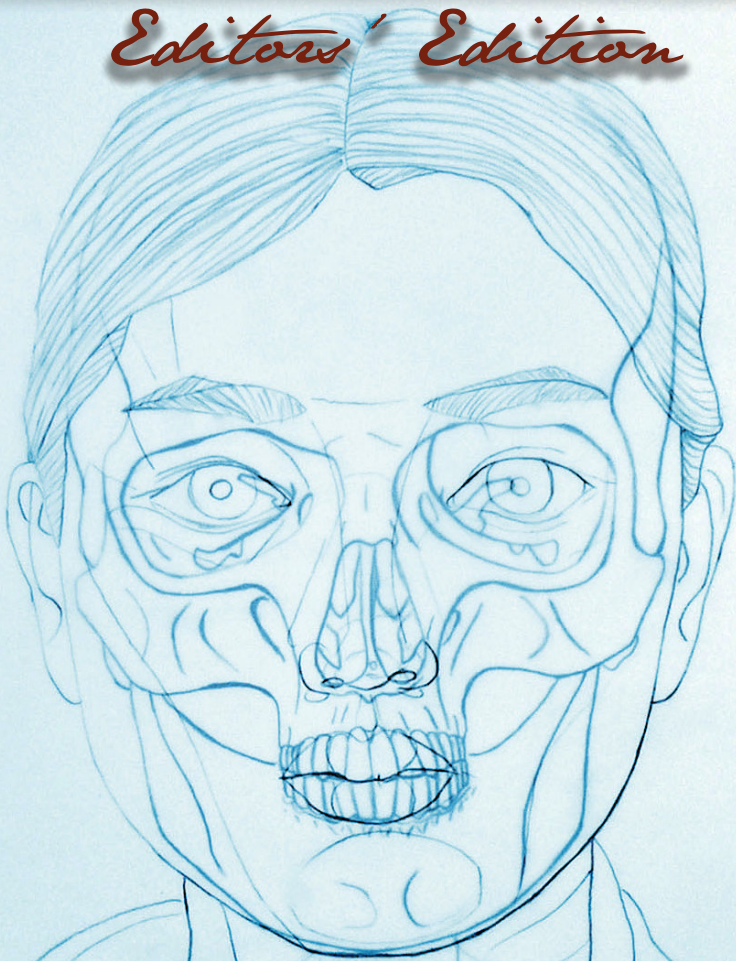


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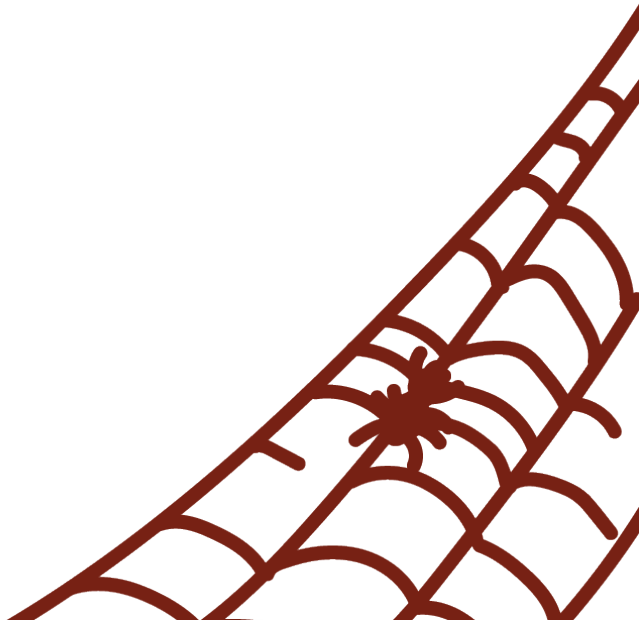
B222

Issue 4 | Fall 2024



B222

Issue 4 | Fall 2024
Heebie Jeebies



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B222 Journal affirms it is our collective responsibility to honour and respect those who have gone before us, those who are here, and those who have yet to come. We are grateful for the opportunity to be working and living on this land.

B222 Journal is published by the Creative Writing & Publishing program in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Sheridan College.

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Printed in Canada
ISSN #####-####

Views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher nor Sheridan College.



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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

It is no secret that *B222* is more than just a journal. If you know us, you know of the room that wears our name. This room, our namesake, is a birthplace of love and a home to countless creatives who have spent years searching for a place to nest, is a hub of learn, creating, and imagining. In our last issue, our contributors lent their homes to our pages. This time, our ever-blooming community lent us their fears.

If you've heard the term *heebie-jeebies* before, you likely know that feeling: the shivers and shakes; the goosebumps and quakes. It's a playful way to say we're feeling that fear physically, not just at heart. The contributors published in this issue not only managed to grab hold of that feeling and dip it in ink, but they convinced us to feel it, too.

In September, I had no idea what to expect, no sense of what was on its way to me or my team. I hadn't heard scary stories quite like these since I was a child sitting knees-up around a campfire, or up past my bedtime in a cabin somewhere cold and intentionally lost. I've unknowingly been hungry for another serving, chasing that feeling since it started. That fireside focus—no choice but to listen and fear. Let me tell you: I've been fed now. In the end, I hope the works published here will feed you, too.

Once we lanced the swelling mass of submissions, out poured chilling stories and visuals that kept us up with goosebumps. Terrors there but forgotten, remembered but lost—these pages are heaping plates of visceral nightmares that writhe and wither. I could not be more thrilled to serve up this delightful concoction made for you creatures of the night who revel in the playful joy of confronting the unreal.

Again and again, Sheridan students push past the rotting fence that defines a genre and have found new ways to convince readers to feel something new. There is a story here for everyone—written, drawn, or photographed. I implore you,

dear reader, to find your favourite.

Hint: it'll be the one that leaves you with a smile and a shiver. The *heebie-jeebies*, if you will.

To all who dared submit: Thank you. I write this note with a hungry heart. I can't wait to see what you come up with next.

See you soon,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'GGoudie', written in a cursive style.

Gabrielle Goudie
Managing Editor

Phantom Machines



Phantom Machines

KB Cameron

Third Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

The complex had survived winters worse than this. Not the same could be said for its tenants. Unlike the heat, rumours had a way of quickly circulating. There was talk a few years back of a woman on the third floor having lost seven of her toes. She was sleeping when the frostbite settled in. And then there was the incident last week. Ellis had gone to bring Mr. Conifer his mail and found the poor man frozen to death on the floor of his apartment. Ellis told me that Conifer didn't have any fingernails, that he had filed them all off, that there were deep scratches etched into the brick of our adjoining wall like he had been trying to claw his way through. That was the night Ellis stopped sleeping.

I was working more than I'd have liked. Ellis hadn't been able to secure a job, not since the snowfall. The cold had a way of halting production. The adverts were sparse. Construction postings wouldn't crop up in the papers until the ground thawed.

Ellis had too much time on his hands and too many tools in arms reach—

I admit it was sweet, at first. I would come home from my double shift to find Ellis had finally greased the pantry hinges or tightened the leaky faucet. But at some point, he ran out of problems and began inventing them. A few days ago, I found my foot inches from a mousetrap and Ellis pressed against the wall we shared with Conifer. He was holding my mother's crystal to his ear.

Said he could hear something moving—

The next day, Ellis greeted me at the door with a guilty smile. He took my coat and handed me a lukewarm mug of coffee, his dust-coated fingers brushing against mine. Then he led me to the wall. To the place where the wall used to be. I scolded him, told him the landlord would have our heads. He didn't seem to hear me. But then I looked through it, the wall. To my confusion, behind it wasn't Conifer's apartment

but an unfinished room. Inside, the stale air was steeped in the thick smell of oil and electricity. Strange metal machines that had long begun to rust hummed against the bare-brick walls, all connected to a larger furnace-like contraption in the centre of the room. Ellis said he thought they were some type of ancient heating system, said that was why the building got so cold, said he could get it up and running again. I told him we should tell the landlord, but he protested. He thought the hound would try to up our rent for the extra space; I was working overtime to barely make rent as it was.

While Ellis inspected the strange circuits and dials on each machine, I started cleaning out the room. If they proved to be junk, I thought we could at least sell them for parts. Maybe convert the room to an office or a nursery. Ellis figured out the mechanics quite quickly. He theorized that the central machine had to be lit and fed kindling and that this heat would then power the others. Testing his theory, Ellis took the phonebook we used to level the kitchen table. He tore out its waterlogged pages and tossed them into the machine's internal chamber.

Then, he struck a match—

The apartment was hot. Factory hot. I'd given up kicking off the sheets and had resorted to sleeping on the floor, though this wasn't all that much better. The window we had unspokenly agreed to keep barricaded shut during the winter months hung wide open, its breath a welcomed chill. Ellis hadn't come to bed. He hadn't come to bed for the past few days. From the floor, I could hear him quietly arguing with someone in the other room. Groggily, I got to my feet. He knew we couldn't afford the phone bill this month. But Ellis wasn't in the kitchen where the landline was. He was in that room, talking to the machines. His low, erratic whispers paused, the silence filled with mechanical rattles as he nodded in certain agreement. Ellis then began to dissect a decorative pillow, tossing tassels and clumps of stuffing into the wavering flame. The bookshelves were all bare. Most of the apartment was bare. How long had he been feeding it? I begged him to come to bed. He said he would. In a minute.

Though he didn't look at me when he said it, just stared straight ahead into the machines' hypnotic glow.

I woke up hours later to the smell of smoke. Choking on the air, I ran into the hallway which was quickly being licked away by flames. On the other end, Ellis was prying up the kitchen floorboards. I screamed at him, but he couldn't hear me. Lulled by their hum, Ellis turned towards the room and fed the splintered wood into the central machine. As the ceiling came down, I fled out the open bedroom window onto the fire escape.

When the flames were finally put out, the building was barely standing. Fire officials scavenged the ashes but claimed they couldn't locate the source of the fire. I told them. About Ellis, about the machines, but they laughed me off. Asked how much smoke I inhaled. When they left, I climbed the fire escape to our apartment. The hole in the adjoining wall was now just a blackened window into Conifer's living room. There was no room, no strange machines. There was no Ellis.

merd



mud

Natasha David

Third Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

mud

/mʌd/

noun

1. soft, sticky matter; a result from mixing water and earth, as in viscous sludge seeping through the floorboards, sucking at your socked feet, clinging to your perfect skin, pulling you in (see **engulf, sink, consume**)
2. a grave's skin, unmarked, ~~embracing~~ consuming your bones, "dragging you[r name] through the mud," where something stirs beneath, unseen, waiting to rise (see **malefaction, tort, fault**)
3. clay; malleable, changeable, shapeable, as in tort allegations shot and killed, carelessly buried, as in a birthplace for rot, molded by things that scuttle beneath the infinite dark (see **decay, mire, trap**)
4. the last thing you taste as the earth fills your lungs, "mud in your eye" as you struggle in vain; the thing that traps your scrabbling hands (see antonym: **release, unshackle, escape**)

A pit of cockroaches



A pit of cockroaches

Jakob Davidson

Second Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

A pit of cockroaches
start with your feet
as you sink further down,
your soles wriggling below.
With your body a root,
the cockroaches begin to climb
inside the cracks of the hems,
disease-ridden limbs
brushing behind your legs,
tickling the back of your knees.
Waist-deep. The cockroaches plunge higher
on your shaking body,
cold with sweat and goosebumps.

