

windscript

The Magazine of High School Writing

Volume 37, 2021

One day I'll
know what
to do

I still look
for your
car on every
busy street

Home is where
I'm known best

You have
been the jury of
my heart

The girl stood up, her gaze
fixed upon the path ahead,
and followed the river home

I'm barefoot,
stumbling all over,
and covered head to
toe in dirt

I am tea and
crumpets, please

Galaxies colliding cannot compare

illuminating her in flowing golden light



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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 (SWG) 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.

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 nēhiyawak (cree), Anihšīnēpēk (Saulteaux), Dakota, Lakota, Nakota and Dené Nations and the Homeland of the Métis Nation.

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MANAGING/POETRY EDITOR

Taidgh Lynch

Welcome to *Windscrip*t 37!

Since 1983, *Windscrip*t has been promoting young writers from all over Saskatchewan and every year another volume is published, which gives students the opportunity to get their writing noticed. The success of the magazine not only depends on the writers, but also the teachers, parents, librarians, and unseen others who give their time and energy to promote and elevate young writers.

As the submissions poured in, deciding what to publish was challenging. In the end, I was delighted by the variety of content. The prose and poetry that has been selected is a reflection of the high quality of writing that is on offer in the province. If I had to pick one theme that the magazine embodies, I would say, “loss”—loss of support, loss of childhood, loss of friendship, loss of culture, loss of family, loss of memory, loss of the mind, loss of time, and loss of identity. The writing in this volume resonates with the time that we are living in. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we face our own losses, both big and small, on a daily basis. These losses are what make us human. No one is without them.

I am grateful to the SWG for entrusting the magazine into my care. A big thank you goes to Cat Abenstein who was a fantastic support and was always available to answer any questions. This year, I was joined by Elena Bentley as Associate Prose Editor. Having two editors is a first for *Windscrip*t. It was wonderful working with Elena. I couldn’t have done it without her invaluable assistance and input.

While much of the writing in this volume deals with loss, resilience shines through and hopeful voices emerge. Please join me in celebrating the writers of *Windscrip*t 37!



ASSOCIATE PROSE EDITOR

Elena Bentley

What a humbling experience it was to work on *Windscrip*t 37! Choosing the prose pieces was a demanding yet thoroughly fulfilling experience, given all the incredible submissions I had the privilege to read. Part of what I think makes this issue of *Windscrip*t special is that despite all the chaos, change, and upheaval the last year has brought us, these young writers not only continued to create art, but they were also undaunted in their desire to share it. Their work serves as evidence that art is powerful, and necessary, in trying times.

I feel very fortunate to have been a part of the creation of such a wonderful issue, and so grateful to have had the health to do so. In the spirit of thanks, I have to give many to the SWG for providing me with an opportunity to continue to grow and learn as an editor. Thank you, Taidgh, for all your hard work putting volume 37 together, for your solid leadership, and for your collaborative approach.

Thank you to the writers—it was an absolute honour to work with you. Watching your work evolve and develop during our time together was, as many of you expressed to me, an amazing process. I was so impressed by your willingness to explore and experiment, the careful questions you asked, and the thoughtful choices you made regarding your work. Most importantly, thank you for trusting me with your stories. I certainly don’t need to tell you to keep writing and pursuing your passions because if a global pandemic can’t stop you, nothing will—and that gives me so much hope for the future.



YOUTH POET LAUREATE

Peace Akintade

The world is eagerly waiting to receive your perspective on her beauty. Each word you sculpt is creating universes out of memories, inspiration, and unique experiences. I believe that young writers are the most powerful creation because we have the power to create culture. We are the inscription of self-discovery, mixed with an unending need to form art. Imagine your feet are growing roots, your hands are branches, and your words are oxygen. Do you think the tree knows its influence? You may diminish your art, but your words give life to others. I want you to remember how important your presence is. How important your vision is. I am filled with joy and energy when I think about the youths writing in their journals, or scrambling a line in the middle of the night. Your imagination knows no bounds. Promise me that you fall in love with your work. Fall in love with the feel of the keyboard, the curve of a pencil; a simple way of romanticizing your passion. When you fall in love with your presence in the universe, the universe falls in love with you! Go forth my seeds of change, my tree of wisdom. Create a galaxy in your branches—give life to the readers!

Jerrett Enns Award

This award recognizes a high school student for excellence in poetry and prose writing. It is named in honour of Victor Jerrett Enns who was Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Writers’ Guild from 1982 to 1988.

POETRY WINNER

**Sohila Elgedawi -
“Supermarket Flowers”**

HONOURABLE MENTION

Emily Zbaraschuk - “worlds collide”

PROSE WINNER

Kamryn Heavin - “The Dirt”

HONOURABLE MENTION

Gracelyn Deutscher - “Where the Wish Sails”

Currie-Hyland Poetry Award

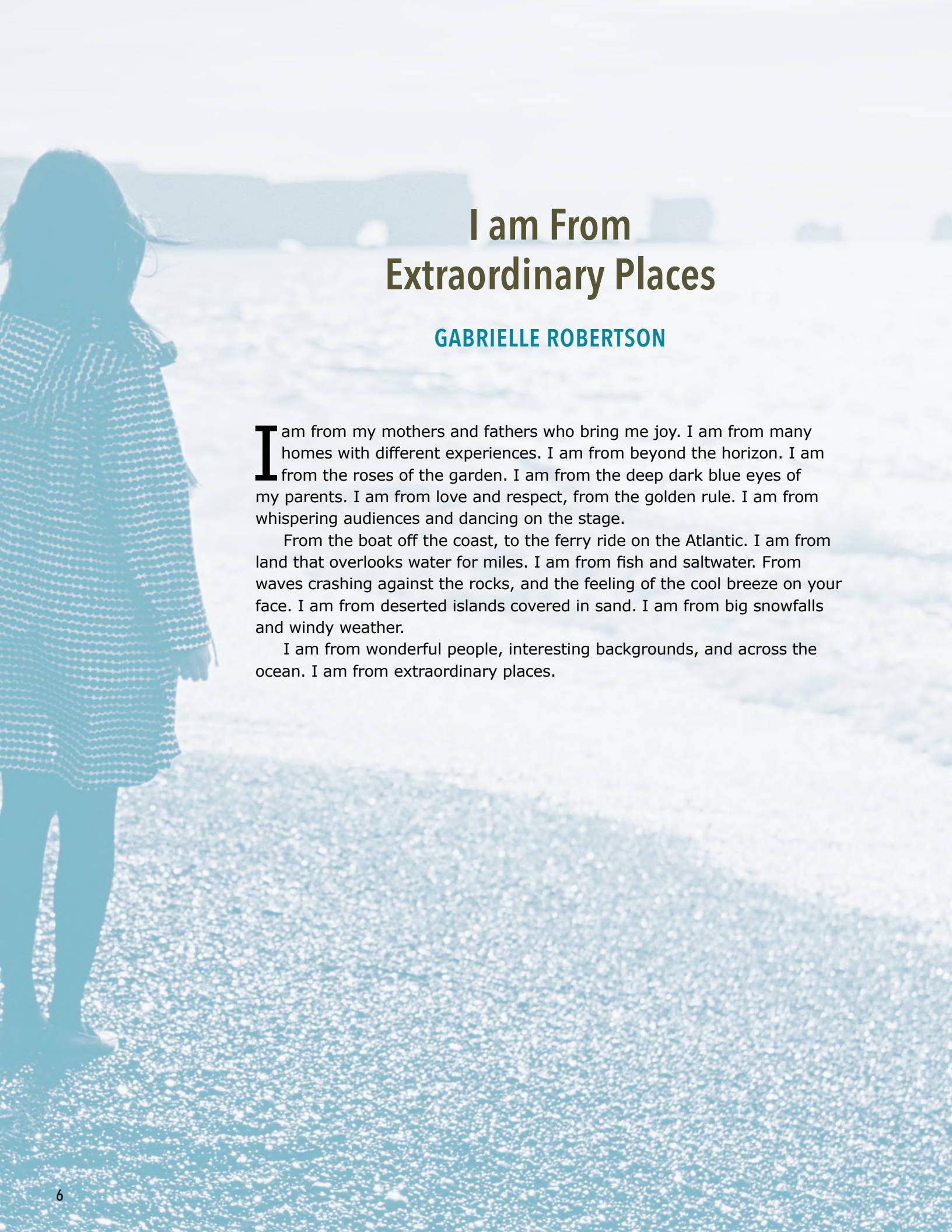
The Currie-Hyland Award for Poetry is awarded for excellence in poetry to a high school student living outside Regina or Saskatoon. This award was established in 1992 by the Saskatchewan Writers’ Guild and the literary community of Moose Jaw as a tribute to Robert Currie and Gary Hyland.

