Lighting the Night

A literary anthology by students of Sandringham College.
It is with great pleasure that I present to you this, the inaugural edition of Sandringham College’s literary magazine, ‘Lighting the Night’. Inside these covers you will find writing from a range of contributors from across all year levels, demonstrating the elegance and innovation of our students.

This magazine provides us with the opportunity to showcase the diverse literary talents of our students, and these pages serve as a useful forum for them to voice their concerns and interests. Through their writing, students have demonstrated an awareness of the broader society and their role within it. They have drawn inspiration not only from their families and friends, but many pieces reflect the style and literary works of greats such as Truman Capote and William Shakespeare.

The beauty of creative writing, and particularly poetry, is that it opens up the wonder of language, and it has the ability to transform our experience by revealing insights previously unseen. It is fitting then, that the title of our magazine is Lighting the Night. As evidenced within this collection, our students have used the power of language to illuminate their paths to self-discovery, to reflect on current social injustices and to express their love of nature and to speak universal truths about love, loss and heartbreak.

With well over 100 voluntary submissions, reducing the entries down to what you see before you was made particularly difficult by the exceptional standard of work exhibited. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Julian Lewis who had the onerous task of editing the magazine, and without whose help, the project would never have been completed.

I must also extend my thanks to Jennifer Down who spent time as a Writer in Residence within the college this year. She was able to connect with the students and encourage them to aspire to a lifetime of writing. I am delighted that Jennifer has agreed to judge this year’s entries for us.

Lastly, I want to thank all of the students who were brave enough to submit their writing to an open forum such as this. Your courage and talent are humbling to say the least. It takes great courage to expose your inner selves in this way, and I hope you take great pride in your ability to Light the Night for others.

– Enza Sepe, English Domain Leader
Stars twinkling
Winking at the moon
Whose blushing
Creates her vertical smile

The son of the sky
The night appears
Vanishing the sun
Replacing it with the lady moon

The wizened cloud surges across the sky
Cloaking the moon in darkness
Extinguishing her form
Obscuring her luminescence.

The stars pull at the cloak
Pushing the old cloud away
Lighting the night
Uncovering the moon and her true beauty.

- Ellen Carey, Year 8
Reverse Racism Is Not a Real Thing

Let me lay it down for you real quick; racism describes a system of disadvantage based on race. I’m sorry to break it to you but if you’re white and you’ve faced prejudice from PoC, you can still never, nor will you ever, really understand black oppression.

Africa had the Kingdom of Kush where we ruled and were real members of society, with every race able to get an education from black teachers who taught Greeks and Romans. We also had a wealth of gold and were an established race and not the victims we are seen as today. But soon enough people stole the gold and converted it to money which became an empowerment for the Europeans. So the Persians invaded too, as they had heard about the teachings, the gold and everything sacred. Africa became completely barren, robbed of everything it once thrived upon, and soon enough, after our culture was stripped bare, our people were shipped off to America like cattle, kept in the fields and whipped to comply. If you were lucky you’d get to work as a maid or a butler. For 245 years and more, our people weren’t even considered human, just used as animals or machines and right up to today some people still cannot see a positive light shone on the black race because we are confronted with social stigmas that we are either heavily impoverished or thieving, violent people. When people see us we represent social stigmas of an entire race buried into one person and aren’t seen as individuals.

So how can you compare white oppression to black oppression, when you can’t?

- Sarah Yusuf, Year 10

Limbo

You think of nothingness as black,
But what if it was white?
What if there was no light at the end of the tunnel,
Just a dark, dark night?
Is grass as green as they implied?
What if grass is found dead on the other side?
Does nothingness have colour?
Or is it just to hide,
The thoughts as blank as the nothingness,
Found on the way of the newly died?
The dreams of the already departing souls
Show a land of wonders,
But if nothingness can be white,
What could it be like
To follow the path of flight?
For we’ve been dying since we were born,
Though the fact is hard to know,
The expired control the thoughts,
Of those who’ve yet to go.

- Tara Gowers, Year 8

Darkness

Do you see the darkness?
The people?
Do you see me?
You don’t
You only see yourself
Reflected back
Do you see my movements?
Do you see the way I hide?
I see you living, laughing, happy
I see my human
Do you see the sunshine?
Feel its burn?
Do you see the way it makes you smile?
I don’t
You have friends
You have family
I am alone
I can not say
My movements are yours
And yours are mine
You are my human
And I am your shadow

- Natasha Grant, Year 8

Pompeii

The stench of tobacco
Permeates the air
Seeping into my nose
Piercing at my veins
My blood tingles
Almost dances
To the feeling of
The cold.
Lungs are heavy
Collapsing, dying
Teardrops are falling
Distancing emotions
My eyes are swollen
Black tar absorbs them
Spindly legs are splintering
Slowly decaying.
My brain is hollow
The howl of the wind echoes
Softly
Darkness
Consumes me

- Jai Ninnes, Year 8
My legs dangle over the wooden fence as I look down into the dirty mud composed of things you would never imagine would belong in a pen. Black dots move across the newly made fence that I sit on. They move in an orderly fashion along the surface, in files moving back and forth, occasionally squishing one.

Farms are viewed by many as nature areas, located far away from urban areas, where most of humanity spend their days believing they are moral beings and going about their daily life. However, they are oblivious to what they do and to the fact that they choose to accept this. There is not a single house in view except for barns and sheds, with the closest town around 400km away.

My best friend was murdered here. On this very farm. But no one believes me.

I heard his screams. It was in the darkest of night and shocking enough to wake me from my sleep. The sound was unimaginable to me, as if the sound was able to push fear through my body and sanity out of my body. At first I thought that the sound came from an unnatural creature, living in the cold and dark air. I simply pulled my sheet over my head and held my breath in fear of my life. But I was just a wimpy kid, just thinking about myself.

When I woke that morning I was glad to see I was still safe in my bed. My limbs still together and my mind still sane. I went downstairs like every morning, going to the kitchen and reached for the milk and cereal which I consume. I asked mum if she had heard the sound produced the night before. The purpose of this was to reassure myself that monsters do not exist and, hopefully, gaining an explanation.

But mum said nothing and looked away from me, changing her breathing pattern and taking a large intake of air before saying anything. And the answer she gave was not what I was hoping for.

