

GUILD OF YOUNG WRITERS

'CREATIVITY IS A
MYTH'

BOOK
RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT
STORIES

COMIC CON

VOLUME 7

AUTUMN
2022

SUMMER REFLECTIONS

Two new anthologies coming this Fall!

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), **WJOLÉLP** (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 programing and publications create a safe, welcoming and engaging environment for all people, including Indigenous peoples.

We acknowledge the support of the CRD Arts & Culture Support Service, the City of Victoria Strategic Plan Granting Program. and our generous donors.



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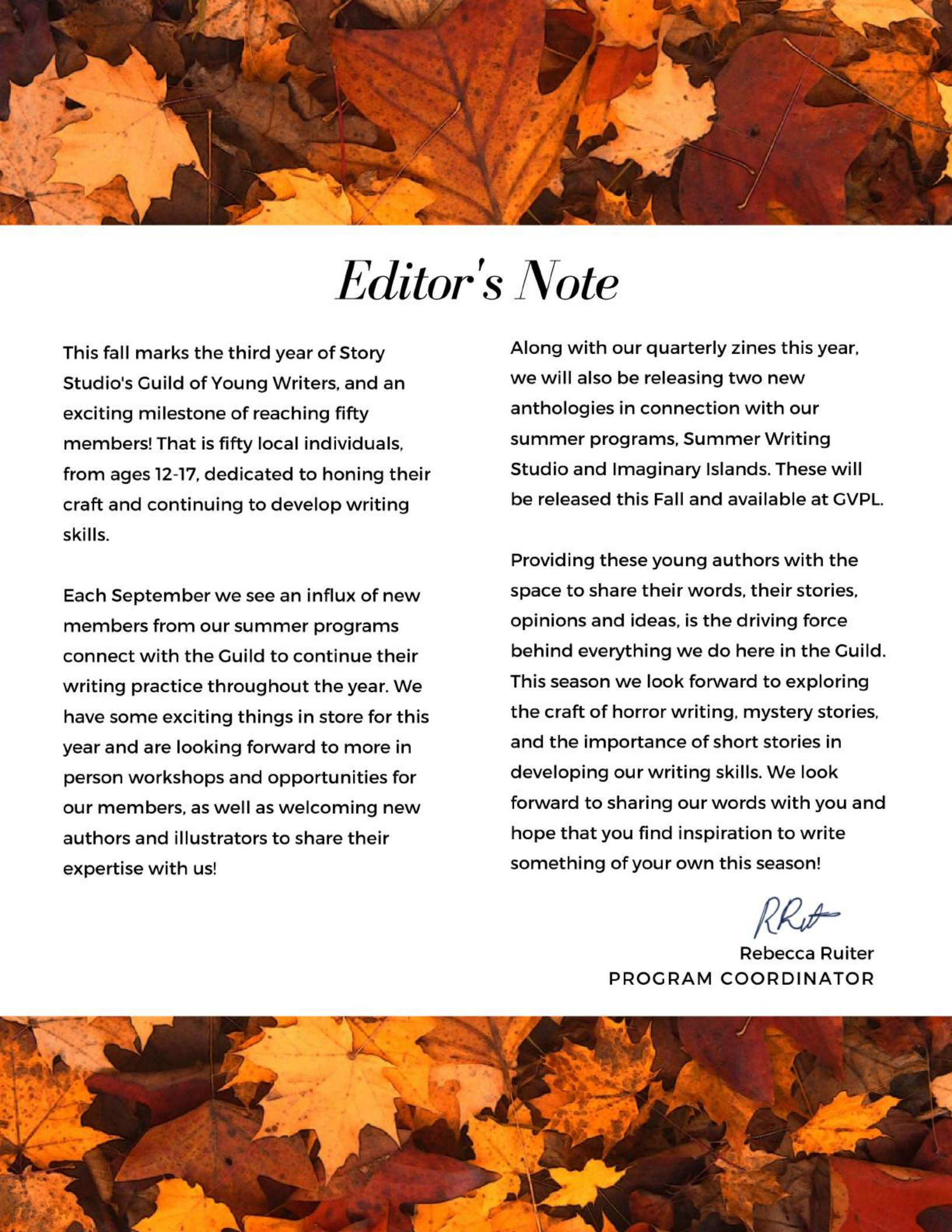
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Editor's Note

This fall marks the third year of Story Studio's Guild of Young Writers, and an exciting milestone of reaching fifty members! That is fifty local individuals, from ages 12-17, dedicated to honing their craft and continuing to develop writing skills.

Each September we see an influx of new members from our summer programs connect with the Guild to continue their writing practice throughout the year. We have some exciting things in store for this year and are looking forward to more in person workshops and opportunities for our members, as well as welcoming new authors and illustrators to share their expertise with us!

Along with our quarterly zines this year, we will also be releasing two new anthologies in connection with our summer programs, Summer Writing Studio and Imaginary Islands. These will be released this Fall and available at GVPL.

Providing these young authors with the space to share their words, their stories, opinions and ideas, is the driving force behind everything we do here in the Guild. This season we look forward to exploring the craft of horror writing, mystery stories, and the importance of short stories in developing our writing skills. We look forward to sharing our words with you and hope that you find inspiration to write something of your own this season!



Rebecca Ruiter
PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Get to know the Authors



Kira Hawthorne is a sixteen year-old scientist, writer and musician. Her first love is story, and she has spent an unreasonable amount of time reading, writing and performing stories in every form.

Lola Weinzettl is a fifteen year old who fell in love with writing when she was three. She lives in Victoria BC with her parents, sister, two cats, and her crazy puppy. Lola loves theatre, acting, tennis, circus, writing and reading. When she grows up she wants to be a published author, actor and midwife.

Abby Hawthorne is fourteen and loves to dance, sing and act and has just been in her first ever musical! She is very artistic and loves to make any art, from drawing to writing.

Bowen Stacey is fourteen years old and really loves to write and draw. He is inspired by horror and Sci-Fi genres. If he could do anything, he would go to space.

Raine Hermosa is a musician, composer & author who also been published in the Story Studio summer anthologies. Raine has written music for the Victoria Symphony, the Victoria Conservatory of Music, & he posts electronic music on his YouTube channel. His other hobbies include video games, & learning languages.

Samantha Martin is a twelve year old writer. She enjoys writing, reading, drawing, fanfictions, RPGs, TV, video games, and various other things. She hopes to one day work in the air force as a Scientist. She has always enjoyed writing so when she learned about the writers guild she was ecstatic.

Kahlan Arnold is a fifteen-year-old writer, dreamer, weirdo, and staunch feminist from Victoria. She can often be found covered in sap and sitting in a tree with a good book.