WINNER

Georgina Doyle - “I am a Conundrum”

HONOURABLE MENTION

Cassie Meyer - “The Seat of My Favourite Coffee Shop”

A person with long dark hair, wearing a patterned coat, stands on a beach looking out at the ocean. The background is a soft-focus view of the sea and distant land.

I am From Extraordinary Places

GABRIELLE ROBERTSON

I am from my mothers and fathers who bring me joy. I am from many homes with different experiences. I am from beyond the horizon. I am from the roses of the garden. I am from the deep dark blue eyes of my parents. I am from love and respect, from the golden rule. I am from whispering audiences and dancing on the stage.

From the boat off the coast, to the ferry ride on the Atlantic. I am from land that overlooks water for miles. I am from fish and saltwater. From waves crashing against the rocks, and the feeling of the cool breeze on your face. I am from deserted islands covered in sand. I am from big snowfalls and windy weather.

I am from wonderful people, interesting backgrounds, and across the ocean. I am from extraordinary places.

Be a Kid

CLAIRE NAGEL

When you were eight, they told you to go and play
To run, to adventure, to imagine
They told you to have fun
They told you, be a kid

When you were twelve, they told you to act your age
To do your work, to be mature, to act proper
They told you to be a role model
They told you, grow up

Now you're sixteen they tell you, slow down
To think, to learn, to take it in
They tell you to go back
To be that eight-year-old again
Don't wish away the little time you have
They tell you, be a kid

Where the Wish Sails

GRACELYN DEUTSCHER

Jordy adjusted his sail in the direction of the wind. He watched as the cloth puffed out before pulling the small boat through the water. He inhaled the slightly salty air, then leaned over to pick up the glass bottle.

It was habit. A habit that had spiraled out of his control. With every bottle he found, his need grew. He felt it in his veins and in his chest.

His hair was grey now. His skin, worn and wrinkled. His beard, bleached from sun and salt.

The bottle felt familiar in his callused hand. They all had a similar weight to each other, and after all these years it was hard for him to forget when he opened the first one. How warm and light he felt when he finished reading that first note.

The beach was crowded with people. Everyone wanted to capitalize on the thirty-degree weather. Jordy had to zigzag around the towels and umbrellas that occupied every available space. His best friend, Brian, was on his heels, and their girlfriends weren't far behind.

Laughing, they braced themselves for the waves that pushed against them. Jordy grabbed his girlfriend, Lana, and lifted her onto his shoulders. Brian did the same with his girlfriend, Jenny, and they faced off.

After some good-hearted trash talk and a few rounds of wrestling, the couples started for land. Breathless, but happy, Jordy wrapped his arm around Lana. She smiled at him before looking at the water.

"Jordy, look!"

She was pointing at an object floating six feet away from them. The glare of the sun reflected into his eyes. Jordy released his girlfriend and swam towards the object.

"It's a bottle," he said.

He held it up for her to see.

"It looks like there's paper inside," Lana said.

"Bring it back to the towels and we'll open it!"

Lana's smile grew bigger as she raced out of the water. Jordy quickly followed. When they got to the towels, Brian and Jenny looked up confused.

"What took you guys so long? You were right behind us," Jenny said.

"Jordy and I found a bottle! It has a piece of paper in it! Let's open it!"

"Why would someone put a piece of paper in a bottle and then leave it in the ocean?" Brian asked. "Seems like a waste to me."

"My grandmother always told me that if you write down your wish on a piece of paper, put it in a glass bottle, and give it to the sea, your wish might come true!" Lana explained.

"Stupid," Brian said, clearly unimpressed. "Let's go get something to eat."

He grabbed Jenny's arm and pulled her away.

"Let's open it," Jordy said and handed Lana the bottle. "You do the honours."

Lana took the bottle and pulled out the cork. She tipped the bottle upside down and gave it a little jerk to get the note. Putting down the bottle, she unrolled the note and read it out loud:

"I wish I could buy a hot meal. Ross Hick. August 2019."

"Babe, what are the chances that's Old Man Hick? The one who's always sitting by the shops with his plastic cup?"

"Yeah, you're right!"

Jordy pointed at the note. "What if we could make his wish come true?"

"What are you talking about?" Lana asked.

"What if we paid for a hot meal from one of the diners and had them bring it to Hicks. We could ask them to give him this note with the food."

Lana grinned and grabbed Jordy's hand. They rushed towards Gibson's Fish and Chips, the popular diner on the boardwalk. Jordy swung open the door to the diner for Lana, then bought a hot meal and asked for it to be delivered to the man sitting across the street with the plastic cup.

When they left the diner, they walked to a bench hoping to see

the delivery. The smile on Old Man Hick's face when the waitress brought over the food made Jordy's chest warm and he felt light. Like he was walking on air.

Old Man Hick read the note multiple times before opening the containers, almost like he was terrified one wrong move would make them disappear. He brought a spoonful of deep-fried fish to his mouth and leaned back into the concrete barrier with a sigh.

"We should do this. The two of us," Jordy said. He looked away from the old man and stood up from the bench, grabbing Lana's hands. "We should find more bottles. Old Man Hick can't be the only one to put their wish in a bottle and throw it into the sea."

"Are you sure? How would we

do it?"

"I have no clue, but we have to try."

Jordy looked again at the bottle in his callused hand. A small smile graced his lips and his eyes crinkled at the corners as he thought of that first day.

"What are you thinking about?" a gentle voice asked.

Jordy looked up at his loving wife.

"Just thinking about the first time we did this."

He held up the new bottle. Lana smiled as she looked at the sun reflecting off the glass.

"It's sure been a journey. You ready to see where this one takes us?"

"I'm always ready."

Jordy took the cork from the bottle and unrolled the new wish.

Buried Treasure

GRAEME HOPKINS

I'm startled into the present by the aggressive rumble of the phone in my pocket. Just by the feel of it, I can tell it's some kind of text message.

The bell rings, and I leave for break. I remove the buzzing phone from my pocket, awaken its dormant face, and see a text from Maddie.

What's up?

Not much. U?

U free tmrw?

Yeah y?

Wanna come over?

Sure

I know we haven't hung out for a while but it's my b day in a couple days.

Michael and Sam are gonna be there too.

Cool. I'll be there.

We all used to be friends. I mean, we technically still are. Every couple of months our parents get

together and we hang out. It's fun, but we never choose to be around each other anymore. Sam and Michael found new friends. Me and Maddie, well, we just grew apart. I found a bunch of new friends, and I always assumed she found new friends, too. I'll probably meet them tomorrow.

I drive up the short dirt road to Maddie's place. Dust flies up, painting my car with dirt and mud. I always wanted to live closer to her. Her house backs onto a forest. When you're standing in the middle of this forest, you can look in every direction and see nothing but trees slowly fading into the horizon.

Maddie runs up to me. She's wearing her trademark giant smile and the same kind of ripped jeans she would always wear whenever we went into the forest.

"Max! It's been, like, way too long! I feel like I haven't seen you in years! How are you?"

"I'm good. I know it's still a couple of days away, but, happy birthday!"

"Thanks! Wanna come inside? Sam and Michael are here."

I walk through the door that leads into the living room of her house. I see Gabbie, Sam, and Michael. Gabbie is pacing around the room, head bowed, looking at the floor. She's Maddie's younger

sister, but we've always hung out with her because she's not that much younger than us. Michael is sinking into the sofa, typing on his phone. Sam is sitting in a chair and looking down at her feet. Maddie walks in. They don't look up. Maddie used to be the center of attention. No one could *not* look at her and listen to everything she said.

"Um, guys? You remember Max? Well, here he is!" Sam and Michael both look up. Maddie speaks louder.

"So, Max. I was just explaining to the guys what we're gonna do. Today, we want to finally find *the treasure*."

As kids, we would spend hours digging and looking for the treasure. When we were no more than six or seven years old, Maddie told us this old family story about some famous bandits who robbed a bank. After being chased by the police, they hid in the forest. To save themselves from capture, the bandits lit the edges of the small forest on fire. But the fire spread, and the thieves had to escape. The only way out was to jump in the river that ran through the forest. They couldn't take the loot with them because the gold would weigh them down and they would drown. So, with the short time they had left, they split up the treasure and

buried it in different places. They planned to return later, but they never did.

I jam my shovel into the dirt. Michael, Sam, Maddie, and Gabbie all have one of their own. We've been digging for hours. The sun beats down on my skin, teasing out sweat from my neck and arms. We're all exhausted, but we're motivated by how rich we would be if we actually found the fabled gold. I can tell Michael is getting angry. Whenever things get tense, Maddie talks in an overly happy voice and shouts over whoever else is speaking.

"Hey, this reminds me of that one time when we poured water over the sides of that hole we made! Sam slipped and her clothes got, like, totally wrecked! You guys remember that?" Maddie says.

"I found it!"

I look around to see who found the treasure. I see Gabbie, and she's holding a wooden crate. We all run as fast as we can to her. All of us except Maddie. Michael snatches the chest from Gabbie's hands and opens the latch that holds it shut.