Nobody on the farm seemed to notice those seconds and nobody believes me when I try to explain. My mother and father have acted weirdly around me ever since the incident, hearing them whisper my name behind closed doors. I feel as if they know something I don’t. It was as if they had forgotten Ben and his parents overnight. It was like I had missed something.

I remember the days after school. I would come home and chat with Ben. We were interested in the same type of stuff, not like the other boys. We both loved animals, our favourite food was fruit and we hated sport.

Ben’s parents had had to go somewhere the day before the accident occurred and had left Ben in the care of my parents. His mum and dad were nice but I never really talked to them. Most people would say that Ben looked just like his parents, but I would have to differ. He didn’t want to stay at our place as he felt he would become homesick. He hadn’t been away from his parents before.

The dark of the night started to close over, like someone layering sheets over our prank as I started to walk back home ready for bed, constantly looking around in fear of vanishing just like Ben. I get into bed. A feeling comes over me, like I am needed somewhere, but I am too scared to do anything.

---

**Perpendicular**

**Part 1**

My legs dangle over the wooden fence as I look down into the dirty mud composed of things you would never imagine would belong in a pen. Black dots move across the newly made fence that I sit on. They move in an orderly fashion along the surface, in files moving back and forth, occasionally squishing one.

Farms are viewed by many as nature areas, located far away from urban areas, where most of humanity spend their days believing they are moral beings and going about their daily life. However, they are oblivious to what they do and to the fact that they choose to accept this. There is not a single house in view except for barns and sheds, with the closest town around 400km away.

My best friend was murdered here. On this very farm. But no one believes me.

I heard his screams. It was in the darkest of night and shocking enough to wake me from my sleep. The sound was unimaginable to me, as if the sound was able to push fear through my body and sanity out of my body. At first I thought that the sound came from an unnatural creature, living in the cold and dark air. I simply pulled my sheet over my head and held my breath in fear of my life. But I was just a wimpy kid, just thinking about myself.

When I woke that morning I was glad to see I was still safe in my bed. My limbs still together and my mind still sane. I went downstairs like every morning, going to the kitchen and reached for the milk and cereal which I consume. I asked mum if she had heard the sound produced the night before. The purpose of this was to reassure myself that monsters do not exist and, hopefully, gaining an explanation.

But mum said nothing and looked away from me, changing her breathing pattern and taking a large intake of air before saying anything. And the answer she gave was not what I was hoping for.

Nobody on the farm seemed to notice those seconds and nobody believes me when I try to explain. My mother and father have acted weirdly around me ever since the incident, hearing them whisper my name behind closed doors. I feel as if they know something I don’t. It was as if they had forgotten Ben and his parents overnight. It was like I had missed something.

I remember the days after school. I would come home and chat with Ben. We were interested in the same type of stuff, not like the other boys. We both loved animals, our favourite food was fruit and we hated sport.

Ben’s parents had had to go somewhere the day before the accident occurred and had left Ben in the care of my parents. His mum and dad were nice but I never really talked to them. Most people would say that Ben looked just like his parents, but I would have to differ. He didn’t want to stay at our place as he felt he would become homesick. He hadn’t been away from his parents before.

The dark of the night started to close over, like someone layering sheets over our prank as I started to walk back home ready for bed, constantly looking around in fear of vanishing just like Ben. I get into bed. A feeling comes over me, like I am needed somewhere, but I am too scared to do anything.

---

**Part 2**

I wake in a sudden shock, searching for my bedside light switch. Thoughts are emerging in my head. I have the same urge as before, but now I know what I have to do: save Ben, or at least make sure that he is not forgotten and this never happens again. It’s like Ben just disappeared, forgotten forever, never to be remembered. The people who could help me would have to be the police, but then trip would take me half the day. I wake up early and plan to go to town before my parents wake up. I leave the cereal on the table to make my parents believe I was out on the farm, like any other day.

I walked to the bus stop 5k from my house, a determined power in my strides. I caught the first bus available. The fare of $3.40 was nearly all I had, however, it did take me all the way in to town. I sat there quietly rehearsing what I was going to say when I stepped through the door to the police office. Twiddling my thumbs, I try to look mature, waiting for my stop.

I stepped off the bus and thanked the bus driver. The hard, urban concrete I am placed on is menacing to my touch. I know exactly where to go. My mind is firm! I set on an objective and I can’t be detoured. I walked as fast as I could along the empty streets, looking composed, but actually desperate inside. I knew that this would get me to the end of my friend’s death. I had come to town quite often and had seen the police office before. I turn the corner and the stereotypical building is small and located half way down the street.

I grasped the door handle to the police office. I step inside and the strong smell of coffee and chemical cleaner hit me. I ask for the man in charge. Conveniently, the officer was the only person inside. I explain my story, stuttering and mumbling, with a tear in my eye. After I finished, he looks at me strangely and says, “Well, I don’t know what we can do for you now son, come on.”

The police officer took me outside and we walked down the street, the policeman muttering and laughing to himself as he we walked, with me two steps behind. We finally stop in front of a small shop. He taps me on the window and I cringe as I look at my butchered friend. he then says, “We’re a farming community and all animals will end up in this shop.”

The title above the window read Butcher, sitting oh so innocently in the sun.

— Eugene Lombardo, Year 9
**You and I**

You blunder forward
I crawl back
Wasps
and butterflies.

You search
I hide myself
Eagles
and mice.

You bask in pride
I smile
Lions
And tigers

You steal yours
I make my own
Bears
And bees

You spread out
I huddle closer
Fish
And whales*

- Natasha Grant, Year 8

**Society ruined me**

I tried again today,
I succeeded.

They say I should be skinny,
That I should have straight hair,
That I should be smarter.
That I shouldn’t be weak.

I must excel in everything;
Sport, art, music, academics... socialising.
I am not good at that.
Which means that in their eyes, I am irrelevant.

These words,
These thoughts.
Were the only sounds I heard when I tried.
When I saw bright red blood.
When I couldn’t breathe.
When everything went black.

- Zoë French, Year 8

**Bombed**

They laughed there,
They cried there,
They dreamt there,
Until it was taken away.

And then what?
Slow deaths, quick deaths,
Sad deaths.
Lies, given to those that still lived,
Even as they got sick and sicker,
And slowly died.

But was this the end?
No, oh no.
For the next generation, and the one after that,
Were given those lies,
And became sick, and sicker,
And slowly died.

They say it came with the bombs,
Or was it really a sickness sprung from the lies,
And the liars’ thoughts?
For peace is the way to end a war,
And bombs are the way to start one.