BOOK'S WE'VE READ & ENJOYED THIS SEASON

Punching the Air,

by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam

The Graces

by Laure Eve

The Witch Boy series,

by Molly Ostertag

Foreshadow

by Emily X.R Pan and Nova Ren Suma

Our Own Universe

by Robin Talley

The State of Grace

by Rachel Lucas

Confessions of a Teenage Leper

by Ashley Little

Wild Bird

by Wendelin Van Draanen

Girl on the Line

by Faith Gardner

The Lesbiana's Guide to Catholic School

by Sonora Reyes

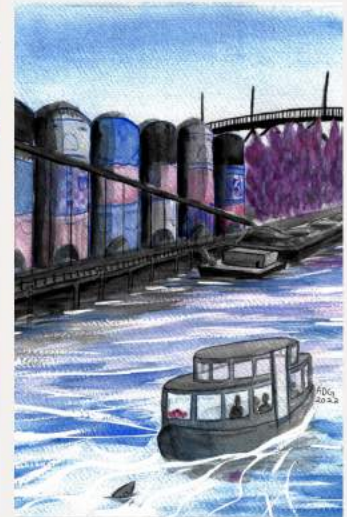
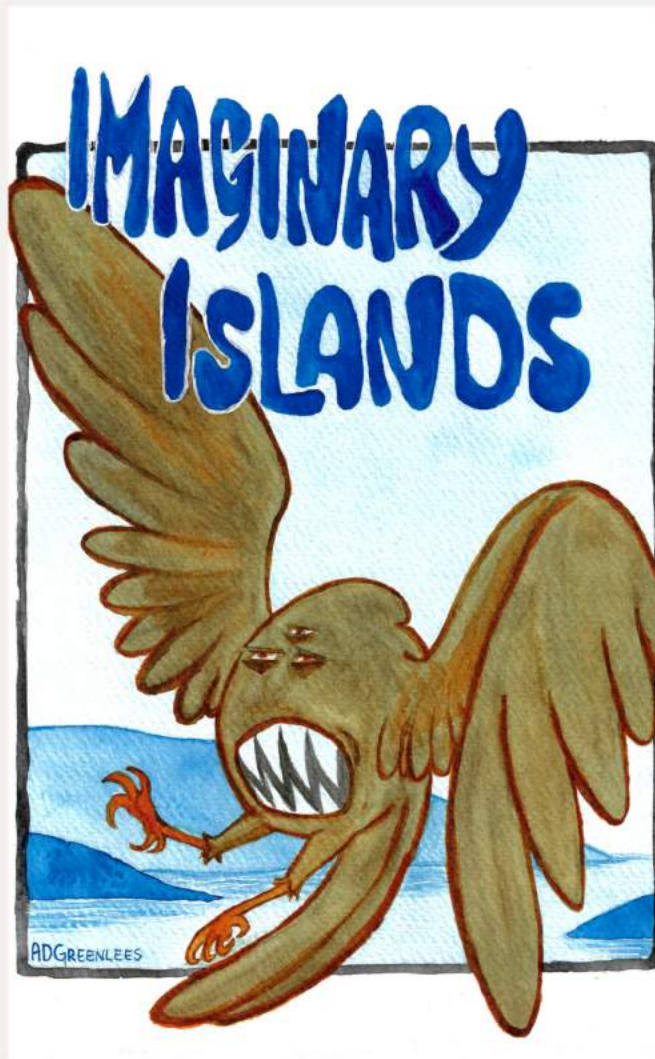
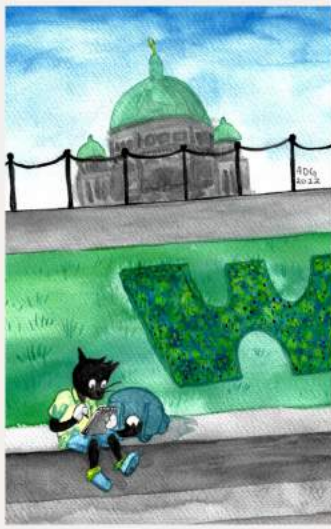


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SUMMER REFLECTIONS



Story Studio was honoured to be the Charity of Choice this year at Cap City Comic Con in Victoria! We spent the weekend surrounded by all sorts of characters and creatures; drawing, writing, creating stories and shooting Stormtroopers! Guild members volunteered to collect donations, and spread the word about Story Studio programs and anthologies. A phenomenal weekend for all!



Imaginary Islands

This summer our Imaginary Islands program took over the West Coast with magic! Writers ages 9-15 joined us in an online program over the course of 8 weeks, selecting a location along BC's coast or within the Gulf Islands, and writing the stories of this new magical land. We were joined by local illustrator Audrey Greenlees who helped us design a new map of the islands, and illustrate each of the stories written by participants.

'*Imaginary Islands*' will be published later this month, containing eleven stories taking place in popular locations across the province. The perfect mix of fantasy and fiction!

Summer Writing Studio

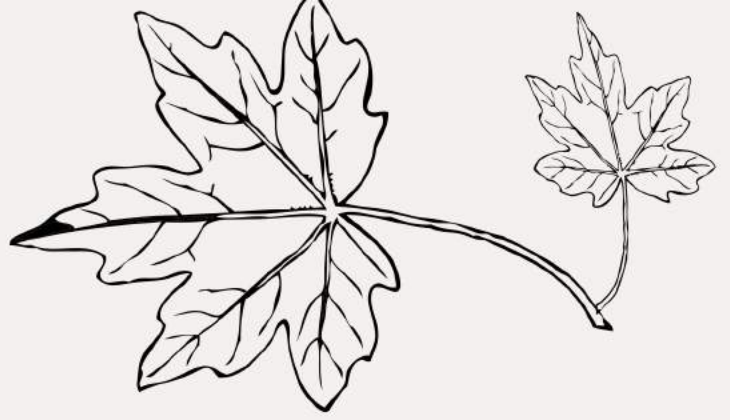
Our third year of Summer Writing Studio brought in many new and returning members! With over thirty participants this summer, this 8 week program allowed writers ages 12-17 to focus in on a writing project of their choosing. Writers were able to learn from a variety of visiting authors, receive feedback on their writing and polish a piece for publication.

This fall our anthology, '*A Glimpse Behind the Curtain*' will be available for purchase, containing twenty-five short stories and selections of writing by emerging novelists!



Infinity

BY KIRA



Notes flow from my fingers and into the keys of the piano. This isn't my song, it's his song, but I'm the only one who can play it now. It's been years since I saw him last, but the melody hasn't faded. I close my eyes as I reach the climax, lost in my memories of my brother.

The audience rises to their feet at the end of his performance, applause filling the air. I'm playing chess with him, laughing over glasses of wine. We're hugging goodbye at the airport; I'm going back to Canada and he's staying here in France. He was- is- my brother.

The last of the notes die away, fading into silence. When I open my eyes again, I see nothing but blank, gray mist. No longer am I in my kitchen, filled with warm light and birdsong. It's completely silent, here. Empty.

I stand up, looking around. "What is this place?" I pause, searching. "Hello? Is anyone there?"

"Hello, young one." Gentle words come out of the silence. I jump, startled. It sounds like a thousand voices speaking at once. I look around for some sign of the speakers, but all I can see is the same featureless gray.

"Who's there?" I call out into the mist. "What's going on? Why am I here?" I pause. "What even is here? It's like I'm in another world..."

"This is infinity."

"What?" My voice is incredulous, but I can't help it. Infinity isn't a place, it's a concept. One certainly can't travel there, not even with music.

"The place that exists out of time, that goes on without end, that houses the untouchable and infinitesimal. Infinity is the place where humankind comes together and shed their weaknesses. Where we become something more."

I laugh, disbelief evident in my tone. "... I must be dreaming. Fell asleep at the piano or something. And, anyway- if this is infinity, how did I get here?"

"Music is a gateway to worlds unlike the one you call home. Your song brought you here, young one. We think it did so with good reason."

"I just wanted to play..." My voice trails off as I look around again. This feels undeniably real, despite the unrealness of another world. I can feel my heart beating, my lungs breathing, the fear and pain building up in my throat. I didn't want this—I was just playing my brother's melody.