Now they're at your shoulders.
You swipe and you flail and you squeeze,
the crunches of hard shells
oozing a pungent stench.
Teal guts stain your skin,
welling tears in your eyes.
You try to scream,
but the cockroaches won't let you.
All they see is an orifice of warmth,
unwillingly granted by your cries.
Pilling on your tongue,
you gag. But that doesn't stop them
from squirming further down,
stretching the lining of your flesh until
your throat swallows the shells,
choking from twitching convulsions
They flood into your ears,
digging toward your brain,
scraping the canals behind your eyes.

Submerged by millions of cockroaches,
they crawl and they crawl and they crawl
until your consciousness fades into the black.

And you are granted mercy.

It Goes on All Fours



It Goes on All Fours

Rachelle-Anne Lawka

Fourth Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

The sickly-sweet tang of rot permeating his bedroom was the first thing Svein noticed. The second was the hollow imprint carved into the bed where his wife, Alva, should have been tangled in a fit of white sheets—the abrasive wool of their quilted blanket tucked below her chin.

Svein knew that insomnia wasn't unfamiliar to Alva—that his wife frequently wrestled with the loose creature of sleep, and, more often than not, lost to its insufferable shape. It was not uncommon for him to wake in their shared bed alone. In fact, had it not been for the acrid odour clinging to every visible surface, he most likely would have found himself still asleep.

But the smell—the awful, putrid scent of spoiled meat mixed with the overbearing ripeness of an apple—violated his nose in a way he could not ignore, which was how he found himself at the base of the house's winding staircase, each breath a laboured exhale ripped from his lungs.

He unconsciously floated toward the faint light glowing from the kitchen at the end of the hallway, where he could hear the soft lilt of a voice whispering incomprehensible words. A swell of unease unfurled itself from his stomach. In his mind's eye, he saw it spread its ebony wings wider and wider until the tips of its feathers tickled the wet mound of his uvula.

The pungent taste of bile clawed its way up his throat.

"Alva?" he whispered into the supple stream of light.

For a brief moment, the soft cadence of what he realized was Alva's voice quieted.

"In here, love," Alva sang from the kitchen. A rasping mewl echoed after her.

The fine hairs at the nape of Svein's neck rose in response. He tried to rub away the gooseflesh that had suddenly speckled his skin—tried to calm the pounding of his own heart rever-

berating in his ears. He was overreacting. Alva was just having another bad episode.

At least that's what he coached himself to repeat like a mantra in his mind as he pressed his legs forward, the floorboards groaning beneath his feet.

Distantly, as though listening to the static of a radio, he heard his mind scream at him that something was wrong, wrong, wrong—that the sound of Alva's lyrical voice combined with the strange mewling, and the unwelcome stench, was incorrect.

But Svein was never good at listening to his own body's warnings.

"I wondered when you would finally wake up," Alva cooed from the kitchen floor. In her arms, cradled against her chest, a blue blanket convulsed.

"Alva, darling, it's late. How about we go back to bed?"

"But Svein, look!" she cried.

Svein watched as she lifted her shaking arms away from her chest and thrust the strange lump of blanket triumphantly in the air.

"At first, I thought I was imagining things." The blanket twitched wildly in Alva's grasp before going deathly still.

"But the sound—that awful sound over and over and over again," Alva moaned, eyes rolling back into her head.

"I could hear him calling me—begging me—to come get him."

"I followed his voice and that's when I found the backdoor open—"

Alva paused her rambling to glance away from the blue lump that she still held above her head, narrowing her eyes accusingly at Svein.

"You always forget to close it properly." Alva's nose wrinkled in disdain. "Doesn't matter."

She continued, "I found him on the porch, and he was freezing! Y'know it dropped to negative thirty last night? The winters here are getting worse—we should really consider moving." Alva swayed the bundle back and forth as though it were a keening baby.

"What's in the blanket?" Svein asked his wife carefully, the bile from earlier thick in his throat.

"Its Cat! He found his way back to us."

Standing in the entrance of the kitchen, Svein wrung his hands painfully together. Their pet cat had gone missing three years earlier.

"Alva," he started slowly, scared that if he spoke too fast he might startle her like a deer in the woods, "how do you know it's really him?"

Alva remained seated on the beige, tiled floor.

Svein forced his leaden legs to take a tentative step forward—hands braced in front of him as though he were approaching a rabid dog.

"Because I just do," Alva stated matter-of-factly, lips puckered in a disappointed frown. "What? You think I'm lying?"

"No, that's not—"

"Cat told me he missed you." Alva spun the lump in the air and for a brief second, a leg poked out from beneath the blanket—only the shape of it was wrong. Bone and tendon bent inward instead of outward.

Svein dropped to the ground. Poised on all fours, he let his body carry him animal-like across the floor until the odour became unbearable.

"Alva, please...what's in the blanket?" For the third time that night, Svein choked on a surge of bile.

"I already told you."

He was now directly in front of Alva, their faces so close he could make out the broken capillaries in her eyes: the shredded flaps of flesh hanging loosely from her temple: the newly formed lacerations on her scalp from where her hair had been ripped from its roots.

Forcing both hands up, Svein reached towards the bundle still christened in the air.

"Be careful with him." Alva's hands loosened.

The thing in the blanket let out a low whimper.

Svein cradled the bundle against his chest. Rocked it back and forth the way he had with their still-born son. He was keenly aware of the sweat pooling on his forehead as he pulled back the blanket from the thing's face.

He heard Alva howl—heard his own voice distant and alien as it screamed. In the recesses of his memory, he heard his grandmother's frightened tone as she prodded the invert-

ed body of a humanoid creature off their porch: *When they come calling, don't ever welcome them in.*

The Collector



The Collector

Rebekah Young

Fourth Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

My nails pierce
the dirt before me
forcing my fingers

into the deepest depths
to pull myself forward an inch

The air around me is snatched away

Hooks every pore

Their tiny arms
rip
at my cheeks
forcing my lips into a strained grin

They stretch my eyelids
to expose

the round innocence of their
whites

My screams are torn from my throat as

they sp li t

the skin

from my bones
and laugh at they toss it in

the **black abyss**

behind
the open mouth
that consumes everything in its path

My bones sparkle in the light of day
All empty sockets except

for the heart beating in my chest
My ivory hands shield it
From those demon claws

It's mine I screech
the banshee they've made me

It's all I have

The wind bares their teeth
They latch their fangs
onto each of my polished white branches

and

snap them from their place
No sound
to echo from it
For that would make the mouth
rather displeased

Dread
leaks
from my wounds

And the jaws slurp it up
and lick their plate clean

At least they don't waste a single
drop

My heart lies
alone
fallen
in the dirt

Smashed
into

PIECES
by the WEIGHT
of it all

The air moans in disgust
and turns away
to find another
for its collection

The Eyes



The Eyes

Noel Cobb

First Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

What is time, really? What are seconds, minutes, hours? Time is eternal. It passes perpetually: one minute is always sixty seconds, one hour is just as many minutes. And yet it is subjective, an immaterial force slowing or hastening at our own perception.

Three hours, passed blissfully in the blink of an eye;

Thirty lethargic, crawling minutes, staring at the waiting room clock.

Surely that thirty minute period is longer.

Right?

An empty black box, the same rough fabric on all sides. Dark, much darker than it should have been, without the city's lights overhead. A miniscule container, flanked by a desolate wasteland of concrete and steel.

I was barely old enough to go to school when it happened. Isolated, yet surrounded. The weight of the world had come down to crush only me, as if this would be my fate forever. I desperately feared for my life. I sat in my metal prison, each second agonisingly

l o n g.

Each second an eternity; each second, a pocket-sized hell made just for me. A lifetime in a moment, and then another, then yet again. An eternity in a second.

Was this my life?

Was this all it would ever be?

Was there anything beyond the walls closing in around me?

I was helpless to escape.

The box of donuts dropped to the floor.

Powerless.

My eyes filled with tears, and I lost track of time. The world began to spin around and around. People passed by in dark clothes, eyes low to the ground, but none took note of me. None would free me from my metal box; each second kept passing by. That's when I saw it.

The eyes.

I don't know where they came from, or what they belonged to, but they were there. Nothing one eternity, then two glowing yellow marbles floating there the next. Unlike the blind masses who paid me no heed, who shunned my existence, caring naught for my pleas, it noticed me; it stared right through. My fear materialised, a giant slug on the verge of death, covered in slime, pulsating through laboured breaths.

What was I to do? What could I do? What did it want? Would it save me from my prison?

Time was frozen.

I was frozen. Paralyzed, unable to scream or cry or curl up into a little ball. Unable to pray for this all to be over. We stared off at one another for decades, maybe centuries; perhaps it was a thousand years.

Just
Stared.

I watched as it approached: I saw no body, no form to which it attached itself, yet it approached. Step by agonising step. What would it do to me? Would it kill me? The thought almost brought relief in some sick, degenerated way. Almost.

It crawled slowly along, on what I dare not ask. For who could bear to comprehend a being of the darkness such as it? The screech of metal, the scratching of nails on a chalkboard,

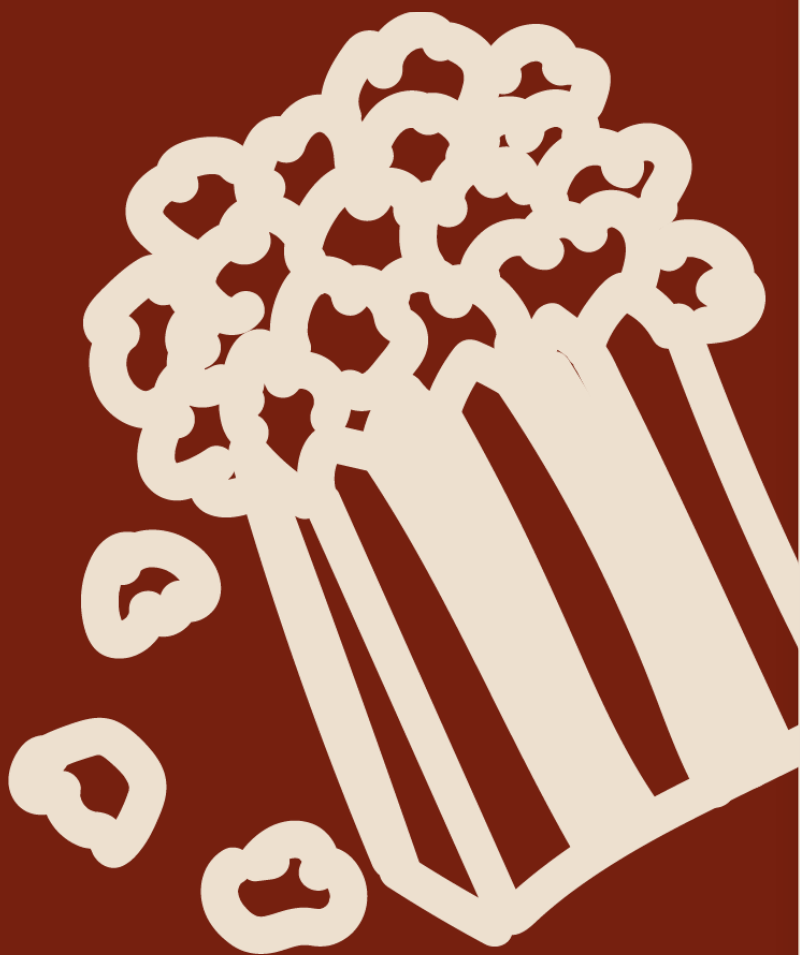
and the sound of a distant piercing scream all ran about in my head as I shut my eyes tight and braced for the inevitable.

