

SCATTERED CHANGE

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CHANGE

GISS WRITERS' GROUP ANTHOLOGY

2013

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To all of you who have ever wanted to write, who ever wanted to say something and to all of you who have written, who have shared and who continue to share, these pages are dedicated to you and to the writers in us all!

May we find our voices!

-Sarah Hook-Nilsson

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connecting
generations

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Foreword

THE WRITERS' GROUP

In the winter of 2012, we started a Connecting Generations writers' group at Gulf Islands Secondary School (GISS) in response to a growing number of requests from young writers for opportunities to connect to other writers. Funded by two Artist in the Classroom grants from the Salt Spring Arts Council and supported by School District 64, we have been able to invite Ahava Shira, poet, writer, performer and educator to facilitate our meetings. The group is open to anyone interested and this year has included mostly young women.

For two hours after school every second Monday we met, wrote, read each other our words, talked about our respective writing projects and shared our love of writing. Held within the walls of the "Connecting Room", we encouraged each other to play, risk, open to what wanted to be said and discover new ways of expressing ourselves.

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Over the past year, the group has evolved, as has the range of voices, styles and projects. As you will see from the diversity of writing here, we are poets, short story writers, novelists, graphic novelists and creative non-fiction writers.

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THE WRITERS' PARTY

At the end of our first semester of meeting as a group, we invited the writers to come dressed as their writer self and to bring their responses to the following questions:

- How long have you been writing?
- How do you get out of writer's block?
- How do you deal with critics, outer and inner?
- Which words are you most attracted to and which letters do you use most?
- Where do you usually write?
- Where is the most unusual place you have written?
- Where do you get inspiration?
- Have you ever had that feeling that you just can't write anything good?
- How do you make the time to write?
- How does your writing career affect your life?
- How do you make a living?
- How else would you like to explore writing?

The party was joyful and playful. It was lovely to listen to each of us share our inspirations and aspirations.

THE WRITERS' REVIEW

At this year's midway session, we chose to create some space for reflection so we could write and think about our experience with the group and what we had been learning. The instructions were to consider in silence the following questions, after which we each wrote and shared our responses:

- How did you feel, or if you can't remember, how do you imagine you felt?
- Where are you now that you have been meeting, writing and sharing your words with the group for the past 5 months?
- What metaphor might you use to describe the journey you have been/ are on?
- Drawing on the theme of a hero's journey, what has been a challenge you have encountered with your writing during this time? How have you overcome it? Or is it still in process?
- Where do you still want to go? What do you want to explore over the next semester? How will you feel when you have arrived?
- What treasure do you imagine you might find at the end of this journey?

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- If you could give this journey a name, what would it be?

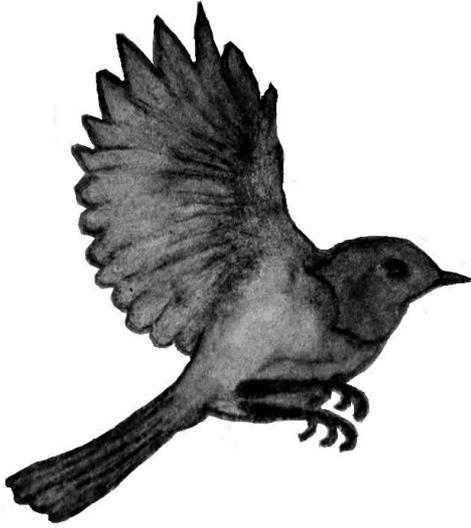
We chose to make some of the questions deliberately ambiguous, certain that each would interpret her experience and articulate her journey in her own way.

It was thrilling to bear witness to their reflections. Each girl's metaphors were original, and complex, expressing the enthusiasm of their creative growth, informing themselves of their challenges with craft and process, and of the hopes for what's to come.

~Ahava Shira

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LET THE ADVENTURE
BEGIN...

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Danielle Aftias

~Thought Provoker~

My passions and inspiration stem from the same place - sharing experiences with others. I love to create music and art to share with the world, and the relationships between people and people, people and art, art and the world, and the world within itself, inspire me to create this music and this art.

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Specks

This morning's sun is dark for late August. The past few weeks have been drenched in rain and heavy cloud, and today at least the rain has stopped. Through the window I see the residual dew dangling in droplets from the tips of fir needles with no sign of any breeze to shake them down. A little brown bird flutters by in a flash of feathers. Another comes up to perch on the fir branch, sending a shower of tiny drops to the damp earth. I brush the hair out of my eyes and for a moment we look at each other, it with its beady black eyes and me with my human ones. I blink, and in the split second my eyelids are closed, the bird takes flight, and all I have left to see is the quivering branch.

My clock reads 6 a.m. I can hear Ben downstairs in the kitchen, opening the door on the woodstove. I can hear the cedar kindling crackle, spitting and popping in the chilly morning air. Ever since he was young he liked to be the one that lit the fire in the morning, carefully preparing tinder, crinkled paper in winter and dry brush in the summer. A few years ago, when he was about six or seven, I crouched on the stairs, peering through the rails, and watched him make a ball of dry grass and set it in the centre of the stove. He had a pile of pencil thin split cedar beside him, and he carefully selected pieces from it, arranging them in a square around the paper, placing two parallel to each other, then

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two perpendicular on top, like he was building a log house. He built this box about eight inches high, then used strands of yellow grass to tie a sloped frame together, placing this on top and covering two sides of it with more cedar. He sat back and turned his head a little to the left, ran his charcoal dusted fingers through his charcoal coloured hair.

“What is that?” I had asked him bluntly, staring past him into the little black stove. I got up, making sure not to trip on my skirt, and padded down the stairs and over to him.

He looked at me, then turned to nod once at his creation.

“It’s a house. Houses burn really really big.”

“Is it our house?” It sort of looked like it, except ours is made of slotted heavy logs, with an upstairs and a downstairs, and a little porch with a little eve.

“No!” Ben exclaimed, “Our house isn’t that small! And besides, we’re *in our* house. We can’t be in something and look at it from the outside .” He paused, flicking a stray hair out of his face.

“Our eyes aren’t long enough.” He poked at one of the pieces of the miniature wall with his dirty hand, nudging it into place.

“Are you going to light it?”

He didn’t respond, only took a matchbook up from the grey floor tiles and pulled one of its cardboard citizens from its moorings, flipped the book inside out and pulled the match through to light it. For a moment he didn’t do anything, just stared at the baby flame. Then he selected the smallest piece of kindling and held

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the end to the match, then threw the match into the ashes at the bottom of the stove. He waited a moment for the flame to grow on the twig, then, slowly and assuredly, he slid it through a gap near the base of the house. The flame licked up the ball of grass, until it became a flaming orb of orange and the wood caught. As it began to burn the roof and walls, I sat down in the charcoal dust beside Ben and put my arm around his shoulders. He leaned into me and we watched his house collapse, and turn to a pile of glowing embers.

We had watched that fire burn into ashes, silent and still on the floor in front of it. When the hairs on our arms began to raise and Ben started to shiver in his thin sweater, I got up and relit the stove, building a pile of sticks and grass, practical and comforting. Staring at the new flames licking up the tinder, listening to the crackle and hiss of ready wood, I didn't even notice Ben leave. But when I closed the door and turned to speak, I found myself alone in the room. The door to the outside was hanging open, letting in a few dusty rays of light, and through it I heard a rustling at the side of the house and followed it.

From the worn wooden porch I watched Ben yank his blue bicycle out from under a pile of scrap metal and branches. He wrestled the branches off, then tried to pull the bike, only to have a length of barbed wire restrain it, entangled in the spokes

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of the wheel. I watched him push his hair off of his face and kneel down to untangle the mess. I moved to help him, worried that he might cut himself on the barbs.

“Don’t help me, Lynn,” he said grimly, without so much as a glance upward. “I can do it myself.”

