  
But smooth creases that exposed themselves  
With every downward smile. From crimson-tinted lips  
Lasting indentations onto places only my skin  
Holds memories of. Freckles painted across her cheeks  
Similar to every nova in the sky. As if God  
Handpicked each of their placements.

If your heartbeat spoke in a language I could decipher  
I would pronounce every word verbatim.  
If the words fell into thin air,  
I would transform my tongue, dedicate my life to learning,  
Understanding the three crucial words  
That motivate my every waking moment.  
I refuse to be filled with guilt for loving this way.

I was consumed with hope,  
Thought the constellations in your eyes  
Meant our love was inevitable and perpetual.  
But that was before,  
Before you were wrenched from my grasp.  
We became the sun and the moon—polarized.

Though I refused to let you go, no matter how deep  
Your burn marks engraved into my skin,  
Like a knife carving symbols into a stagnant oak.  
I thought I could withstand the heat,  
But the flames turned into an inferno, blazing through  
Acres only you knew, creating ashes that fell like snow.

I pick skin from the palms of my hands. Tearing away pieces  
No matter how cracked, how bloody they become.  
The loss of your warmth has turned me into a vessel, hungry  
To be filled, desired, transcendent.

# When the Night Comes

by Bella Pinay

*Content Note: This piece contains depictions of residential schools and child abuse. Please take care while reading.*

I never sleep. I'm always watching. Ticking. Never running out. I sit upon the wall. The children watch me like I'm a God. Their eyes are always on me when it's past dusk, for that's when the monsters come. I look out and see rows and rows of beds, a trembling boy in each one. I'm ticking as the sun goes down. Their eyes start to wander up onto me, for they know what's to come. The Machi Manito<sup>1</sup> is nearing with swift strides, long fabric rustling together as he walks. Eyes, water pooling in each of them, are on me. All that the boys can do now is put their heads down and pray not to be chosen. The jingle of keys sends an unspoken cry through the room. There are scared little eyes flickering between me and the warped man on the slab of wood. They were told that he would save them, but I don't think they are the ones who need to repent.

The door opens and a man appears. His body enters the room, and with it he brings something you can't see, something dark. The air changes, growing cold like all the warmth in the world is gone. The lights grow dimmer, the sky turns from gold to grey, and all the light in the world seems dull. His mouth opens to say something to the children. All at once, every boy gets beside his bed and kneels.

Fifty scared eyes tremble again between me and the man on the wood. For whom should they pray to? Someone who has never come to save them? Or should they pray for their demise to be quick?

The man walks around the room listening to the children, looking, watching, searching for any faults, searching for . . . something else. With snake-like eyes and claw-like hands, he hunts for his next meal. Every night it's the same; one name spilled from his mouth. One name to be taken. Every night he takes one boy to the Maci-pawamiw<sup>2</sup> room, at least that's what the children call it under their breath so that the Machi Manito doesn't hear. Screams crawl up the walls, invisible scars left behind that don't go away. The ones that dig under your skin to nest, to fester. I watch these children night and day, just like they do to me. I am their only friend and their worst enemy. The only thing they have. The only thing they wait on. Hoping I go faster to end their suffering.

Tick.

Tick.

Tick.

Tonight most are safe, but one is not. All they can do is pray. Pray for something they don't understand and hope they don't get

picked. They say they are servants of God. That what they're doing is for the greater good. The pain and suffering that haunts these halls is for the greater good? The stolen innocence. The stolen childhood. If this is for the greater good, I would pray to their God to never meet him.

The creak of the floorboards comes to a halt and the world stops. The air stills. The silence is overwhelming enough to make a person go mad. Hollow eyes meet innocence. A swift movement awakens the child out of his trance. Strong hands grip weak arms. The priest holds on tight like he knows the child is going to squirm, like he wants him to. The boy looks at me, and fear is all I see. The man drags the boy, the child, to his desolation. When the door shuts, the other boys pray. They pray for the child, pray for themselves, and pray to one day escape their eternal torment.

Tick.

Tick.

Tick.

<sup>1</sup> (Machi Manito) means devil, demon, and evil being in Cree.

<sup>2</sup> (Maci-pawamiw) means a sinister, dark, bad dream in Cree.

# Gazing

by Sam Ellis

*Content Note: This piece contains depictions of violence in war.  
Please take care while reading.*

As the black sea of night flooded the land, I stood within the trenches  
Gazing across a sea of flames, whose forked tongue licked the sky.  
Sparks flew, rising like fireflies, fleeing the heat of war.  
Across scarred earth is where our enemies lie.

A shell landed near me, a thunderous blast,  
Hot air seared my side, burned a hole in my boot.  
Twisted metal slashed my stomach, embedded in my flesh.  
The world slowed as men continued to shoot.

I gazed in shock across the blackened landscape,  
Fireflies became agonized spirits . . .  
Spirits of fallen soldiers, rising to heaven,  
Guided by the white wings of angels.

Further in the distance, the spirits of the enemy rose,  
In grey-and-black uniforms they raked us with fire.  
The same as us, just men on a conveyor belt.  
To the angels we were one foolish choir.

The enemy was the devil inside  
Driving us to kill without questioning why,  
Killing fathers, brothers, sons, and friends.  
The imperialists who created this hell had lied.

I collapsed, my fate written in bloody, gushing wounds.  
From a support trench, a medic rushed to my side.  
In his metallic blue eyes was grief without relief,  
For just days prior, his brother had died.

I faded in and out as his hands passed over me.  
One way or another, I thought the worse had passed,  
But then, perhaps the final indignity,  
A shrill cry down the trench: "Gas! Gas!"