A bald man, my saviour, exited the store straight ahead of me, but I did not see him. The end was near, I could feel it. My tears ran uncontrollably. Then the door opened.

It was the bald man who opened the door, and I recognized him well. In an instant, the eyes' gaze relaxed, and it vanished into the night. Later I would tell this story to others, but no one would believe a child's word over a sensible, well-adjusted adult. After all, monsters don't exist. There's no creature born of darkness, wandering the city streets by night, lurking in wait to claim its next victim.
...Right?

"I'm back," the bald man declared excitedly. He didn't hug me, didn't comfort me, didn't tell me I'd be alright. He could never, *never*, understand what he had put me through during that everlasting half hour. That eternity. I would have called him my father then. I'm glad I don't anymore.

High Wires



High Wires

Quinlin Caid

Fourth Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

"We should have gone to the movies," I said while watching one mime pretend to choke out the other. "This is even creepier than I thought."

Lydia punched my arm. "It's not creepy! It's cool. It's art."

Acid rolled to the back of my stomach, urging me away from the circus tent. I shouldn't have let Lydia talk me into this. Yeah, sure, this was her favourite form of entertainment, but we were already roommates. We didn't need to share everything.

I eyed the unmoving, choked-out mime on the grass as we moved forward in the line. Lydia flashed our tickets to the booth and dragged me up the metal stairs to find a seat.

"This is the best place to see the wire-walkers," Lydia said.

"They're my favourite part."

She waved down a clown with a plastic tub of popcorn strapped to his chest. My chin disappeared into my neck, wary of the costumed vendor approaching; his eyes were pure white and lined with dripping red makeup. He scooped popcorn into a bag and dangled it in front of me, his stretched-out smile never faltering.

My fingers dug into my thighs. "No, thanks."

Lydia scoffed. "Popcorn is a part of the experience! Don't worry—I'll pay. My treat."

She didn't give me time to argue. Neither did the clown; he forced the bag into my hands before passing one to Lydia. My friend immediately started munching down, but I only placed one kernel into my mouth before recoiling at the unusual flavour. The taste was bitter and sharp, like bugs pushing against my cheeks, desperate to get out.

I banished the bag to my feet. The drumroll didn't start until everyone had their own bag of popcorn. By the time the lights dimmed, Lydia had already finished her food and was swaying side to side with her eyes closed like she was high.

“Are you good, Lyd?” I asked, grabbing her arm. She replied with an airy chuckle. Her teeth remained apart, but they channeled quiet clicks, like a dead tree creaking in the wind.

“Welcome, ladies and gentlemen!” the ringmaster bellowed from the middle of the sandy stage. His long, dark cape floated up, up, up, and took the form of a giant, fanged mouth. The fabric hovered just above its owner, licking its lips, until the rest of the performers entered the ring. It was an impressive trick—huh, maybe this was why Lydia liked this place. I turned to admit that to Lydia, but she wasn’t in her seat.

“Lydia?” Why would she leave me alone in this place? I grumbled to myself, curling my legs up to my chest. “Lyd, this isn’t funny,”

“Woo! Go acrobats!”

My head shot up. Lydia’s loopy voice came from above, but I couldn’t see her on the wire. Instead, I saw double—two trapeze artists, two elephants, two juggling unicyclists—until the pairs quadrupled. My call for Lydia got lost in the cackles of the multiplying clowns. I swatted away the pink and purple bubbles discharging from the ceiling. My eyes scanned the tent for the source of them until I finally spotted my friend clawing across the tightrope, her shoulders jutting out behind her like extra limbs.

“Lydia, get down from there!”

The crowd’s drunken squeals were distorted and eerie, like a swarm of hungry bats circling the moon. I kept low to avoid my fellow spectators’ spindly fingers, their bodies snapping into odd positions like their bones knew no bounds. I stumbled over the barrier and into the circus ring.

“Lydia!”

Her laughter wasn’t haunting, but feverish and hollow.

The top of the tent started to unravel, and Lydia dangled from the threads like a fly trapped in a web.

The only ladder in sight was swarmed by the crowd. Their forms stretched and twisted into giant spiders of varying species—some were thin and towered over me, while the beefy ones flattened themselves out, their bulbous green eyes locking in on me from below. I screamed, standing

smaller and smaller each time they split, pieces of their bodies separating and puffing out into new spiders like soot-covered popcorn.

The popcorn. No wonder that shit tasted so weird.

I covered my ears while a wave of tiny green spiders washed over me. My skin boiled and burned as fang after fang dug in. Above me Lydia shrieked, and through one red eye I saw the strings supporting her weight slowly deteriorating. I swam through the spiders, grabbed a clown by the collar, and used every ounce of strength to push him underneath Lydia. She landed on top of him and bounced onto her feet. Seconds later, the clown crumpled into dust. Or, by the smell of it, a dank mold.

“Oh, hello!” Lydia said through a stiff jaw, her syllables merging like her tongue couldn’t separate them. “What’s happening? What’s wrong?”

“I don’t know!” I shook off some spiders, seizing her arm and scrambling for the exit. When we were finally out I pressed the heels of my hands into my eyes. “What the hell, Lydia! Everyone started turning into...”

I gulped, slowly removing my hands from my face. Lydia stood there, listening intently, but she wasn’t herself.

“Laura?” she asked, her voice strained and raspy. I couldn’t pick an eye to focus on.

Unlike the rest of the spiders, she didn’t multiply and shrink down; she pounced, driving her hairy legs into my chest. Before she could tear through my ribcage, my skeleton ripped out of my skin to replace it. Instead of blacking out, my wrists cracked, my diaphragm contracted, and my jaw stretched to my sternum to snap into my own set of pincers.

Of Anecdotal Vampires



Of Anecdotal Vampires

Dani Arieli

Third Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

The weight of aged and withered fingers lining the base of my neck felt morally intolerable, but ethically insatiable. No longer had the calendula light of the sun cradled the small windows between the lecture hall's wooden beams. I sat in the middle of the circular room, empty lecterns elevated on the dramatically uneven mahogany floor. And there, standing behind my creaking chair, remained Professor Lieven Van Leeuwen—clad in a dove-white lab coat and hefty, black boots. His slow and calculated steps echoed throughout the annular hall, as though a musket were firing rounds at some otherworldly creature.

An unusual winter had dawned on the city of Bristol, and the thin sheets of snow—akin to silky linen in a quiet storefront—had adorned the tiny cracks between our cobblestone roads. Professor Van Leeuwen had addressed the plummet in temperature; whichever student chose to partake in his nightly experiment after the lecture would be rewarded with an exemplary letter of recommendation to take into the medical world, as well as an accompanied walk home after hours.

We had only just begun tonight's experiment, but I was already looking forward to the escort back to my apartment. The air inside the lecture hall nipped at my skin. I could feel the tips of Professor Van Leeuwen's fingers growing cold and uncertain. But he spoke, still, in that silky baritone—always as though he were merely musing to himself, rather than speaking to a student. 'Your neck stings quite pitifully. I would like to warm the skin further.' The sheer density of his Dutch accent enticed me to adhere to every proposal slung my way. 'The human nervous system is an anomaly like no other. Of course, the flesh that accompanies it provides a simulacrum of understanding into its mystery, but otherwise, we cannot discern the exact reason for its primal reaction to'—he sucked in a breath, squeezing gently at both of my shoulders—'touch. *Human touch.*'

I froze. The lecture hall was dark, save for the dozen candles lining the second row of every lectern; I hadn't noticed that our combined shadows endowed the wooden banisters with an amalgamated creature of the dark.

Clearing his throat, he continued, 'Vampires are a work of fiction. Salacious fiction, yes, but the denominator always remains—thus, human blood is a priceless delicacy, and man thirsts after it like some nightmarish fable. But, this is precisely why I wish to peel back the skin of fiction, and indulge in a taste of anecdotal research, myself.' Here, he prodded his plump syringe at the side of my neck. 'Now, if you would just tilt your head back for me, we can begin.'

I clutched and scratched at the wooden arms of the chair, my flesh having long receded past my nails. Professor Van Leeuwen gently parted the hair—weighted and riddled with sweat—that sat against my neck, whispering: 'You will feel the head of my needle penetrating the softest patch of skin I could find, and then you will feel nothing at all. Hold still for me, yes?'

My shriek filled the hall faster than the next gust of wind could echo my shrill wail against the frosted windows. I writhed in that chair, rocking the entirety of my weight on my soles, but the needle had already retracted from my neck. When I turned my head to look back at him, his chestnut hair brushed against the bridge of my nose. He was sucking at my neck.

No—he was biting me. Although I couldn't feel his perverted intrusion, the pressure from his lips gave his fraudulent act of 'fiction' away. The sultry slick of blood had quickly trickled down my neck, splitting off in an oval shape as it passed down my throat, before reconvening at my collarbone.

'Release me! Release me!' I cried out, straining to pull my neck away from its prison of seduction. Quickly, I looked back towards the devilish figure our shadows had concocted.

There, a most rambunctious idea dawned on me. Head falling back against my shoulders, I whispered a particular phrase in Latin: *Monstra quibuscum contendis cave ne imiteris.*

And then, Professor Van Leeuwen was halfway across the room, falling up against one of the lecterns in a saunter of frenzy. 'Come nearer, fiend, and your blood shall be returned!' he exclaimed, half-grin spread across his lips. He clutched at his lab coat, now sullied by splotches of my blood, as he used the same cloth to wipe at his lips. 'Look at you... Look at this sanguine creation of radiance!'

Standing from my chair, I grimaced at the dull buzzing against my neck—hiding both arms behind my back. With shaking hands, I clutched the syringe in my palms as I stared down at my professor. 'Who knew perversion could cloud the mind, donning the visage of academia?' I spoke dutifully, grasping harder at the medicinal weapon in hiding. 'I commend your efforts, Professor. But vampires aren't real.'

And then I stabbed him in his eye, injecting the syringe's numbing contents against the slick of his cornea—lodging the needle beneath the swirling hazelnut of his pupil. Tears and viscous juices trickled down his cheek. The syringe was now wedged in the annals of his left eyeball; he wrapped his fingers around the thick trinket, struggling to free it from its squelching abyss. Through my own horror, I watched as his cornea became perforated, moulding itself against the stout length of the needle as the latter began to dislodge from his eye. As he reached for me and fell forwards, it was now his turn to scream. But I had already retreated.

He called after me, but I didn't make out his words. They were slurred, and most certainly crude. Of course, I was never going to bite him back, but strutting out of the lecture hall, I couldn't help the grin that seduced my lips, and the way my skin now craved the cold air.

