

WHY WE WRITE



CENTAURI **ARTS**

CENTAURI ARTS

The pieces in this magazine were produced by
creative writing students
in all classes at the Centauri Arts Academy,
between September 2024 and January 2025.

The cover art, and the art pieces
within the magazine, were created
by students in our Monday evening Digital Art
course

Cover by: Gulay

Collaborative Poem:

Tuesday & Saturday Writing Workshops

We are kayaks drifting on the Georgian Bay at dawn,
Rain against the window panes as soft as sifted sand
And snowflakes slowly floating down to earth.
We are the warm breeze, blowing through clear, Autumn skies.

We are sadness, when we lose our reading socks,
Anger from attention given unjustly to others,
Fury, when younger brothers use hurtful words,
And joy, when Friday finally arrives.

We are strawberry cheesecake made with love,
And the star earrings, a gift from a girlfriend.
We are a ski jacket worn for years, a true companion,
And jewelry left over from a childhood.

We are dreams of dumplings, steamed and ready to eat,
Dreams of playing baseball with dad,
Dreams of writing an awesome story,
And dreams of joy, of bliss, of making others smile.

We are arms that will never reach the top shelf,
Eyes, seeing sunrise for the first time,
Ears that truly know how to listen,
And fingers that cannot seem to grasp the world.



Wonderland

by Hannah

Wonderland was a magical place
Where flowers blossomed only at night
Where beautiful streams sparkled in the gleaming sun
Where all creatures were wacky and weird
Yet beautiful and unique at the same time.

But it was all a dream.
A dream created
By Alice's strange little mind.

Wonderland is not so wonderful after all.
The once big, blooming flowers only wilt and burn.
The once gleaming river is filled with deadly poison.
The once unique creatures are horrifying monsters
Feeding off fear.

Why does the world have to be so unfair?



THE ROOM OF MYSTERY

by Julia Kapler



Once upon a time there was a peculiar street. It was the type of street where anything could pop out anywhere.

One day, six friends were wandering along the street and found a sign that read "Creative Writing Class!" The sign was so shiny and bright that no human could resist the urge to go check it out. So they did.

As soon as they stepped inside, the door shut behind them. There was a girl inside the room. She smiled kindly and said, "Come sit." The second they sat down, ropes curled around their wrists, waists and ankles. The girl reached for a globe. Once her fingers touched it, the room exploded into chaos. The terrified friends watched landscapes flash in front of their eyes, swirling into a pit of darkness.

Suddenly everything stopped. It all looked normal, except for six new portraits hung on the wall...

Bowfin Fishin' and Werewolf Trickin'

by Magnus W. McKinnon

Bogs are the best place to find music. The twang of crickets, newts bouncin' on lilies like drums. While mosquitos hum, frogs knock against the 'gators' backs. My bobber goes under. I yank, catchin' her in a dance. She waggles to the music. A bowfin. A whole 18 pounder.

"Whoo-wee. She's a beauty." Feed the family by herself, she will. I say a prayer and gut her, letting out stringy insides wavin' into the reeds. "Moon's arisin'," I tell the bowfin, pinchin' a cigarette between my teeth. "Can't let Rougarou get to my dinner before me." I chuckle, givin' the fish a twirl on its line.

The Cajun legend, Rougarou. Half man, half wolf. If a child don't listen to his mama, Rougarou comes and snatches em' up, eatin' whole in one bite... so the ol' tale goes.

I hear the crunch of a crayfish to my left. My head jolts. Ain't no one out here. Ain't no one ever out here when I am. Another crunch at my back. I step around, boot landin' in the swamp. A heron coos like a singer. It picks itself up from the water, wings takin' flight to places I don't know nowhere 'bout.

"Rougarou. Crazy ol' legen'." I breathe out smoke, coverin' the moon with fog. "Load a nonsense." I drop my cigarette into the mossy water. It drowns, light goin' out.

That's when I hear him. The howlin', the barkin'. Rougarou snarls as he leaps from the reeds. It's a chase unlike I've ever run before. Claws tear up the mud, flingin' dirt chucks into the bog behind me. I wade into the swamp, water waist deep 'round my overalls. He keeps chasin'. I throw my fishin' pole at him and he bites it in half with a foamy growl.



I throw myself at the river bank, scuttlin' up through the greens to the other side of the wood. The ground cuts off at the marsh. Nothin' but water and endless reeds in the darkness. If I go out there, ain't nobody ever find me again. The werewolf slows. He's run me down.

I back up far as I can go. "Hey, I know you don't want to do this."

Rougarou keeps his eyes locked on me as he licks his chops. He knows his prey can't go nowhere.

"Listen." The heel of my boots hits water. "There's a man in there and I'd wanna have a drink with him when this is all over. So there's no need for any of this."

The werewolf growls louder, teeth sharper than my finest hook.

"The moon, it does things to you. Things I know you'll regret come mornin'." I swear there's a moment when his eyes look human. Almost manly blue in color past the black eyes of a beast. I keep talkin'. "I won't tell no one about this. Not even my mama cause I know she'll say 'I told you so.'" Even as a grown man, I'm wishin' for my mama right now to come and save me. "I got a family at home waitin' for me. My wife and these two kids just this tall." I motion for the ground with my hand. "They're waitin' for me. Don't know how they'll feed themselves without me."

Rougarou can't hear me through the ears of an animal. All he knows is instinct, and animals gotta eat when they're hungry. Man is worse. Most times man won't even kill to eat, he'll just kill for the joy of killin'. Who is this beast? Half man, half wolf. Which side of nature does he fall upon? What is his reason for killin'?

He lunges at me, teeth glarin' in the light of the moon. His claws squashes my chest til' I can't let in air. Saliva drips down my cheek like a tear. I grapple with my pockets. The beast crushes my arms. I wriggle out from his grasp. My hand closes on my knife. I wrestle with the beast, slicin' down his arm. Rougarou howls like the devil. My blade comes up to his shaggy throat. The werewolf freezes in his place. My chest shudders with my breath. I swallow, spit rolling down my throat as I will the knife to pierce that of the beast. A flash of blue rises through the eyes of the wild animal. Deep in there, he's just a man. I can't kill him. I drop the knife. My eyes close. This is my last night. There are too many regrets to be had. My kids won't have their daddy 'round to teach 'em how to fish. My dog will wait by the door every night wonderin' why I left him. Worst of all, before I left I didn't tell my wife I loved her.

All a sudden, the werewolf's nose snaps towards my pocket. It waggles like the bowfin on my line.

I take the gutted fish from my hefty pocket. "This what you want?"

Rougarou's eyes widen with hunger, his tail wappin' against my boot.

Ain't no way I'm thinkin' twice 'bout that. I throw dinner into the marsh and Rougarou scrambles off me to get to the bowfin. That fish just saved my damn life. I run for the road not far from the bog. I enter my life reborn. When death catches me again, I won't be able to say I have regrets.

Few nights later, I'm at the pub in town. The moon has waned after that run-in with Rougarou. I haven't told anyone 'bout it. Don't think I ever will. Mostly cause no one's gonna believe me. I'm sittin' at the bar, drink in hand, when this feller walks in. Grizzled black beard and a shaggy mane of hair that needs a good washin'. He sits down at the bar beside me and orders two shots. When the bartender puts 'em down, the man sets one in front of me.

"What kinda fish you like to grill?"

Picking up the shot I reply, "Love a good snapper."

"Can't go wrong with red snapper." He raises his glass to me, blue eyes aglow in the dim light of the bar. "Although I love bowfin. They're my favorite."



RESISTANCE

by Sadie

It was the 1940s. The start of an era. At least that's what the Germans called it.

My name is Gemma Rhea and I live with my family in France, a country suffering under Nazi occupation. Although I was born into a rich family, and then married into another, my situation could not be more desperate. You see, I have a secret. One I could never share with my husband, Clark, or my eight-year-old son, or anyone.