# The Sweltering Heat

by Ibrahim Osman

The first steps are always the hardest, not because of the inability to take them, but due to being unable to imagine oneself accomplishing them. The fear of failure and regret is the biggest hurdle to success. Taking these first steps is what my mother courageously did twenty years ago, barefoot across the African desert. The sweltering heat of Southeastern Africa can only be described as torture, and to travel across several countries with a baby in these harsh conditions reflects on a person's character. To most this would be a death wish, but to a very select few, this is merely the beginning of something better.

Eritrea should only be referred to as a prison for those born there. From birth, the mental programming given to the people of this country is tactically manipulative. People are forced to become soldiers at the age of fourteen, attending military academies or simply being thrown into wars as child soldiers. Living in Eritrea, it's inevitable to end up as a tool, as the lack of opportunity is rampant. You are born into death, freedom a bleak dream only allowed to three percent of the population: the wealthy, the politicians, the soldiers who have been labeled AWOL.

Money cannot buy safety, not on this side of the world. Even if you have endless amounts of money, avoiding rape or enslavement is an almost impossible challenge. To do this one must be socially aware, incredibly intelligent, strategic, and strong.

My mother was one of these people, someone with a will so strong that from birth, her purpose could not be defined by government leaders who view themselves as gods. She was a natural writer with an advanced understanding of many languages, an insatiable curiosity, and a sense of justice, making her a born journalist. This led to her receiving a scholarship to attend King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah. But she had been born female, and rather than being able to continue her studies, she was forced to marry my father. Little did she know that she would give life to five children, all of whom share the same will and dreams that she once had.

The vast expanse of Southeastern Africa was the hardest escape one could subject themselves to. From her first step towards freedom, my mother needed to avoid the violent guards that survey the prison that masks itself as a

country. Following a shoot-to-kill order, these guards are willing to slaughter their own people for the sake of the uncaring government. This perilous journey starts with an untimely death for most. According to Al Jazeera, a hundred thousand unfortunate souls lost their lives during the violent years of the 1998–2000 Eritrea-Ethiopia border conflict,<sup>3</sup> when this type of violence was normal. This was when my mother left the country, but fortunately, she was blessed enough to not become one of these statistics.

This journey would span seven countries and six thousand kilometres, and for my mother, it was carried out barefoot with a child. To walk barefoot across the south border to Ethiopia for a home is the goal of many who flee Eritrea, but Ethiopia wasn't willing to harbour my family. The journey continued through Kenya; journeying while lacking water and food and with a year-old infant was grueling, but that was not the end of them. They continued their trek into Tanzania, passed through Mozambique and Zimbabwe until they reached Botswana, only stopping when they found a place to live that was just safe enough. Staying in a refugee camp, they



did not know whether they would be granted asylum in the United States or Canada. But after years of daily visits to the Canadian Consulate in Gaborone, my mother and her family, which now included five children, finally received the stamp of approval. They found their home.

Regina, to most, is a small city with little opportunity, but to these people who had never seen freedom, the opportunity was too large to pass up. Enrolling five children into private school was both costly and stressful for the woman who was working two jobs just to keep her family afloat. Waking up at 4 a.m. and working till nearly midnight became my mother's daily routine. Even with her terrified children praying for her safety, she could only find solace in having a roof to cover us. At this time we constantly had to move, finding it more difficult to support ourselves in the ever-declining economy. Our hands ached as we scaled this sheer cliff, but we kept climbing. All five children have been accepted into university. Two have graduated or are on the verge of graduating, two have just begun their journeys in university, and one is still finding his path in life. It is thanks to our mother's brave efforts and our inheriting of her will that we have been able to climb so high.

The frozen tundra is classified as a form of desert. I now walk through this challenging snow to get to school, leaving behind new

footprints for the generations of our family to come. These footprints take me back to my mother's first steps, her courage now feeling like a distant dream. This is where it begins—my love of sports, my dream to become a lawyer, my therapy in writing, my story—and where I continue to find my dreams.

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<sup>3</sup> Awol Allo, "Ethiopia-Eritrea Conflict, 20 Years On: Brothers Still at War," Al Jazeera, May 6, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/5/6/ethiopia-eritrea-conflict-20-years-on-brothers-still-at-war>.

# One Last Shot

**by Abigail Nelson**

*Content Note: This piece contains depictions of violence in war, suicidal ideation, and suicide. Please take care while reading.*

There are nine shots in my body tonight,  
Eight from the half-empty bottle of rye,  
And one in my back from France in '44.

I reach back to feel my scar.  
Did it really happen?  
Forty years later it's still there,  
Raised and itchy like it always was.  
I'm back home now,  
So I strike a match to light my cigarette,  
Figure one last shot couldn't hurt.

I raise the amber glass and close my eyes.  
I won't cry or choke as I take this shot  
Like my father and brothers had,  
Chest tight with nation pride:  
Was God really up there  
In the blazing blue sky?

Instant white-hot flames  
Bring warmth all the way through.  
I drop to the floor,  
Liquor splashes against my chest,  
And the revolver clatters to the tile.  
Still, those old nightmares ooze from my bloody head.  
The things I had never spoken about  
Haunt me until my final breath.

Now, there's ten shots in my body:  
Eight from the half-empty bottle of rye,  
One in my back from France in '44,  
The last in my skull.  
I could never be well and fine after that war.

# The Weight of War

by Cole Allen

*Content Note: This piece contains depictions of violence in war.  
Please take care while reading.*

Left home a dreaming boy,  
returned a broken man.  
Shoulders bearing burdens like Atlas,  
smoke and blood burned into my skin.  
My story part of an ancient system,  
the system of war.

Scarred, blistered hands, withered heart  
witness to shattered friends, pieces of them  
dripping from my hair and coat.  
My body, testament to General folly,  
twitches, hungers for battle.  
The heart still remembers  
drumming, thumping,  
*thump-thump, thump-thump*  
to the beat of war.

