

GUILD OF YOUNG WRITERS

THE FLAME:
PERSONAL
STORYTELLING

BOOK
RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT
STORIES

POETRY

VOLUME #9
SPRING
2023

SCIENCE & STORYTELLING

Mark Leiren-Young & Jeanette Bedard
joins us to discuss the importance of and
connection to stories within the realm of
science!

Story Studio Writing Society is located on the traditional territories of the **W**ŚÁNEĆ 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, **ST**ÁUT**W** (Tsawout), **W**JOLÉLP (Tsartlip), **BO**KEĆEN (Pauquachin), **M**ÁLEXEŁ (Malahat), **W**ŚÍKEM (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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Share your words.



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Editor's Note

Another busy season for our Guild of Young Writers as we navigate the challenges and exciting opportunities presented in schools, along with personal writing interests and habits. Spring brings a resurgence of life to many of us, opening up to the longer and lighter days ahead.

This zine marks the first of our new subscription opportunity! The hopes of getting our words and work into the hands of more interested writers and readers across British Columbia. Along with the encouragement from our group for those readers to connect with us and share more of their own words with the community. This zine has always been built by youth, for youth, and we're excited to see where it will bring us in the coming year.

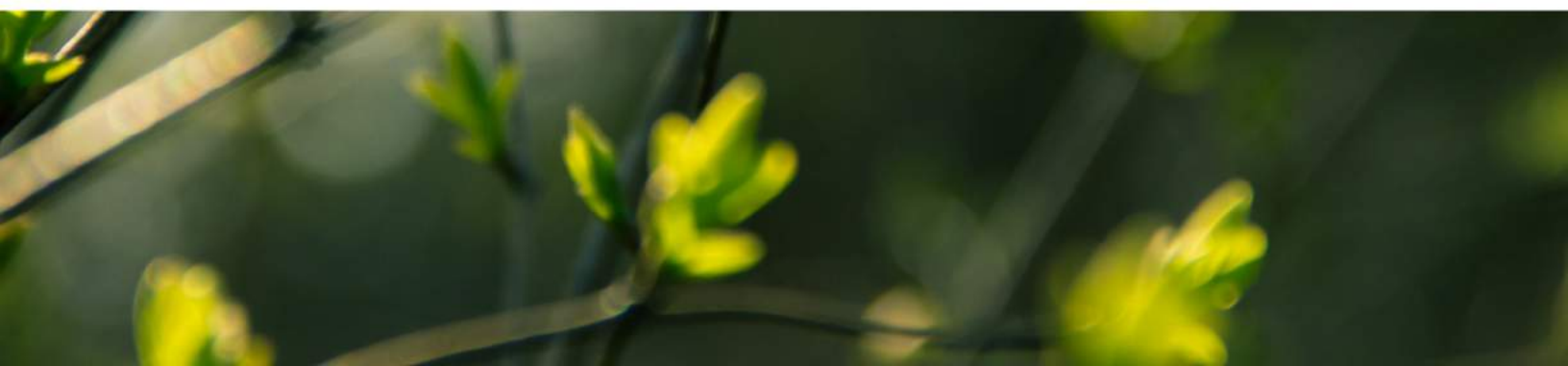
The past few months have brought us exciting new connections with local authors

such as Mark Leiren-Young and Jeanette Bedard, who both joined us to share more about their writing journeys and encouragement to continue our own.

We've been diving deeper into fantasy writing and worldbuilding, along with exploring science fiction and dystopian writing. Although these genres have influenced our past couple months of writing, as always you will see a large array of writing from the guild, from poetry to new articles and short stories of many genres. A few of our members also had the pleasure of learning from oral storyteller Deb Williams at The Belfry's The Flame event; working to challenge one another's writing minds, and welcoming new exciting opportunities in storytelling.



Rebecca Ruiter
PROGRAM COORDINATOR



Get to know the Authors

WOULD YOU RATHER WRITE IN A ROOFTOP GARDEN SURROUNDED BY CITY NOISES — OR IN A QUIET STUDIO WITH COWS AS YOUR NEIGHBORS?

I would rather write on a rooftop garden. I prefer the noise. I think my creative side works better with a busy atmosphere, like writing in a café, it isn't silent but the noise is there and it's not really harshly interrupting.

- Molly, age 13

I would rather write in a quiet studio, even if there were cows as my neighbours. When I'm writing, I love to have a quiet space where I know I won't be interrupted.

- Kira, age 16

As much as I appreciate being in the countryside, with the peace and quiet of a studio, I prefer writing on a city rooftop, where there's so much going on, and so much to be inspired by

- Raine, age 16

I think I'd rather write in a rooftop garden because when I write I always need something whether that be music or quiet background noise otherwise I get distracted and won't focus on my writing. And I feel like in a city I'd get more inspiration from the things going on around me. Also being outside is just nice.

