

GUILD OF YOUNG WRITERS



BOOK REVIEWS

SHORT
STORIES

POETRY

A collection of writing and
creativity by local youth

**EXCLUSIVE
FIRST EDITION**

WINTER 2021

Story Studio Writing Society is located on the traditional territories of the **WSÁNEĆ** 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), **WJOLELP** (Tsartlip), **BOKEĆEN** (Pauquachin), **MÁLEXEŁ** (Malahat), **WSÍKEM** (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 programming and publications create a safe, welcoming and engaging environment for all people, including Indigenous peoples.

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A Message from the Editor



Rebecca Ruiter is the program coordinator and facilitator for Story Studio Writing Society. She runs the Guild of Young Writers program, supporting participants throughout weekly meetings, and provides new opportunities for young writers to share and learn.

Story Studio is an award-winning Victoria-based charity that inspires, educates and empowers youth to become great storytellers, transforming lives and strengthening communities. Since 2010, we have delivered innovative, 'fun-first' workshops to almost 10,000 youth, improving their narrative capacity and encouraging a life-long engagement with literacy and the arts.

I am honored to introduce the 'Guild of Young Writers', a unique online community that we've created that's designed to support and encourage young writers (ages 12-17.) The pilot program engaged 20 youth from across the province during the summer of 2020, as a collaboration with the Greater Victoria Public Library. Participants then requested that the summer program be turned into a permanent community: a place to nurture and support young writers.

So we did! Now, each month participants participate in a range of online activities, all free of cost: Writers' Cafe drop-in sessions for peer support with their writing; guest presentations from authors, illustrators, and other professionals; writing challenges and contests and more. Each quarter, we create a digital anthology of participants writing, to celebrate and share their accomplishments. The first anthology, 'Tapestry of Dreams' is currently available for download on our website. In providing more opportunities for the writers to share their work, we have created our first digital Zine!

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Damien

BY KIRA

My eyes fill with tears. I look down. This was expected, but in the moment- it's so much worse. No one deserves to have- this. Never this.

One by one, my people fall to their knees. Their voices ring throughout the hall, echoing off the vaulted ceilings. "Praise be to her! Glory to our saviour!" No one here is anything but jubilant. No one but me. No. No. What I did was of evil, as evil as those I tore apart. Don't praise me. Don't love me. Don't shower me with gifts. I don't deserve it.

Only when the king enters does the cheering stop. Everything goes still, a moment made of crystal, poised to shatter well before its time.

He comes to stand by my side, and lifts one of my fists high above my head. His chin lifts, a practiced smile coming onto his face. "This," he says, voice strong and proud, "is the girl who saved our kingdom. Who defeated the demons that have been plaguing us for generations. Who, despite all the danger she faced, prevailed and returned to us a saviour. Maia of the Skies, ladies and gentlemen!" He looks at me, waiting. "Go on," he murmurs.

My smile threatens to crack, but I say the words anyways, like they want me to. "Let the feasting begin!"

Everything comes back a hundred times louder than it was just minutes before. People seem to be screaming their praise, toasting me with over-filled goblets of wine. Servants move through the crowd with practiced ease, keeping the celebration going long past midnight. But finally, it ends. Turning, I leave the hall to find some solitude. But as much as I long for it, I know I won't find it. After all, he is always there, he is always watching.



As I open the door to my room, his voice drifts out from the darkness.

"My dear, are you done?"

"Damien."

"Yes?"

"You knew I never wanted this."

"And yet you begged me for the chance to defeat them. You would have given me your soul, if that's what I desired."

I inhale sharply. "Damien."

"You can't lie to me, remember? I know. I always know."

I move from lamp to lamp, lighting them until their glow bathes the room. It doesn't touch him, however. Instead, it wraps around him, wreathing him in darkness.

Perched at the foot of my bed, Damien smiles mockingly. It's not something I can see- it's a feeling. Him laughing at me.

"Aren't you going to respond, darling Maya?"

"No, I'm not. When you told me the price was a cage I thought-" My voice breaks.

"Ah, so that's the problem." He pauses. "You thought that I meant it literally."

"Yes," I snap. "I thought you meant it literally. I thought you meant I'd be locked up for eternity."



"But aren't you?"

His words give me pause. I'll be remembered for what I've done until the world falls apart. Not just anyone can take the darkness and break it in two. Not just anyone can face the monsters that lurk in dark corners without fear. Anyone who can will-

"Will be remembered," I whisper.

"It's a cage in of itself, is it not? You'll be remembered for what you've done, not who you are. Friends might be foes in disguise. Everyone will watch you, at all times, no matter where you are or who you're with. You're caged, Maya. You'll see."

"I do already." My voice is raw with the fear that comes of sudden realization.

You've seen but a sliver of what awaits you. This is just the beginning." Shadows dance around him, wreathing him in darkness.

