



GUILD OF YOUNG WRITERS

SONGWRITING

SHORT STORIES
& POETRY

VOLUME THREE
AUTUMN
2021

A SUMMER OF WRITING

Two anthologies coming your way

Story Studio Writing Society is located on the traditional territories of the **W̱SÁNEĆ** and Lkwungen-speaking peoples. We respectfully acknowledge and thank the Lkwungen People, also known as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations communities, for allowing us to live, work, learn, play and create on their lands.

Through the work we do on the territory, we are accountable to the following communities: Esquimalt, Songhees, **STÁUTW** (Tsawout), **W̱JOŁŁP** (Tsartlip), **BOKEĆEN** (Pauquachin), **MÁLEXEŁ** (Malahat), **W̱SÍKEM** (Tseycum), T'Sou-ke Nation, Scia'new Nation and Nuu-chah-nulth: Pacheedaht Nations.

We acknowledge that the historical relationship to the land and territories of these peoples continues to this day.

As an education based organization, we recognize that we have the responsibility to work towards truth and reconciliation, and to remain open to suggestions, consultations, and partnerships, especially with local Indigenous communities and organizations, on how our organization can continue to work towards reconciliation.

We hope that Story Studio's programing and publications create a safe, welcoming and engaging environment for all people, including Indigenous peoples.

CONTENTS

8

Songwriting
Andrea Rose

22

Opinion Piece
Equality in Sports

30

SUBMISSIONS OPEN!
Share your words.

4

Editor's Note

5

Reflecting on a Summer of Writing
Summer reflections and new member welcome

8

Songwriting
Local Guest: Andrea Rose

14

Betrayed
Excerpt by Lola

16

The True Story of The Tortoise and The Hare
Short Story by Jakob

19

The Sirens Sing for Odysseus
Chapter Two by Cameron

22

Opinion Piece by Kat
Equality in Sports Teams

25

Opinion Piece by Maisha
Why Mockingjay is the Superior Novel

28

Contest Winner:
"Just when I thought I'd get out of there alive..."

30

Submission Opportunity
Share Your Writing with the Guild!

5

Reflecting on a Summer of Writing

Eight weeks of writing, three programs, two anthologies and many new members to welcome!



Editor's Note

A new school year has brought in new members to our Guild of Young Writers community! After completing one of Story Studio's summer programs, participants were then invited to be a part of our Guild of Young Writers to continue the ongoing support and encouragement that this community provides. It has been a delight to see our 'senior' Guild members welcome in new friendships and connections over the past few weeks.

In returning to our regular programs, Guild members have been meeting for weekly Writer's Cafe workshops to share their writing and provide feedback and resources to improve their craft.

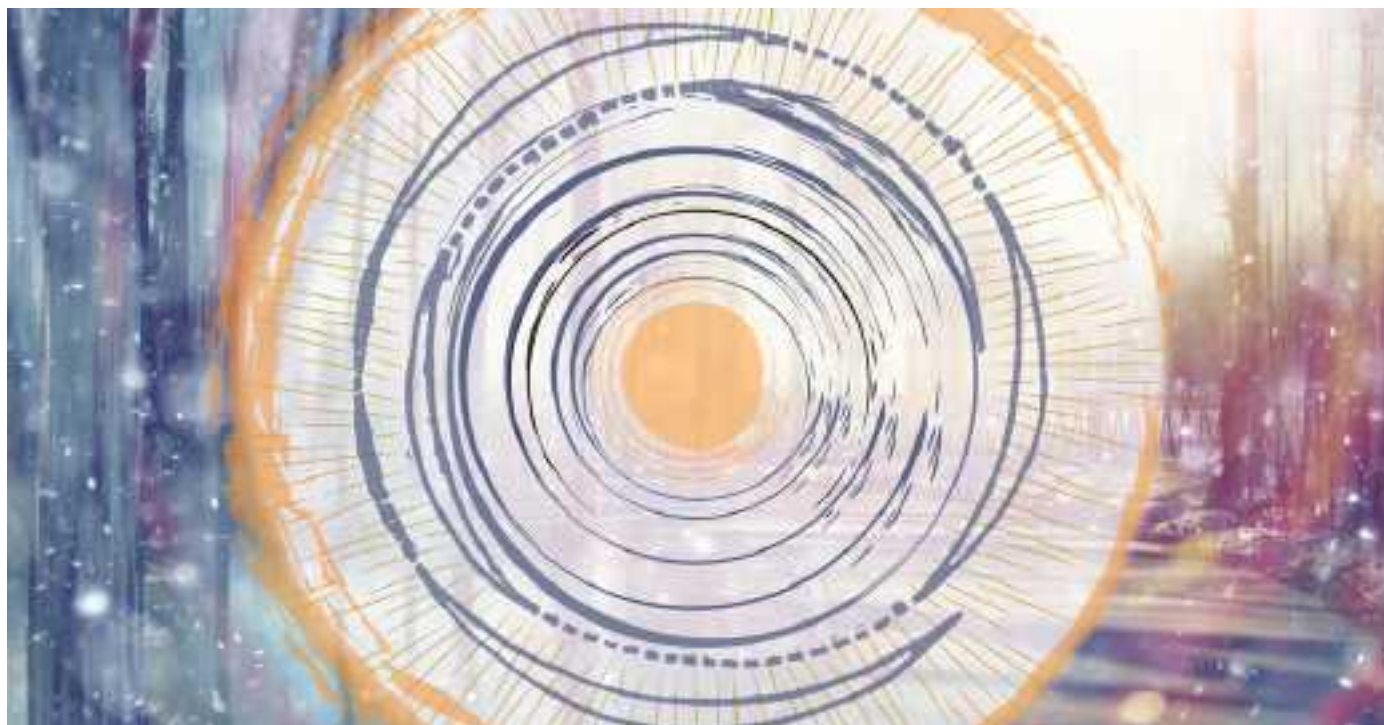
Each month the Guild focuses on a different writing theme. This year we are exploring many different forms and elements of writing. September's theme focused in on songwriting, and the many connections it makes to poetry. We thank Andrea Rose for joining us and sharing her talent! The month of October we are focusing on Screenwriting, and how we might bring to life the stories we create. We look forward to welcoming more visiting authors and illustrators to support our young writers as they grow their toolboxes and hone in on their writing skills.