"No!" Maddie yells.

I'm too excited to wonder why she would say something like that. Michael empties the contents onto the forest floor. Gold coins pour

out of the crate. We all shout in excitement, but Sam looks confused. She walks up to the coins and picks one up. The smile instantly disappears from her face. She looks devastated.

"What is it?" I ask. I grab one of the coins to look at it myself. It isn't gold. It's nothing but plastic.

"What's the deal? Your precious treasure is fake!" yells Michael. "Who told you that story? Your parents? How come they didn't tell you it was fake? I don't understand!"

"I'm ... sorry," Maddie whispers. Tears well up in her eyes and crawl slowly down her pale face. The sun finally dips below the forested horizon and douses our world in darkness. Her small lips quiver and twitch with every word.

"It was never supposed to happen like this. It was a prank to get us all excited. I was only six years old! You were supposed to find it that first day, but you didn't. You came back over and over again, and we just kept digging. We had so much fun. But then we got older and you found new friends. I didn't. I wasn't good enough anymore. How did you forget about me? Too busy making new friends, I guess. As soon as you arrived, I knew it was hopeless. You're too different. If you had known the story was a lie from the beginning, would you have

still come over? What now? Leave, if you want. I don't care anymore."

Michael and Sam storm off. Eventually, I hear two cars drive away. Maddie is still standing there. For some reason, I stay. I think about what Maddie said. I look at my shovel, and I see the stickers I put on it years ago. Then, I see Maddie's signature. When I look back at Maddie, she's sitting slumped up against the trunk of a tree. I walk up to her and offer her my hand.

Red

ERICA RACETTE

i'm falling for you
for the same reason
that i fear you
which makes me wonder
if love and fear
are merely synonyms
under different shades of red

Trip

ERICA RACETTE

some days
he would put his foot out
so i'd trip
and he'd catch me
just to prove
that he could

but one day
he put his foot out
so i'd trip
and i didn't want him to catch me
just to prove
I could catch myself

Seventeen

COURTNEY ELDSTROM

One day
I'll know what to do,
where to go,
who to be.

For now
it's okay to be lost.

Too Much

COURTNEY ELDSTROM

So what, then?
If not now, then when?
If not this, then what?

"Answer me."

He doesn't speak a word,
but the air suddenly shifts.

He doesn't like girls who ask hard questions.

A Glimpse of Heaven

ANNA PUENTESPINA

I am the Kingsmere River trail lying perfectly still between the twining trees.
I am the footprints left behind creating their own lasting memory.
I am the lazy river that is hidden between the trees for no one to ever find except for those who truly look.
I am the warm sun that sits on their skin as they look up to the blue sky, soaking it all in.
I am the hair-raising water they float down leaving their systems shocked.
I am the reflection in the water mirroring their soft interlocking hands.
I am the jumping fish breaking through the water ... *Splash!*
I am the broken tree they float under giving them a cool shade of relief.
I am a cloud, alone in the sky watching them laugh.
I am the yellow daisy listening to their laughs and admiring their young love.
I am the faint sound of a bee hovering over the fresh dandelion.
I am the swift kayaker travelling past them, creating ripples in the water.
I am the quick current pushing them through the branches while they spin uncontrollably.
I am a sandbar where the river ends, and the bends of the road begin.
I am a rare river filled with beauty of all sorts.
I am a hidden gem dug up from the deepest mine.
I am a glimpse of heaven.

Mind Palace

EVELYN FOURSTAR

You asked me
What is home to you?
I thought for awhile
What is home to me?

Home is not just a place you lay your head
Or a place to fill your stomach with a Sunday roast
It's where dreams sit on mantelpieces
Where laughs brighten the room with warm light
Home is not a place
It's a feeling of wholeness and serenity

Home is in my memories
I live within the lyrics of "Another Day in Paradise"
I lay my head on my innocent juvenescence
I cover up in the lack of knowledge

What is home to you?
Home is where I'm known best
Where no such thing as judgement exists

Home is my mind palace

Christopher

ELEANOR GRANT

Christopher sat in his room. He was supposed to be doing homework, but what Daddy didn't know wouldn't hurt him. Christopher's favourite thing to do was watch the sunset with his pet turtle, Jeremiah. Although Christopher couldn't see it, it made Jeremiah happy and anything that made his turtle happy was worth doing. He especially loved it in autumn because of how the leaves whistled in the wind. Mommy loved autumn. She liked the way the leaves crushed and crumbled underfoot. Christopher was sad that his mommy wouldn't be there to see it this year.

Christopher was blind, but he could feel colour. It was like getting a headache of a different colour every time someone talked. He was four years old, but he'd already figured out what the colours meant. He knew that orange was fear and deep blue was despair, and the scariest colour was red. Red was bad. Red meant danger. Today, his turtle was seeping red, and it filled the room like an oil spill in the ocean. Something was wrong, and Jeremiah knew it.

Christopher felt scared, so he ran down the stairs with Jeremiah and called for his daddy. He ran into the kitchen and the living room, but no matter how hard he searched, he couldn't find him.

"Christopher," a distorted voice whispered in his left ear. The sound was like nails scraping on a chalkboard.

This *thing* was not his daddy. It didn't even sound human. He saw no colour evaporating from it. This *thing* probably couldn't feel anything.

Christopher whipped his body towards the stairs, ran back up to his room, and locked the door. He heard footsteps, first on the wooden tiles, then on the hollow stairs. He dashed under the bed and hid behind his toy chest and boxes that hadn't been touched since the move. He clutched Jeremiah to his chest.

The footsteps stopped in front of his door. Holding Jeremiah tight, Christopher listened and wondered where his daddy was. The doorknob shook vigorously, then it went quiet. Christopher was paralyzed with fear. All he could do was pray and hope that his daddy would burst through the front door before this *thing* could find a way into his room.

He fidgeted and grinned with relief. But just as Christopher began to feel hopeful, he heard a click. He knew that this was no human.

The *thing* pushed the door open. Its heavy footsteps got louder as it got closer to the last safe cranny of Christopher's room.

Christopher prayed even harder than before. He prayed that his daddy was okay and he prayed that he would come and save him. Hope, now, seemed like a string of deep blue. He kept waiting for something to happen. It seemed like nothing was ever going to happen. And then,

as suddenly as the silence started, it ended.

He held Jeremiah to his chest and covered him with his arms and legs. Splotchy blue and orange evaporated from Jeremiah as the bed flew across the room, exposing them to the dreaded *thing*.

Christopher didn't know what happened after that, but he wasn't scared anymore. All he knew was that he could see things that he never could've dreamed of.

He saw everything.

Still holding Jeremiah, he stood up and looked around. He was no longer in his room. He was in a beautiful garden. He went searching for his favourite flower, the 'Lady in Red' peony, but he found something much better. Christopher found his mommy's arms, and he wrapped himself in them as if they were a warm wool blanket. Then they found his daddy.

Christopher was so happy to have his mommy back.

"Mommy," Christopher whispered. "Can we stay here forever?"

His mommy didn't have to answer. For in his heart, he already knew.

The Seat of My Favourite Coffee Shop

CASSIE MEYER

I always think that I'm over you
I finally start to believe
That I've moved past the way that we once were
But for some reason
I can't help but sit at the window seat
In my favourite coffee shop
In the hope that you'll walk by
Perhaps you would see me sitting here
The way we did many moons ago
Two people just existing side by side

Something about being back in this place
Makes me instinctively reach for my phone to call you
My body goes on autopilot
Because I'm desperate to hear your voice
A voice that I once memorized
But no matter how hard I try I can't seem to remember it now

I still look for your car on every busy street
And for your face in every stranger
Every time I get a text I wonder if it's you

See, I don't think people ever truly move on
I think we simply learn to live with the pain
Of losing the one that we love
I've lived in this state of melancholy for so long
That I've made a home here
And suddenly I don't want to leave
I hung pictures of our heartbreak on the walls
And arranged our tattered furniture carefully
around the room

I got so damn used to stepping into the kitchen
And seeing ghosts of the people we once were
Slow dancing in the kitchen on a Sunday morning
The faint smell of brewing coffee pervading the air
Winter sunshine filling the room with light
Filling me with light
But now the rooms have gone dark
And I don't drink coffee anymore

I've found that the dull sting of heartbreak
Exists within every aspect of my life
Although it does fade
It still wanders through the streets of my mind
As I sit here
Many years later
In the window seat of my favourite coffee shop

The Stain

JANE GURNEY

The apartment is hot and humid. When I walk in the door, the heat hits me like a wave, washes over my eyes, nose, and hair, and settles at the back of my neck. A buzzing fluorescent light casts a sickly glow over the place, accentuating the tan carpet and mildewy walls. I bring in my bags, boxes, and an old couch. The apartment has no fan and the window is locked. Moving in alone isn't easy, and soon beads of sweat form on my brow. A single drop falls and plunges into the carpet. It rests briefly at the surface before being consumed by the fibres.