I moved to go back into the house. I knew where the pliers were, the pointy ones with the wire cutters.

“Without your help!” I heard him yell as the door swung closed.

I walked back through the kitchen, past the stove and the table and the chairs, and through the door underneath the stairs. Someone had covered the little window, and so I had to feel my way to it in the dark. I touched the wall, and ran my hands across it until they met with something, a cardboard box. I pushed it a little, but the window was still further behind it. I lifted the box, my arms straining with its weight, and I set it down on the floor. Now the light flooded the room, hazy through the dirty glass, illuminating the boxes and bags and chests and shelves all jumbled up together. I squinted my eyes and looked for the metal toolbox. This is such a wreck - a box overflowing with file folders overflowing with papers, a shelf covered in old paint cans, bags full of ratty moth-eaten clothing that never made it anywhere lined up and stacked against one wall. I see a glimpse of the toolbox, peeking out from underneath a piece of flattened cardboard.

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As I swung the front door open, turning the pliers over in my hand, I saw Ben sitting on the edge of the porch, shirt off, wrapping shreds of cotton around his hand. Dark bright blood seeped through the fabric, enough to soak the cloth but not enough to be dripping. The remains of his shirt lay in a little pile beside him, crumpled and sad.

Before I could say anything to him, he turned and stared at me.

“I came to help,” I would say.

“I didn’t want you’re your help. Why didn’t you listen to me?” He would be angry, and his voice would be quiet. “I told you not to.”

“ But you cut your-“

“But I told you. And then we would stare at each other, for a long time, and he would be thinking: about how I was a bad sister, and how I could never replace Mom, or Dad, or anyone worth replacing.”

“I’m going to make some soup. Do you want any?” I pretended not to see the makeshift bandage growing wetter and redder.

Ben nodded, and turned away from me, and swung his feet forward and back off the edge of the porch. I walked back into the house, set the pliers down on the sill of the front window, and walked down the stairs to look for potatoes.

The sounds of burning wood downstairs is muted with the squeak of the stove door closing. For a minute I remain still under my sheets, listening to the occasional patter of water droplets hitting the window, airborne from the tree branches in

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the slow wind. The clock ticks beside me, and the seconds pass by, each marked with a tick or a tock, perfectly in time.

Steel

your first swiss army knife
polished silver and red
back porch,
uncles carving ducks from soap
Mom's more serious business, apple pie
slicing skin from flesh
first splash of red
plastic scent of spider-man band-aids
all the other boys
who would never touch death
compare hunting knives
cutting into new boxes of soup cans
brand new nametag, white shirt tucked in
3 a.m.
staring into the bathroom mirror
stroke gently across your wrist
bitter October afternoon
orange glowing grins
your swiss army knife
clatters to the floor
flecks the tiles with red
virgin plunge of steel
five tiers of sweet ivory

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sharpened blade pushes the remnants
of your dirty white snow into lines
Something cold
slides sharply
through your jacket,
your shirt,
your skin.

Important

Flash.

Every face

broken into black and white.

Why

am I meaningless if I can't be held

paper-thin

between your devoted fingertips?

Listen to me.

Take a pencil

not a pen,

because people change,

and write.

Show the Prime Minister,

the President,

the Queen of England

that I am young

and impulsive,

and I used to listen to heavy metal

because I wanted to be rough.

I wake up early

to feel alone,

and when I grow up

I want to travel the world

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eat snails
go fishing for soggy boots
in a leaky boat
on a mucky lake,
smile,
laugh,
fall in love.
Show them
that these
are the important things.

On Scattered Change

There is one ripe apple
at the tip of this branch.

Red-speckled gold and orange
round and ready to drop to the soft green grass.

The others cling tensely to their height,
thin stems quivering in the morning breeze.

The green fruits, undersized and outspoken
watch carefully as a bird alights, snaps a twig,
and sends the ripe red apple tumbling to the ground.

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Chelsea Baldwinson

~Swan, Romantic Ranter~

I'm passionate about nature and singing my heart out. Love and romance spark my creativity.

The Wishing Well

After the holidays in January, I looked forward to going to school again; I couldn't wait to see my friends! Winter break had been uneventful, other than Christmas Day. It snowed that morning but the sun melted the snow by noon. It's amazing how weather can change so quickly! Oh how I longed for someone to hold me tight that night. Christmas had come and gone and there I was, lying in bed, alone. My True Love had not come, and the loneliness I felt nearly broke my heart again. This trend continued till some day after New Year's. I could feel a change stirring inside of me, as a new idea formed in my head. I decided that come the first day of school, I would start collecting coins. After collecting a certain amount, say 30, I would scatter them in the wishing well at Grace Point, wishing for love on every one of them.

Reflection

When I think of scattered change I think of scattered emotions, then the image of scattered coins on the floor. I also think of change as in something new, and different. That kind of change is hard to describe but I know it is like the wind. The wind always comes and goes, and it changes direction. Change is like going in a new direction, focusing on something else, or transitioning from one state of mind to another.

Scattered emotions are like feeling happy for a while, then suddenly crying tears of sadness. It works the other way too; one minute you are crying tears of sadness then a few seconds later they turn to tears of joy! Change is strange sometimes.

Memories

Scattered change, like memories scattered in my brain. They get lost over time, then show up again. When something reminds me of my past a connection zaps through my brain, and I picture an image of that certain memory. Memories are sometimes precious, like a shiny penny. Sometimes, they are clouded with drama like a penny etched with dirt. Other times memories are scary, like a pile of pennies turned black; tossed there by a tornado of coal. Whether happy, sad, dramatic, or scary, memories are always with you, like a collection of pennies stashed in a protective, circular box.

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Karina Bratt

~Questing Adventurer and Character Creator~

I find that many things spark my creativity. A good song in the right mood for the piece, perhaps a drawing done previously, a beautiful piece of art, a good daydream session, or a nice cup of chai tea to warm the tummy and let loose the ideas.

Today We Die

Today is the day we die. It must be! Why else would they chain our hands, but not *to* anything? So we must be going somewhere. To die.

“You’re thinking something grim, aren’t you?”

“And you are not?”

She gives me a distressed look in response.

I look away. “Sorry. I heard them discussing it. They thought that we should be ‘disposed of’, since we have not shown enough potential. Something of that sort.”

“But they told me I wasn’t a failure!”

“Well, you are now. Sharing the blood of a failure probably did not help.” I sigh. “Welcome to the world of outcasts. My home.”

The Beginning of The Change

I wish something interesting would happen.

What would be interesting?

I don't know. If I knew, I wouldn't be saying this now, would I?

True...Isn't the military interesting enough for you?

It is to a point. I don't like killing things as a pastime though. I'm bored.

Fall in love then.

Pffff. That's absolutely ridiculous. Almost all the men here are afraid of me.

The ones that aren't are irritating.

“Aww you're no fun at all. I know what you mean, though. They assume too much,” Tenshi smiles sadly.

I love Tenshi dearly. She is the one person who knows me heart and soul. She is technically my twin, identical in all ways, except for colours and personality. She has deep, aquamarine curly hair and cat's eyes, where I have magenta. She is happy or sad, where I am angry or neutral.

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At the moment we're in the middle of the forest Ayuren. It's mostly made up of pine and cedar, old growth, and is very beautiful. It is untainted by humans, and no one usually comes this deep in. It's also the morning, being fairly dark, but my night vision is excellent, and I am able to see and hear all of the early morning activity that most don't notice. I can't see much of the sunrise yet, but the rays that glimmer through the foliage have a dim, gorgeous red hue.

“Yooooochi~! You're ignoring me!” Tenshi calls.

“Sorry. The scenery is *so* much more interesting than you at the moment.” I tease.

She gives me a hurt look, but quickly her face brightens. “Let's go boy scouting!”

