

ANOTHER STORY

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HIGHLIGHTING CENTRAL AB
AUTHORS & ARTISTS
INAUGURAL ISSUE

**NOTE: COVER ART BY SAM SWANSON,
FEATURE ON PAGE 10.**



WELCOME

to our INAUGURAL issue!

I wanted to say "Welcome!" and thank you for supporting our new magazine. Looking through all the submissions has made me incredibly inspired by the young authors and artists in our community. We are proud to showcase their works here in the first of what we hope will be many issues.

Thank you to all our contributors. I can't wait for you to see the talent in and around Central Alberta!

Anyway, we hope you enjoy this one.

Claire

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REYJEN MISOLE²⁸

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

I remember when I first saw this country, I fell in love with its beauty and so I realized that I wanted to let my family back home see how wonderful this country is. I want them to see it through my lenses as that's the only way I know. Hehe. So yeah that's what inspired me.



THE HISTORY OF PEOPLE

MAHKA ZIA, 20

my mother grew up near a sugar cane field,
in a village where people knew the back of your hand the way they knew their own children.
when her father was shot, the people ran to the creek of her fence. through the guava tree and
dying flowers, they said: do you think there will ever be a man like him again?
everyone in the house lost their voices. they knew the answer before it had even been asked.
there would never be anyone like him again.

in the mist of small streets, everyone runs toward the lamp posts; where the light ignites the way
and there is no game you can play without the glow of the moon, of the sun, of anything other
than its people.

usually, in these lights, my family appears like a family. made of five smiling people who dance
around each other like puzzles waiting to be completed.

but years ago, something was buried beneath us all. no one has been able to find it ever since. a
unfound, beautiful, treasure of our own undoing.

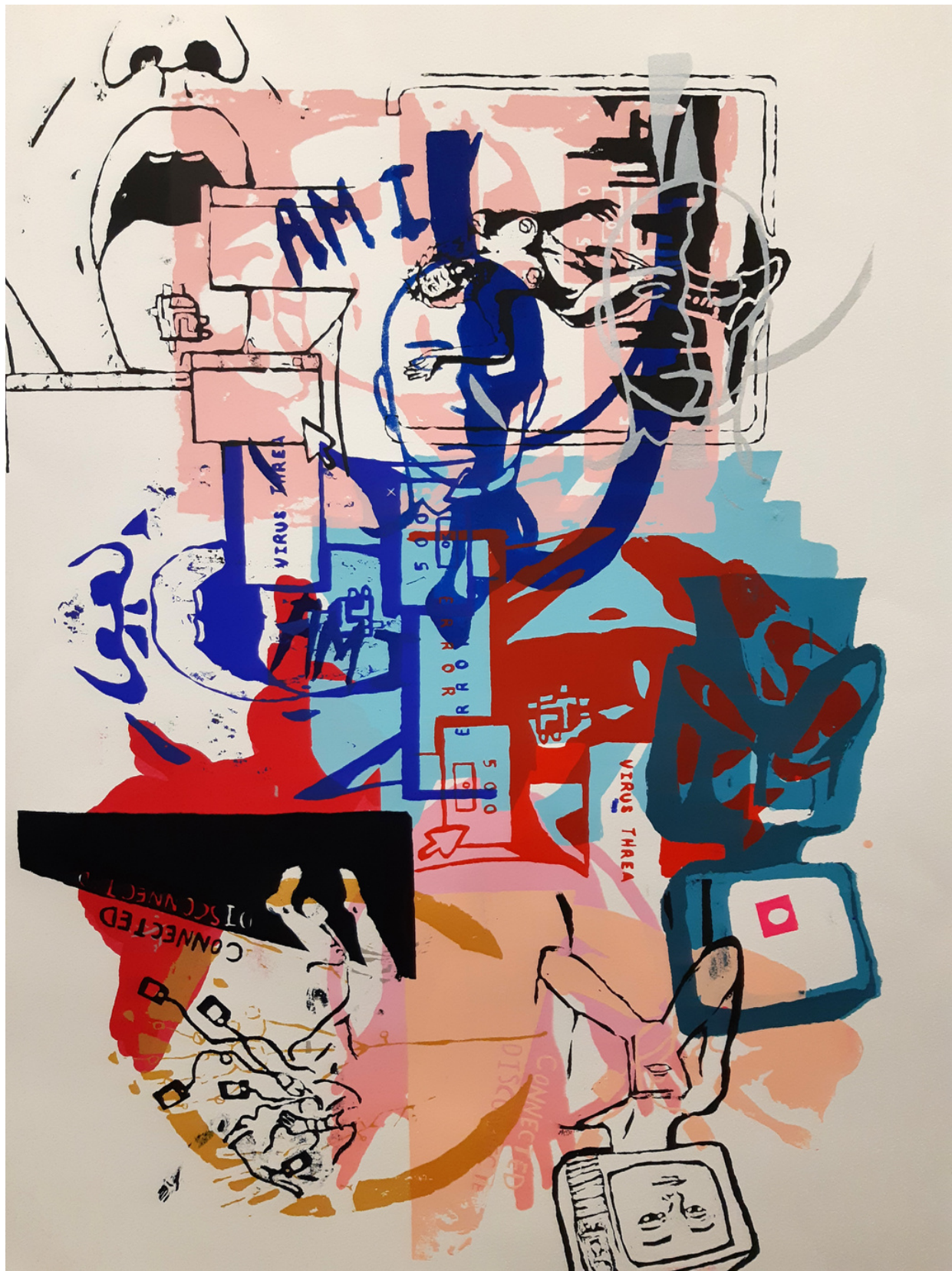
for years, our house was fenced away and our neighbours knocked on our door every morning so
i could "come play". and i did. my sister and i holding hands with strangers that felt more like
family than our own. running for hours and hours and hours.

when the sun set, we were afraid for the call home. inside was a graveyard digging. it was
finding caskets of dead pieces you did not know could die. and people that you did not know
could be alive.

that was life for us back then. in that old house with the two long trees in the backyard. with our
eyes too bright and too shy to see what was in front of them:

we aged and we age. wine and bruises and bones that run brittle with their history. i'm afraid of
the places we grow and how they wrap like vines around us. taking us into their mold. how easily
i could become a tree standing still. a bush within all the wildflowers and all i would be is
conquered. you know, i was a child when the crickets made home in my ears. for years, i heard
the echoes of sounds i was afraid to go back to. a thousand places and not one where i was not
shaking. a thousand homes and none i can call them by just that.

my mother grew up near a beautiful sugar field! **and it feels like i grew up in a fire.** i know our
stories are our own and belong to us. but i am wondering when i'll love my own enough for it to
truly belong to me.