"Your music wanted you here. Why?" It feels like they can hear the thoughts passing through my mind. And, strangely, there's no reproach in their tone. What have I done to earn this?

"How should I know? I'm just someone playing for a person they barely remember." I blink back tears, emotions rising faster than the tide.

"You were calling out to them, weren't you? With that motif."

I glare up at the sky. "I was, not that it's any of your business. It... I was playing for my brother." I bite my lip and look down. "We fought, I lashed out, he left. I said things... I said things I regret, and I remember every single one of them. And every time I've tried to contact him, I get nothing in response." I stare hard at the featureless ground beneath my feet, trying to reign in my anger and sorrow and guilt. "Sometimes I wonder if he's right not to forgive me."

"How long ago was this?" I hear no judgement in their voice, just curiosity.

"Twenty-two years." I pause. "But it doesn't matter anymore. The police messaged me eight months ago, saying that he hadn't showed up to work one day. And the next one, and the day after that. They filed a missing person's report, but there's no sign of him anywhere. I've been looking for him ever since, but I've just about given up hope. If he hasn't turned up by now..." I shake my head, closing my eyes. "I don't know where he is."

There's no response. I stay where I'm sitting and start humming his melody under my breath.

Eventually, I open my eyes, the glimmers of an idea coming to light. Excitement fills me, lifting me up, and I can't help but half-smile with hope. "Could he be here? He's twice the musician I am, the song-that was his before it was mine. Now I just play it for him. If it brought me here, could it have brought him, too?" Please, I think, I pray, let him be here.

"He isn't here," the Infinite replied gravely. "You are the first." My heart plummets, their words like a knife to my heart.

Tears fall down my cheeks and onto the ground below. "Where, then? You must know, you're the Infinite."

"We don't know all. While we are greater than any individual, we are not god."

I shake my head in disbelief, still crying from year's worth of pent-up emotion. It seems impossible- I'm here, in infinity, the one place I haven't searched, and *he isn't here*. "Could- can you at least tell me if he's alive?"

"We do not know." I just shake my head, torn between anger and sorrow. If even the infinite doesn't know if he's alive, what hope do I have?

"Should I just give up, then?" I demand. "Should I just stop looking for him?"

"You did not let us finish. We don't know if he is alive. But we believe he is. And we believe you will find him, if you were to continue searching." Again, there's no reproach in their voice. Just kindness. *Is this what it means for humanity to become one?*

I take in a shuddering breath, tears slowing. "I'm not stopping. He's my brother. But, I... I don't know." My thoughts flicker through every message I sent to him, the days and then weeks without response. "Do I even deserve to find him? Do I deserve the chance to apologize, after everything I said?"

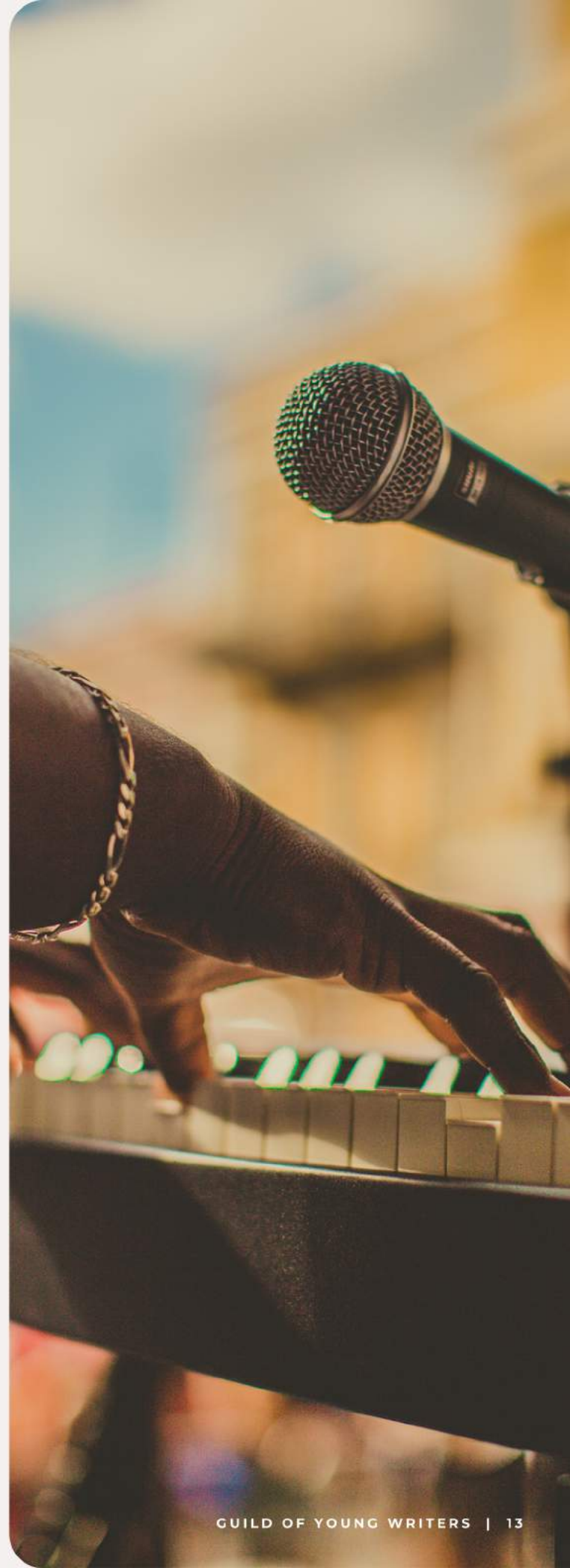
"Just keep looking, young one. There is hope, you will find him."

I nod mutely, looking up at the sky. *I miss him.*

The mist begins to dissolve before my eyes; the ground seems to drop from beneath my feet.

"May you find what you seek." *My brother, his forgiveness, the good memories not tainted by what came before.*

The Infinite's words are the last things I hear before I find myself in my kitchen, whispering to myself, "There is hope."







Visitor

A Fractured Fairytale
by Abby

As I was strolling down the path towards my grandmother's house I heard a rustling behind me and I quickly turned around in fear of a bear or some other creature mother and father always warned me about. Luckily the sounds stopped and I continued on my way. Soon I heard the noise again and I turned back to see the shadows open up and a face appeared.

Dark green eyes gleamed at me from behind a tree and he stepped out. "I'm sorry if I startled you." A small hopeful smile arose and he bit his lip.

I shoved my hands in my pockets and glanced around. We're alone. "It's really fine. I just.. wasn't expecting anyone to surprise me."

He nodded knowingly. "What's your name girl?"

"You first."

"I asked first."

"It's Corsen." I pointed at him. "Now your turn."

"Fine, fine. Since you told me." He rolled his eyes. "It's Fenrir. You know?"

"No. What's it from?"

He just shook his head. "Nevermind. But I have a question."

"Shoot."

"Why go so fast? Really if I were you I'd stop and enjoy these wonderful flowers and the sun!" Fenrir stuck his tongue out. He swung his arms above him and spun slowly in a circle.

I placed my basket full of food on the ground and looked around me. The trees were tall blocking all the would-be light and if I looked off into the distance there were more shadows hiding between the trees.

"Yeah right. The sun. Totally gonna enjoy it." I looked beside the path, noticing some bluebells growing there. My grandmother's favourite flower! I had forgotten they grew here in the fall.