Today I am going to blow up a train.

I tiptoe out of bed, my breath shallow and the floorboards unusually creaky. I kiss my son on the forehead, slip into darker, more comfortable clothing and pack my bag with the bombs I keep under a loose floorboard.

Those Nazis don't know what's coming to them.

There's a nightly curfew in effect, so I have to be sneaky about this. I don't want to think about what would happen if I got caught. I leave through the back door, keeping to the back of the houses. After running for what feels like an hour, I arrive at our meeting place at 3am on the dot: an abandoned farm somewhere along the train tracks. I hide my bag under a pile of hay and shiver in the dark until a familiar face emerges - Caleb, a young Jewish kid who joined the Resistance Movement after his parents were killed.



My frozen face cracks into a smile.

“Thank God,” I say. “I wasn’t sure you’d come.”

Caleb sits down next to me.

“Of course I came. Now we just have to wait for the others.”

As if the universe heard, the other two arrive: a school teacher and a shop owner.

All once-normal people, with normal lives.

“Did you get the stuff?” one of them says, his voice gravelly and rough.

I open the bag and show him the explosives.

“I’ll do it.” Caleb takes the bag from my hands. “I do have the most experience, after all.”

No one contradicts him. He swiftly places the bombs in among the tracks, his face contorting with concentration. As he works, he explains the plan.

“These are set to explode as the train rolls over them,” he says and he stands up. All done. “We shouldn’t leave until it blows up, though. We have to make sure it works.”

A train whistle sounds in the distance. Our cue to hide. We huddle behind a roll of hay and watch as it gets closer. The train rattles, full of weapons of war.

Dread creeps into my stomach as the train gets so close we can see the wheels turning and the ground rattling.



And then it happens. The explosion. My ears ring with the sound of it, and the constant ringing consumes my very existence.

I only have a second to process all of this before the debris and dust settles around us.

“We have to get out of here.” I try to stand up but my vision is blurred and my head aches. I hear a muted cry: “Gemma!” but it feels light years away.

And then I pass out.

July 15, 1992

“... and what happened next, Grandma?” two voices squeak in unison. I smile at my grandkids before hoisting myself up from my chair.

“I guess you’ll have to wait until tomorrow to find out, because it’s bedtime!”

I turn off the light, ignoring their protests. Ignoring, too, the dull throb in my head that never quite went away.

“Goodnight,” I whisper to them both.



The Man

IN THE SHED

by Mila

Jessica La Poisson lived in a fancy house with an equally fancy back garden. In that garden stood a shed. Inside the shed, there was a strange old man. His hair was long, curly, and dark with dirt and mud. Jessica despised him.

On her old rotary phone, she called Dr. Horace, a professional in handling unusual situations. Jessica hired him to remove the old man from her shed.

Dr. Horace arrived at noon.

“There you are. I'll show you to the shed,” Jessica said, her voice tinged with mild panic.

Dr. Horace had long, curly, grey hair and a matching beard. He wore a mismatched suit and tie, which Jessica found particularly offensive—she prided herself on coordination.

They walked through the back garden, a lush expanse filled with flowers and plants. The gardeners didn't wave or greet them; they only stared.

Jessica hung back as Horace approached the shed. Flashlight in hand, he opened the door and scanned the unused interior.

“There's no one here, Miss Jessica,” he said, sounding intrigued.

Jessica frowned. “He's out on a walk—I forgot about that.” She adjusted the hem of her dress. “Come back at 5:00 PM. He's usually back by then.”

Dr. Horace left but returned promptly at 5:00. Jessica led him to the shed again. By this time, the gardeners had gone home, and the garden was filled with cats. They brushed against their legs as they walked, seemingly drawn to the place.

This time, Jessica opened the shed herself. Dr. Horace peered inside.

“No one here again, Miss Jessica,” he said.

Jessica leaned in, visibly frustrated. “He might have gone out to get water around this time,” she muttered, fidgeting with her sleeve. “Come back at 9:00 when he’s sleeping.”

Dr. Horace sighed but agreed.

At 9:00, he returned once more, now familiar with the path to the shed. Jessica followed closely, convinced the old man had returned. Horace opened the door and looked inside yet again.

“Are you certain someone’s in your shed, Miss Jessica?” he asked.

Jessica nodded, her confidence faltering. “I was sure he’d be here now. I don’t know where he went...”

Dr. Horace grumbled as Jessica handed him the payment, adding an extra tip for his trouble.

That night, Dr. Horace contacted the psychiatric department, reporting Jessica for potential schizophrenia. They came and took her away. She screamed all the way there.

Dr. Horace smiled.

He liked his shed.



CLASS TRIP

by Sadie L.

Tick.

 Tock.

 Tick.

 Tock.

It's so cold.

We all huddle together. Oranges in our shivering hands.

Suck the juice out. Watch the crane.

Shiver.

Repeat.

The crane lifts up.

 Then down.

And we all drop our gaze. The teacher sends someone out. She gets smaller.

And smaller.

 "There's no bus," she says. Some boys race each other.

Others talk.

Most are silent.

We hold our creations close. What if the wind blew them away?

 I should have brought a coat.

"45 minutes late," someone says.

"50 minutes late."

"One hour late."

"It's here!" The scout yells. We spot a long blur. We celebrate.

It comes closer.

 Closer.

 Closer.

"Not in Service," the sign reads.

And so, the walk begins.

We shuffle our feet.

And we freeze.

 Slowly.

 Yet.

 Surely.



A Leaf

By Elise

Out my window
There is a leaf.
The leaf is hanging.
Hanging on the tree.
I wait.
Hours pass.
Days pass.
The leaf does not move.
I stare.
The other leaves fall.
The leaf does not move.
I wait.
And wait.
More time passes.
The clock ticks.
I wait.
I tap the table.
Everything is quiet.
Time passes.
The leaf does not move.



The Magic's Awakening

By Kristine

Chapter 1: Magica's Appearance

My hands trembled as I opened the trapdoor. A ladder headed downwards. It was so dark down there I couldn't see anything but shadows. I leaned forward and realized that there was a light down there. It was glowing with a sky-blue hue. I was scared and confused.

Mom never told me about this before. A *NORMAL* mom wouldn't hide a trap door from her daughter unless it was important. *NORMAL* moms wouldn't hide a trap door glowing with a blue hue. Something was amiss.

I felt confused because I didn't know why my mom would hide this from me.

Scared to find out what was down there.

I jumped off the ladder and landed with a thud. I turned around quickly and thwacked whatever was there with a frying pan. When I realized I just hit nothing, I was confused once more. I looked down and there was just a glowing crystal. Disappointed, I went up the ladder, clutching the beautiful blue rock.

I closed the trapdoor and hid the evidence to make sure my parents didn't find out what I did and kill me!!! I held the gem in both palms, gazing at it.

Why is it suddenly feeling super warm? I wondered.

AAAAAA!!!!!!

A blast of light shot out, making me drop the gemstone, which shattered into a million pieces.



It was so bright I couldn't see anything!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Once the light died down, I heard the most beautiful voice. It was as sweet and pure as an angelic harp. Was I in heaven??? No, I could feel my bedroom floor, which means I didn't die (yet). I looked up and saw the most beautiful creature in the world.

She had long blonde hair that shone like unraveled, silk rope. White antlers, light blue fluffy ears, a flowy blue top with a crescent moon on it, sequined denim shorts and wrap-around ballet heels. But what really made her stand out was her kind smile and ocean blue eyes. A gem was placed on the middle of her forehead.

"At last, I'm finally free!!!" she cried in her melodic voice.

I couldn't help staring.