Enjoy the stories, poems, and perspectives the Guild has to share with you.

Rebecca Ruiter
PROGRAM MANAGER



REFLECTING ON A SUMMER OF WRITING



This summer, Story Studio was able to support over 50 youth with eight weeks of fun and engaging writing programs. From individual writing projects, to creating collaborative stories and coding interactive fiction, participants honed in on their writing skills and learned from a variety of visiting authors, illustrators and game designers. Story Studio is thrilled to announce the publication of two new Anthologies: *'A Portal to Our World'* by Summer Writing Studio and *'Imaginary Victoria'* by our Imaginary Victoria program. Both anthologies will be found in GVPL's collection in the coming months! If you're interested in purchasing a copy, contact us at info@storystudio.ca

In November, after publishing has been completed, a book launch will be held in the Greater Victoria Public Library central branch atrium, to celebrate the new authors on a very successful summer! Meet some of our new authors from the Guild of Young writers and join me in celebrating their accomplishments. Thank you to GVPL for their ongoing support of our young writers!

1

ABBY

Abby is thirteen and lives in Victoria. She's a short story author, animal lover and poet. She spends her time playing with her puppy, writing and reading - a lot of reading. She enjoys writing in her journal, and dances with no shame in her living room every day. Abby is a not-so-great-but-still-loves-to-sing singer-songwriter and is shy when people ask her to show them her songs which she's made. Whenever she wants to, she creates comics and loves showing them off to her family.

2

ASTRID

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

3

CATHY

Cathy is fourteen years old and lives in Victoria, B.C. They have written over 49 short stories, and hundreds of poems, and that collection is ever growing each day. They wish to change the world one step at a time with humour, but have no idea how to. They love reading opinion pieces, and love learning about the world. They love writing in Fantasy, though they also write in many other genres as well.

“Either write something worth reading, or do something worth writing,”

- BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

4

CAMERON

Cameron is thirteen years old and loves writing, drawing, musical theatre, and the movie Con Air. He's currently working on writing a novel and battling against the evil forces of chronic procrastination, and his favourite genres are fantasy and horror. A trope present in all his writing is found family, and a trope he deeply detests is the dreaded love triangle. He loves to play with metaphor in his prose and he is looking forward to another exciting season of Story Studio!

5

JAKOB

Jakob is a twelve 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!

6

KAT

Kat Gillese is an extreme multipotentialite, which means someone who has many different interests and creative pursuits in life. To keep it simple, Kat enjoys making people laugh and doodling small creatures on whatever surface they can find. They have a huge family, which can be fun at times, and they really wish they had an animal of some kind. Most nights, they like to make complications to their plots instead of sleeping. Kat is a proud weirdo and thanks their many friends for being crazy and weird with them. They hope to one day be taller than all their friends, but this sadly will most likely not happen.

7

MAISHA

Maisha is fourteen 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.

8

SYLVIE

Sylvie is a dystopian author, who was probably a cat in another life and should not read as many apocalypse books as she does. She likes musicals and Disney, which often results in people walking in on her singing Hamilton and Mulan very loudly in her bedroom. Sylvie also gets way too invested in the storylines of books, movies, and video games. She enjoys playing with her cats, Olive and Alice, playing Genshin Impact, re-reading her favourite books, and drawing. When The World Ended is the first story she's written that got past a thousand words.