He bent down and picked a bluebell off its stem and said, "You like flowers?"

I shrugged.

"Well here's this one." He moved closer and tucked it into my hair.

I stepped back and crossed my arms uncomfortably. "Well.. Thank you, but I should be going now." I threw my thumb behind my shoulder.

"Alright. I'll be off." He ambled backwards. "You know your grandmother might like some flowers to go with whatever's in that basket of yours."

"How did you know I was going to my grandmother's house?" I spoke with a tremble in my voice. I stopped mid step and pivoted on my heel to face him.

Nothing was there. Just air. The trees whispered to each other and the birds which had been singing earlier became quiet.

"Fenrir?" I crept over to where he was a moment ago and peered around the trees.

Moss, trees and an empty path.

I ran my hand through the ends of my hair. "Okay! You just disappear on me!" I threw my hands up in the air and kneeled to pick up the basket. Before I got up and went to Grandma's I picked a few of her favourite flowers and gently placed them in the basket.

"See you later Fenrir. Thanks for the advice." I whispered to the birds, trees and emptiness in the woods.

A while later I arrived at Grandma's house. The door was slightly open so when she knocked the door opened a bit more. "Grandma? Are you home?" I called into the house.

"Oh yes dear, come in, come in." I wandered in and sat down on the bed. I assumed she was in the bathroom.

As if reading my mind I heard her call dramatically to me from behind a closed door. "I'm just in the bathroom dear, freshening up for my appearance."

Grandma, the ever theatrical one. "Of course. No problem. I brought you some of Mother's famous sponge cake." I smiled to myself, I may have taken some crumbs for myself on my long walk.

"Wonderful!"

"Oh! And I also brought blackcurrant juice to share."

"My dear, your mother really is too kind to me. I swear, just one minute and I'll be all ready for you." Without waiting for a reply she continued. "Are you wearing the jacket I made for you?"

"Well yes." I rolled my eyes, sometimes I think she likes that jacket more than me.

"After a moment or two more she opened the bathroom door a crack and told me I could come say hi to her. I strolled over to the door and pushed it open and began to ask how she was doing. Suddenly I stopped when I felt cold metal on my neck.

I choked a little and dropped the basket on the floor and the blackcurrant juice rolled on the floor. "Gran-?!"

"Shh, your grandma is in the closet. It's alright. It's Fenrir."

I stopped talking when I heard his voice.

My heart pounded and I swear it was just about to pound right out of my chest. Slowly sank to the floor and let out a whimper. Fenrir followed after me with the knife still pressed against my neck. I sucked in a sharp breath and said, "Fenrir, you're hurting me," as I tried to swivel my neck sideways.

He hmphed, but let the knife ease up on my neck a bit. With a yank and a lunge, I got free and reached for the glass bottle which had rolled from the basket whirled around with it, holding it out in front of me like a sword. His hand with the blade shook a little and his eyes were wild and impossibly dark. The hand without the bottle of black currant juice raised up in front of me slowly and I began to feel as though I was talking to an animal.

"Fenrir," I paused and swallowed. "It's okay, you're okay, I'm okay," and I hoped to myself that Gran was okay too.

He lunged forward and I ducked and stuck my foot out. He nosedived to the bathroom tile and I swept the knife from his hand. Fenrir let out a small uncomfortable grunt when I stepped on his back with one booted foot.

To myself I whispered a tiny Aha! With my knife pressed to his back I knelt down next to him and told him, "You.. You need to go to a hole and be buried alive, then because that's too good for you, I'll dig you up myself and feed you to the wolves, that'll really make you wish you weren't so much like them. Now," I said as I stood up, knife in hand, boot on his back, "I'm going to lock you in here and check on my Grandmother, then I'm gonna call my father and he's going to come and deal with your sorry butt. Capeesh?"

He nodded and I hauled Fenrir to his feet. I took off my jacket and held it in my mouth while I worked my arm out of it. Then I did the other and grabbed his wrists. I threw the knife down in the general direction of my grandmother's bed. After I heard the soft whump I used the arms of my red coat to tie his arms together as best I could.

Once it was good as I knew I was going to get it I shoved him in as I retreated and slammed the door shut. I raced to the closet and there was my grandmother with cotton balls in her mouth tied up with some brown jute twine she had for gardening.

Finally, after I got Gran out of the closet and free and we called my dad I left her on the bed resting and went to check in on Fenrir. When I opened the door I found no one inside and nothing different except for the window was opened and my jacket lay on the floor with the semi-crushed sponge cake.

"He's gone." I raked my hands through my hair and a deep sigh escaped me.

"The nasty boy? I thought you locked him in."

"I did." The bed creaked as Gran stood up and came over to me. She pulled me to her chest and held me. "I let him get away." She just rubbed my back in circles and by the time my father arrived at Gran's house we were sitting on the bed eating squished sponge cake and drinking the black currant juice.

We left soon after we'd recounted the story to my father. I was cold, my t-shirt didn't block out the wind or the drizzle which began as soon as we got outside. I'd buried my jacket at Gran's house and left it there for the earth to claim it as its own. Over that I took the bluebell Fenrir had tucked into my hair and laid on the dirt. She didn't mind that I'd left my jacket there, she knew what memories I'd associate with it now.

About twenty-five minutes later we got back to my house with Gran in tow, she'd felt like staying over. When I crept up to bed with hot chocolate prepared by my mother in hand I set it down on my nightstand. A fresh bluebell lay on top of my pillow and there on my bed was a red jacket, just like the one I'd buried in Gran's back yard and the now-open window letting in a cool breeze.

I had gotten a visit from the wolf.

Though we would never admit it, we would
always be lying alone at night, whispering
stories to keep the ghosts away.

-Kira





BETRAYED

An excerpt by Lola

Chapter Five

I am halfway there when I wish I had brought a warmer jacket. It is freezing out here. The walk is very long and this is the third time this week I have done it. First to scan the area for the mission, second to do the mission and now. The forest is eerie even for the middle of the day. I hear a scuffle behind me and freeze. I pull out my blades and turn, putting the blade on the thing's throat.

"Hey, watch where you put those things. They are sharp."

"Jack? What are you doing here?" I pull my blades away from his throat and slide them into their sheaths.

"I would ask you the same thing, but I already know. I snuck out after you drugged your uncle. Which, by the way, is pretty cold of you."

"First of all, he drugged me first so I would say we are even. Second of all, how did you—"

"I just know okay. Anyway, I followed you. I wanted to come and break into the museum again."

He gets closer to me and I back away.

"Ew, what is that smell?"

He grimaces, "Ever heard of manure? What do you think my punishment was, cuddling cats?"

"Well, you can't come with me, I am going alone."

He looks very sad, then puts a smile on his face. "I am coming and there is nothing you can do to stop me."

I sigh, knowing there was no way out of this. "Fine, but you better not slow me down. Come on."

We continue trudging through the forest for another thirty minutes. Jack is starting to lag behind.

"Jack, come on. Hurry up."

He tries jogging to catch up. "I don't have as much running training as you, I am very slow."

He is right, when I was younger my uncle had made me run miles every day as a workout. Now it took a lot to tire me out.

"Well that might be true, that is not a very good excuse. So hurry up. Please."

He grumbles and mutters some not nice words about me under his breath. Then jogs and walks fast next to me. "So Ailith, I never asked. What is the plan?"

