

GUILD OF YOUNG WRITERS

POETRY

AUTHOR CHATS

BOOK
RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT STORIES

VOLUME #11
FALL/
WINTER
2023

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

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

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

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

We hope that Story Studio's 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.



CONTENTS

25

Victoria Conservatory X Story Studio Collab
by Raine

28

Writing Prompts and Inspiration
by Abby



4

Editor's Note

5

Get to know the authors
Would you rather...

7

Haikus
New, ongoing by Molly

10

Poetry Reminiscing on Summer Vacation
by Raine

12

A Reason
Poetry by Abby

14

Beyond the Glass: Chapter 1
by Samantha

18

The Survival Instinct: Chapter 1-2
By Nathan

21

Author Chat with Mark Leiren-Young
By Marja

23

Waiting Room - An Excerpt
By Abby

24

Author Chat with Giselle Vriesen
By Marja

27

Tiny Stories
Flash fiction by Cathy

EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the latest issue of our zine! I am acting as interim editor for the Guild of Young Writers while Rebecca is on maternity leave.

I have always been surrounded by words and stories. Steeped in them, really. My mother, a Dutch immigrant, is a voracious reader, studied linguistics in university, and has worked as an editor. She loves to tell us the origins of words, having studied Latin and Greek in her youth. She is painstakingly articulate (and funny!) in her works of prose and poetry for special occasions. My Danish immigrant father had aspirations to be a librarian, and shared a love of reading, always falling asleep with a novel on his chest. In my parents' office were bookshelves lined with rows of books of all kinds. My older sister did everything with her nose in a book. I mean EVERYTHING. She read in the car and while we walked to school. She even read while she brushed her teeth.

I did not share my sister's, nor my parents' voracious proclivities until later in life. With my own children, however, I have embraced the power of sharing a book, making full use of the public library by taking out the maximum of sixty books at a time. As a literacy specialist and classroom teacher, I have carried on the excitement of sharing a story with my students. When you can captivate a child with the magic of a story or inspire them to express their ideas in a tale of their own conception, that is something special.

When my daughter was in the first grade, she came home with a bound copy of a book that she had written with Story Studio's Story Maker program. She was proud of this accomplishment and was keen to share the physical creation that she held in her tiny hands. My family and I all marvelled at the concept of this program and gushed at her lovely story. What an amazing opportunity for children to publish their own books! Eight years later and now in high school, she has rows of books on her own bookshelves and reads and writes non-stop.

Earlier this year, I was fortunate enough to experience and support Rebecca's facilitation of the Story Maker program in an elementary school classroom. She was able to inspire the class to create stories of their own and connected with each and every student in the room. Remembering my daughter's experience, I recalled the great appeal of this program. Perhaps six months later, I heard from a friend that Story Studio was looking to hire someone to be a workshop facilitator. This was absolute kismet. I walked into the interview with my daughter's Story Maker book in hand, and it all came full circle. I have never been as invigorated by an interview or as completely struck by the discovery of something that felt meant to be.

I am honoured to now be a part of this unique community - the Guild of Young Writers. These young authors have inspired me with their talent and their vulnerability. I feel lucky to be a steward for their stories. Special thanks to all these teens who have welcomed me into their established circle and shown such a willingness to engage with other new members, as well. I am immensely happy to facilitate your creativity.

Marja



Marja Sirna
Program Coordinator

Would you rather publish one insanely great-selling book and never write again ... or publish a string of 15 average-selling books over a 20-year period?

15 average-selling books over a 20 year period because it would kill me to never write again.

~ Sami

Definitely 15 average-selling books because I couldn't ever *not* write.

~ Abby

15 average selling books, because I could never not start a interconnected book universe.