I purchased the cheap apartment from a man with yellow-stained fingers who smelled like rot. He handed me a small brass key coated in a sticky film that soap fails to cleanse. He only said one thing to me: "Rent's due on the third of each month."

Dinner is boxed pasta and an apple I found in my bag. I notice the bruise too late and my teeth sink into brown, mealy flesh. Dinner is now just boxed pasta.

When I wake up I notice a small, round, reddish-brown dot above the couch. It's so small that I wouldn't have noticed it if the light hadn't been just so. And yet, the light is just so.

I am certain it wasn't there yesterday. Or maybe it was, I can't be sure. It's a strange texture that reminds me of dried blood, a scab waiting to be picked. I am so very close to touching it when my phone rings—it's my co-worker, wondering why I'm fifteen minutes late. An ancient watch on my wrist tells me otherwise. I hit it, but the hands stay stuck. I sigh, hurry off, and forget all about the stain on my wall.

Crash.

My hands fumble as I try to pick up the pieces of the still-warm coffee cup. I've been floating through my day, trying to keep my thoughts from wandering. As I collect the ceramic shards, I begin to think about it. Why is the stain there? The question makes my skull itch; the answer is so close

I can taste it, but it's still out of reach. A stinging sensation makes me look down and I realize I've cut my hand. Blood blooms across the floor, merging with the coffee and spreading through the cracks in the tiles. I watch the pool grow before it occurs to me that I should probably clean it up. I feel a bit sad as I clean and sanitize, erasing the part of me I left on the break room floor.

I arrive home late at night, and immediately check the spot on the wall.

It's grown larger, contaminating more and more of the space with its filth. I don't know why I am so disgusted by a simple stain, only that its eyeless shape watches me from across the room. My apartment is hot and humid, and I convince myself that if I can get permission from the landlord to break the window lock and let some fresh air in, this perverse mould will simply disappear.

It takes me three days to finally catch him. He never answers his door, even when he knows I can hear noises inside. He is blunt, yet courteous, and follows me back to

my apartment so I may show him the stain.

"You're kidding me right? This gotta be some kind of prank. You like jokes?"

"What? No I—." I try to stammer out some kind of defence. "The stain is right there." It's looking at both of us, a giant mass above my couch. The landlord cuts me off.

"Even if there was some kind of *stain* here—which, let's not kid ourselves, there isn't—you can't open the windows anyways. It's a security risk. Look at you, living alone. You'll end up leaving the windows open at night. Easy pickings."

It is clear the conversation is over.

So I return to my humid little cage where the stain grows ever larger.

I start to see it everywhere. I feel the urge to pick, to peel and dig. It is a scab, a blight, a mass of rotting wood and wallpaper eating through me. I pick at it in my dreams. Pieces flake off in my hands and worm their way under my nails. It seeks out all the cracks where it can rest and burrow inside.

I pick, pick, pick until my nails bleed. Afterwards a thick, foul, red fluid stains my skin; it smells like honey and meat just starting to spoil. I worry that I am not dreaming, that I am becoming accustomed to its presence. It feels like company. My own personal parasite.

My bedroom is so hot that I wake up drenched in sweat, my sheets sticking to me like flypaper. I can't move an inch as I struggle to free myself. My tongue is cracked and sweat falls into my eyes. The smell of rotting flowers and unmixed paint crawls around my room and fills the back of my throat, clawing its way down. When I am finally free, I stagger out into the living room and stare longingly at the stain, thoughts coming to the surface from behind my eyes. Maybe release wouldn't be that awful. After all, it would be so selfish to deny it what it craves most.

And so I turn my arm over, examining soft, waiting flesh. Then I go to the kitchen and get a knife. The blade is a cheap one, but I sense that it doesn't make

a difference. The steel is cold and alien, something from an old life. Soon I will not need these artificial tools. Through the haze I am vaguely aware of a low thrum that fills my head, whispering sweet praise. My gift will be appreciated in the end. We will be whole.

When my palms run dry I find new places to carve—anywhere I can hollow out and offer up to my consumer. Standing is almost impossible. My feet falter and I lean against the stain, falling into its warm embrace. The scab is open and it hums lovingly, telling me how well I did, how I have so much potential, so much to give. *So much more.*

The Dirt

KAMRYN HEAVIN

It's not easy digging. It's not easy digging with blisters formed and already broken. With my back and arms aching from this unfamiliar labour. With fresh cuts stinging my palms.

But I don't stop.

Because this is good pain. The best kind of pain.

The handle is awkward and shaky in my grip. The spade carries less and less dirt from the hole with each throw. I'm almost done. I've already decided I'm not going down the full six feet. At about four I call it good, and for once, no one is telling me it's not.

I throw the shovel out first, then hoist myself up. It's the most graceless act I've performed in years, pulling myself out of that hole.

It's marvellously, wondrously, clumsy.

Standing there, surrounded by the trees and blissful silence, I look down at the body. I wonder, for the very first time, if I've made a mistake. Maybe I should have been more forgiving. Maybe I

should have kept my head down and accepted the excuses.

And then I remember the insults and the shoving, and the endless, endless screaming.

Well no one's screaming now.

This is the part where I'm supposed to shed a tear. I'm supposed to fall on my knees, overcome with grief and pretend that he meant something in this world, that he will be missed.

But after everything he's taken from me, I owe him nothing.

I don't give him a single word. Just one final kick.

The rug lands in the hole with a hollow thud and unrolls enough for me to see the contents.

One arm is pinned under his torso and one leg is bent at a sickening angle. I don't have to see his chest to know that there's a large gash there, another across his stomach. I don't have to see his face to know that his eyes are open wide, and the wound on his neck is open even wider. I don't have to see any of it to know he's dead.

I pick up the shovel and throw

the dirt back into the hole.

I start to leave the hurt behind.

I start to feel a little lighter.

At some point, I start to laugh.

By the time the house comes back into view, the sky behind me is stained a light pink. I'm barefoot, stumbling all over, and covered head to toe in dirt.

Still laughing.

When I enter the house, I stop smiling.

It looks exactly the same, *feel/s* exactly the same as it always has: as if the walls are closing in and the ceiling is falling down. There's always been so much empty space and never enough air.

I take a deep breath.

I walk across the floorboards that warned me.

I stand in front of the door that hid me.

I enter the room that broke me.

There's the shower curtain, torn off the bar. The mirror, shattered in the sink. And the shard of glass, forgotten in a puddle of blood.

I could say that I didn't mean to do it. That I had picked up the

shard and didn't know what I was doing until it was over. That, once it was over, I couldn't believe it, and I desperately wanted to take it back.

I could say that.

But I won't.

When the maid, Alice, arrives for work, I'm sitting at my vanity. I'm dressed in a deep crimson dress, my hair is pinned up, and I'm painting my lips a blood red.

I listen to her soft footsteps on the stairs, her sharp intake of breath as she draws to a halt in my doorway.

"Miss Reynolds," she greets me, a hint of confusion in her voice. "It's barely seven in the morning."

I smile. "And what a beautiful morning it is."

I set the lipstick down and rise from my stool. Today, there will be no need for foundation or concealer.

Today, I am wearing the cuts, scrapes, and bruises, for the very last time.

Because I have nothing to hide.

I will not bow my head.

I will not turn away.

Today, I will meet each look, gasp, and whisper, with a smile.

"I noticed there's quite a bit of dirt on the floor downstairs," Alice says, watching me closely. "Would you like me to—"

"That's quite all right," I

interrupt. "Why don't you take the day off, Alice?"

She blinks. "But shouldn't I clean first? Won't the dirt upset Mr. Reynolds?"

Oh, it will.

The dirt will torture Mr. Reynolds.

The dirt will drive Mr. Reynolds absolutely mad.

Yes, the dirt will make Mr. Reynolds scream and shout and spew curses like never before.

"My father won't mind at all," I assure Alice, my lips curved in a downright wicked grin. "In fact, I think he'll become rather comfortable with it."



Does the Past Become Memory?

JACK BELL

Everyday was the same. I would get home from school at 2:30 pm on the dot. I would come through the back door and slide off my shoes. I never wore lace-up shoes because I hated sitting on the creaky wooden chair she kept pushed up against the wall. She denied it, but whoever sat in that chair fell victim to its splinters. Even though I had been told to put them on the rack my whole life, I would leave my shoes by the door. Then I'd let my overstuffed backpack fall off and crash to the floor as my textbooks hit her travertine tiles, signaling I was home. Everyday she came out of the basement with a smile that could fill a person with enough joy to last a lifetime. She always stuck to her routine. She never missed a day. And I felt safe.