I laugh, "What plan? I don't have one. We are going in and improvising."

He gapes at me.

"We are robbing something very important, valuable and extremely hard to get. And you don't have a plan. Are you serious?"

I nod, "Dead serious."

He shutters. "Do you think we will be killed? Because I am not ready to die yet. I have lots of years left in my long life."

I just pat his shoulder and continue walking.

Twenty minutes later we arrive at the back of the museum. Like I thought, there are police everywhere. Maybe uncle wasn't kidding. This could be a suicide mission. Jack gulps and hides behind a tree.

"Um, do I have to go? I am scared."

"Ha, you, scared? I don't believe it. Come on, you got yourself into this."

I pull a rope with a grappling hook out of my belt. Jack looks at me like I am insane. Although this is not the first time someone has looked at me like that.

"Okay so, you will distract the guards while I get on the roof. Distract them while I go in. Then I will grab what we need and we can get out of here."

"What, no way. I am not distracting them. Plus, you are a better distraction than me. I will just make them more suspicious. How about you distract them long enough for me to get on the roof. Then you can come up after."

I frown considering. He really is a bad distracter.

"Fine, just don't retrieve it without me. Wait for me in the vents."

He nods, then hides behind a tree. I walk out of the woods with a fake limp and a perplexed expression on my face. An officer looks over at me.

"Hey you there girl, what are you doing?" He comes towards me. I stumble and fall to the ground and start to fake cry.

"I am so sorry officer, I am lost. My husband dumped me when we were camping then left in the middle of the night. I have been walking for hours and I don't know where I am."

I think I did a great job improvising.

"Miss, you are at the museum. I will bring you in and call a taxi."

I fake a grateful smile, push through the feeling of not wanting to and sweep myself into his arms. "Oh thank you. I can't thank you enough."

He carries me towards the door. I do one last look and see Jack wave up on the roof. I smile; plan in action.





The Sirens Sing for Odysseus

BY CAMERON

Chapter Six

"What Greek hero do you relate to the most, Devon?" I asked once we had gotten into the car.

He stared back at me like I was speaking a different language. "What?"

"Don't worry if you don't understand, Devon, just let him talk," Grandad said from the front seat.

Devon nodded at him and turned back to me. "I don't know which one I relate to. Can you?"

"Alright, so, I relate to Odysseus because, while the vast majority of Greek heroes rely on violence and place lots of value on glory and heroism, Odysseus relies on his wits and knowledge as well as his courage and strength. You could describe him as an intellectual. Now, this applies to me because I am different from the vast majority of people: where they are emotionally driven, I am logically driven. Odysseus is also logically driven, often openly evaluating a situation before he decides what to do. We also share the same

curiosity, which is occasionally the root of our troubles, as shown with the Cyclops. Victory motivates us: do you want sources on that, because I've got tons-"

Devon shook his head no. I squinted at him, confused.

"Okay, well, if you're going to just take my word for it, then that's- that's alright, I guess, yeah-"

"Do you want me to ask for sources?" he said, grinning. I nodded quickly.

"Well then, can I see your sources on why victory motivates Odysseus?"

I smiled in disbelief. "Really? Wow, nobody's ever let me talk for this long before... Are you sure you wanna hear?"

"Of course I do, now just go!" He made a shooing motion with his hand, and I jumped back into essay mode.

"Alright then. Odysseus' main goal is to return home and live in Ithaca, and so every step of the way is another test, sometimes another battle. And it has to be, or there's no story. Now, I relate to this because every step along the way of my own life also tests me. Nothing is ever easy."

I stopped to fiddle with my glasses, trying to get them to sit properly on my nose. Eventually, I gave up and kept talking. "His fondness for victory is cultural as well as practical. In Homer's world, with no proper police or justice systems, might equals right. Most of the time, at least, but that's a whole other story. Anyway, the strong prevail, and the weak fail. Often Odysseus must choose between death or victory."

I talked the entire way home, but Devon never interrupted or did that thing people did where they coughed and shifted around louder and louder until I finally stopped. He had to be the best person I'd ever met.

"And that's why I relate to Odysseus as well as look up to him, in some regards."

He stared for a minute, then started applauding. "Wow. You put more thought into that than I have in my entire life."

I cracked my neck and fidgeted with my ear. "You liked it? And you really listened? Usually people just say I'm being annoying, but--"

Devon shook his head with vigor. "No, no, of course not! That was so interesting!" he said, and I beamed with pride.

"There is one part I'm not quite clear on, though. How did he get his men to start obeying him? You know, since he was having difficulties controlling them before."

My face lit up. "Well, that's actually a very fascinating part of his story. You see-" I started as we walked into the farmhouse. Devon gazed back at me in enraptured awe, completely captivated by my words.

We talked about Odysseus until it was time to go to bed. My grandfather ended up fixing the door incredibly quickly, so we could have privacy as we slept.

As I slipped into bed, I thought about how much fun we had today.

"Let's see if we can top it tomorrow," I whispered mischievously to Devon.

He gave a knowing wink back to me and I fell asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow, dreaming in impatient anticipation of the morning.

[Find Chapter Seven in our Winter Zine Release](#)



Strange spirits jump
out from the walls,
only coming to give
pause. Their dresses
are tattered white,
like in the movies, but
their eyes are full of
stories, and you know,
they never let go.
They never go.

- Kira

CREATIVITY IS A MYTH

Article

By Raine

When you're an artist, you're sharing a part of you. When you're a creator, you express what's important to you and create something that's your own. When you're looking for a book to read, a video game to play, a movie to watch, you want to escape into something different. You want to see something new, exciting.

When you're working as an artist, you want to stand out, be different from everyone else. What's gonna draw people's attention to you?

It's the endless struggle of being a musician, writer, illustrator, filmmaker, dancer: How can I be unique? What makes me different? What makes me, me? But I want you to consider, maybe this isn't the right thought process. I said earlier that when people look for media they want to look for something different, but people complained about Genshin Impact being a clone of the Legend of Zelda Breath of the Wild, yet millions of people still play each game every day. So many pop songs use the exact same chord progressions, but people are still drawn to their own preferences. They pick their favourites and hated songs. It doesn't mean that everyone's copying each other, but maybe everything is more similar than we thought.

One of the greatest books I've read is, 'Steal like an Artist' by Austin Kleon. It's a guide on how to be creative and find ideas, and makes bold points that change your thinking. In the very first chapter, titled "Steal like an Artist," he explains that artists get their ideas by stealing them. To quote page 6:

"When you look at the world this way, you stop worrying about what's "good" and what's "bad" - there's only stuff worth stealing and stuff that's not worth stealing."

Nothing is completely original, and everything is built on something that came before. On page 8 Austin writes:

"If we're free from the burden of trying to be completely original, we can stop trying to make something out of nothing, and we can embrace outside influence instead of running away from it."

Chapter two, titled "Don't wait until you know who you are to get started," goes into further detail about what to steal and how to steal. You learn by copying others, but not imitating. Humans are incapable of making exact replicas, so as you study your idols and inspirations, the unique thing that makes you you will make it stand out from what came before.

On page 36 it reads: “Don’t just steal the style, steal the thinking behind the style.”

The book also makes a big point to steal from many. Study many artists, consume many different media and steal from all of it. On page 39, a chart is drawn comparing the differences between ‘good theft’ and ‘bad theft’.