COLLABORATE

Raven Golka, Heather Jessen, Miles Kyler, Josiah Little, Michael Meneses, Traci-lynn Maybee, Dee Orlliss, Niki Portelance, Sage Sorokan, Brenna Thomas, Miranda Valemonte, Kaydin Williams, Rin Wilson, Eli Young - Ages 18-28

RECOGNIZING DRAGONS

CATHERINE BUTCHER, 21

The tower jutted oddly from a cave on the edge of the mountains. It was a standard Princess Hold, complete with dragon and lonely damsel. But the tower was coated with a creeping grey moss when finally a knight appeared who could defeat the hideous serpent. Many men before him had failed to rescue the poor princess, alone in her tower. Well...not quite alone. She had her books. And the dragon who filled the cave. But no human company...

She looked at the knight after he'd done it. He'd slain the dragon, and carried her down, and now he looked back at her with a guarded gaze. There was no denying she was very beautiful. But he seemed to be shrinking from her as he had not shrunk from the loathsome beast. This prince was not the fresh-faced, rosy-cheeked, handsome lad she'd been led to expect. The sandy hair combed straight back from his receding hairline was mottled with streaks of grey. His eyes were blue, and full of the knowledge of his own scarred visage. His jawline was firm, but puckered on the left by an old wound. One eye drooped slightly. But the hand he raised from his left side to stroke the horse was gentle. The silence stretched and yawned, and he dug his fingers restlessly through the horse's mane, as if to expend some hidden emotion.

The princess looked at that hand, rough, with golden hairs on its back, and thought he must once have been handsome. He had given that up. And for what? She knew this must have been only the most recent battle in a long journey of dragon slaying. She had waited at her window, forcing herself to watch him die as so many had before him. It was the only penance she knew for the betrayal of her own existence as hapless bait. Yet she had not seen him suffer. He was skilled beyond any who she had yet seen, and found the dragon's heart quickly enough. So she knew that his wounds were the marks of experience, not foolishness. His helmet, though old, still bore the emblem of the Knights of the Lost Maidens. Once upon a time he had sworn to save and protect a maiden such as herself. How then, was he unattached? Still fighting dragons?

"You are a man of habit, good sir?" The knight looked surprised, then furrowed his brow. "Why do you ask such an odd question?" She smiled softly, though there were traces of sadness in her eyes. "I think you have fought many dragons. And since there are easier ways to earn coin, you must have the comfort of habit to keep you on the road. Moreover, there is no expectation in your eyes. Though I am rightfully yours, you kiss me not." and she blushed a little, because kisses were something she had only imagined over the years. He gazed at her for a long moment.

"I have no reason to think you would wish to kiss me."

"Yet you have saved my life."

He chuckled, humorlessly.

There are many lives I have saved who saw no further than the scar on my cheek, and the baldness that afflicts me. I would not stoop to keeping a slave.” The girl’s eyes were large, as if she heard a tale in those few words. “I find it strange, however, that the first damsel you saved did not see in your youthful person a knight worthy of her heart. You must once have been handsome.”

A strange bitterness misted his eyes.

“I was never handsome, for her or any. My first battle I lost—this.” and he held up for her his left arm, on the end of which was no hand at all. Only a shield, still strapped ingeniously to his forearm. The princess’s mouth tightened. Seeing it, the knight’s eyes grew cold and he abruptly turned, swinging himself onto his horse. He would have ridden away but for her sudden cry—

“I will not hurt you.”

Again startled with her words, her perception, the knight halted his movement and the horse, half-started, pranced nervously. He spoke.

“You cannot wish to come with me. My place in the kingdom is surely taken. I have no riches to give you.”

Her heart dropped at this thought of his. She looked up at him, far up from her maidenly stature to the knight seated on his beast. She drew in her courage, and spoke.

“If I had harbored such a desire, it would wound you, as the idea of it surely has. I have lived my life in a sumptuous prison, and lived with the stench of death rising through my window. In your eyes only have I seen a bitterness which matches that which I felt at being unable to rescue my rescuers. I found that I was even too weak to kill myself, and save them from the vain effort. I think now that had even the fourth knight won me to himself, he would have found me as sour a mate as your princesses thought you. Seared with the images of young men’s bones crumbling into the turf, my grieving heart would have been unfit to join with the innocent, idealistic dreams of a fortunate young prince.”

The knight was silent, his blue eyes hard, and boring into her slight form. She continued, softly.

“I no longer care for the blooming innocence of my would-be rescuers. Bitter with helplessness, steeped in the lore of the old poets, recognizing the dragons in your soul—if you care for her, my knight, you have found your princess.”

The knight stared at her for a full ten seconds as if she were mad—or just extremely melodramatic. Then something in his face broke. He slipped off his horse, stumbled towards her, met her eyes—and then, quite deliberately—he kissed her.

RECOGNIZING DRAGONS

JESSICA SCHREINER

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

"My inspiration is usually spur of the moment, a beautiful flower thriving or a sunset that makes the sky look like its on fire. Just the small things people rarely stop to appreciate those are what inspire me, to just take a second and look at the beautiful world around us."

ABOUT JESSICA

Jessica is 29 years old, She loves reading and taking photos. Jessica has been taking photos for two years. She is inspired by nature, and how each season is beautiful in its own way.



PAPER SCRAPS

EVA BELDER, 14

The smell of freshly pressed paper and pencil shavings lingered in the dimly lit room as a cool autumn breeze fluttered in through an open window. Click clack click, the keys of the typewriter danced under my skillful fingers. Finally. "The End", I typed, and pulled the paper out to scan for any mistakes.

"Well? Are you finally going to bed now?" Harriett spooked me. I jumped, and it was then that I caught sight of the clock.

"I better, shouldn't I?" I replied, regaining my composure. I smiled.

"What?"

"I finally finished it, Harriet! Can you believe it? I'm bringing it to the postal services early tomorrow!" I pushed my glasses up.

"Slow down, you still need to teach tomorrow!" she laughed until it faded. Now more seriously, "are you sure you want to do this? What if they reject it?"

"Harriett, I know it's unlikely they'll publish it, but you of all people would know that this has been my dream since we were young children."

"Oh, I remember," her smile returned, eyes far off and thoughtful. "All those days doing small jobs to earn money for a typewriter, begging Mother and Father for paper scraps."