BOOKS WE'RE *FALLING* OVER

- **ALL EYES ON HER**
- LAURIE ELIZABETH FLYNN
- **THE GUILDED ONES**
- NAMINA FORNA
- **SYMPTOMS OF BEING HUMAN**
- JEFF GARVIN
- **GOOD GIRL, BAD BLOOD**
- HOLLY JACKSON
- **THE DEGENERATES**
- J ALBERT MANN
- **THOUSAND SHADES OF BLUE**
- ROBIN STEVENSON
- **IRON WIDOW**
- XIRAN JAY ZHAO



SONGWRITING



"ART IS MESSY, SO BE MESSY" ~ANDREA ROSE

When listening to music, we tend to make connections to lyrics, evoking an emotional response in us or bringing us back to a memory. Writing, regardless of the form, is meant to make readers/viewers feel something. Young writer's of the Guild have been exploring the elements of songwriting, and the process of taking their words and mainly their poetry to fit a rhythm and flow of song. In September, the Guild was joined by local singer and songwriter, Andrea Rose.

Andrea emphasized the importance of writing from your heart and strengthening that by keeping that voice with you in everything you do and create.

In discussing the messy process of songwriting, Andrea encourages young writers to feel for the rhythm and flow of the music and not fight the repetition we may find when putting pen to paper. Andrea encourages writers to, "Let what comes out, out!" So here's what came out for us.


FALLING

It's been too long and I think
I'm falling,
I can't find you in this sea of
emotions.
I think I'll drown before I
anchor your love.
But I'll keep my head above
anyway.



ASTRID

COLOURBLIND



ABBY

When the dark is bigger than the
sun
When the world is only in black and
white
That's when I know I'm not fine.
When my vision starts closing in
When my hands start to tremble
That's when I know I'm not fine.



REINVENTED

Looking in the mirror,
She saw a girl with a lonely heart.
Wished that she had friends,
But they are all just super damn busy.
Oh well.

She wished that she could join that crowd of
people,
everyone seemed like friends,
She'll have friends,

Friends!

I'll be never lonely.

I'll never be alone.

Over time,
She changed herself to be someone else,
Promising that this would be her true potential,
Never thought of anything else.

My other friends? They probably don't care.

Or at least she thought.

At least, she thought.

Reinventing a new persona,
She found on Pinterest the other day,
It seemed cool,
People liked it,
It was all she needed,
It was all she wanted to be.

Dyed her hair a blue, now,

No one could not see me,

It stands out more than all they'll ever be.

They'll be my friends, and I'll never be alone again.

But happily ever after never came.

No matter how hard she tried

As she approaches that group,
Standing up tall, with the brand new outfit,
She bought it at the mall two days ago.

She saw her old friends glance,
they wanted her to come back,
She wanted them back, but she thought this was for
the best.

She ditched them.

For new friends.

A false sense of security,
She thought this was who she's truly meant to be.
But as the days went by,
She was left alone,
And she wondered if this was all for the best.

It was not.

She's back at square one.
Nothing happened, just loads of money spent.
She didn't have to change herself,
I really liked the old girl better.
I just want to bring her back.

I don't know her well,
I just want to see her happy,
Those friends should treat her better,
But they don't.

They scream at her,
Every time she did something wrong,
Neglected and rejected,
Only there.
Only there to sprinkle them with compliments.
And to be taunted on her own beliefs.

She thought this was the person she wanted to be.
She was wrong.
The reinvented process was wrong.
She was back at square one.

Again.

GOODBYES ARE HARD

Goodbyes are hard.

They leave you empty and numb.

They leave you to pick up the pieces of your shattered heart.

Because despite how much you tell yourself not to.

You hope for the promise in 'See you later, but all you see is the lie.

You try to hold on to those last few moments, but they come to an end.

Everything does.

All you have left is an empty promise and a broken body.

Because those left behind hurt the hardest.

The ones who lived to tell the tale.

The ones who have to keep going.

The ones who are left waiting, holding a broken 'See you later' in their hearts.

We all say goodbye eventually.

Maybe it was a fevered whisper in someone's ear.

A sound that came out like a sob.

A broken one that was too late.

Goodbyes are hard.



SYLVIE



CAMERON

FISH BAIT

Pockets marked red
'Cause my body is dead
Such a mess, protest
Till I just can't rest
All her acidic scum
That's dripping out my knees

Old playground scrapes
Turn to bloody landscapes
In the blink of my fictional eye
Glass, pierce my foot
Write out its book
Dice are rolling in our skies


And I know God is optional
'Cause he's just not an option for me
And it's fate, fish bait
'Cause I'm doomed to love
But they deem me to hate

Do I hurt or worse
Start to place myself first
On the chopping block
Another failure to balk
At the laps I lie on
Slipping their hands over the heat

New age, same old
Corpses coated in gold
Think I know the reason why
A deceptive dream
To deflect the beam
Of "I really want to die"

And I know God is optional
'Cause he's just not an option for me
And it's fate, fish bait
'Cause I'm doomed to love
But they deem me to hate

And I'm fate, fish bait
I'm your dead little weight
Set to blow every fuse
Plan B in the basement, your last option
has risen
Now push any button
And
I'll
Shoot

A cup of orange soup with autumn leaves in the background.