"You made a deal with the dark. And the dark takes what it wants from you."

Without another word, he disappears. No bang or flash of light, just... gone. Just like any chance I had of escape.

I fall to my knees, suddenly sobbing. It hits me then, what the cost has become.

It's so much more than just being bound. I will never be forgotten. Even if I leave, if I disappear for good, I'll be remembered.

Why? Why did I want this? Why did being caged seem like nothing? I was a fool to deal with the darkness. Now I'll never be free. Ever. Tears come faster, fall harder. My ceremonial robes are splattered with drops that bleed through to my skin.

"Damien! Come back! Please! I'll do anything. Just let me go free. Please."

He's back in part now, I can feel it. "You know that's impossible. Once the bond is sealed, it's over." And then he's gone again, this time for good.

My nails dig into my thighs, sharp points of pain that help me stay grounded. "No. This can't be happening." Hot tears stream down my face. "Not now, not after all I've been through." My emotions are flaring bright, brighter than before.

A strangled scream comes from somewhere and nowhere and the darkness is suffocating but so is the light and I'm breaking. Breaking into a million white-hot pieces that will burn whatever they touch. I can feel the cage's bars pressed up against me even though it's not there and I'm screaming and screaming and screaming. I'm going to die this time. The cage has me and there's nowhere to go and I'm dying. Their voices are playing in my head and it's closing in and I'm dying.

"She did it. Maya of the Skies, ladies and gentlemen, the champion of darkness and rider of light!" The announcer, a mouse of a man, proclaims this to the crowd with gusto. "You saved my family. Thank you so much. I'll never forget what you've done." A tall young man with dark hair and dark eyes. He smiles at me.

"I want to be like you when I grow up." A little girl, not even ten years old clutching her doll. Her voice is soft, insistent.

"You're amazing. An inspiration to all of us." An old couple, arms around each other's waists. They view me with pride, as one if I were their daughter.

Their words cut into me, so deep I think I'll never recover. I'm shaking, so hard I might fly apart at any moment. Quietly, I sob. And as I do, the bars grow more pronounced, more real. When I reach out to touch them, my hand can rest against it. It's real.

It's real.

The cage is real. It's real and I'm really trapped and my future is even more certain.

I am a girl, the girl, and it's over.

This is my future.

It's over.

I curl in on myself, unable to still my breathing or stop my tears. The feeling of panic is receding but... I'm gone. The girl who wanted to be remembered has disappeared, replaced by a memory. Never again will I feel like I did before, I know it. Nothing can be the same after this.

I've been caged. Not even against my will, I wanted it and it happened. The price of ridding the world of one more type of darkness was well worth the price. As much as I can pretend that I did it for others... I wanted fame. I wanted glory. I wanted to be wanted, to be remembered, to be loved. It's only now, after having seen the cage truly, do I want to escape.

But I can never escape. Ever.

This is it.

The room is still brightly lit, but it feels cloaked with darkness. The cage has stolen everything from me, even the light.

This is it.

My breath comes quick and sharp. I've begun to accept my fate, now, and that nothing can change it. That I'm stuck with this reality- I'll be remembered, revered.

"I'm in a cage. I'm in a cage. I'm in a cage." My voice is soft, harsh. "This is it. I'll never escape. I'm in a cage."

Distantly, I realize that I'm bleeding. My legs are marked with little half moons, running with blood. A few are crusted over, but most are shining ruby red.

I look at my hands. My fingers are stained with red, my palms coated with flaking dried blood. Revulsion fills me, and I cry out, turning away from what I've done to myself.

Eventually, I rise to my feet and stumble across the room to where the bathroom is.

There's a sink in there, I get it off of me. I have to get it off of me. As I look in the mirror, however, everything comes undone once more. My eyes are rimmed with red and shine like twin stars. My cheeks are tearstained, my hair wild.

I look like a being from a nightmare, something otherworldly and strange. As I look more closely, I can see the faint outline of a cage around me, like an aura. It looks like ghostly smoke, glowing faintly in the darkness. As I reach to touch the bars, my hand goes through them.

I swallow a scream.

It feels like my hand was drenched with icy cold water, so cold that my arm feels like it's on fire, so cold that I can't move for so long. Too long.

I snatch at a cloth, and bring my hand back in, trying not to cry. As I look for damage, I see nothing. My skin is smooth, unblemished. But when I feel my arm, it's as cold as death.

Trying to keep myself from panicking, I start to clean my legs. Methodically, swiping the cloth over one patch of skin, then the next. It's soon stained with blood, but my legs are clean. I toss the cloth to the side, not caring about where it lands. My feet carry me to bed as memories of the parade start to play through my head.

People smiling and cheering like their lives depend on it. Flowers falling from the sky, gold coins showering the poor. The king and queen stand on either side of me, waving at everyone. We're not moving yet, just waiting. The queen whispers to me, "Isn't this incredible, Maya? There's nothing like the crowd, seeing people cheer for you."