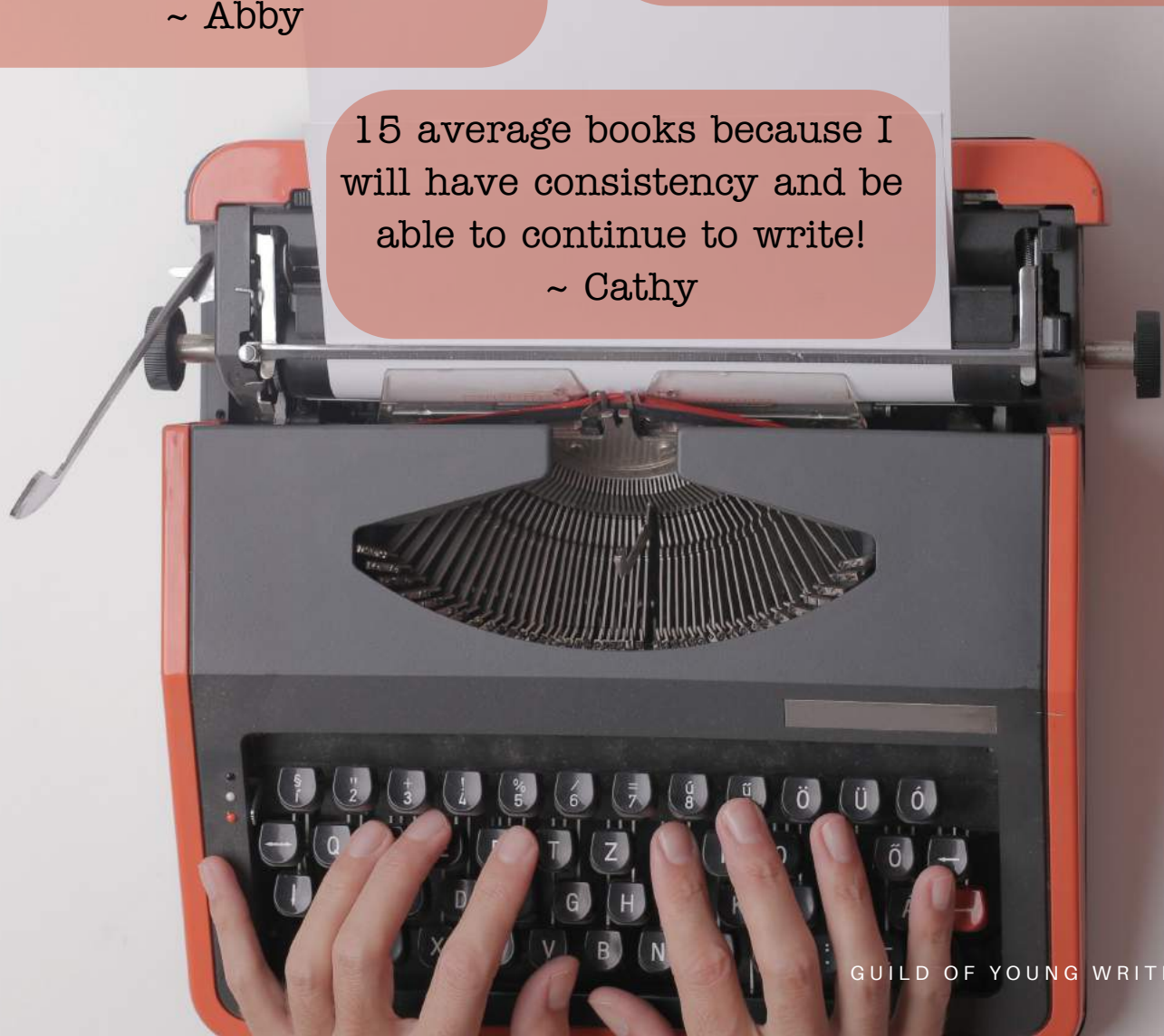
~ Raine

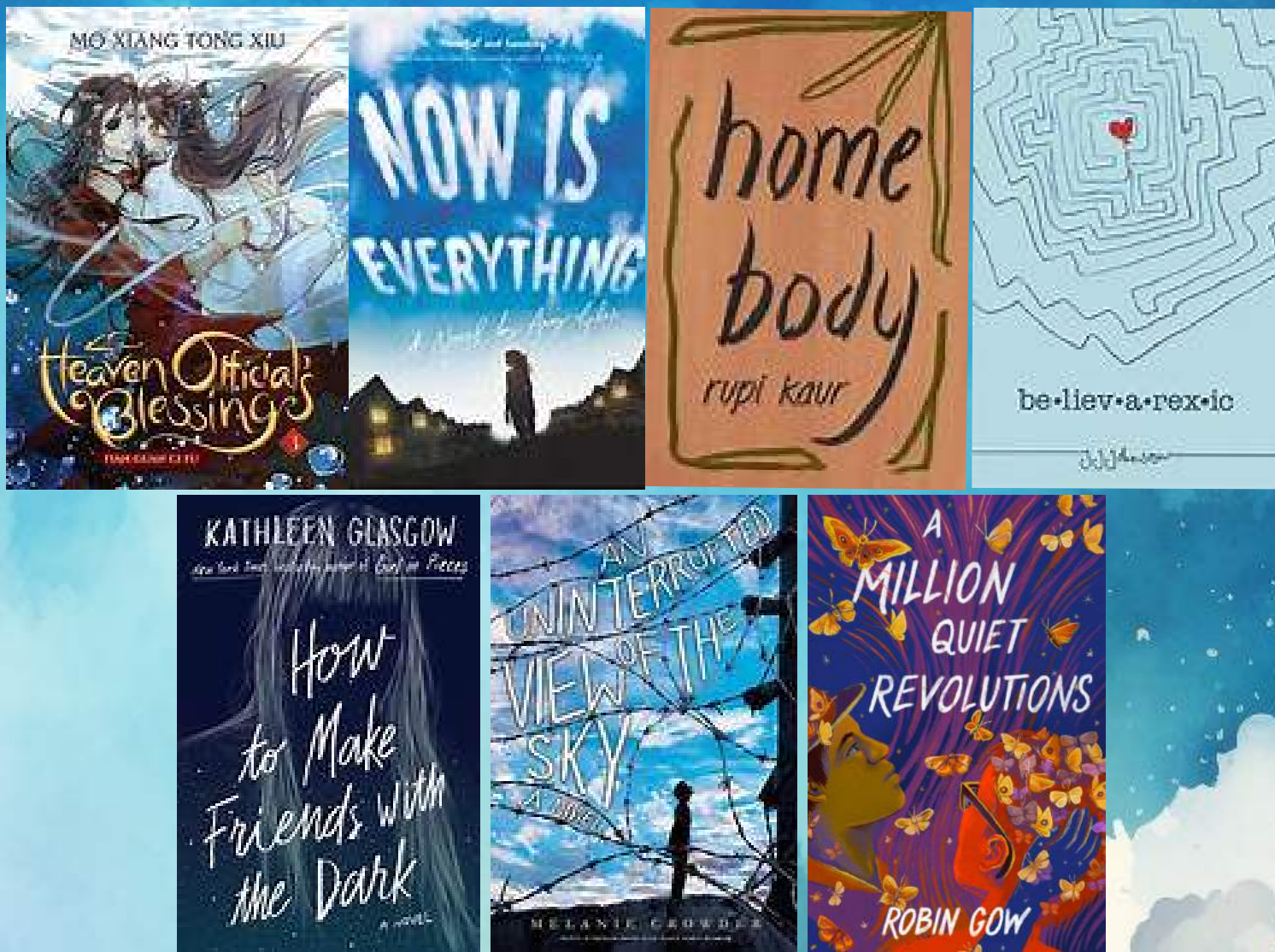
Probably 15 av selling books, cause you could grow out your progress over time and once the 20 years is over you'll sell a banger.

~ Rei

15 average books because I will have consistency and be able to continue to write!

~ Cathy





BOOKS WE'VE READ AND ENJOYED THIS SEASON

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH THE DARK, BY KATHLEEN GLASGOW
 A MILLION QUIET REVOLUTIONS, BY ROBIN GOW
 BELIEVAREXIC, BY J.J. JOHNSON
 HOME BODY, BY RUPI KAUR
 AN UNINTERRUPTED VIEW OF THE SKY, BY MELANIE CROWDER
 NOW IS EVERYTHING, BY AMY GILES
 HEAVEN OFFICIALS BLESSING (TIAN GUAN CI FU)
 BY MO XIANG TONG XIU



Dust lines every wall
Memories of what once was
The dust has settled



Plants lead simple lives
Growing to be beautiful
Then burning away

Haiku and designs by Molly van Zoelingen



On November 25th, we had the pleasure of celebrating some outstanding young authors at the launch of the 2023 Summer Writing Studio's *Beyond the Veil: Tales of the Unknown*.

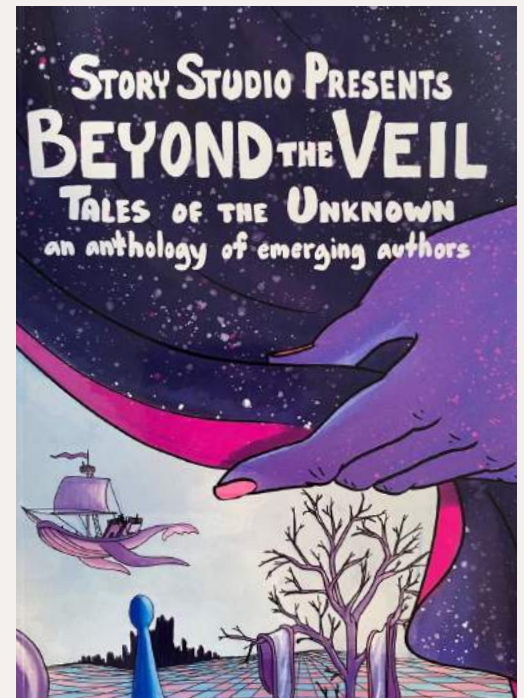
Book Launch!