"Exactly! There is a chance, Harriet! I need to do this!"

"Okay, you better go to bed. Tomorrow's going to be a big day."

I practically skipped down the sidewalk, jolly as could be. I couldn't contain my delight.

"Well, if it isn't Little Louie." I turned around to catch Margaret White's ugly sneer. She was with her two friends, presumably shopping or sharing snatches of rumors. "What might you be doing so early this morning?"

"Well if you must know, I am on my way to send off my book for publishing," I turned my nose up and continued on my walk without another word.

"A woman publishing a book! That's enough to make a stuffed bird laugh!" she remarked, carefully enunciating each word, twisting a knife in my gut. I let out a slow breath and closed my eyes firmly, trying to forget the past events and pressed on.

The next two months passed as slowly as dripping molasses. Margaret got busy spreading the best, most juicy gossip she could think up. Odd looks were all I received walking down the streets. Students would ridicule and mock me, causing the whole class to burst into hysterical laughter. I was so humiliated I could crumple into a ball. I knew I shouldn't let them get me down, but as the days passed, I began to lose determination. Every night I came home worn out, with bags under my eyes. Harriett would try to cheer me up. She'd say things like, "that Margaret White is an absolute gobby! Don't listen to them, nothing they have to say is worth more than hogwash!" She brought me hot tea in the evening to ease me, and warm me up from the increasingly frigid nights.

Every morning I would return to the post office. I got to know the ladies that worked there well. Before long, I didn't even need to say a syllable, and they knew why I was there. All my hard work and late nights paid off one day, and I finally received the letter! I snatched it from the mail lady, not bothering with manners, those could wait, and took off in a jog, the best I could manage with a long restricting dress.

PAPER SCRAPS

It took all my willpower to restrain myself from opening the envelope on the way, but I made it home just as I thought I couldn't take it any longer.

Harriett rushed over. There was no need to explain. Only one thing could be this important.

"Well, open it, will you?" Harriett exclaimed.

Not another word need be said. Frantically, I tore the envelope open, ripping the encased letter out. My first thought was that it looked rather short. I folded it open, the suspense enough to kill me. I had to reread it three times to finally slow down enough to understand it. My subconscious grin drifted away.

Harriett spoke first. "They didn't take it?" She was illiterate, and had only my facial expressions to interpret it for her at the moment. "Are you joking Louise?"

"They rejected it. They're sending the story back soon."

She scoffed, "why?"

"No explanation," I say, though I know quite well enough already. I am a woman. I walked briskly down the street, attempting to escape. Escape what? I asked myself, tears streaking down my face. I realized this was all too likely before. I got my hopes up. This is my fault. I wished it was night so no one could see me. I realized too late that I would run into-

"Louie! Oh dear, why are you crying?" Margaret White. I clenched my jaw.

Walk away Louise, I told myself.

Margaret smirked, "Is something wrong?"

"You know what happened. Don't be plain rude about it."

"Oh? Did your story get sent back? Well, I don't see a reason for tears now. You should've known this was coming. You could never do it even if you were a man," she whispered the last sentence in my ear as I got close, trying to pass.

"Don't kid yourself, Margaret. I'm not finished with this." I brushed past her and walked briskly away down a lonely street. I thought over what I'd said. I wasn't sure I believed myself, but I said it with so much confidence. What was I thinking? How could I possibly change this? There isn't anything left to do. Now, I will live my life like any other woman. Purposeless. Meaningless. Dreadful. Harriett and me had worked so hard for what? To be forgotten, thrown away, rejected. Her long hours as a laundry maid, mine as a teacher. All a waste of time. This was all my fault.

I tucked a fresh white handkerchief into the chest pocket of my new dark navy business suit and let loose a contented sigh. The publishing company was mine. Just two evenings ago Father had signed the papers, and passed it down to me. He is officially retired. My lifelong dream to be surrounded by novels, papers, articles had finally come true. I reached out to turn the smooth shiny handle to my Father's office- my office, that is. The door opened without a creak, and I stood there for a moment, admiring the room. It was filled to the brim with paper. Pinned on walls, stacked on shelves, arranged on the desk, hanging from the ceiling! Okay, maybe not hanging from the ceiling. Finally!

I stepped inside, carefully, gently closed the door, waited a couple seconds, then quietly screamed with joy to myself. I plopped down on the desk chair, sinking in, and took a long look at the desk. So many stories, I thought.

I sat there, cherishing the moment, taking it all in.

I decided to begin. As I sorted through the nest of papers, one story in particular stood out to me. I picked it up, turned it over, and began to read.

PAPER SCRAPS

Life went on after my story was rejected, but it wasn't the same. I had no purpose. Margret White stopped bothering me, but I'm sure if I had anything interesting enough going on for some good gossip, it would be different. Harriett and I were losing hope, and with it, money. I sold the typewriter, pencils, paper; I wouldn't use it again anyway. Still, days passed by, and food became scarce.

Harriett got sick one day. That was the day life regained meaning. It was like the rejection of my book was a blow to the head, and I had finally resumed consciousness. Harriett stayed in bed all day, head hot to the touch. Her left shoulder was covered in a bright red rash. I called the doctor to come, but he said there wasn't much to do for her. "Scarlet fever," he'd said.

I worked twice as hard, getting home late at night. I always rushed in the door, eager to make sure she was alright. Each time, she took longer to respond.

I woke up early, before the sun had risen with only street lights to guide me, and walked my daily route to the school. My eyes caught the postal service sign. It had been so long since I last visited the place. I never apologized to the ladies there for being so abrupt and rude. I thought I better stop by.

The bell attached to the door rang as I opened it. Sunlight just began peeking over the horizon. I peered inside, and took one hesitant step.

"Hello there ladies. I must say, I am most regretful for my hostility last time I saw you." "Don't you bother, Miss. We can only imagine what terrible suspense you built up prior. Come to think of it, I'm sure we got a letter for you just recently."

"Oh? I'm not expecting anything at the moment."

The two ladies worked together shuffling through the envelopes. A moment later, one of them found it. They handed it to me, over the desk, and I took it, curiously.

"It must be a mistake," I said as I read over the address information. Then I saw it. The return address. Hutchinson & Co. Publishing Industry.

The two ladies glanced down at the letter, obviously interested. If they were absolutely anyone, they would've heard Margret's rumors.

I tore the paper, a familiar feeling. The paper slipped out, into my hand, and I unfolded, gently, and slowly. Every movement was sustained, and careful. I scanned through the words, and my jaw dropped, and I gasped.