- Tara Gowers, Year 8

**Dream**

Now dreams are far from people
But they follow just like friends
Nightmares far from colleagues
But lives that others lend

Now background noise like static
Follows in my sleep
Now hurting hearts are leaking hope
And now I’m in too deep

If people have dreams, do dreams have people?
And why must they follow me?
But dreams? They hide and blind and cloak
And it’s too late to see

These dreams are far from people, yes,
But friendship do they lack
For people, they have shades of grey -
But dreams are only black.

- Meg Nicholls, Year 8
"NO! NO! NO! It's just not possible." I've been working on this case for years now. I started in 1932, it was now 1942. Ten years of my life was wasted on this stupid, idiotic, life-destroying, family-tearing, career-changing case. Ten. Years. I thought I'd seen it all by now; murder, rape, domestic violence and kidnapping. But nothing, and I mean nothing, in this universe or the next could have prepared me for this case, and as I said before, it's just not possible. I can't even describe what I'm thinking right now, so I'll have to tell you everything from the beginning.

Our story starts in 1932 just in case you weren't paying any attention. I'd been a cop for a year before I was promoted to detective. It went so fast. I was promoted because the chief said I had guts and a real something about me. He also said I had moxy, whatever that means. Everyone says when you're a cop you get one case that makes or breaks you and everyone including my wife and kids said that I've had mine now and that my career was boring from here on out. But if they knew what I was going I through now...well...if they were still here they would have said otherwise.

One day, don't ask me what date, I was sitting in my office waiting for my next case but nothing was coming through. It was like a drought and it seemed like every criminal had turned into a wimp or something. But as I was sitting there, watching the fan on the roof spin round and round, almost being hypnotised by it, there was a knock at the door that broke the spell.

I quickly stood up and thanked the Lord for bringing me a case but, as it turned out, it was just the chief with a letter addressed to me. But not a usual letter, with a stamp and address, as the only thing on it was my name. "Great," I thought to myself, "I'm getting fired"; but that was not the case. Upon opening the letter several pictures fell out, along with a note. It read: "If I am correct, you, Peter Green, should receive this letter on December the 5th, 1932 at 4:58pm. I checked the calendar on the wall behind me. It was December 5th and the time was 4:58. I continued reading, "Along with this note should be a photo of you in 1902." I stopped. This was impossible. That was a year before I was born. This had to be a mistake. I put the note down and picked up the photo, and, without a doubt, that was me, and in the background there was a banner for our town's fair that read 1902. I didn't know what to do. At once all these emotions came rushing into my system; fear, anxiety, hatred, nervousness and only one question was on my mind, "How?" The room started to spin, and before I knew it, I was falling. Then I realised I was fainting. The last thing I remember was hitting the floor, hard.

Then...darkness.

I woke up 2 hours later with a headache that could kill a man. It was now 7pm and I was going to be late for dinner. I quickly threw on my dark brown trench coat and hurried towards my car. I jumped in the car and, to drown out thought, turned the radio up loud so I could get whatever it was that just happened 2 hours earlier out of my head. By the time I got home it was 7:30 and there was no relief from the flap I was about to receive from my wife. I contemplated not going in and just waiting until she went to bed but I knew that just would make things worse. So I went in, prepared for the worst.

The moment I stood in the door, there she was, sitting on the couch, dishes already washed, feet curled up, with a glass of wine in hand, reading her favourite book. She always tried her best to look good, especially when I came home. But she didn't have to, for she always looked pretty to me. I had often told her that, but she continued to dress up for dinner anyway, so I let her be. In fact, time froze whenever I looked at her, with her long blonde locks of hair that flowed down her shoulders and her face with everything perfectly proportioned. Even the perfume she wore was beautiful. Frankly, meeting her after work every day reminded me just how lucky I was to have her, but I knew that, in the blink of an eye, this picturesque, seemingly demure woman could transform into a nightmare.

"Where have you been?" she asked, with more than a hint of suspicion in her voice.

"Where I am everyday, work." I replied.

"But how do I know that? For all I know you could be coming home from God knows where and lying right to my face." And where do you think "God knows where" is?" I replied angrily.

Another woman's house perhaps?" she retorts, almost in tears.

I dropped my briefcase and grabbed her hands, "Hey now, you know I would never do that to you. You are the love of my life and I made a vow on our wedding day to always love you." By the time I had finished saying this, she was in tears and lying on my shoulder.

"I know and I'm sorry, I don't know why I would think that, something just came over me and-"

"It's fine, just promise me you will never think that again."

"I promise. I'm gonna go to bed."

"Alright darling, I'll be up soon." I said, relieved that the fight was over.

I put my dinner in the microwave. While waiting, I pulled the note and photos out of my pocket and threw them on the table. The microwave went off so I grabbed my dinner and ate it quickly. After finishing my dinner, and thinking only about what was on the table the whole time, I washed my plate and cutlery and picked up the note. The bin was right there. I could have just ended it, there and then, but something inside me needed to know more. So I threw the note back on the table to come back to it in the morning. I wandered up the stairs, still distracted by what was happening. I tried not to make a noise, but, to no avail. Both my children came running out to greet me.

"Daddy!" they both said with excitement in their voices.

"Shh, go back to bed and good night."

"Night daddy," they said as they scurried back to their rooms.

I went into my room, changed into my pyjamas and hopped into bed without even cleaning my teeth, which was unlike my routine. I figured that all I needed was a good night's sleep but hoped by the time I woke up that this thing, whatever it was lying downstairs on the kitchen table, would be gone by morning.

- Max Green, Year 9
Misgivings

The wind howls, the earth shakes. The chamber door creaks as Lady Macbeth slowly pries the door open and enters with a look of despair upon her face. She sits down at her table with nothing but the soft glow of the candle beside her. She picks up her quill and knowing that no one is around, breaks down and cries. She does not have to act strong any more, for there is no one around for her to lie to. She can take off her shroud of deceit and return to her normal state. Lady Macbeth begins to write for Macbeth to read later of her emotional state.

My dearest love,

These nights have not been colder nor more haunting. The desire we have been following in these recent times has brought me to madness. I am slowly becoming more and more paranoid. I have been told by the gentlewoman that she has seen me in my sleep, washing blood from my hands that wasn't there. I cannot forget the treason we have committed upon our kingdom.