Bad theft is: Degrading Skimming, Stealing from one, Plagiarizing, Imitating, Ripping off.

Good theft is: Honoring, Studying, Stealing from many, Crediting, Transforming, Remixing.

If you are struggling to find ideas for your project, look to others for what they did. It’s your own way of asking for help from your idols. Watch movies. Play video games. Browse pinterest. Listen to music. Listen to artists you don’t think you’d like. Go to concerts. Watch plays. Read. Read, Read. Read news articles, novels, webcomics. Read your favourite things, and things you would hate. Each one of my compositions was an attempt at multiple genres at once. Each one had several songs I listened to and referenced in the writing process, but it was my own humanity and personality that molded my songs into what they are now, truly special, and just like everything else at the same time. There’s a reason why the little things can’t be copyrighted, it’s so that you can build off of them.

Switching gears a bit, you can find inspiration from more than just forms of media and art. Everything around you is art. Every person, building, object, shape, cloud, tree, has a story to tell. You should try to enjoy every moment and learn something. Stay in the present, and pay attention to what’s in front of you. The sounds of crowds, machines. Walk without headphones on. Analyze the highway intersection. Pay attention to how you feel when you go to your favourite coffee shop. Go shopping in a different thrift store. Drive down a different route to get home. Settings are important in all art forms. Interesting events you come across can become parts of your stories.



This leads me to what I've learned through songwriting, storytelling, filming, photography, and everything else I've tried. Creativity is not about creating something original. Imagination is not about creating new ideas or doing something different.

Creativity is all about making connections.

True inventiveness is being able to see the connections that can link things together, no matter how small or insignificant, and bringing them together to forge something new. The best way to make something “original,” is to combine aspects from numerous influences. In this essay alone, I incorporated stealing from inspiration, connections, and the beauty of the ordinary, all to share this one message:

Don't be original.

Infuse your art with everything that's important to you, everything you've experienced, everything you've heard, everything you've seen. Because all of that is what makes you, you.

Last tips: If you want to learn by copying and making derivative works, that's awesome! Just remember what makes good theft. Give due credit when it's needed.

And remember, cultural appropriation is pretty weird and disrespectful to others, so make sure you're learning from other cultures and understand what's important to them.





Tom Riddle - Harry Potter
Illustration by Sami

THE WEIGHTLESS

PART TWO
BY KAHLAN

FIND PART 1 IN SUMMER ZINE #6

It is a half hour from dawn, and I am ready for whatever will come to pass. The Great Phoenix has accepted me, and I believe.

I'm on my way to the ridge, strolling through the trees on a path I know well, even in the dark. I stretch out my hand to touch the rough bark of an oak, the cascading branches of a weeping willow, a graceful bough of cherry blossoms.

I spent the night praying, huddled around my candle like a planet orbiting the sun. By now, I am totally calm, my steps sure and even. Though I should be tired after staying awake all night, I feel full of strength, more aware than ever before. The robin feather around my neck feels light, as if it were ready to fly away.

I quickly reach the edge of the forest. The grass becomes softer beneath my shoes, and the trees fall away, leaving only the infinite sky above me, still twinkling with the few remaining stars. I feel like I could leap into the air right here and now, growing wings and never coming down.

A hundred meters or so ahead of me the grass suddenly ends at a cliff that stretches down and down into the sea. Near the edge is a dark figure, illuminated by a row of lanterns. Welania. She's scattering a fine powder across the ground. Preparing for whatever happens at dawn, I suppose. Rather than approach her, I lie down on the grass and watch as the sky turns from an inky blue to a soft grey, then to a dusty pink at the eastern edge. Just a few moments now.

I rise and slowly walk to the ridge. There are a few others there now, and I join them. We are all silent as we observe the scene in front of us. There is a long strip of grey powder, probably what Welania was spreading earlier. It forms a pathway straight to the edge of the cliff, lit by the flickering flame of lanterns. Beyond the cliff, the ocean can be seen, stretching out to the horizon. The sky is growing lighter. Soon, the sun will rise, letting the light glint off of the ocean in an ever-changing kaleidoscope. But for now, it is still dark, a mass of cold unknown.

Welania is standing at the end of the path she made, hands stretched out to either side. She looks holy. Angelic, almost. Our faithful leader leading us to the sky.



A hand on my arm surprises me. I turn and see my mom. She nods at me, but says nothing. If only she knew—I am a new person now.

I turn back to Welania just as the sun begins to show. It astonishes me that such a tiny bit of sun can change the whole sky. Suddenly the world is filled with light, illuminating the ocean, the cliffs, our faces.

Welania turns around. She is framed in light, almost blinding to look at. “Dear friends,” she says. Her voice, always full of grace and power, seems even more so today. “You are here because you believe. You have put your faith in something greater than this earth, greater than the ground. You have put your faith in the sky.” I feel a swell of joy and pride inside of me. I’m so glad I chose to believe. I did the right thing, finally.

“I know it has not always been easy, and I want you all to know that I am proud of you. You pushed past judgement and hardship, and today you will be rewarded.”

There is a curious murmur throughout the gathered crowd. We all want to know what this is about. “One week ago today, I was given a sign. One from the Great Phoenix herself.” She holds something up. We all jostle to see it better, and as we do, a gasp ripples through us.

It’s a feather. But one unlike anything I’ve seen before: it’s the colour of fire, long and majestic, practically glowing in the light. “A sign,” Welania continues, “that brings with it the end of all things. Today, the faithful will be blessed with wings and ascend.”

A moment of silence. Of shock. It takes a moment to digest the words, to understand. Today, we will fly. I turn to my mom. She is smiling through the tears that cascade down her face. I tentatively smile back, and let her pull me into an embrace.

Welania clears her throat, and we turn back. “I came here this morning to find this ash spread across the ground, the lanterns lit. The phoenix had prepared a place for us, on this sacred ridge.”

Wait. That’s not right. I saw Welania scatter the ash. It wasn’t the phoenix, it was her. But it doesn’t make sense for her to lie to us. There is nothing for her to gain by pretending the ash was already there. I must be misremembering. I can’t let this minor detail sway my feet. It hardly matters—We are about to grow wings.

“Who is faithful? Who of us will be the first to ascend?”

Nobody moves at first. Even the strongest belief doesn’t entirely wipe out doubt. But then—

My mom steps forward. “I will.” Her voice wavers slightly, but her head is raised proud. I don’t always get along with my mom. She can be slow to forgive, cranky in the mornings. But her faith is strong.

Something flashes across Welania’s face. Jealousy? Sorrow? But then it’s gone, and I must have imagined it. “Hanna. I do believe that the birds will accept you with open arms. It is time for a leap of faith.” She gestures at the ashen pathway, to the cliff’s edge. “If your heart is true, you will not be harmed.”

Oh. Doubt’s cold hands twist my gut. I believe, I really do, but... is this necessary? If Welania says so, I guess.

Mom turns back to me, squeezes my hand. Her eyes are alight with passion. She is ready. Half of me wants to grab her hand, refuse to let her go. But she’s already gone. Striding across the ash, pausing a moment at the edge.

And then she jumps.

I dash towards the edge, ash spraying up behind me. I collapse on my knees and peer over just in time to see my mom plunge like a rock, into the ocean.

Since your whole lives started revolving around that weird cult thing—

She doesn’t come back up.

—what is it, The Heartless or something?

“It seems her faith was weaker than we thought. Perhaps her offspring can do better?”