"Thank you, you lovely ladies! Wonderful! Marvelous! Magnificent!" I skipped out the door, careful to avoid contact with Margret. I smiled ear to ear all the way home.

"Harriett! They reaccepted my book!" I announced cheerfully as I unbuttoned my coat. "Harriet?" I called, more concerned this time. I hurried to her bedside and knelt, looking into her fluttering eyes.

"You did it!" she mumbled. This was the worst I had seen her. Her nose was red and running, eyelids puffy and swollen. Her forehead was hotter than a stovetop! I quickly dampened a rag and laid it across her forehead. "Don't you worry about me, Louise. Go become a writer. I always knew you could do it."

"No! Harriett! Don't do this to me!" my breathing quickened and I rushed to layer more blankets on her, get her some water or food, anything to help her.

"Louise, listen. Go pursue your dreams. Do what you love. Don't let anyone tell you what you can and can't do. I love you," she told me, till her voice was no more than a whisper. She closed her eyes, and I wrapped my arms around her, holding her close till her last breath.

I sat there crying for hours, but I knew that she was right. I couldn't let her down now, after she had sacrificed so much for me. I could finally do what I had always wanted. I had reached my dreams, and now, I was free.

SAM SWANSON

ANOTHER STORY: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

Sam Swanson: What inspired me to submit these pieces was that I really enjoy making art, especially animal paintings. There is something about it that just makes me happy when I paint them. I chose to submit because if I have the chance to be in a magazine why wouldn't I try and just see where it goes. The worst that will happen is not get in and that's ok! This is also a chance for me to grow as an artist and maybe be known by more people. There were definitely a few pieces that I chose against mostly because I just didn't like them. I am very particular when I make paintings so when I do submit things I like it to be pieces I really love. I think with my art I don't really have a specific group that I am trying to reach, but more everyone. All people must like animals so why not draw a cute dog or some other animal ! Mostly when people look at my art work I would like them to know that this is not something you just do, but is made with heart as well.

AS: CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF?

SS: I am 15 years old and live in a small town called Rimbey. I love making art, and I always have enjoyed it ever since I was little. Overall painting, drawing, really anything that has to do with art makes me happy, and I hope others feel that same way when they do something they like . I also love playing sports! Some of the sports I play are volleyball, basketball, and I also enjoy playing softball with friends and family! If I had to let my community know something about me, is that I always try to never give up. If there is a piece of art that I am stuck on, I won't just give up and throw it away. I think it is important to keep trying until you get what you want, and I think that applies to anything in life. It is important to see your progress and how much you have grown, so never giving up will show you that and make you realize its importance in everything.



THE TIME CAPSULE

Out of the blue, he decides it's time
To clean the car

Five years together
This has never once occurred
Despite consistent complaining
From his number one passenger

We divide to conquer
I nab a black bag
He snags gloves and
Pulls the car around
For closer access
To the waiting can out back

First, passenger side
I clutch the black bag gingerly
Manicure still drying
While wrappers of past lunches, bottles, and
Stray fries, desiccated remnants of their former glory
All quickly find
Their final resting place

Moving on to the back
The nature of the chore changes
Streams of trash slow
Unearthing relationship relics

We are archaeologists
Excavating artifacts rediscovered
After years entombed

A chain forms, item to memory
Each a piece of the narrative
How we got here
Where we are this very minute
And can be arranged
Into a timeline
Of our relationship.

More pairs of jeans than I knew he owned
Shirts I've never laid eyes on
Shoes and socks of the friend
Who brought the two of us together
Dress shoes donned for first dates
Purple shirt and pillow
Remnants of that first weekend away

DANIELLE KEYS, 26

Garbage bag seat covers
Protected upholstery from clothes
Dragged through the mud years ago
Socks from mom
Christmas gift from years past
Still in the package, never worn
Dance shoes and a change of shirt
Bring back a long ago flash-mob practice
The hoodies he claimed were jackets
Lost and now found

The box of candles from the night he proposed
Names and addresses from mom
For family and friends to save the date

Many papers quickly pass
From floor, to hand, to bag
Before my sentimentality can register
If they too, were souvenirs
Of a long forgotten date or outing
Certainly
Many were missed

All told
This long procrastinated job
Takes only 20 minutes, and three black bags
One for laundry, bursting at the seams
Two for trash

For so long
I teased, complained, protested
This chaotic car
Going through it was unexpectedly pleasant
A surprise trip down memory lane

Wrappers, bottles, snacks at my feet,
won't be missed
However, the Horcruxes found in this car
Will be living memories
The pieces of our souls
Trapped in the items that
Make up the adventure of us

This was no simple messy car
but rather
A memory trove, a moving
Time capsule
Of us

COPPER'S CARVING

KRISTINA GAGNON, 29

The small object sat on his side table all night, where he kept examining it as he woke up intermittently until first light. He found something else wrong with it every time he looked. Frustration cursed him but there was something comforting about seeing it next to him as he slept; imperfections and all.

When he woke, he carefully preserved it with bubble wrap, then old newspaper taped outside.

Even though anxiety was tight in his chest, he knew he needed to do it. With a sigh, he placed the circular wrapping at the top of his backpack to ensure it wouldn't get broken. He still found himself staring at the spot it occupied as he dressed, as if he might magically gain X-Ray vision so he could keep finding faults with it.



He didn't see her all morning, which only gave him more time to let his mind run wild.

Why do I care so much?

It was lunch time when he finally spotted her in the cafeteria. The grip he'd been holding on his backpack tightened at the sight of her friends. He took a clean breath. He would wait until she was alone.



The gift stayed placed with care at the top of his backpack for several days before he got his chance. It was the end of the day on Friday when he found her sitting alone.

She was on the bleachers, legs braced against the row in front of her. As he approached, he could see a notebook on her lap. Right hand guided a pencil lightly around the page, making gentle curves and lines. Her pretty face was keen with focus, long copper hair dipping down to scratch the page. Certain she hadn't heard him approach, he prepared himself to just walk away.

COPPER'S CARVING

He turned to leave, stopped only by her head popping up. She examined him curiously, and greeted him with that smile she often wore.

Straight to the point, Lazarus came up next to her and put down his backpack on the seat. He opened it, pulling out the gift. He shoved it towards her, trying not to make eye contact while simultaneously being too curious to look away.

She took it hesitantly, setting it on top of her notebook for a moment. Just in case it was too terrible to tell, he cocked his head toward the paper blob and said, "It's a gift."