- Abby, age 14



BOOKS WE'VE BEEN ENJOYING THIS SEASON

Recommendations by the Guild

The Three-Body Problem by Lui Cixin

Hell Followed With Us by Andrew Joseph White

The Shape of Content by Ben Shahn

The Witches are Coming by Lindy West

Children of Time by Adrian Tchaikovsky

His Dark Materials Series by Philip Pullman

Elatsoe by Darcie Little Badger

Screaming Staircase by Jonathan Stroud

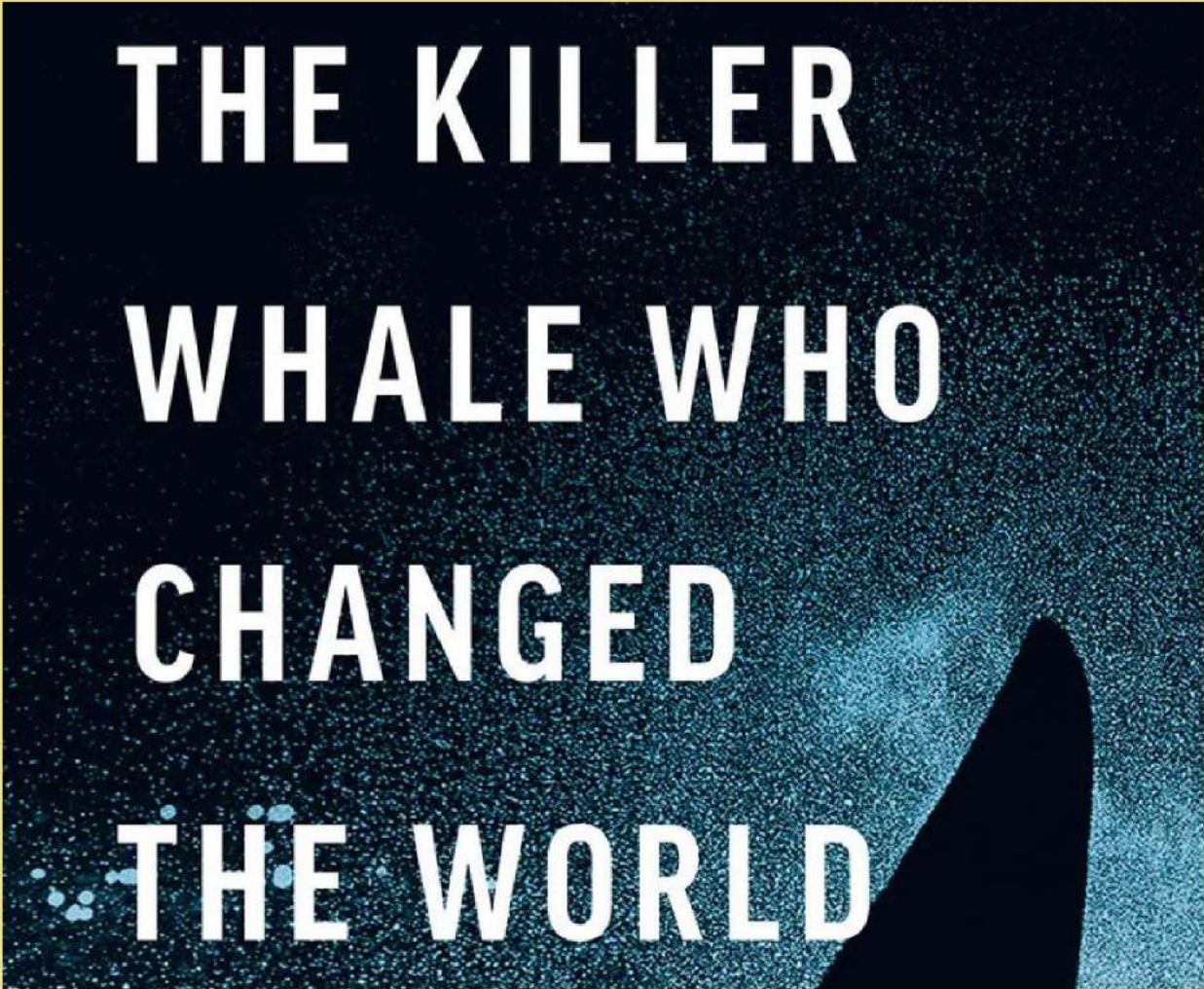
Man o' War by Cory McCarthy

Greenwood by Michael Christie





SCIENCE & STORYTELLING



THE KILLER WHALE WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

"WE DON'T REMEMBER DATA WITHOUT THE STORIES"

~MARK LEIREN-YOUNG

Over the past few months, we've been thinking a lot about science, and the ever important role storytelling plays in connection to it. When we think of science we often think of data and research, much of which can be difficult for everyone to engage with. But all science has a story behind it - a powerful way to nurture engagement and explore a more comprehensive way to connect with the facts.

We had the pleasure of hearing from the multi-talented playwright, documentary filmmaker, author, journalist, and humorist, Mark Leiren-Young in January when he joined the guild for an author chat. Not only does he have a wheelhouse of knowledge to share, but also a deep connection with the world of science, and the importance of storytelling within it.

Mark writes for all ages and all mediums - books for preschool to adults, plays, comedy, movies, tv scripts, his podcast Skanna, and more, including the Orca Exhibit itself at the Royal BC Museum. But his focus lately has been on translating science work, directly from scientists, into storytelling that sticks - emphasizing the importance of naming the objects being studied in order to make the emotional connection between the object or case study and it's story. Mark's 'The Killer Whale Who Changed the World' tells the story of Moby Doll, a whale that instantly became a celebrity, rather than being seen as a bloodthirsty sea monster. His story became one that we can all connect to in many ways, much more than one can connect to a numbered case among the sea.

Our own guild members have been exploring this connection between science and storytelling - ensuring science is more accessible and relatable for all. Kira, a long member of the Guild of Young Writers, has been diving deep into the world of science and space. She and a partner worked with the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) and the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory (DAO) in discovering and confirming the existence of an exoplanet (a planet outside our solar system). Kira is hosting a physics conference at the Pacific School of Innovation and Inquiry on April 24th. This conference will bring in different companies, individuals and organizations to connect with high school students across Victoria, with the goal of sharing just how much there is to explore in the world of science.



This past February, we were also joined by local veteran and scientist, Jeanette Bedard, who shared with us her experience as a military engineer and Oceanographer and how it reflects in her Science Fiction writing. Jeanette believe you "Write what you know," and with that came her two self published series: Settler Chronicles and Encoded Orbits. Jeanette shared with us her story bibles and thinking behind her novels, pacifically in worldbuilding. She discussed that with an open ended universe you're not creating a new world per se, but taking pieces of our current world that aren't focused on to create something new and yet possible. We were inspired by her thinking and experiences to explore more science fiction and fantasy realms in our own writing and worldbuilding.



Affinities

An excerpt

By Molly

Second River, Honoré, 276.

"Mama!"

A tired mother turns to face a squealing infant with a grin on their face. They are holding a small toy, shaped like a person. A doll. It has a lovely painted face, ragdoll-like hair. It is all these people can afford.

"Mama!"

"Yes, darling?" the mother responds, wiping her mouth after taking a long drink from a flask with an unknown liquid inside.

"I'm hungry," the infant says with a slight lisp. Their teeth are far from full-grown.

"Yes. You will have to wait," the mother sighs, turning to the front of the cabin-like area.

It is a small boat, which is slowly making its way to the other side of the Second River. The infant is finding it funny, the movement from side to side which has started to increase.