“You're still on about that?” I stand up from the tree I was sitting against, sigh and cross my arms. “There's nowhere *to* go looking for a guy. Unless you're referring to humans.” I glower at her.

Tenshi sighs. “I give up. I'm hungry anyways so I'll see you later.” She smiles and walks away. I watch her until she is out of sight, just to make sure she doesn't try anything.

It's been a long night, so I'm going back to sleep.

The End of Normality

I wake up to find a boy. Right in my face. I jump a bit at this. He leans back and says, “Oh hi. Didn’t mean to disturb you, but I’m lost. Could you help me get out of this forest?”

He *looks* harmless. And like a weakling.

He’s one of the Fae. Why the hell is he talking to me?! Vampires and Fae are at war. Over minor matters, but still at war. Faeries are always so stuck up anyways.

“Faeries normally know the forest they grew up in like the back of their hand.” I paused. “Don’t you know what I am?!” I ask him incredulously.

“No, I don’t know what you are, but does it matter? I just want to get out of here!”

“Huh. You really are one stupid Fae.” I half mutter to myself while standing up. “Where do you live?”

“I didn’t think you were interested in me.”

“I’m not, idiot. I can’t get you out of here if I don’t know where you live!” I say, snarling slightly.

“Oh. Well, I live at 548 Lied Avenue in Racecell.”

“A human city?!”

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“Yeah. So?”

I sigh. “Let’s go. And by the way, I’m not going in that city. The boundaries are as far as I go.”

“That’s fine. I live near the edge of town anyways. You should come visit me sometime!” He grins.

We start walking. “I refuse. I hate mingling with humans. They’re worse than elves.” I say with disgust.

We continue in silence for a while. I didn’t notice how he looked at all so now I’m taking the time to look at him properly. He’s cute, his hair curly, slightly shaggy, with a burnt caramel colour. He would be attractive if he worked on his muscles.

“What’s this, checkin’ me out now?” he grins impishly at me.

I’ll admit I blush slightly at this. “Either you’re really desperate, being a stereotypical boy, or a creepy pervert trying to make me hit on you so I look like a pedophile.” I glance at him.

“What? You’re weird.” he says with a cute half-smile.

We walk in an awkward silence for a while, until we finally are at his town.

I stop with hands on hips. “Well, there’s the town. Bye.” I start walking away.

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“Hey, wait!”

I stop and look at him.

“If I get lost in the forest again, will I see you?” he says with a hopeful face.

“No. You were extremely lucky to chance upon me. Have a nice life.” I sarcastically say with a tiny smile and melt into the forest.

The grin slowly disappears. I wonder if Tenshi set that up. She has good taste, with a little work. Since I find myself almost hoping I'll see him again. Almost, but not quite.

~ ~ ~

The rest of my day is uneventful and regular, and I have decided to travel some and visit places that I haven't tyrannized in a while. This will be a good chance to forget a certain someone.

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Heather Burdett

~HB, Idea Painter and Vocab Utilizer~

My name is HB and I have lived in the Gulf Islands my entire life. My passions include egyptology, dietetics, and reading (historical fictional and non-fiction in particular.) I find inspiration for writing in everyday life, imagining characters from interactions and dynamics I have encountered. I got started writing by spending hours in front of the computer, typing away stories that were nonsensical yet enthusiastically numerous in quantity.

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Broken

The red Chevy sprinted down the highway, smoothly exiting on the 72, before coming to a pause at the lights. The sun was keeled over to the west, and a splatter of clouds dotted the cobalt sky. The mountaintops were capped with snow, as the hillsides draped down to the lakeshore like velvet green carpets, passing along the way the colourful red tile roofed villages that clung to the cliffs. Vying down meandering narrow roads, dense with a blend of chestnuts and sycamores, the truck slowed to a sluggish hustle. After a quick pass through a few of the little hamlets, the main road started to climb, snake-like against the mountain. The road climbed until the truck drove cliff-side, ascending until it was adjacent to the tucked away glacier pool, moving towards the icy mountains at the lake head.

Andrew could barely focus on the asphalt, his hands dancing on the wheel, his body feverish with heat, and his gut rumbling with forebode. The radio hardly worked, and the sound had quit miles back. A half-eaten apple bounced on the dashboard, falling onto the empty passenger seat. He put his foot on the accelerator and glanced at his cellphone, 2:32pm. The note had mentioned little, its lines etched into memory, and he knew only that time was running out.

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Just before the lake head, the road plummeted down to the last village. He careened through the village centre, racing past stunned citizens who weren't used to such a flurry of activity. The local magistrate would be informed, but he was likely in another town, these parts relying on the power of good to protect them. Fools.

Despite the village's location, there was still a precisely paved road to take the Chevy up into the park towards the glaciers. The curves, bends, and hills were too precarious for great speeds, but Andrew tested them anyway. Surprisingly, the truck kept well, and did not veer off into the woodland. The road ended in a dirt cul-de-sac lined with whitewash fence, giving a view of the lake in its entirety. He made a quick park job, then jumped out the driver's side, and sprinted over the white wood.

Disappearing into the forest, Andrew quickly found the path. It was lined with wildflowers and the earth underfoot was smoothed and well kept. The smell of the forest was a sweet aroma that whipped round him as he ran. Sweat and pine mixed, before trailing the length of his body, racing off like a skier down the slope. He kept a steady pace, and as he flew as fast as his feet would go, he couldn't keep the memories back.

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He came out of the treeline and saw her, standing but a few feet from the cliff's edge. She knelt, crouching, like a tightly-coiled spring ready to burst out at any moment.

“Sarah!” He yelled, as she rose up, her hands above her head, standing on her tippy toes like one of those Olympic divers. He could imagine it, her stepping off, auburn hair in flight, eyes closed as gravity pulled her down. Her clothes whipping round from the accelerating speed, her lips rolling in expectation, her body shooting downwards, flying through the air, a backwards flight. He gasped; knowing everything, everything except when she stops, after that there is nothing. Andrew raced forward as she turned, the wind caressing her hair, and a weak smile came to her face.

She'd insisted on driving, and as they started back, Andrew's eyelids dropped heavy with fatigue. His body conformed to the shape of the door, his head resting against the glass. She put her cellphone down beside her, the doctor's confirmation repeating itself. A hand moved and traced the expanse of her belly, and the other gripped the wheel. She looked at Andrew with a sudden fury that caught her breath, and she wished she had jumped. No matter the way she chose, the only difference was a degree of pain, and she'd already foreplayed with death long enough. The only change was taking more than just her own.

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"How do you feel?" The man asked, his white lab coat set back against a series of bright lights.

"Where, where am I?" Sarah whispered.

"Unfortunately, Sarah, we were unable to save the baby. Your boyfriend, as well, did not survive." He informed her with downcast eyes, before listing off a range of the traumas her own body had suffered.

"Survive what? What happened? I can't, I can't remember. Who's Sarah?"

The doctor looked over his shoulder before moving his eyes back. "You are Sarah. According to what the police found, you drove your truck off a cliff, killing your unborn child and boyfriend, Andrew."

Having moved her wheelchair close to the window, she was admiring the interplay of moonlight upon her room, as it mixed and was woven into the dance of the fire. The tea cup shattered on the floor, peppermint crawling across the timber boards. She could remember it all, the attempted jump off the cliff, Andrew's rescue, her maneuver of the truck into flight down into the lake's aperture. Further back came rushing the little pink plus sign, and the little velvet black box Andrew had been hiding in his underwear drawer. A scream erupted with a breadth of an inhumane depth. It rose with calculated strength, mixed with anger and sorrow. Her tears ran down the wrinkles, and her body

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grew limp as it took the last of her, casting it's strength into the darkness. As she heard the sound of what could have been fading, the ugly sound held the house, and effectively, everlasting, a soul was broken.