This is what she lost first: her sense of routine. The change was slow, and at the time it was impossible to notice. She would be a few seconds late coming up from the basement after I dropped my bag on the ground. A few seconds turned into a few minutes. And a few minutes turned into her not coming

upstairs at all. I'll never forget when I realized that something was wrong with my grandma.

I was a little bit late getting home that day. I had been caught up at school with a friend. The air was cold. It was right before a snowfall and the wind was sharp. The walk home was torture. Like routine, I slipped off my shoes and then dropped my bag. It thudded on the ground, but she never came. *Maybe she thinks I'm someone else coming home*, I wondered. I stood there waiting to hear her footsteps because after living with someone for so long you know who is coming just by their step.

I twisted around to pick up my bag and shoes. I slowly walked over to the shoe rack where I slid them into their parking spot just as she did. I shuffled along the floor, dragging my feet, hoping to make my presence known. I hoped that maybe she had just lost track of time, and she would realize it was me and I would see her smile. But as I reached for the basement door, the house was still as quiet as it was when I arrived home.

"Grandma," I called. The only

answer I received was my echo bouncing off the walls.

I crept down her stairs. The stairs were carpeted and creaked at every shift and step. *Surely, she knows it's me*, I thought. *Why isn't she saying hello? Did I do something wrong?* When I got to the bottom of the stairs, I met an empty room undisturbed from the night before where we had family over for a movie night. The popcorn bags laid stiff on the floor and empty pop cans were staggered on top of every surface. *It's almost three*, I thought. *She would have cleaned this up by now*.

I slung my bag over the back of her chair and called out. Just before the echo could respond, I ran back up the stairs skipping steps as I went. I called out again, but I still got no answer. I saw her as I reached the top of the stairs, sitting at the dining room table. She was facing out the window. My heart was pounding and my worry turned into anger. *Why didn't she respond to me?* I was so worried. I stomped towards her, but when I touched her shoulder she recoiled as if I were a stranger and my anger

and accusations disappeared. I had never seen her do that before and I was scared.

It was a long night until my grandpa got home, and a long few years until we got a diagnosis.

When the phone rang, I was the one to answer it. I often answered it now. The doctor began in a soft tone, like he was trying to encourage me to accept what he was about to say. *Alzheimer's* echoed in my ears. The word sat in the back of my throat. *Alzheimer's*. I repeated the word and it came out like a heavy fog. Before the doctor could answer, I hung up the phone. I slowly drifted through the house to the living room where she spent most of her days humming and uneasily playing with her hands. I stopped at the doorway. She looked up at me and smiled like she always did. Before I knew what I was doing, I laid my head on her lap like I did when I was younger. I felt her body tense under my head. She was unsure, but after a few minutes she stroked my hair like she used to. We stayed there in silence late into the night.

The Way Winter Has Returned

NOLAN LONG

I woke up shivering and alone in bed,
Wrapped in sheets that did nothing to save me from freezing,
And nothing to replace your arms.
I sighed at the thought of winter.

It's been two years since I met you,
In the basement of a girl neither of us really knew.
Without saying a word to one another,
We laid on our backs and gazed at the stars through the roof,
But I only wanted to see your face.
I'm glad I met you,
In spite of all that followed.

For a year after that night, I saw you for only moments
And short greetings in the hallways.
I remember thinking, *I'd love to be his friend.*
It took so much to realize I'd fallen for you.

When I came to terms with the fact,
And saw the sky growing above me,
I hit the ground like hell,
Had the breath knocked out of me,
And didn't breathe again until you kissed me.

It's been almost a year since that happened,
Since you approached me as the same precocious boy
I had become in my infatuation,
But with spades more courage.

For a time, you loved me back.
But that short winter we spent together
Has reaped nothing but tragedy.
The story of you and of my ever-breaking heart
Has become the source of my sorrow.

Now, every day that goes by I'm forced to wade in the memories
Which serve no purpose but to hurt me,
Because sure as it's been long enough,

I miss you more than I ever longed for you.
I don't know what I'll do
When the anniversary of your leaving finally comes.

The snow's come back to our town.
At first fall, my mother told me to look out the kitchen window,
But I couldn't bring myself to do it.
That's when you loved me,
When the snow was coming down.

When I was finally forced to leave the house,
I raged within myself,
For sure as the snowflakes reminded me of your beautiful words,
They scalded my skin.

About a week ago I started talking to a new boy.
I thought it might help me finally rid myself of you.
But though he was beautiful and kind,
Everything was different.
He wasn't the lovely, caring boy I longed for.
He wasn't you.

There are two records on my shelf that I hadn't played until today,
Because it was the music we listened to together.
But just like I was forced to go out into the cold,
The ghost of our love made me play them,
And I wept in the basement in memory of you,
Not for the first time.

Every day I fear
All the parts of you I hoped I'd left behind.
The morning's new hellscape I must face.
Should I not be given respite from our history?
Is not the pain of my own emotion enough?
And should I fear the Winter of every year?

Please just tell me,
Are you also thinking of me in this cold?
Are you also reminded of the time you carried me over the snow?
Or have you outgrown me,
Leaving me insignificant in myself?

Pray for me come January,
For should I have to experience you leaving me all over again,
I might not make it.

Supermarket Flowers

SOHILA ELGEDAWI

I'm restocking shelves and
he stands in front of the flower stand.
The fluorescent lights baring
a waxen face and chapped lips.

He reaches for sunflowers;
hesitates.
They're not right,
his lips say.
I wonder why not;
sunflowers are pretty.

He looks across the peonies, the lilies, the geraniums.
I can tell by the flexing of his hands.
None of them are the answer.

I can see how he longed for one.
A prayer spills from his lips;
desperation from his eyes.

The resolve washes over his face
as he reaches for the roses.
He holds them like a prayer in his hands,
brushing the petals with pious fingers.
Salvation, his eyes say.

And I could see how he longed for it.

I wonder what the gods think of us now,
praying to supermarket roses rather than them.

worlds collide

EMILY ZBARASCHUK

before i met you,
infinity was
nothing more than
grains of sand on a beach,
the waistline of the universe—
a measure w i d e r
than my arms could span,
g r e a t e r
than my mind could hold.

but when we met,
time waned and waxed around us.
when we touched,
constellations tangled,
horizons untethered,
gravity lost its pull.

Galaxies colliding cannot compare
to knowing
that nights spent numbering stars
are needed no longer
because you are the infinity
within my reach.

A Mind Gone

ABIGAIL FRIESEN

The old woman sat slumped in her hospital bed. Her breath was steady, softly rasping in her throat as the air struggled out of her withering lungs. Her daughter sat in the worn recliner chair beside her, fiddling with her purse and checking her watch every few minutes. No words were exchanged between them. The old woman's failing blue eyes were trained on the window.

Her mind is gone, they all said. The daughter knew this. She knew her mother would never again talk, or move, or even shift her gaze. She no longer believed her mother could hear the words she spoke to her, so she abandoned them over time. The doctors, nurses, family, and friends could only shake their heads in sadness. There was nothing they could do.

The daughter dutifully spent one hour every week in painstaking silence, watching her mother who couldn't raise her chin from her chest. She sat there because she knew her mother deserved at least that much. Yet life proved to be too time consuming, and the daughter found herself too busy to find the extra time in her week. The hour

turned into half an hour, which soon became fifteen minutes, and then five.

But today was her mother's birthday.

Weeks ago, someone had kindly placed a small vase of flowers on the side table to liven up the room. Delicate flowers that were once bright oranges and brilliant pinks were now dull and faded, wilting far too quickly. The daughter found herself staring at them. She felt a tender throbbing in her chest, until she noticed her mother blink once, long and slow. The old woman's fingers twitched.

"Mom?"

It was the first thing she had said to her mother in a long time. She reached out and gently placed her fingers on her mother's hand. She watched, eyes wide, but the old woman didn't move. The rhythmic sound of her ragged breathing was all that filled the silence. The daughter waited, but her heart sank with every silent, passing second. Tears that never came now spilled over her cheeks.

She cried for a long time. She cried for the mother she would never have again, and for the

person—so bright and beautiful—the world had lost.

"Wherever you are, Mom," she whispered, smiling in spite of herself and the hope that foolishly swelled in her chest. "I hope it's somewhere good."

She's far away, she thought, shaking her head. She stepped out of the small, stuffy room, and away from the unbearable silence that would forever be her mother.

And it was true. For in the golden light of dusk, the old woman was far away from the bed her frail body sat upon.

* * *

The cool, bitter wind stung the small girl's cheek as she bounded down the dirt pathway. She had been outside, picking at the hard soil that was her mama's garden. The smell of fresh bread wafted in the air and quickly found its way to her, but nobody called her in. She was beginning to think they had forgotten her.

She was almost home when she saw the door swing open. A tall figure, with a familiar twinkle in his eye, stood in the doorway.

Her heart soared. He was home! Oh, he was finally home!

She leaped with all her might into her father's strong arms.