Chapter 2: My Guardians

Immediately, I fell to the ground, scared. Who was this person and what were they doing in MY house????????!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I grabbed my frying pan and started thwacking it, not letting up. The creature dodged them all, expertly. "

Careful there, deary. Why are you trying to hit me??!!!! Haven't you heard I'm not a butterfly to be caught!!!!?????" she huffed, brushing dust off her tail.

She looked VERY irritated, but when the creature looked up at me, that annoyed frown quickly softened into a sheepish grin. "Sorry, there. I've always been a little... skittish. My name is Magica, but you can call me Daria." Suddenly, Daria's eyes lit up with hope and recognition. "Are you, by any chance, Keriora Min???"

I was shocked. The creature knew my name!!!!"

"Y...e... Yes!! How did you know my name?" I cried, looking confused.

Daria giggled. "It has been such a long time and now you're all grown up!! You probably won't believe me after what happened, but I'm one of your guardians." she said.

Uhhh, was she joking??

Even though Daria was very sweet and kind, how was I supposed to trust a deer-like creature who came to me from a weird crystal?"

Keriora, I know it's hard to believe me, but it's true. Here."

Okay, I was *DONE* being patient.

I was about to grab my frying pan when Daria shoved something into my face that made me stop short. The items I was holding were pictures.

Pictures of me.

The pictures were of the day when I was at last able to stand up to my bullies. I had shared cookies with my classmates and I was able to score a slam-dunk in the last 5 seconds of my basketball game. “

“Sooooo.... Anybody could've sawed. How do you prove that *YOU* were responsible?! It was just when I did something nice to people.” I spat.

Daria sighed. “Did you really mean to do things by force or the kindness of your heart?” she asked. I wanted to lie, but then I thought back to the moment when those things happened.

I had wanted to keep all the cookies for myself, but something in my heart just said it was wrong. I couldn't stand seeing people bullied, but for some weird reason, that day I had decided to stand up for myself and show the bullies who was boss. And I was the *SUCKAREST* on my basketball team, but still I had managed that slam dunk, and made my team win the finals. I didn't do those actions out of the kindness of my heart, I just felt proud to see people so happy.

Was Daria (my apparent guardian) responsible?

I know it is shocking, but it is true. Ever since you wished on a star for something magical to happen, me and my friends came to your aid. We noticed that at school, you'd always get bullied. So we helped you with your self defense, caution and bravery. But we also helped you to have good qualities like kindness, encouragement and staying curious.”

I couldn't help staring. So it was Daria all along?! I just made that stupid wish, thinking I would get a little help, like not getting my lunch money stolen for at least one day.

But it was actually Daria who was helping me!!

“Wait!! What do you mean by ‘you and your friends’?” I asked, curious.

At that moment, Daria fell to the ground, looking weak.

What happened? Are you okay?!” I cried, alarmed.



WHY WE WRITE

By Lydia

DARKNESS

By: Vera Sevelka

Crouched behind a mailbox, it could see its target: James Myers. It had watched him walk into the bar with a couple other humans, talking and laughing energetically, and was waiting for when James inevitably left alone. While waiting, it studied him. He had short, curly brown hair and stubble on his chin. He was dressed in blue ripped jeans, and a red flannel. James had downed drink after drink, and was asking the woman behind the bar for another when one of his friends tapped him on the shoulder and pointed with her thumb towards the door. James nodded, finished his last drink and stumbled towards the door with the rest of the group.

James stumbles out of The Big Black Bear with his friends, laughing drunkenly at a joke one of them made. They went to the bar after work to celebrate his promotion to assistant manager at their office. He's had a few drinks and is feeling dizzy, so he decides to walk home. His house is in the opposite direction to everyone else's, so he says his goodbyes and starts the long walk home.

This was its chance. It scurried behind bushes and garbage bins, always making sure it had a clear view of its target, nattering happily to itself. It could see James stumbling along the narrow road and smiling to himself, slowly making his way in the direction of his house. Little did he know, that would not be where he will end up tonight.



As he walks along the narrow main street of his small town, he shivers, feeling a cool breeze. It is nearing the end of September and it is starting to get cooler as Fall approaches. He keeps walking, wrapping his thin flannel around himself and can see the street lamps starting to get dimmer and farther apart. The stores lining the streets slowly dwindle into small bungalows spread far apart. The walk home seems strangely longer than it usually is, but maybe that is his imagination. As James walks along the road, the houses on the right slowly turn into a forest with only a couple flickering street lamps lighting his way and on his left is a big, tall corn field. In the distance up ahead, next to one of the lamp posts, he thinks that he can see something... a small, dark figure crouching at the base of the trees. He squints, trying to see better with his blurry, drunken vision but can't quite make it out. Is it an animal, a person, or... something else? "Hello? Is anyone theeeere?" he asks. Silence.

As it crouched at the edge of the forest, it could see James looking its way with his head to one side. Staying still, it heard James yell some words, his speech slurred and illegible. James was still too close to the town, so it couldn't make its move just yet...

James shrugs. It must be his imagination. He has walked this path many times before, usually late at night and nothing bad has ever happened. He keeps trugging along the dirt road, wondering how much farther it is to his house. He starts to think about what he will do when he eventually makes his way back home, and what is to come tomorrow. Longing for the warmth of his house, he starts to think that maybe he is going the wrong direction. Wanting to double check, he stops and reaches into the bag slung across his chest, looking for his phone.

It was watching James slowly make his way along the never ending street, impatiently awaiting its chance to strike when to its horror it saw him swing his bag to his front and reach inside. This was bad, very bad. Maybe he had a weapon? Maybe he saw it and was going to come after it or run? That would never be good! That would ruin its plan! Its precious plan! That would never do! It had to strike now, now or never! It was getting ready to lunge at James, when suddenly he pulled a glowing object out of the bag. It stood still.. Maybe this was some sort

of lantern? But the light was blue. Was James not human? Could he summon blue light? Would James see it and run away? But instead of any of that, James looked down at the glowing rectangle, his confused face illuminated in the light. It had never seen anything like this. It slowly crept closer, intrigued. Maybe this wasn't a weapon of sorts. Maybe this was something else? It couldn't be a lantern, with its odd shape and James having looked into the light, so what could it be? It kept creeping its way towards the man, wanting to get a better look, when suddenly a twig snapped under its hoof.

James is checking his phone for directions, when he hears a sound pierce the eerie silence of the night. Startled, he looks around, his eyes getting used to the darkness again. He quickly clicks on his phone's flashlight, frantically shining it around him. To his left is still the tall corn field, swaying in the breeze, and to his right is the dense forest, its trees now looking creepier with the light illuminating it and creating shadows. Farther in the forest he sees something dash from tree to tree. Maybe it is just a deer or a coyote, but as James watches it run, he can't tell if it is running on two legs or four.

It was foolish to go towards James instead of watching from afar, but its intrigue had gotten the best of it. Now, the human knew of its presence and was frantically looking around, shining a light directly at it, somehow illuminating the forest with the strong light from the rectangular object. Darting from tree to tree, so James wouldn't be able to make out what it looked like, it thought of a new plan. This was bad, very bad. The target was still too close to the other houses, but there was no way it could execute its original plan now, not with its presence known. It knew what it had to do.



James finally comes back to his senses, now scared and sober, and he starts to run. He still doesn't know what kind of a creature he has seen, but he doesn't want to know any more. He runs as fast as he can, the light from his phone flashing at the now scarier forest, and his mind frantically racing to find an explanation. In the distance he can see his home, a tiny spec that doesn't seem to be getting any closer. He looks to his right to see what is chasing him, and that's when he sees it. It's long, slim, dark figure running at exactly the same pace as him with a sly grin on its face... if you can even call it a face. Squinting in the dark he can make out a creature with the hooves of a bull, legs of a human, wings like a bird, a strangely-shaped head, a too-big mouth dripping with black gooey liquid and hair that looks damp and stringy. As James stares in horror, he trips and falls, his phone skidding away from him and landing in the bushes next to the corn field, the light flickering and going out.