It’s The Weightless.

“Emmett? It’s your turn.”

And it’s not a cult.

A cult. It’s—

I turn and run.

Three months later, and I am back at the cliff. A survivor, they tell me. A hero. If I hadn’t ran for help, who knows what would have happened? How many more bodies would be fished from the ocean?

I don’t feel like a hero. Most days I feel nothing at all. But here, now? I feel plenty.

I rip the robin feather necklace from my throat with a wild scream, and throw it as far as I can. It floats gently downward, until I can no longer see it. It doesn’t fly.



SCP Adventures

AN ONGOING STORY
BY BOWEN

Chapter One: Unexpected Mishaps

There was a loud explosion, followed by the alarms blaring.

The on-site intercom crackled to life and a voice said, "The site is experiencing multiple keter and euclid level containment breaches, full site lockdown initiated."

There were sounds all around me, screaming, guns firing, otherworldly sounds coming from the various monsters running loose around the facility.

I was crushed against the floor, something fell on top of me.

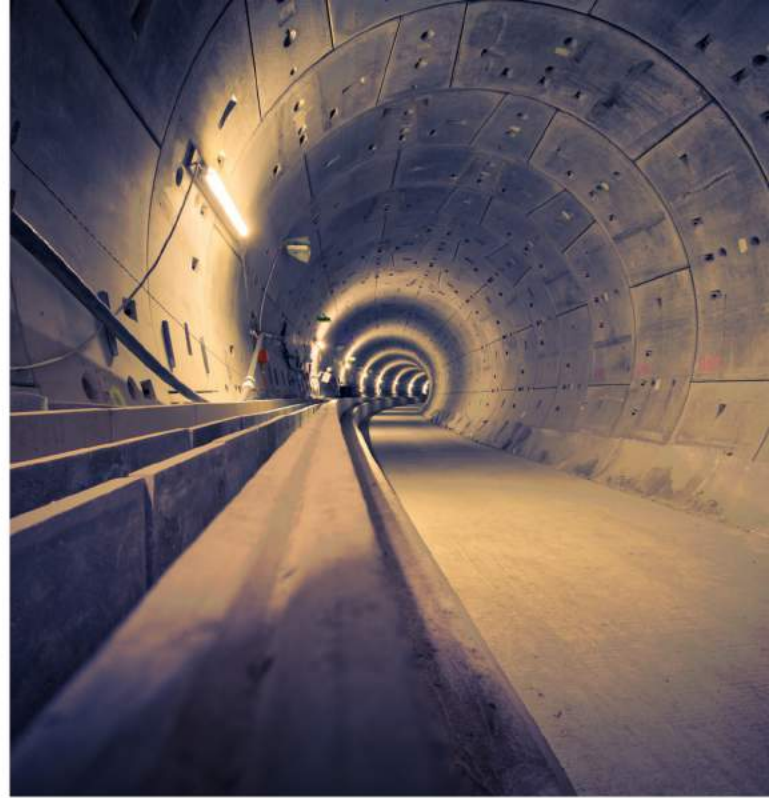
I looked to my right and saw something emerging from the wall with a sickening gurgling and bubbling noise. It was covered in black ooze, leaking it. It had a terrifying grin that quite literally reached from ear to ear.

I couldn't move, I was trapped.

The terrifying figure let out a low chuckle as it slowly limped towards me. It reached out a bony and rotting hand towards me, with acidic black ooze dripping off. Then the monster suddenly looked to its right and its sickening grin turned into a look of realization and then fear.

I heard footsteps approaching. Several MTF units armed to the teeth in assault rifles and grenades came running down the hall towards me and the monster. They opened fire on the creature. The bullets seemed to have no effect.

The thing chuckled and limped over to the squad of armed soldiers. It grabbed hold of one of them and stabbed its bony hands into the soldier's chest, and crushed his lungs.



The soldier coughed up a heavy stream of blood and then dropped dead.

One of his teammates threw a flashbang at the monster. I closed my eyes and covered my ears.

When I opened my eyes, the creature had backed away. It let out a screech and rubbed its eyes. One MTF unit pulled out a huge device that looked like some kind of electrical weapon. He charged it up and fired. A massive beam of energy and light came shooting out at the creature.

The monster let out a loud roar and retreated into the floor in a puddle of the same repulsive black goo that covered its body.

The MTF units lifted the fallen support beam off of me and carried me to the entrance zone.

My name is Dr. Mark Wheeler. I'm a level 3 researcher at a top secret facility called Site 19.

Site 19 is located in [LOCATION REDACTED], USA. It is one of the many facilities owned by the S.C.P. Foundation. SCP stands for Secure, Contain, Protect. This foundation is funded by governments all around the world for the task of capturing and containing dangerous anomalies and monsters that defy the laws of physics. We operate completely in secret, which is why everyone who reads this is not to tell anyone about it.

The foundation has eyes and ears everywhere.

We have facilities on the moon and in orbit around Jupiter.

All the conspiracy theories about ghosts and monsters and bigfoot, are mostly true stories, and we have to deal with them every day.

Remember the moon landing? Apollo 11 was it? Well it wasn't launched because of the race to the moon, it was actually sanctioned by the SCP Foundation in cooperation with NASA to place the first SCP owned lunar site on the moon without NASA realizing it, which is no small task. Michael Collins who was secretly an agent for the foundation, had secretly launched from the craft in orbit around the moon and landed in the mare imbrum crater, he then planted a small lunar base which was expanded and upgraded by many lunar missions later on and eventually became the lunar site that we now know as area 32. All photos of the mare imbrum crater are altered to hide the presence of the lunar site.

We deal with the most crazy and random stuff you can think of, from monsters, beasts and ancient gods, to talking toasters and sentient ice cream trucks. We have agents as undercover police officers, we have media agents tasked with hacking and removing leaked classified information from the internet, and providing cover stories for when an anomaly breaches containment.

Whatever you think you know about society surrounding the paranormal is irrelevant.

We may not follow common law, or even maritime law. We have the right to kill any person who betrays the foundation or leaks information. And don't think that the military can save you if you give away classified info or files. Our forces can obliterate every military force on earth in a matter of hours. And of course, we have enemies, the nova corporation, the serpent's hand, the church of the broken god, but our greatest enemy, the one which strikes fear among almost all our personnel, is the chaos insurgency.

The chaos insurgency are a GOI (group of interest) dedicated to the capture and weaponization of anomalous entities. They attack at random, and they are unpredictable.

Then there is the Global occult coalition (GOC), basically frenemies to the foundation. Instead of containing anomalies, their goal is to destroy all of them. But they sometimes help out with world threatening disasters.

We have a leader, or rather thirteen of them. They are called the O5 council. They are the highest level of command on the planet. They make all important decisions and lead the entire foundation during a disaster. They must be protected at all costs, and they are rarely allowed to travel off-site. Some personnel don't even know the O5 exists. The foundation is very old, it's been around since 1903.

But anyways you've heard enough. It's time to get back to the story.

When we arrived at the entrance zone, there were other scientists and researchers all waiting, and some E&T (engineering and technical) department guys were attempting to fix the elevator. We were underground so we couldn't simply walk through a door and be free. The MTF units placed me down on the floor and left the entrance zone and searched for more survivors. Several medical personnel examined me and searched for any serious injuries. Luckily, I wasn't badly hurt. I got up and looked at the group of survivors and tried to Evaluate any missing personnel.