He thought he saw her cheeks redden in his peripheral. He could hear the crinkling of paper as she opened it, then silence.

When he finally worked up the courage to look, he was shocked by her reaction. She held the wooden fox in her palm as if it was made of glass, admiration filling her kind, brown eyes. "Oh my goodness! Laz, it's beautiful. Did you make this?"

Before she could give it back, or tell him that the ear was bent, he picked up his backpack and started walking home.

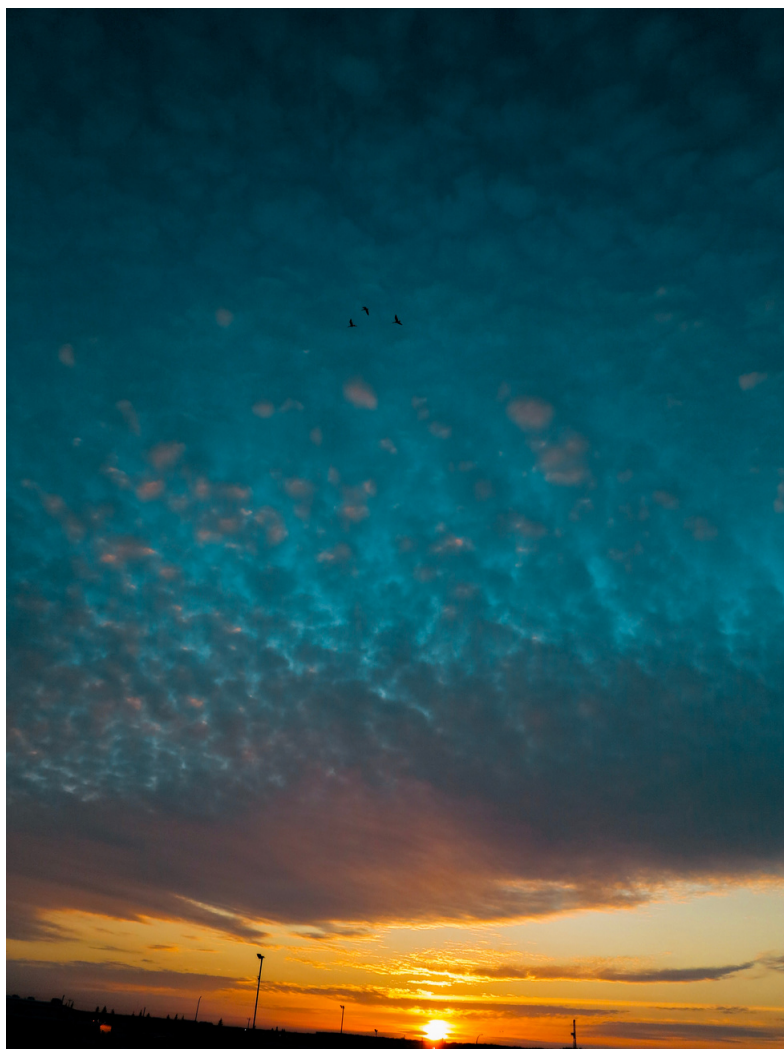
LANDON BROWN

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

"I have only been a photographer for half a year and what inspires my work is positive feedback."

ABOUT LANDON:

Landon is 16 years old. His hobbies include going out finding adventures, and taking photographs along the way.





LION & LAMB

TAYLOR SOLBERG, 26

SELECTION IS FROM CHAPTER 1 OF LION & LAMB, A MANUSCRIPT IN PROGRESS. FOR CONTEXT, WREN IS A SIXTEEN YEAR OLD GIRL WHO MET VIX, A COLLEGE STUDENT, ON AN ONLINE ROLEPLAY FORUM FOR TWILIGHT FANS. TONIGHT IS THEIR FIRST MEETING. VIX AND HER ROOMMATES ARE HOSTING A PARTY FOR SOME OF THE LOCAL FANS BEFORE THEY GO SEE THE MOVIE PREMIERE OF TWILIGHT.

After the movie credits rolled, the coven of twihards poured out of the theatre, squealing and chatting loudly as they made their way to the cars. Vix was the only one who was quiet, her arm winding around Wren's waist and pulling her close as Wren and Kaylee debated the meadow scene. Once they reached the car, Vix reached around Wren to pull the door open. Before the latter could duck inside, Vix leaned in and whispered in her ear:

"Do you trust me?" A shudder ran down Wren's spine but she managed a slight nod. "Good," Vix responded, her voice slightly stronger as she guided Wren into her seat. The ride back was uneventful as the girls continued to discuss the movie. Wren even got involved in the conversation, although Vix's finger tapping on her knee kept her from getting fully sucked in. They arrived back at the house in what seemed like no time and piled back into the basement without skipping a single beat in the conversation. When Vix disappeared to hand out fresh punch and snacks Wren let out a breath she didn't realize she had been holding. She settled in next to Kaylee on the couch.

Things began to get fuzzy as the night drew on. The conversations wore in circles and some of the girls started to drift off to sleep, leaning on the shoulders of those around them. At one point Vix (and a dizzying duplicate of her) wormed their way into the space beside Wren on the couch, reaching out to draw Wren closer.

"How was your night?" she purred into the younger girl's ear. Again Wren shuddered but then giggled, a warm, fuzzy feeling filling her head.

"It was...more amazing than I could have possibly imagined," she replied, grinning from ear to ear. "I wish I could stay here forever..."

"Oh?"

"I just..." Wren floundered for the words, searching through the fog in her brain to find a way to describe the feeling. "It's...it's nice having friends." Vix smiled sadly in response before leaning in to press her lips to Wren's temple.

"It's nice being your friend, little bird." Her voice was barely more than a whisper and Wren felt her heart skip. The two of them made eye contact and all Wren could see was sadness. All throughout the night that sadness had not lifted and her heart wanted to burst. If Vix was capable of making her happy, was it possible she could make Vix happy?

LION & LAMB

Hesitantly, Wren reached her hands up to cup Vix's face and the fuzzy feeling began to bubble up again. Before she could second guess herself Wren brought their lips together, harder than she meant, but she hoped it got her point across. Vix froze and Wren almost pulled away in a panic, then strong arms wrapped themselves around Wren as Vix began to kiss back.

After some time Wren pulled away, gasping for air, which Vix took as an opportunity to begin trailing kisses down her neck. The room was spinning as Wren stared up at the ceiling, shuddering under the touch. Then she squeaked, feeling teeth graze her skin--Vix must have also put in some costume fangs like the ones Constance had been wearing, Wren thought as she felt fingers tangle in her hair to tug her head back. And then two things happened in the same heart beat.