Halting a couple meters from its target, it smiled to itself. Finally, James is just close enough for it to go in for the kill. It looked at its target slyly, watching him take deep ragged breaths, eyes wide and panicking. It loved when the humans felt fear, it always added so much to the experience. How delightful! It slowly made its way towards James, watching as he tried to crawl backwards on his elbows, kicking up dirt. Finally it lunged, pinning James to the ground and spitting its poisonous saliva into his face. It plunged its teeth into James' neck, breaking his bones easily.

James wakes up in an instant, sitting up in bed. He rakes a trembling hand through his damp hair. Sweat has soaked through his pajamas and bed sheets. Looking around frantically, he can see the familiarities of his bedroom; his dresser in the corner, work clothes laid out on his grandfather's old chair, and everything where it has always been. Taking a deep, ragged breath he looks towards his window on the second floor. The window is half open, curtains blowing eerily in the wind like twin ghosts. He looks past them, and thinks he sees a dark figure crouched at the edge of the woods in his backyard. James rubs his eyes and the figure disappears. He shakes his head and slowly gets out of bed to wash his face. Perplexed, he realizes that his legs feel heavy and sore. He doesn't

remember doing any exercises or running... until he slowly starts to remember fragments of the dream he just had. Was it real? It can't be, it's just a dream. James gets up with a groan and checks the time on his bedside clock. Four in the morning, too early to start getting ready for work. Feeling groggy, he slowly makes his way to his bathroom and feels for the light switch on the wall. Flicking on the light and waiting for his eyes to adjust he looks at himself in the mirror. He squints, thinking that he sees something red on his face. Confused, he looks closer at the mirror, feeling his face with his hand and winces in pain. There are three deep, dark red claw marks across his face. His heart races as he begins to accept that his dream was in fact real. James staggers backwards away from the mirror, shocked and confused. He feels his heels collide with the side of his ceramic bathtub and starts to fall, arms flailing, trying to grab onto anything he can reach. He falls into the tub, hitting his head against the side on his way down. Pain is now coursing through his body. His head is throbbing and his legs are weak. His eyes are struggling to open as he slowly loses consciousness. Blinking slowly, his eyes blurry and too weak to move, he sees a creature towering over him, too tall to fit in the bathroom, smiling eerily. The monster was real all along, not simply a nightmare. James takes a final, ragged breath, his vision going black.



THEATRE SCRIPT:

The Boss

By Owen

SCENE 1:

(A meeting room in a mundane office. The BOSS and KERES enter. Centerstage there is a table with a few chairs. Keres is wearing a medieval helmet with a sword and carrying some files. Keres is also wearing a business suit. Boss is wearing a dark business suit)

KERES (Handing over the files) Hello Boss! I got the files you needed!

BOSS (Angrily) Don't "Hello" me Keres. Keres. Where is my Coffee? I need it. Now.

KERES (Panicking) Yes sir! I'll be back in just a moment.
(Boss puts feet on the table and starts looking through files.)

BOSS (Calling out to Keres) Keres?! What the heck are these files? These filings are awful!

KERES Sorry Boss. I was fixing the server rooms.

(Insert laugh track as Boss and Keres look around.)

BOSS (Annoyed) I thought I told you to get the sound recorders out of the ceilings!
You really ought to get on your game Keres. You need to be faster. Quicker. If you continue like this Keres I might have to reconsider your position as Senior Coffee/Fetch Boss the Unpaid Intern. SCBUI for short.

KERES (Horrorified) No! I can't be demoted to just Coffee/Fetch boss the Unpaid Intern! Otherwise I'll just be the bridge boss everybody rolls past!

BOSS Well if you still want the experience and the title of a Mandatory Souls Mini Boss, you better learn quickly. Otherwise I may have to consider that option.
Do you understand?

KERES (Keres nods) Yes Boss!

BOSS NOW GET ME MY COFFEE!
(Keres runs out of the room as the Boss crosses their arms. Curtains close)

SCENE 2:

The COFFEE-MAGGEDON

(NARRATOR walks beside KERES as they walk to the break room. Narrator has gray hair and wears square glasses and a Hawaiian shirt with cargo pants and sandals. There is a bench in a hallway. BOSS is idling in the meeting room)

NARRATOR (Walking next to KERES, Mundane monotone voice)
Keres, fearing for their job, rushes to the break room. There is a potted plant. Keres must look at it and totally not the person in their head.

KERES You know I can hear you right?

NARRATOR (Monotone, Miming crying with a tissue / handkerchief) Keres said to themselves.
They obviously are going insane and imagining things. Maybe because of the stress of their job being unstable they are also becoming unstable.
How tragic.
Keres walks down the hallway and encounters a MONSTER. They think it's a good time to test out their sword. They do not know the Monster is in fact a paid actor in the play of the Cruel company: Hard games, Hard employees and Hardware incorporated motto: "Happiness is not deserved it's earned".

(The MONSTER waves. They are in front of the door, blocking the path. It's a person in a dinosaur suit carrying a cardboard sword. Keres looks at the Narrator and the Narrator looks away and whistles.)

KERES This is so stupid.

NARRATOR Keres said to themself again. They obviously must be losing their mind in this-

KERES (Exasperated) Why don't you stop talking?! It's hard enough with the BOSS being angry with my performance as SCBUI! And we have you yammering about my every action!

NARRATOR Keres said to themself-

(Keres brings out their PLASTIC sword and hits the Narrator's leg: lightly. The Narrator goes into their preferred death pose of the actor. And dies)

(The Monster surrenders by dropping their weapons and raising their hands over their head as they walk out)

MONSTER I quit.

(Keres opens the door to the break room and enters SCENE 3: The Coffee Riddles)

SCENE 3 THE COFFEE RIDDLES

(KERES enters door and there is a coffee machine being covered by a SOCK PUPPET covered in coffee)

KERES Who are you?
(Sock puppet twitches and waves erratically)

SOCK PUPPET You fool! I'm your superior!
(Keres tilts their head, confused)

KERES (also confused) What? I thought BOSS was my boss?
(Another hand pops out and flips it's index finger side to side before going behind the counter again)

SOCK PUPPET I am Sock Puppet. Full title: Sock Puppet The Coffee Blocker Boss: The Paid Intern. SPTCBCTI for short. I'm blocking a very useful optional item, you see. Makes your life easier but not necessary to complete the challenge!

(Multiple hands appear and gesture to the coffee machine)

KERES The coffee...

SOCK PUPPET (Cackling) That's right FOOL! You must...

(Keres readies their weapon)

SOCK PUPPET (Panicked) No! We aren't using knives, my back hurts! You must answer my riddles!

KERES OK. What's the riddle?

(Several hands appear and glasses are put onto the sock puppet and a riddles book is given. The hands flip through the pages.)

SOCK PUPPET Haha! What has 4 legs in the morning, 2 legs at noon and 3 legs at night?

KERES A... human?

(Sock Puppet looks at Keres and its puppet mouth scrunches up and it slinks off stage. Keres walks over to the Coffee machine and grabs a coffee.)

SCENE END

SCENE 5

THE END IS NIGH

(KERES goes over to BOSS. Boss is looking for the sound recorder playing the laugh track)

KERES: Hey Boss I got you the coffee. Do you want me to grab the files now?

(Grumbling, the Boss takes the coffee. Immediately their demeanor changes into happy and happy-go-lucky after drinking the coffee)

BOSS Oh don't worry about it. I can handle that. I was thinking of a promotion for you.

KERES Uh... what?

BOSS Yeah you did a really good job at grabbing my coffee. I decided to promote you.

KERES Wait. Weren't you-?

BOSS Oh yeah! I didn't have my coffee today, usually I get one at home but I had to drop off my kids today. So don't worry. Have a good rest of your morning! I'll give you that promotion later today.