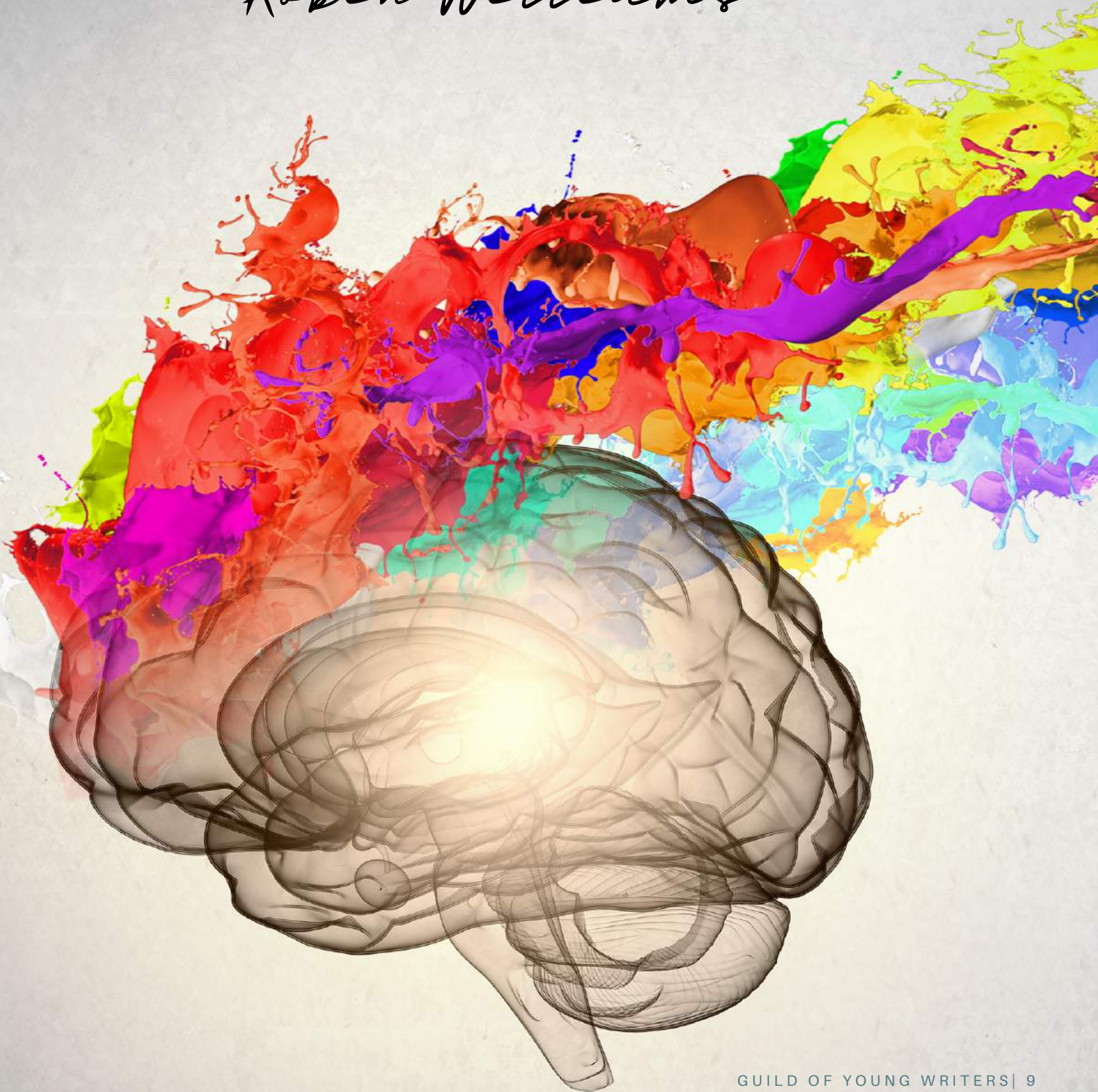
The cake fooled many people who thought it was actually an old book sitting on the table! Special thanks to my sister, Lisa Stewart, who shared her baking and decorating expertise! It was beautiful and delicious!

The Summer Writing Studio

This anthology is a collection of the work of 16 young authors: Ilisha Bhalla, Kat Gillese, Abby Hawthorne, Kira Hawthorne, Raine Hermosa, Maisha Klette, Kai Leangen, Sylvie LeBlanc, Samantha Martin, Claire Murray, Nic, Zlata Steeves, Cathy Yeung, Iris Yeung, Ava Webster and Molly van Zoolingen. Rebecca Ruiter led an engaging Summer Writing Studio that led to this stunning work. Many thanks to Audrey Greenlees for their unbelievably creative and beautiful artwork, Emma Dingman and Sarah Kilian who volunteered their editing talents, and Sean Rodman for executing the publication. Congratulations to all!



*"You're only given one little
spark of madness. You
mustn't lose it."
- Robin Williams*



Poems to reminisce on summer vacation

The further we venture, the more lost we become.

Ascending above the clouds to soar for new heights, we
break free from what holds us down.

What we know is what we hold dear, what we refuse to
let go

Our goodbyes are what we realize to be the start that
lets you fly

And the clouds still block your view


And the further you venture from home, the more you
realize you don't know where you are or where you're
going.

The clouds cover your view, but they also cover all your
tears, your expectations, your fears.

you let go

and you realize, you are free.

Written by Raine



I just wanna see you again
Screw all the plans I made
I shouldn't have left you like I did
Though I never see you you're on my mind
Please don't hang up the line
Though I never
When the sun falls down
and the sky glows pink and gold
and the air is cool enough to feel the breeze.
When the lights come on, around about
I sense mother earth return her vow
no more storms to settle
I can breathe, as so I'm told
alone, all i wanted, all i mourn

Written by Raine

Here, it doesn't feel like home
The sun illuminates our path
From here, I can see all the ways
that we could go.
The world will never stay in place
And it will lead you back to me.
Our world could stay right with all
the lights and sounds

Cause we will always find each
other
in the places I find for you
things I leave behind

A Reason - Poem by Abby

I think I've found a reason

A reason to be a book filled to the brim with ink-clad pages
To be a magician with just one more trick up my sleeve
A reason to be a run on sentence.
To forget all punctuation and just write no matter what came before or what will come after.

There's the fact that I don't have to have memories make my brain go into anaphylactic shock.
It might take a while but soon.
Soon I'll be free from the memories I thought would never stop haunting my dreams.

There's that one person
Who gets you
Even if you aren't quite
The same person.
That person who you can joke with, and scroll through Pinterest side by side with, and laugh with until tears run out of your eyes, or have sobs racking through your body and they'll be there.
Telling you it'll be fine, giving you hugs, and loving you.

There's the one wearing black and white
And sometimes red.
Who you have some sort of strange snow in the middle of summer connection with.
That takes you to concerts, and makes you playlists and tells you to dance.

People you know, and even though you might not know enough to write a full poem about, mean so so much.
Who will make you laugh, even when they don't try.
Who bop you on the head as they walk by.
Who show you cute photos of their pet and you ooh and aww over them together.

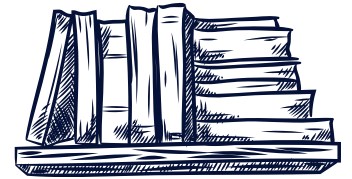
Schools that take you in
Despite your past
And teach you and help create your new present.
Teachers who listen
And guide
And joke with you,
Who let you cry
Even when you don't want to.

Books that are propped on shelves propping up your heart and helping it stay just
One more day.
Because there are books you have yet to read that will change everything. Your point of view, your hope. Your name.

Traditions that will live on forever
Others meant to break
And some to mend with the right people.

Songs that will hurt you heart because they will remind you of people that broke your mind.
Some that will make your arms wiggle and legs stand up and jump around.
And some that you hate with an absolute passion for no reason other than they don't sound good.

There's trips to take
Around the world
Or to a thrift store
Or to the library
To find yourself.
Those trips won't ever end.