**FOLLOW THE PATH
SET BEFORE YOU. IT
IS NOT AN EASY ONE,
BUT WALK IT WITH
COURAGE, FAITH, AND
STRENGTH.
PERSEVERE, FOR
BETTER TIMES WILL
COME.**

- *'The Crystal Ribbon'* by Celeste Lim



BETRAYED

An excerpt by Lola

Prologue

He decides on the katana. Turning around, he grins at me. His teeth are rotting and look as though they have never been cleaned. He approaches me slowly, as if afraid. He knows I can do nothing to him though, handcuffed to the wall in four different places. He hesitates, then spins the katana around slowly and sits down in a chair.

“So, we can do this the easy way. Or the hard way, your choice.”

I pretend to think about it for a second. “The hard way would be great, thanks for asking.”

He growls, “Tell me. Where is my brother hiding?”

I grin. “Well, that’s a great question, but I’m afraid I can’t answer that. Any other questions before I get bored? My attention span is very short.”

He smirks at me. “I was hoping you would say that”

He puts the katana to my neck but I just laugh, then attack.

Chapter One: Two Days Earlier

He was taking too long, and my face was getting cold. He had promised to be ten minutes, but it had been twenty and he was still gone. Ugh, I have to do everything myself.

I was about to jump down from the roof when he scaled the side and jumped next to me. “Hey gorgeous,” he smiles and twirls my hair around his finger.

I pull away frowning. “I told you to stop calling me that. What took you so long?”

He pulls a small bag out of the inside of his coat. “No harm done, I just took my time a bit. Nothing to worry about.” He tosses me the bag and I open it. “I got all of it, so we can go now.”

I scowl at him, this was way too easy. There has to be a catch. “It couldn’t have been this easy.”

Then from inside the museum, a siren blares.

“Ugh Jack you idiot, you were seen weren’t you?”

"Um... maybe. I don't know."

There are loud noises as police trucks pull up in front of the museum.

"We have to get out of here, we cannot be caught or we will be in a load of trouble."

I put the bag in my coat and we peek off the side of the roof. More police cars are pulling up and have surrounded the museum. There are news reporters down there as well and they are filming the whole scene.

"Come on, let's go this way." I pull him to the corner of the roof on the left side and pointed to an air vent leading into the museum.

"Are you crazy? We cannot go back in there, they will find us."

"We are surrounded, we have no choice."

He hesitates and I pull him closer to it. "Ugh Jack just trust me on this, I have a plan."

I jump through the vent and slid down to the 4th level of the museum. Then, with Jack following after me, we start slowly crawling through.

"Perfect," I exclaim as I see a room with 2 security guards. "Follow my lead." I open the grate and pull myself through so that I am hanging. One of the guards walks beneath me and I drop gracefully to the ground on top of him and knock him out with a quick blow to the head. Jack follows down after me and lands on the other guard a little more sloppily than I had. Once we are sure they are not going to wake up for a while. We strip them to their underclothes and put on their security outfits. Mine is too big.

We tie them up and put them in a janitor closet nearby.

"Now what? How is this plan going to work?"

"You will see Jack, you will see."

We walk through the museum rooms acting like guards until we get to the jewel room. There are guards patrolling so we go along with that. A guard walks over to us, "Barry, Clive. You are supposed to be patrolling outside. Why are you here?"

The guard speaks harshly to us. Jack is to do the talking since I am too "feminine" sounding. He catches on to that and responds sounding serious. "We apologize sir, we were confused. Everyone was running around everywhere and we thought..." He made himself sound very convincing and the guard looks apologetic for being so harsh.

"Sorry. Just, go outside and patrol the area. Got it?"

We nod and walk swiftly to the front door without being intercepted. The police just nod at us as we go to the very back of the museum. We leave the grounds and then walk straight into the woods without being seen. Once in there, I take off the sweaty mask and outfit. Jack looks at me in astonishment.

"Wow, that actually worked, how?"

I smile at him and give a pointed look his way. "I was just hoping it would work, anyway come on. We need to report to boss."

Jack looks at me like I am crazy. "You were hoping it would work, stop guessing things will work or one day we will get caught."

I just laugh, "Unlikely," and we walk into the woods.

Find Chapter Three in our Winter Zine December 2021

THE TRUE STORY OF THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE

A short story
By Jakob

The Hare hadn't had a good night's sleep in a while. Mob debts do that to you. As his teeth chattered, he remembered what his mother had told him before the mob whacked her: "The mob will never whack me, son."

The Hare had a piece of paper with a smiley face on it. It was known as Mr. McSmiles. He'd had it since he was a child. His therapist had recommended it to him. He was supposed to snuggle with it when he was sad, but all that happened was he got a bunch of paper cuts. He'd asked his mom if he could just get a stuffy instead, but she said "Stuffed animals encourage incompetence."