The storm is calmed, for now,  
but I dread the silence of night.  
A boy who once dreamed  
lost to the hunger of man,  
crushed under this weight,  
the weight of war.



# The Sensation of Drowning

by Heidi Paice

I crash into water.

The waves steal my breath and, with their cruel hands, hold it just out of reach. I do not know which way is up or down. Left or right. All I know is that the water threatens to coil around me and drag me into its depths, into a world where life cannot follow. It swarms my vision, and I squeeze my eyes shut to stop myself from witnessing my own end. I refuse to watch myself go under. To watch myself drown. To watch myself die.

I never bothered to learn how to swim, and now I desperately wish I had. My lungs begin to burn as I sink further into the depths of the dark void below me. It was fear of this that held me back. I have to get out, but now the water pulls me deeper, the light fading with each desperate gasp. Slowly, the surface slips away, and the world above becomes a distant memory.

Thirty seconds. That is all my breath can hold for. Thirty seconds left of life spent in the dark with my arms and legs kicking like fish trapped in a net. There is only my rapid desire to breathe, no remembrance of my name or the sound of another's voice. Instead, I focus on the stiffening of my skin, how the porcelain colour becomes blotchy, how my veins bulge against it. Finally, my body goes limp, and I allow myself to sink.

That's when I open my eyes. Through the hole in the ice, I see an open sky swirling with clouds of all colours—violets, pinks, and oh, my favourite. Blue. So very blue. But not the blue that consumes me now. No, this blue breathes with life, like sunlight that clings onto ocean waves, spilling the sound of laughter and carrying it to ears that take too long to listen. It is a painting. A painting made of life whose delicacy I have taken too long to see.

Twenty seconds.

I lift up my hand to block the golden light that blots my vision from the sky that I never took the time to see. The sun is vivid this evening, casting a trail of fuming yellow light I wish I could feel on my skin once again.

Ten seconds.

A fool I am—how could I live with such life and beauty and ignore the gift it has been yearning to give me for all these years? The sun takes hold of me in the vast darkness, brushing its light through my glacial hair and twisting around my numb body. In the water, we dance, the sun and I, swirling further and further down.

Panic and desperation tear at my chest, allowing the water to push its way into my lungs, stabbing through my last hopes as I try to grasp onto the dying light. I

don't want to go. I don't want this to be my end!

But hope means nothing to my emptying lungs.

Five seconds.

Even the thing that threatens to kill me, to drain away my last breath, seems new to me. It is becoming. The water is more divine when seen from beneath. The bubbles are stars, the current is the wind through my hair.

Death is alluring. It will end this suffering with one snap of its fingers. It is a poisonous flower, its petals the eyes of a lover. Yet it is not the love I wish to embrace.

Why didn't I get up today to see the sunrise? Why didn't I stare into the face that spent each day wasting away, the face of one who spent their days living a life in a world that wasn't truly theirs? To ask why. Why didn't you live? Why didn't I live?

One second.

I don't want to die. What I want is to see the last smile on my mother's face. The last laugh of a stranger. I want to bite into my skin—just to feel the pain, to let it remind me I am alive. That I still want to live.

My mouth opens for a final breath, but only water answers. My head falls back, giving me to the endless dark.



# Turmoil

**by Finn Landry**

Ocean waves crash against crumbling cove walls,  
blue slate sky turns stormy black as night falls.  
Lifeless water trembles and screams, tempting  
someone to slip into the swirling trap.  
High tides nip and shatter everything in their path.  
Darkness in the hidden cove is violent,  
thick with tension.

Hours pass, dawn begins to break,  
the ocean's fury rages outside the stillness of the cove  
until the sun rises. Seething water settles,  
its passionate calls forever remembered,  
ingrained in hard, slippery limestone,  
silently waiting for the moon to rise once more.

# The Sled Trip

by Keller Nickell

It was a beautiful day. The warm sun rays caressed my face while waves of cool winter air flowed in sharp, fickle bursts over my sweat-soaked hair. For the first time that year there was snow on the ground, albeit far from ideal. The feverish daytime temperatures combined with the stone-cold stillness of the night had, countless times, melted and refrozen the once soft and fluffy snow, turning it into a hard-packed sheet of crust. Lucky for me, my sled ate hard-packed crust for breakfast.

My friend Kyler, his cousin Cael, Kyler's dad, my dad, and I had organized a snowmobile trip around Sonningdale. I don't remember many of the smaller details, but I do remember the hit of dopamine I got when I woke the beast up from its dull and prolonged summer slumber.

I grabbed the matte black rubber key, twisted it clockwise, felt some resistance, then twisted it further. There was a faint sound of metal brushing on metal as the starter gear exploded onto the teeth of the flywheel in a matter of milliseconds, aggressively rotating itself upon contact and reaching peak speed almost in-

stantly. The spark relay switched on to complete its circuit, electrically charging the veins of the machine. Suddenly, a spark ignited the fuel and air in the cylinder, slamming the piston downwards. The engine sprang to life, producing the classic two-stroke exhaust popping sound I know all too well.

The smell of exhaust brought back memories. It always does. Two-stroke engines burn both oil and gas to lubricate the cylinder walls, and the smell of that burnt oil and gas being expelled from its boiling-hot metal sarcophagus out into the crisp, cool winter air always smells heavenly. It's like a tangy, sweet aroma with a dash of gasoline (sometimes accompanied by the smell of burnt clutch, smoked belts, melted plastic, and shattered hopes and dreams). Smelling the exhaust for the first time never changes; it inspires the same feeling I got when I was handed the keys to my first sled.

Fast forward an hour or two, and we were in a field heading south. The flaming yellow ball we call the sun lay resting in the sky directly overhead, cooking my retinas with its unforgiving

rays of light. Kurtis (Kyler's dad) was the most experienced rider and led the group. Kyler and Cael followed closely. Because my sled is only 400cc (397cc, but who's counting?), I'm used to being the last in the pack, but let me get one thing straight: I ride the hell out of that little thing. I'm talking throttle clamped to the bar 24/7, and it's not like it's slow; in fact, it's quite fast (my current record stands at 128 km/h on a trail).