An Education

Every day, at one point or another
Telling the story on repeat, tale of surely someone other
Maybe it's just crazy
Having thrown away the key
Yet there it's playing again, surely on repeat

Playgrounds, kingdoms of plastic and tar
Swooping down to the gravel below
Daisy chains, without cause or blame
Silence evades covered in its bureaucratic shade
Attempts to instruct, row on neat little row
A boy he laughs from far away
Back to the place where reality shows

Freedom comes on swift winds
The abode, the brother, the textbook that wasn't
The smell of grass, of the place where love lasts
Yet longing in dreams for just a hand to hold
Longing in waiting for a return to come
The growing pains, friends in race, tears upon the pillowcase
Ammunition but to the human condition
The rain comes, it begins to snow
The crickets chirp once, twice, in a row

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The decision made, blackboards came, instruction but a shame
A duck waiting for the hunters game
Bathroom stalls, mascara crawls down the cheek
The homework flows and acquaintance lows
Bubbly moments of happiness arise with a haze in the head, an
english assignment on the bed

Lost in translation, with the season coming the tide went out to
sea

Back it goes, this time different or maybe not at all

Having to see, an understanding had crept on me

It wasn't there was nowhere to go, or a need to show, a hideaway
to stow

The winds upon whichever to blow

Needing just this shadow, just this little piece, all needed

In the end was me.

Every day, at one point or another

Telling the story on repeat, tale of surely someone other

Maybe It's just crazy

Having thrown away the key

Yet there it's playing again, surely on repeat

Jump (Short Story)

My breath catches as I step over the rail onto one of the planks sticking out. I have never been afraid of heights but suddenly am. No, I push the feeling away, I can do this. I must break free of my personal hell and this is the way. Yet the fear lingers, and as I kneel a sadness cuts through my body. I think of my family, the tears they will cry, and the people at school who will walk around in a daze. But they don't understand. This is my destiny, I was not meant to live. The pain is too much and far too deep. I don't want them to be sad, they must understand that I will be fine, this is what I want and this is what I will have. The smell of salt intoxicates my lungs and I close my eyes, breathing it in.

The wind caresses my face and I stand. I pull my hands above my head and stand on my tippy toes like one of those Olympic divers. It plays through my head, my feet stepping off, my auburn hair in flight, my eyes closed as gravity pulls me down. My clothes whipping around from the accelerating speed, my lips rolling in expectation. I can feel the water coming closer, I feel weightless as I plummet faster and faster. I know everything that will happen except when I hit the water. After that there is nothing.

I breathe deeply, trying to steady myself. I am hot, my determination and fear fighting on the edge of decision. Suddenly

SCATTERED CHANGE

hands come from behind to touch my back. I want to cry.

Suddenly my youth interrupts again, not ready for this sort of thing. I can't leave everything behind like this. I am immediately grateful I am being rescued but I turn to see no one. No one cares, no one is here to save me, and nobody wants me. If anyone did they would have been here, would have stopped this fifteen year old girl.

A Question

You entered into my life, sharply like a knife
Brought down every wall, in spirit you were ten feet tall
Days would pass and your presence hopefully to last

You had your short brown hair and your blue eyes
It took none by surprise to find you popular
Doing the things we wish we did.

I saw beneath the exterior, the deer in the headlight
Caught out in the open, without a cause to flee

I saw what you hide, the truth the world would not abide, that
which for you would lie
You let me in, let me discover, secrets I wouldn't dare tell my
mother.

I thought I could understand, but like the world you fooled, to
me you did it too

When the wind came you blew away
Now I stand here and wonder how you did it.



Emily Dunsmuir

**~Darkes Knight, Dungeon Master and Keeper
of Epics~**

Nothing is more inspirational than wandering the woods on a
dark night and wondering what hides among the leaves.

Everything I dream up is borne upon the wind and scurries
beneath the hedgerows. The twilight peace is my muse and so too
is the dark mistress that follows in his wake. I gain my wisdom
from the tombstones that stand sentential in grassy graveyards
and my diction stems from the spirits of the night and the
wafting breeze of changing seasons.

What Comes Before

The man sat slumped on the park bench, his head in his hands, looking beaten. His hair was a chestnut brown and the sunshine danced on it in a way unsuited to his mood. He shifted and looked up. A hooked nose, strong brow and cheek bones, a pointed chin and green-gray eyes that told the world it was hated. He looked about late thirties and might have been considered handsome ten years before. He straightened his jacket and tie, picked up his hat from where it sat next to him, and stood. He was a man on a mission. He strode away, out of the park and back into the city.

The door creaked open a crack and a small face pressed itself to where it could see the room beyond. The man stood by the wobbly wooden table and watched the woman in front of him.

“I’ve lost my job, Yvonne. Boss says he doesn’t need me and my ideas. I’ll show him.” He slammed a fist onto the table, making the cutlery, the woman and the unseen watcher, jump. “I’m going to be someone, Yvonne. Just you watch. I’m going to be someone and then I’m going to go find him and I’m going to wring his neck. He’ll see. Oh, he’ll see.”

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A little girl with chestnut hair lay in a small little bed and pretended to sleep as the man sat near her feet. The man let out an angry sigh.

“You know, Paula, I don’t know what’s wrong with me.” He kept his voice soft and the little girl knew she wasn’t supposed to be hearing it. “I can’t seem to find it in my heart. I can’t even seem to find my heart. All I want is to succeed.” His voice turned ugly. “I want the world. I want it all. For myself. Not for you, not for your mother, but for myself. All for me. Every last piece of grass and every last life on this planet. I want to own it all.” He raises his hands to his face and when he takes them away, they glisten with tears. “When you were born, I fell in love. Now I loved two. You and your beautiful mother. But then I began to lose. I’ve lost everything but this apartment and the two of you. I don’t love anymore, not even myself. I’d trade you and your mother for everything else in a heartbeat. What is wrong with me? I’ve lost my soul without knowing how to get it back.”

The man walked down the sidewalk unawares that he was being followed. He pushed between the scraggly men and boys, all looking for work, and his shadow slipped after him. She knew about the gun that he carried and a sense of imminent danger swelled in her heart along with the dread. Why couldn’t he take this like everyone else? Go look for work. Even riding the rails would be better than what he was planning.

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The man kept walking and didn't hear the growl of his follower's stomach. She clapped a hand over it and tried to think up the last time she had eaten a full meal.

The man stopped and looked around. Time's Square was full of the unemployed and the homeless and yet still those with jobs twisted through the crowds, desperate to not upset their employers by being late. He spotted the person he was looking for and his shadow held her breath as the man fumbled with something stuck in his coat.

Paula didn't scream as the man's target toppled to the ground but she did cry. The man, however, was not yet done. Seemingly at random he discharged shots into the crowd, spinning in a circle as if to ward off anyone who would stop him. It was then that Paula screamed, no longer a shadow, but a bloody little girl with one limp arm.

The man sat at the kitchen table and watched as the clothes he'd been wearing earlier slowly burned in the hearth. A pair of scissors sat next to him and his hair, once a little long, was now irregularly short.

The front door pushed open and the woman entered. She looked bedraggled from her day but triumphant. The smile slid off her face like water off a roof as she noticed the scene in front of her.

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“I got a job. No one’s hiring but I found a job.” She let her eyes rest again on the burning fabric, the scissors and her husband’s new appearance but she seemed determined not to mention them. The fear in her face belied her knowledge of what this meant. “Where’s Paula?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t seen her.” The man stared deep into the flames.

“What do you mean you haven’t seen her? She’s eight. Eight. You have to keep an eye on eight year olds!” She rushed into the bedroom and looked under the bed, in the closet, everywhere. The man came to stand in the doorway.

“Yvonne. I’m sure she’s fine. Come sit down.”

“No! I need to find her!”

“Yvonne.” The man grabbed her shoulder. “It’s no use.”

Yvonne looked up, wild eyed. “What do you mean? Where’s my baby? Where’s my baby?”