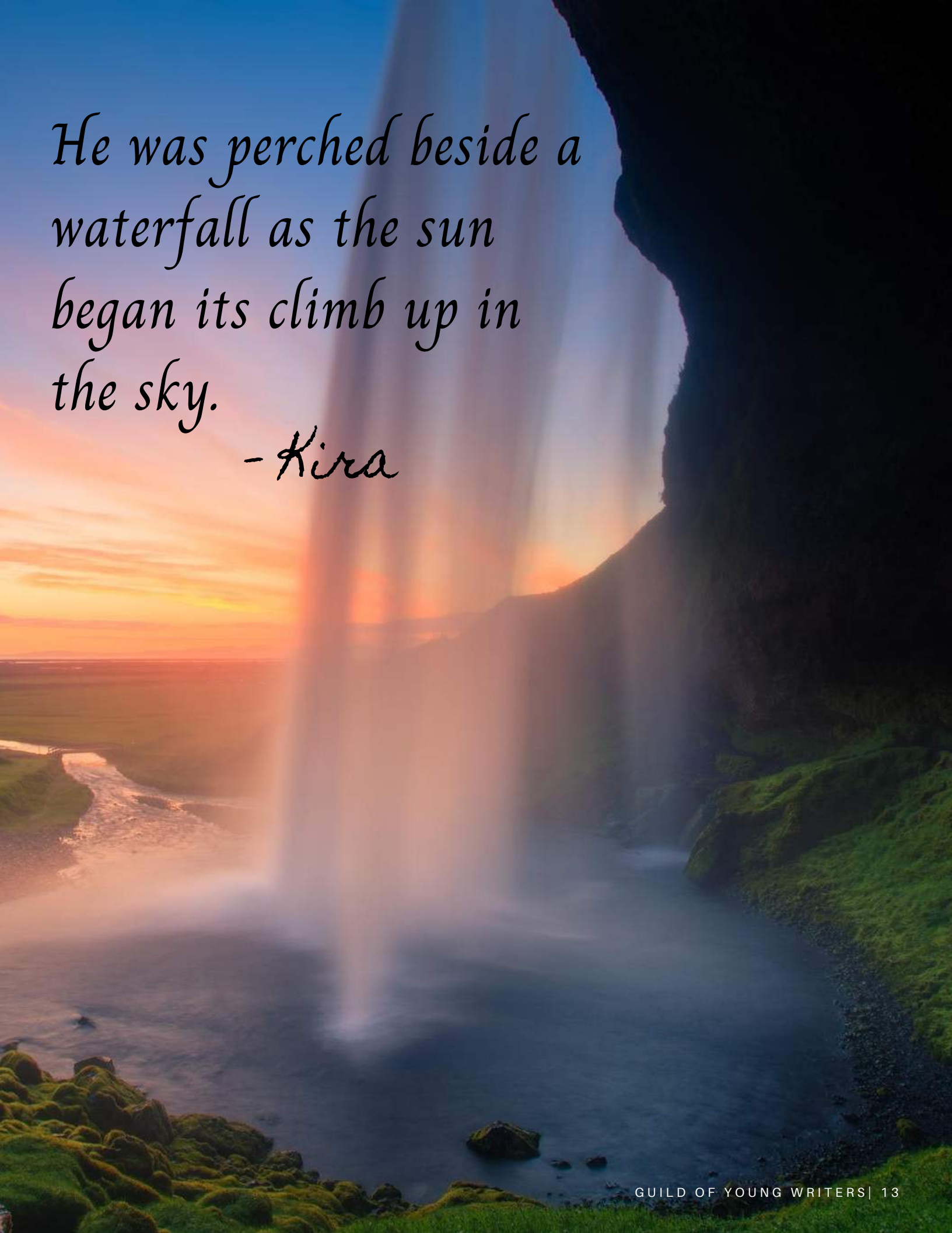
Making sandcastles
And waiting for the waves to rush over the structure and bring it down

Walking through forests
And pretending to be a fairy, or a witch, or a nymph
"pretending"
But really among the leaves you can be whoever you want.

Writing stories
About you
and others
And right
and wrong
And happy
and sad.



Letting yourself be free
Letting go of the rules of punctuation and society
Letting yourself be a run on sentence.



*He was perched beside a
waterfall as the sun
began its climb up in
the sky.*

- Kira

BEYOND THE GLASS...

CHAPTER ONE

BY SAMANTHA MARTIN

Ervin Thornebourn, October 1st 1875

"Your room, sir," the hotel assistant said, handing me the shiny room key.

"Thank you." I smiled back, turning the key over in my hand.

The skinny gold key was just like any other hotel room key, with its long stem and the room number etched into the top. Little did I know that that key would lock my fate.

I sat my bag down on the floor of the overly lavish room and started to unpack somewhat bitterly. It was an impressive room, there was no doubt about that. What aggravated me was in a world that revolved around social class, did I deserve this? As an upper middle class citizen I was used to nice things but this room was more fit for a noble than a mere Police Clerk.

I placed my clothes on the bed and looked around the room, despite the fact no one was there. I quickly took out a case file from the bottom of my bag and flipped it open, sneakily examining the contents. I technically wasn't allowed to bring any elements of my former work with me but I couldn't help myself. The case was just too fascinating.

Before I left Westminster my job was to sort paperwork on a case that piqued my interest. A series of murders that had occurred around London. The victims were cold and blue as if they had been choked to death but autopsies showed evidence of being burned alive. To top it off, all the victims showed the same markings: a cross, slashed deeply above the heart. When examined by a coroner the bodies contained no blood. Not inside the body, not at the crime scene. So far the victims had all been ex-military or those of new money status which caused an immediate investigation to be started by Scotland Yard.

Few were chosen to work on the project; all were hand-picked by Queen Victoria herself. I was one of the lucky ones who got assigned to the project. I have no idea how. It's not like I was a certified inspector, but apparently my theories on the case were deemed valuable. I was laid off, and it frustrated me beyond belief considering we are already running low on people. I placed the file inside the drawer of the ornate vanity and smiled at it briefly. The last thing I pulled out of my suitcase was the therapist referral note my boss set up for me. Another thing I felt was utterly pointless but my boss had insisted.

"For a man of your age to have no wife or kids is simply outrageous!" Mister Kippings had said. "And for you to be working day and night without rest or food! Well, I would be a monster not to give you a vacation! Besides, this isn't even your real post. I'm sure it has been hard for you." The only two thoughts that went through my brain at that time: a man of my age? I'm 23 for heaven's sake! Did you just say, vacation? You may as well just say you're booting me off the project. I decided to politely decline his offer, then he gave me a cold stare.

"Let me rephrase this Thornebourn, You are no longer a part of this assignment whether you like it or not and you will treat your time off as vacation until we can find you a new post! We will find you a nice hotel in London for you to stay in until then —"

"Sir," I interrupted. "What about my house here?"

He gave me a grave look. "Well, because your house is provided through Scotland Yard, it is being taken back to be used by other employees," My heart sank. Not only was I getting fired but I was being forced to move. All I really could do was nod and say, "Yes sir, I understand."

I mean, what else are you supposed to do in that situation? I soon found myself packing for my 'vacation' and travelling to my new home in this hotel.