I shook my head, chuckling wearily to myself as I drew my hand over my pants to rid my flesh of Leeuwen's corneal innards. 'Vampires aren't real,' I whispered. 'Vampires aren't real.' I looked to my shadow on the snow-adorned road, and nodded towards my escort.

*We Don't Play, Play
By The Banana Tree*



We Don't Play Play By The Banana Tree

Juliana Putri Tan

Second Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

Play *play!*

they scream down the rice paddy steps
feet squelch on fresh buffalo dung
shiny foreheads kissing the stars

Play *play!*

they come closer to my banana tree
near the droopy rice grains
where heavy heads rest

Laugh *laugh!*

under sarongs they sneak
a stash of chewing tobacco
a lit cigarette

Laugh *laugh!*

from my perch
soft tickling cackle
behind their necks and ears

Wait *wait!*

You hear that?

I stifle my dirty grin
brushing through strands
hoping I looked pretty

Listen *listen!*

pressing their ears to the deep
while the cricket rubs its feet

You're imagining it

I sing *sing!*
they'll love my shrilly skirts
it is my best performance
whistling between shrieking leaves

Run *run!*
around their eyes roam
louder I crinkle
the plastic bag of my vocal cords

Run *RUN!*

I am not playing with Kunti tonight.

they squeak, scrambling
muttering protection prayers
warming rivers flow down their knees

Stay *stay!*
swing by my banana tree
I just want you to hear
me sing a singed lune

he he he he

Play *prey!*
entertain miss Kunti

the telephone game



the telephone game

Victoria Lilley

Fourth Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

i wish i could believe in ghosts
wish i could walk through walls
but i don't (and i can't)

there was a phone on Ebay
rotary, red
it reminded me of that car we used to have
the same colour
as the Elmo purse kid me carried
until my skinned knees healed
and it wasn't cool anymore

at home, the phone rang
vibrant buzzing against the red wall
(that i've since painted white)

i picked it up
and it was you
not raging and rabid
but a whisper
through the receiver

there's a red rotary phone for sale
(the cord slightly ragged from being ripped
out of the wall)
\$10.99 plus free shipping
a bargain if you believe in ghosts
and i don't

Art Pieces



Glasgow Cathedral and Necropolis, 2018

Filomena DeRose

Third Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

July's warmth clings to the Scottish tombstones in the Victorian cemetery. Worn grass holds the shoeprints of visitors while the trees' curved branches shield the names of those who've passed—an embrace after death.

Two witches and a werewolf

María José García

First Year - Creative Industries Management

The werewolf waits to tear into its prey, its cuteness a cruel
trap and the witches hunger for souls growing.

The real question: who will reveal their monstrous nature
first?





EMBEDDED

Disha Tamboli

Second Year - Urban Design

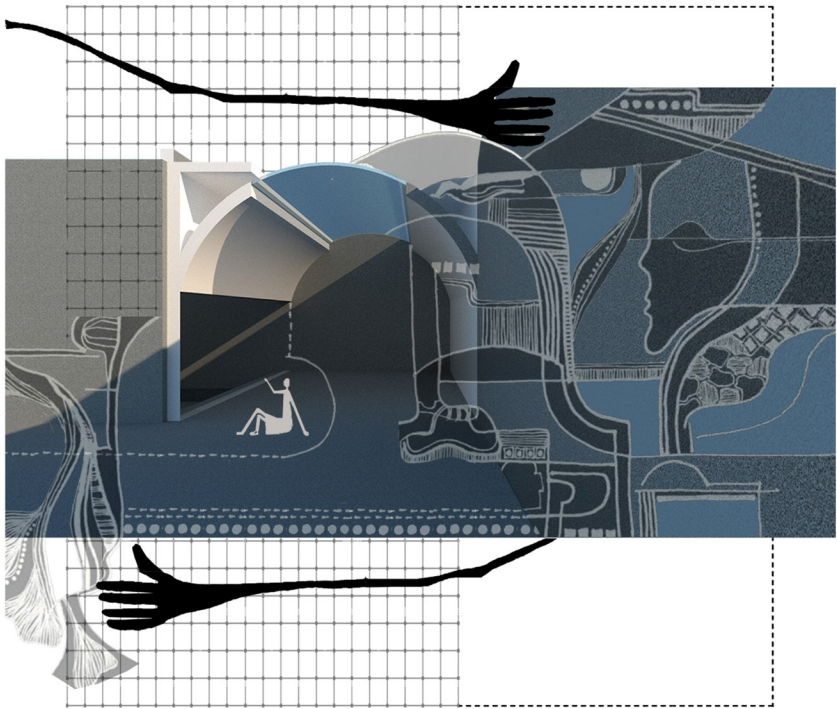
Everyday Essentials and Obsessions (Medium: Coffee & Ink, Coffee being essential to start a day has been used as a medium for this artwork.)

THE LABRYNTH

Disha Tamboli

Second Year - Urban Design

The complex network of concrete, nature, and intangible.
(Medium: Mixed media)



Ghost Pumpkin



Ghost Pumpkin

Alexandra Lilley

Fourth Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

I know the whole town is really just jealous
of my \$5 leggings and the sweater Granny knit
when I was 12 out of
climbing ivy, and crow feathers, and tiger moths
that still crawl after 1 am
when no one else is looking.

I'm told it's pretentious to shout
famous lines from 90s movies in
checkout lines and movie theaters.
But I still whisper "O captain, my captain!"
as I write my own verses, fold them into
paper planes and boats
that go

where flesh and pulp is still intact,
where no one wonders
why I'm not orange,
not hollowed-guts-carved-and-smiling.
Life really isn't like a box of chocolates
because with Jack O'Lanterns you
know exactly what you're gonna get.

I know the whole town is really just jealous
of how my face can be seen in the dark
with just a glint of fairy or Christmas lights.
But you need your intestines ripped out
and baked into a nice pie just
so the tea light in your belly can glow
for one night of the year.

Lorraine



Lorraine

Arha Faisal

Second Year - Information Security Sciences

Dawn trickled down the leaves of the forest, leaving shadows flickering at Lorraine's toes. At its edge, the morning breeze rang through the trees singing like ocean waves. Behind her, the village was ablaze. When the fire settles, it will only leave ashes and tattered bodies. In front of her stood the beast. Its jagged teeth grinned, holding back its selfish tongue. Its wicked eyes watched her with the simple cruelty of a child eyeing a bug to squash. They had known each other for a long time and now they were finally face to face. She softened her eyes and let out the breath she'd held for many years.

It was before she could speak when the men had returned from that catastrophe. What was left of them at least. Father bathed them, blessed them, but could not cleanse them. It was born then, a sickly desperate thing. It crawled about pathetically and stumbled by her mother and sister. They simply ignored its frantic squirming. When it had managed to gnaw on Lorraine, the poor child cried and cried. Her mother and father ran in to see. They met her puffy eyes with disappointment. In the corner, Lorraine caught her sister watching her. And with so much disdain. So much that she didn't see the beast had finally torn into her flesh. It was voracious.

It rained, then it snowed, then it shined. Again and again and again. One day under a sea of stars, she knew the beast was sleeping. Lorraine looked up and saw herself looking down. She saw a small girl. She tilted her head and saw a girl in a village in a forest in a world that hung among infinite celestials in the immortal cosmos. She cried out "Please!" but she wasn't yet able to imagine what for. So she cried out once more "Please, please please" then it rained and snowed and shined. Again and again.

When the beast woke, it gracelessly rummaged through the village for its fill. At the beck of its miserable streak of ruin, it noticed the village was insistent on cleaning after it. It wasn't a personal threat after all. So their faith was natural.

Its indignation was met with devotion. Its insatiability with indulgence. It didn't seem to matter that its sweat and shit trickled through the village. Loraine could naught but stare at her sister while she kneeled at its feet. Her body was bent down with the zeal of a prophet yet her conviction rang as hollow as a heretic's. She could never understand. How could she? When Loraine looked into her eyes they looked right past her. They all knew, the village, the beast, Loraine, it was all a means to an end. No one knew what for, but it didn't matter in the end.

She never understood her sister. Not at her wedding. Not at her funeral. Soil dropped over her bruised neck and her broken body. Loraine looked in her sister's eyes, to ask for forgiveness, to forgive. But they continued to look past her until they too were covered in soil. The village stood and watched in solemn assuredness not speaking a word. All that could be heard was the beast cackling a hearty laugh. A joyous reckoning for simple pleasures of life. And Loraine? She was so angry, all she could do was weep.

She left for the forest to wander. She saw the trees, the stones, the moss, the creeks. Loraine had known these woods long enough to never get lost at night. But whether burrowed or blooming, each sight became a trove of secrets. Each spoke of a different life and lifetime. At their word, she saw the home where she had lived her whole life for the first time.

In the village, the beast was bored of petty offerings. And so, swiftly was every bird and beast culled. And so swiftly, was all the game laid in line at the center of the village. Their blood dried, bones bleached by the sun and flesh rotting.

One final dusk fell. Loraine perched atop the corpse of the tallest tree. From its vantage she could see beyond the forest. On the horizon, at the precipice of everything, she saw land unnamed and unbound. It wore the horizon as its crown, clouds gold crested, shimmering in reds and purples. She took with her a bow and her grief. And in the village? They tore their dining halls down to stakes and pikes. They stripped holy garbs to twine, their pots and cauldrons melted to brandish steel and their jewels traded for loyalty. They didn't know the beast had already left in the morning but they knew all they had left was each other. And whatever they had they could

sell. For every ounce of love, a pound of flesh.

Now, Loraine looked again at the beast. It no longer needed to hide its gutless lusting as brazen desire. For millennia the village nursed each other, fed each other, buried each other. And in a girl's lifetime all that was left were corpses like carrion, their history left as charred black dust. Loraine didn't hesitate. The beast didn't have time to wipe off its gaping smile and pick up its sloshing tongue before it was struck like a shy fowl. She walked past the limp thing, free as her aim was true.

*Of Mandibles and
Mild Mannered Bugs*



Of Mandibles and Mild Mannered Bugs

Alexandra Lilley

Fourth Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

My heart is stitched together with blue thread,
a patchwork of cardiac muscle embroidered
with carpenter ants who scurry across
my seams and down between
into the cavern where the blue oak grows.

And the waltz of my pulse
(ba-dum ba ba-dum ba)
calls the other bugs from the creases of my heart.

The seed stitched mantis from my nasal cavity and
the cross stitched beetle who lives in my voice box
tip hat and curtsy in the current of my blood flow.
Blue, and blue, and blue,
to the ballroom on the checkered floor of my heart.

Come one, come all, to the ball
of mandibles and mild mannered bugs.