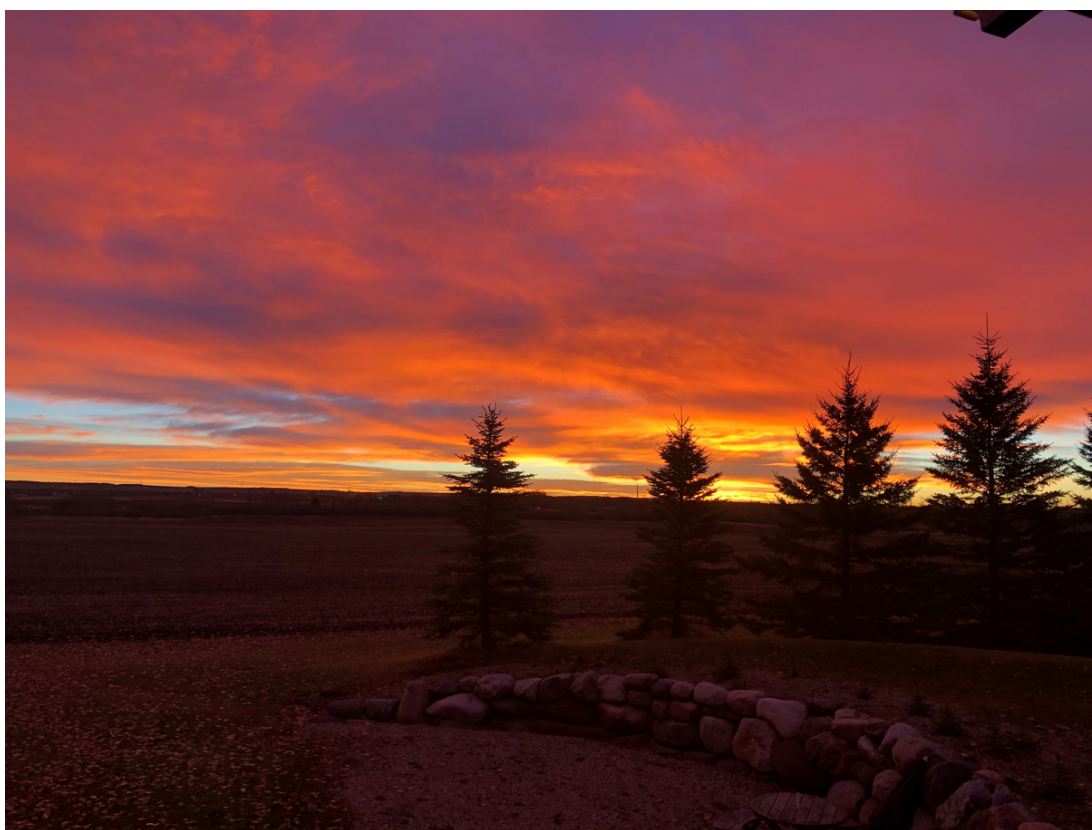
Vix bit down hard on Wren's sensitive skin, sending a fire burning through her torso, and Wren heard a shrill scream come from one of the other girls. The hand in her hair wrenched her head to the side and the fire burned hotter as Vix readjusted her teeth. Wren could just barely make out the squirming shapes that filled the room as the edges of her vision started to go dark. In one corner she could just barely see the form of Constance bent awkwardly over one of the girls... Laura? Aurora? Suddenly Wren couldn't remember her name. Her eyes darted around the room noticing similar scenes, as she felt Vix's palm press against the small of her back, pushing their bodies closer together as her teeth went inexplicably deeper into her skin. The last thing Wren remembered before darkness overtook her was the scream that tore from her own throat.

The darkness broke very briefly. Everything was grey, including Vix's face as she drew close. Wren couldn't feel it, but she saw Vix reach her fingers out to caress her cheek. Her eyes fluttered closed for what seemed like an eternity before they opened again to see what looked like a bleeding wrist forced closer to her face. Again, her eyes closed. After a moment she felt a warm liquid run down her throat. Then the darkness took her back.

SUMMARY OF LION & LAMB: WREN FIELDS BECAME A VAMPIRE AT AGE SIXTEEN. HER TRANSFORMATION WASN'T APPROVED BY THE CITY'S VAMPIRE COUNCIL AND SHE AND HER SIRE HAVE SPENT THE PAST TEN YEARS IN HIDING. NOW, WREN HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE HERSELF AS WORTHY OF JOINING THE COVEN, BUT IS SHE ACTUALLY READY?



LEAH MARTINOSKI





FROM LEAH

"I am honoured to share the beauty I have found in nature with you all and I hope you all enjoy it."

ABOUT LEAH

Leah is 26 years old, and currently working on her Masters to become a Registered Psychologist. She has a passion for school and insists she cannot wait until she's old enough to audit courses at the college.

Though not self described as a photographer, she often finds herself seeing a scene that needs to be in a photo and somehow able to capture exactly what she's seen for others to enjoy. Leah is inspired by nature, and will often venture outside to capture as much of its beauty as she can.



ORB

NYAH PELKE, 13

**THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT
FROM A LARGER WORK OF FICTION:**

Generally, when you buy something at a farmers market, you don't expect it to have magic powers. But then again, you probably don't expect the crazy plot twist in the middle of your new favorite book until it happens. So as I stood in my room, staring at a beam of light and what looked like a portal through a bubble, it occurred to me that maybe I was going insane, and that this could all be cured with a little mental therapy, and that I'd be fine in a month or so. Until the light started talking.

"Queen Jordan, you have been summoned by the realm. Come with me now, and claim rightful control of your kingdom."

Uhhh.... Yeah, not gonna happen. Also, why was it calling me Queen?

"The deadline is almost up. If you do not join us, your world, and everything that you know, will be destroyed."

And I thought that the most surprising thing that was going to happen today was the fact that we were having dessert a night early. Just as the light was about to speak again, I stopped it.

"First of all, I don't know why you are calling me Queen. Second of all, I have no idea what you're talking about." I said, walking towards the bubble. "And third of all, I highly doubt that you are going to get me to walk into some creepy bubble thing without some sort of explanation!" I stopped, staring expectantly at the light. Which, to my surprise, wasn't actually a light, but a fairy like creature disguised as a beam of light. She was small, with brown hair down to her knees, with a flower crown on her head. She wore a long dress, with layers of floaty pale blue fabric cascading down her body like a waterfall. And in her hand, a very long, very pointy scepter, which she was currently pointing right at me.

