

GUILD OF YOUNG WRITERS

APRIL 2021
NATIONAL
POETRY MONTH

EMERGING YOUNG WRITERS

Get to know eight youth writers who will
capture our literary hearts

VOLUME TWO
SUMMER
2021

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Contest Opportunity

Share Your Writing with the Guild!



Editor's Note

Over the course of the Spring months, the Guild of Young Writers has been exploring different forms of writing and creating. We were lucky to have local authors Robin Stevenson and Kit Pearson join us for virtual workshops this Spring. We also had the opportunity to meet and learn from a variety of local and visiting poets in April, including a poetry workshop to challenge some of our writing skills. It has been a busy spring for this dedicated group of young writers. I am constantly inspired by their commitment and floored by their ongoing curiosity and interest in the literary world around them. In this second issue of the zine we wanted to emphasize connection; connection to one's self, surroundings and community.

We are coming to the end of a second year of disorienting shifts in education, and ongoing pivots in daily routines. This program began as a means of continuing a community of like-minded youth from last summer's writing program. The connections made within the program between youth, authors, and other community organizations, such as The Nature of Us, has reached far beyond our expectations. Words, stories, and ideas continue to make new connections that allow us to experience and understand more of the vast world around us. As we approach the one year anniversary of the Guild of Young Writers, we invite youth ages 13-18 to connect with us by sharing their writing within our contests.

Rebecca Ruiter
PROGRAM MANAGER



8 EMERGING WRITERS TO WATCH OUT FOR

Get to know eight members of the Guild of Young Writers who will capture our literary hearts



This year has been a year of pivotal changes in education, and our daily lives. The ability for youth and teens to adapt in new ways throughout this pandemic has been no small feat and quite astounding to witness.

We introduce you to a selection of our dedicated writers from the Guild who are thrilled to share their work with the broader community. Please join us in celebrating their work as new authors.

1

ASTRID

Astrid has been writing for five years. She enjoys creating comics and graphic novels as she finds they help her come up with better ideas. She prefers to write in the office at her house where it's quiet and distraction free. Astrid enjoys sci-fi, heist, adventure, thriller/suspense stories and of course comics/graphic novels.

2

ELANA

Elana is twelve years old, and lives in Maryland, a two minute walk from the DC border. She considers herself a DC resident because she lived in DC for five or six years before moving to where she lives now. She's dabbled in writing since at least second grade, maybe earlier, and has too many notebooks filled with (extremely messy) story ideas. Elana loves walking in the woods near her house, and enjoys writing free verse poetry and any sort of story, short or long. She edits everything far too many times, and is very excited to finish her Leigh Bardugo binge this summer.

3

JAKOB

Jakob is a 12-year old writer currently residing in Victoria, British Columbia. He has been writing since the day he could grasp a pencil (and been making up stories for longer.) This would be impressive if he was writing the next Iliad, but he was just writing nonsensical stories about poop. He gets his inspiration from his thoughts and dreams. He writes anywhere, anytime, and enjoys most types of writing. His writing process is mostly not a thing, he just writes whenever!

BOOKS ON OUR SUMMER READING LISTS

- **THE HANDMAID'S TALE**
- MARGARET ATWOOD
- **LEIGH BARDUGO SERIES**
- **THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS**
- LOUIS CARROLL
- **SALT TO THE SEA**
- RUTA SEPETYS
- **THE CONQUEST OF BREAD**
- PETER KROPOTKIN
- **FIGHTING WORDS**
- KIMBERLY BRUBAKER BRADLEY
- **HERE THE WHOLE TIME**
- VITOR MARTINS



4

KAHLAN

My name is Kahlan, and I'm fourteen years old. I have loved writing since grade six, when our teacher let us spend a month creating stories about whatever we wanted. My attempt at a fantasy novel was pretty terrible, but it showed me how much fun writing can be. I've read and written stories from many genres, and I love them all, but especially dystopian and horror. In addition to writing, I spend my free time reading, listening to podcasts, and crocheting.

5

KIRA

My name is Kira, which means both light and dark; a theme I try to bring in to all of my writing. At fourteen years old, I have written a number of poems, stories, and too many papers for school. I'm a reader, writer, instrumentalist, and all-purpose nerd. I love nature, especially forests, listening to music, and hunting for new books by old authors.

6

MAISHA

Maisha is 14 years old and lives out in the country. She has been making up stories for as long as she can remember, but at age 8 she decided formally that she wanted to be an "authoress" and a "poetess". "Author" and "poet" were unacceptable as she decided they were not "romantic" enough. She finds her writing inspiration in all sorts of ways. History and other peoples' books and movies are definitely a prime source. Her writing process is one that would probably horrify many famous authors, and deeply impress others. It is messy, disorganized, and in her opinion, very free.

"Maybe life isn't a novel all the time. Where we're always trying to see what happens in the end. Maybe sometimes it's poetry. Every syllable of living counts."

- THE TRUTH IS, BY NONIEQA RAMOS

7

NIKOLAI

My name is Nikolai, I'm twelve and have achieved nothing much to date. I love cats and any book, a really good one I just finished reading for the ten-thousandth time is 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.'

8

REQUIEM

My name is Requiem and I'm 13 years old, I live in Victoria, B.C. and I've been writing since the third grade. I find my writing inspiration through drawing, music, and other content (books, movies, television programs, etc.) that I enjoy. My writing process is to throw words at paper and hope something sticks.

NATIONAL POETRY MONTH



*"POETRY IS A DEAL OF JOY AND PAIN AND WONDER,
WITH A DASH OF THE DICTIONARY." ~KHALIL GIBRAN*

Poetry has a way of providing a deeper understanding of language, and allows you to see your writing differently. As poet Amy Eisner describes, "The same words in different hands, mean different things." This month our young writers spent time choosing the right words in their poetry—for their meaning, their connotations, their sounds, even the look of them.

In April, the Guild was joined by local spoken word poet, Elysia Glover. She emphasized the importance of relating to the land through your writing, and encouraged youth to write the things they need to hear. The poetry created by this group of young writers has built confidence in their words, and increased their willingness to share stories that connect to their community.