What was it all for? Have we no humanity left in our souls? I do not believe we can repent of our crimes as there is not much left for us here. You pay no attention to the consequences of the glory of the throne, yet it was I who pushed you, believing the visions of the witches. I regret ever thinking that things would be smooth for us. This thirst for blood needs to end. You are king now, so let your mind be at ease.

The wind blows through the gallows
The squeak of the chamber door echoes through the empty room
My mind races faster than the beat of my troubled heart
The drip of blood sounds like the tears that fall as I write this letter.

Screams of horror! horror! horror! are looped in my head.
The way I gripped the dagger is the way my chest feels
Come forth, oh desecrated one, taketh my soul and let this pain be undone
The conscience makes cowards of us all
It seems that to undo the troublesome acts of treason, would be to end my miserable life
I pray for hope and forgiveness
It is said, "There is always a chance to rectify what you've taken, make your peace in the world"
If I slip through the cracks, I could leave this room
I feel the burden of murder, it shakes the earth to the core
I feel like the world was collapsing. Then I think
"Can I still get into heaven if I kill myself? Can I still get into heaven if I kill myself? Can I ever be forgiven that I killed the king?"

It was a foolish mistake fueled with nothing but selfish motives!
And if I turn the same fate on me, if I even it out
"Can I still get in or will they send me to hell? Can I still get into heaven if I kill myself?"

I will leave the world behind, I don’t want to know how it ends
Lady Macbeth steps to her window in the unforgiving cold
She feels the brisk wind flow through her dress
It comforts her that with one leap forward
She will not feel any more guilt or regret
She is ready to move on and start again

With that, Lady Macbeth descended rapidly
Picking up speed as she fell
The sudden relief of death hits her

- Jeremy Topakas, Year 10

---

Monsters

under the Bed

I heard my mother
I was the first
My world stopped spinning
My family stopped functioning
You couldn’t see it
Yet some were taken
I was scared
Everyone was scared
It came again, and again
So many alarms
No one would talk
When the monster was around.

God sent it. Why?
To make us stronger.
Sometimes we think,
It’ll come again.

- Zoë French, Year 8

Waves

The waves are like gigantic wolves
They leap and jump
And razor with all their might
With razor teeth and deadly claws
They playfully pounce on the shores

They hungrily pull the sand castles
Into their foamy lair
And run across the ground

They shake their wet body
Over the grainy sand
But when they get tired
They tickle feet and give hugs
And dance through the rocks

Then they rest their head on the shady shores,
And howl and prowl loud
And then quietly roar

- Kiana Mokhtari, Year 7
The story begins like any other ironic introduction to a story mocking the whole “like every other story” genre, a typical favourite, might I add, of brain dead teenagers. Don’t get me wrong; teenagers are great. I just think they are the kind of great that can be annoying, like a harness for rock climbing, there to make it seem less scary but are uncomfortable to have close.

My name is George. I am not curious. I am also not an elderly man complaining about teenagers and referring constantly to my favourite pinpointed time in my life, “back in the day”. No. I am the other end, the “young whippersnapper”, the teenager. Like my animalian counterpart, who is very curious and also called George, I am smelly, cheeky and hairy. I think my school is a zoo and the teachers are just reliving their childhood memories of seeing monkeys fight and bicker behind the safe bars of the animal prison. The only difference is we do not look like monkeys (well, most of us) and there are no bars for the teachers. The five days a week babysitter has only one protection method: “I will call your parents”.

Everything, else and I mean everything is the same, from the smell of stale food dropped on the floor to the animal banter spoken in various lingoes only understandable by each species. So where do I fall in all of this? “Let’s read some more shall we!” instructed the English teacher enthusiastically as sighs across the room broke out.

The first day of school is the easiest. I had a list to clue that parents are always on about. I have created a list, as formal as I could make it, about why school is the easiest on the first day.

Reasons why I think school is easiest on the first day
• No one talks to you
• You can get away with not doing any work
• Teachers love you, another potential pet
• You are a MYSTERY

Lists explain things how they are; lists are that friend that tell you if that dress makes you look fat. I like lists a lot - such honesty.

“Honesty goes a long way”, my wannabe wise guy father will explain over the dinner table, jousting his fork full of steak and chips at me. He is also a wannabe dinner table, jousting his fork full of steak and chips at me. He is also a wannabe dinner table, jousting his fork full of steak and chips at me. He is also a wannabe dinner table, jousting his fork full of steak and chips at me.

When I stood in line for the canteen I went in front of the overweight kid so I could not be seen from behind. It worked perfectly. I could see everyone behind me in the reflection of the mirror at the back of the canteen that the lady running it uses to put on her hair net for hygiene and her lipstick to impress the senior jocks. I could see them like a pirate through a telescopic spy glass. It was clear and easy.

I was in line for a while and some girls turned up. I could spy pretty, straight-haired girls, discussing boys, and then, just before mentioning me, turning their heads 170 degrees (100 degrees short of an owl) both ways, right, then left, before continuing. My brown, now see-through, due to the grease-filled contents, bag was ready with a Hawaiian pizza for me. I didn’t catch anything of what they said. I’ll be sure to get something from the canteen tomorrow.

Parents asking how your day was could be the most stressful question ever asked. Do you have any homework and do you have a crush on someone? Testosterone does not help answer these questions.

Mum pushes her ever dimming luck and asks how my day was. My inner monologue tells me to have an outburst now so mum thinks there is something wrong with me and the school. Then, if the school is great, which it seems to be, everyday will seem amazing to mum because she will think back to when I was that shocking first day.

“Mum, my day could not have been worse! The teachers hate me and I am so mad I could swear right in front of your innocent parental ears.” I force a tear.

She knows I am serious because I refer to her ears, her least favourite part of her body. She responds quickly with a tear. She knows I am serious because I refer to her ears, her least favourite part of her body. She responds quickly with a tear.

“I want to swear.” I say aloud before putting my headphones in. Beethoven understands my sins.

Dinner is never an enjoyable time. My family deems it appropriate to talk during dinner and make light hearted conversation. How is this politically correct? I sit at the dinner table to eat and enjoy my meal whilst staring into the eyes of my awkward family members wondering whether they can hear me chew. It’s actually quite fun to be frank. Although I am not Frank, nor am I an elderly man. I stated that before but I think reinforcement is the best kind of learning.