"I am not in the position to give you information at this time." She said, in a voice that was surprisingly strong for her size. "You will come with me, and we will tell you everything that you need to know."

I sighed, stepping towards the bubble. It wasn't like I wanted to go, but I currently didn't have a choice, as the fairy was closing in on me with her spear/scepter thing, and I really didn't feel like getting impaled. I stepped inside, making room so she could join me in the bubble, which was surprisingly large. With a silent whoosh, the bubble sealed up, and began plummeting downward, either to some far off bubble kingdom, or to my doom. And I was praying it wasn't the latter.

ONE LEGGED JACK

KIYONA LASAS, 18

Smoke?

No.

Fog fills the room. It's hard enough to see with what remains of the candlelight but as the night grows, the room is lit by little more than the moon. Not that it matters to those in attendance. Piano music lulls in the background as heels shuffle carefully about the floor. Mystery concoctions are passed about as velvet collides with silk and soft words exchange and bargain favors.

Once again, he is being scolded for his seeming lack of interest in the event. This is false, he is interested, it's just that his interest in the guests has faded with the decades. This time, it's his father's turn to remind him of his responsibility. After all, it has been centuries since the last of the true fae were born. He gazes at the open ceiling. It's dark. When did the sun set? His seat begins to feel as if it is holding him in place rather than providing him with a comfortable viewing spot and he admits defeat. Making his way across the floor, he begins greeting his guests. Though he has known them for centuries, he can never quite name their faces in person. One by one, he greets each of them acceptably. Then, an unfamiliar face appears in the crowd.

You don't belong here. Though uninvited guests tend to appear every other night of the year, tonight is a special celebration where such guests are not particularly encouraged. "I don't believe we've met," the prince smiles in what he hopes is an inviting manner and reaches out a hand. Though it is dark, he notices the man's eyes widen. Taking a step forward, he asks for his name.

"Clyde." He gives a curt shake and turns to go.

"Clyde, we've just met, where are you going?" Guests turn to witness the scene. It's always an eventful evening when the prince takes interest in a guest. The man tenses, his coat stretching as he faces the prince.

"My sincerest apologies your highness, I thought you would have more important guests to attend to." Seeing his face again, the prince studies him. Stubble shadows his chin, his hair is unkempt, and though he has tried to slick it back, strands of it stick out at odd angles. The man's breath reeks of whiskey and his hands are tucked into his coat... what do you have there?

"Clyde, there's no need to apologize," the prince glances around at the guests, looking for any signs of suspicion. *Who brought you?*

ONE LEGGED JACK

"I was only eager to make your acquaintance." More guests are beginning to take notice of the man and whispers are growing louder by the minute. Clyde shifts his weight, eyes darting around the room. The prince looks for his father, taking care not to let the man's hands out of his sight. There. His father is chatting with guests near the throne, but with the crowd-drawing nearer to watch the scene unfold, the path to him is growing longer and longer.

"I presume you've yet to meet my father?" He reaches an arm around the man, turning him in the direction of his father.

"No, but, you see, I must get going-" Clyde stops, resisting the pull of the prince to stand in place.

"What could be more important than making the King's acquaintance?" He glances in his father's direction, to no avail. His father has yet to notice the scene.

"Your highness-"

"Oh, you must be nervous," Where is she? "It is not him you should fear," the prince gives him a reinforcing pat on the back in the direction of his father, "my mother on the other hand-"

"Announcing the one true Queen of the fae, Madame Marie."

Everything stops.

His mother steps slowly, observing the crowd. Her gaze lands on the prince and his mystery guest. He cringes as she holds his gaze. No. No. No. She starts towards him, heels clacking on the stone floor. Guests step aside, making way for the queen, heads turning from her to him and back again. Clyde fiddles with his pockets.

"Step away from my guest." The room has fallen silent and her command echoes within the prince's ears. A flash of silver leaps towards a woman.

"DON'T COME ANY CLOSER!" Clyde restrains the woman from behind, holding a blade near but not on her throat. His other hand is holding onto a gun pointed at the crowd. The queen pauses, her lip curling in disgust at his trinkets. The prince looks to her for input but she shakes her head. She has forbidden it. The queen continues,

"Sir, would you please dispose of your weapon-" "AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARCH!" The woman cries out as the silver presses into her skin. Droplets of blood begin pooling around the open wound.

The queen stops.

"I'm here to make a deal!" Clyde presses deeper into the woman's neck. The guests are still, only their eyes move to look between the queen and the prince. Another guest steps forth from the crowd in Clyde's blind spot. The prince shakes his head to deter him, but he continues. Clyde must have noticed because in one second, the guest is lunging for him, and next his brain matter is being splattered upon everyone within a six-foot radius. The queen races towards him. Realizing that his demands are not going to be met, Clyde drops the woman and continues firing into the crowd. The prince lunges at him. Clyde turns to face him but the girl pulls on his arm, causing his bullet to hit another guest instead. The prince tackles the man to the ground. CRACK! Oh no.