VIOLENCE

Running through hot water I don't have
a choice.
Battling with myself is a war I'll never
win.
Choking up blood in the bathroom
mirror.
Hiding from them all,
I'm disgusting.
Time and time again they ask me how I
am,
I'm fine, I'm fine because I'm alive.
How to fight this I don't know,
All of a sudden I'm just numb inside,
Trapped inside this prism of memories,
The glass breaks when I try to leave.
These emerald eyes have seen nothing
like that,
So I'll stay here for a while.

DIRTY
TRIST
ASTRA



UNTITLED

Everywhere I look, I see starlight.
Everywhere I look, I see hidden rays
of sky.
Everywhere I look, I see shadows
folding in on themselves 'til they
shine.
Everywhere I look, I see whispers of
wings sewn from lightning just
before it dies
Murmurs,
Murmurs,
Of magic brought to life.



KIRA

MAISHA

FIRE GIRL

I am a creature,
Born of fire and flame.
Look me in the eye,
And you'll never be the same.

I am the thing,
That haunts your dreams.
I am the person,
That rips your life up at the seams.

I am that something,
That you fear.
I am the monster,
That captures your tears.

I am the girl,
Who rose up from the ashes.
I am what you see,
When your world crashes.

ASH AND EMBER

Help
Help
I'm falling
I'm falling
I'm burning
I'm burning
Help
Please
I'm dying
I'm crying
I'm-
I'm-
Prepared.
The fires are burning
But I don't care
The sky is falling
But I don't care
I don't need to care
For I am only ash and embers

That's all I'll ever be
Foolish of me to think
Anything mattered
We are just ash and embers
That's all we'll ever be
I'm sorry for those who think
Reality has this grand purpose
But we're just ash and embers
We're just pieces of stardust
Broken pieces
That's all we'll ever be.
That's all we'll ever be
That's all we'll ever
Need to be

JAKOB

ELANA

ICE GIRL

I'm the Ice Girl

born from the crack of a whip
the tension of a bow
the steely sky
I am born a ghost
without the tears to cry
Three parts nothing
two parts bone
The poet to sing
with words to hone
My glares are stitched with thread
of hell
Your eyes bewitched with the
strength of my spell

I am the Ice Girl

Wearing a crown
of a spire
Made up of lattice-worked
memories
and made up words,
The last holly boughs still
Raging,
Twisting
turning the sky to
bleak
Black

Wingtipped arrows
Born to hurl
Painted blood
for

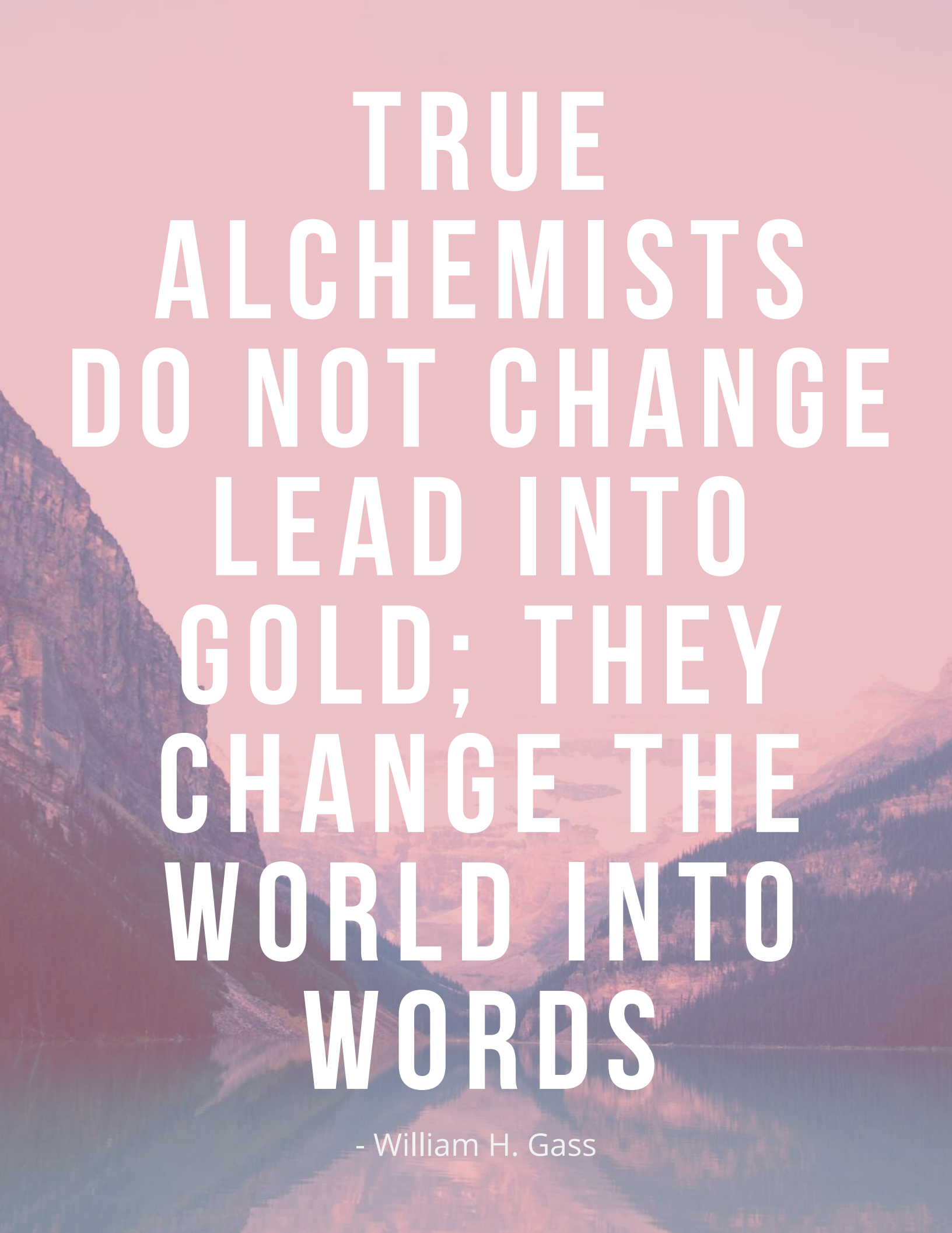
I am the Ice Girl

Hard stone
fireflies in jars
I twist your mendings
I crack your endings
A quilt
of a story
of a tale
Now forgotten
A note
Of a lyric
Of a song
Filled with iron
wrought in
The wind
of a tempest
of a tornado
of an etching
Reaching
swirling
spiral

I am the Ice Girl

Queen of shadows and snow
of looking you in the eye unable
to say no
of bits of rope
of lengths of hope
the demon at night
The girls with no might
the monster
who dreams of flight

For I am the Ice Girl.