As we crossed the field, we approached a road resting on top of a steep and tall wedge of land. Kurtis had stopped atop the road and put his arm up to signal something, but because the sun hates me and wants to gouge my eyes out, I couldn't tell if he was signalling to stop or slow down. Not too long after, I sure as hell found out.

There I was, cruising at 80 km/h, trying to figure out what Kurtis was signalling and forgetting about the terrain in front of me. For whatever reason, the farmer who owned the field had cleared a path in the middle of nowhere and left behind a three-foot-tall ridge of hard-packed snow and ice. A couple of seconds later, the ridge

crept into my peripheral vision and was closing fast—too fast. With no other options and a feeling of hopelessness washing over me, I let off the throttle, accepted my fate, and smoked the ridge at 75 km/h.

At the time, it felt like I was twenty feet in the air. The track made a rumbling noise, caused by the lack of tension as it spun load-free in the air. Seconds later, fragmented pieces of ice and hard-packed snow erupted from around my right ski as it slammed into the cold and frozen ground. The sled bounced like a bucking bronco when the shocks bottomed out, leaving nowhere for the force of the impact to go except into and through the sled itself. At some point, my left hand lost its once tight grip and slithered off the handlebars, flailing helplessly at my side. A sense of dread and confusion hit me like a sack of bricks. Something on the small LCD screen built into the dash caught my eye: “92 km/h” stared back at me in large black lettering.

I hit the second ridge much harder and much faster. With only my right hand gripping the handlebars, and my body barely on the seat, I pinned the throttle to the bar in a desperate attempt to hold my grip. I thought about bailing, but ultimately decided my sled’s suspension had one job—absorbing impacts like these. So in a last ditch effort to save myself, I yanked on the handlebars,

pulled myself back onto the seat, and braced for impact. I hit the ground. Hard. The shocks had once again been compressed all the way and could no longer absorb the extra energy from the force of the impact, and what goes up must come down—or in my case, what goes down must come up. So with that, the back end of my sled catapulted me upwards, knocking my left hand off the handlebars and bucking me off of the seat.

Still going 90 km/h, I needed to slow down before I hit the road (which wasn’t going to happen with the position I was in and the speed I was going; in fact, if I didn’t let go, I’m almost sure I would have set a new sled-jump record). Out of ideas and getting desperate, I remembered the red kill switch that was attached to my jacket with a turquoise carabiner. My left hand that, up until now, had been flailing at my side found its way to the coil-like texture of the cord. With the spirals grasped tightly between my fingers, I yanked it towards me like I was starting a chainsaw, and the plastic attachment points separated in an instant.

The face of my helmet dug into the once undisturbed snow like a plow sinking into the soil of a field. My world turned white as chunks of ice and snow torn up by my visor slammed into my face shield. Once the slide came to an end and the adrenaline wore off, I tried to stand, my legs like boiled

spaghetti. I let myself collapse, sinking both of my knees into the crusty top layer of snow. The deafening roar of an engine got closer and closer. I looked up and saw Cael driving over to me. As he pulled up, he lifted his face shield, slammed his hand down onto the kill switch, took a deep breath, and yelled (with some colourful language added), “Keller! That was awesome!”

Turning around, I found my sled waiting on the side hill of the road, twelve metres away from the asphalt-lined top. As it turns out, Cael, for whatever reason, had turned his head at the exact moment I hit the first ridge and got to watch the whole thing unfold in real time. My dad was following me and also got to witness the spectacular jump. Unlike Cael, whose main focus was how awesome the jump had looked, my dad seemed pretty concerned that I was going to be badly hurt and came speeding over like a bat out of hell when I dismounted from my sled.

I didn’t end up with anything more than a stiff neck and a couple of bumps and bruises, although the realization of how badly that could have gone does haunt me. Whoever it was that made the ridge—a farmer with his tractor and giant snow-plowing blade, or the RM with a grader—I’ll never know. But because of that ridge, I’ll forever have a story to tell and a memory to find in the cool winter air.

# This is Canada

by Seraphim Strauss

Lightning strikes and ozone saturates the air  
Rain streaming from the heavens  
Washing the world clean  
Thunder rumbling  
Earth trembling in its wake  
Wet dirt and summer breezes

This is Canada

Cold-bitten skin and freezing breaths  
Howling winds and drifting snow  
Impassable mountains of ice  
Carved into the landscape amidst the harsh white world  
Fresh cold air burning lungs and seeping into bones  
Frozen rivers and icy fractals

An ocean breeze and the crunch of sand  
Life teeming from every tide pool  
Exploding out of each nook and cranny  
Gem-bright fish and crabs  
Dart between swaying plants and coral  
Seabirds cry and call  
Harmonize with the crash and swell of waves  
Reflections bright on foamy waters

Wheat fields shining gold in the sun  
Seemingly endless plains stretch on forever  
Thick forests with birdsong echoing amongst the green  
The rustling wings and scurrying squirrels  
Wildflowers with mushrooms interspersed  
Wafting scent of highbush cranberries and damp rotting leaves  
Sweet and spicy and uniquely autumn



Grassy plains and towering mountains  
Jagged cliffs where rivers rush to the sea  
Slicing through their rocky beds  
The bustling cities filled with people  
From every flag of the world  
Towns as warm and cozy as they come  
Farms rising from prairie and parkland  
Like icebergs in a landlocked sea

This is Canada

Marble-stepped cathedrals and stained glass windows  
Sweat lodges filled with sweetgrass and steady beating drums  
Prayer flags stretched between houses and altars built in homes  
The freedom to explore

Crumbling farmhouses next to rusted cars  
Relics of eons past littered across weedy ground  
Long dead equipment once displayed with pride  
Skeletons of tarnished metal and wood  
These objects are a physical reminder and guide  
Remembrance and innovation go hand in hand

Flickering campfires lick the sky  
Powder-dust stars in infinite inky black  
The aurora dancing in purple-green-blue brushstrokes  
The same sky our ancestors have seen  
That future generations will observe with wonder  
The land we have called home for millennia  
We will call home for centuries more

This is our Canada

# Nostalgia

by Julia Cismaru

We stand ankle-deep in the dewy grass, my brother and I, the saggy soccer ball between us. My feet are clad in pink-and-grey sandals, totally inappropriate for the circumstances, and he stands at least a head taller than me in orange cleats already caked in mud.