ONE LEGGED JACK

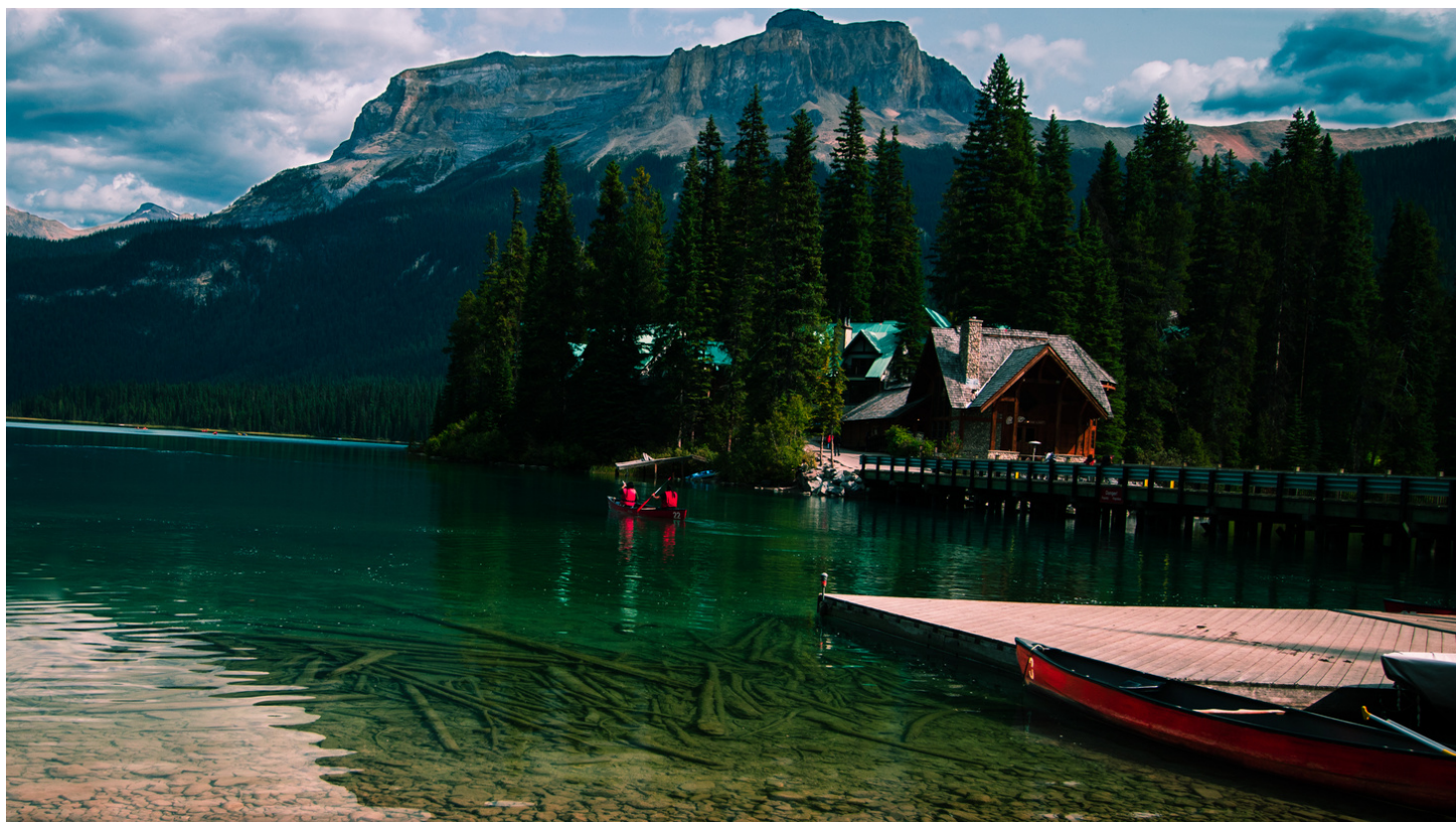
Clyde's head lays on the floor like a dropped egg. There is more screaming, not because of the dead guests, but because of the human blood soaking into the stone. The prince looks up to the queen. Her eyes are wide and filled with fire,

"GUARDS!"

He's really done it now.

"Arrest my son."

AFTER HER MOTHER LOSES HER JOB, RILEY IS FORCED TO MOVE BACK TO HER CHILDHOOD TOWN OF BLACKWELL. A TOWN SHROUDED IN TREES AND RUMORED TO BE THE ORIGIN PLACE OF BEDTIME STORIES. THINGS HAVE CHANGED SINCE SHE WAS LITTLE, AND THE TOWNSPEOPLE SEEM EVEN LESS FOND OF OUTSIDERS THAN WHAT SHE CAN REMEMBER. UPON HER MOTHER BEING HOSPITALIZED FOR UNKNOWN REASONS, RILEY MUST UNCOVER THE TOWN'S PAST WITH THE HELP OF A LOCAL GANG IN ORDER TO SAVE HER LIFE.



EMIL JOHN AQUINO, 24

Another Story: What inspired you?

Emil: I was inspired by a YouTuber named Thomas Heaton. He's a landscape photographer from the UK and after watching some of his videos, I really wanted to do landscape photography as well.

AS: Why did you choose to submit?

E: I chose to submit because I felt like there's not that many young landscape photographers in Central Alberta. I wanted to show my work to others that you don't have to be an expert to be able to showcase your work.

AS: Why this piece? Were there others you decided against?

E: With the pandemic going, I hope the photo can inspire people and also let them know what is waiting for us once the pandemic is over. I thought about sending a photo of some trees with their full autumn colors during a thunderstorm, but I thought a photo depicting summer is much better.

UNTITLED

EMBER WILLIAMS, 18

I was thirteen when they met. He was tall, she had chestnut waves and an infectious laugh: they fell in love. I told the man something he didn't want to hear. There was a flash, and for a moment, all I could see was darkness. Then the shadow slipped away. There was a daughter. A girl almost my age, with beautiful twinkling brown eyes. The wedding was an explosion of flowers and lace, and they kissed and danced and teased. The girl grew, and so, we thought, did the man and the woman's love. But the woman's laughter quieted. Her smiles dimmed so slowly that I did not see. I was sixteen when I saw the bruises. I didn't want to ask. Lots of people have bruises, don't they? Slips and bumps and a scratch that looks wrong. I didn't want to be rude. I didn't want to hurt her feelings. I was seventeen when I read the book. It talked of monsters who hurt those they were meant to protect. Who go on hurting them, over and over and over. I glimpsed a tall, familiar shadow of someone I knew. I asked my mother but she bit her lip and hoped. She didn't want to hurt the woman's feelings either. I was eighteen when grim voices pressed me down. When the monster was revealed. When I realized that the woman I loved, my sister, my confidante, had been hurt so badly that she had finally cried out loud enough to be heard. Nausea swirled as I saw the harsh words and the bruises again, as I heard the words of the book playing in my mind. I had suspected where others had not. And I had done nothing. I will not be silent again. The next time I see, I will ask and pray that I am wrong. I will beg God for the joy of seeing indignation and surprise in their eyes. But I will not stand in fear of their feelings as they cower in the fear of their monster.

They call me naive.
Simply because I'd rather my head be in the clouds,
Then in the reality that breaks down around me.
I'd rather be dreaming about another place in another world,
Where I am somebody else, yet still myself.

They think I don't understand,
The harsh concept that is this world.
But I understand a little too well,
Because I've been through a little too much.
It's funny how it only takes one misconception,
To make people talk.

I am who I am.
What people call naive or weird,
Might be another way of understanding, Or an entirely normal thing,
For one individual.
Nobody takes in reality the same.
And nobody can wholly understand another.
All anyone can do is take one step at a time.
I am just trying to get by,
With my head in the clouds.

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

LEAGH EAGLES, 18



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