I hate parmesan cheese. I seem to hate a lot of things, I promise you, I don’t. The principle of hating things and something going wrong in your day is that you say it before anything else. If someone says, “What happened today, George?” I will surely respond with the interesting story of the boy who got caught smoking weed on the oval and was so high he thought they couldn’t see him through the smoke and that he was a ninja. Why would I tell any story but that when asked the question?

Then we have the other end... “What happened today, George?” The same person from a parallel universe will ask and parallel universe George will respond with, “Oh, you know, I woke up, breathed air and lived. How lucky we are to be a live mysterious stranger!” “Ever so lucky!” the stranger replies. They now go about their days, breathing. Oh boy, did they breathe.

I seem to be getting off track again. I really do hate parmesan cheese.

Day two of school is much more interesting than the first. The first pancake is always the worst, too much sugar coating. Day two is raw, uncompressed questioning. I have had 4 people approach me and I have not even entered the school grounds yet. The only reason no one else is talking to me is because I have stopped at the park next to the school and am writing in this journal. I think I would be the first antelope to go in a lion attack; I would just sit and write in my journal hoping none of them set their gaze on me, or worse, talk to me.

I am memorising names of the most interesting people I have talked to and am including a landmark on their body to remember them. So much for being mysterious over the next few weeks. There’s Tim, big nose, small personality and even smaller dignity, will do anything for a joke. The other two contenders for potential “talking companions” are Darcy or Zoë. I can only have two, that’s the rules, Harry Potter had two “talking companions” and he is a famous wizard with a wicked back-story and a film crew following his every move like a shoe following a foot, never leaving except on Sunday evenings, only to be replaced by slippers.

Lunch is over and the canteen line was revisited. All of the popular girls talked to me and I simply nodded my head until they left. I kept nodding to myself as I left the line for the canteen; I think I needed to tell myself everything is okay. Moving to a new school is hard and it probably won’t get easier, just easier to hide.

– Noah Sole, Year 10
Prologue

“THE COPS ARE HERE!” Liam heard in his earpiece.

“What?!?” Liam responded, extremely surprised.

“They’re here; I see four coming in now!”

The spotter was very anxious as Liam had said that the police wouldn’t be there for another 10 minutes. Liam couldn’t figure out why the police were here already as they should have had more time to get the money.

“Just do your damn job!” Liam couldn’t have his men doubting the mission. The police entered the bank.

“POLICE, DON’T MOVE!”

They moved in groups of two, watching each other’s back.

“Weapons free,” Liam said to the two guards at the drill. They fired their suppressed MP5’s and the police dropped dead on the ground.

“Sir, someone is trying to contact one of the cops, should I answer it?” one of the guards asked.

“Yes,” Liam said, hoping the cop on the other end wouldn’t get suspicious.

“Is everything alright, did you find the criminals?” asked the cop on the other end of the radio.

“Ah, everything’s fine, ah, no need for back-up, we’ve got the criminals in handcuffs,” replied one of the drill guards.

“Well I’ll send a squad and a transport with SWAT over to pick you up,” said the cop. But before the guard could reply, he hung up.

“Damn it! Ok we’ll have to move fast. Once we have the money we’ll run to the van, put the money in and get out.”

Liam ordered all the men to grab the money from the vault. They didn’t have much time, and if the cops arrived while they were still grabbing the money they would be in trouble.

They had almost all the money in the vault when the police arrived. Groups of regular cops and SWAT moved into the bank and when they saw the dead cops, called for medics. Liam’s crew was about to get out of the vault when they heard something.

“Guys, did you hear that?” whispered one of Liam’s men.

“It’s SWAT, we have to move NOW!”

Liam never liked to engage the enemy but when he did, he did it well. The Crew moved out of the vault and waited for the SWAT to split up.

“Here comes one now.”

Liam was hiding behind cover, waiting for someone to come close enough for his men to flank them. The SWAT officer came around the corner slowly, checking each area’s little nook and cranny for bad guys and didn’t see Liam or his crew. Liam was good at positioning and ordered his men behind the officer who took him out silently. They moved on, getting closer and closer to their escape van and moved to the back of the bank. But when they opened to door to the staff parking lot, they found about 20 police officers waiting for them.

“Put your hands up!” multiple cops shouted at the same time.

But Liam’s crew didn’t put their hands up, instead panicking and opening fire, killing about 5 guys before the cops realised what was happening. The cops had better cover, and the advantage, and killed most of Liam’s crew, except for two - Liam and the spotter, Leon, who escaped. Liam would have tried to contact him but he must have ditched his phone, so he couldn’t be traced, which was a good idea but it meant Liam couldn’t find him again. They were good mates and Liam would have helped him to get off the radar but couldn’t reach him. He was sure he would at least contact Liam when he wasn’t running anymore, but Liam never heard from him, so assumed he was dead.

Liam then went into hiding to avoid being killed by the MHO, or being caught and going to gaol.

Chapter One

Six years later...

Liam moved like the wind when he was in the zone, jumping between rooftops and vaulting over rails. Parkour was how he got around these days, being on the run and all. He had a small house that he had managed to buy in a small suburb for a cheap price (like that is the last place the MHO would look. He had put a lot of time into building a little base underneath the house that had everything he needed to stay off the radar. The base is also where he constructed his greatest invention (Did I mention he was a bit of an inventor?) He called it The Folding Board, (I know, not very original, but folding up was what it did). It was a skateboard that could fold in half and fit in a small backpack. It was made of a special metal that could withstand lots of pressure, so when Liam had it in his backpack and went to roll, it wouldn’t snap. The backpack was also made of a special fabric that could protect him from a skateboard going through his back. This tool would help Liam get away from, or fight, the police or MHO. Liam also carried an M1911 in a concealed holster which he used only for emergencies.

Liam was in his underground base when he got a ping on his radar. He walked over to the screen. It said there was MHO in the city. He wouldn’t normally go after MHO assassins but the radar said they were supposed to deliver a special message. Liam was interested to see the MHO’s plan to deal with him so Liam grabbed his backpack, which had his folding board in it, and went up the stairs, through the secret entrance, out the front door, and started skating.

Hopping off his folding board about three blocks away from where the assassins were going to be, he folded up the board and put it in his backpack. He looked up and moved towards the building in front of him and climbed up onto the fire escape stairs. He then climbed up the stairs to the top of the building, got a run up and jumped across to the next building. He started to get some flow and was jumping onto small railings, then climbing on to air conditioning units and climbing onto pipes on the side of buildings; then onto the top of that building. He decided to wait on the roof next to the building where the assassins would be. There was an elevator on the roof of the building next to Liam. The doors opened and the assassins walked out.