"How much longer?" the child says, for the second time.

The mother did not register that they had said something before. It appears that the mother is too drunk to notice anything.

"Oh," the mother tisks, "I don't know, go ask the kapitein." The mother is speaking in a haze, she is too far gone to know what exactly the child wants nor what it needs.

"Mama, where is the kapitein?" the infant asks.

"I do not know."

"Mama, where is the kapitein?" the infant asks.

"I do not know."

The mother sits down on the bed, her eyes bloodshot. The flask is half empty—or half full, however you perceive it. She takes a rattling breath, and turns to her child.

"I'm giving you up, you know. I haven't even named you. I do not care to."

The infant blinks, unrecognizing the speech as their mother's. "Mama, what are you saying?"

"I didn't want you, child," the mother hisses, picking up the flask and draining it. A heavy stench of Devil's Blood, a cheap and intoxicating drink from the Dijk, fills the room.

The infant gags.

The mother looks up in a drunken way and grins lopsidedly at the child. "I didn't care when I became pregnant. It just became my way of getting rich."

Chapter One

Honoré en Celestia, present day, 286.

Saffron slammed down their fist on the desk. "I refuse to pay 500 guilds for this."

"That's my honest price, my love," the man selling them to Saffron said with a slight smirk.

"I could buy a whole goat for that price, no deal." Saffron's face was filled with lividity, if they had a chance, oh, how that man would suffer.

"Your loss," the man laughed, putting the box full of liquor away.

It was festival time again, the Dijk was preparing themselves for an onslaught of drunk commoners ravaging the streets, wanting to see those beautiful Affinities they so worship.

Little did they know that one was walking around on the streets, wearing two large bags that kept slipping down their God-forsaken shoulders.

Saffron was an Affinity, something that they had rather not given much thought to lately, nobody recognized them, and they didn't want to be known.

Affinities were priceless, quite truly. Their blood shone golden-red, which was about as much worth as 1,000 guilds per drop. Their blood could be converted to a bloed guilder which was just like a diamant in this world. And Affinity hair, oh, lords, it was so rare that next to nobody had it. Only the wealthiest disgusting old men had it, trodding around, talking about how their precious 'Affinity hair' was the most priceless thing on Honoré en Celestia.

It was fake, of course. The Affinities decided to fabricate something that seemed to act and look like hair, and sold it on the market with an Affinity, whose hair was glamourised to be half-chopped off. And they got guilds for it.

Far more than that price that the man had given Saffron for that cheap liquor. Damn him.

Struggling to pull the hood over their head again, Saffron opened the door and stepped out into the musty smell of a marketplace. Imported goods from practically anywhere you can name.

De Dijkstraat.

Saffron held up an arm towards the sky, the sun making their eyes hurt. Their short-cut raven hair sneaked out from beneath the hood, nearly pushing it off again, and one small girl on the street gasped and stood still for what felt like eternity.

Saffron squeezed past the crowd, trying to get away from the girl, who has started to scream bloody murder.

Affinities weren't very accepted down in the lower depths of de Dijk, they were easily kidnapped, assaulted, or even bought and sold, or worse.

One Affinity named Lavender, Saffron's former friend, had actually made a life down here, until Lavender fell in love. They started to fall apart, their hair started to fall out and skin started to become nothing but a layer thinner than paper.

Affinities could not fall in love. Ever. It was practically a sin. But this time, God wasn't going to let you go for it.

Xabriel knew if she was in trouble, and standing face to face with a hunter with a pistol in hand, she was only in about ankle-height. But yes, this was trouble in other people's terms, but for her, not such a problem.

The hunter presumably saw her and thought that she was an Affinity. It's true, she held that 'title' with false prowess, it was not and would never be hers.

She was too old to lose herself to the Ouder Gezin, if she even wanted to.

Her mother, a desolate woman who only wanted riches for her and her daughter, had hired a hunter to steal Affinity hair a decade or two ago. She then hired a Surgeon to apply it to her daughter's head.

Good idea at the time, but, Xabriel wanting to work in the dumps as a Jager, she never had a chance to be loved by many, assumed to be an Affinity or the sort. She had simply cut off half of the hair, sold it to the next wealthy idiot that wanted more of the beautiful creatures that roamed de Celestia. Not to mention the fact that her mother had bought it for her son, expecting him to respond adequately, cut off a bit of the hair, and make sure that his body would be suitable to be known as an Affinity.

She had not expected her son to... feel the need to be a daughter.

So, with the gun up to her head, Xabriel had time to think, to speak, to make sure she was going to be completely fine. The attacker was a hunter, a lower version of the Dijk's Jagers. Sadly, Xabriel had been disarmed of her pistol and dagger. But, she still had her arms and legs, which proved quite well in a fight.

The person hissed, quietly tugging at Xabriel's hair, "So, you are one of those creatures."

That breath is all that Xabriel would need. She quickly hooked her leg around her attacker's and brought him to the ground. He cried out and tried to reach for the pistol, which was just out of his reach. Frustrated, Xabriel used the heel of her foot to stamp on his hand, causing his muscles to flex and flatten his hand on the pavement. The attacker growled, quickly recovering, and grabbed her ankle, but she easily knocked the grip loose.

She picked up her bags and stormed out of the alleyway, the man behind her groaning and asking for help, his broken hand and bruises were apparently enough to make him beg for mercy.

'Not a good merc,' Xabriel thought as she mindlessly crept into the crowd that swallowed her shadow whole.



The Flame

ORAL STORYTELLING WORKSHOP HOSTED BY
DEB WILLIAMS AT THE BELFRY



In February, a couple of us had the amazing opportunity to participate in a two day storytelling workshop with Deb Williams, an accomplished actress, playwright and co-creator of the 'Mom's the Word' plays. We got to join a wonderful group of people of all different ages and all walks of life, where we shared the joys and trials of our lives through stories.

On the first day, we each arrived with a true story about us that we wanted to share with others. The rules were set out: the stories had to be in first person, they had to be true, and they had to be told in five minutes.

We then broke off into different groups to share what stories we wanted to tell, and it was exciting having two other writers eager to give feedback and discuss how to present better. After, we had a lunch break to flesh out and write down our plans for what to present. In the afternoon, we shared our stories out loud to the whole group. We came back on the second day to do it all again, with a new connection to the others.