“You won’t find her. You can’t find her. It’s no use.”

“You monster! You’re a monster! You lied to me. You shot her didn’t you? I heard the stories.” Tears were a waterfall down her cheeks and her features were twisted in pain. “A gunman. In Time’s Square. Three dead. One little girl shot. Answer me, dammit!” She tried to twist out of his grip. “Answer me!”

“It was an accident.”

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“You shot my baby, you shot my baby...” She wilts, his grip being the only thing holding her up. “You shot your own daughter!”

“She shouldn’t have been following me.”

“You shouldn’t have been shooting people!”

A nurse bustled about a hospital room, tending to the small child in the hospital bed.

“She has no identification and hasn’t regained consciousness yet. She’ll lose the arm for sure but I think she’ll survive. We’ll have to see.”

A man sitting on a stool in the corner nodded. His hair was so blond it looked yellow and his eyes were two blue orbs.

“I can’t thank you enough for bringing her to us,” the nurse continued. “Any longer and she would have been dead for sure. That gunman was a right bastard, shooting a little girl like that.”

The yellow haired man paced the hallway. Up the hallway, down the hallway, up the hallway, down the hallway. Just as he paced up it, yet again, he bumped into someone. A hooked nose man of green-gray eyes with an odd haircut, tufts sticking out at odd angles. The pacing man took a step back.

“Go away.”

“I want to see my daughter.”

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“Go away. You’re not allowed.”

“Let me see my daughter.” He leaned into the yellow haired man’s face and his eyes again showed what the world had done to him. “Now.”

“No.” Blue eyes easy, he turned him down.

“I want my daughter.”

“You gave up your claim to her when you embedded that bullet in her arm.”

“She’s of my blood, she’ll always be mine. Where is she?”

“I won’t let you have her.”

“What about her mother? Will you let her own mother have her?”

“Her mother is dead. You know that.”

Shock flourished in the gunman’s eyes. “How did...”

“I can see it in your face. You shot her when she wouldn’t stop crying. You couldn’t take her grief. You are a coward. A greedy coward.”

“What do you know of me and my family!” But the man’s eyes belied his anger at this nameless intruder, this yellow haired man who knew things he shouldn’t. “I will see my daughter.”

“I think not.” The yellow haired man was finished with the conversation and wandered off down the hallway. The gunman followed.

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The first man, the one whose hands were not stained with blood, stuck his head in through a doorway. “The gunman is here.”

“What?” The nurse stood in terror, one hand clutched to her heart. She had been brushing the hair out of Paula's eyes.

“Don't worry. His gun doesn't work any longer. The girl is his daughter.”

“I don't care.” The woman was resolute. “Daughter or not, he shan't have her!”

“See?” The yellow haired man turned around to look at the father. “I'm not the only one thinking this. My thinking is not backwards.” He tilted his head slightly, studying the man curiously. “It is odd that you should think so.”

“You're bonkers, man!” The gunman pushed the blue eyed man to the floor and entered the room. The nurse picked up a chair and brandished it at him.

“Stay away. I warn you, I won't go down without a fight.” The yellow haired man was picking himself off the floor. “I apologize for this,” he said as he stood. “It may hurt your brain to think about later.” He addressed the words to the nurse and moved to the bedside, beating the father there.

He took the little girl's good hand in his own and muttered something.

The air twisted and popped, a blue orb- the same blue as the man's eyes- flickering into being.

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The nurse screamed out and fainted in terror. The man and little girl began to vanish.

The gunman lunged, gun out, and-

Far Away, Right Beside – A Novel

(Excerpt)

The corporal, barely more than a boy, put a hand to his chest in shock. The deep red colour dripped between his fingers. He was the last. I lowered the gun with a sigh of satisfaction.

“General. You are truly fantastic, you know. Your skill never ceases to amaze me.” My partner treated words like they were a teenage girl's shoes. He had way more than he should be using. “A five-on-two sneak attack and you managed to take them all down before I could fire a single shot.” He grinned at me. “Something's got you riled up.”

“I always fight like this, Private.” I reloaded and stuck my head around the wall. Three more lazed about on the other side of the compound, somehow having missed the groans of their dying comrades. “We're not out of here yet.”

Sweat trickled down my forehead. August was too bloody hot, as usual. I wiped it away and tried formulating a strategy. Talented as I was, two against three should have seemed easier than eating pie. One of us would have made it through their defenses in a heartbeat. However... I glanced over at the newbie I'd been saddled with. If I wanted him to get through this alive... Well, I'd have to be more careful than I was known for. I took

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another look around the wall at the last three guards we needed to finish off. They looked surprisingly at ease for a bunch of... A glint of red caught my eye and I withdrew quickly.

“Shit.”

“What?” The Private looked up from cleaning his nails. It appeared to be a nervous habit. “What?” He said again, shakily this time. It was as if the adrenaline rush was finally starting to get to him. He rubbed the stubble on his chin, his face nervous and grime-coated.

“Rilla.” I swore. We'd been expecting a thick guard of low-ranks and instead... “Dammit.”

The Private froze. “You mean she's on the guard? General Rilla? Why?”

“How should I know?” I muttered to myself. This was going to be fun. General against General, with only my overly talkative and not all that great with a gun, Private, to take on the other two. Damn. Might as well know exactly what we were up against. I took another look at the other two. A Lieutenant and a Captain. The realization kicked me in the balls. “They know I'm here. Shit. We've got a leak. Looks like our secret operation is not quite as secret as it should have been. Someone snitched.” I cursed under my breath, not wanting to alert the already bad

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situation into a worse one. My mind was already working frantically, trying to piece together who might have sold us out. Our lives were on the line because of some nitwit traitor and I didn't like it.

The Private looked down and absently ran a thumb along his nails, eyes gleaming. "It's just Rilla being Rilla, though, isn't it? She's been wanting to top your kills for weeks. What's better than beating you, by killing you?"

His excitement was suspicious. I looked at the Private, gauged his grin, the unmistakable bulge of a cellphone in his pocket and felt a surge of irritation. The gun was raised and he was spattered in red before he could figure out what was going on.

"I don't like leaks. Now die quietly."

He was still staring at me, mouth open, as I ducked out from beyond the wall and took out Rilla with a nicely placed shot to the breastplate. She looked down at the paint splattered over her chest and swore.

A flash of green streaked past my head and I was reminded of the other two guards. I managed to off the Captain with a shoulder hit but decided against staying around to deal

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with the Lieutenant. I darted through the gate and snagged the flag.

“So...” I said as I sauntered out of the falling down shack of the flag house. “How's that defeat feel?”

Rilla was wiping her breastplate, trying to get all traces of paint off. She looked up and grinned. “I deserved that. Picked an obvious leak.”

“Couldn't keep the grin off his smug little face. I don't think he'll make it past Private.”

She laughed, showing teeth. “You're particularly peeved today. I'm going to make a random guess and say it's because you didn't get the lifeguarding job.”

I ignored her. “Maybe I'll go find the little snitch again and take it out on him.”

“Oh don't, he's a friend of Alec's.”

I wheeled to look at her. “Alec has friends?”

She laughed again. “Fine. Fan. Kid appears drawn to danger.”

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“Yeah, I figured that out when he tried to screw up my plans. He will get it, you know, fan of Alec or not. Damn. Alec must get his ear talked off. Poor guy...” I trailed off until an impact rocked my right shoulder. I flinched and looked up. “The game's over, ass. You're late and stupid. Don't shoot your allies.”

The boy on the roof smirked and swung down.

“I'm a good sniper, though, aren't I? Getting General Kaito right in the shoulder.”

I sighed. “You cheated, Dai.”

“Woah. Enjoying your dosage of August heat then? It's obviously getting to you.”

Rilla slid her gun into the holder on her back and freed her red dreadlocks from her bandanna. “He didn't get the job, Sherlock. Stop harassing him.”