**TRUE
ALCHEMISTS
DO NOT CHANGE
LEAD INTO
GOLD; THEY
CHANGE THE
WORLD INTO
WORDS**

- William H. Gass



HEART

A short story by Kahlan

I wasn't walking down twenty-third street last night, so I can't prove that there is any more fact to this tale than there is sugar in salt. I can't prove that it's no more than a lie, either.

"There was a man on twenty-third street, on the seventh of June, who stabbed himself. Well, I suppose that's the wrong way to put it, isn't it. He carved himself. In went the knife with the wooden handle and the long, curved blade, right above where his heart should be. Well. Right over where his heart was. If, of course, a man was there at all."

Don't write this all off as a lie, though. There is often a deep truth to tales, even if no fact can be found. Truth and Fact are different. Truth, pure, true truth anyway, is a punch to the gut. It physically hurts, because you know it to be true, and the thing about true things is that they make you change. When you discover a new truth, you have to mold yourself to fit within its rules. And you don't fit until you change the part of your life that is a falsehood.

Fact is just the way things are. The way things happen. The actual events of last night, on twenty-third street.

"The man carved a path, a deep gash, into his chest. The cut began to form the shape of a heart.

As you might imagine, there was a great deal of blood. It ran down his body, coating his legs with the sticky fluid. You couldn't really see the colour of it in the dark, but if you could you would have been appalled. The man's blood ran thick. And the colour of rot.

He stayed calm, despite the blade in his chest and the rotten blood. He stood there, quite reverently actually, as if it were some great, sacred duty to carve such a deep, heart-shaped gash. He didn't wince at the pain. He closed his eyes, and he yanked the knife out of his chest and let it hit the ground with a clatter (though he stayed silent, didn't even flinch).

And then, the man (if there was a man) plunged his hand into the wound and felt around for a minute.

He found what he was looking for.

He smiled.

He pulled his heart out of his chest.

He didn't collapse, or gasp, or die.

He looked at the heart.

The heart kept beating, as if in the shock of being removed from its body all it could think to do was keep racing on wildly.

Then he threw back his head, raised the hand holding the heart high, and laughed.

After announcing the wonderful accomplishment of removing his heart, the man bent down and placed it in a small cloth bag at his feet. From that bag he removed a coat, which he pulled on and hugged close to him, presumably to hide the wound, though the blood the colour of rot very quickly began to seep through the garment. Then he picked it up and hoisted it onto his shoulder. He began walking down the street.

A few minutes later, the man arrived at the entrance to a seedy restaurant. He waited there a minute, until a young woman exited alone. Her hair shone in the moonlight, and a serene expression on her face seemed to say that her solitude was chosen. It was a warning to stay away. If only she had chosen to take comfort in company, just for the night. Alas, that was not the case.

He grabbed her from behind, easily, smoothly, and clapped a hand over her mouth. The man dragged her into an alley and shoved her against a wall. He reached into his bag and removed the heart. The woman's eyes shone with fear as she tried desperately to pull her head away. It was no use, though. Despite carving out his heart mere minutes before, he somehow managed to produce a peculiar strength that would have been impossible for the average person, even one in possession of a heart that remained in their chest.

The man took hold of the heart and gathered his resolve. The woman gave up and hung limply like a scared rabbit in the man's grip.

The heart beat faster in anticipation.

“
The man plunged the heart
down the woman's throat.
She gasped and choked,
and finally collapsed.
.....”

Under her dress, something moved. Then there was stillness, a few moments where no one breathed - the man because while he wasn't dead, he didn't seem to be alive - and the woman because something was happening to her. Something was growing, changing in her under the surface, and then-

She breathed. Her eyes fluttered open, eyes that were once a light shade of blue, and were now a colour too dark to be discernible. Something had changed. You might say that everything had changed. The young woman got up. The man watched her.

"It is your turn now," he whispered. "Let it grow, and pass it on."

The woman nodded, "Thank you." It was not the voice of a woman anymore. It was the voice of a monster.

That is the end of the tale. But a parting message is necessary: some day, the heart will grow restless. Someday, it will be grown. It will need a new container. It will be ready. Will you be?



A DAUGHTER OF FRANCE

A short story
By Maisha

All these years later, they've almost all forgotten me. I'll never be more than a name, a little footnote in a history book. Even in death, my mother overshadows me.