There were two of them, who stood side by side. One of them was wearing white pants and a black shirt with body armour and a strange black mask. The other was wearing the same, but his clothes were grey. Liam assumed that the one in the black was the grey one’s master.

“He’s going to be hard to find and has a lot of tech at his fingertips to keep him off the radar, so we’ll have to find him the old fashioned way,” said the black assassin. They walked slowly as they talked.

“What’s the old fashioned way?” asked the grey assassin.

“We search the general area, which is Rockton, and then we’ll ask around, show pictures and bring him to HQ”, he said, getting to the edge of the building as the black assassin finished talking before standing there.

“So that’s why we gave those people the message, in exchange for the—”

Both assassins turned and looked straight at Liam who had tried to get into a better position in order to listen, but they must have heard him.
Chapter Two

Liam was patching himself up when he heard the doorbell. He finished treating his wounds and went upstairs, carefully closing the trap door and putting the rug over it. He looked through the peep hole. There was a man standing there. The man looked about 40 who had orange hair and was about 5'10. Liam asked the man who he was. “A friend,” the man said. Liam didn’t trust him and he asked him why he was there. “Just let me in and I’ll explain,” Liam didn’t want to let him in but the man obviously wasn’t going to leave. Liam said he would be back in a second and got his gun. He opened the door and the man walked in. “Thank you, my name is James Arter. I’m here.” Liam pulled his gun on James. “I know you, you’re from the MHO!” Liam kept his gun pointed at James. “I left, I no longer work there. You can trust me, Liam.” Liam slowly put his hands down but Liam didn’t lower his gun. “And why should I trust you?” Liam asked slowly, inching his finger on the trigger. “Because I’m on the run too, you know you can’t just leave the MHO. Please, I just want to help you.” “I don’t need any help, I’m doing fine. Plus there’s nothing I can give you in return.” Liam lowered his gun, but didn’t put it away, just lowered it. “That’s where you’re wrong, I need some equipment for myself and you’re the guy who can help me get it. In return I’ll give you the blueprints of the MHO headquarters. What do you say?” The assassins of the MHO headquarters would be great. Liam could destroy all the files related to him and hack the computers, making it look like he’d paid the MHO. Then he would have to do is worry about the police. “What’s the equipment?” Liam asked. “I need a military grade UAV drone…” Chapter Three

Liam and James were going to the god damned military base. Liam wasn’t happy about it, but he really wanted those blueprints. They were in James’ white Nissan Silvia. It had a cool body kit and a half, which seem like a lot of time but when you’re stealing something it’s really not. James pulled into the staff parking at the military base and left the keys in the car so they wouldn’t have to fiddle with keys. They then walked up to the guards and nodded to each other and went inside. The sound of gunfire filled the room. There were four soldiers inside the hangar who were out in the open making easy targets. Liam and James took them out easily. They moved towards the UAV drone that was surprisingly big. Now all they had to do was get the drone out of there. Liam only now wondered how the hell they were going to get this thing out of there. “Remember, west hangar,” James said quietly. They ran around the back and split up. Liam went left around the hangar and James to the right, before both taking cover on the side of the hangar where they nodded to each other and went inside. The sound of gunfire filled the room. There were four soldiers inside the hangar who were out in the open making easy targets. Liam and James took them out easily. They moved towards the UAV drone that was surprisingly big. Now all they had to do was get the drone out of there. Liam only now wondered how the hell they were going to get this thing out of there. “Ah, I don’t mean to worry you, James, but how the hell are we supposed to get this thing out of here?!” Liam was angry. He assumed that James would know the size of this thing and would have arranged transport accordingly. "Don’t worry, man, I’ve got a guy coming in a truck. He works at the MHO but he’s ok working outside his normal job if you know what I mean.” "Who is it?" Liam was curious as to who this guy was and if he would try to kill him. "He didn’t say what his name was, all I know is that he’s good.” The guy arrived when James finished saying "good.” He was wearing all black with a black helmet. That’s when Liam realized who this guy was and instantly pulled his gun on him. "Whoa Liam, he’s with me.” "He tried to kill me, why shouldn’t I kill him now?" Liam had his M4 aimed right at the black assassin’s head which made Liam think where was the grey assassin? "Liam it’s ok, I just want to help you..." the black assassin said as he nodded to Liam. He turned around in time to get hit in the head with the butt of a sword. He was out cold...

Chapter Four

The only thing Liam could see was the black assassin. He was looking right at him, staring through his mask. Liam was tied to a chair. He couldn’t move and knew he was to be interrogated. "Crack," Liam thought, "where was he?" There was only one place, the MHO. "Just kill me and get it over with already," Liam didn’t want to be in this situation. "Why would I kill an old friend?" the black assassin enquired as he leaned across the table. "What?" Liam was thinking as hard as he could, "who is this guy?" "It’s time Liam, no more running. There it was again... "it’s time... "What did it mean?" "What does that mean?" asked Liam, still running names through his head. "It means I’m giving you a second chance, Liam. Join the MHO and wipe away the debt." The black assassin started to pull his helmet off... It was Leon, the spotter from the failed heist. "Leon, I thought the MHO got you," Liam was happy but also annoyed. Why hadn’t he contacted him? "Oh they got me, I’m one of their best men. I’ve killed over one hundred targets. I was assigned to kill you but I couldn’t because you trained me and you would be a great ally. So that’s the offer, join or die...” - Ewen Ekeberg, Year 9
Thoughts

I Had at Midnight

1 We all have a spark of ‘I want to save the world’ in us;
It’s okay if you only save one person.
It’s okay if that person is you.

2 To fight sadness is to invite it inside. Make friends with sadness.
Shake its hand, let the tears fall
And let it slowly leave you behind.

3 To feel everything is the difference between living and existing; it is also the difference between happiness and sadness. Love and hate, if you will.

4 When the lights are on, harsh white light becomes a metaphor for harsh, white reality.
Firelight brings inner thoughts.

5 Everybody knows how to talk, but nobody knows quite what to say.
It’s fine to make things up as you go along.
Life doesn’t need a script.

6 To have a soft heart is both ignorant and courageous.
Undeniably stupid but more so beautiful as it is rare.

7 There is gold in unexpected places.
People may be empty or broken but the holes in their heart and the cracks in their soul are often filled with diamonds.