“Oh. Touchy, touchy.”

I looked him over. His still dry shirt talked of having recently come from an air-conditioned building and his hair was still perfectly mussed, not a drop of sweat in sight. As much as I longed to fire a good round into his chest and ruin his white t-shirt, I refrained, not willing to risk a demotion for bad conduct.

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Damian was a Private, unable to sink any lower and therefore would be unaffected by a trial.

“Want to go find out who got the job?” He asked, leaning the butt of his sniper rifle in the dust.

“You're going to damage your gun,” I noted, minorly pissed that he'd put such an expensive piece of weaponry in such a position just to look cool.

“Do you want to go or not?”

“You just want to go swimming.”

He shrugged. “Anything's better than this heat.”

“Then why not the lake?”

“Come on, just give in already.” He leaned against the wall of the shack, half in the shade, his gun still grinding into the dirt.

Rilla glanced over at the two of us, done cleaning her gear. “Kaito, the outdoor pool is, ironically enough, at the beach, so you'll see whoever it is anyway. Just go. Get a good swim in and relax. You won't have to work as an ice cream scooper forever.”

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I resigned myself to being a minimum wage slave for ice cream crazed public forever and vowed never to help produce any of the grimy, sticky, hyper children I had to deal with on a daily basis.

“Alright. Let's go.” I didn't bother to remove my breastplate or clean off the paint and dust coating my clothes. I just pulled my bandanna down around my neck and slid my gun into its sheath on my back.

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Brooke Middleton

~Vocabulary Extraordinaire and Diction Wizard~

I am inspired by my commitment to a healthy, ethical life and working on behalf of justice and equality for others in my school and community. To be free oneself is only possible when others are also free to be who they are and to succeed.

The Man in the Window

He was seated at the window. There was a window in a simple whitewashed room and David Hostner was sitting in front of it. Beyond the glass pane was a whole world and David peered, much like a bird in his perch, down at it from his position in the sky. He was waiting. There were tear tracks fading fast along the crevices of his wrinkled features. And he was waiting.

Several knocks radiated through the door.

David responded absently, his attention directed still at the streets below.

“Is something happening along the road?”

The sound of the woman’s voice caused David to turn around.

“Ah! You are here, I have been waiting for you.”

The woman entered the room and approached David quickly with a expression of delight.

“I’m glad you’re in such high spirits. I know that good days are often the hardest to handle,” she said.

“Hard to handle? My dear a good day is better than any other! And how could it not be? With temperatures as they are it appears as though the Holidays will be celebrated in bathing suits.”

Her smile lowered.

“Dad, it’s March.”

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David's brows furrowed in concentration. Then for a moment his thoughts strayed and he was weary of a great sadness. There were flashing lights of red and white. Red and white.

"What did you just say?"

"I said that it's March."

"No the other thing."

"Dad, I only—"

But the woman fell silent as David raised his index finger. His age old vision began to blur unexpectedly through a broken dam of tears. When he blinked there trickled down on either side of his face a glimmering wetness.

"Who do you think you are to come into my house unannounced and say such a thing to my face?"

The woman's next words were spoken very slowly: "Dad, its me; your daughter, Sarah."

"My daughter is dead!" David exclaimed. "She died right in my very arms twenty-eight years ago! There was a bang and she collapsed because her heart—her fragile little heart..."

David was sobbing when the woman reached her arms around him.

"Yes dad my heart, I know. Remember the ambulance though? Remember how they used a defibrillator and brought me back to—"

"I know what happened!" he roared.

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The woman jumped back a few paces and extended her hand towards the desk on her left. She was patient but desperation was corroding the resonance of her vocal chords.

“No dad, the girl is me; I am your daughter Sarah. You gave me this remember?” She grasped about the collar of her blouse and retrieved a jewel set in gold. “You gave me this necklace when we went on our first road-trip. You gave me this necklace after I graduated high school.”

“How did you get that? Give me that you wretch! Don’t you know that it belongs to my daughter Sarah? She died twenty-eight years ago—” David clenched a broad hand around the woman’s upper-arm. She winced but did not cry out.

“Dad let go, it’s me, its Sarah!”

There came no courteous knock before the door burst open. Four nurses entered and resolved reflexively to relinquish the woman from David’s clutch. He was still spitting in rage as they clouted him into the single chair the room possessed. They brought out a needle. He was injected with a clear substance.

“We came as soon as we heard him shout. Why didn’t you call?” asked the nurse closest to the woman.

The woman watched David become sedated for a moment before turning abruptly to the nurse who had addressed her.

“I had considered pressing it,” she gestured towards the button on the desk. It was a startling red with the word ‘Emergency’

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printed atop it in white. "But I guess I thought that I could handle it on my own."

"Here, let me take a look at your arm."

"No, I am fine, thank you."

David sat calmly. There was no motion about him besides the gradual rise and fall of his chest. The three nurses who had restrained him left the room.

"We had best let him rest now, dear."

The woman took a few steps towards David.

"You can call any time you want. I programmed my number into the phone so that you only need to press the big green button," she said.

David's attention was devoted the section of floor by his feet. He took on the appearance of a man beaten by the eternal hardship of loss. But the woman before him mirrored that look of exhaustion all too exactly.

"I love you dad."

"Come on Sarah we best be off," said the nurse once more.

Some thirty minutes later David elevated his sunken sights.

"Sarah?"

He stood and reached for the telephone, however, the hook was vacant of any such device. David left no item unturned during his search. When he finally held it he smiled and wandered back towards the receiver. For a moment he looked quite puzzled but

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the sensation of confusion did pass. He replaced the device with satisfaction.

David turned and sat in the chair. There was a large window in front of it and on the other side was an entire world. An entire world was on the other side but David Hostner was only concerned with one thing. He was waiting for someone to arrive. And while he waited, his eyes began to water.

A String of Pearls

“It nods and curtseys and recovers
When the wind blows above,
The nettle on the graves of lovers
That hanged themselves for love” by A. E. Houseman
Came the horns of war in warning
To the South, they need help there
Two fond lovers do untangle
Hearing knock upon the door
Calling man to service further
So the man holds fast his woman
Holds her close and holds her fair
Promise whispered soft and slowly
‘tween lip and lobe to where
It nods and curtseys and recovers

Travelled he for many day
The squelch of mud tight ‘round his feet
Smoke in rising t’ward the distance
There he shall battle, there he shall fight
Under oath of five-point star
To his majesty as knight
Yet each forward stroke of limb
Takes him further from his lover

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Further from his woman
So lov'd words he casts to carry
When the wind blows above,
Oh she waited day to night
And night then 'til to-day for assurance
Of pen on paper as said he prior atop their bed:
“Look for Talon flying, see yourself my printing there
But if twelve days should pass without it
Think me dead and please take care.”
Long she sat in wait of messenger bearing writing of his hand
But it never came, though bird did come
Cloaked in blood and smoke and earth
Desperate tears, her heart too broken
To live she tied a single rope
Final thoughts still for her lover
With eyes set upon
The nettle on the graves of lovers
Happy men the fight was over but
One man was restless still, to reach
Back home his lover, his voluptuous fair-skinned
Lover, and make love for those he'd felled
Oh nervous was he, noticed had he
That her response was much delayed
So to village off he rode on a
Mounted steed with rein but

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Only silence stood to greet him
And In silence found he there
She was dead in tree just hanging, her
Skin like pearl just hanging and he held her
Then just hanging cold like loneliness and snow
So beside her then he joined her,
“Darling still is pity known, I would never let you
Leave so long without the company of my own.”
And the town would later gather at the sight
Of those above, over the waving nettles,
Tangled in rope and limbs, the lovers
That hanged themselves for love.