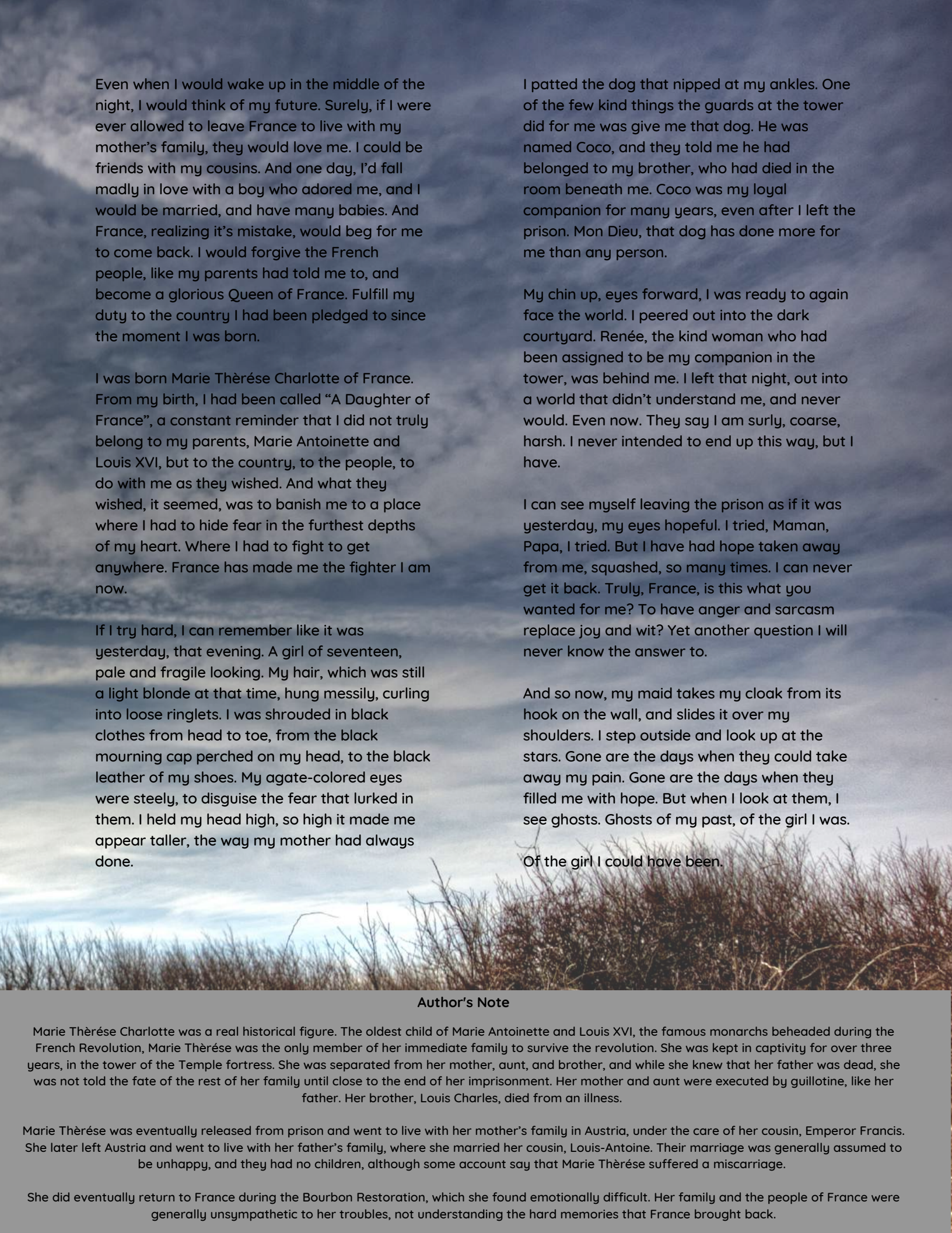
I've grown hard over the years. My mind is warped. I see traitors and conspiracies everywhere I turn. Life has denied me everything. My happy childhood was stripped away when I was only eleven. I never received love or compassion from anyone, not even my own flesh and blood. I never got to experience love, trapped in a marriage with a man I could not stand. I was never blessed with children. Maybe having children would have saved me. Stopped me from going as far as I have.

I still wake up screaming in the middle of the night, my nightmares drenched in blood. I spend hours every night pacing the floor, so much I have worn a path in my carpet. Sometimes, I am afraid to close my eyes, for fear of the visions I may see.

Would they still have done it, had they known? If they'd known how this would affect me my entire life? Would they have had compassion for the mind and fears of a child? Or would they, swept away by ruthlessness and bloodthirst, have turned their backs and carried on?

Those are questions I'll never know the answers to. I have many questions like that, as many as there are stars in the sky. They hover around me, taunt me, call to me. But I can never vanquish them. I can never get the answers. So I ignore them, push them away. I learnt very young how to hide my emotions. To some extent, not even feel them.

I wasn't always like this. Ready to give up on life so easily. As a child of seventeen, I was hopeful. Sad and fearful as well, but there was a spark in me ready to start burning. Most of my memories were terrible memories. But I had a few good ones, and I clung to them with all my might, not willing to let go.



Even when I would wake up in the middle of the night, I would think of my future. Surely, if I were ever allowed to leave France to live with my mother's family, they would love me. I could be friends with my cousins. And one day, I'd fall madly in love with a boy who adored me, and I would be married, and have many babies. And France, realizing it's mistake, would beg for me to come back. I would forgive the French people, like my parents had told me to, and become a glorious Queen of France. Fulfill my duty to the country I had been pledged to since the moment I was born.

I was born Marie Thérèse Charlotte of France. From my birth, I had been called "A Daughter of France", a constant reminder that I did not truly belong to my parents, Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI, but to the country, to the people, to do with me as they wished. And what they wished, it seemed, was to banish me to a place where I had to hide fear in the furthest depths of my heart. Where I had to fight to get anywhere. France has made me the fighter I am now.

If I try hard, I can remember like it was yesterday, that evening. A girl of seventeen, pale and fragile looking. My hair, which was still a light blonde at that time, hung messily, curling into loose ringlets. I was shrouded in black clothes from head to toe, from the black mourning cap perched on my head, to the black leather of my shoes. My agate-colored eyes were steely, to disguise the fear that lurked in them. I held my head high, so high it made me appear taller, the way my mother had always done.

I patted the dog that nipped at my ankles. One of the few kind things the guards at the tower did for me was give me that dog. He was named Coco, and they told me he had belonged to my brother, who had died in the room beneath me. Coco was my loyal companion for many years, even after I left the prison. Mon Dieu, that dog has done more for me than any person.

My chin up, eyes forward, I was ready to again face the world. I peered out into the dark courtyard. Renée, the kind woman who had been assigned to be my companion in the tower, was behind me. I left that night, out into a world that didn't understand me, and never would. Even now. They say I am surly, coarse, harsh. I never intended to end up this way, but I have.

I can see myself leaving the prison as if it was yesterday, my eyes hopeful. I tried, Maman, Papa, I tried. But I have had hope taken away from me, squashed, so many times. I can never get it back. Truly, France, is this what you wanted for me? To have anger and sarcasm replace joy and wit? Yet another question I will never know the answer to.

And so now, my maid takes my cloak from its hook on the wall, and slides it over my shoulders. I step outside and look up at the stars. Gone are the days when they could take away my pain. Gone are the days when they filled me with hope. But when I look at them, I see ghosts. Ghosts of my past, of the girl I was.