My already fake smile grows brittle. "No, nothing like it. It's... wonderful."

Leaning in close, the king smiles, but it doesn't reach his eyes. "This isn't the last time you'll have this, either. They love you, my dear. You saved them."

I bow my head and fake a blush, trying to hide how uncomfortable I am. Though I begged Damien to let me be remembered, I didn't think that I'd be... famous. It's an awful feeling, having everyone know you. It's like you're onstage, expected to perform. You have a part to play and can't mess up, or everything will be ruined. A sudden hush falls over the crowd. A man steps forward from the crowd of politicians to the left. His voice is deep and proud. "Ladies and gentlemen, everyone here today, you know why you're here. To celebrate a girl who saved our kingdom, our very world, from destruction. She took darkness by its throat and killed it. She killed it, and brought the light back to us. May I present to you, Maya of the Skies!"

People are screaming, cheering, crying my name. As the procession begins, voices reach a fever pitch.

My heart is pounding, it feels like it's going to beat out of my chest. Double, triple what it normally does. My smile feels fake, plasticky. Nothing is right in the world, not with me, not with anyone. They're making a mistake. I don't deserve this, I shouldn't have this, I made a deal with the very thing I wanted to defeat to get to this place.

What would they say if they knew? Would they hurt me, or ignore the dark in favour of light? What would I do if they did? No. No. The man has a medal. He's walking towards me.

No. No. No. He's smiling, saying something. What is he saying? No. Everyone is looking at me, staring at me. I didn't want this, didn't mean for this to happen. My thoughts come in a flurry, too quick to pin down.

Damien, why did you do this to me?

Damien, why did you hide the truth?

Damien, am I as dark as those I killed? Damien, what does this mean for me, to be remembered?

The man places the medal over my neck and shouts something to the crowd. The cheers grow in intensity and I feel like I'm about to faint. The overwhelming combination of emotions and sensations is just about enough to undo me. But I stay together, as the crowd desires. Only once it's over do I fall apart.

I wake up curled in on myself, gasping for breath. My gaze darts around the room, hunting for the crowd that had been watching me just moments before. But my room is quiet, undisturbed. The lanterns went out at some point during the night, leaving it cold and dark, except for a sliver of moonlight through the curtains. It brightens the room, just a little. But the stark reality of what I've done comes crashing back. The bars, misty and pale in the darkness, surround my body. When I reach out to touch them, they feel cold. Empty.

"This is my cage. Not one made of metal and a desire for control, but one of expectations and unexpected responsibility. Freedom is something I didn't even know I had before- this. And now... it's gone, like a breath of wind." My voice sounds hollow. "I remember, when I was younger, I was never afraid. Not of falling apart, not of being broken, not of anything. I was happy and able to float through the worst of the darkness. There were friends to make me smile, family to help me grow. And I loved them. I loved them.

"Then came growing up, trying to find my place in the world. Friends could turn bitter in a second, never to care again. I tried to find them, follow them, care for them, but it never worked.

"And here I am now, grown up without a moment's notice, losing the one thing which I always needed but never thought about until today.

"I'm caged, now. Broken, now. This is the end, I think. The end of my story." My eyes squeeze shut and I hug my knees to my chest.

"Damien? Are you there?"

Silence.

"Damien, I want you to know one thing."

Silence.

"Stories can't continue when someone is trapped without end. They can't keep going if there's no hope for escape. Nothing fuels a story more than possibility. And Damien?"

"Yes?"

"You took that from me."

Dragon

A short story
by Jakob



"No more," they said simply, dropping their sword.

"Knight, you shall do as you are told," the general ordered.

"I won't kill a living creature who has done nothing wrong," the knight responded, shaking in fear.

The general smirked. "For the life of me, I'll never figure out your morals, knight. In the battle of elverflynn, you killed at least 20 people."

"General, they had killed countless others. They had been touched by evil forces and became a mockery of their old selves. There was no way to save them, other than by destroying them and ending their suffering."

"Hm," the general responded, staring at the massive troop of knights and archers that stood before them. "This dragon has eaten countless crops. Many people are starving." The knight flinched. Generals like Kann would use any excuse to kill a dragon. The crop had been bad this year anyway, and it was mostly weasels and finks and other small creatures that ate the crops.

Because killing a dragon- or leading a troop that could kill one- would grant you fame and glory. And of course, they'd be the one to do it. Nobody else had been granted the Golden Armour of the Phoenix from the Phoenix monks. Nobody else had been entrusted with protecting the land from evil forces.

If attacked, the dragon would decimate all the armour on everyone in a matter of seconds. Except the Golden Armour of the Phoenix. The knight's choice would change everything, as getting the Golden Armour of The Phoenix was a life-changing event. The knight remembered when they had gotten the armour.