The Hare sobbed as he got paper cuts. He knew the mob wanted to kill him. He knew! He knew! And, a million thoughts racing through his head, he decided he needed to say something incredibly profound or else he would die.

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH
HHHHHHHHHH!" The hare shouted as a letter crashed through his window.

"Sheesh!" The letter replied, "Way to make a guy feel welcome, eh?"

"Wait, you can talk?" The hare asked, bewildered and frightened.

"Uh, no," the letter replied and was silent.

"Oh. Okay." The hare opened the letter and saw something incredible! It was amazing, stupendous, wonderful! It almost made him forget about his bone disease.

It was a race to win 150,000 dollars happening in two days, which was the exact amount of cash-o-la he needed to pay off his debts! Because of this, the hare started boogying around to the song "Beethoven's 1st symphony-electric guitar remix."

The Hare knew his bone disease would give him a disadvantage, so the next morning he headed out to the training centre for the racers. He offered everyone some drinks.

"Thanks," a washing machine said.

Everyone stared.

“Oh, right, I’m not supposed to talk,” the washing machine replied, and promptly shut the heck up.

When the other racers headed home, they would become very sick thanks to the drinks. This meant that the hare only had to worry about any racers who didn’t go to the race...

The next day dawned and the Hare hopped up to the starting line. The race was about to begin and there was only one other competitor. A tortoise. Well, this should be easy, the Hare thought.

The gun fired a blank and the race began. The Hare easily surpassed the tortoise in speed, but then he came from an area surrounded by trees. He had a Vietnam flashback.

“NOOOOO- OSWALD!!!!” The Hare shouted. And he thumped to the ground crying for hours on end as the Tortoise slowly walked by.

The tortoise was almost to the finish line, when out of nowhere, The Hare hopped forward. “THIS IS FOR YOU, OSWALD! I’LL NEVER FORGET HOW GOOD OF A BOAT YOUR CORPSE WAS!”

The Hare leaped over the Tortoise... and won.

Unfortunately it turned out the race had been won by the mob, so instead of giving the Hare his money, they promptly shot him.







The Sirens Sing for Odysseus

BY CAMERON

Chapter Two

It's a bit last-minute, but since it's a four-day weekend, I've arranged for you to visit your grandfather. I haven't seen him in about a year. Suuups bad. Pack your things, we're leaving in ten minutes."

I grinned, not even daring to correct her on that abhorrent abbreviation of "super". "Yes Mum!" Racing upstairs, I looked at the checklist I had pasted above my bed: Shirts? Check. Trousers? Check. Pants? Check. Socks? Check. Notebook where I kept the music that I was working on? Check. Thesaurus, spare chest binder, and music box? Obviously.

Good to go! I shoved the things in the suitcase and peeled down the stairs. Seconds away from jumping in the van, a horrible realization stopped me.

"Mum! Wait! I've forgotten my coat!"

She sighed, "You're wearing it."

I looked down, sheepishly seeing that she was right. "Oh."

My mother let out a short laugh; the type where she wasn't bored, but not genuinely amused either. "Just get in the car."

And get in the car I did. We drove the six hours in what was basically silence, save for the sounds of me fidgeting in the backseat.

When we arrived at the farmhouse, Mum parked the van and a cloud of dust blew up at the crunch of the wheels on gravel. Scrambling to undo my buckle, I burst out of the vehicle. "Grandad!"

His kind chuckle could be heard across six lanes of traffic and he smelled very much not of cabbage as I pressed myself into his arms. "Good to see you too, kiddo." He made some gestures and said some muffled words, and seconds later I heard the sound of my mum peeling out of the driveway. I waited until she was gone, then slipped out of his embrace.

"Thanks," I mumbled.

"Don't mention it, son. I know you and your mother have a tense relationship. Now, I made some cookie dough for us to bake up, and there's another little trinket I've got for you inside. Come on in!"

I smiled and walked into the house with his arm around my shoulders. We'd come a long way since the visit when I was seven. Mind you, it didn't take me too long to warm up to him. One touch of the piano and I was sold.

"Can I play?"

He laughed, but shook his head, and I frowned. "In a minute," he said. "There's still that trinket for you I was talking about."

He led me upstairs to the attic, where he kept all his bits and bobs he had accumulated over the years.

See, Grandad was a traveller, and a collector at that. He had been all over the world, and never left anywhere without picking up some kind of special piece. I was kind of the same way, I suppose. I'd pick up little snippets of music, tucking them away in my notebook to eventually create a complete piece with all those polished fragments. Some fragments never got used, either, and that's alright. Logically, because music snippets come to me so often, that equals far too much music to ever fit in.

But Grandad was different, in that he never really did anything with his bits. Which, personally, I found to be odd. Why purchase things that have no practical value? It made him happy, though, so- go for it, I suppose?

"Here it is!" he said, bringing me out of my thoughts. A small rock with glasses, a cap, and a small smile drawn on sat in his hand. "I was going to give it to my son, but then I had a daughter, so I wanted my grandson to have it."