Of the girl I could have been.

Author's Note

Marie Thérèse Charlotte was a real historical figure. The oldest child of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI, the famous monarchs beheaded during the French Revolution, Marie Thérèse was the only member of her immediate family to survive the revolution. She was kept in captivity for over three years, in the tower of the Temple fortress. She was separated from her mother, aunt, and brother, and while she knew that her father was dead, she was not told the fate of the rest of her family until close to the end of her imprisonment. Her mother and aunt were executed by guillotine, like her father. Her brother, Louis Charles, died from an illness.

Marie Thérèse was eventually released from prison and went to live with her mother's family in Austria, under the care of her cousin, Emperor Francis. She later left Austria and went to live with her father's family, where she married her cousin, Louis-Antoine. Their marriage was generally assumed to be unhappy, and they had no children, although some account say that Marie Thérèse suffered a miscarriage.

She did eventually return to France during the Bourbon Restoration, which she found emotionally difficult. Her family and the people of France were generally unsympathetic to her troubles, not understanding the hard memories that France brought back.



The Sirens Sing for Odysseus

BY REQUIEM

Chapter One

I tapped my foot to a beat that only I could hear, nodding my head and swaying gently back and forth to the music. To any passers-by, this was a rather odd display, but in my mind, my fingers danced across the keys of a polished wood piano. I had been working on this piece for quite some time now, but I had never been able to make the last bit feel quite right.

I loved to make music. Ever since I could articulate my fat little child fingers, I would beg my parents to let me visit my grandfather's house. He had the most beautiful piano...

The first time I had been to see him was after the death of my grandmother. My mother wasn't very close with him, and hadn't seen him since she moved out. He didn't even know she had a child. I suppose she felt bad for him, though, all alone in the massive house that was so empty without his wife, his only family living hours away.

So she packed my dad and I into the car, and we made the six-hour trip to the farmhouse. Being only seven, I balked at the idea of driving an eternity to some dusty old house and spending a week with some dusty old man, but my mother did not budge.

"He smells of cabbage, Mum!" I yelled down the stairs. My dad stifled a laugh.

"You haven't even met the man, how would you know what he smells like?" she called back. "Now go upstairs and pack!"

"All old people smell of cabbage," I grumbled as I dragged myself up the stairs.

Still fuming, I shut my bedroom door, pulled open my drawer, and carelessly threw shirts, pants, trousers, and socks into my suitcase. I'd never disobey my mum, but I didn't have to be happy with her decisions.

Once my clothes were packed, I took my stained, battered, and dog-eared thesaurus and laid it on top with the utmost care. Stroking the leather cover, I couldn't resist opening the book and smelling the pages before it was shut away with the rest of my things. After placing it down, I frowned and took it back out of the suitcase. It'll be a long car ride, and I'll need something to do, I thought as I tucked the book under my arm.

Preparing to wrestle the overflowing suitcase, I took a deep breath... and immediately stopped. My music box!

I grinned as I spotted the glint of the burnished brass peeking out from atop my "Schoolwork Pile of Doom". Quickly snatching it down, I took a minute to admire the odd aura of beauty surrounding it.

My parents had pictures of me clutching the music box from the day I was born. It wasn't a family heirloom or anything, merely a trinket my mother bought from an old lady at the flea market as a present for me.

And my mother has the audacity to wonder why I'm obsessed with the piano. Anyone would be if their first memory of music was the soft, tinkly noise of Pachelbel's Canon as they fell asleep. God, I'm getting nostalgic just thinking about it.

Anyway, what was I saying?

Oh! Yes, I was packing my stuff for the trip. I ended up spacing out for quite a long time, though, which led to my mum screeching at me to get into the van. Rather similar to a harpy, in fact. Harpies, as in- from Greek mythology, the human/bird hybrid personifications of storm winds featured in Homeric poems. Did you know their name means "snatcher", actually, and they're primarily described as ugly.

However! Hesiod described them as beautiful maidens, as shown in this excerpt from his writings: "...the Harpyiai of the lovely hair, Okypete and Aello, and these two in the speed of their wings keep pace with the blowing winds, or birds in flight, as they soar and swoop, high aloft." And- Oh, I'm getting off topic again. Sorry, sorry. Shouldn't be wasting your time like this.

Alright, I swear this is the last time I'll have to do this. So, as I was saying, I packed my stuff, spaced out, Mum yelled at me, I got in the van and we drove out to the farmhouse. You might be thinking "well, what about the drive?" and to that I'd say "well what about it?" Honestly, it was mostly me reading my thesaurus and playing my music box on repeat for six hours. Not quite what one would consider exciting.

When we arrived at the farmhouse, however, it was a different story. I had never seen a house that big, save for on television, and certainly never even dreamed of owning one.

It had a moss-covered roof made with dull green shingles, with white walls and a beautiful balcony. What blew my mind the most, though, was the windows. Three rows of them. Three!

Come to think of it, I never have gotten over those windows.

Now, while that may seem great- and it is, don't get me wrong! But the real beauty of the house lay inside, with the-

The teacher cut me off. "That's very nice, you can go sit down now." I heard some of my classmates snigger, and I raised my eyebrow.

"My story isn't done." The muffled giggles became full-out laughter, and the teacher sighed.

"I can see that. I'd like to remind you to pick a different story to share next time. We've all heard this one many times before." I stared back at her, careful not to break eye contact. My classmate Myrtle said it made me look "completely mad", in her rather earthy terms, but if I made no eye contact at all, my father said I was "cowardly" and "rude". I frowned. People are always such a puzzle, a puzzle that you can't ever solve. Then it hit me.

"Sisyphus!"

The teacher yelled at me, pointing at my desk with her finger. "I told you to go back to your seat! Stop making such disruptions!"

"Miss, this isn't a disruption, it's strictly school-related. I had forgotten the name of the man who was given an impossible task as torture when he died, where he had to push a boulder up a hill but it would always roll back down again, but then I was thinking about how people are like an unsolvable puzzle, and I remembered his name! Sisyphus!"

"That's enough talking back, now go to your seat!"