There is something about sharing stories with others in a safe space that makes writing that much more valuable.

Raine

I learned a lot about writing that weekend. After sharing my story, I was able to hear what people were curious and wanted to know more about, a very valuable piece of audience information that really helps you think about how to structure your writing. I found new ways to find ideas, and learned that our normal life is something special, and each one of us has things worth sharing about, no matter how simple. Whatever we say, our decisions, our routines, our thought processes, reveals things about who we are as people.



As someone who is dedicated to both the arts and the sciences, learning how to tell my own stories is absolutely necessary. To share knowledge with others, you need to be able to communicate it—and how humans best communicate with each other is through story.

At The Flame, we had the opportunity to listen to stories from people of all ages, and all walks of life. It is empowering to realize that your stories are worth sharing, and this is something that Deb impressed upon us. Everyone has experienced things that others haven't, and through sharing those experiences, we are able to connect with others. For me, as a human being, that was the most valuable part of the entire experience.

So much took place during those two days that it is hard to describe all of what I learned. But there were major themes that we kept returning to throughout, and those have stuck with me: the importance of characters, and how to choose which characters to focus on; different ways of illustrating the importance of the journeys we take; what it means to start and end a story well, and so much more. I'm incredibly grateful that I was able to participate in The Flame and its workshops, and hope that I will be able to share my stories onstage with others someday.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DEB WILLIAMS OR
THE FLAME WORKSHOPS, PLEASE GO TO
WWW.THEFLAME.LIVE



Storytelling Matters

When a child writes with us, it builds their confidence, develops problem solving skills and improves mental wellness. When we share stories from young writers of different backgrounds, we bring our community closer together. For over 10 years, Story Studio has run workshops and programs that build narrative capacity in local youth, working with over 10,000 kids. We connect authors, illustrators and emerging youth writers, so that they can learn from each other. We forge partnerships with non-profits and agencies to deliver programs at no cost to vulnerable youth and families. If you believe storytelling matters, please contact us to learn more about how you can help, and get connected to our programs.

Guild of Young Writers (ages 12-17)

Join our growing online community for new voices and emerging storytellers. Learn from visiting authors and illustrators and be the first to hear about exciting opportunities to showcase your writing!

Emerging Young Writers (ages 9-12)

Are you a young writer looking to take the next step with your stories? Learn from story studio staff and receive a bound and illustrated book with your original story inside! Email or visit our website for details.

Volunteer with us!

Story Studio is always looking for reliable, passionate volunteers to help us! Email info@storystudio.ca or visit our website for details.



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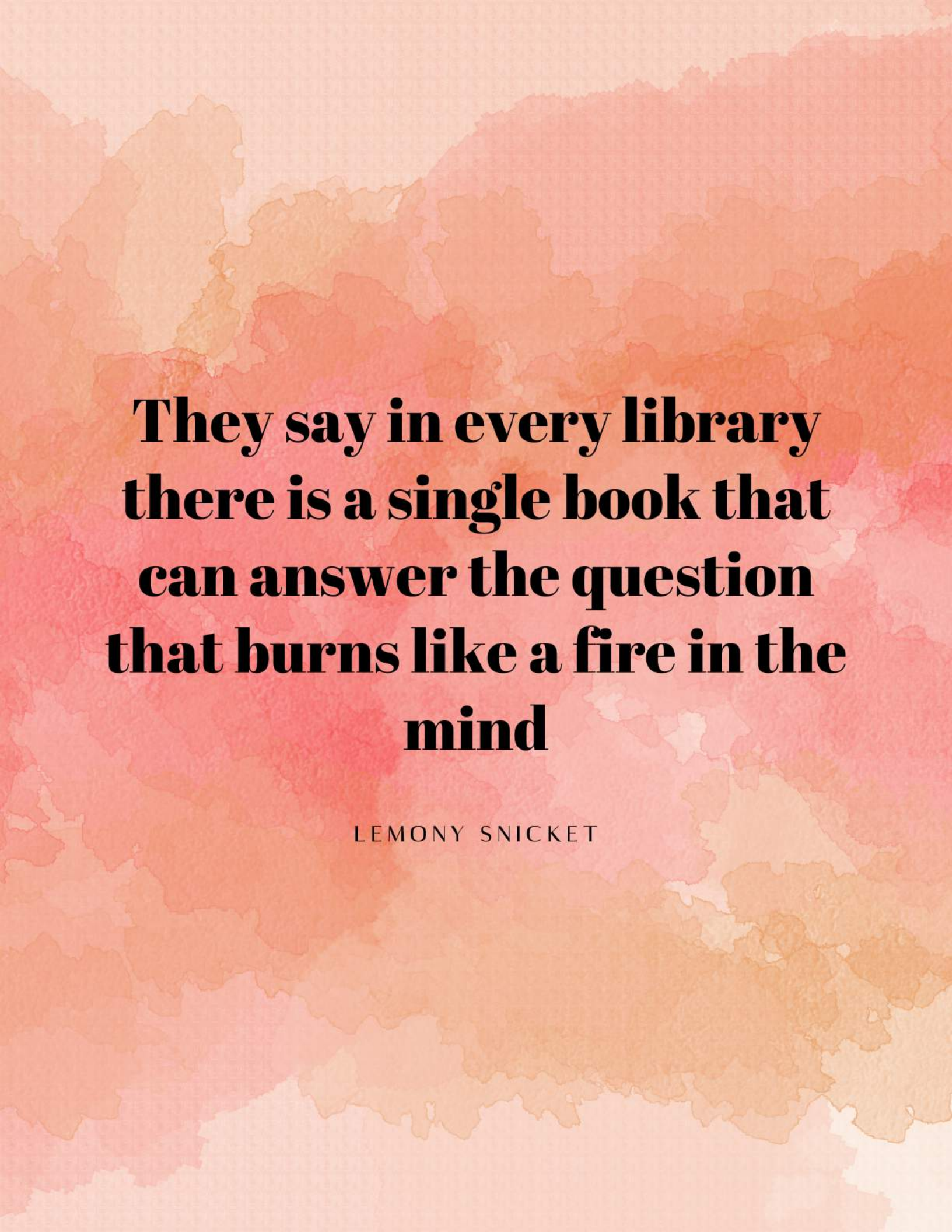
www.storystudio.ca