My cheeks glowed with happiness. 'Grandson.'

I loved him. He was the only one I was out as trans to yet, and he immediately used my correct pronouns, even ordering me two chest binders online. This was my Grandad, mark you. The Internet was practically his arch-nemesis.

And now he was passing down a family heirloom (probably? It was just a rock, though, so I wasn't sure), to me. His grandson.

I grabbed the pebble and threw myself into his arms. He let out a short laugh, startled, but hugged me back.

"Easy there, buddy! We've got all weekend, no need to break someone's glasses." I quickly released him and examined the rock in my hand.

"Thank you so much for this, though, really. It- it means a lot. But I do have one question," I added, and he grinned. "Ask away."

"What does it do? Like, what's it for?"

And, at that, he just winked. "You'll see. Now come on! That piano isn't going to play itself, and you want to make those cookies, don't you?"

"Well, obviously," I said, smiling. He returned the smile and turned to the door.

"Race you there!"

After a happy first day of baking (and eating) cookies, playing piano, and reading, it was finally time for bed.

"You know the routine, Grandad. Bed is eight o'clock sharp."

He sighed, defeated. "Won't ever budge on that one, will you? Well, I'll be up in a minute to tuck you in. Make sure to brush your teeth and take off your binder before going to bed."

"I've already brushed them," I said, and he grinned.

"And the binder?"

I scratched my neck. "Er, not quite yet."

His grin broke into a short chuckle. "Figured as much. Well, just make sure you get around to it."

"I will!"

"Good to hear. Now up to bed, you little scamp!" I laughed, bolting up the stairs and making my coat swish around my ankles.

"And don't you dare sleep in that heavy black coat! You'll roast!"

After taking off my binder (I wasn't budging on the coat), I laid out some clothes for the next day as usual. I proceeded to whip back the sheets and slide into bed, pulling the blanket up to my chin as my grandad entered the room.

"Hey there, buddy. You got ready quick." I nodded silently and he laughed. "Serious much?"

"Yes, I am," I responded, frowning. What an odd thing to say.

Another laugh. "Good to know. Surprised you didn't check it out a bit, you're such a curious boy."

"Er- what?" This was getting more odd by the second.

"The rock that I gave you, remember?"

Of course! I knew I had been forgetting something! "Oh, er, no, I haven't looked at it yet. No."

He frowned. What had I done wrong? "Alright then. I really think you'll like it though. Maybe take a peek in the morning."

"Alright then, I will." The smile returned to his face and he kissed me on the forehead.

"Goodnight, son. I love you."

"Goodnight, Grandad. I love you too." He started to leave the room, but stopped in the doorway.

Find Chapter Three in our Winter Zine December 2021

A photograph of a narrow path or stream winding through a dense forest of trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of orange, yellow, and red. The path is dark and reflective, possibly wet, and leads into the distance. The trees are tall and their branches are covered in leaves, creating a canopy effect. The lighting is warm, suggesting a sunny day in autumn.

*BETTER
TERRIBLE
TRUTHS, THAN
KIND LIES*

- 'Six of Crows' by Leigh Bardugo

EQUALITY IN SPORTS TEAMS

BY KAT



In my school and outside of school, if you want to join a sports team, there is almost no doubt your only options will be a ‘Girls’ team or a ‘Boys’ team. Some teams will be co-ed, but the majority will not. As a non-binary person, and someone who knows a lot of my school’s transgender and gender non-conforming students, this fact is very unsettling.

For one thing, let’s look at what the Greater Victoria School District has to say about the LGBTQ+ community. Well, many of their schools have GSA clubs. They make rainbow t-shirts for their staff to wear. The support visible.

But how deep does that support go? The District does have rules against discrimination and harassment. As quoted, the Gender Identity and Gender Expression policy, Policy 3405, in the Leadership section states: “Support inclusion of all students and staff in all aspects of school life (academic, social, and extracurricular), and enable the free and full expression of their gender identity.” Now, I just wonder, how can the district say that they support their trans and gender non-conforming students when they limit their students to only ‘Girls’ or ‘Boys’ teams?

When I went to basketball sign ups, the teacher there told us that if you don't identify as a girl or a boy, you can simply choose which team you want to be on. If you want to be on the 'Girls' team, join the girls. If you want to be on the 'Boys' team, join the boys. We even had the choice of noncompetitive and competitive teams. But let's just think about that for a minute. For one thing, if there are noncompetitive teams, why gender the teams at all? It's noncompetitive, meaning all the arguments about separating people by the bodies they were born in, because male bodies are typically stronger than female bodies, are unjust. Then you might wonder, is there really any point in separating teams based on which body you were born in if they let transgender students on which ever team they want? It seems a bit contradictory.

But aside from trans students, what about other students who just want to be on the same team as their friends? Maybe it's too radical to ask for all co-ed teams, but I propose there should be at least one co-ed team per grade for each sport. This will also support those who want to be on the same team as their peers, regardless of gender. If we're being honest, changing the gender policies doesn't affect the sports themselves. However, it does create a safer environment for everyone.