"Step, *then* kick," he reminds me. I back up from the soccer ball before taking a running start, sending the squishy white-and-black ball hurtling through the field. With my *left* foot.

"Not bad," my brother tells me, not quite smiling.

We move on to another drill, him playing goalie in one of the park's nets, me several metres away with the soccer ball.

I kick the ball. It rolls unceremoniously to a stop after being intercepted by my brother's orange cleat.

"Come on, use your strength!" Frustrated, I retrieve the ball and fire it in an uncontrolled manner. The tip of my sandal catches on a protruding tree root mid-swing and I trip. The ball careens forwards at an odd angle.

Saving me from the embarrassment of missing the net, my brother launches himself at the ball with an exaggerated yelp, landing sprawled in the park's muddy grass. His entire right side is caked in mud, but he holds the (also muddy) ball triumphantly in his hands.

I laugh at the ridiculous scene. "I would've missed . . ."

"I know." My brother grins. No other comment.

We laugh together, the two of us, mud-streaked and shivering in the rapidly dropping temperature. Undeterred, my brother rolls the

ball back to me. It bounces over slick mounds of grass until I stop it with my left foot.

"Go ahead," my brother nods at me, the corner of his mouth curving upwards into a slight smile. "Line up your next shot. Be patient—you might get it this time."

"Aren't you cold?" I ask, staring quizzically at my mud-plastered brother.

"Eh." He shrugs, chuckling. "I'll warm up quick if you step up your game!"

Something like hot sunshine floods my limbs, and I set up the ball for a more precise kick. I'm determined to prove I can do it. The wind rustles the treetops around and above us, but we're only focused on each other and the soccer ball.

# Threads of Forever

**by Hallie Quist**

In the quiet moments between breaths,  
where thoughts linger like shadows,  
I find you a spark, a blaze,  
the soft echo of laughter in the distance.

Time stretches, bends, and sways  
as we weave the golden tapestry of days,  
each brittle thread a memory, a heartbeat,  
our fleeting glance that holds the weight of forever.

The world fades, it's just us,  
lost in the rhythm of our own song,  
where silence speaks louder than words,  
and every heartbeat is a step closer to home.

# Brown, White, and Red

by Ebe Sage Johnson

Spring. The time of year for blooming flowers to replace melting snow. Chickadees and mockingbirds flew above the meadow flecked with dandelions, rabbits, and hedgehogs. All were cheerful and hungry for breakfast except for one very distraught hare.

Harry stood on a hill with his hedgehog friend, Winchester, looking at the animals who nibbled the sweet grass below. Brown, grey, and black fur dotted the fields, but Harry was watching for white. It didn't take long for the beautiful white rabbit to catch his eye, surrounded by the young children of the meadow. Harry had been friends with Wynn all their lives, but their relationship was swiftly changing.

Winchester followed Harry's gaze and smiled. "How's the flower?" he asked, referring to the one Harry hoped to use as a proposal to Wynn. "You two are of age now, you know. Eight months each."

"I know," Harry replied. "I just don't know for sure if today is the right day."

"What better day could you have?" argued Winchester. "The sun is warm, the dandelions are at their best, and there's no danger to be seen."

Harry began pacing back and

forth like a dog awaiting a squirrel that hid in a tall tree.

Winchester munched on his clover—he always had a clover, or sometimes a dandelion, to snack on—until he figured out what it was that Harry needed.

"Remind me again why you even want to propose to Wynn?" Winchester knew he had asked the right question when Harry's eyes lit up.

"Oh, Winchester, how could you wonder such a thing! You've seen for yourself how her earnest kindness wins over anyone and everyone, especially the little ones. But under that shell of refinement is a fervent spirit who doesn't hesitate to speak her mind, who tells you what you need to hear even when it's not what you want to hear. I couldn't imagine a better life than one lived with Wynn."

Harry sighed. Winchester had reminded him of his spirited love for Wynn, but it hadn't made him any less nervous. His apprehension battled with his resolve until he decided he needed a distraction.

"I'm going down to check on my flower," Harry said, and down his burrow he went.

"Don't be long, breakfast will be over soon," Winchester called, which prompted him to make quick work of his savory clover.

In the depths of the burrow, the flower's soft yet luminous presence was in stark contrast to the dusty dirt floor it sat on.

"Winchester is right," Harry thought to himself. "It won't be long before this flower goes bad, and really, the best time to do something is when it can be done."

He grabbed the flower by the stem and climbed out of the hole. Winchester was a little way up the hill scavenging for another clover, bearing a remarkable resemblance to a round man looking for his lost car keys. Harry knew better than to disturb him when he was in such a hungry mood, which was often, and set off down the hillside towards Wynn.

The morning sun made her fur shine, and being nearer to her finally gave Harry some courage. He was about to put the flower down so he could speak but stopped short. Harry's chestnut fur stood on end.

From within the bushes, a long pointed nose breathed in the fragrance of rabbit. The fox's heartless stare was locked onto the scrumptious little morsels, its copper body ready to pounce at any moment.