(Laugh Track plays)

Curtain closes

PLAY END

A JUMBLE OVER JAM

By Elvie

Edna is busy at the grocery store, shopping for food for Christmas dinner. The whole family will be over tonight—all of her children and grandchildren. She has nearly gotten everything on her list, only missing a jar of strawberry jam that she will use to bake her signature pie. She needs this spread as her family is expecting the pie.

As she maneuvers her wheelchair into the aisle where the jam is located, another elderly lady who is coming in from the other side catches her eye. She seems to have all the necessary items to make a pie, except the jam of course. But Edna quickly notices that the other old lady is eyeing up the last jar of jam on the shelf.

The other old lady finally turns her head and spots Edna, catching sight of the competitive gleam in her eyes. In an instant, they're both speeding down the aisle from opposite sides. Yet in reality, they're really not going that fast considering they are both in wheelchairs.

The wheels of their wheelchairs are squeaky against the tiled floor of the supermarket, creating a nearly unbearable noise. It's like nails on a chalkboard to Edna's ears.

The tension is high, and the stakes are higher. Edna can only imagine the disappointment on her family's faces when they hear that she didn't make her signature dessert. So she vows not to let them down.

But the other lady's wheelchair is seemingly newer than her own, hers being old fashioned whereas the other lady's is an, and it is moving faster down the aisle. Edna has to refrain from crying out in joy when she spots that another shopper has blocked her competitor's path, giving herself the lead.

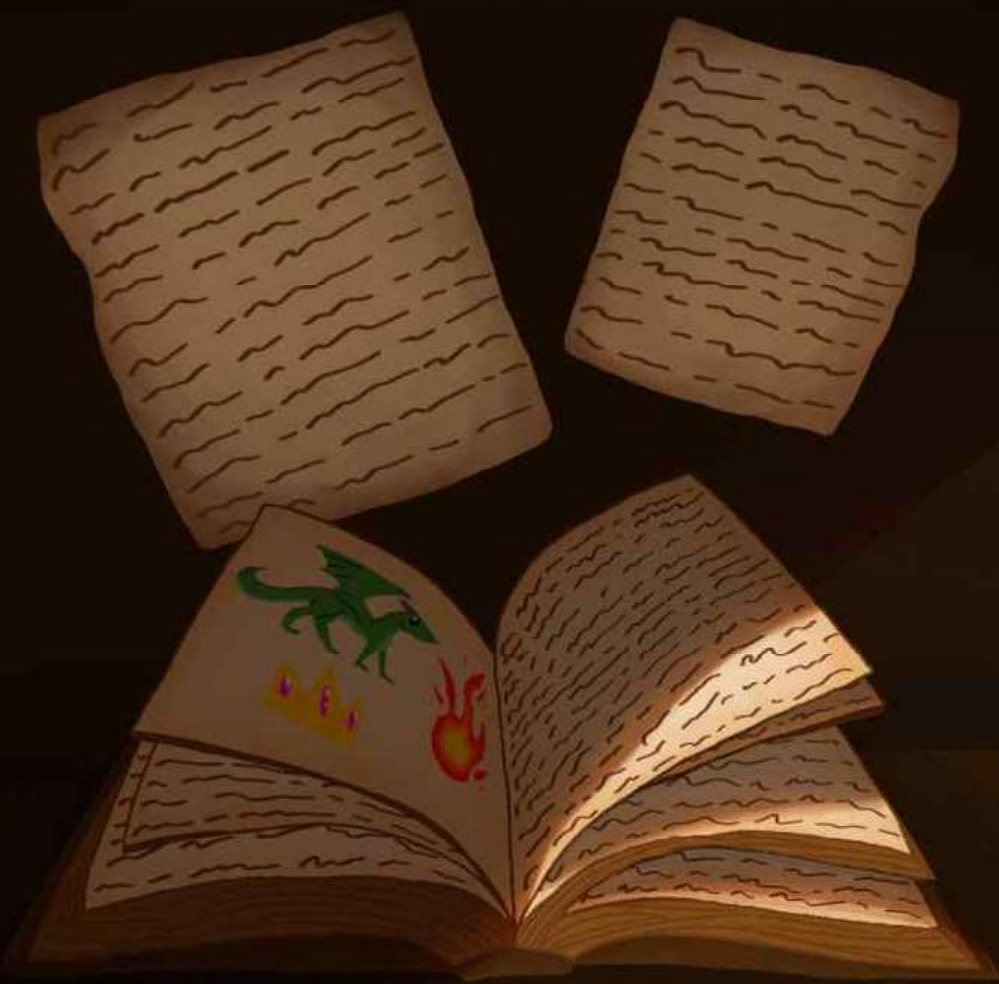
Edna pushes herself to go faster, using her little strength to turn the wheels quicker. Pushing herself past her limit. All for my family, she reminds herself. And finally, after what seemed like ages, she reaches the jam and snatches it off the shelf.

She turns to the old lady, grinning smugly at the angered look on her face, before turning around and wheeling herself to the cash register.

What a wonderful day to win.



Why we write



By Madelyn

Sinners

By Kate Maly

Prologue/Chapter One

Decrepit, abandoned, dirty. In the creaking of wood, the plumes of smoke wafting through the streets, a group of vulgar monstrosities were unusually silent, all glaring at different pieces of static. The only voices were echoing through the dingy speakers, cutting out from time to time. When it did, a harsh slap to the top of it, and it whirred back to life.

It was all unnecessarily violent. The only source of light were those screens, and loosely hung lights more dim than each of their futures— like cavemen or barbarians lived there. Shallow characters, doomed for nothing, all determined to be more than what would be assigned to their pitiful skulls.

The woman in her little hut to the left slammed her glasses higher up her misshapen nose. The pants of a small child and footage of a bodycam came from the glow of her TVs, and it clashed so disgustingly with the rousing speech being shown and projected from their lousy setup in the 'main room.' Crossing his arms and scoffing, the man kneeling at the table shot his knee up, rattling the table and cup of tea on top of it.

“Be careful there!”

“I’m always careful.”

The woman across from him reached out, waking him up with a flick to his forehead. Scowling and covering the reddened patch of skin, he rolled his shoulders back, before darting a side-eye to the coil-haired perpetrator, watching as she drank his tea without a care in the world. Setting it down properly, handling the ceramic like her own child, she smiled daintily, unfazed by the knowledge of the barks that were certain to come her way.

“If you want your own cup, do that. There’s no reason you should have to hog mine, you troll!”

“And you’re quite the brute, calling a girl a ‘troll.’ Didn’t your mummy teach you a thing or two about respect?”

He juttred the ceramic into her face, a drop of green tea splashing onto her cheek. Rolling her eyes and pushing the cup to sit back on the table, she straightened out her apron, wiping away the tea.

“She taught me that you shouldn’t steal someone’s drink then put it to your mouth when you have lipstick on! What’s that for, huh?!”

Slamming his hands on the table, piercing the musky veil of silence throughout the hideout, he leaned forward, interrogating her. All the while, she just laughed, covering her grin with the sleeves of her kimono.

“That’s quite specific. Did you wear all of her lipsticks as a young boy? It makes sense, with the fact that your masculinity is so fragile that you could break it with a tap.”

“Shut up! I did no such thing! My masculinity is incredibly unshakable!”

“Mhm, and the grass is purple, and we all love living in this raggedy hole. Anything else, Einstein?”

“I. Can’t. Believe you!”

Shrugging off his words, she patted the ox’s skull that sat atop his head, tapping her index fingers on the tips of the horns. Swatting and slapping her hands away, he slumped back over, chin in the palm of one hand as he used the other to snatch the teacup and pour the remaining contents onto the ground.

“Aiden!”

“What?”