To conclude this article, I'm going to leave you with one question:

If we have teams of students born in all different bodies and the District says they want to support their students, why are the teams still divided the way they are?





MOCKINGJAY AS THE SUPERIOR HUNGER GAMES NOVEL

BY MAISHA

**Why Mockingjay is my favorite Hunger Games book
(and why Katniss isn't "weak" in it).**

Last summer, I read The Hunger Games series by Suzanne Collins for the first time. It was the first young adult series I read. I loved all three of the books (and the prequel) but my favorite of them all was Mockingjay, and after I finished the series, I went onto Goodreads, because I love to read book reviews. Of the original series, Mockingjay has the lowest average rating, which surprised me. As I read the reviews, several things stood out to me as being things that multiple reviewers complained about. I want to break that down in this essay, and share my thoughts on all of it, and why I thought that Mockingjay was the best book of the series.

Firstly, the thing that stood out the most to me in the reviews was that people said that Katniss, as a main character, had changed. They said that she wasn't being strong, she was weak, she had turned into a puppet, she was whiny, she was moody...the list goes on and on. This bothers me for several reasons.

First of all, Katniss went through a huge amount of trauma throughout the first two books.

Her father had been killed, forcing her to support her family by herself at the age of twelve, she had been through the Hunger Games (twice!), had her boyfriend captured and tortured by the Capitol, had received death threats for herself and her family by the president, and had witnessed the deaths of several people she loved and cared about. All of these events would have been extremely traumatic. And yet, after all that, Katniss still became the Mockingjay, she still helped the rebellion, still realized the true nature of President Coin and put an end to her. And after it was all over, she still went on. She built a new life for herself. No, it wasn't a happy ending all tied up with a ribbon. But it wasn't hopelessly dark, either. It was bittersweet.

The depression, PTSD, and anxiety that Katniss deals with in Mockingjay doesn't make her weak. Those are all natural, expected responses to trauma, especially the amount of trauma Katniss was dealing with. That is why it makes me feel so irritated when people say that Katniss wasn't as "exciting" or "strong" in the last book. She was dealing with a huge amount of trauma.



The author could have pushed that aside and simply made the book an action story, but she didn't. She chose to show the truth: nobody can come out of a situation like Katniss's without scars. They might manifest in different ways than hers did, but they will still be there.

Maybe part of the reason why I loved *Mockingjay* so much was because I connected with it. I read the book coming out of an incredibly difficult time in my life, and while what I had been through was nothing compared to what Katniss had been through, it was still hard. I felt shockingly similar to Katniss at times.

One quote in particular stood out to me, although I can't fully explain why:

'I spring up, upsetting a box of a hundred pencils, sending them scattering around the floor.

"What is it?" Gale asks.

"There can't be a cease-fire." I lean down, fumbling as I shove the sticks of dark gray graphite back into the box.

"I know." Gale sweeps up a handful of pencils and taps them on the floor into perfect alignment.