SCATTERED CHANGE

yoU bRing ouT tHe maDMaN iN mE

yoU bRiNg ouT tHe nErVous tWitCh iN mE.

tHe fAileD iNteRVeNtiOns. tHe

cOuNseLing aPpOintMenTs. tHe

cOmPulsiVe liaR iN mE. tHe

iMpOsSiBle griN. tHe

crOoked tEeth. yoU briNg oUt tHe

maniAcaL lauGhtEr iN mE. tHe

iNabiLity tO bliNk. tHe

liTtle whitE paDded ceLlars iN mE. tHe

tIghTened stRaight jaCket.

yoU bRing oUt tHe hoUdini iN mE. tHe

liTtle reD piLls. tHe oVal blUe piLls. tHe

oRaNge piLls. yoU briNg oUt

tHe puRple piLls iN mE. tHe chAins. tHe

haNdcuFfs. tHe

resTraiNts iN mE. tHe

eLectrOshoCk thErapy iN mE. tHe

paNtOmimE maQuiLlagE.

yoU briNg oUt tHe viOlence iN mE. tHe

jabBerwoCky. tHe

seLf-conVersaTionaList iN mE.

tHe laCk oF iDentiFication. tHe

iNSomniAc iN mE. yoU bRing oUt tHe

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klepTo-nyMpho-pYromaNiac iN mE. tHe liFe
seNtEence. tHe “iNcurable” iN mE. tHe
mAsoChist iN mE. tHe laCeratioNs iN mE. tHe
raZorbLade iN mE. yoU bRING oUt tHe
sAdist iN mE.

And you think that I am relatable.



Tahani Peters

~Deep Thinker and Story Teller~

My name is Tahani Peters. My passions include camping, being creative in all that I do, and helping others. The outdoors, the beautiful stories of life, and music sparks my creativity.

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The following is the first of 2 short stories inspired by the wonderful painting on the bottom of the front cover of Scattered, Change. During one of our meetings in the GISS art room, we used the creations surrounding us as inspiration for our writing and wrote the thousand words which such a picture tells...

Thank you, Hannah, for allowing us to reproduce your work for this anthology.

The Last Lesson

“It’s a bird,” said the student. He glared at the being laying on the table, studying it with intent and curiosity. “A mechanical bird. How peculiar. Did you make it yourself?”

“No,” the man replied. “It is a creature of God.” The student frowned quizzically as he pivoted towards his former professor. “Oh did he? Rare, a man of science who devotes his creations to God. I never took you for a Catholic man.”

“I did not create it,” he reiterated. “God did.”

The student laughed with a tone of sarcasm and took a step closer from the office door, towards the motionless creature and the professor. Humouring his professor’s sudden change of heart, he pointed to the bare components of the being. “This is metal. Surely God did not create a mechanical creature along with the organic ones. How could that be?”

“God formed the ore necessary to create this bird.”

The student felt the patched feathers of the tiny creation, gracing his fingers along the soft down of blue and pink “The feathers have been plastered on. Feathers cannot grow from metal. How could that be?”

“God created the feathers and glue to create this bird.”

With growing impatience, the student raised his arms in the air.

“It is not a bird! It does not live like we do. It does not live at all!

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If it is truly a bird, why does it sit there so lifelessly? Why does it not fly away? How could that be?"

"God created this bird so it may live." And so the professor turned a knob connected to the components of the being, causing its gears to spin and its legs to move about.

"You've gone insane, old man!" The student barked out. "What is the point in making such creations if you just declare it a divine anomaly?"

After a moment of silence, the student turned back towards the door with a huff. As he left, he muttered "There is no point. Life has no point if it cannot be questioned."

The professor stood alone, the creature on the table still thrusting its legs.

"You are quite right," He whispered with a smile. "No point at all."

Similarity

the way it's always been

The changes are

two marks on the same stone

The etches on her skin

the red upon her virgin pages

testaments to

a transgressed time

the tear in the fabric

of her story and her stitches

There is what you will not do

and what you've never done

Two black spots

behind a misty veil

and the words

crawling in the crevices

with haste and vain

The changes are

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the way it's always been



Heather Reynolds

~Detailed Describer, Insightful Poet~

I feel most creative when I see the realm beyond the boundaries, when I feel my inner potential and when I realize I can portray the beauty from within in outer means. My name is Heather, I do not have a long story behind my name like many people I know, my name has a special meaning to me though and I truly value it.

Often, I feel names are labels and can easily understand if someone changes their name because they cannot fit into or connect to their name's vibe. When I was little I lived by big bushes of the pretty pink-purple flower called Heather. I pictured the Heather fairy from my flower fairy book hiding amongst the small dark green leaves and spikes of drooping white or rose-coloured bells. I would leave her offerings of rain-kissed rose buds delicately served on a platter of the prettiest maple leaves I could find. When I look back upon the memories, so vividly

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imprinted in my heart, I see who I really am and instantly feel warmth and gratitude. I don't think I will ever change my name. I wasn't born with a story but in life one weaves their own story, sometimes using fabrics of the old as well as discovering new textures and feelings to tenderly sew into their own beautiful creation.

Salty Seas

His wan smile folded at the creases. His crescent eyes squinting from the gathering wrinkles. I studied his smile as he nodded his head in acceptance. We couldn't understand each other's languages but communication existed in many forms.

His teeth were yellow and he smelled of fish, typical for a fisherman. His black hair was salted with white. The man, at first, tried to get me to understand him. "Konnichiwa", he said confidently. After seeing my confusion he did a little wave, then stood smiling.

What was it that had appealed to me so much about visiting a foreign country, where I wouldn't be able to grasp anything? The whole time I was with my husband, Peter, I secretly imagined myself doing just this. Peter's voice would drone on and on and I realized I was destined to be a loner. I didn't want love, at least in the way I had always received it. I convinced myself of this all through the divorce. I didn't know that love, just like language, had many forms.

Now gazing at the warm-hearted fisherman my past thoughts melted. I didn't want anything but to be myself. Something I couldn't do or felt I couldn't do for the longest time. I stared into the kind eyes of the old fisherman, breathing in the gentle smoky ocean. Here I was, in a completely different environment, more myself than ever before.

Chain-Link Fences

The consciousness enters the world like a dandelion piercing the soil by the tall grass. the flower so bold when in bloom. A vibrant yellow speckling against the fresh spring green. The consciousness expands across the rushing city. Through the skyscrapers and scaffold, out into the outskirts and dusty gas-stations, covered in rust, out in the field of fourth-month grain and desolate wooden fences.

The dandelion seeds blow and spread. Everyone returning to the same world no matter how many times we pass through the cycles, the generations. The dandelion returning, no matter how many times it is weeded. The dandelion fighting to find the sun, even in the confusing highway side.

We are beaming with hope, striving forward, experiencing the same perseverance our ancestors felt. The connection between past and present is not defined in lines except, rather, a big cycle, that keeps growing with evolution and returning.

To think, it all started with a seed.

Electric Energy

I'm sick of this electric energy
subways and motorcars
crumby rain and distraught smiles
empty faces gloom
shadows lurch and hang in dead air
untouched is the love that has collected dust
fallen into the synthetic mist
racing speeds
fast
fast
zoom
and then it ends...
I want that electric energy
To show its impurities
To become raw
To become real
Screw braces and zit cream
backwards living and hand sanitizer
Screw breast enlargements and diet pills
Screw not smiling
Afraid to appear too forward
Screw smiling because you're afraid people will think you're
negative

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Afraid...

Afraid of what?