Gesturing wildly towards the stained, wood panelling, then raising her eyebrows, she rocked her body away, hands settling on her knees. Aiden flicked the cup onto the table with a snap of his wrist, sulking against the table.

“It’s going to rot. And stink. And smell. And it won’t go away for like, a week! The hygiene here already needs the kinks worked out, and you’d rather suffocate us in a terrible smell than dump it outside?!”

“Yeah. Good. Let these sinners rot.”

“Don’t call them that.”

“Rats.”

Skittering around, cowering in their hideout, only appearing under the guise of something better. Sinners who can’t do anything about their fate. Monstrosities who fought, and fought, and coined themselves fools. Idiots. Beasts. Brutes. Only strong when they team up. An agonizingly idiotic band of misfits who accomplish nothing, and have the gall to think themselves heroes. Bringing nothing to the world, weeping over sorrows on the television. Sobbing as they stood, watched, and failed.

“I know you want to jump to conclusions, but—”

“I have every right to do so!”

Slapping her palm over his mouth, she sent the low table off to the side, skidding herself and the pillow beneath her to invade his space.

“You’re panicked. I get it. I understand why. You just need to focus on the fact that it may just be a baseless threat.”

“Think of all the people in here that would stop at nothing to get his spot, Trish! Their loyalty is bought, not earned. How can you be so sure that their guilt outweighs their desires, huh?!”

Seizing her wrist, giving himself that fraction’s worth of personal space back, Aiden squeezed her wrist, feeling how it writhed and vied for freedom.

“The people here aren’t that shallow.”

“They’re rats, mice skittering around for cheese. They see gold, they take it. See the chance, they take it. People bow down when he walks past, and you obviously don’t know how badly they want that! To be admired! To be the Greatest Sin!”

“Aiden. Aiden, Aiden, Aiden...”

“This place was never the happy family it wanted to be. There’s no unity. No trust; and certainly no love. So stop bullshitting both of us and face the truth!”

“Aiden Aiden Aiden Aiden Aiden. Take a moment and breathe.”

Planting her subdued hand onto his shoulder, the other one joining parallel, Trish smiled, making the rise and fall of her shoulders just visible enough under the layers and layers of clothing she wore. Soon enough, Aiden joined, letting her wrist hang free from his grip. Tilting the ox skull up just enough, he grabbed onto a manilla white envelope sitting atop his scalp, the lip already torn apart.

Inside, a matching, painfully boring card. Crude handwriting, but the words couldn’t be clearer in their black ink.

“You’ll die at the hands of one of your sinners.”

“I can’t— won’t let him die at the hands of a rat. These vermin in human disguise.”

“These people have names. Have you even bothered trying to remember?”

“You don’t give names to the roaches in your room.”

“You’re going to accuse somebody here without even knowing their name?”

Crumpling up the paper, holding it captive in his palm, he looked around the room, cringing at different levels depending on the different breed of rat. Rolling his eyes, he shot a lazy finger at the woman slouched in a hut, posture nothing more than hideous.

“Veronica. Veronica... sun... something.”

Smirking, tossing the paper and envelope duo under his makeshift ‘hat,’ Aiden sagged into the table to his left, sweeping his head around to rest on his palm. His sly expression was met back by Trish’s twitching eyebrows and eyelids. Jaw slack, she dragged her palms down the sides of her face, resetting herself.

“Wrong. Completely, utterly, embarrassingly wrong.”

His smile fell.

“Shush.”

And the room followed. The beating of heels on tiles was punctuated, each step chilling. Cocking his head back, seeing the details on the screens still moving as animatedly as could be, a flashing ‘muted volume’ echoing on and off a screen, a silenced, still beating heart.

Unified for a short moment, the horde stood, activities nearly completely brought to a stop. Nobody spoke, nobody dared to breathe any more than necessary. Frowning, getting on one knee, he was matched by Trish, then by the others in the room. Her face was one with a smile, tainted once she locked her left eye to Aiden’s right, everything melting down into a pensive expression.

“... and here he is...”

He dared to whisper,
dared to glance at the figure in
the door.

“The Greatest Sin.”



THE FOUR SEASONS

By Leah Chan

Summer

In this moment I
feel like I could fly,
Above the clouds
And into the sky.

In this moment I
Hear the birds
Calling to each other
With musical words.

In this moment I
taste cherries beneath my tongue,
Not an artificial taste but
The one you loved.

In this moment I
Smell the gentle perfume
Of trees that sway,
Of flowers that bloom.

In this moment I
See myself as a dandelion wisp,
Sipping juice
And stealing a kiss
From the sweet taste of summer.

Autumn

Colours like a dancing fire
Scarlet and amber
Or dark and slow like
Burgundy, maroon.
The nights grow long,
Everlasting darkness,
Counting ever closer
To the end of the year.



The air is cooling
Class is starting,
A bell piercing the air
That used to be silent.

Curled up with a mug of tea
By the window
The rain splashing,
The clouds painting
The sky grey.

Spiced cookies
And sweet aromas,
Cozy sweaters and long walks
Through fiery forests,
Breathing
The crisp autumn air.

Winter

The snow sparkles,
A powdery layer
Like the flour on the rolling pin
Ready for battle.

The snow falls
And it's brilliant outside,
But inside it's warm
And there's a din
Of quiet chatter,
Of comfortable chatter,
Of a white Christmas.

The snow dances
Like ballerinas on a cold night,
Stage lights aglow,
Audience caught in rapturous wonder
By a winter miracle.

The snow crunches
Under boots,
Splatters like paint
In a game of shrieking laughter



The snow glitters,
Catching the light,
Shining like a beacon,
Warning, winter!

Spring

The snow melts,
Revealing green
And colours like gemstones
Waiting to be seen

Each breath is fresh
And bright and sweet,
The air has a lightness,
From snow's retreat.

Buds sprout,
Flowers abloom,
Tulips and lilacs,
Iris or heirloom.

The rain never ends,
Battering the ground
Bringing life to the plants
That are waiting to be found

The animals awaken
And dig up the dirt
To begin a new life
Of new beginnings on earth
In spring.



Only a Memory

By Amalyn

I thought I had forgotten.

But as his gray face and gaunt fingers curl around the wooden ladder, I know I have not.

The sage green cabin in the midst of a rainforest was supposed to be my escape. Surrounded by dense shrubbery and the calls of wildlife. That was my safe haven, a place where the people, the police, he, could not find me.

And yet here he is, sunken eyes, sickly green hair, slowly making his way up the rotting planks of wood, damaged by water, now too broken to be called a ladder.

I let out a sigh, defeated, dismayed, disgruntled, as I stare from the pale white bench where I spent so many other evenings looking out into the murky waters of the river, troubled, trembling, tired. I lean my head back on the tinted windows, rethinking, rewriting, all that had happened before.

Back when he was breathing more than just water, back when he was muttering more than just murmurs.

His spider-like limbs and kelp-strewn hair reach for me, as if they are snakes closing in on a mouse. Except he is no longer the mouse.

I sob, I cry, I beg, curling up into a ball against the chipping white of the door, shielding myself from his overbearing presence. The porch set over stone creaks as all old porches do, when he drags his gangly limbs onto the dried planks of wood. Leaving a trail of water.

Not blood, not blood. It's no longer blood.

Sirens.

That's not right. I was not caught. They can't find me in the middle of a rainforest, in my sage green cabin, lost by the river.

He pauses, his turtle-like neck reaching out of the shell that is his ribcage, and I pause alongside him. We stare at the red and blue lights reflecting off the green and brown river. He slowly turns his head back to me. His sunken eyes, his kelp-tangled hair, his gaunt features.

He smiles, a slow smile, water dripping out of the cracks between his rotting yellow teeth.

His words are no longer whispers. He yells in a twisted sort of joy, though it is lost in the oncoming sirens.

I cover my ears.

I scream.