After unpacking I made my way slowly down to the restaurant below. Gentlemen hustled back and forth, some carrying wine glasses, others trying to woo various ladies. I bustled past them. I just wanted to get my food and go. I sat down at the bar and tried very hard not to breathe too deeply. Pipe smoke lingered above diners' heads like fog on a late October night. The smell of tobacco and overpriced drinks hung thick in the air, and I watched as perfectly good gentlemen lost their decency under the influence of their poor choices.

"May I get you somethin, sir?" the bartender asked me.

"Just some food please," I muttered, half heartedly.

"Anythin to drink, sir?"

"No, thanks. I don't drink."

The bartender stared at me for a moment, examining me up and down as he polished the glasses.

"You aren't from around here, are ya?" he said finally.

I looked up. "No, I'm not, I'm from Whitehall, in Westminster,"

"Here on vacation, sir?" he asked, handing me a menu.

"You could say that. I'll have the soup, please," I responded, handing the menu back.

I watched as the bartender took out a bowl and poured out a good helping of soup for me. He passed it over and I ate silently. He stared at me unnervingly while I ate. I was just about finished when the bartender spoke up again.



"Are you sure you don't want a drink, sir?" he asked.

I frowned. How many times was he going to ask me that? Of course, you can only deny something so many times before it is seen as rude and after all my boss did say I was to treat this as a vacation.

"You know what... sure," I said, giving in. The bartender smiled. "What would you like?"

"I'll have a scotch please," I muttered.

"Scotch! Man for someone who claims they don't drink, you're going all in!" The bartender laughed.

I took it and sipped slowly. It was true I knew next to nothing about alcohol but I'd seen coworkers and friends order things before, wine and scotch always seemed to be a constant. To my surprise it actually was pretty good, it had a slight smokey flavour which I found oddly pleasurable, and it tasted almost creamy. I took the wedge of lime from the side, dipped it in the drink and sucked on it as I'd seen others do. That wasn't so good. I decided to just keep drinking it straight. It was odd I felt so carefree, why had I been so bitter before? It was my vacation and I could spend it however I wanted! I didn't need to worry about working or not working right then! Besides, that drink was delicious! How had I not had it before? I ordered another drink and it soon disappeared, so I ordered another, and another, and...

"Are you sure you haven't had enough?" the bartender asked me.

I looked at him. "What do you mean?"

"You've had eight..."

"So?"

"You're drunk, sir!"

I stared at him and paused. I felt fine. In fact, I felt better than ever. I mean, everything was lagging slightly and I felt odd but- I stopped. Blazes. I was drunk. Extremely drunk. The bartender must have noticed my panic because he smiled at me kindly.

“Don’t worry, the hangover isn’t too bad for scotch but you may feel a bit off for the next while. Go back to your room and try to get some sleep.”

I nodded and stood up. The world spun. I instantly regretted giving in to the bartender and his persuasion. I stumbled back to my room, tired, drunk, and humiliated. My hands fumbled with the key as I tried to put it in the lock. I finally managed and practically fell into the room. I grabbed the wall for balance and made my way over to the bed. I paused for a moment, grabbing onto the vanity for support before finally making it to the bed. I sat down and changed as quickly as I could, stripping myself of the coat, vest, shirt and everything on my person and replacing it with the soft silk of my night clothes.

As I turned round and slid into the sheets, my head started to spin. Worse than ever. Suddenly an overwhelming sense of dread consumed me, pressing me down until I couldn’t breath. I couldn’t move. I couldn’t even scream if I wanted to. The fear was immense, spreading out from my chest like poisoned branches, crawling up, stretching out and winding around me. I could feel my pulse in my head and the pounding just kept getting louder. I jumped when voices started in the room, soft and hissing.

“iunge nos,” the voice hissed.

I tried to struggle but was left helpless. The voice was so persuasive even though I had no idea what it wanted me to do.

libera te ipsum... dimitte te...de hoc mundo relinquo

I shifted and tried to resist but every word heightened the pressure in my temples.

MITTO! MITTO!

I tried to struggle but was left helpless. The voice was so persuasive even though I had no idea what it wanted me to do.

libera te ipsum... dimitte te...de hoc mundo relinquo

I shifted and tried to resist but every word heightened the pressure in my temples.

MITTO! MITTO!

The voices changed to a scream and a sharp pain flashed across my cheek threatening to spread to the rest of me, to rip me apart.

I sat bolt upright. Sweat was built up on my brow and my whole body was trembling.

The room was pitch black but it felt like there were other people there. People that most certainly wanted to hurt me. I leaned over and turned on the gaslight next to the bed. I looked around the room. It was empty.

What was I thinking? Of course it was. It was my hotel room and no one else could get in.

But those voices. God, those wretched voices. I stood up and wandered over to the vanity, my hands clutched the edge shakily. I looked at my reflection. I was a mess, hair matted, my face pale and sweaty. Then I noticed something and did a double take. A thin cut across my cheek where I felt the pain. I moved down my collar. More scratches.

Suddenly the reflection in the mirror flickered.

“What on earth is —”

Before I could finish my sentence I collapsed.



*How long can I keep my head above
water?*

How long until the spark burns out?

*How long can I lay here, broken with
wonder?*

How long until I drown?

- Kira



THE SURVIVAL INSTINCT (AN EXCERPT)

By Nathan Hellner-Mestelman

• • • 1 • • •

The harsh sunlight beat down on the sand. Na'al looked up at the spotless sky, not a single cloud to stain it. The ground cracked underneath her dark brown feet as she wearily stepped out of her wheat hut. She flicked back her curly black hair and flinched as some dust blew into her eyes.

The desert was a spectacular view, and her small Natufian clan had been settled around a modest oasis for centuries. The lake was about a hundred meters wide, supporting a small collection of trees and acres of moist soil.

"Na'al, look! This leaf wants to play!" a voice called out to her.

She quickly recognized the voice to be Ke'nam, her younger brother. He was thin, dark-skinned, and had long frazzled dreadlocks of black hair. He was twelve years old, born four years after Na'al. He was kicking a dried leaf around with his feet, and the gentle morning breeze kept it tumbling in the air.

Na'al said, "Can't you work on something more important, Ke'nam?"

"Like what? Growing more food?"

"Searching for a new home!"

Her brother turned and scoffed, then continued kicking his leaf around. He then asked, "Where are you even going, Na'al?"

She was beginning her routine ten-mile walk, to scout for new lakes her people could settle around. The harvest that year had been the smallest in recorded history.

"This oasis barely keeps enough resources for a hundred people," she explained, "and if our population keeps growing the way it's been lately, we'll need to start looking for new water, trees and soil."

"But we're doing alright here, aren't we?"

"We were doing alright, back when only fifty people lived here. But there's more of us now, and the soil is exhausting, Ke'nam."

He glanced up in confusion, "Can't we tell the birthers to have less children?"

Na'al laughed, then began to walk, "Silly, you know it doesn't work that way."

She looked back at the unkempt assortment of tents and huts, food storage sacs, fruit trees and grassy patches that constituted El Wad, a tiny and remote Natufian settlement. In the spring and summer, Na'al took part in the barley and fruit harvest, and in the fall and winter, she'd join the hunting expeditions.