But the beast's hopes for lunch were squandered in an instant, as the thump of Harry's



hind leg sent all meadow folk ducking for cover in their burrows. Even so, they weren't out of danger yet.

"Winchester!" Harry called, scampering up the slope to draw his friend out of his breakfast trance. "Gather up as many hedgehogs as you can and follow me!"

The fox had now dove headlong into the burrow. Harry could just make out a white rabbit pressing against the others and pushing the young ones out of danger, the overcrowded burrow making it difficult to evade the beast's reach.

Harry watched with anticipation as the hedgehogs arrived and, seeing the fox, spiked up and rolled into balls like a herd of deadly pompoms. Though it stung, Harry gave each hedgehog a shove down the ridge, and they rolled right into the fox. With a yelp, the fox was startled out of the burrow. After several failed attempts to ignore the spikey little nuisances, the fox became discouraged and fled.

Once he was sure the fox had left their meadow, Harry went to the hole where the rabbits were emerging. Winchester was nearby, dizzy from rolling down the hill but assuring the others that they were safe now.

"Thank you, Winchester," Harry said sincerely, putting a paw on his shoulder. He withdrew quickly as he remembered the sharp quills. "Is everybody alright?"

"We're fine now," said a

honeyed voice from behind them. "Other than a bruise or two from packing into the burrow like that."

Harry immediately recognized the voice as Wynn and whirled around to see her there, slightly dusty but unharmed. He nuzzled her gratefully.

"We can handle things from here," Winchester said with a not-so-subtle wink at Harry, who caught the cue and led Wynn up the hill.

In the brilliant sun, with the cool breeze and twittering of birds, no time could have been better to be up on the hill. But as they approached the top, Harry stopped and stared at the ground, where a very mangled flower was pressed into the soil. He picked it up gently, and they continued their ascent. As they sat down at the summit, he laid the flower in front of them.

"This was for you, Wynn. It got trampled when the hedgehogs came down the ridge, but I was hoping to—I thought it could—"

He stopped as he noticed a peculiar bunch of white petals nearby. He walked over, picked the brilliant white flower, and set it at their feet.

"The truth is, Wynn, I want to be with you always. Whether it's the prosperous spring or the wilted winter months, I want to love you and protect you. So I give you this gift with the question: Would you have me as your own?"

Wynn looked up from the flower and into Harry's eyes, their dark chocolate colour deepened

with emotion that captivated her.

"Oh, Harry, I will! I've thought about this for so long. I've fallen in love with your good heart, protective spirit, and bashful chivalry. Why, I couldn't imagine a better life than one spent with you."

With joy, Harry placed the flower between Wynn's ears like a crown on a queen. They ate grass together on the hill until the evening, then went into the burrows and fell sound asleep.

Though their flower wilted after only a few days, their love for each other never did. And what of the first flattened flower? Like a testament to their love enduring through the seasons, its seeds were blown across the hillside and bloomed the next spring (which means Winchester probably had a very full stomach that year).



# Revelations: Chapter Six

by Toni Mulder

To be eternal is to exist forever, without beginning or end. It was mortals who labelled us as such—we four never claimed such a title. Humans fail to understand that everything has a beginning, and thus, everything must have an end. Why should we be any exception?

The story of our beginning has already been written.

This is the story of our end.

Our brother faded first, his bloody passions tempered by the weary faces of his worshippers. Wars could not be waged when there were hardly enough humans left to fight in them, and thus his power dwindled. He proved difficult to find, at first. I think he did not want us to see him weakened.

When I finally found him standing alone in the centre of an ancient battlefield, he held a gun to my skull and ordered me to leave. When I did not, he begged. His form wavered like a dying candle flame, nothing left for the fires of his fury to consume. I stared into the glistening barrel of his weapon as it flickered, and when it vanished, I bowed my head.

The earth did not shake. The sky did not weep. My brother, so furious and volatile in life, received no grand farewell to mark his

passing. Yet something about the world felt different, as if the earth itself released a breath long held. A sigh of relief, or resignation; it was impossible to tell the difference.

In that very moment, I felt the cold creep of eternity wind its way around my neck, hanging like a noose in the seconds before the trapdoor falls. Fear is not something I have ever known, but in that moment, I wondered if I understood it.

It was my sister who found me in the weeks afterwards, watching over barren fields sown with ash, where the stench of rot hung heavy in the dry air. Her hollow eyes spoke of an unending hunger that would never be sated, poised to devour her as surely as it had multitudes of others. When she turned that desperate gaze on me, I knew she saw the future as clearly as I.

"We must fulfil our duty," I murmured before she had the chance to speak. "It is why we were created. Why we exist."

"The duty you speak of would have us end ourselves."

"Yes." I did not know what she expected to hear. It was not a truth we could change. Our path had been set since the moment the seals were broken and we first set foot on Earth.

"I think . . ." She trailed off, her tattered shawl shifting to reveal ribs pressed against the flesh of her stomach. "I think I will miss them."

I closed my eyes, head bowing. "The humans." It was not a question. There was no one else for her to miss. Our bond was not strong enough for that.

"Yes. They do what we cannot."

Precious seconds ticked by in which I did not answer, confused by her words. "They die?"

"No. Everything dies eventually, brother, even us." When I turned to her, her hungry gaze was cast to the horizon. "They *choose*. Even in the face of destruction, they chose. They are not set in their ways as we are."

"You wish for things we were never meant to have, sister."

A pained smile wound its way across cracked lips. "Countless centuries, and you have yet to learn to think for yourself, brother."

I did not meet her gaze when it turned back to me. Instead, I stood and watched the brilliant scarlet of the horizon bleed into darkness. As the very last blood-red stain vanished from sight, I sensed a chill beside me. My sister gasped, a sound more absence than breath, as the air yawned open like a pit

and swallowed her whole.