8 Nothing ends poetically.
Midnight ends and we write poetry about it.
These are just thoughts;
Do with them what you will.

– Meg Nicholls, Year 8

Perspective

Perception
I see myself
As I am
But no one else can

I hear myself
The words I mean
But no one else can

I see the world
In my own way
But no one else can

I hear the people
Their rudeness to me
But no one else can

I feel the pain
When I get hurt
But no one else can

I see the people
They act like they care
I wish they wouldn’t pretend

– Stephanie McNally, Year 8

Personal Identities

They judge me like a picture book
By my colours like they forgot to read
My religion, my history, my lifestyle
They act like my face is from Mars

My self esteem runs low
From all the people who have a lot to say
About my ideas, my family, my race
I don’t want to be this person anymore

Even if we have the same colour eyes
We’ve see different things in our lives
My environment, my flaws, my challenges
I’m losing my self respect

It’s hard to have my own opinions
When I’m shamed for my beliefs
My sacrifices, my dreams, my perspective
None of it matters to them

When they’ve been hurt
They have an escape from what’s haunting them
But everywhere I go people will see me
I stick out like a sore thumb

When the day’s over they clean themselves up
But this is my life
There is no escape from who I am
My physical appearance, my personality, my identity
And it’s what makes me strong

– Georgia McGrath, Year 8
**Anarchy**

Fire is anarchy
Pure and simple
Ignited by the sun
Fuelled by the air
Trying hard not to run out

The ground charred
The air stained
A work of destruction,
Aided by blaze.

Fallen rubble
Brought down,
By the heat.
The ground no longer green.
The soil no more.
The trees bear no fruit.
And out of the wreckage
A fleck of green,
A spout of life.

- Angus Napier, Year 8

---

**Gone**

A drop, clear, heavy
Falling, falling
Almost dancing
Creeping down her craggy face

Faster, faster
Seeping into the wrinkles, deep
Eyes wide, mouth quivering

Emotion, breaking
Angry, frustrated, upset
She breathes, loud, laboured
Exhaustion covering her face

Step, step
The movement underfoot, mysterious
Wind swirling violently
Trees whispering, muttering to one another

The air around, damp, cool
Frozen like ice, she stands there
Still, still
Like soldiers at a stance

She tries to run, but she can’t move
Possessed, possessed
She stands there still

A drop, clear, heavy
Sliding, sliding
Down her crumpled face
She hides, silence

- Rose Ireland, Year 8

---

**The Quest of**

**Being Whole**

Coal daubed on my pillow,
Windswept greasy hair,
Unheeded television noises,
Dogs that aren’t there.

Blades of grass bring strawberry blotched thighs,
The air thick with the stench of fried animal fresh and sauce.
Echoes of laughter, decency meshed with derision,
Stomachs soaking flecks of light.

Staircase gleaming with light, breathless bliss falling on
Minute violet flowers.
Breath, humans, sustenance.
Quickly, the cold is consuming,
The suspension of safety and home.

Grins expelling sleep deprivation.
Faked synthetic enthusiasm.
Energy sapped from you and from me.
Darkness carries relief, I think you hear me.

- Rebecca Van Wyk, Year 12
An Unusual Workplace

BANG! BANG! BANG!
They’re bashing the doors.

BANG! BANG! BANG!
What have I done?

BANG! BANG! BANG!
Sh*... one of them is in...

“AHHHH!” I scream, shooting up from my bed. Phew, just a dream.

RING! RING! RING RING!
My phone is ringing out in the hallway. Why would someone be calling me at 6 in the morning? I ignore it and lie back in my bed.

RING! RING! RING RING!

“Alright, whoever is calling me better have a damn good reason!” I storm out of bed and to the phone.

“What do you want?” I say, in a very angry tone.

“Hello? I’m the manager of Freddy Fazbear’s Pizzeria. I’m calling to talk about the job you applied for. Is this Mike?” the man on the other end asks.

“Oh hey, yeah, this is Mike. Did I get the job?”

“Well, yes you did, because all the other people who applied backed out, so the night shift is all yours!” He is trying to sound cheerful but he seems scared.

“Oh sweet, when do I start?”

“Well…?”

“Um, we need you in tonight actually. The previous night guard decided to mysteriously disappear last night, so I just did his shift then, but I don’t have time to do another night. So is that ok with you?”

“Yeah, I guess I can. Was it a 12 o’clock start?”

“Yes, but come in some time around 3 this afternoon so I can give you a tour round the building.”

“Oh ok, I’ll see you then, bye.” I hang up and head back to bed.

Light shines through my window and hits my Freddy Fazbear poster on my wall. I’ve loved that place since I was a kid, so it’s awesome being able to work there. I get up and make a sandwich.

That nightmare made me hungry. I then decide to put on my jacket and drive down to the pizzeria.

I haven’t been here for a few years so it’s great to be back. I see the big sign “FREDDY FAZBEAR’S PIZZERIA”

It warms my heart to finally be back. As I walk through the door I hear a bunch of laughing kids and a couple singing along to the main attraction, Freddy the bear. To his right there is Bonnie the bunny, and, on his left, stands Chica the chicken, all three animatronics there making the kids happy. I see the manager’s office on the other side of the room so I head that way. I walk past a big purple curtain that has a sign beneath it saying “Sorry, Out of Order.” I peek through the curtain and see my favourite animatronic standing there, Foxy the pirate fox. Shame to see him not working. I continue into the manager’s office.

“Ah yes, hello Mike, are you ready for the tour?”

“Yeah, I guess I’m ready.”

“Well, have a good night Mike, I’ll call you tomorrow morning to see if everything’s alright.”

“Ok. See ya.”

I walk back to the car and drive home. When I got there I set an alarm for 11pm, turn on the TV and drift off to sleep. BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

My alarm goes off. Luckily, my phone didn’t glitch out and set off the alarm for a completely different time than I had set for it. Anyway, I put on my coat and head back to the pizzeria. This time the drive is very peaceful because no one has a reason to be driving around at 11 at night. When I arrive at the pizzeria all the lights are off and everything is quite eerie. I walk up to the stage where Freddy, Bonnie and Chica are standing. They are very big and when everything is dark, very scary. They smell awful, like rotten corpses. Must be from being around all the pizza. I look up to Freddy’s face and see a hard mark on it. How peculiar. I look down at my watch:11:55. Better get down to the office and set up. There is a tablet on the desk hooked up to the camera feed all around the building which, hopefully, I won’t have to use. On each side of the office are two big doorways that have two buttons on each door, one for a torch out into the hallway and the other to close the big door. I’m kind of confused. Why would I need all of these things just to make sure a robber or something doesn’t come in.