Twenty hours of work per week, and another 148 hours to relax.

Except, for the last year, Na'al hadn't been relaxing; she'd been searching for a future for her people—a bigger future, with more than just meat and grain.

Her father called out to her, indicating that he was sending out the daily hunting party to capture the day's meals. Na'al knew the droughts usually made wildlife scarce—and there was hardly enough meat to feed the growing number of people, anyway.

"I need to go," Na'al stammered to her brother.

"When will you be back?" Ke'nam asked.

"Before the sun crosses meridian, I promise," she replied.

Na'al had always come back, but she knew, soon enough, that she'd find another oasis. She had formulated a plan with a few members of her clan to escape by night, endure the painstaking walk to their new home, and settle there permanently. A new home, she imagined, would contain boundless resources—a sanctuary of new human happiness. Not a soul would dare go looking for them; without a map, embarking into the desert was certain death.

She reflected back on the last winter—the season her mother died from the cold. The campfires each night had brought her clan together, singing in chants and cooking meat, but alas, it hadn't been enough to save Yu'maar.

As her memories drifted even further back, she thought about her clan's dances and festivities. They were such a happy people, so accepting of death and nature's hardships, so empathic, always looking out for one another. Everyone knew everyone, not just by name, but by personality. Everyone constantly lived at the bare minimum and still finding such joy in living.

But Na'al knew it couldn't go on forever. She knew that her people had to divide and conquer. Boldly, she began to walk off into the desert.

"You're no fun at all, you know," Ke'nam admitted bluntly.

"I'll be back later, then we'll play." Na'al promised.

• • • 2 • • •

Decius Cerularius stood on top of a parapet and overlooked the colossal city his ancestors had constructed. The evening sun was setting, casting a golden glow over thousands of brick roads and houses. A giant cylindrical building stood proudly along the skyline from a mile away. It had just finished construction the previous day.

"They call it the Colosseum, you say?" Decius asked.

"Indeed, and if I am not mistaken, it is now the largest amphitheatre in the world," replied Aurelia, his wife. Her long brown hair blew in the evening breeze. Decius smiled at the horizon.

"Spectacular," he marvelled. "I reckon that its presence will entice more people to come settle in this vast empire."

"Oh, to see the gladiator battles?" she asked.

"Certainly, people do love a good show of blood and gore," he replied.

"You realize that nearly one-and-a-half million people now live inside these city walls, and that our empire's reach now extends from Europe to Africa," she said.

"Certainly, but the population is still growing."

"And you suspect it won't stop soon?"

"I'm quite certain I know it won't stop soon! If we stopped expanding, our empire would crumble and our legacy would be erased!"

"You worry too much about the future," Aurelia said.

Decius looked somberly at his wife, then stared out into the village. People traded with each other in the warm orange glow of sunset. Bushels of wheat were passed around in exchange for meat and vegetables, glass exchanged hands with metal, and bricks with wood.

He smiled at the relative peace amongst the people. He pitied the slaves that toiled away endlessly to carry heavy loads, labour for the wealthy patricians, and fight to the death in the arena for entertainment. He knew there was a tremendous amount of work to be done. He wished the rich rulers could care a little more, but he knew it was just a part of everyday life. Nothing needed to change, in his eyes.

"Are the palace workers still trying to fix the aqueducts?" Aurelia asked.

"Yes, yes, I was there today," Decius remarked. "It's truly a mess underground. We keep trying to contain the water, and no matter what we do, it always leaks out. And when it leaks out, it gets into every crevice and nook, and it destroys our delicate foundation."

"If our population weren't still growing, we wouldn't need those extra water systems anyways. You don't think it will stop?" she asked.

"I suspect we shall conquer the whole of Europe," Decius stated, "and we will swiftly crush the Dacian Kingdom of Decebalus, we will annihilate the Germanic tribes, we will not stop until the world is within our grasp or every last one of us has died fighting."

Aurelia looked at her husband, "Decius, are you happy?"

Decius looked down over the parapet, scratching his bushy beard. Several children were pulling a kite back and forth. Squeals of laughter came from the two kids who playfully fought with wooden swords.

"Maybe I will be, after the Dacian War is won and we have replaced those barbarians with honourable citizens of our empire," he replied.

"Can you not find contentment here, now?"

"Those children have yet to learn the meaning of a legacy," he said crossly.

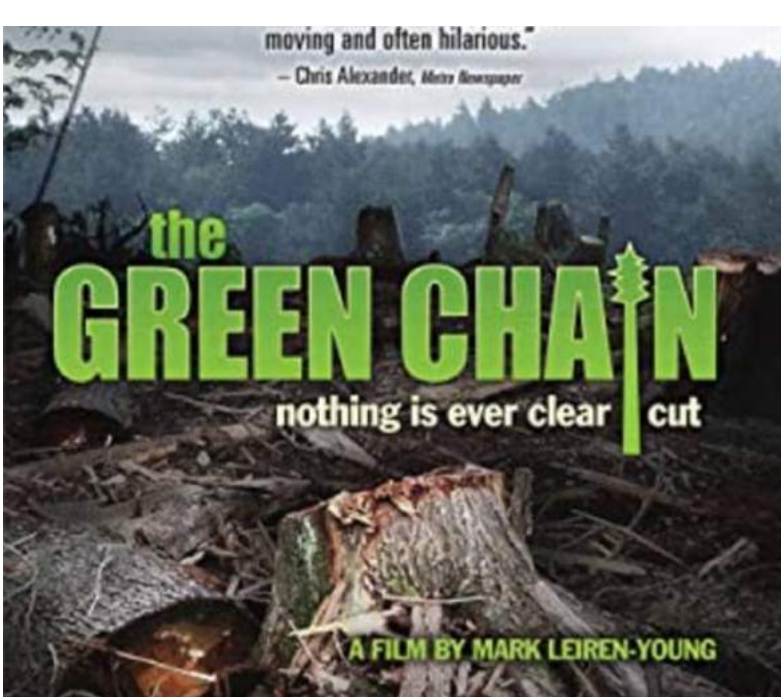
"My dear husband, maybe you have something to learn yourself." his wife replied, "Look at those children. I'm sure they don't care how they're remembered, if they're remembered."

"That is surely dishonourable, to them and their family."

"Look, Decius, we perhaps place too much glory on a legacy. Those emperors who are loved, we remember them as gods, and those emperors who are hated by the populous, well, that is why we have damnatio memoriae--we erase them from the history books."

"Our children will remember us, won't they, Aurelia?"

"Of course they will."