"Papa," she gasped, a smile beaming on her face. "What are you doing here?"

"Cara, my little spud! How could I be gone for my little girl's birthday?"

Her birthday.

Cara had thought nothing of the day. Tough years made sorrowful days. Her mother and siblings made no unusual affections towards her. Why should they? Celebration was for the grand, and Cara was not grand.

Her father hung his hat on the wall and then her mother, smiling brightly, revealed a gift. Her siblings laughed and sang songs. Joy was brimming from their small homestead. Her father had even brought oranges home. Oranges! She felt gladness blossom in her chest.

The evening drove on far too quickly. Cara found herself on her father's knee next to her younger sister who had claimed the other. Her belly was bursting with warm stew and freshly buttered bread, and now drowsiness settled upon her drooping eyelids. Perfectly content, Cara gazed through the small

window. She sighed as her mother brushed the hair off her forehead.

Before sleep could claim her mind completely, she saw a break in the grey sky. For just a second, the clouds parted. Sunlight flowed golden upon the land, reaching out with soft fingers, illuminating the people she loved the most. Cara felt within her something sinking deep into her bones. Something that touched her soul. As her eyes closed, she knew.

* * *

As the daughter walked to her car, she looked up at the grey November sky. Snow fell gently on her hair while the tears slipped down her face. She smiled. In her heart, she believed her mother was somewhere truly good, somewhere she could be free. And in that moment, the clouds parted, illuminating her in flowing golden light.

New Clothes

MOMIN BILAL

New clothes, mandated upon me by unfamiliar faces,
Sewn with the cries of my people, dull and lifeless.
They were a layer of disconnection surrounding my soul,
Forcing me to forget my beaded, colourful, traditional clothes.
The fabrics, which instead of comforting me with warmth and vitality,
Acted as armour; hard, mechanical, and cold.
The shoes and socks leading my feet, reminded me not to step out of line,
One wrong step and I would be beaten.
The shirt, ordinary from a glance but irritating on the inside.
Its sleeves digging into my flesh, its high collar smothering my emotions.
The constricting band at the waist,
Not given to me as a way to hold myself together,
But used to break me.
Finally, a headband,
A target on my head that read "Assimilate me",
Visible to only those who desired to see it.
"Bring back my old clothes please," I say.

Darling, our life is a circus

SEL ZBETNOFF

People come from far and wide, creating an audience.
Critics queue to catch a glimpse of our imaginary beards.
We are a simple concept that some people just can't grasp.
We are a topic of conversation for being much more than "normal".

Darling, our life is a circus.

Our given names are screamed through the air by the close-minded ringleader.
Our life choices are commercialized and amplified by the megaphone of opinion.
Our "lifestyle" is something people watch from the edge of their seats.
Our every move highlighted with the spotlights of judgement.

Darling, our life is a circus.

Some agree with our way of life, but those who don't love to speak
Our trainers shock us to balance on our unwanted paths.
We have the tempers of kittens but are made out to be monstrous tigers
We are harmless, but can terrify a person by simply existing.

Darling, our life is a circus.

We are an act to be talked about,
We are an act that's laughed at.
We are an act because we stray from expectations
We are an act because of our love.

Darling, our life is a circus.

But my dear, my love is a net to catch you when you fall from the tightrope.
Your embrace is the safety harness they never offered us
Our hope is the key to free us from this place

If it means I can protect you, Darling I'll turn my words into flames
And I'll burn this circus to the ground.

Running Away for the Night

HEIDI TERFLOTH

I am so small in the darkness. Tiny pinpricks of light speckle the abyss above me like sprinkles tossed across a cake. There's no particular order, but everything seems right where it should be.

Blades of grass tickle my arms and cheeks. The ground is soft underneath me, and a light breeze wisps my nutmeg hair across my face. Everything smells like fresh rain. All I can hear are the crickets and the faint sound of faraway cars on the freeway.

This lack of technology feels odd. I'm not sure what to do. I'm not bored—maybe a little lost, like a piece of me is missing. But the hole slowly fills as I realize that I don't need my phone right now because I'm here, and that's all I want. The night tips. It dives and winds itself into a little ball and plants itself in my chest. I don't need the internet. Or people. I need the sky. I need every star and planet up there. I tuck them into my memory and I plan to never let them go.

I wish I could get away from the city more often. To run and run and run into the night, to a random hill in the middle of nowhere, like this one, away from civilization and responsibility. To collapse on the ground panting, but laughing, and filled with passion. It seems like I never get to run like this in the city. No high-rises or factories get in the way here. I can escape every email and video, dodge all the wires blocking my path, and never look back.

But I have to go back. I have a life in the city and I can't survive on my own. Maybe I'll turn off the modem. To be honest, I probably won't because I am human, and humans are addicted to the internet. I need it to connect with people and for work. I promise myself I will come back. I promise that I will marvel at the sky again one day.



Musings of a Bird

BROOKE SAWATZKY

The humans had been acting strange lately,
Mused the little bird. Normally they were always
Going somewhere, always had places to be.
Humans lived their lives in a blur of motion,
Constantly striving to do more, to make more, to **be** more
Never stopping, rarely registering their surroundings.
What had changed? Wondered the little bird,
Now that the humans spent their days
Locked away in their homes,
Some of them, all alone.
As the little bird alighted
On one of his preferred perches,
He felt a pair of eyes watching him
Human eyes. Those eyes followed him around,
And they seemed sad to see him go.
This was a memory he often pondered,
As it did not match his previous experiences
When the humans had paid him little mind,
Often not noticing him at all.
They used to disturb his day with their constant need for noise
So, when did they learn to appreciate the silence?
Yes, the humans were certainly acting differently
But the little bird was not one to complain
As the peace and quiet was a pleasant change
Though it did feel odd, as he flew over town
To see so many humans aimlessly walking around.
Usually they traveled in their machines that growled
Yet now they preferred to wander on their own feet
And the little bird was ever so confused
As to why the humans no longer traveled in groups,
But rather in twos or threes,
With such large distances between them
And with strange coverings over their beaks.
They seemed such curious creatures,
That they would choose to obscure their features.
From up above, the humans looked like leaves,
Not seeming to care where the wind carried them.
Still, strange as they may be,
Humans had faced change before, quite resolutely
And the little bird knew, without a doubt
That whatever problems the humans now faced
Sooner or later, they would figure it out.

To Nobody At All

ANNA DOLGOVA

A young girl laid awake in her bed. She was alone with the shadows, and they did not make great company. She tried to will herself to sleep, but her mind went on. Memories and jumbled thoughts slid behind her eyes like a greasy film she couldn't scrub away. In the dreary gloom, her dresser, mirror, and armoire seemed to stare back at her. They looked disfigured and ominous in the dark. After peering around to make sure there were no monsters, the girl squeezed her eyes shut and pulled the blankets up to her chin.

"Who am I?" she whispered to nobody at all.

As the girl drifted into sleep, the shadows around her wafted their dark cloaks and replied softly:

"Why you are a child, of course. You are scared of monsters and the night. Your imagination runs in circles. But do not worry. One day, you will not shy away from our gaze."

When the girl woke up, she rushed around her home, snatching some bread and bologna for breakfast. She ran back to her

room, then changed out of her nightgown and into a matching forest-green vest and skirt and itchy high stockings. She caught her reflection in the mirror, and desperately tried to flatten her puffy hair. Just before she left to kiss goodbye to her mother, the girl looked deep into the mirror.

"Who am I?" she whispered.

The grand mirror, with its elaborate engravings of fairies and mushrooms, replied with a deep, hollow echo:

"Why you are a young lady, of course. You have mousy brown hair and serious hazel eyes. You are small and you have a birthmark on your left collarbone. That is who you are."

The night's frost had turned into glistening dew that clung from the green leaves and grass of the ash forest. The morning sun spilled like milk through the trees' branches and pooled in golden puddles around the girl's feet. She giggled as she hopped from one warm ray to the next on her usual path through the woods. A familiar

pair of blue wings flew above the girl's head. Her eyes flitted up to the bluebird and she smiled. She pulled a small leather pouch from her pocket and opened it to shake some sunflower seeds onto her palm. The bird, who the girl had named Blue, chirped and landed on a nearby branch. The girl stopped beside him and held out the seeds, the morning chill biting at her fingertips. Blue flapped onto her hand and pecked at the seeds.

"Who am I?" she whispered to her feathered friend.

Blue puffed out his chest feathers and chirped his answer in a sing-song voice:

"You are my friend, of course. You are kind to me and to the rest of the forest. That is who you are."

After school, the warm fall wind blew the hair away from her face as the girl walked through the hills. She heard a shout. The girl looked around to see her friend sprinting to catch up to her, clutching his heavy books tightly to his chest as he ran. When he finally reached her at the top of the hill, he collapsed with a

laugh into the tall green grass. The girl teasingly shook her head and sat down beside him. They talked for a while before running out of things to say. The boy closed his eyes, and the girl stared up at the bright blue sky above her, watching the fluffy white clouds move along gently.