It's all gone within a matter of seconds.

I thought I had forgotten.



Why We Write



By Nicholas

GHOST

By Kashvi

I was only thirteen when I died.

A week ago would've been my sixteenth birthday.

I've been alone in the woods for three years, not used to having visitors, and that's why I felt ecstatic - but at the same time confused and shocked - when she arrived.

I've longed to meet a living human, but trying to leave this forest hasn't worked. It's like an invisible wall was keeping me out. After my death, they put up a sign warning that something was in the woods. People started rumors about what had killed me, I was sure of that, though I doubt that they'd ever find out or even think of what had actually happened.

I followed her around, and couldn't help but laugh. It had been so long since I'd seen a person. Everything about them seemed funny now, yet interesting. I wish I knew how to communicate, then everything would be so much more fun. But so far, this was the best thing I could do to not be alone.

The sky darkened and all the laughter I had disappeared.

No. I ordered, wondering if he could hear me. No, I won't let you take her, not the same way you took me.

I tried to stop him, but it was no use, he was far more powerful. I tried to tell her, motion to her, whatever, but tried to see if I could transmit anyway of how she could get out of here.

You can't do this I told him.

Silence was what I received in return.

Nothing happened for the next three minutes and I thought I was seeing things, until his laughter filled the air.

And that's when I saw him, right above her.

No!

Before I knew what I was doing, I dived in and pushed her. I didn't know that by doing that I had put her in even more danger.

All I wanted was to not be lonely anymore.

I didn't mean for this to happen.

I'd rather be alone forever than cause the bloodshed that happened after.

And it's all my fault.

EMBERS

By: Antonio Rosa

It had all amounted to nothing, the blood, sweat and tears boiling into a putrid mix of no worth. Still he trudged forward, through the grime and brimstone to his one final task. Perhaps a chance to soak a bit of joy from this cruel journey.

The gunslinger steps were hard against the ashy stones, his boots charred. His long burnt cloak blew ever so softly in the wind, the burning edges trying to streak the already tainted air. He looked at the land with his same sharp green eyes, timeless and void as if they were nothing at all.

As he listened to the wind blow in the distance, he could make out strange, somber words being sung. "All burns in the end, fuel to fire with no hope to mend. Lifeless and rotting atop desert soil, your fair bodies left to blister and boil." He had heard this song many times, from the far reaches of mountain passes and the busy chaotic city escapes he hated with all his being. Though he did not know what it meant, it always came with a sense of loss. The gunslinger had lost his mind long ago, all the empathy and curiosity that a man needed to live were absent from his mind. He felt this song was a strange reprimand, the universe not letting his empty mind consume him just yet.



“With sorrowful eyes we watch you wander once more, into the beyond for some other man to adore.” It grew louder in his ear, the song’s almost melancholy instruments drawing out the sounds of flames and carnage. In the distance beyond the stacks of smoke he could see them, the flaming figures of running people. The light from the faire cast the details of their bodies in a haunting glow, even through smoke he could see their newly-deformed shapes. In the distance he could see it, the end to all of this.

“But then against you steeps will bring rot and your breath decay, scorching the earth to die another day.” There he was, the stranger who he tried to love. He was a strange thing now, buried under soot and ash, a large stone spike sticking from his chest, His head stumbled forward, eyes covered by that strange mask he always wore. It was one used by the doctors of old, back when the world was consumed by disease. He had always hoped he could rid the world of all imperfections, give a clean and unique experience to all things. Such a noble mission, what a shame it ended him in a place like this.

“Did it work?” he asked, nearly choking on the fumes. He raised his head slightly, the beak of his mask broken into thin hanging strips of fine leather.

“Nothing could have,” the gunslinger responded.

He lowered his head again. “Through all of that, I will be left a legacy of ruin. So many lives torn by my hands, so many left to burn,” he said with fading life and weighted tears.



The gunslinger knelt down to the thing's level, digging his knee into the mountain of ash. He reached for the thing's mask and gently removed it from his face.

His expression was imperfect in every way, torn and cut in all places with tears shining in the orange light upon his face.

"Rest, my friend, you have done well. There is nothing to fear anymore."

The gunslinger then raised himself, and in an instant drew his weapon. A loud bang shot through the air, then a strange quiet. Everything fell, the fires faded into pillars of smoke and the sky turned black. His mission was done, every life taken. The gunslinger wandered off - where to, no one would ever know. But one day he would come back from his strange prison, like he had so many times before. Forced to set the fire, forced to shoot the shot once again. And as his cloak blew in the ashy breeze and his eyes faded with the dark, that same song played, faultlessly.

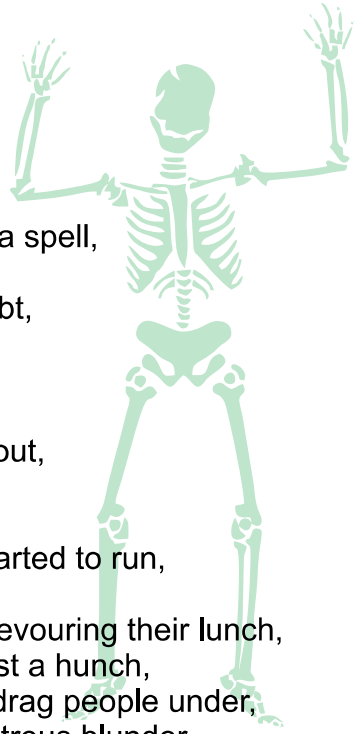
"Wander of dead man, wander to the pain you have caused. Let yourself sink into the back into nothing, your worthless tired grand flaw."



A HALLOWEEN POEM

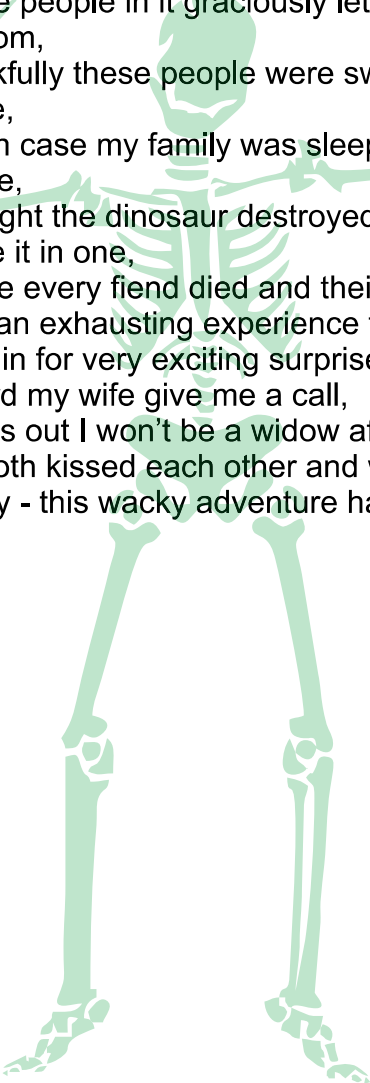
By Justin Di Nino

I was walking along the beach at evening,
Hoping to enjoy the relaxing outing.
It was pretty chill, so all seemed well,
Then I saw the water act like it was under a spell,
It was strangely rough and swirling about,
It was so strange that many started to doubt,
The whirlpools swirled as fast as light,
As the sky turned into a dreaded night,
One by one monsters shot out,
While everyone at the beach started to shout,
Dinosaurs, spiders, ghosts and clowns,
Not a single one had a frightened frown,
They all maniacally laughed as civilians started to run,
If only one of us had a gun,
The dinosaurs chased after others while devouring their lunch,
They must have been hungry, but that's just a hunch,
The spiders crawled around the beach to drag people under,
While they were all running from this disastrous blunder,
We couldn't see the ghosts, but we heard their cackles,
As foolish victims failed to perform tackles,
Why they thought tackling would work I do not know,
All I know is that the clowns were trying to put on a show,
They giggled and howled and slashed and diced,
While everyone was hiding as quiet as mice,
After hopping in my van I dashed before it was too late,
But I could have had a very gruesome fate,
I arrived home to my sleeping kids,
Whether they heard the news about tonight I did not know if they did,
That is until I heard the television,
That my wife was watching about this horrifying vision,
We went to bed all tucked in nicely,
Until we heard a roar so lively,
Suddenly a tyrannosaurus rex showed up by my window,
It grabbed my wife - oh no I might be a widow,
It soon ravaged my house, destroying everything inside,