"Isn't that how conversations work, though? One person speaks, then the other responds. Correct me if I'm wrong, I suppose, but that's what I thought." More laughing and more fury from the teacher. Rather unfounded fury, in my opinion at least, but that's just how people are. Lots of emotion, comparatively little logic.

Life would be so much better if everyone simply followed a formula or routine of some sort, I thought as I trudged back to my seat. Less confusion.

The rest of the school day passed in a blur, but when I got home, things got interesting (finally).

Find Chapter Two in our Fall Zine
Sept 2021

Loarfelds

BY NIKOLAI
FANTASY WORLD DESCRIPTION

Ah Loarfelds, population 153 and ½. Exactly.

* * *

Loarfelds was the type of city that heroes came from. In fact, Loarfelds was so old it might have housed the first thief before he went out to steal fire from the gods. There are many stories in which the first hero goes out to steal fire from the gods. But isn't theft a crime? And if it is from the gods, it must be worse. The people of Loarfelds believe in the first thief.

* * *

Loarfelds looked like one of those really old family heirloom blankets in which none of the original material was remaining. In fact, Loarfelds's main export was probably ragged old blankets.

The rolling waves of the hillside fell through the farmsteads like through a shark's fin. (No ironic foreshadowing meant) Its coastal area was made up of the one singular street in town, the houses looking like they'd been ravaged by thousands of wolves, maybe even weekly. This is probable as the village's only guard happened to be sleeping. He looked like a fat old man in a breastplate too small to fit a chicken and a helmet that looked like it had been used for doing the dishes. He was huge.



A scream bounced off thin air, echoed off solid clouds, and faded into nothing. This is because there was nothing in sight for it to echo off. The scream did what it was meant for and awoke the sleeping guard.

A short woman, probably a dwarf came out from behind a building and shouted at the guard to do his work. She was probably his boss, and he reacted immediately.

"Of course sir, m'lady, your highness."

"I was swimming out on my private dock when a shark came out of nowhere to attack me. You are supposed to protect the village, that includes me! How is one supposed to look sophisticated when they are forced to punch innocent animals all the time?"

"Yessir!"

"That was not the right answer!"

"Of course, m'lady!"

"Neither that."

* * *



On a day like this, death could be roaming, but in a place like this, death is always roaming. After all, Death is just a homicidal farmer that wears a skeleton mask and has an urge to swing his scythe wildly.

The main population of Loarfelds were farmers. This is because of peer pressure more than anything else.

If you want to be a merchant? Your family doesn't think so. Get prepared to have all your dreams crushed one by one. Uncertain if you deeply want to be a farmer? How about wondering if you are still in your house come morning or shipped across the country in an old bag? Not many big-city dwellers realize how lethal a farming town can be. They think assassins and thieves are the worst. How wrong they are. Wild animal attacks, crop failure and farming personifications are only a few to be listed.

* * *

Smaller towns like this often have elderly retired miners. Due to some work catastrophe, they stopped their work.

This happens even if there have been no active mines in the area for over a century. Its like someone made a poster and job application to which the only question is: Have you worked in the mines? They live to tell their grandchildren about "the day that the mountain collapsed into a molehill since ole' Jeff dropped his pick in the wrong spot," or the famous, "I remember when there was a shaft a three-point-one-four-one-five-nine-and-some-more, shame it succumbed to turning in ever-smaller circles."

These small villages are a necessity for adventurers, travellers, kings, queens, and any other fantasy hero to pass through on their way to a big city or monster lair. They might even have been born here, it is surprising how many rightful heirs to the throne come from a small nothing of a town. It could also be fun to play out the story of the most successful (yet still barely successful at all) merchant striving to survive in a small town like this.



OUR VOICES MATTER: WHY THE VOTING AGE IN CANADA (AND AROUND THE WORLD!) SHOULD BE LOWERED TO SIXTEEN

BY KAHLAN

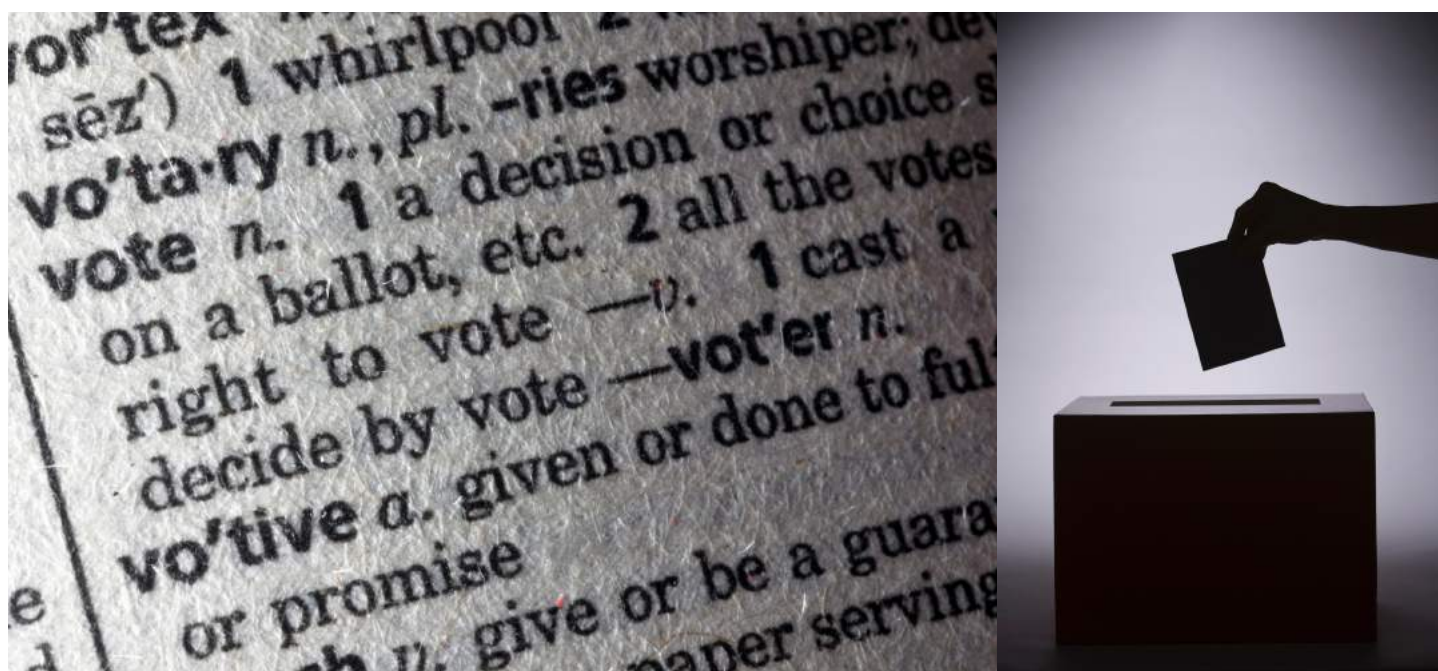
Recently, there has been a lot of talk about inclusion and diversity. “Everyone should have a say! Everyone deserves a voice.” But how much say do we kids really have? Not much. Not when it comes to our futures, and the future of the world which we - soon - will be in charge of.