"Who am I?" she whispered softly to the wind. The gentle breeze blew through the green grass around her and a reedy, musical reply sounded:

"You are the notes that I carry on my currents. Think of all you've said, and all you long to say. That is who you are."

But the weeds in the woods were less forgiving. The trees' sharp edges seemed to grasp at her, tangling themselves in her hair and scratching her cheeks, and the fallen thorns clawed at her ankles. Tears that had been blurring the girl's eyes for what felt like hours finally fell as she sank to the forest floor. The girl knew these trees well, but it was her distracted mind that had led her far off her usual

path. Blinking at the fallen leaves on the ground beside her, the girl knew she was lost. She didn't know if she was going in the right direction, or if she was spinning in circles. Where was she? Who was she? Was she a good person? The girl didn't know. The crows above her head squawked, telling her to get up, to keep moving before dark falls. Wearily, the girl stood up and began to walk. It wasn't long until she heard the sound of trickling water. Her eyes lit up. She knew that river. It ran right by her home.

She ran towards the sound, jumping over logs and tree roots. Soon the ground was damp as she reached the river's edge. The sunset reflected off the veins of moving water, gold threads shimmering against the deep sapphire depths. The girl, exhausted, collapsed beside the bank.

She looked down at the wet sand and whispered "Who am I?" to the river. But the river, which ran on too fast and too loud to hear her plea, did not answer. She sighed, feeling defeated. She waited, the sounds of the turbulent river surrounding her, and she realized

that, maybe, she didn't need a reply. Everyone seemed to know who she was and what she gave to her little world. Maybe that was enough for today. The girl stood up, her gaze fixed upon the path ahead, and followed the river home.

A Tree's View

LILAH FLIEG-BACHESCHI

In the earth
Covered by damp, dark dirt.
I. Struggle. to break free.
When will my time come?
Will I ever see the world?

My roots feel strong.
My limbs powerful.
Up, up, up I go.
Towards the surface. Towards the light. Towards freedom.

Finally
I feel the sun. Fiery. Tingling. Warm.
Its sweet light reaches towards me.
I drink it in, eager for life.

Welcome. Welcome. Welcome.
The trees whisper.
Telling tales of a world
Standing still. Standing quiet.

Rain.
The beauty of it.
My young branches let it enter my leaves.
Let it enter my spirit. Let it enter my soul.

Seasons rush by,
each one more beautiful than the last.
I grow. My branches form a canopy.
My limbs are a shield.
I am undefeatable.

I see. I see. I see.
I see a little girl climbing my branches.
I see two lovers sitting under my leaves.
I see a cat, ginger and bright, scratching at my bark.
Then I see the saw.

It cuts.
Hard and strong.
Pouring agony through my veins.
Roaring, snarling, thundering me down.
Down, down, to the ground.

That saw.
Ripping. Tearing. Slashing. Bleeding.
It destroys me.

One simple saw. Ends my beauty.
Ends my light.

Ends my precious, precious life.

For They Were Ashamed

NETHAN SINGBEIL

No one noticed the old man at the back of the room.

It was Sunday night at *Christ the Saviour Church* and the pastors were hosting a funeral for Albert Green, a man who had died and joined the Lord in the all powerful heaven. Everyone who was there had come together to say farewell to the local saint.

Everyone except the old man. He was hoarse and gruff, and had no emotional connection to Albert.

"My father," began a woman at the front, her eyes swelling up with tears. "Was a walking angel. He *never* cursed or sinned or used foul play. In all the world, no man lived up to him." A chatter of agreement came from the congregation.

"My husband," began another woman, her eyes also swelling up with tears. "Was a great provider. He had his problems, but he never gave up. He was loyal to my family until the end." Another chatter of agreement came from the congregation.

"My friend," began a tall, slim man with a black eye and rotten teeth. "Was a great person. He was loving, caring, and funny. He lived a great, long life full of joy. We were

blessed to know a living saint, and we are sad to see him go. I am sad to see him go." Without a tear, he looked out to the people who applauded in agreement.

All except one.

The old man at the back of the room stood up and walked to the front. Everyone looked at him in confusion.

"Sir," the friend started, peering at the small man. "Please remain seated. We have not finished."

"I will in a second," the old man snapped, glaring at all three speakers. "I've got something to say." He pushed the friend out of the way and took his place at the front. Clearing his throat, he looked out onto the room of puzzled faces.

"I will not drag on," said the man. "I've come only to say a few words. I did not know Albert Green. But I came here to listen to these pitiful people." His voice bounced through the room, ringing in everyone's ears.

"I am Detective Leon Brooks. At sunrise on Sunday the 13th, Mr. Green was found dead in his backyard. Murdered by gunshot." Detective Brooks scowled at the daughter.

"Sophie, did you kill your father?"

Sophie was shocked. "Of course not! What kind of question is that?"

The detective looked at her. "It's a logical one, and I'll tell you why. Sophie, you are a liar. You say he never cursed or sinned. Just the day before he died, you fought with him. You cursed him. He used the Lord's name in vain. He lied and tried to beat you. You beat him. Is this true?" He looked at the woman who began to sob.

"Yes," Sophie cried, and she ran out, for she was ashamed.

"She is guilty of breaking commandments five and nine, but not of six," declared the detective. He then turned his attention toward the wife.

"Marie, did you kill your husband?"

Marie, still crying, was shocked. "Of course not! How dare you ask me that?"

The detective frowned. "Marie, Albert was *far* from loyal. He committed multiple acts of adultery. He even had an affair with his boss. He used people. He used you."

"Yes," Marie sobbed, and she ran out, for she was ashamed.

"She is guilty of pridefulness, but she is innocent of commandment six," stated Detective Brooks. He turned and stared at the friend.

"I had three suspects. Two are gone. Paul, you killed your friend."

Paul shook with anger. "Detective, stop asking questions."

"I wasn't asking. Paul, you are a liar. Albert was a terrible friend. The scars on your back and that black eye? Were caused by a drunken Albert. That time you *accidentally* fell down the stairs. Wasn't an accident, was it? You knew who he was. And he was far from saintly."

Detective Brooks paused.

"Did you kill Albert Green?"

Paul's teeth were clenched and his face was covered with sweat.

"YES!" Paul squealed. "I killed him! But can you really call it murder when he *deserved* it? Go ahead and charge me—I am *not* ashamed!"



I am My Own Conundrum

GEORGINA DOYLE

I am British, I am Filipino,
I am white, I am brown,
I am rice and potatoes,
And I serve the crown.

I am from neither here nor there,
I am different from the crowd,
I am whispering when they are too loud,
And I am always new in town.

I am tea and crumpets, please.
I am scones with jam and clotted cream.
I am chicken adobo and halo-halo,
And I am always eating solo.

I am from sandy white beaches,
I am red double-decker busses,
I am from the islands of the south,
And I am bridges over foggy rivers.

I am Georgina.
I am my own conundrum.

mirror

KELLY LAM

pt. 1: trapped

you hurt me.
i built myself up, bit by bit
just for you to ridicule my efforts towards acceptance

i want to improve my relationship with you
it shouldn't be difficult to stare at myself and simply be okay
but every time you are in my sight
i feel disgusted by my own skin
my OWN body
my whole entire being.

it isn't always an aggressive assault
it's those minor passing thoughts,
delivering blows so bitter about my imperfect figure
those are the most **devastating**
"Kelly, *why can't you be skinny* like everyone else?"

you always assert
Every. Single. Insult.
like a professor receiving tenure;
a guaranteed position for l i f e

the saddest part is that
you.
have.
no.
conscience.
it isn't like you are a human I can move on from
or a stupid comment on the internet that
will eventually be f o r g o t t e n

you are simply a mere reflection
that shows me everything I don't want to see
that tells me that *being good enough* will
never be an option

you.

you are an inanimate object.

*you relentlessly feed my inner self-hatred.
... yet i can't seem to let you go.*

pt. 2: eureka

Hey, it's me again.
(It has been a while, hasn't it?)
I didn't come by to cry about you.
(I have given you enough tears.)
And no, I haven't come here
to complain about my amazing, beautiful body.
I bet you didn't see that compliment coming.
(I know how hard you worked to destroy those.)

Before, the sight of you made me feel
So h i d e o u s.

So w o r t h l e s s.

So insignificant.

To the point where I almost accepted that as a fact about myself.
That I will always be the "ugly kid."
You almost succeeded too.
You were nearly there.

You have been the judge of my body,
forcing my insecurities to stay locked up.
You have been the jury of my heart.
The decision always split on whether to accept self-love,
causing these vicious trials of negativity to drag on.
... and I never fought back.
That changes now.