Before I could grasp what's going on the monster tossed me aside,
I laid on the ground motionless while it stormed away,
Before waking up while my mind was astray,
When my eyes awoke they were in some cage,
While monsters and ghouls were steaming with rage,
They seemed to not like me as the star of their act,
So I tried to escape but could not react,
I got zapped with electricity every time I moved,
It is as if the fiends did not want me to be removed,
My mind thought that these guys didn't want me here,
Unless someone is trapping me for their own entertainment - that is
what I fear,
All of a sudden a ghoulish figure in a robe came out from behind,
My my what a strange find,
He had white wrinkly skin with long crooked fingers and toes,
And a smile that could scar the mightiest of foes,
He introduced me to the crowd with his eerie raspy voice,
But the entire crowd was questioning his choice,
I couldn't quite make out what he said,
However I think he wanted me dead,
At this moment I felt like giving up,
Then I saw underneath me a great big cup,
It was filled with golden liquid that was thick and shiny,
It even looked disgustingly slimy,
It scared me so much I snapped out of my sadness,
I couldn't give up even though this situation is madness,
I just hope my family is okay
As this is turning out to be a horrible day,
All of a sudden the cage floor underneath me gave out,
Which was followed by me free falling like a crazy lout,
Before landing in the solution I grabbed onto the sides of the pool,
Then jumped off and ran like a fool,
I shoved the monsters aside causing the skeletons' bones to fly
everywhere,
Just trying to escape this dreaded nightmare,
In front of myself appeared the ghoulish figure,
At a closer look he seemed pretty disfigured,
He maniacally laughed then grabbed me by the leg,
But I used quick thinking to knock him down a peg,
As the weirdo lied stunned I hightailed it towards the exit,
But then an angry spirit creeped towards me bit by bit,
It then attacked me with its fiery body,

The devil it seemed to embody,
I ran away from it like a graceful megapode,
But its flame filled self hit an oxygen tank which caused it to
explode,
In one fell swoop the place was set ablaze,
So I dashed towards freedom in this never ending maze,
The door was nearly in my reach,
Then finally - I was outside and let out a great screech,
My body's force held the door shut,
As the fire made the monsters let out screams from the gut,
When there seemed to be no more left I ran the other way,
My plan was to hitchhike and get home to start a new day,
I saw a car in the distance and hollered to them,
So the people in it graciously let me have a second chance of
freedom,
Thankfully these people were sweet so they brought me back to my
house,
Just in case my family was sleeping I went inside as quiet as a
mouse,
I thought the dinosaur destroyed my home though so it was strange
to see it in one,
Maybe every fiend died and their work was undone,
After an exhausting experience that almost caused my demise,
I was in for very exciting surprise,
I heard my wife give me a call,
It turns out I won't be a widow after all,
We both kissed each other and went to bed,
Finally - this wacky adventure has come to an end.



The Legend of Sun and Moon

By: Sofia Romano



Midnight's hooves hit loud on the ground, gallop after gallop. I reach for my dagger and pull it out, feeling the power seep into my hand. I savor it. I let my long black hair down and hop off the dark horse. Searching the treeline, I notice there is a shift in the atmosphere.

A brighter and happier air comes over me. I tense, waiting for whoever is coming, though I know who it is. I will always know when he is near. That is my curse. He emerges from the trees, a white glow around him. Fortis. I glare, holding the dagger close to me as he steps forward.

"Mela, darling, how very good to see you," he says in a cunning manner. I sneer at him.

"Stay away from my land, Fortis! I've warned you countless times!" I spit out, circling him. He smiles and bows his head. As I round him, he reaches a hand out waiting for me to take it. I can't help but laugh. "What is this?"

"I am offering you an out with me," he says, his hand still out.

'An out?' I think to myself as I search the tree line for any guards but find nothing.

"There are no "outs" Fortis. We are not allowed to leave. What are you up to?" I ask, quizzically. I know there is no way of leaving the kingdom. There is nothing outside of it, especially for us. After all my hard work of retrieving the dagger and rightfully taking over the Kingdom, I will not leave.

"Let me show you," he says softly, forcefully taking my hand. As we touch, I screech, feeling the darkness in my body leaving, the light burning me. As I thrash desperately trying to free myself from his grasp, I reach for my powers. Darkness lunges forward and wraps around my body, shielding me from the light that threatens to engulf me. I struggle to get out of Fortis' grip, stabbing him with the dagger. He simply takes it from his side and drops it to the floor. My shield of darkness falls away as defeat washes over me.

Before my eyes go white with Fortis' power, I see him stomp

the dagger into the soil.

I wake in a cold cell. I stand and run to the open door, thinking this must be a mistake. I am pulled to the ground by chains attached to my ankles. My head hits the floor and I wince in pain. I try using my powers, summoning the shadows to break me free of the chains to no avail. Footsteps approach the cell. I don't look, assuming it's just a guard coming to patronize the daughter of the moon, now captured.

"Mela. What a sight to see," Fortis' bright and cheerful voice says from above me. I look up from the cold ground. I glare at him.

"Release me! Now!" I demand. He laughs. His head goes back, his blond hair falling with the motion. He snaps his focus back to me, grinning widely as he bends at his knees.

"Why would I release such a valuable person? I have been chasing you for three thousand years, my darling," he says, brushing a strand of my pitch black hair away from my face. "I suppose, however, if you really wanted to be released I could... call for a favour." he says, standing again.

I sit up, ready to hear his offer. "What do you want, Fortis?"

He paces, just out of arm's reach from me. He extends his hand, palm up. A little white light forms above it, twisting and humming. It forms a person; me? I watch it with fascination as it starts to move, dancing. As I look closer I realize the formation is doing the sun dance, performed years ago when darkness flooded over the world. I look at Fortis in confusion.

"What is this?" I ask. He closes his hand, putting out the light.

"I want you to dance. For the Kingdom. I want you to summon the moon, so that we become equals." He reaches his hand out to me, his face softening. "I never wanted to hurt you, Mela. I just... you are very stubborn. I couldn't get your attention any other way. I apologize for blindsiding you." I listen to him, but don't take his hand. He sits beside me. "I have a vision. For the world. Where we have equal time to show our powers. We can rule together."

"I don't understand. You want me to summon darkness?" I ask.

"Yes, we will dance together and rule as one. There will be no more eternal light or eternal darkness. There will be day and



night. I will rule the day, and you, darling, will rule the night.” He says, looking at me. I contemplate this.

“Alright. We will dance.”

The Kingdom gathers before the castle as Fortis and I stand on the balcony. The sun is bright, relieved to be shining after my long rule. Fortis takes my hand and we dance in unison. As we do, the moon rises, meeting the sun in the sky. We watch in awe as the moon passes over the sun, creating a soft glow on the world. In an instant we are pulled upward as the moon passes over the sun. We are released from the air, our hands still intertwined. People cheer and begin to dance below us.

“How do we know it worked?” I ask him.

“We wait. But for now, let us celebrate the end of our war,” he says as he takes out the dagger. I look at him as we use our powers and lift it into the air. It shakes and hums, breaking into hundreds of little pieces.

“To our Kingdom ,” he says.

“Yes, to our Kingdom!” I respond.





why we write

By Max