Then all of a sudden, the main gate opened to reveal a blonde haired woman in a slightly torn up lab coat with a Glock 17 in her hand.

"Dr. Buck, are you alright?" I asked as the medical personnel tried to examine her for any injuries.

"Yes, yes, I'm fine," said Dr. Buck in an annoyed tone as she motioned the medics to back away.

The E&T guys fixed the elevator and a man with orange hair and a moustache practically leaped out of it.

"Mr. Moore? What are you doing in the elevator?" I asked him.

"I was trying to get to the archives to pick up some documents. But the elevator got stuck and now I see that there's a containment breach," said Mr. Moore.

"Almost all the anomalies broke out of their cells," said Dr. Buck.

"Shit," Moore cursed under his breath.

"How long until Epsilon 11 arrives?" I asked.

"At least an hour," said Dr. Buck. I was confused as to why the second wave of MTF was going to take that long to arrive, but I decided not to question it.

The intercom blared and the C.A.S.S.I.E system (Central Autonomic Service System for Internal Emergencies) announced an update on site status. "SCP-035 contained successfully. containment unit: MTF echo 13," and then the intercom went silent.

"Good. it looks like echo 13 is having some success."

But then the intercom blared again and the CASSIE system said, "WARNING FACILITY OVERCHARGE IN 3... 2... 1..." and the facility went dark. The power went out due to generator failure.

"Oh come on!!" I turned on my flashlight. "Could we maybe turn on the backup generator?" I asked.

"No. The backup generators are only meant to power a couple rooms during an emergency. And the CASSIE system is already working to restore facility wide power," said Dr. Buck.

"I hate the dark," Mr. Moore whined.

"Shut up Matt! Or, If by some miracle you don't die, I'll kill you myself," she said.

"You have more to fear than the dark," I said.

We could hear faint and muffled sounds. Screaming, bullets being fired, roaring and wailing, along with other strange noises.

"So we just sit here and hold our breath?" I asked.

"Precisely."

Then the CASSIE system opened the intercom again. "FACILITY POWER RESTORED," it said as the lights turned back on.

"That was strangely quick," said Mr. Moore.

Then the CASSIE system finally had some really good news. "MOBILE TASK FORCE UNIT EPSILON 11 HAS ENTERED THE FACILITY. ALL REMAINING PERSONNEL ARE ADVISED TO PROCEED WITH STANDARD EVACUATION PROTOCOLS UNTIL AN MTF SQUAD REACHES YOUR DESTINATION. SUBSTANTIAL THREAT TO SAFETY REMAINS WITHIN THE FACILITY, EXERCISE CAUTION."

The elevator opened to reveal six armed MTF units belonging to epsilon 11. They then marched out of the elevator and formed a line along the wall.

"All personnel take the elevator up to the surface now!" yelled one of the MTF units.

All the scientists got inside the elevator five by five and made their way to the surface. Dr. Buck and I stayed behind to help re-contain all the escaped anomalies. I pulled out my glock 17 and began roaming the halls with all the MTF units following behind.

We entered the light containment zone where most of the safe class SCPs are stored. Mostly inanimate objects with anomalous properties. We were moving towards the heavy containment zone checkpoint, but when we arrived, the checkpoint wouldn't open. "It must be locked down for decontamination," I said.

"We have to circle back," said Dr. Buck.

When we turned around to walk back to the entrance zone, we were stopped by what appeared to be a plague doctor. He had the robes and the bird mask. And there was blood on his gloves. "Hello," he said.

"SCP-049 HAS BEEN SPOTTED," yelled one of the MTF units.

The beaked figure pulled out a syringe of green liquid and attempted to inject it into me. I dodged and bludgeoned him in the beak, causing him to stumble backward. One of the MTF units grabbed the masked figure from behind and put him in a choke hold. The beaked man injected his syringe into the MTF unit. The unit dropped dead. The masked figure got back up. I fired a shot into his shoulder causing him to stumble and lose balance.

The dead MTF unit on the floor got back up and let out a zombie-like growl. The undead MTF unit ran towards me with it's arms outstretched.

"Holy shit!" I yelled as I rapidly fired the trigger on my glock. The zombie dropped dead.

"Such a shame, I expected more," said the beaked figure.

Then a vent was kicked open and a strange man yelled out to the masked person and instructed them to get in. The masked figure followed the person inside and closed the vent behind him.

“What the hell was that?!” Dr. Buck asked.

“Not good,” I said. “We should head back to the entrance zone.”

“Agreed.”

“I don't get paid enough for this,” I said under my breath.

We were halfway back to the entrance zone, but a door had shut on us. Confused, I pressed the button beside the door but nothing happened.

“Power must be out,” said Dr. Buck. “At least we're right next to the server room.”

I looked inside the server room window to see a pale, almost skeletal figure facing away from me. A security cadet walked around a corner from within the room and saw it. “Oh no,” I said.

“Oh god, how did 096 get out?!” yelled the guard. 096 then turned towards the cadet and then let out a terrifying scream that sounded exactly like a person. It then covered it's face with it's hands and began screaming, crying, and roaring. The cadet raised his p90 and pointed it at 096.

096 sprinted towards the cadet who unloaded his clip on it. The creature grabbed at the cadet and bit his head off. The window got covered in blood so I didn't see what happened after. Luckily I hadn't seen the creature's face, otherwise I would have been dead by now. Because if you didn't know, the creature kills anyone who looks at it's face, directly, or even in a photograph. It is able to sense someone looking at it's face from an infinite distance. That's why all photographs of it's face are censored or incinerated.

“What is it?” asked Dr. Buck.

“096 is in there. But so is the backup generator. I'm going to have to go in there myself and carefully go flip the switches while trying not to look at 096,” I said.

“Be careful,” she warned.

I nodded and used my keycard to open the door. I closed the door behind me and kept my eyes turned down. I saw 096 sitting on the ground over a giant puddle of blood.

There was no trace of the cadet's body anywhere. The creature got up and slowly walked around the room while quietly sobbing.

I had to be extra careful not to accidentally see it's face. I managed to switch the power flow to the backup generator and restore power to the door. I was on my way out of the server room when I accidentally bumped into the creature and looked up to see a terrifying face covered in blood.

The creature panicked and roared in anger. It's jaw descended halfway down it's chest. I ran out of the server room and opened the previously malfunctioning door.

“RUN! I SAW IT!!!!”

We could all hear the monster screaming from inside the server room. We ran to find a tesla gate (a big gate that zaps anything that walks past it). We could hear the monster tearing through steel doors as it chased us at top speed.

We finally found a Tesla gate near the entrance zone. I hopped past it and began overriding the energy flow. I charged it up and waited. One of the MTF units followed behind us and closed the bulkhead doors behind him. We heard screaming and guns firing, and the disgusting sound of flesh tearing. Then the steel door received a massive dent bending inwards. The dent became larger and larger before breaking open as the creature frantically tried to get in. I charged up the Tesla gate.

The monster leapt towards me but I pressed the discharge button inside the control panel and **ZAP!** The monster was on the ground in the fetal position and with smoking charred skin. I let out a huge sigh of relief. Everyone else was panting and sweating from running so long.

The intercom blared and the CASSIE voice said, “SCP-096 CONTAINED BY AUTOMATIC SECURITY SYSTEM. ALL SCP SUBJECTS HAVE BEEN CONTAINED SUCCESSFULLY.”



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