We protest in the streets, but time and time again politicians turn a blind eye. We seem invisible and powerless. But what if they had to listen? What if our voices, and our votes, joined the ones of adults? This is why the voting age in Canada should be lowered to sixteen: to give us a voice, to break down barriers, to get young people excited about politics, and to make sure we get a say in our futures.

To be clear, this is not a new idea. The voting age is sixteen in numerous places around the world, like Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, and Nicaragua. A few other countries let some sixteen year-olds vote, like those employed or married, and others let sixteen year-olds vote in non-federal elections.

And young people will vote if given the chance. In Austria, 16 and 17 year-olds were found to be more likely to vote than older first-time voters between 18 and 20.

People say teens aren't mature enough to vote at sixteen, yet we are mature enough to drive, and get a job! And it's not like adults are immune to immaturity. But...they all get to vote. They wouldn't take the right to vote away from adults just because some of them aren't going to take it seriously, so why wouldn't they give it to us? A good amount of teens want their voices heard, and just because some don't care shouldn't mean that the rest of us have to stay silenced.



Another positive outcome of lowering the voting age is that we will build habits of voting that will stick with us as we grow older. If we grow accustomed to the act of voting as teens, when parents and teachers can hold us accountable, we are more likely to continue to do so as young adults. In addition to growing habits, voting will make us more mature and aware of politics and the people who lead our country. We will hopefully be inspired to do research and decide where we stand on issues that affect us.

And speaking of issues that affect us, there are some major ones. Climate change, for one. The generation before us holds a lot of power, the power to decide the course of our lives and the lives of future generations. How well can they understand the fear that they will die because the air is full of smoke and the water is polluted? Many of the people currently ruling countries around the world will die before they see the full consequences of their actions. But us? We'll be around to see a lot of terrible things happen unless the world changes its course.

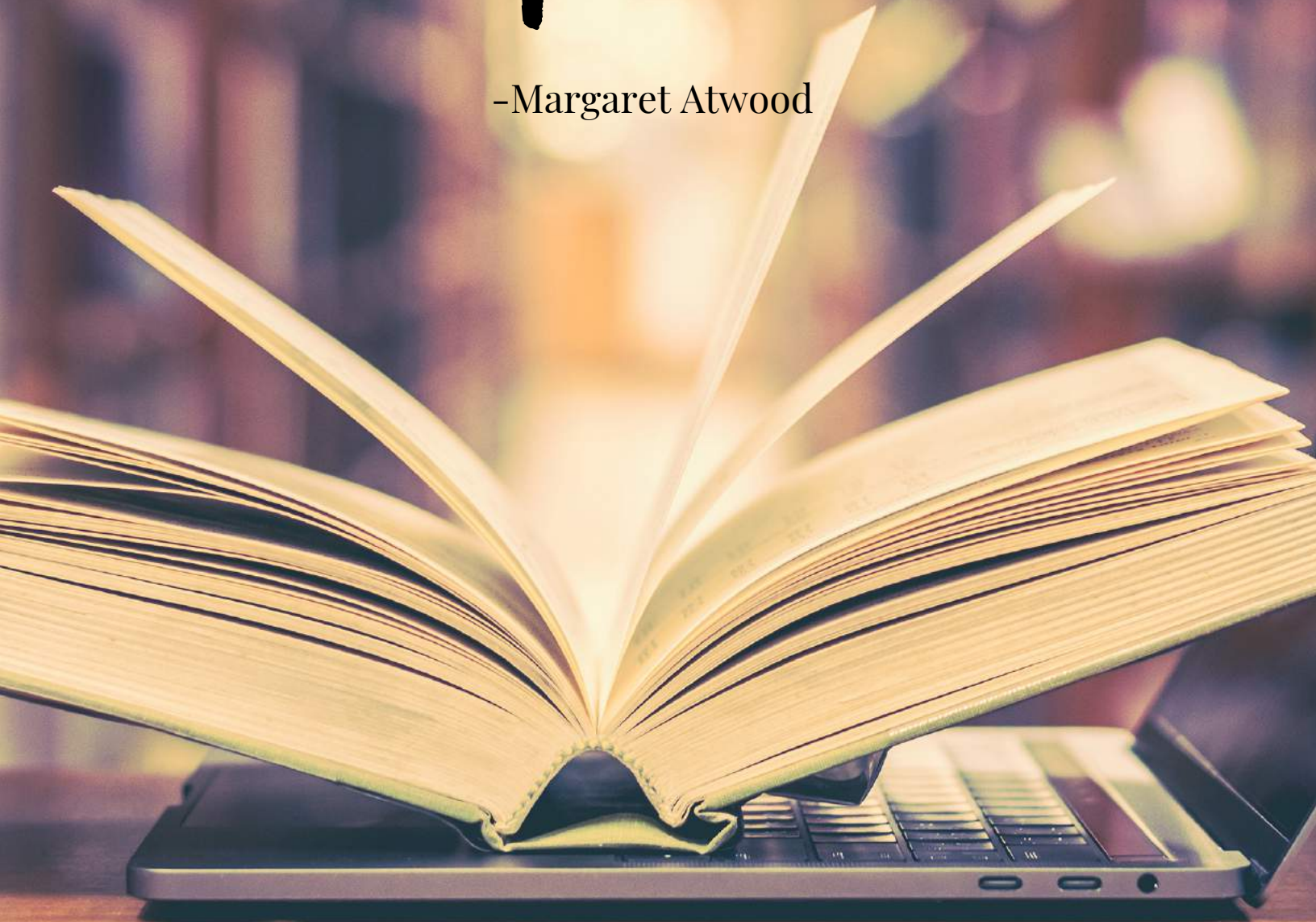
By lowering the voting age, more young people would have their opinions heard when it comes to issues that will affect them more than anyone currently in power. Shouldn't we be able to decide what our futures should look like?