I did not weep. It was not something I knew how to do. Yet when I was finally called away from that barren plain, a monument of stones remained where none had been before. From a distance it resembled a cloaked figure in mourning, though none remained to see the likeness. At the figure's feet, shards of glass glittered like tears.

My final sibling sought me out in a graveyard of monoliths, knowing their own sickness would soon consume them. "You will have to end everything alone," they whispered in a voice ravaged by disease.

Their words settled on my shoulders, weighing heavier than I expected. "We always knew it would be this way."

"There is a difference between knowing and experiencing, brother." My sibling held a shaky hand to the horizon, gesturing at the crumbled remains of concrete and stone that surrounded us like the corpses of giants. Browning ivy scaled the city's corpse, choking the stone the same way sickness had choked the lungs of those who lived here. "The humans must have known their end was coming, yet look how little they did to stop it."

"Perhaps, but we cannot stop it." I paused, then quickly corrected myself. "We will not stop it."

"Then maybe it's a good thing you were chosen to be the last."

They inhaled a rattling breath and slowly sank to their knees, robes pooling around their emaciated frame like broken wings. I crouched next to them, a steadying hand on their shoulder as they shivered violently despite the warm air.

For the first time, I did not look away. I watched as creeping tendrils rose from the ground and the sky, gathering my sibling in their embrace. A moment later, they were gone.

Now, I walk alone. I wander through lands where proud nations once ruled and humanity celebrated the very things that would lay them low. I travel through battlefields, barren plains, and land where even the earth holds poison, and I remember those who passed.

All too soon I am drawn, like a moth, to the very last light alive on this battered, blood-soaked planet. She is hardly more than a husk of a human now, her glow dimming as she lies alone in the shadow of humanity's hubris. I wonder if she's even aware that she is the last. Does she sense, with every step I draw closer, the twilight of humanity trailing at her heels?

I doubt she does. She rests quietly in her bed, chest rising and falling alongside the weak staccato of her heart. She is old, her pale face lined with wrinkles, each one telling a story of hardship. I recall my sister's words and wonder, as I approach, what choices she made that led her to this moment. What

regrets does she have, what wishes will she leave unfulfilled? There is a sorrow to be had in these thoughts, and I consider for the first time what might have been.

"Perhaps things could have been different, once." I sit at her side, listening to the shadow of her breathing. "But now, to remain alone is a cruel fate. I think it is time we both rest."

She will not die of violence—the passing of my brother made sure of that. Nor will she die of sickness or starvation—those deaths were taken with my siblings when they left. But there are other deaths, more peaceful ones, and that is what lies in store for her.

A final soul, released from the wreckage of a dead world. I stand vigil as humanity breathes its last, and then I too crumble.

I am Death. In the end, I come for all.

# Contributor Bios

**Cole Allen** is a dedicated teenage student, passionate football player, and provincial-level competitive swimmer. Beyond sports, he is an avid reader with a deep love for poetry. Cole's commitment to athletics and academics, alongside his creative pursuits, highlights his well-rounded nature and determination in all areas of life.

**Julia Cismaru** was born and raised in Regina, Saskatchewan to Romanian immigrants, Magdalena and Romulus Cismaru. A voracious reader since childhood, Julia began writing her own stories at just nine years old. She has volunteered with Regina Public Library and has a passion for writing and English Language Arts.

**Sam Ellis** is a Grade 10 student, originally from Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, and he now resides in a rural town in the west central region of Saskatchewan. Sam participates in several school and club sports.

**Erika Hertlein** is a Grade 11 student at Langenburg Central School who spends most of her time reading, dancing, spending time with friends, and being a total perfectionist. From a young age, she has used writing as her creative outlet.

**Justine M.H.** is a Grade 11 student with a love for literature. She lives in the heart of the Saskatchewan prairies and loves spending time outdoors at every opportunity. In the future, Justine hopes to publish several novels.

**Ebe Sage Johnson** has been crafting stories for as long as she can remember. Her favourites include epic tales, meaningful pieces, and comical anecdotes, whether in English or French. She also has a passion for painting, a love for music, and is happiest when sharing it all with family and friends.

**Finn Landry** is a sixteen-year-old high school student in Moose Jaw. With his passion for literature and overwhelming feelings, he picked up writing at a young age to help organize his mind. Now, he continues to write and aspires for a future where he can help other people.

**Jhan Lorah** was born in the Philippines surrounded by the bustle of a busy town. She moved at the age of three with her family to a small town in Saskatchewan. The busy noises were replaced with birds chirping and silence. As a normally quiet person, writing gives her a voice.

**Zayden Mack** is a Grade 12 student at Lanigan Central High School that has had a passion for reading and writing since a very young age. She adores classic literature, gut-wrenching films, and emotional music. She hopes to continue writing in the future to better understand herself and the world around her.

**Angeley McLean** is a Grade 12 student with a passion for reading and writing. Angeley has been writing since she was nine and has enjoyed literature since she could read it. She appreciates both fiction and nonfiction writing, but particularly likes realistic stories and poems.

**Toni Mulder** is a Grade 12 student in the SAGE program at Walter Murray Collegiate. She lives on an acreage and loves to spend her summers writing on the back deck with her dogs. An avid reader and writer, Toni also enjoys playing basketball, snowboarding, cross-country, motorbiking, and crafting.

**Abigail Nelson** is a junior in high school. She lives in a small town in southeast Saskatchewan called Rocanville. She is an avid reader, which directly relates to her love of writing. She also loves the sciences and has hopes of becoming a pediatric nurse after high school.

**Emily Neufeld** is a Grade 12 student from Saskatoon who is currently attending Marion Graham Collegiate. When she's not belting out songs in a car that is in no way soundproof, or crying to rom-coms she's seen a million times before, she is writing poems and starting lyrics that she will never finish.