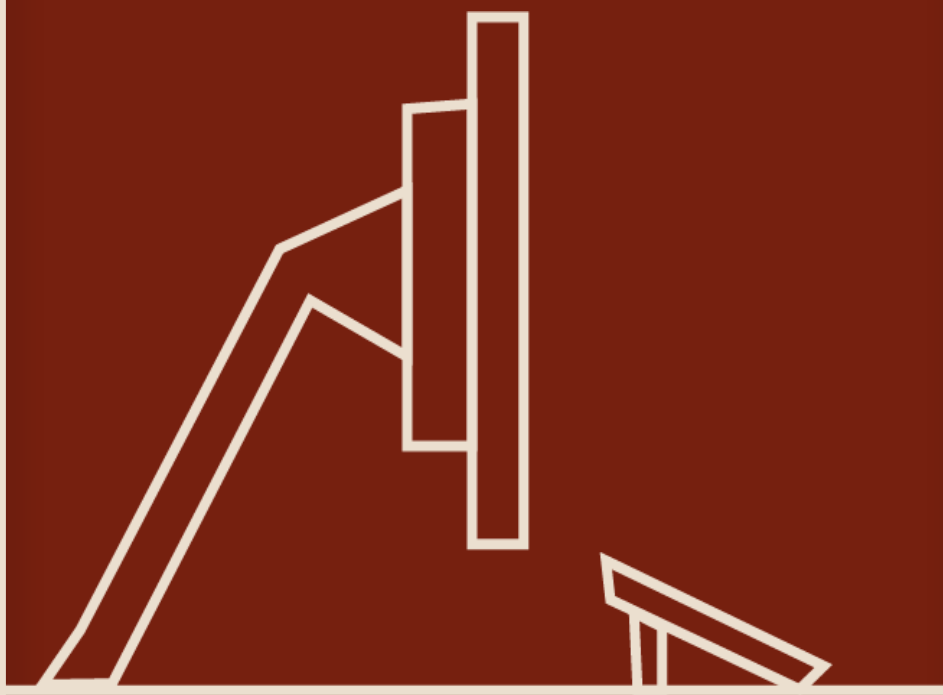
Here the Insect King
who lives in my aorta makes
his way to the feast and dance.
He sits under the tree
amongst the outcasts and afterthoughts
eats a blueberry tart that stains his thorax
like the wasp beside him.

When the festivities end
the bugs scurry home
to sinew and nerve and anonymity.
They move my parts the way the Insect King wants:
with renewed passion for making me graceful,

and I struggle to keep their

embroidery from crawling blue
onto my tongue.

Our Modern Marat



Our Modern Marat

Ian Dariusz Maliszewski

Second Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

His restless breath scrapes against his lungs, searing its way up the throat and wheezing out. His ragged, wrinkled skin had long fused itself with the cushion chair.

In this long-forgotten room, within a long-forgotten hovel of the world,

There he sits in his foxhole.

The only little light illuminating the chamber comes from a blocky white box.

The only little sound is his frail pruned fingers tip toeing on blocky white plastic keys.

Thirty-eight hundred million fifty-three hundred thousand one hundred and sixteen words. Double space, twelve-point times new roman font, written out on electrical plaster.

A gripping narrative, one thawed out in salad days, one nurtured in this burrow, hidden away from a hostile world.

And after days,

and after weeks,

and after months,

and after years,

and after years and a halves,

and after decades.

This large, loose, baggy monster of a manuscript was to be
finito.

The man stops, the rusty gears in his cranium beginning to turn. His dusty dried lips tap against themselves, dancing in different pronunciations and sounds, until his eyes illuminate as thunder strikes the stiff old hamster wheel, electrifying in-sight.

The final note in the lament.

The final pep in the step.

The joy of his soup du jour pours from his body like pus.

His eyes water, as his magnum opus slams against his skull begging to be released.

He can smell his triumph, and it smells like

toast.

The victory in his heart turns to a sharp pain, as if a thin piece of metal were piercing his shield.

He falls to the ground a small wrinkled creature of humid cushion and sweaty skin, clawing towards his milky blue-beaming box.

Every withered bone, every atrophied muscle, pulling themselves like comrades towards their little destiny.

And then he falls, alone. Another starved artist in a starved world.

There he sleeps, in his foxhole.

Soon enough maggots will come to munch and crunch on his chewy carcass. The amalgamation of furniture and flesh will finally give back to the earth.

A plump choir of larvae merrily carol

"Thy flesh consumed."

Haemouore



Haemovore

Brandon Grace

Third Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

Entry 117

1:30am. November 9th, 2042.

Creatures inflicted with Haemovoria, a mutated strain of what is colloquially known as vampirism, exhibit numerous characteristics that many deem supernatural. Extensive research has once again proven that idea false.

Haemovores do have heightened senses, but there are many animals found in nature with similar traits. Using echolocation, these mutated vampires pinpoint their prey by producing a series of sharp clicks through their mouths and talonlike fingernails. This is likely why they lose their eyes after being infected with the virus. They no longer need them.

The heightened sense of hearing shared by many vampire species is likely what is responsible for the belief that they are unable to approach holy ground. The sound of church bells happens to be extraordinarily painful to their kind, and haemovores have an exceptionally bad reaction due to the sound disrupting their echolocation.

During the transition into one of these creatures, all traces of hair and many teeth begin to fall out until only the elongated canines remain. This culminates in their salivary glands producing a unique anesthetic toxin meant to paralyze and incapacitate their prey. At that point the change is irreversible. The haemovore virus is transmitted through blood but ingesting it will only lead to illness. The blood of a haemovore must enter a subject's bloodstream for the virus to take hold.

Once the process has progressed beyond the initial stages, individuals lose the ability to think or speak, leaving only a mindless creature possessed by the foulest of hunger. The most drastic of mutations comes in the form of flaps of skin

attaching the lower triceps to the creature's rib cage in a twisted approximation of what you may find on a sugar glider.

These flaps of skin are also an indication of age as they continue to grow, albeit slowly, throughout the creature's long lives. Eventually they extend down the arms and between the fingers developing into genuine bat-like wings. The oldest specimens I have encountered had wingspans of up to 14 meters, longer even than the quetzalcoatlus of the late Cretaceous. Though they lack the ability to properly fly, they are capable of gliding remarkable distances, making tracking and hunting them particularly troublesome.

In comparison to the more mundane vampire, haemovores' rate of cellular regeneration is several times greater. Vivisection of subjects one through nine demonstrated that whole limbs could be regrown within a week provided the subject has adequate sustenance. Internal organs took longer than muscle or bone, and in all subjects, severance of the spine or destruction of the brain resulted in permanent termination. Decapitation is the recommended method of disposal.

Extensive and continued study finally revealed the source of their advanced regenerative capabilities. Cells collected from bone marrow and brain matter were found to be in a constant and endless state of mitosis. These cells showed advanced signs of degradation, but when provided sufficient proteins and nutrients they rapidly began to divide, producing new stronger cells, only for them to degrade and die off shortly after dividing once more, beginning the cycle anew. Disregarding external factors, so long as they have an available food source they can live indefinitely.

Unlike negligible senescence found in species like the naked mole rat, the cells of a haemovore are in a perpetual state of rebirth. The human body undergoes a similar process where our cells recycle at a rate of once every seven years, but our bodies cannot continue this cycle indefinitely. This means that every seven years, an individual will be made up of entirely different cells than they were before. As we age this begins to slow down. Vampires undergo this process daily and their cells can seemingly reproduce infinitely.

Another peculiar mutation can be found within their sweat glands. The result of which forms a thick fatty mucus that covers their bodies and helps protect them from sunlight. Their supposed weakness to the sun comes from their bodies' complete lack of melanin. All forms of pigment producing cells die within 48 hours of an individual contracting the virus, halting the production of melanin and slowly turning their skin sickly and grey like rotting flesh.

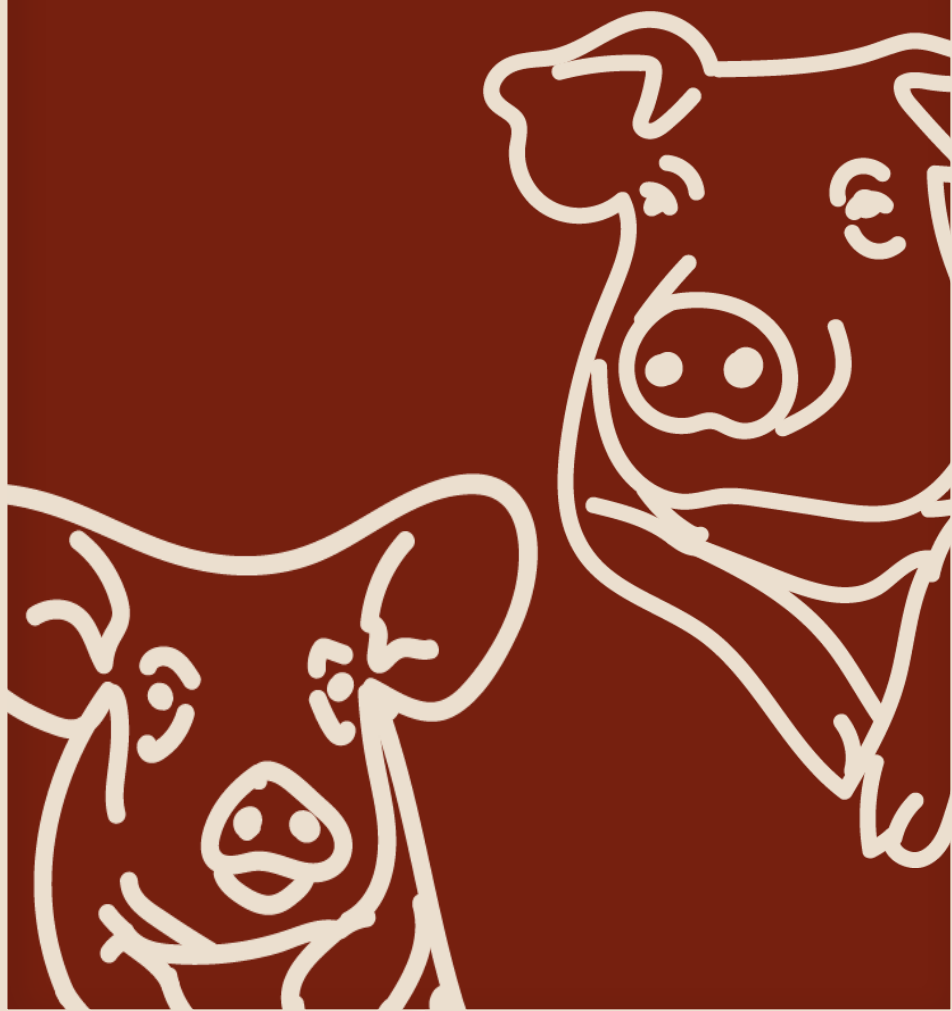
Prolonged exposure to ultraviolet light resulted in extreme sun burns that slowly and eventually stopped their bodies cells from reproducing. This caused subjects ten through fifteen to expire after nine hours of direct exposure in comparison to the two hours for most ordinary vampires. Subjects sixteen and seventeen, far older and larger, lasted up to four hours longer than the others. This is likely due to a combination of the mucus produced by their sweat glands and the fact that haemovores are considerably larger than most other vampires.

This strain of vampirism also showed no sign of rejection to their kin's flesh. In fact, the young have a tendency to be cannibalistic. This proved to be a viable method for maintaining their rate of regeneration throughout the experimentation process.

Continued study of the haemovore variant is required to better understand these mutants' aversion to garlic as well as their allergy to silver. I have no doubt my findings will once again prove that nothing is super natural, only preternatural, meaning things we have yet to find an explanation for.

Vampires are no different.

Fulfillment



Fulfillment

V. Navarro

First Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

I have to be on stage. It's something I've always known from a young age. I refuse to look at anything but the camera that stares back at me.