They had been training for a long time, and they beamed with pride as the Phoenix monks handed them the armour. But there was one last test. The armour was as hot as the day it was forged, which was why it was unaffected by the dragons. But someone with a pure heart would not feel the heat. And when the armour was put on the knight, they did not feel the heat. And since then, they never looked back.



"If you do not do this," the general warned, "You will no longer be a knight. You will be a fugitive, a traitor, and no kingdom will accept you. Greedy people will try and find ways to take your armour from you. You will be hunted from all sides by wizards, witches, warlocks, mages, barbarians, assassins, beasts of the night and will never get a good night's rest. And this will only postpone the dragon's death. We will find another way."

"Alright, I'll find a way to prevent you from doing that," the knight responded, smirking. The knight vanished into the trees, leaving everyone else to wonder: Had they made a mistake in following the general? Had they another choice? Could they choose... the path of a new kingdom? A fresh start? A kingdom not chained by blood and hatred, and founded on the principles of love and acceptance? Or were they better off trying to fix the old kingdom? Or... should they just stay? And do nothing? Their lives were fine. The only things that could change would come from them choosing to change. Nothing was happening to them, so why should they change?

Most stayed. Few left. This would almost always be such. Almost always would the people who stayed be the majority, preferring to stick with older, more traditional, ways. Ways that would not change, even as the world was changing around them. But the few... they'd find new ways. Ways to change the world for the better. Ways that would slowly become older, but would slowly take a long time to fall under the obsolete category.

The general led his troops to kill the dragon. They couldn't find it. The dragon knew to stay away from bulky troops with weapons. But the dragon found another group, led by the knight in the Golden Armour of the Phoenix.

That knight could be you. I didn't specify age, gender, race, sexual orientation, even whether they walked on two legs or needed a wheelchair. And they could have been talking with sign language. But, remember, I also didn't specify anything about the general either.

So it's up to you to choose who you want to be. Choose wisely, for dragons like eating generals...



WHEN THE PAST DOES NOT DISAPPEAR AS EASILY AS ONE WOULD HOPE

by Kahlan

The man sat. The ground was hard. But he continued to sit. Watching me.

I went about my work, and every few seconds I glanced behind me to see if he was still watching me. He was, of course, and I would turn away and pretend I hadn't been looking at him. After a few minutes, he took out a sandwich and ate it, taking big bites. I wondered if crumbs would get stuck in his beard. It was a scruffy sort of beard, the sort you could imagine things getting stuck in.

Suddenly I was craving a sandwich. I debated asking him for half of his. It was an odd thing to ask for, and he would probably find it rude, but I hadn't eaten since last night. I was hungry. I decided to approach him, because it was about time I headed back home - it might look suspicious if I was gone for more than a couple days at a time - and I wanted to eat something before I left.

The man watched me approach. A hood covered his head, cloaking his face in shadows.

"Hi," I said, and left it at that, because I was a quiet sort of person. Not shy, but definitely quiet.

"Hello," the man replied. His voice was rough and scratchy, like he had a cold, but more likely because he was a gullarite addict. I could almost smell the sickly scent on his breath. It could have been my imagination.

"Interesting work you were doing a minute ago." It was also vaguely familiar...

"Is that a threat?" It came out harsh, but I couldn't help panicking.

"Is it?" the man just seemed amused.

"You can't turn me in. I'll tell them about you! Gullarite is just as illegal." The words slipped out before I could stop them, and I blushed. I didn't even know for sure that he was an addict.

The man guffawed. "That is true." And then he pulled out a stick of gullarite and started sucking on it.

I gaped at him.

"So shocked to see me breaking the law? You were just doing it yourself, and it seems to me you did worse than I. Sit, sit! Don't go away, please."

I sheepishly looked over at the work I had been doing. And then, because I didn't think this man who openly joined me in breaking the rules was going to turn me in, I sat on the ground beside him. The ground was hard.

"Do you want a sandwich?"

I turned to him and grinned. "Please."

He dug around in his bag and pulled one out.

"Thank you."

"Now, I think I should know the name of the girl I share food with."

"You can call me Anne."

"Is that your name?"

"I break rules. Did you expect the truth?"

"No."

"What can I call you?"

"Poe. Please."

"Is that your name?"

The man - who was possibly, but probably not Poe - ignored me. "How did you get here, Anne?"

"What do you mean?"

"Most people aren't born criminals."

"By the state of you, I'd say you've been breaking rules for at least a good portion of your life."

"I'm a special case."

"We needed food."

"Hmm?"

"That's why."

"Oh."

"Yeah." I stood up. "I should go."

"But we've just met!"

"I have to go."

"You can stay a little longer..."

"I can't!"

He grabbed my wrist tightly. I was getting anxious. Something about this was very wrong. I took a step back, ripping my hand from his grasp.

"Where are you going, Anastasia?"

"You-how?!"

And then he pulled off his hood. I gasped. He was back.