KIRA

WHIRLWIND

Where am I?
I am in: pain, fear, confusion.
The world has started spinning, and
I've lost my footing, and
I'm lost.
Memories tugging the rug out from under me,
I don't know where this road will lead.
It's a whirlwind of chaos,
Colours, emotions and melodies whipping around
In the wind,
And I'll be blown away if I'm not careful,
Or if something else goes wrong.
I am alone.
Am I alone?
Someone is tugging at my hand,
Pulling me out of the maelstrom and guiding me away.
In the wind,
Colours emotions and melodies slowly settle,
The whirlwind of chaos seen from the outside looking in.
I don't know where this road will lead,
But I can trust that the memories will fade.
I'm safe.
I'm grounded, and
The world has stopped spinning, and
I am in: silence, peace, hope.
Where am I?
Home.

The background is a soft, abstract watercolor wash in shades of orange, peach, and light pink, creating a textured, painterly effect.

**They say in every library
there is a single book that
can answer the question
that burns like a fire in the
mind**

LEMONY SNICKET

ABBY

A cluster of yellow butterflies of various sizes is positioned in the upper right corner of the page, appearing to fly towards the left.

FLAWS AND ALL

Scene from a Live Show at PSII

Narrator: Dear Diary, Elspeth wrote, today was the day Peter finally asked me out. Took him long enough. She taps her chin thoughtfully while she wonders what to write next. She raises her pen in the air in aha! and continues writing.

Elspeth (as she's writing): I didn't give him an answer, I told him I'd have it by first period tomorrow morning. Now it's late at night and I still have no idea what I'm going to tell him! I of course told all my friends what had happened and they'd responded with-

Narrator: "O M G. Girl that's amazing", "You should totally go for it", and hugs and "Ha! Girl's first boyfriend!"

Elspeth (taps her page and looks up lost in thought): I so badly want to go out on a date with him! Just think! Me, dating popular, handsome, blond haired, blue eyed Peter. I'd be the most wanted girl at Clinton High ever.

Narrator: But Elspeth felt something holding her back, maybe pulling her in another direction completely.

Elspeth: There's this other cute guy. Uri. My friends made fun of him for his name.

Narrator: Oh my gosh, no way. That's almost like URINE. Sorry darling, can't date him.

Elspeth: But Uri is funny, in a nice way. Peter is just (sighs dreamily) Peter..

Narrator: Elspeth puts down her pen and grabs her hairbrush and brushes it through the ends of her hair. Once again, lost in thought.

Beat.

Narrator: She puts down the brush and continues writing.

Elspeth: I don't know what my friends would say if I turned down a date with the hottest guy in school. They'd probably kick me out and I'd have to join the poetry group and sit with them during lunch to at least seem like I belong somewhere.. To something...

Narrator: At this point Elspeth is completely in knots about what to do. (Raises one hand palm flat out) Peter. (Raises other hand in same way) Or Uri. Suddenly she scribbles furiously into her diary, a worried expression on her face.

Elspeth (determinedly): (Tapping her pen against the page gently) There was something my English teacher said about knowing who you are. Like whether you are always looking for yourself. That perfect version of yourself, or. You take a chance and you start creating yourself to who you want to be. Flaws and all. (Elspeth pauses while Narrator talks)

Narrator (to audience): I don't know about you guys but this sounds like a pretty smart English teacher.

Beat.

Narrator: Elspeth tucks her hair behind her ear and sighs.

Elspeth: Uri, kind, and soft spoken and doesn't seem to care what others think. But Peter is the one I've always wanted. The one me and my friends have always dreamed about. He's Ken. And I could be Barbie.

Narrator (in a sympathetic voice to Elspeth): You have a tough decision to make. Ken. Or. Urine.

Elspeth: I've known for a while what I've wanted. (Smiles softly to herself) Not some perfect plastic world. I want the flaws and all.

Narrator: I choose..

Elspeth: Me.







The Sirens Sing for Odysseus

BY CAMERON

Chapter 8

I packed up my stuff and climbed into the car while my mum tried to probe me for anything she could talk about.

“So, how was the weekend?”

I didn’t respond.

“I said, how was the weekend?”

Nothing.

“Why are you always so grumpy with me? Is it really too much to ask for just a little conversation?”

Again, silence. I couldn’t say anything even if I had wanted to.

“You know what, that’s enough. When we get home, you’re grounded.”

She stopped trying to get me to talk.

When I got back to my house, I threw my suitcase down onto the floor and went to lay on my bed. I didn’t get up for the rest of the day, not even when my mum called me down to dinner. My routine was completely trashed, but I didn’t have the emotional capacity to care. I’d trash my routine a thousand times over if it meant getting Devon back.

The next day, I still didn’t say anything. Couldn’t. And when I left for school like usual, I didn’t pack any of my school things, instead putting my wallet in my backpack and setting off for the station.

After buying my ticket, I walked out onto the platform, feeling the cool air rush across my face.

“Sorry, Devon. I couldn’t save you.”

I couldn’t even save myself.

I took a deep breath. I didn’t even know where I was going, but I was done. This slow-burning fuse had melted down to his end.

I laughed as I heard the rush of the oncoming train. This was what they said about the siren's song; it was temptation beyond belief. And I hadn't bothered to plug my ears with candle wax.

"Mordecai! Wait!"

I whipped around and saw a sight I never thought I'd see. My mother was rushing towards me, pulling me into a tight embrace.

"Please don't leave me, my son. My beautiful, beautiful boy," she sobbed.

I could think of a hundred different things to say, but none of them came close to what I wanted to express. So I hugged her back and started crying as well.

I wasn't sure how long we stood there like that, hugging and crying on the train platform, but it didn't really matter. All I knew was that it was long enough for everything that needed saying to be said.

"I'm so sorry, Mordecai. I had no idea you felt that way."

I smiled. "It's alright, Mum. I had no idea you cared."

She cupped my face in her hand. "Oh, I'll always care. You're my son, how couldn't I? You know, there's nothing worse than someone who abandons their child because they turned out a bit differently than originally thought. Those types can't even be called parents, honestly."