I stand alone in the elevator, grinning to myself as the numbers light up with each passing floor. I've finally landed my first audition; this is the start of my dream.

I quickly exit the elevator on the third floor, entering a hallway. The walls are a chic grey and the carpet is so black you wouldn't be able to see even a speck of dirt.

The girls waiting to audition sit tightly packed in a row of five against the wall. I confidently stride towards the one empty chair. A cool air surrounds the girls, who are immediately aware of my presence. Their eyes digest me with judgment, envy, and disgust. Eventually the room's tension settles and they all go back to practising the script we were given while I eagerly wait for my turn.

"Lovetta, you're up," a woman wearing a formal suit commands me. Though she doesn't make any eye contact, I follow. She guides me in through the door, and as I step in, she steps out.

Another woman aims a big camera directly at me. Light reflects off the blinding white walls and onto me like a spotlight. I walk straight to the centre to a chair similar to the ones outside, initially diverting my gaze away from the table of judges, but I quickly muster up the courage and move my eyes up towards them. From their dirty black office shoes to their too-tight business suits straining around their chubby white bodies and their—

With a sharp breath, I hold my mouth shut like a child getting scolded.

Pigs.

The faces of the three men sitting in front of me are those of pigs. Black, beady eyes sit perfectly in their squishy, pink, pig-shaped faces with pointy, pig ears perking out. Snot drips from their snouts onto their big, drooly mouths.

The middle pigman gives a hard grunt as if to cue me. Startled, I glance at the camerawoman but with no response to my reaction, I begin my act.

Suddenly, the pigmen snort, their bodies huddling together with their snouts up in the air.

A couple of women wearing suits enter with what looks like a variety of raw meat on plates. The women leave after setting down their plates, and the pigmen begin their meal. Continuing my scene, I become overwhelmed by the noises of scoffing and grunting. I make eye contact with the different faces, bloody chunks of meat stuck to their mouths, and carry on with my dance of desperation. At the scene's climax, where I seduce the main love interest, the pigmen jerk their scruffy snouts out of their meals. I've suddenly caught their interest.

The large chorus of shrills impels me to repeat my scene. Their eyes stain my body as I perform. Squeals and oinks follows.

When I reach the climax scene once again, the pigmen lean forwards in their chairs. I keep calm and continue despite their excitement causing their seats to shuffle and scrape against the floor. Eventually they stand up and waddle towards me with their perky tails. My body moves as if commanded by strings while the pigmen sniff. They pant hot breaths along my tense, cold body. Their snot slathers onto my inner thighs and collarbone while their tongues slurp into my armpits and wrists. The mixture of their lips smacking echoes in my ears.

As the scene finishes, the pigmen and the sounds of their hard grunts surround me. I keep a smile plastered on my face. They eventually return to their seats and continue their unfinished meal at the table.

"Thank you." My voice shakes.

Quietly, I slip out from the audition room. Where the hallway looks stripped and bare.

I enter the elevator once more, and begin to cry.

Derailed



Derailed

Filomena DeRose

Third Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

“Keep up!” Adalia says, grinning over her shoulder while running down the escalator. I try, eyes on the ridged steps so I don’t trip, but she’s already bolting into the subway. Her outstretched hands protest the automated voice telling passengers to stand clear.

I throw my body around the corner. Adalia’s trying to pry the metal doors open. I stop short of slamming face first and, cursing, slap a hand on the streaky glass.

“Brennen!” She laughs in disbelief and places her hand against mine.

I tell her, “Get off at the next stop, Lee.”

With the subway out of sight I double over—hands on my knees, fighting for breath.

Glowing headlights of the next train blind me. There’s no roar as it glides along the rusted tracks. I cross the yellow line. The doors shut before I take my second step in. Startled, I twist my neck, glaring back at them, then up at the speaker.

Nobody’s waiting on the platform. Maybe this train isn’t running? But there would’ve been an announcement. A staccato voice telling passengers the train’s out of service...

The subway lurches. My shoulder slams into the plexiglass; then I’m jostled into the seat on my right. Grasping the worn fabric, I regain balance. Service is spotty, but I text Adalia ‘Be there soon’.

The stiff seat digs into my ass. The air’s musty, like the inside of a dusty car—with old, rotting fabric seats—in mid-July. I glance at the map, expecting to see the green light at the next stop blinking at me. The lights are out. Great, this train is out of service.

After 35 minutes of the train barreling full-speed—tossing me around like a lightning bug in a jar—I call Adalia.

“Brennen! Did you get on the next subway?”

“Yeah—it hasn’t stopped.” I start walking down the length of the train.

"Maybe it's run down?"

"Buddy's been throttling full-speed." I squint out the windows—nothing. "I should have gotten to you by now."

"Can you ask someone—"

I laugh, pull the phone away from my ear, and video call her.

"Hi, babe," she says with a worried smile.

I show her the vacant car. "Hi, MTV. Welcome to my crib."

"The whole thing's empty?" Her voice drops to a whisper.

I turn the camera to my face. She's pixelated, eyes blocked by blue lines. Her lips move but there's no audio.

The subway car shakes as the tracks change and I frantically grab the pole in front of me, dropping my phone. "Shit."

"Brennen?"

The whites of her eyes look like melted candle wax dripping down her face. I blink. Her image is normal.

"I'm fine," I say, snatching the phone before walking towards the front of the train again. The hall seems to stretch; I can't see the end.

"Oh! Ask that gentleman for help!"

My face scrunches at her joke. But through the screen I see an older man sitting peacefully behind me. I spin around. The seat's empty. "Lee, no one's there."

Her face scrunches now. "But I saw..."

I turn around to continue walking—but stop when I see he's still sitting. On screen. Behind me. I tap myself on the video call, enlarging my square. His eyes are closed as he hums and sways.

"Ehem," I clear my throat.

His slick eyelids blink, moist strings sticking to the top and bottom lash-lines. Pink, empty holes are carved where his eyes should be.

Holding in a screech and the bile lurching up from my stomach, I cover my mouth and stumble. With my back against the doors, I stare at the empty seat, still hearing his raspy humming.

"Lee," I whisper, "Adalia, did you fucking see that?" I can't lift my shaking hand to look at her. "Lee?" I whisper harshly.

Nothing.

I lift the phone and tap the screen with stuttering fingers. The seat is empty. I scan my surroundings, eyes flicking from the phone to the open space ahead of me. I'm alone. My head thumps against the door. "What the hell? Lee, the man's gone."

She's aspirated. "What man?"

"The *gentleman* you pointed out. Sitting over there." I jut my chin out rather than pointing.

"Brennen, I've been saying 'hello' for five minutes."

"You didn't see the man with holes in his head?"

"Bren... are you alright?"

"Am I being punked?"

Her reply is garbled—lips not moving. The image freezes with her brows pulled up.

"Babe, you're glitching out. Lee?" Green pixels outline her lashes like specks of slime. "Damn phone." I smack the back a few times. Adalia's image disappears and my phone beeps three times. Dropped call.

Halfway down the hall, the lights flick. I spin, looking around. No sign of my gentleman friend.

The front of the train is close—only a few cars away—and the door opens. The conductor tips his hat towards me, obscuring his face. Before I can call him, I hear the old man's raspy humming behind me.

Hands grip my shoulders. One crawls up the side of my face, fingering my mouth, groping my nose, before clawing at my eye. I reach behind to shove him away, fist colliding with what feels like the inside of a watermelon.

The conductor, now standing in front of me, grabs my neck. I choke out an incoherent scream for help. He pulls his cap off—pieces of his scalp sticking to the hat and sliding off his skull—and forces it on top of my head.

The old man behind me mashes his fingers into my eyes, jagged nails ripping through the fleshy balls as though digging out the pit of an olive. The vision in my left eye turns black. With every plea, it feels as if razors are shredding my throat raw. The conductor grins with yellow teeth and brown gums stinking of backed up sewage. He holds my jaw with one wrinkled hand as the other scoops through my lid, into my right socket. My head throbs and I shriek, but my

screechy voice blends into the sound of the wheels rushing along the rusty subway tracks.

Angel



Angel

Jakob Davidson

Second Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

I remember what the broadcast said
about the angel in the night,
no trace of human in its eyes.

“Do not open your windows.
Do not answer its call.
It uses the voice of others.
This is no salvation,
but punishment.

May God have mercy on our souls.”

Weeks have gone by.

Houses are boarded.
The streets echo in silence.
Mom and Dad haven't been home since Thursday.

Another sun falls.
I climb into my bed
with covers drawn up tight.
The blinds. The blinds are shut.
Yes. The blinds are shut.

And then...

A **SHRIEK**.
A bloodcurdling,
throat-cutting,
ear-piercing **SHRIEK**.

I hear it I hear it I hear it
It's from across the street.
Ohmygodohmygodohmy—Gone.

Be not afraid,
for the screams are extinguished from the night,
like it was never there.

Heartbeats pound at my ribs,
a muffled scream
throbbing in my ears,
begging to explode.

It's coming for me next
I know it, it's coming
The angel is coming.

I can feel it
turning its head toward my room,
its eyes ripped to the lobe,
dilated sockets of black
leering through the frame.

It's there.

It's outside the window!

Just beyond my curtain!

Its featureless face pressed against the glass!

I pull the covers over my head,
protecting myself in the darkness
below the soft fabric.

And there I see

The deafness in its pupils

Slow Down



Slow Down

Andrew Bald

Third Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

Ba-Bump...Ba-Bump
Is my heart sounding funny?

Ba-Bump...Ba-Bump
It's beating wrong.
I can feel it

Ba-Bump...Ba-Bump
In my chest, In my ears,
Like a drum
Beating!
In my Head!?

Ba-Bump... Ba-Bump

Ba-Bump, Ba-Bump, Ba-Bump
It's starting to speed up
a bit more now.

Ba-Bump, Ba-Bump, Ba-Bump
This isn't right
It can't be right,
Ba-Bump, Ba-Bump, Ba-Bump
Right?

Ba-Bump, Ba-Bump, Ba-Bump
Why is it still beating so fast?
It feels like it's about to BURST!
Ba-Bump, Ba-BumpBaBump
Can't....breathe
.....air tastes....
....chunky?

BaBumpBaBumpBaBumpBaBump
THAT'S TOO FAST, THAT'S WAY TOO FAST!
BaBumpBaBumpBaBumpBaBump
IT'S STILL GOING! SLOW DOWN
BaBumpBaBumpBaBumpBaBump

SLOW DOWN! SLOWTHEHELLDOWN!

Ba-Bump...Ba-Bump...Ba-Bump...ba-bump

That's,

That's a lot better...

It's...

Ba-Bump.....ba-bump.....ba-bump

Yeah.....that's much. Better?

Ba-Bump.....ba-bump

Maybe... it....mm

Maybe. it could.....it

.....