Just hold onto yourself and do as you please

Simply because you enjoy It, because it sparks you on fire igniting
your passions

Feel the rain

Let it fall onto your skin

Free of products

Free your skin from these creations

Made by man

Man craving more and more

Greed and hunger

Do not feed that man

Let him

Embrace

The level he is at

Let him learn to feel satisfaction

And how it works in opposition

The more you feed the hungrier you get

Let that rain penetrate deep inside of you

Notice the nature

The beauty

Close your eyes

And stop

Nothing is anything

SCATTERED CHANGE

And nothing is everything

Don't be locked in chains your whole life

Only you hold the key

Forget the ideas

That made you feel

Anything but yourself

And remember

The wisdom you gained from hardships

Negativity is a sinking boat

Hold onto that flying power with positive thoughts and creations

Let your spirit soar high racing through the clouds let you

become you

And please

Forget

That electric energy

Untitled

It's nothing

And anything

I am

A fish

Swimming to the surface

A bird flying from that surface

To the moon

A star reaching the galaxy

It isn't words

It isn't anything

Or nothing

Just continuously drifting

Through

Seconds

Moments

Laughter

Sadness

It's breaking

Or creating

It is you

And it is anything

My eyes are coloured green

Don't ask me why
My eyes reflect the light
Turning blue to the sky
Or black to the night
Don't ask me why
They reflect the forlorn
They dance they tingle they cry
They sleep they breathe they scorn
Sleep calls to them
It closes them
The morning rises with them
I awake
To the grey mirror
Its stingy ash shade
I blink and rustle
Adjust and open
And gaze
My eyes
Have seen
All I have seen
They are not grey
Like the icy winds
They are not blue like the calm sky in a summer's day

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They are not orange like fires my spirit has danced to

They are not deep like the vast oceans

They are not floating like the soft heavens

They do not glimmer

They do not shine

Here in this dull bathroom

But when I am alive

So are they

Except here

In this dull bathroom

With its faded walls

And

Faded mirror

My eyes are green

SCATTERED CHANGE



Shasta Steadman

~Shadows Page, Drawer of the World~

Passion: graphic novels, drawing, painting, dreaming, writing.

Inspirations: Song, something beautiful NEEDTOBREATHE?

wildlife and human suffering and strength, paintings and life.

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My Life

It's my life and it's now or never, I ain't gonna live forever. I just want to live while I am alive, my heart is like an open high way, like Frank said, I'm gonna do it my way.

As if fire was rushing through my veins, my hand leapt for the pencil on the desk while my other ligament ripped paper from my old sketch book and slammed it down on the table. My pencil caressed the paper softly but fast, as I sketched in my idea, my mind judging the lighting and the image I wanted to transfer down on the paper. Almost instantly, a young girl began to form. Her curly hair and grey pencil toned eyes seemed enchanting and welcoming. With each line my pencil etched it added more to a once white world. This is what I want to do. This is my life, each new paper a new world to be made and characters to build and love. I put down my pencil hastily and flung about searching for my water colours. Finding them, I burst open the delicious colour and wet my paint brush. Slowly, a once white world became alive with colour and voice. I had made this world with my own hands, my own way.

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SCATTERED CHANGE

Mentor:



Sarah Hook Nilsson

~Creator, Down-to-Earth Dreamer~

People, places, patterns, sights, sounds and situations all inspire me to play with words. Sometimes it is for the sheer fun of it, sometimes strong feelings need expression. You might say life and the living of it, in all its many hues. I delight in finding the precision of the right word and feel filled with awe and gratitude when sometimes the words just land already formed, sent by the hand of some generous, benevolent muse.

Words

Warp and weft, washing through every fiber of my being.
Words I have loved you.
From the time you could talk and before I could utter
Worlds that spoke, that breathed through your voice,
Showed me subtleties which can pass unnoticed when unnamed.
Evolutions of intent, unseen shifts, unthought choice,
As coins whose face remains the same,
But value changed.

Words wet the tongue, talk to the heart, speak the mind and
reflect the spirit
While walking to the sound of their own voice.
And I, in awe and delight, follow blindly where angels fear to
tread to the edge of the living word.

Inexplicable, unforgivable, unrelenting, impetuous.
Soothing, calming,
Unnecessary, unspoken,
Unwittingly eloquent, unabashed,
Invisible, intangible –

... And gone,
With the breath that gave them life.

The Painted Bird

It lay there, its vivid feathers still luminous with life, its beak barely open as if ready to utter a last cry of disbelief that life was over. But its eyes were flat and unfocused for that is where the spark had shrunk away first, receding within to the fluttering heart when there was no hope of recovery.

Now thread, a knife and a paint brush lay close by, ready to transform the feathers on the limp body into some gaudy headdress for a festive follower in the parade where even these tropical colours of the jungle could pale beside the flamboyant gaudiness of the Mardi Gras. And the sounds - all the shrill cries, the steel drums, the children's shrieks of delight would be a backdrop for the funeral procession for this tiny spirit that had flown on other wings, back to the jungle of delights.

Freedom at last from the bars of a cage. Only a limp body could speak of the confinement now left behind. The doors of the cage open at last and the spirit free to fly.

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SCATTERED CHANGE

Mentor:



Ahava Shira

~Painter of Words~

Inspiration comes from sensuality, beauty and meaningfulness of words, birds, trees, all of nature, and people with their hearts on their sleeves and wherever else they wear them. I live with awe for our vulnerability and the power of our resilience. Passionate about all the ways, with words, through stories and in silence, we practice compassion and connections in community. What joy it is to create and share all these magical worlds to feel and breathe and fly in.

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The Turning is Inside Her

She is on the landing of her third floor flat and inside is where everything will begin. Nothing between her and the next step except this door. Nothing special about it except she has to go through it, and she has never been through it before.

Sure there were other doors, in other times, other floors and landings, but not this particular door, on this specific floor. Not at this moment in her life.

It feels as if someone has just thrown cold water on her face. Startled, shocked by the intensity of feeling that is both propelling her forward and gluing her to her place.

Her hand moves to the handle. Shaking, she wonders if it is locked. Looks behind her; No one else but her. Closes her eyes and all the familiar voices crowd around:

“How could you?”

“Why now? Why this?”

“What if they don’t remember you?”

“What if you forget your lines?”

“What if there is no room beyond the door?”

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“What if...What if...?”

She shakes her head, trying to get rid of them. A vision of her mother in the kitchen, yelling at her to stop looking in the mirror and get down to breakfast so she'll be ready for the bus.

She reaches for the handle again.

The turning is inside her, the door swinging forward. Her eyes on the space in between, opening up.

Facilitating Learning

Curious, about to step into the role of mentor, of guide to a group of young authors. Curious, that I said author, not writer, because aren't we stepping into something more than our writing here? It's about voice, the choice and chance and effort to stand on this side of the door and say I'm coming in, to declare ourselves writers. How many wanted to come but didn't. Because they couldn't claim the word(s), their voices shaky and unable to say "yes!" to the adventure. I'll take door number 3, the trip to Hawaii, or the sports car with the amped up speakers. You each chose door number 1 though, to say I am a writer and I belong here. To open the door to yourself and then keep opening it, each week, sharing the conversation with the conviction that your words matter, have substance, meaning, vision.

What courage, what self-awareness, to say this is who I am, a writer. To write when others might not. You write for yourself and for them. Authors I call you, showing you that to become one takes courage, conviction, self-awareness, persistence, showing up at the page, alone and with others, reading your words.

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And the glory, the power of publishing, authoring, that is exciting, and will bring its own joys and challenges. And always the pen will meet the blank page, inevitably.

Afterword

I hope you've enjoyed reading this compilation of stories, poems and journal entries from the Gulf Islands Secondary School Writers' Group of 2013. As the editor, I would both like to thank you, the reader, for taking the time to peruse the pages within this anthology, and would also like to take the time to thank the writers for their contributions.

A lot of work went into producing the book you see before you. I'd like to acknowledge the hard work of both of the group's mentors, Sarah Hook-Nilsson and Ahava Shira, as well as the hard work of the three artists whose works you can see produced both on the cover and within the pages of the book itself, Hannah Martens, Heather Reynolds and Shasta Steadman. Thanks also go out to Gulf Islands Secondary School and School District 64 for their support of the Writers' Group.

~Emily Dunsmuir