"Thanks, Mum. I do have one question, though: how did you know?"

She laughed. "Actually, that's an interesting story. When I woke up today, there was a note on my bedside table that told me everything. It was especially odd because it was signed by someone called... Darwin? No, no, not Darwin- Dylan? No! I know! Devon! As I was saying, it was especially odd because I don't know anyone named Devon. Do you?"

I grinned from ear to ear. "Oh, I'd say so."

"Well, I suppose that's settled then. How'd he know all that stuff though?"

Shrugging, I twirled, making my coat spin around my ankles. "We've talked."

She grinned. "Well, no matter how he knew, I'm just glad he did."

I nodded. "I am too."

"I was probably most shocked about the schoolwork and that. I never meant to pressure you like that, I just- well, when I was your age, I wanted to become an engineer, but then I had a child really young and it ruined everything I had worked for up until that point. I just- I didn't want that to happen to you."

"Wow. I never knew that."

She bit her thumbnail. "Well, we all have secrets. Some more than others."

I thought back to Devon. "Yeah, some more than others."

Mum shrugged. "Well, I wanted to make it up to you, and the annual talent show they hold at the local concert hall is coming up, so- I signed you up to play the piano."

My face lit up. "Really? You did? Oh my god, thank you thank you thank you! Did you know it was my dream to play there?"

She winked. "The note may have covered it, yes."

I jumped up, pumping my fist. "I'm gonna play in the talent show!" My mum laughed and put her hand on my back, steering me towards the exit.

"Now, come on, let's go home. No school for you today."

Epilogue

There's nothing sweeter than the second of silence between the last note of a song and the deafening noise of several hundred people clapping.

I reveled in that silence after I came to the fast-paced close of my favourite piece: Elysium. I had composed it shortly after I left my grandad's house, as a sort of requiem for my first friend.

I always dreamed of this moment: when I would finally get the applause I had been waiting for since "Flight of the Bumblebee" in the third year.

As I looked out at the audience all applauding in unison, I saw a familiar face; one with blue eyes, freckles all over, and curly blond hair.

And despite how many people were in the concert hall, not one's clapping was clearer than his.

THE END.



*She had come here to disappear, and
the water welcomed her home.*

- Kira

STICKS AND STONES AND SPIRITS

PART TWO BY RAINE

Is someone there?

The voice rang throughout the cave, it echoed against the walls. Lilac breathing was accelerated and his palms sweaty.

I don't need you! I can do this! Come back here!

As he kept walking, he noticed that he didn't recognize his surroundings, and the light he expected to reach never came.

He was going the wrong way.

There was only one path in how could I-

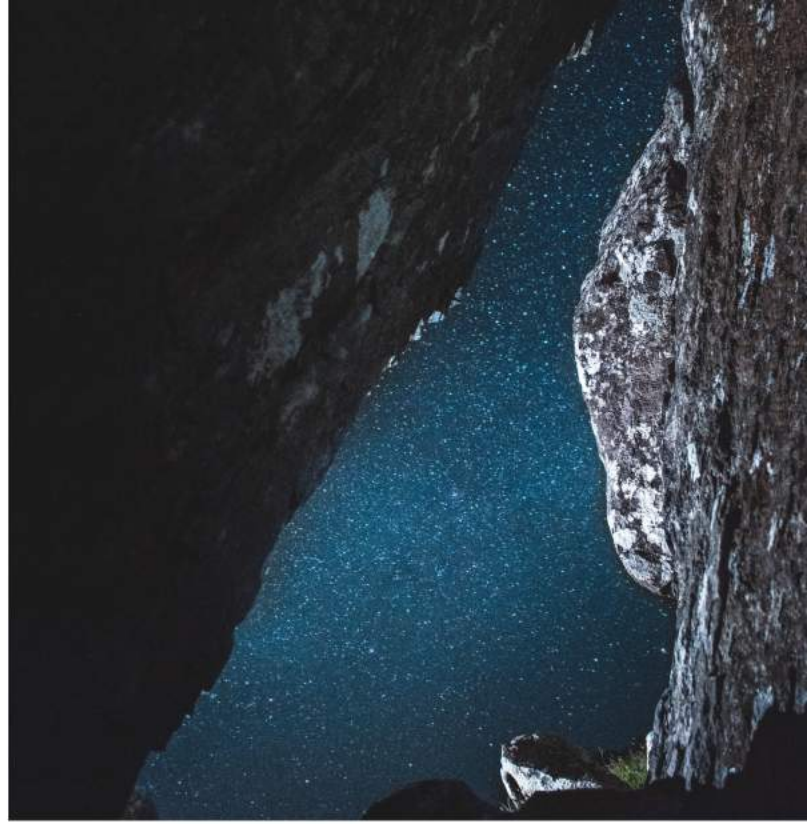
His foot slipped on a rock, and he landed in a puddle. He spilled the rocks he was carrying all over the ground. Lilac groaned as he stood back up, his shirt drenched in water, and his hands muddy. He stumbled to grab some of the rocks he dropped, before he kept walking.

There was light coming from the next room. It had a window to the surface, a small crack in the ceiling, a stream of sunlight filling the space.

The storm must be over already

He noticed across the cave was a sack, with a blanket spread across. Beside it there was a comb, and a notebook, but not much else.

Maybe there was someone here after all.



All of sudden, he heard rocks crumble in the distance. It was coming from behind the wall.

The voice echoed throughout the caves:
I've found you

'This is it,' he thought, 'The ghost has unlocked boring abilities.'

The sound of rocks falling grew closer and louder. And then, the wall fell.

There, Lilac was face to face with an otherworldly being. Lilac was on the ground, his arm bruised, lifting a rock, ready to attack. And the ghost's eyes widened in shock, and he dropped his sword.

"I-, did I scare you?"

Seeing the look on his face, Lilac knew that the ghost wasn't who he thought he'd be. He lowered the stone in his hand, placing it on his lap.

"I thought you wanted to scare me?" Lilac asked.

"I didn't want to scare you, I just wanted to see who was there." the ghost replied.

"Well you had a very loud way of doing so."

"And what was the sword all about!" Lilac yelled.

"It's from my martial art's classes, I didn't want to lose it." the ghost continued.