Additional Artworks

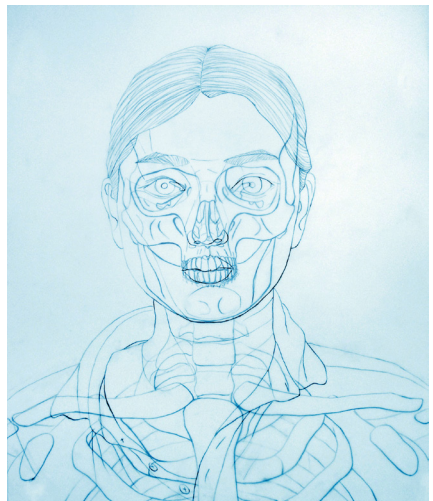
Front Cover & Bookmark
Horror in Foraging
Vivian Cheng
Fourth Year - Illustration

A walk in the forest passes
by many potential dangers.



Back Cover & Bookmark
Facing Mortality
Vivian Cheng
Fourth Year - Illustration

This self-portrait done with
pencil on layers of vellum
and paper invokes the realiza-
tion of the inevitability of
death in the artist.



Contributors

Alexandra Lilley Alexandra is a writer and poet in her fourth year of Creative Writing & Publishing here at Sheridan. Alexandra is persistently plagued by concepts, so when she's not scribbling away at her desk she might be bringing her newest crochet idea to life, trying to keep her sewing machine from jamming (in vain), or writing a song on her guitar. She has been previously published in *B222* and Teen Author Boot Camp.

Andrew Bald has always liked falling down the rabbit hole into whatever stories he comes across. He loves to read, watch, and write about mythology, horror, and action but most of all, he loves to mix his weird sense of humour into most of his work. Is that a little weird? yes, but he likes to embrace the madness sometimes.

Arha Faisal I write about the world as I see it.

Brandon Grace My name is Brandon Grace, and I've always had an overactive imagination. Many people throughout my life, mostly family if im being honest, would tell me that I would make a great writer because of that fact. Thankfully, I listened to their advice, because it lead me to the Creative Writing Program at Sheridan College.

Dani Arieli Dani Arieli is a lover of weird, dark, and archaic literature. She has poems and fiction pieces published in 7th-Circle Pyrite literary journal and *B222* journal, as well as forthcoming publications in *Beyond Words* and *The Familiars* magazine. She is currently working towards her Honours Bachelor of Creative Writing and Publishing degree at Sheridan College. During most writing sessions, her black cat sits atop her lap while she fervently taps away at her keyboard; she very much enjoys having a writing partner who can meow. You can visit her website, daniarieli.com for further authorial information.

Disha Tamboli As a designer, I draw inspiration from the world around me, particularly the intricate relationship between nature and humanity. My creative process is fueled by observing both the tangible and intangible elements that shape our environment.

Filomena DeRose is a reader and writer honing her craft in Sheridan's Creative Writing & Publishing program. Her coffin-shaped bookcase is filled with romance, ghost stories, and poetry. To unwind, she loves walking down wooded trails.

Ian Dariusz Maliszewski is a Polish-Canadian Science Fiction writer and poet based in the GTA. He is currently in his second year creative writing and publishing program at Sheridan. Inspired by mainly New Wave science fiction, his work tends to play in the backyard of the mind.

Jakob Davidson If anything I wrote was perfect, I wouldn't be attending this school. Better to regret a submission than submitting nothing at all. I encourage others to do the same.

Juliana Putri Tan is an Indonesian student in Sheridan College's Creative Writing & Publishing program. Poetry is her current medium of choice but she hopes to write a book someday.

KB Cameron is a Canadian writer based in Oakville, Ontario who loves anything horror and absurd. When not struggling to write an author's bio, KB can be found rifling through the Hot Wheels bin in Walmart or being hunted by squirrels in your local park.

María José García My name is María José García, and I'm a Venezuelan-Canadian artist who loves illustrating for storyboards, visual development and children's books. I'm passionate about adapting myths, legends, and stories into my artwork. My style leans towards children's illustrations with a fun, whimsical vibe, but I like to add a hint of spookiness to capture the mood of the season. I hope my art brings a bit of magic and mystery to your day.

Natasha David is the author of a collection of short stories, poems, screenplays, and two half-formed ideas that have spent more time in her brain than on paper. She is a long-time lover of fantasy and dystopias, and spends her free time playing piano and collecting more books than she can read. Her works have been published in *B222* Journal's inaugural issue and issue 10 of *Petal Projections Magazine*.

Noel Cobb I've been writing for as long as I can remember. As my style developed, my focus has been on marrying the strange and absurd with satisfying narrative flow. As an avid reader, the spoken word is very important to me. In my spare time, I enjoy hiking, playing video games, and dabbling in amateur landscape photography.

Quinlin Caid (he/they) is a Canadian poet, musician, and author who typically uses writing to discuss themes related to gender identity, neurodivergence, and disability. His work can be found in *B222*, *The Familiars*, *The Publisher's Desk*, and on any music streaming platform under the stage name Q. Caid. He enjoys spooky things but is irrationally afraid of mushrooms (amongst other things).

Rachelle-Anne Lawka (she/her) is an emerging Canadian poet and student in her fourth year of the Honours BA in Creative Writing & Publishing at Sheridan College and has previously been published, or has forthcoming work in: *Arrival Magazine*, *PRISM International*, and *The Familiars*. She loves all things fall-related, *Gossip Girl* associated, and *X-men* connected. In her spare time, when she is not writing or painting, she can be found reading her cat poetry, exploring new hiking trails, or chasing waterfalls across Ontario.

Rebekah Young is a fourth-year student in Sheridan College's Honour's Bachelor of Creative Writing and Publishing. You can find Rebekah's work *The Publisher's Desk* as well as *Halls of Hazel Magazine*. Her poetry was shortlisted in the Sheridan Read's Writing Contest. Her short stories have received first prize and an honourable mention in the Power of the Pen Writing Contest. She is currently completing an internship at PCL Construction.

Victoria Lilley is a writer and poet living in Burlington, Ontario and is currently completing her fourth year in the Creative Writing and Publishing program at Sheridan College. She works as a fiction editor for Press Pause Press and her poetry, essays, and other creative works can be found in places like *B222* and *The Globe and Mail*. When not writing or reading, she can be found crafting, jamming to show tunes, and dancing.

Vivian Cheng is a Chinese Canadian Illustration student at Sheridan College. She focuses on narrative illustration, including comics and picture books. Through her art, she explores complex interpersonal relationships and introspection. Vivian uses art to connect to others by sharing her perspective on the highs and lows of the human experience. Her work has been published in *ButterMochi Journal*.

V. Navarro is a first-year student in Sheridan College's Creative Writing & Publishing Program. She was studying in life sciences prior to CW&P, but decided to change career paths after a single creative writing class. A lover of horror movies, video games, and books; if she isn't writing about horror, she takes on literary fiction.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the wonderful team at B222 for making this publication a reality. We would like to especially thank Tali Voron, our Faculty Mentor, for supporting this publication from the very beginning and continuing to support it through her mentorship and guidance.

We would also like to thank the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for their generous sponsorship. To the Creative Writing & Publishing faculty, thank you for letting us visit your classes with announcements and for always being so encouraging. A special thank you is also necessary for Gabriel Levine, Paulina Delfino, Genevieve Amaral, and Owen Percy for helping us make this publication possible.

Thank you to all Sheridan faculty and students for supporting our publication in every way possible. Your creativity and support means so much to us.

A final thank you is also due to our contributors, whose work makes this publication worth reading. Thank you for submitting your work and most importantly, thank you for creating your work in the first place.

Thank you to FHASS for their support!

Sheridan | Faculty of Humanities
and Social Sciences

Printed and bound by Paper Sparrow

Next Issue

For our fourth issue, we asked students to submit their work that follows the theme Heebie Jeebies. As always, we were impressed by how our contributors interpreted this frightful, playful prompt.

Without further ado, we are very excited to announce that the theme for the next issue is:

Intersections

They are crossroads. A plateau. A catch and release. A sliver of common ground on a venn diagram. Neither good nor bad, but the space in between; separate and somehow together, two things considered as one. Like the universe's beginning, an explosion triggered by a million invisible forces, the aftermath is inevitable... But what came before? We may never fully grasp the paths that led us here, but here we stand, nonetheless.

For our fifth issue, we want to know what interesections appear in your life. What stories, images, words, or sounds come to mind when you think of a stage set for convergence?

Not looking to submit? You can still get involved by attending B222 events, joining the B222 team, or picking up an issue of the journal.

Visit us at:
www.b222journal.ca!



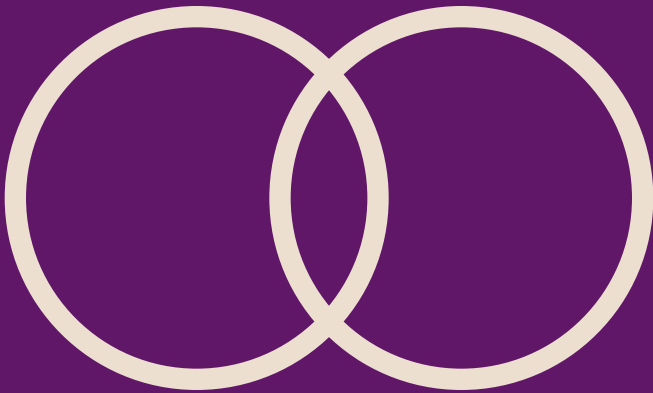


EDITORS' WORK

Intersections

Spring 2025

Our teams interpretation of the
upcoming theme to help inspire &
ignite the imagination of our
future contributors.



No wonder the sun is worshipped; it has a way of making you bow.

Gabrielle Goudie

Fourth Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

When Nana takes us camping, it's hot outside and it's always June. That far, heavy sky drags your lungs down deep blue. When the clouds stop shielding so your head hangs. If you look down long enough, you learn to read the time from the shadow of your body as it ticks around your feet. No shame, just too bright.

Don't you remember when the summers were shorter? When two months hit our ears like we'd been promised an eternity all because we didn't know what a decade felt like? The heat started seeping sometime after high school, crawling greedy into December.

In the future we'll move North for the sentiment. Christmas vacations somewhere cold to escape the heat, access to tradition swallowed up by paywalls and status determined by the answer to, "Did you have a white Christmas this year?"

But while the summer spread, its heart remained. The longest day North of the equator never strayed from the 20th of June, save for when February needed to take a day off. That one quarter of a day was so troublesome. The time makers must have been annoyed. Why wouldn't they just make that day a holiday?

And that's just what Nana did.

We skipped school as if it wasn't a weekend. The babysitter would take us and she would gab from the crack of dawn to day's end.

"We're not just humans on a planet—we're bacteria on an animal that knows how to ice us out. Or maybe we're just excited by a high speed limit and dash up a course of nature like a hill, desperate to live forever just to see the end of the world. You're skating fast for the first time, wind in your hair til you see the boards and realize you never learned how to stop. You don't know how to slow down but you're already going too fast so you close your eyes and take the beating."

My brother and I did our best to ignore her, to enjoy the day for its views, squinting in the light. I told Nana I'd rather come with her to her volunteer job than hike with the babysitter, I never saw Vanessa in person again. Nana was too old for hikes so Dad got a day off to take us out instead.

He stopped midday, right at 12:00 sharp, to sit us down for some sandwiches he'd made before the sun came up. They were soggy, all deli meat and mustard, but better than meatloaf leftovers or cold baked chicken and peas. I asked him, for the first time ever, why we did this.