Poetry



ELANA



ROSE BLANCHE

*Tell me the story of a girl who stitched her way from hell and kept sewing,
Tell me the story of the girl who ran for forever and kept going.
Tell me the story of that silhouette on the bow of that ship,
A baby at her hip,
Who jumped out a window to cast her vote vote in a dreamed-up-land,
Who ran to the ends of this earth to understand, yet never could.
Tell me the story of a fighter with a name masked in peace,
Tell me the story of every million of us missing a piece,
Tell me the story of the screams at three am,
Tell me the story of broken windows and bruises,
shadows without candle flames to mend them,
Tell me the story of hands pressed against bars,
Tell me the story of fingers wrenched from ours.
Tell me the story of every answer you can't give,
Tell me the story of every life she never lived.
Tell me every story that lies to this day untold,
Tell me the story of her children grown old.
All we see is a barbed wire fence and a fallen flower,
Stem split down the ends,
Petals muddied and bloodied.
"The white rose," she whispers,
And that night, my dreams are haunted by bones.*

TRUTH

Truth is the thing that stares you in the face.
Truth is the thing that keeps you rooted in place.
Truth is the thing you don't want to know.
Truth is the thing you try to show.
Truth is the thing that breaks you.
Truth is the thing that wakes you anew.
Truth is the thing you try hard to forget.
Truth is the thing you can never bet.
Truth is the thing you seek every day.
Truth is the thing that gets in your way.
Truth is the thing you fear.
Truth is the thing you hold dear.
Truth is the thing you try to hide.
Truth is the thing that you disguise.
Truth is the thing that comes to you in the dark of night.
Truth is the thing you try hard to fight.
Truth is the thing that brings you light.