"You, you take martial art's classes?" Lilac asked.

"Yup, erm, well it's just me and two other friends. We were being taught by their father, who was a part of the local theater."

"I take kickboxing classes," Lilac replied.

"But boxing is fighting with just your hands?"

"No this is different you can kick your opponent too" said Lilac.

"Well I've never heard of that anywhere in Canada"

The ghost glided next to Lilac, opening the sack near the lamp and the blanket. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Lilac"

"Isn't that a girl's name?"

"Well if I'm a guy then it isn't," Lilac stated

"My name is Amaro."

Lilac tried taking a deep breath again, trying to process all that happened. "How did you die?"

Amaro looked up from his things, his eyes confused. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, look at you, you don't have a body."

"I don't know what you're talking about. Everything's fine-"

"How long have you been down here?" Lilac raised his voice.

"It hasn't been that long, a few hours?" Amaro replied.

"I've never seen you in town before."

"Well I've never seen you the world's pretty big you know-"

"You're a ghost okay!"

Lilac held one of the stones up to Amaro's hand. It fell through his translucent form, dropping on the floor.

"What year is it?"

"1935"

"It's not 1935, it's 2022."

Amaro looked up to the crack of light in the ceiling.

"I'm, I'm not dead okay! My family's waiting for me right now!-"

Lilac wrapped his arms around Amaro. He could feel the warmth coming from Amaro's glowing form. Amaro froze before sinking in his arms as well.

"If you're still here, that means there's something still waiting for you."

Amaro lowered himself, sitting across from Lilac on the floor. He wasn't able to make any eye contact. "Why are you down here?" he asked.

"Oh uh, I was just on a walk up the mountain. I heard your voice, and decided to see who was here while I waited for the storm to pass above," Lilac explained.

"I meant, why are you so far away from town? There has to be a reason."

Lilac didn't understand.

"I came here because the boys at school told me I'm weak if I couldn't spend a night here on my own. They said that I never do anything alone, and that it makes me weak," Amaro exclaimed.

Lilac didn't know what to say. "Being independent is okay, but coming here unprepared and alone is dangerous. What were you thinking?"

"I wasn't thinking! I packed my things, thinking I would stay the night there, and all the bullying would end," Amaro yelled.

"I don't know you, but your strength is more than just how self-sufficient you are. You don't have to listen to what anyone else says!"

Amaro crossed his legs. "Sorry I scared you with the sword," he said.

"It's alright, don't worry about it, it was a misunderstanding."

"Do you want to see it?"

"Sure."

Amaro lifted it off the ground and placed it in front of Lilac.

"It's very pretty."

"It's from the theater."

Lilac took a deep breath.

"I was on a walk because I don't know what to do."

Amaro looked at Lilac.

"My last few tests have had lower marks, and it's because I have no idea what's going on in class. My parents are expecting that I keep up my grades, or else I won't go to university."

Lilac pulled out a piece of folded paper from his pocket.

"This was my last report card. I was gonna throw it off the cliff."

Amaro lifted the paper in excitement. "Nice airplane."

"Thanks," Lilac replied.

"I'm sure you're not doing that bad, don't you have friends that could help you?" Amaro inquired.

"I don't really."

"What about your parents?"

"I couldn't put that burden on them. They have enough on their plate, doing my teacher's job shouldn't be on there," Lilac explained.

"But if they care about your success they care about what you need," Amaro added as he handed the report card back to Lilac. "Just ask."

Lilac took a deep breath. "Only if we get out of here."

Lilac stood up, but Amaro stayed put on the ground. "You can go ahead without me, I'll find own way out."

"I need your help too!" Lilac reached his hand out to Amaro

"My phone's dead, your light can help us see. With that, I should be able to retrace my steps."

Amaro grabbed his sack and blanket, and got up from the ground.

"You're warm too, I'm freezing," Lilac exclaimed.

Together, they walked out of the room where Amaro spent the last eight decades living in. They walked through a narrow hallway, before arriving at the same fork in the road that Lilac approached earlier. He remembered the stalagmite that was growing in the middle.

"I turned right the first time, and then right the second time, so this time we'll go left."

"No."

Lilac turned around.

"I saw you coming from the left path before, we will go right this time,"

They turned left, and continued up the rocky surface. When they approached a steep cliff, Lilac grabbed on and tried climbing up, but slipped and scratched his hand. "Shit!"

Amaro floated next to Lilac to help him see the rockface. "You should place your right foot on that rock, and your left foot on that ledge."

Lilac followed his directions.

"I'm gonna create a ledge for your hands."

Amaro focused his energy on the wall in front of him, and using his telekinesis, he ripped out two pieces off the wall.

"Argh, push and jump!"

Lilac used his upper body to climb up onto the upper level. Amaro followed, dropping the rocks and floating up to meet him.

From here, the cave got narrower, they needed to step over boulders and crouch under low ceilings. It got to the point where the cave was so narrow they would have to crawl on their stomachs.

"I'm not going in there," Amaro stated.

"It won't be that long."

"There has to be another way, I'll go find another path-"

"We stick together, okay? There's no danger in that

and your light will make it easy to see."

Amaro moved to the entrance of the passage.

"Here, I'll go ahead. Take a deep breath."

Slowly, they crawled through with no mishaps. Emerging on the other side, there was another fork in the paths.

"I've never actually been this far away from where you found me. After a while, I made that corner of the cave my own."

With the help of Amaro's luminescence, Lilac was able to recognize that he had been here already.

"When I entered the cave, it kept descending deeper, so we should head right because it is going up. It should be getting closer to the surface."

They kept climbing and ascending until they reached a stream.

"Amaro we're almost there! This is where I tripped."

Amaro used his telekinesis to move a few stones over and create a dry path. The last part of the cave had sand, and it was wide and spacious, stalactites hanging from the ceiling.

After climbing another ridge, they saw their destination. The cave opening, the outside world. Granted, it was as dark as the cave, but they could see trees, and they could hear rain falling, and they could see the stars.

They both walked towards the edge of the cave, when Amaro stopped. "I-I can't."

Lilac turned around.

"I can't go out there, I mean, what if people see me, I am just a myth, I'm a freak!"

"I will protect you, as much as you've protected me today, and together we will face anything that comes for us."