He chewed faster, swallowed hard to get words out quick. "We're the closest to the sun you can get. Tomorrow, we make our way back down to the fall."

It wasn't until years later that I understood what they'd been on about. Vanessa went on to be an activist somewhere far South, no job but she lived with a vibrant community of rebellious insisters that humans were the harbingers of our own downfall. I was in grade six, old enough to be on social media and about the time they start teaching you the real physics in words for adults, when Vanessa reposted a Game of Thrones meme from an environmentalist's page that read, "Winter is coming."

It might start the second the climb is over, but the real Fall, the moment right before the wet becomes cold, before feathers on glue, is the moment you realize it's all inevitable. In the summer, you're invincible. You're warm and sweating. Brave, bold, and adventurous. Your skin burns just for one more hour in the light.

But when the tide rolls out and the ice returns in its place, when your friends send pictures of shovelled driveways and snowy eyelashes, that's when reality sets in. You'll step outside for a secret puff in your slippers and drag the salty evidence back in through the house. There's no hiding in the winter.

What used to be a summer at Nana's in the parks and the forests became summer classes and three jobs with a side of yawning through that damn hike after an eight-hour shift.

In memory, that field in Nana's backyard is another universe. Misty mornings revealed pointed deer heads that moved through the still sea of foggy golden light with grace,

symbiotic. Crowns of horn and perked ears were backlit by these long splinters of light, blades singing loud from the tree line.

I realized these forests used to live everywhere.

The trees by the old railroad were shrinking. A century old bur oak lost a thick branch to thirst and cold winters and it derailed a train. The small patch of green we'd hiked for years was burned to the ground. Thankfully, it was contained. No houses reduced to ash in the process, protected by walls of snow shovelled out of the backyard.

We had captured them in bubbles, in ecosystem zoos, and we would turn the North into a snow globe soon enough.

When they needed us to see our place and never take more than what was absolutely necessary, we still took. We toed the line because the consequences were only immediate for the victims. For years, we thought the only victim was the planet and its animals, until we saw our children become those animals.

The world we built to protect us from nature's wrath had become a cage where the lock is an open hand demanding payment.

I watch the older generations retire. The generation that raised us, held our hands through storms. They're living again, gifted a sparkle in their eye when they leave behind the teaching and the directing and return to goals and forward thinking partnerships.

I told my Nana yesterday, "I don't have the time to hike."
She shrugged. "And I don't have the body."

For Otzi

Kennedy Cast

Fourth Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

A farmer wakes to the brisk morning air -
sun peeking through the icy peaks of the Similaun Glacier,
found along the border of Italy and Austria.

Penned ibex bleat their wake up call(s),
a farmer awakens
pulling on leather and fur lined boots crafted by the Village
Head's daughter.
He chews on dried deer meat—it being all he can comfortably
stomach, all he can
comfortably stomach with that mornings abdominal pains—
he grabs his weathered spear
and heads up the steady incline to the mountain just outside
the village.

Plumes of smoke from the communal hearth signal the start
of breakfast.
Soon oats will be ground to a paste and topped with cooked
ibex still on the bone, which the youth will pick at with their
teeth until all flesh has been peeled away, and the bone(s) will
be shaved down into spear and arrowheads.

Otzi, feeling the lashes of the air against his skin lets it fill his
lungs and lap at his nose so it's cracked dry and red.

A new day has begun, and the thought of
~~finding foliage to bring for that night's dinner~~
~~finding the buck that broke through the pen~~
~~who knows who knows who knows~~
spurs him on further.

It does not cross his mind that a life as humble as his own
will cause such speculation
and intrigue in future.
He does not worry about his legacy,
it matters not.
He has had his children and they theirs.
What comes next is inconsequential, the only priority being
to survive until the next
solstice.
and if lucky, the solstice after that.

Over a millennium will pass, and only then will Otzi's body
be found lodged between
two ridges of ice,
remains nearly perfectly preserved,
dark skin pulled taut over aged bone,
arm bent precariously at an unnatural angle across his torso.

Centuries will pass and two German tourists will make their
same way up the snow
paved path, the village hearth having long been snuffed,
forgotten by any visitors unaware of the lives they now tread
on in snow clad boots,
The wind will be brisk and their parkas will barely succeed in
keeping it out from assaulting their persons.

It will not have been the bleating of goats that awoke them
that morning, but
the beeping of their hotel rooms' digital clock.
Dried deer meat will not line their stomachs, but eggs served
over-easy on rye bread
with sausage.
They will trek through the mountain marveling in the sus-
tainable architect —
Mother Earth.
They will not think of returning to Her soil until later that
night,
Having found a man, later coined Otzi, cocooned in an icy

icy sarcophagus in the ground.
They will not know until much time has passed that the
remains are not that of an
ill-fated tourist,
but a farmer waiting centuries to be found.

They will lie awake in their foreign beds,
and wonder if they too could have suffered the same fate,
and if it too
would have taken centuries to be found,
by people much like themselves,
but from a much newer time.

Over five millenniums after Otzi's death, a young girl will sit
in a musty classroom,
and learn of Otzi and wonder about his life and who he was.
She will learn of the German tourists, and will think of the
~~horror~~ excitement of discovering something so new-old.
It does not cross her mind that someone may analyze her life
the way she does Otzi's and the tourists centuries later.

Nearly five years later, she will write this poem,
hoping it too will be her sarcophagus of ice.

Angel's First Bar Fight

Macie Yott

Second Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

From the other side of
the counter, you glimmered
bare-chested entropy ready
to pulverize my skull

*Shotgun, shot glass, showgirl blues
we move to bruise—*

Matchstick in my chest,
now I'm kneeling like
the saints do, making hazy prayer
to your granite fists,
scalding phosphorescence
on this snarl-stained dancefloor
rocking slender lamentations
against a falling beat

So seraphic, supersonic—

My tongue a deathbed
offering, lacing blood
and sequins with your carpal feathers
in the back of the taxicab
I repent absolution;
let no mercy find us
in these rising hours
whiskey glass anointment
come to poison us both
blackhole grinning
with the devil's own rubies
dripping from your lips

BONES

Matt Boylan

Third Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

She arrived home mute pale and wet and went to the kitchen. In it stood her Husband and Son. They looked at her with concern and asked where she had been. Out, she said. Where? They asked. Nowhere, she said. They looked in concern.

Nowhere? He said.

She was silent. She smiled. It's been days, he said. It has, she said. And so? And so what. You can't just leave. Why not. Because you can't. Why not. We need to know where you are. Silence. Where did you go? Silence. We worry. Why's that. Because you leave. Yes. We worry. What for. For you. I'm in no danger. For your health. I am in perfect health. No you're not, not in your head. It's perfectly attached. Your mind. In working order. We don't think so. I do. You do? Who can know their own mind better than them. We're worried. About? You. That is fine. It's not. I am fine. You're not. We can disagree. Look at you. How do you suppose I do that. You're a mess. All the same. Where have you been? She put her bag on the counter turned around and began walking out of the room to the staircase. Don't leave, Ma. Ma was silent. We're not done here. She was silent. She took to the rise of stairs and went up. What shall we do, Papa. I'll go, he said. He went. Up the stairs to their room he found her. What's the matter with you. Nothing she said as she lay in their bed. Get up. She was silent. Get up, please. I'm tired, I think I will rest.

No, we need to talk. Not now. Now. Ma was silent. Wife was silent. She was silent. There was tension in the void that separated Man from Woman, Father from Mother, Husband from Wife. Her soul locked away Her eyes empty and unblinking to the terminus of her reticent essence. Okay, I'll get up. The words spoken changed not the expression on Her face. Come down please. He went back down the stairs to the kitchen where the

son sat with head in hands. She is coming back down. Okay, he said. Moments passed, as they do for all alike at different intervals relative to each. Okay. She entered the kitchen. We need to talk. Okay. She smiled. She began to remove articles of clothing. Her coat. Her shirt. Her bra. Her skirt. Her underwear. Her stockings. What are you doing. Whats going on Papa. What are you doing. Smiling. Gaunt and pale, the skin shines bright under the moon. Under the light in the house under the Moon. Papa. Fabric falling at whim. Papa. Stop this. She smiled to them both. What's wrong. The light of the kitchen now seemed treacherous in its illuminations. Fully unclothed she began to dance. Slowly swirling with intention. Smiling. The boy was crying. The father was frozen. Mad—you've gone mad. She smiled, She danced. She spoke these words. Bones. She spoke these words. She danced, and the boy was crying, and the father was red in the face, and you could see his tears but he hid this from his Son, facing the Mother, facing Ma. Papa, Ma! That's enough now. Don't cry. My son. And she danced around the kitchen, pale gaunt and naked, she spoke these words. Bones. Bones. What's left. Papa. Mother. Son. Bones.

Folk Dance

Jenna James

Fourth Year - Creative Writing & Publishing

A baby emerges from his mother's vagina doing a pirouette. He points his pink-purple baby feet and spins across the hospital tile. The fluorescent hospital bulbs hit him like a spotlight and Tchaikovsky plays from nowhere—maybe the vents. When he's done, he bows his nose to his shins. The nurse cries in the corner with her hands over her mouth. The doctor whispers Remarkable! Remarkable! They have never seen a thing like it.

All the while, the baby's mother is fading then gone. His father strokes her hair, then never speaks again.

The baby is now 12 years old with the meanest calf muscles on the planet. To get to school, he chaînés over farmland then spends his days doing fouettés on the cafeteria tables. Even though it is 1992 in Opheim, Montana where everyone thinks ballet is gay and therefore dangerous, no one bullies him. He is too beautiful and can't be touched. When the bell rings, roses are thrown as he grand-jetés out the big double doors. He never goes to class, but no one minds too much—he is more of a phenomenon than a student.

The 12-year-old is now a glass-faced teen. Other teens with pimples and braces (and an especially passionate fan group from the retirement home in town) all throw themselves at the perfect arches of his feet. He does grand allegro in the town hall with a unitard beneath his overalls.

The mayor begs him, *Stay stay stay in Opheim!* but the boy mimes being pulled elsewhere by magic and melody, an angelically toned dog on a tether made of sound. The dancer's father is afraid to watch him go and afraid to be seen crying, so he tucks himself away in his garage and does neither.

The teen is now 30 years old and celebrating his 15-year tenure as a principal dancer with a company of performers who will never be as good as him. A special division of the military has been assigned to the doors of the theatre to stop the mobs from stampeding in. He has never taken a lover (he is still, somehow, untouchable). His body never tires because he is so hot and talented.

But one night during a developé, he *sickles* his foot. He *sickles* his foot for six whole seconds. It is the night someone calls to say his father is dying.

The dancer, still 30, is now in the same room he was born in. It is the room his mother died in, and the room where his father is now turning grey with wires and tubes coming out of all ends of him. He is spinning on the tile again. It is the best performance of the dancer's life and the first his father ever watched. His father can not speak on account of all the tubes, but he makes noises like a squeezebox that almost sound like *Bravo!*

The dancer takes his final bow. He sits in the cracked plastic of the hospital chair and slouches for the first time ever. His father is fading then gone—his son holds his hand while it happens.

Some years later, there is a sighting of someone waltzing over the wheatfield and leaping into the sky, but most say he never danced again.



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