FALLRIDGE

Fantasy Worldbuilding

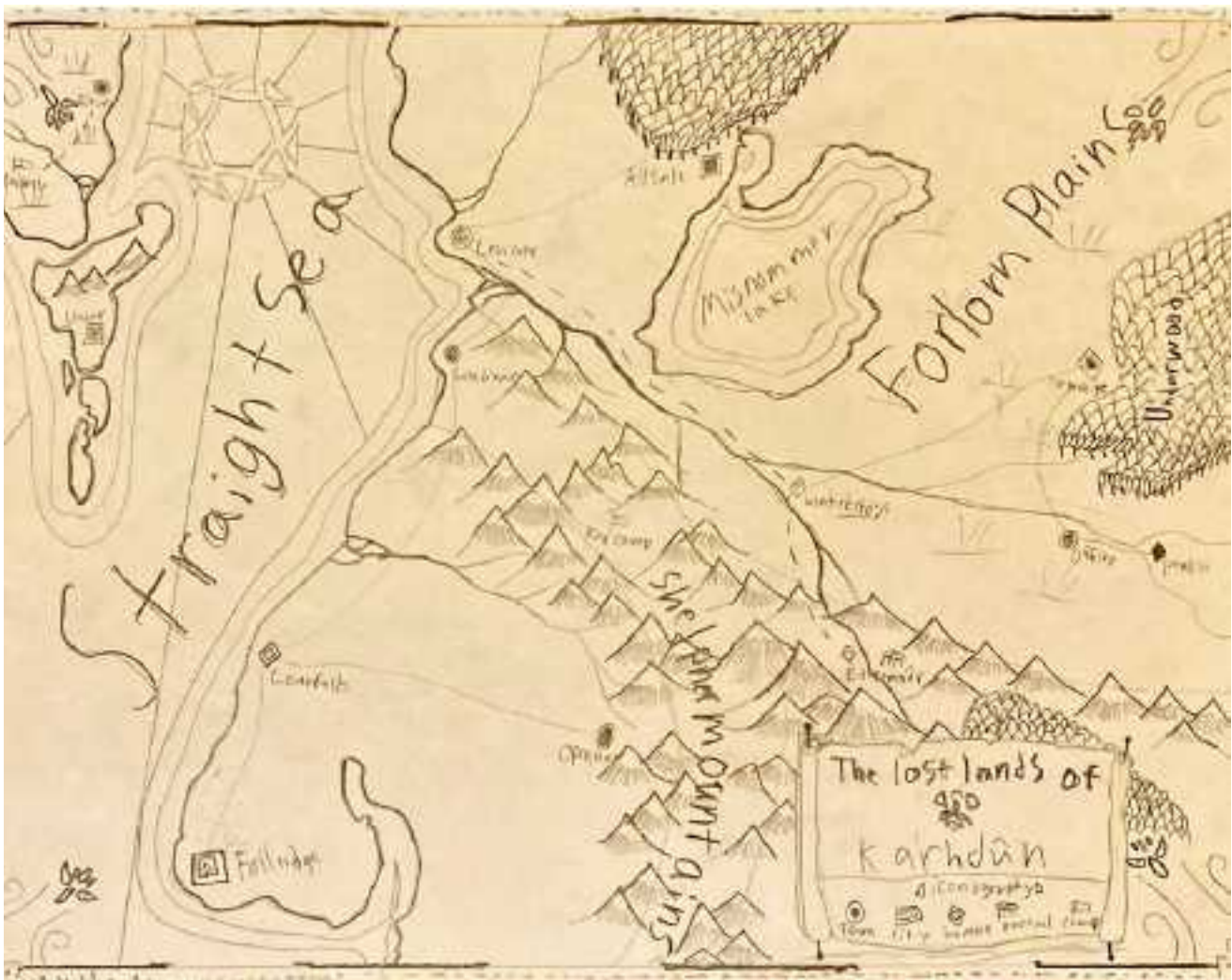
By Nikolai

Fallridge is a large city with a population slightly more than ten thousand. Minus the everyday subtraction due to the following explanation...

* * *

It was rumoured that in the shadiest part of the city, the Darklandes as it was called, the sun never shone. But this is unrealistic because the sun shone elsewhere in this area. It was, however, true that the sun shines reluctantly there because if it shines too bright it might get stolen. The mages have pondered this, as have the savants, inventors and artificers but they could never figure out why this area was the worst. The rogues had plenty of better places to choose from: the docks, the abandoned sheds, or even the main street. But it was here they chose.

The police warden walked down the busiest street in town. To find crime here all he had to do was open his eyes, but sadly those were closed so that he could avoid crying. Tears for all of the coins he had lost already to the vast crime population of the city. No one paid attention to his status as an officer. The thieves outnumbered him by the dozen.



The trick to being a watch officer in a big city is that you have to not let the crime lords know that they outnumber you. Then you let the crime lords outcompete each other. The hordes here were just too hard to keep under control. Not anywhere else in the city were there as many crooks, swindlers, blackmailers, thieves, and any other synonyms of those. It was beyond control, but the man was in a rush.

This was the reason for the richness of the city. The marauders and swindlers took in goods from merchants. Thieves took it from there, with the fewer crime lords taking the gold in the end. This was more or less the hierarchy of swindling in this city. To say that you are a trader from Fallridge basically means pickpocket. This officer took to hiding his true identity, for if he didn't, there was no telling what these people would do to innocent police. Then again, there are no innocent people in Fallridge.

The watch officer made it to the gates. A guard met him and saluted in the odd kind of way that people tend to do when they hope they are doing it right, but don't have much faith. The young officer looked up at the chief. "Is it true that your life passes before your eyes before you die?" he asked.

"I'm not sure," said the officer. "But you have my permission to ask anyone who comes through this gate."

* * *

A trader entered the far side of the city. A guard said to him, "Hold up, buddy, who are you? Where do you come from, and what are you here to do?"

"I am a trader," said the trader.

The gatekeeper was immediately on his guard. "Hey, that is really serious, we'll have to escort you to the city center, just to make sure you're not importing dangerous goods."

"Alright, but you can check my load? I have no weapons, poisons, potions or otherwise destructive material."

The guard's eyebrows were raised so high that they were very nearly peeling off his face. Not to say that wouldn't be an improvement. This man's face was most comparable to an ape's. Probably human anyway.

"There is no account for that in the book, sir, it just says that if a trader comes to the city, to just ask if they are honest, then haul them off to the jail. There is no cause for an honest trader."

"Really?" the trader put on an amused expression. "Well, there will be when I am done with you, just not one for living guards!"

"Do you happen to know if someone's life passes before their eyes before they die?" asked the guard, getting back into the swing of things.

"Actually, yes, it takes quite a long time though."

The guard was taken aback. He was used to people saying no, and him answering in the most menacing of voices that they would soon. "Really?" he asked.

"Oh yes, the process is called living." Then the trader slipped off into the city before the guard could stop him.

* * *

Impossible. There was no room for movement. The tension simply wouldn't allow it. The assassin crept ever closer to the bed. Swiftly and silently the dagger struck down and hit the lump on the engraved and impressive bedstead.

The lights sprang on, a dull penetrating glow. It made the assassin's eyes open wide up. The pillow was torn open on the bed, spewing fluff everywhere. It was a chaotic scene. "We have deemed you fit! Five marks out of five!" Boomed a voice from the ceiling.

The king looked down from his work. The reason being, a mage had turned the room upside down and inside out.

“Would you care to reverse the improper gravity, Lady Liera, archmage of Karrendurn, healer of the despised dragon?” asked the king.

“Yes, of course, Lord Darrein of the lost realms, ambassador of the impossible frenzy, improbable obstructor of enemies close and far, master of the nine winds, creator of the world as we know it, the knowledgeable savant of the eight lands unforetold!” The room flipped around.