AN AUTHOR CHAT WITH MARK LEIREN- YOUNG

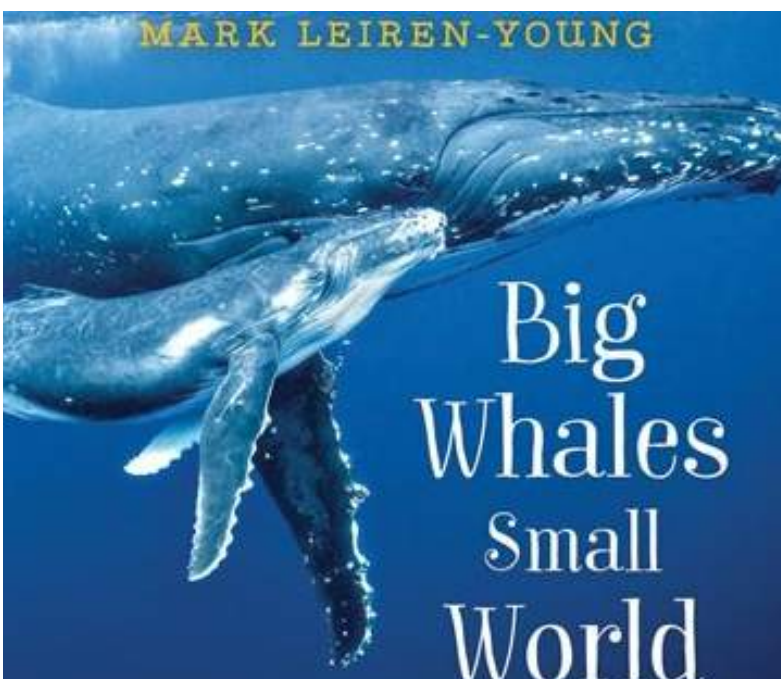
We were very lucky to have a chance to learn from Mark, an award-winning author, screenwriter, director, playwright and journalist. He was entertaining and had such great stories to share with us.

Marja: Does it feel like a completely different thing writing for theatre than writing screenplays?

Mark: Yes and no. So much of the craft is the same. One of the biggest differences is the status of the writer. This also changes how the writing is treated. I'm not sure how playwrights pulled this off for generations and generations before I was alive, but playwrights managed to set the expectation that we are freaking gods! In playwrighting, it is actually a breach of contract to change a word in a script. Actors and directors working in theatre have that hardwired in.

I was lucky enough to have a script of mine workshopped in New York and the two actors were both working New York actors who did stuff on and off-Broadway. I remember getting this phone call on a New York subway... and the director [says] "Okay, we've got a question from the actor... In this sentence, you have a period, but he thinks it's a question. Do you want him to play it as a question or a period? And we were actually having this very serious conversation for about ten minutes. The actor was concerned about misinterpreting my punctuation marks! That does not happen in TV and film.

Then you get to TV, and in TV, if you created the show you're like the playwright - it's your world, it's your playpen. You hire the directors and the actors. They work for you. But if you're a writer working for a creator, your job is to serve the showrunner. In film, the writer's just this annoying necessity and, seriously, if they could replace us with AI, directors and producers probably would. Writer had to fight to get the right to be on set for films.



*There is no center,
And so I fall.*

*-Kira
Home
made
Apple
Pie*





Waiting Room ~ An Excerpt



Author's Note:

This summer I took part in Summer Writing Studio for my third year. I decided to try my hand at writing a story in verse. A week prior to the due date when we needed to hand in our finished work, I completely changed how I was writing the story. This piece of poetry didn't fit into the new writing and so was left unpublished. I hope you enjoy this excerpt.

Waiting room

No games to pass the time

Broken eyes and sobbing hearts

Both shooting and embracing of messengers

Yelling words to adults in white coats

While good news is met by hugs and tears of joy

Wait for the room

To be announced

Some wait for 6 hours

To be shown out the door

Saying "your fine"

Some wait 30 minutes

To be brought to a doctor

Saying without so many words

You're more important than

the woman sitting in unbearable pain

Hiding, masking her pain

She's learned well

We don't talk to the messengers.

We wait for the announcement.

That we can have a room.

That we're important enough.

Is my mom important enough?

Wait,

One more moment

Wait,

Someone needs more help

Wait,

For 6 hours

We're brought back to where we started.

Doors.

"Mom, why are we going back home?"

"Baby, I'll be okay. They had people who needed more help than me."

"Can we play Monopoly before bed? It's Saturday!"

Dad says: "Not tonight Mercury, your Mom's tired."

"But she just sat for foreveerrr."

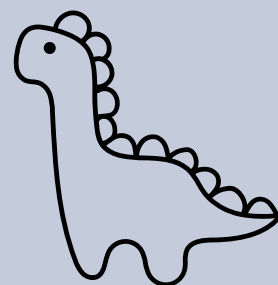
"Hon you can have an extra scoop of ice cream before bed instead."

"Okay Mama."

My mom was now weary face, shaking hands, in bed all day.

Dad didn't play games with me. He sat at the kitchen table with papers clutched in his hands. I sat on the floor trying to make up worlds for my plastic dinosaurs to live in but my imagination pool was depleted.

I now don't play games at all. My figurines are hidden in a box, left gathering dust in my closet. My imagination pool is overflowing with the made up worlds I create to make living bearable. I now sit on a hill with a gray sky above me. The fog holds me tight and my tears mix with the damp embrace.



By Abby

*"I wish I could keep time in a bottle and pour it out as needed." —
Giselle Vriesen, Why We Play With Fire*



Author Chat with Giselle Vriesen



Giselle Vriesen visited us in our Author Chat in October! She was so open in sharing her journey to releasing her debut book, the YA novel, Why We Play with Fire. She told us about the inspiration for her book, drawing from her love of mythology and her own mixed heritage (Jamaican, Chinese, and European-Canadian.) Giselle had some lovely metaphors for the collaborative process of editing and publishing and we enjoyed our time with her. We look forward to the book's release on February 6, 2024! Keep an eye out for her when she comes to Victoria and be sure to follow her on Instagram! @gisellevriesen