We are very similar, you know.
I. Constantly critical,
II. Observant,
III. Always needing perfection.
There is one very important difference between us.
Once you are broken,
you cannot be repaired.
I was broken,
but my pieces have become one again.

I know our relationship has been very rocky.
I could not stand you. You could never get rid of your iron grip on my heart.

For every excerpt of kindness you gave, there was an article of pain.
News just in from Kelly's Daily Thoughts:
"Kelly's outfit is garbage!"
"Who can stand Kelly Lam? Her friends must pity her!"
"Lam spews out stupid ideas! She should keep her mouth shut!"
And I was the lead editor.

I don't think I ever hated you. Really.
The media surrounding me constantly shredded any self-esteem I had.
Television ads, clothing stores, Instagram photos.
Any attempt to appeal to those crippling societal standards was a failure before it even began.
My chubby cheeks were the opposite of the desired chiseled jawline.
Having a perfectly flat stomach quickly turned from a healthy goal to a toxic obsession.
The skin and bones that make me were rejects from the perfection production line.
All were telling me that my body would never be enough in this world.

I judged myself so quickly, without realizing that **I am full of wonder.**
Self-awareness freed me from the silencing shackles of self-hatred.
It took me a while to get there,
but time fosters growth,
and with growth comes healing.
I have forgiven myself, even though **I was never at fault.**

Kelly's Daily Thoughts has been surprisingly upbeat lately.
The editor has been changing up the inner narrative.
In fact, I think a story is about to break.
Newsflash: Kelly finally realized that she is enough.

From now on, I will look at you with care.
I'll see myself, and it will bring a smile to my face.
Because how could I not admire the beauty staring right at me!
I will give myself so much love, that you'll start to feel it too.

My body is *e x q u i s i t e*.
My mind is *d i v i n e*.
I a m l o v e d.

Contributor Bios

Jack Bell is a 17-year-old high school student who is new to Saskatchewan. He moved all the way from bustling Toronto, Ontario to quiet Christopher Lake. His story looks into a grandmother’s slow fall into Alzheimer’s and how it can effect a family.

Momin Bilal, aged 15, is a Grade 10 student at Bedford Road Collegiate. He’s a dedicated student and is not afraid to take on challenges. His passions include helping others and making the world a better place through volunteering. In his free time, he enjoys graphic design, reading nonfiction, and calligraphy.

Gracelyn Deutscher is a 17-year-old, Grade 12 student at Flex ED who has always had an interest in writing. She has attended Sage Hill Teen Writing Experience for two years; however, this is her first piece of published writing.

Anna Dolgova is a Grade 12 student at Bedford Road Collegiate. She loves stories and writing, and hopes to have her own books published one day. She also loves her extracurricular sport, which she hopes to continue with while attending university next year.

Georgina Doyle is a 17-year-old, Grade 12 student currently attending Flex ED, which is an online school. She was originally born in London, UK, and moved

to Saskatchewan when she was seven years old. In her spare time, she enjoys music, travelling, CrossFit, swimming, and taekwondo. She is a cat lover, and is obsessed with potatoes.

Courtney Eldstrom is 17 years old and in Grade 12. She has been writing poetry since she was around 11 years old. Since then she has invested her time into writing a poetry book that she one day hopes to publish. Sending these works in is hopefully the first step to something more.

Sohila Elgedawi is a Grade 12 student at Bedford Road Collegiate. She loves all things literature: poetry, writing, and reading. She also has a genuine passion and fascination for languages. After high school, she will be attending the University of Saskatchewan.

Lilah Flieg-Bacheschi is 13 years old and was born in Inuvik, NWT. She now lives on a farm in Saskatchewan with a sister, embarrassing parents, and various animals, including a cat who thinks she is a parrot, a bottle baby sheep, and two very fat ponies.

Evelyn Fourstar is a calm, bashful girl with a passion for reading and writing. Her preferred genres to read are horror and narrative nonfiction. Her writing consists of her personal passions and emotions. Evelyn also has

a great desire to learn about anything and everything.

Abigail Friesen is a Grade 9 student from Dinsmore. She enjoys reading, writing, and everything music. She spends most of her time making art, overthinking, petting her dog, and writing stories at midnight.

Eleanor Grant is a 15-year-old girl who lives in Eastend. She is in Grade 10 and goes to Eastend School. She aspires to be a doctor, but for now she works at a local coffee shop. Some of her hobbies include cooking, sewing, dancing, singing, practicing piano, and writing.

Jane Gurney is a 16-year-old student attending Walter Murray Collegiate in Saskatoon. When she isn’t devouring any literature she can get her hands on, she enjoys swimming, art, classical music, and a strong cup of tea. She hopes to continue writing and creating art until her death.

Kamryn Heavin is a Grade 11 student in Melfort. She has no idea what she wants to do with her life after high school, but as of right now she likes books, photography, and waiting until the very last minute to title her stories.

Graeme Hopkins is a writer living in Saskatoon. Although he aspires to study paleontology as his main career, he also enjoys engaging in many methods of

creative expression, including creative writing. When crafting his stories, he often draws on his own personal passions, emotions, ideas, and experiences for inspiration.

Kelly Lam is a well-known person around her school and community. From basketball statistician to proud board game club member, she is active in multiple facets of her school. Her writing journey has just started, and she isn’t turning back anytime soon!

Nolan Long is an 18-year-old Saskatchewan student who, after a lifelong obsession with literature, has begun writing his own poetry, fiction, and essays. His publication in *Windscrip* marks the first time his work has been released. Next fall, he will begin attending the University of Saskatchewan with the hope of someday writing for a living.

Cassie Meyer is a Grade 12 student in Swift Current who has a passion for writing poetry, and hopes to one day write a book with a collection of her poetry. In the future, she plans to attend post-secondary school for Communications and become a successful journalist.

Claire Nagel is 14 years old. She lives near the small town of Mossbank with her mother, father, and very disrupting younger sister (just kidding, she is not all that bad). In Claire’s spare time,

she enjoys reading, writing, and playing sports. She plays both softball (first base) and volleyball (middle).

Anna Puentespina writes all her work with passion. Everything is meaningful to her, from a small blade of grass to a lonely cloud—she always finds purpose. Her writing goes beyond the words, pulling the reader into a world of imagination, giving them a sense that they are truly there.

Erica Racette is a Grade 12 student currently attending Balfour Collegiate. She lives with her parents, sister, and her old, smelly Boston Terrier named Benson. In her free time, she enjoys writing, playing her guitar “Betty,” going on exhaustingly long jogs, and hanging out with people who make her happy.

Gabrielle Robertson is a Grade 9 student who attends École St. Mary High School. In her free time, she enjoys dancing at the Performing Arts Warehouse, traveling, and journaling. She lives with her four siblings and both of her parents. Gabrielle would love to enter more writing competitions.

Brooke Sawatzky is a Grade 12 student from Saskatoon. She loves her family, even though her brother gets on her nerves sometimes. She is known to occasionally play the trombone, and she enjoys reading, writing,

video games, and TV. If asked, her friends would probably describe her as quiet.

Nethan Singbeil currently resides in Swift Current. A quiet and reserved person, Nethan has always loved writing, and he has even been a participant in the Sage Hill Writing Camp for the past three years. He lives with his sister and grandparents.

Heidi Terfloth is a 16-year-old writer from Saskatoon. She mainly writes flash fiction, varying in topics from gophernados to loss to unknown places. Heidi loves history, photography, art, music, and theatre.

Emily Zbaraschuk is a Grade 12 student who plans to escape high school, earn an English degree, write a novel, and travel the world (post COVID-19, of course). In the meantime, one can find her humming showtunes, starting art projects she’ll never finish, and playing troika with her family.

Sel Zbetnoff is a student at Nutana Collegiate. She loves to write poetry as a way of sharing her story while also trying to help people with her writing. Right now, her main goal with writing is to get her work published and attend university to become a social worker.

Since 1983 the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild has proudly supported the fresh, original work from students across the province in *Windscript*.

Thank you to teachers and librarians from these participating schools who encouraged students to submit their creations for this issue.

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- Bedford Road Collegiate
- Bert Fox Community High School
- Carlton Comprehensive Public High School
- City Park School
- Delisle Composite School
- Dinsmore Composite School
- Eastend School
- École Monseigneur De Laval, Pavillon Secondaire des Quatre-Vents
- École St. Mary High School
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- Mossbank School
- Nutana Collegiate
- Rosthern Community School
- St. Brieux School
- St. Joseph High School
- Swift Current Comprehensive High School
- Walter Murray Collegiate
- Watson School

Windscript Submission Guidelines

DEADLINE: DECEMBER 15, 2021

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 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
 - Please format your file names as follows: magazine_title_genre (example: Windscript_PoemOne_Poetry)
 - Submit documents in .doc format only. Please do not submit PDFs
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 and email address
 - If under 18, the name, email, phone number of your parent or guardian
 - 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.

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