A few minutes later a messenger ran into the hall. “Lord Darrein of the lost realms, ambassador of the improbable landslide, forlorn obstructor of enemies close and closer, controller of the nine winds, the knowledgeable savant of the eight worlds unforetold! There was a dragon of fearsome legend at the edge of the kingdom! The Duke there warns to send help immediately!”

“Again?” was the king’s immediate response.

But the mage broke in with, “Actually, It’s: Lord Darrein of the lost realms, ambassador of the impossible frenzy, improbable obstructor of enemies close and far, Master of the nine winds, creator of the world as we know it, the knowledgeable savant of the eight lands unforetold!”

“But I thought it was: Lord Darrein of the improbability symptom, destroying of the stupid barbarians, improbable helper of enemies close and far, servant of the nine winds, breaker of the world as we know it, the stupid savant of the eight lands unforetold!”

They all three looked at each other and the king sighed, “You can call me Bob,” he said. “It was my first name before all this nonsense came in about my titles.”

* * *

The central city monastery was made the year B.C.180 000 000 000 000 from a lump of clay and some straw, all of which have been stolen. The monks mostly just hung around outside and prayed to their god for better clothing and lodgings.

It is possible for there to be a world in which gods are not believed, but it would be very dull. So there has been a promotion for hired believers. In addition to the actual priests. Possibly, this could make the gods mad. In which case the king would take evasive action aka the old human sacrifices to appease the gods trick.

This is now where the common folk called The Gods’ Tool Shed. It was a place that existed not only on the material plane of existence but many others besides. It was impossible not to overlook it, however, as all the remaining buildings were underground and there was no sign of it from above ground except for the outhouse reused for the purpose of providing the entrance to the under-temple. The reason for this was that all resources not taken from the lump of clay, and piles of straw were not allowed in the Inderhiom religion. They instead took resources out of the ground to make a monastery, money, and the nearby buildings have unstable foundations. They also weren’t allowed to eat peanut butter, jam, meat, bread, or any other desirable food product.

Was this god trying to lose followers?

Another thought, as going through the mind of the man in the cloak, a mis-philosopher (Someone who puts into words what everyone knows) has thought that the darkness of the underground area was helpful, as it helped the vision not see. Priests can do stuff without their gods watching them like stalkers.

* * *

Thousands of new big cities with citizens and places like this carpet every fantasy world set in the medieval period. They are important to give resources to adventurers.

TYPOS & ERRORS



By Jakob



BOOK REVIEWS FROM THE GUILD

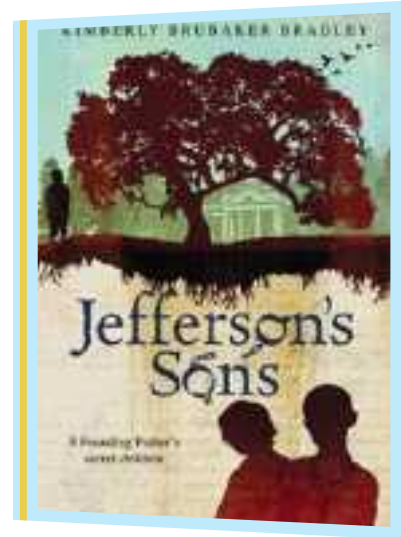
Jefferson's Sons

Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

BY MAISHA

Summary:

'Jefferson's Sons' is the fictionalized story of the children of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings. Told by three perspectives (Beverly, the oldest son, Madison, the second-youngest, and Peter, a family friend) the book covers a timespan of over 20 years, immersively telling the story of what it was like to be a secret (enslaved) child of Thomas Jefferson.



This book blew me away, for several reasons. I have read other books by this author (The War That Saved My Life, The War I Finally Won, and The Lacemaker And The Princess) and she never fails to impress me, especially in the way she handles difficult topics.

Thomas Jefferson wrote "All men are created equal," yet he enslaved hundreds of people. The book tackles this in an age-appropriate way for a middle-grade audience, exposing Thomas Jefferson's flaws without making him seem like an all-out villain.

It also manages to handle his relationship with Sally in a way that makes sure that the book remains appropriate for its middle grade audience. The characters themselves are realistic and I liked the multiple perspectives. The book also covers a time span of over 20 years, which I thought was done well, without making it seem rushed.

The book raised many interesting questions for me, and inspired me to do more research on Sally Hemings, who was a fascinating person in her own right. The author lists the resources she used at the end of the book, which I found very useful. The Monticello website has lots of information on the characters in the book, and it was amazing to be able to research the real life characters the book was based on.

The book also has an excellent historical note at the end, explaining the aspects of the book that were real, versus the parts that are fictional or had liberties taken. In conclusion, I thoroughly enjoyed this book and recommend it for people ages 11+. I think it tells an important story that is too often forgotten or missed, and ought to be known.