Issues other than climate change affect us too. When it comes to decisions about education, social justice issues... anything, really, choices made can affect us as much as anyone else, yet our voices aren't fairly represented. That is not the fair and just system politicians strive for. Not when so many people who should have a say don't.

Is all the discussion of inclusion and equality sincere? If it is, governments need to start thinking seriously about lowering the voting age to sixteen, and soon. If not, well, that's not the end. We'll keep fighting for the rights we deserve. No matter what the laws say, we can never be truly silenced.

*A word after a
word, after a word,
is power.*

-Margaret Atwood



BOOK RECOMMENDATION: SIX OF CROWS

BY MAISHA

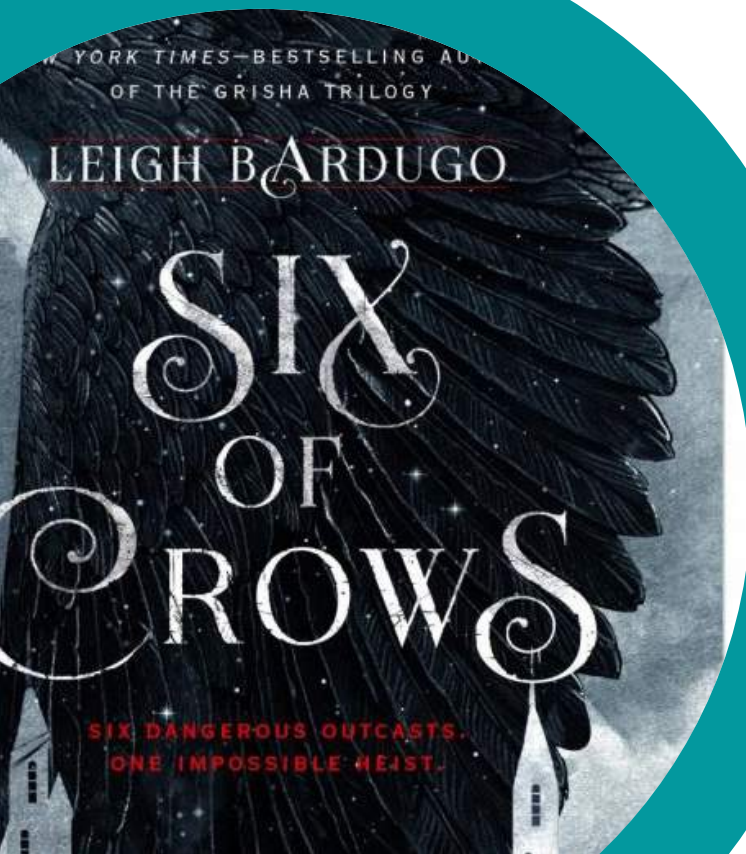
With the release of Netflix's "Shadow and Bone" series, it is my hope that more and more people will be exposed to Leigh Bardugo's duology, of which characters are featured in the Netflix series.

For me, *Six of Crows* and its sequel, *Crooked Kingdom* are some of the best books I have ever read. They are so different from any other books I've been exposed to; set in a fantasy world, but not focusing on magic, incredible plot twists, several point-of-view characters, all of which are amazingly developed. *Six of Crows* feels like you are reading a tv show, because it shows the perspectives of several main characters like a show or movie would, and the imagery is so vivid, it feels like you are watching rather than reading something. It also doesn't hurt that Bardugo is the absolute master of slow burn romance.

"SIX OF CROWS IS
A BOOK I'LL
RECOMMEND TO
PEOPLE UNTIL MY
VOICE GETS
HOARSE."

Another thing that makes *Six of Crows* so amazing is its diversity. Featuring characters of different races and sexual orientations, *Six of Crows* also features characters with dyslexia, ADHD, PTSD, and gambling and drug addictions. Something I appreciated about it was that characters weren't defined by these things, and they weren't shown as weaknesses. They were simply shown as part of the characters, not something to be ashamed of or hidden. But the thing I liked the most was that they didn't define the characters; the story wasn't about that. Of course, it's important to have books that focus on things such as mental health struggles, but I feel that it's very important to have books where it is not the main part of the story, to show that people are not defined by mental health or disabilities. Those do not have to be the story of people's lives, the things that define them.

Overall, *Six of Crows* is a book I'll recommend to people until my voice gets hoarse. I fail to understand why it didn't become an addition to "the big three" (*Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, and *The Hunger Games*) since I feel it absolutely deserved it. (Okay, fine, I think it deserves it way more than *Twilight*). My hope is that the Netflix series will introduce more people to this amazing book, and that more and more people will fall in love with its world and amazing characters.





SHARE YOUR WRITING

**Contest
Opportunity!
Ages 13-18**

THE GUILD OF WRITERS: CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST

Calling all writers, ages 13 to 18! Submit your writing to be featured in our Fall 2021 zine release!

Contest is open to all Canadian residents ages 13-18. Submit your story by emailing info@storystudio.ca by August 15th 2021.

SENTENCE STARTER:

"Just when I thought I would get out of there
alive..."

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Include the sentence prompt anywhere within your writing. Submit a poem, scene or short story with a maximum of 2000 words.

Submit your writing, along with any illustrations to info@storystudio.ca

Contest Deadline: August 15th 2021

WINNERS FEATURED IN OUR FALL EDITION

Our panel of judges will include members of the Guild of Young Writers, Story Studio professionals and visiting authors. The top two pieces of writing selected will be shared in the next zine release along with any illustrations and short author biographies to recognize the new authors.



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If you are interested in joining the Guild of Young Writers, head to www.storystudio.ca/write or email info@storystudio.ca for more information.