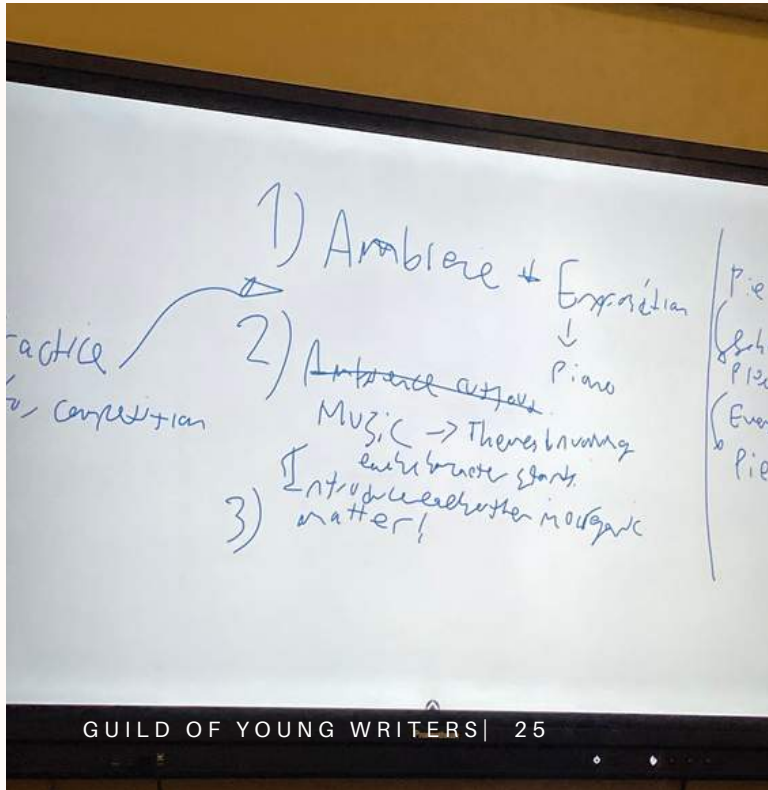
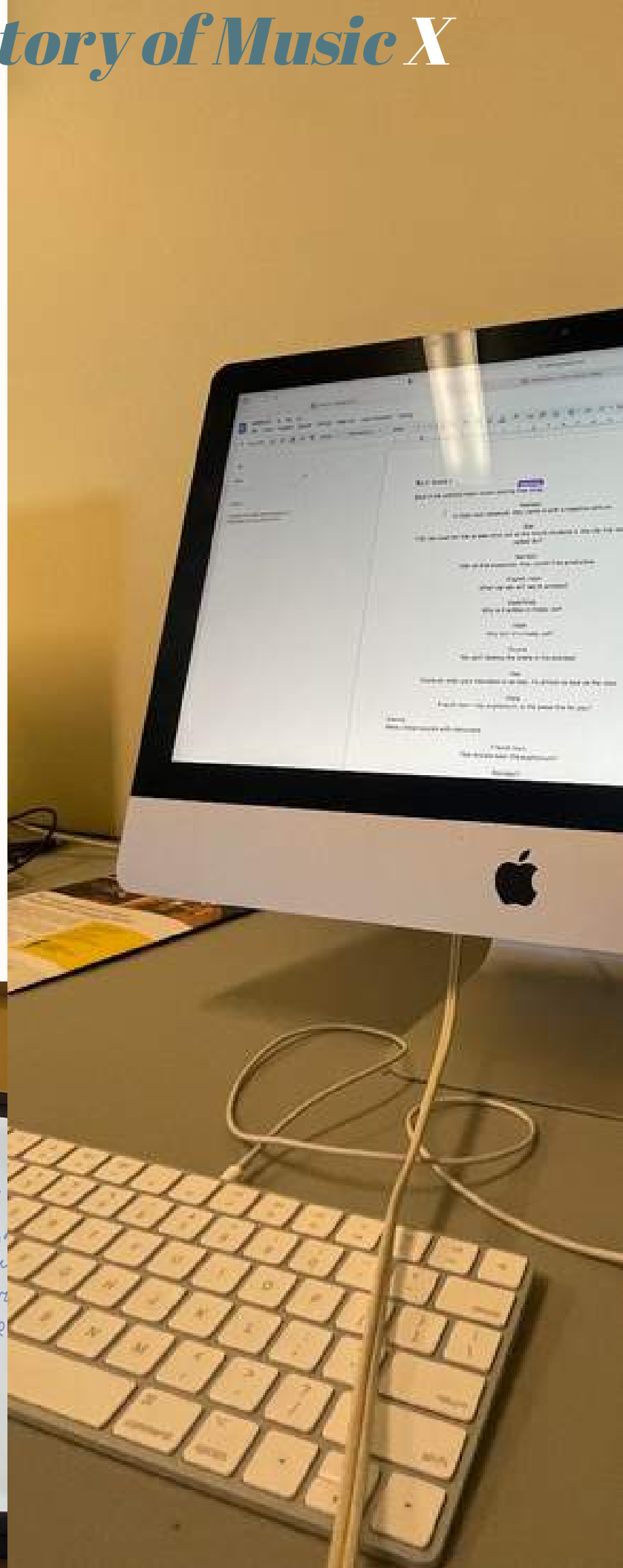
"Full of action, godly hijinks, and magical artifacts, Giselle Vriesen's WHY WE PLAY WITH FIRE is an adventure from the very first page." — Kendare Blake, #1 NYT Bestselling author of Champion of Fate

Victoria Conservatory of Music X

Story Studio

This fall marked the first collaboration between the Victoria Conservatory of Music and Story Studio! With support from Daniel Brandes, director of the School of Technology and Creativity, Sean Rodman, and Marco Neri, composition teacher at the School of Music Technology and Creativity, a team of four talented student composers (including yours truly) have assembled to create a revolutionary narrative audio work.

Over the course of 4 meetings in October, we worked with Sean Rodman to draft up an outline of our story. We also created characters, which in our case turned out to be living breathing instruments. Then, we each got to work creating our own musical ideas to fit different scenes. Being a multimedia project, there was a lot of discussion around how to integrate elements of music, spoken dialogue, and ambience/sound effects to create an immersive atmosphere for the listeners.





The story revolves around a band of 6 instruments; Soprano Saxophone, French Horn, Euphonium, Drums, Violin and Viola, as they train together to win a music competition, in the hopes that it will save their school from closing down.



Going into the new year there is still lots more to do. Once all the musical and spoken components are composed, we'll move into the recording phase. Working with musicians from the conservatory, as well as voice over artists to bring the story and the world around it to life.

Bringing the Conservatory and Story Studio together means we can expand our perspectives as artists and bridge together storytelling and music in our own unique way. I'm so thankful for the opportunity to work with all these wonderful people and learn how to collaborate and bring something this extensive from start to finish. I'm looking forward to continuing to combine each of our ideas and to make this story the best it can be.

Story #1

Perhaps it was the slight of hand that he had when the glimpses of the past always tried to hold me onto a happy ending, until that treacherous glare hollowed out a sinister smirk.

"You know what the funniest part of all of this?" he laughed and all I wanted to do was scream. "I lied, you knew, because you didn't want to lose the last thing you had. But you just did."

And with that, he sauntered away, without any remorse for my drowning heart.

Story #2

Starry tear-pouring eyes filled with hopelessness as the sense of dread overcame her worries.
The cliff-high waves encompassed her as her body struggled for the surface.

"Jelly Cat!" It was Bollie. The heirloom was priceless; the last memory Bollie had of her sister, Ollie, and Jelly Cat had taken it just like that. Jelly Cat looked at Bollie, hoping she would forgive her, but she walked away.

"Ollie would have saved you. But I won't."

Tiny Stories by Cathy

Story #3

The world collapsed in front of me before I knew it. All because of her.

"You have to help me," The girl urges.

"Who are you?" I ask.

"I'm a... I don't know. I guess I've been teleported into this weird futuristic world obsessed with perfectionism, and apparently, I'm not perfect enough so I was a 'reject' and was living in the other-"

The door swings open, and the officer rushes in and drags her out. And I never saw her again.

Poetry Prompt List

- An element of chaos
- A place where water and earth meet
- Write an obituary poem
- Loud tears
- Grief being an expression of love
- Write about how the rain sounds/makes you feel
- Labels
- Write about your surroundings and the memories they bring up
- Math class
- How to breathe
- What does silence sound like?
- Write a poem while you're traveling
- What's a good thing that happened today?
- People you've known
- Write about someone you've lost
- An I am from poem
- Wonderland
- Write about what thinking inside your brain looks like
- Write a poem including the words glitter and blood
- Poem about a holiday



Story Studio is an award winning charity that inspires, educates and empowers children and youth to become great story tellers, transforming lives and strengthening communities. We rely on donors to make our programs accessible for all youth. To learn more about the impact of our programs, download free resources for youth, parents and educators, or to become a supporter, please visit www.storystudio.ca

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

If you are part of a school or community organization interested in subscribing to our seasonal zine releases for 2023, please contact rebecca.ruiter@storystudio.ca for more information.