Amaro smiled. "Thank you"

As he looked up at the stars for the first time in years, Amaro's body slowly faded away and was sucked into the sword he was holding.

Oh shit, no no no no. I made him realize his purpose and now he's moved on. My one friend. Lilac eyes started watering up as he picked up the sword.

You know I'm still here right?

"Huh?"

Yeah you think I would just abandon you like that, no way, you're cool. I'll always be there for you.

*And this is why I do these
things: to see the beauty, and
help others see it.*

- Kira



Forum Topic: Send in your new years messages!

user: 79846390

The year ends in dark
And the year starts in colour
Let's be together.

Happy new year everyone! Not to plug but there's a promotion at the shop. Everything on the clothing racks is 40% off, and uh I won't be sewing any commissions this week.
This year I want to finally use the camera I found in the evocation. I want to bring it outside and record all the things I want to remember forever. Wish me luck!

user: 689504937

Happy New year!
I just came up with an idea. The evocations are strong enough power sources that we could probably create lights to decorate all of the buildings in town. If our island was bright enough, we might even be able to see it from space.
If only we had enough materials (and we weren't in hiding).
One day, I hope this technology brings us closer together. Honestly I don't want it to get too bright because then I wouldn't be able to show the kids the stars I can see from the evocation. At least, I don't think the satellites would be affected.

user: 34465866

During the winter season, the sun is out less, the work is done, and we can take time to rest and relax. That's how I would want to start the year. You won't see me on the fishing boat as much, but you'll spot me at home, maybe even trying to draw.
As much as warmth is important for survival, we should appreciate the cool air while it lasts.
This year, when I speak my stories, I will make sure that it also goes through my microphone, so that it remains in the evocation, just like the memories of those long ago.
Happy New Year.

user: 9078689

Last night, on new year's eve, a child came up to me. He was holding a piece of metal, something that came from the old world. I told him, "things like this used to fly, they had cameras and lights. Luckily he never found out that I found that in the evocation, and tried taking a picture of the island from above, only for it to run out of battery and crash down. Now that he's given it back though, I can show you all the picture I took:



Happy New Year

**A Melody Finder excerpt
by Raine**

SCP Adventures

AN ONGOING STORY
BY BOWEN

Chapter Three: Ordering Moose Blood from a Coffee Machine

The on-site intercom crackled to life.

“Dr. Wheeler, please report to SCP-294 containment chamber immediately.” said the intercom manager over the PA.

I made my way to the light containment zone. And then inserted my keycard in the door labeled “SCP-294”. The door slid open and inside, I saw Dr. Buck standing in the middle of the room, patiently tapping her foot on the concrete floor.

I saw Mr. Moore looking down at us from inside the observation room. I looked to my left and saw what appeared to be a coffee vending machine with a keyboard on it.

“Huh, so this is the coffee machine that can dispense any liquid right?” I asked.

“Indeed. We would like some assistance in testing. Also I forgot my wallet so I can't pay the machine.” she said.

I chuckled and took out my wallet. I inserted 50 cents into the coin slot on the machine.

“What would the first drink be?” I asked.

Dr. Buck looked at her clipboard and said “Liquid nitrogen”.

“Okie dokie” I replied as I typed in “liquid nitrogen” on the keyboard.

A cup materialized and a vapoury liquid was poured into it. The room got cold, and the observation window was getting slightly fogged up.



She wrote something down on her clipboard. I went up and touched the cup. To my surprise, the cup was somehow at normal temperature. I picked up the cup and carefully placed it down on top of a steel table. I then walked up to the machine, inserted 50 cents, and typed in mountain dew on the keypad. Another cup materialized and a fizzy green liquid was dispensed into it. I picked it up and took a sip.

“I wish we had this at site 19.” I said.

“Alright. Next up is moose blood.” said Dr. Buck.

“Why moose blood? That seems oddly specific”

“Just punch it in. I don't make the rules.” she said.

I typed “moose blood” into the keypad and then the cup materialized again. And moose blood was poured into it from out of nowhere as usual. “Set it down on the table and I will take it to the lab for testing later” she said.

I placed the cup on the table. I was about to return to the coffee machine when I accidentally slipped and knocked the cup of liquid nitrogen over and spilled it on my hand. I felt a burning sensation in my right hand, then it went numb. I winced and grasped my wrist.

“Medical emergency in SCP-294's containment chamber!” Dr. Buck yelled into her radio.

several medical staff flooded into the room and lifted me into a stretcher. They then carried me to the infirmary while the indescribably cold liquid burned away at my hand. When we arrived, the medical staff laid me down on the bed and began wiping a strange liquid on the wound using a ball of cotton. They then patched up the wound and wrapped it in a bandage.

Later that day...

Lawrence, Carson, and Gustav had come to visit me and see how I was doing. "How bad is it?" asked Gustav. "2nd degree frostbite." said Dr. Buck.

"Hey Carson, you gotta have some kind of joke about this." i said

"Hmmm. Oh I know! What do you get when you cross a vampire and a snowman? Frostbite!"

"Har har" said Lawrence with obvious sarcasm. "Oh come on! The only thing colder is Dr. Buck's attitude." said carson.

"Oof burn, or should I say freeze?" I said.

Everyone had a good laugh while Dr. Buck sat there with her usual annoyed look.

"Okay guys I got one more." said carson.

"Please don't be what I think it is." I said.

"Yup" replied carson.

"Please no." I said.

"What do you call a blonde woman with a wig? Artificial intelligence!" he said.

Gustav burst out laughing. Lawrence tried his best not to laugh but ultimately failed.

Dr. Buck just sat there wide-eyed in utter shock from what she just heard.

"And on that note, I think it's time to stop with the jokes for now." I said.

We just sat there in silence for a solid 10 seconds. "How long until you recover?" Lawrence finally asked.

"About 6 months, I was lucky" I said.

"Damn".

"Just kidding! I'm gonna be administered a pill of SCP-500 and I'll be out and about in no time." i said

"Oh great. Hope you're ready to be dealing with Gustav everyday then." said Carson.

"Actually on second thought, how about you hand me a rope and give me a hand with tying a noose please." I sarcastically said.

"Ouch!" said Gustav.



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Ages 13-18

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