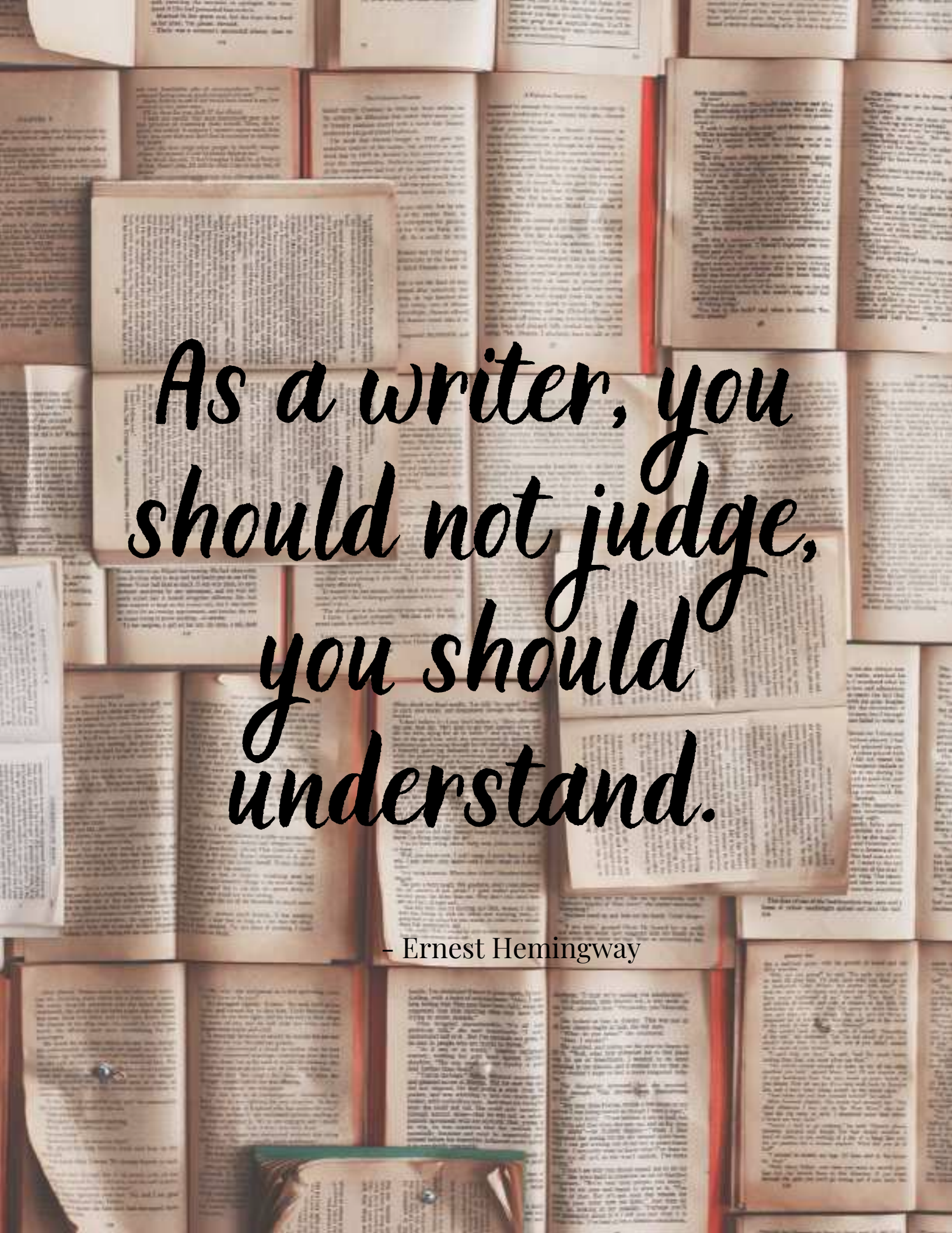
"Whatever reason Peeta had for saying those things, he's wrong." The stupid sticks won't go into the box and I snap several in my frustration.

"I know. Give it here. You're breaking them to bits." He pulls the box from my hands and refills it with swift, concise motions.'

To this day I don't know why that quote resonated with me so much. Maybe it's because out of all the different things I was feeling, I felt out of control. Something, very subtle, in the writing, hints that Katniss is feeling out of control too. 'I lean down, fumbling as I shove the sticks of dark gray graphite back into the box.' It may just be my interpretation of the writing and of Katniss's emotions. But certainly, I felt out of control. I was afraid of losing myself to my emotions. I felt like Katniss, frantically stuffing pencils back in their boxes. For whatever reason, that little paragraph is the part of the book that spoke the loudest to me.

To me, *Mockingjay* is a powerful depiction of trauma and healing. It is easy to understand why it might not appeal to readers of the original two books. It's not nearly as much of an action book. The primary conflict in the book is no longer Katniss battling the Capitol; instead, it is Katniss battling herself.

In summary, I believe *Mockingjay* is the best out of the three Hunger Games books. I applaud it for not shying away from some hard subjects, and being truthful about the effect violence has on those who experience it. It is a beautiful, bittersweet reminder that it is possible, although not easy, to learn to cope with and move on from trauma.



As a writer, you
should not judge,
you should
understand.

- Ernest Hemingway

Issue Two
Contest Winner:
Cathy

Just when I thought I'd get out of there alive...

I heard a crack of a tree branch. Something or someone was near, and we had to get out of there quickly.

"Mabel!" I shouted frantically. "We need to get out."

She looked at me with a concerned look and nodded. Her eyes were full of determination and willpower. If I were to get out of this cavern I'd fallen into, we had to act fast. There was no time to wander around. Anything, especially those ominous enhanced spiders everyone was rumouring about, could come out at any second and gobble me up.

"I have a piece of rope," Mabel murmured. "Catch."

A piece of rope landed swiftly near my feet. I reached for it, and it was only a few meters away. Just as I swung my arms to catch it, it was gone. I looked up, only to find the scariest sorceress alive looking at me with a sinister smile. I trembled as she gazed at me, staring down at me with her beady eyes. They held no emotion, and that made me feel as though she was planning to make me into stew, like everyone said they would. But I wouldn't let that happen. I wouldn't let Mabel down.

A high-pitched shriek bellowed around me. Mabel, I thought.

I looked up, only to find a witch over Mabel with a trash bag. I saw them take out a bottle, a glass bottle. No, I wanted to scream. Don't you dare do that to my best friend.

But before I knew it, darkness overcame me, and I could see no more.



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Opportunity!
Ages 13-18

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Submission are open to all Canadian residents ages 13-18.
Submit your piece of writing by emailing info@storystudio.ca by
November 30th 2021.

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Submit a poem, scene, short story, comic or other piece of writing of a maximum of 2000 words.

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Deadline: November 30th 2021

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