**Keller Nickell** is a fourteen-year-old student from Maymont Central School. Keller was born on October 18th, 2010 at RUH in Saskatoon. He now lives on a farm owned by his grandpa outside of Maymont. Keller loves to spend his free time driving tractors, quadding, and snowmobiling with friends.

**Ibrahim Osman** is the son of two immigrants who sought asylum in Canada and is a Grade 12 student at Regina Huda School. He is a writer, athlete, artist, photographer/videographer, and more than anything, a kid with a big dream. Ibrahim will be entering the University of Regina with a major in Psychology in the arts and hopes to become a lawyer.

**Heidi Paice** is a sixteen-year-old student currently in Grade 11. She attends Whitewood School and is enrolled in a Sask Distance Learning creative writing class. She enjoys both reading and writing and her favourite class at the moment, excluding her creative writing class, is ELA.

**Bella Pinay** lives in Lebret, Saskatchewan with her parents, Carlin and Jennifer, and her siblings, Sheridan and Esme. When she's not at school or hanging out with friends, she enjoys writing and playing volleyball. Bella has loved writing since she was a little girl, and it has been one of her dreams to write something worth reading.

**Hallie Quist**, a Grade 10 student at Lucky Lake School, is an avid writer of poetry and short stories. A dedicated volunteer at the local rink, she also enjoys reading K.R. Alexander, playing volleyball and badminton, and exploring her passion for art through painting and drawing.

**Seraphim Strauss** is eighteen years old and has spent the majority of her life living in small rural communities. She gradually developed a love of writing from reading and spending years lost in the pages of books. Her life dreams include mythology and introspection.



# Windscrip 2026 Submission Guidelines

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

Writers selected for publication will go through an editing process with the editor(s) and will receive payment at the standard SWG rates, as well as 2 complimentary copies of *Windscrip*.

The editing process consists of revising the content, organization, grammar, and presentation of a piece of writing to enhance the writer's voice. Students should submit their best work but **be prepared to work collaboratively on edits with the editor(s) to take their work to the next level.** For example, the editor(s) may ask you to expand a scene or may suggest word choice changes. Students should consider the suggestions of the editor(s) respectfully and with an open mind and understand that they can advocate for their writing with the editor(s)—this is what we mean by “work collaboratively.” Work selected for publication is always chosen for its potential and not its perfection. Editor(s) will communicate with students by email; timely and attentive communication is crucial to the process, so students should check their email often.

Writers selected for publication will sign a publishing contract that gives **Canadian first serial rights (FCSR)** to the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild (SWG) for their work. This means the SWG will have the right to publish the piece first in Canadian markets. After this first publication in Canada, the writer is welcome to publish in other mediums or include the work in a book. The writer still holds first rights for international markets.

## Criteria:

Those submitting must be:

- Saskatchewan-based high school students. Students can submit creative writing in any and all forms including poetry and prose (fiction and creative nonfiction).
- Students do not have to be members of the SWG.

Submissions must be:

- All work must be original and human-generated from start to finish.
  - We do not accept submissions of any kind that were written, developed, or assisted by AI tools such as ChatGPT. Any attempt to submit AI-aided work may result in being banned from submitting to *Windscrip*.
  - Submissions that are proven to be plagiarised will not be accepted and the submitter will be banned from submitting to *Windscrip*.
  - Plagiarism, whether from the web, from other students, or from published sources (digital or print) is a serious writing offence. Plagiarism is the presentation of words or thoughts of someone else as if they were your own—exceptions are proverbial sayings or common knowledge. Avoid charges of plagiarizing by acknowledging your sources in the submission and be sure that all words and phrases from the source are in quotation marks.

- Writers must submit their own work directly —submissions cannot be made by a third party (such as a parent or teacher).
- You must proofread your manuscript before submission.
- You may submit up to four poems and two prose pieces (which do not exceed 1500 words each).
- You can submit in both prose and poetry, but contributors will only be published in one genre.
- *Windscrip*t does not accept pieces with multiple authors or images.
- *Windscrip*t does not accept work that has been previously published. Published means that the work has been made available to the public in some way, including in physical form (like books or newspapers) or electronic forms (like websites or social media).

## Guidelines:

**Always keep a copy of your submitted work.**

**Submissions will not be returned.**

Please email the following as attachments to [windscrip magazine@gmail.com](mailto:windscrip magazine@gmail.com) with *Windscrip* Submission in the subject line:

- 1) Download and complete the *Windscrip* Cover Letter Form from our website (<https://skwriter.com/programs-and-services/publications/windscrip>) and attach it to your email along with your poetry and/or prose pieces. Fill it out completely or your submission will not be accepted.
  - Your *Windscrip* Cover Letter Form

can be emailed to us in the following formats: PDF, Word .doc, or .docx formats. Please do not submit links (like from Google Docs) to your *Windscrip* Cover Letter Form. For security reasons, links will not be clicked on.

- Your *Windscrip* Cover Letter Form should be named "First Name Last Name - cover letter".
- 2) Each submission properly formatted:
    - Do not put more than one poem or prose piece on a page. Each piece of writing should be its own document. Your file names must be as follows: *Windscrip\_title\_genre* (example: *Windscrip\_The Raven\_Poetry*).
    - Type each piece in 12 pt. plain text font (such as Times New Roman, Arial, or Courier), and prose must be double spaced.
    - Number each page.
    - Put the title on each submission and each page of the manuscript.
    - Submit documents in .doc or .docx formats. Please do not submit PDFs or Pages files or links (like from Google Docs) to your work. Download each file and attach it to the email. For security reasons, links will not be clicked on.

Questions? Email [swgevents@skwriter.com](mailto:swgevents@skwriter.com)

For the most up-to-date submission guidelines, please visit <https://skwriter.com/programs-and-services/publications/windscrip>

## Contributors

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