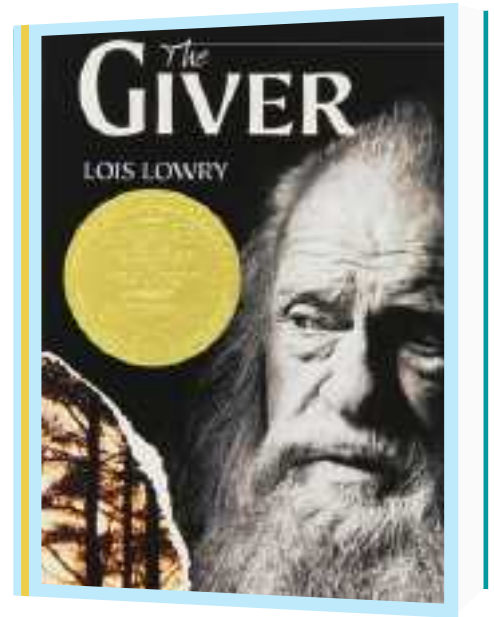
The Giver

Lois Lowry

BY JAKOB

Summary:

'The Giver' is an interesting moral story about a young boy named Jonas who lives in a futuristic world that works to free citizens of making choices by assigning parents, partners, and jobs to its citizens.



If you're an avid reader, you might have heard of *The Giver*. A dystopian novel that paved the way for *The Hunger Games* and other dystopias. Of course it goes without saying that this book caused somewhat of a controversy. Whenever something new that challenges you comes along, it's almost certain to do that. As such, *The Giver* joins the ranks of *Captain Underpants*, *Drama*, *Bone* and more as a banned book in some places. Of course, this only makes it even more of a classic! I loved the book, to be fully honest with you, and here are my spoiler-free thoughts on it: This book makes you think quite a bit. It has a slow burn to it, meaning it takes a long time for the information to get through, which I typically don't like in a book, but here I was pleasantly surprised. The world-building is fantastic, thanks partially to this. I loved the concept of a world where you're assigned your jobs, families only have a certain number of children (which are birthed by non-members of the family) and people take pills to "douse" emotions.

The book slowly changes our perceptions of reality, and it does it very well. The book is executed almost perfectly; the timing is amazing, the characters are so well done, everything is-

Hold on though. It's not perfect. Nothing is perfect. The main problem is the animals. The characters say they don't know what animals are, but some animals, like salmon, are used for food. Others are used for stuffed animals, and the main character Jonas is able to recognize different types of animals. We're never given an explanation for this. That's the only real problem I can think of.

I haven't yet read the sequels (I hope it's not the classic author-returning -a-long-time-later-to-write-unplanned-sequels-to-a-successfull-book-and-the-publisher- not-editing-anything-because-the-author-is-a-big-shot-now situation).

In any case, I would recommend anyone ages 10-13 read this book. It's too good to pass up. It's also a fairly short read.

I give this book... 9.5 out of 10.



Contributors

Elana

Elana is twelve years old and lives in Washington DC. She loves chocolate and poetry equally, though lately, poetry seems to be getting an edge on the chocolate part. She enjoys writing at night and spending school hours listening to Broadway musicals, along with spending way too much time in the woods near her house. Her favorite nights of the week are Tuesday and Thursday where she can goof off with the other people in the Writer's Guild, and she is very excited to continue to write and collaborate with them for as long as she can.

Currently Reading: Forest Born by Shannon Hale

Jakob

Jakob is an avid writer, reader, and dreamer whose dreams are constantly changing. Sometimes he wants to be a novelist. Sometimes a comic writer. Sometimes a YouTuber. But for now, he's doing fine just making his way through life. He lives in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

Currently Reading: Son (Book 4) The Giver Quartet by Lois Lowry

Kahlan

Kahlan is a great lover of stories (making them and enjoying them), nature, learning (about pretty much anything), Broadway, and chickens. She hopes to spend her life making the world a better place while reading and writing and living in a cute old house in the forest.

Currently Reading: Bury Your Dead - Chief Inspector Gamache Series by Louis Penny

Kira

My name is Kira, which means both dark and light- a theme I try to bring into all of my writing. At fourteen years old, I've 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.

Currently Reading: The Guilded Ones by Namina Forna

Maisha

Maisha is fourteen years old and has been writing stories and poetry since she was eight. She is currently working on completing a novel, and writing more poetry. Besides writing, she loves to read, sing, do musical theatre, play music, bake, and research history! History inspires her and is the basis for many of her stories, even ones that are set in fantasy worlds. She doesn't know what she would do if she could do anything, but seeing a Broadway musical and travelling through Europe are top contestants. One day, she hopes to be a writer and a famous Broadway actor who writes her own musicals.

Currently Reading: Legend by Marie Lu and Spin The Dawn by Elizabeth Lim

Nikolai

My name is Nikolai, I'm twelve years old and have achieved nothing much to date. I love cats and any book.

Currently Reading: Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" by Douglas Adams



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