12am hits and the phone rings. This must be that Phone Guy that the manager was telling me about. I answer and he starts talking.

“Hello, hello? Uh, I wanted to record a message for you to help you get settled in on your first night. Um, I actually worked in that office before you. I’m finishing up my last night now, as a matter of fact. So, I know it can be a bit overwhelming, but I’m here to tell you there’s nothing to worry about. Uh, you’ll do fine. So, let’s just focus on getting you through your first week. Okay? Uh, let’s see. First there’s an introductory greeting from the company that I’m supposed to read. Uh, it’s kind of a legal thing, you know. Um, ‘Welcome to Freddy Fazbear’s Pizza. A magical place for kids and grown-ups alike, where fantasy and fun come to life. Fazbear Entertainment is not responsible for damage to property or person. Upon discovering that damage or death has occurred, a missing person report will be filed within 90 days, or as soon as property and premises have been thoroughly cleaned and bleached, and the carpets have been replaced.’ Blah blah blah, now that might sound bad, I know, but there’s really nothing to worry about. Uh, the animatronic characters here do get a bit quirky at night, but do I blame them? No. If I were forced to sing those same stupid songs for twenty years and I never got a bath I’d probably be a bit irritable at night too. So, remember, these characters hold a special place in the hearts of children and we need to show them a little respect, right? Okay. So, just be aware, the characters do tend to wander a bit. Uh, they’re left in some
kind of free-roaming mode at night. Uh… Something about their servos locking up if they get turned off for too long. Uh, they used to be allowed to walk around during the day, too. But then there was The Bite of ’87. Yeah. It’s amazing that the human body can live without the frontal lobe, you know? Uh, now concerning your safety, the only real risk to you as a night watchman here, if any, is the fact that these characters, uh, if they happen to see you after hours probably won’t recognize you as a person. They’ll most likely—”


The bloody call cuts out before it ended. After I process this I take a quick look at the cameras. Oh no, Bonnie isn’t on the stage anymore! I quickly flick through all the camera feeds and I see him in the corner of the backstage/spare parts room. I look back at the stage and Chica is gone too. This is not what I signed up for. Nowhere on the job application did it say anything about killer animatronics. I check the dining room camera and Chica is standing in the middle of a row of tables looking into the camera. They must know I’m here. I do a camera sweep and see that Bonnie and Chica are both in the dining room and Freddy is being nice to me and not moving from the stage. I look in the bottom corner of my tablet and the power reads 89% and the time is 2am. I check the lights on each hallway door. Nothing there. I do another camera sweep. Bonnie is at the end of the left hallway, Chica is in the bathrooms staring me down through the camera and Freddy is still on the stage. When I checked Pirate Cove there was something peeping out that looked like Foxy. But how could it be Foxy? He is out of order, isn’t he? I put the tablet down and check the lights. Nothing again.

It’s 3am and I have 70% power left. I hear a lot of clashing going on somewhere outside my right door. I check the cameras, no one in the right hall, no one in the dining room or the bathroom. Chica must be in the kitchen being very clumsy. I quickly check through the rest of the cameras. Bonnie is in the little storage cupboard in the left hallway and Freddy is, thankfully, still on the stage. I put the tablet down and check the lights. Phew, nothing. A low pitched laugh echoes through the building, sending chills down my spine. But I recognise the voice as that of Freddy. I pick my tablet up and check the stage. It’s empty. I scan through all the cameras and find him in the bathroom with his face straight up in the cameras and his glowing eyes staring at me. I hear noises coming from the phone. I think I hear the phone call coming back.

“…see you as a metal endoskeleton without its costume on. Now since that’s against the rules here at Freddy Fazbear’s Pizza, they’ll probably try to…forcefully stuff you inside a Freddy Fazbear suit. Um, now, that wouldn’t be so bad if the suits themselves weren’t filled with crossbeams, wires, and animatronic devices, especially around the facial area. So, you could imagine how having your head forcefully pressed inside one of those could cause a bit of discomfort… and death. Uh, the only parts of you that would likely see the light of day again would be your eyeballs and teeth when they pop out the front of the mask, heh. Y–Yeah, they don’t tell you these things when you sign up. But hey, first day should be a breeze. I’ll chat with you tomorrow. Uh, check those cameras, and remember to close the doors only if absolutely necessary. Gotta conserve power. Alright, good night.”

WELL, THAT WOULD’VE BEEN GREAT IF I HAD KNOWN ALL THAT BEFORE EVERYTHING STARTED!!!

I check the right doors’ lights. Chica is looking at me through the window of the office. As fast as I can, my hand shoots to the button to close the door. The big, heavy door slams shut, blocking Chica out. 5am. I check the cameras again and Chica has gone back to the end of the hallway. I look through the rest of the cameras and see Freddy is still in the bathroom but Bonnie is nowhere to be seen.

I completely forgot about checking the left door lights! At lightning speed I leap to the left door button, closing it without even checking the cameras. I’m at 40% power and only have an hour left until 6, so I’ll just leave both doors closed. But the animatronics start getting aggressive.

BANG! BANG! BANG!
They’re bashing the doors.
BANG! BANG! BANG!
What have I done?
BANG! BANG! BANG!
Sh!”… one of them is in…

It’s just like my dream last night, except this time it’s real…

A giant hand picks me up, and before I can scream, my spine snaps in two. Blood gushes violently out my mouth and I struggle to breathe.

I look up and see a big purple rabbit with bright glowing eyes staring at me as everything fades out…

– Nicholas Stokes-Beeston, Year 9
**A True Story of Life and Death**

This story is based on the true events of my great uncle, Pesach Urbinder's survival and how he lost all connection with his family in WWII.

**An attic in the Warsaw ghetto, late 1943**

Pesach, Saul and Samuel were playing cards in an attic above an abandoned shop. It was around 5:30 pm and they were waiting for their chance to escape from the Warsaw ghetto. The attic was an old, small and rotting room with only one candle for light. While they passed the time, Pesach briefly brought up how he had to break up with his girlfriend in order to escape. His friends immediately wondered whether she could be a risk to the success of their escape. She could have gone to the SS and told them where they were hiding. Pesach told them that she still cared about him, and so she wouldn’t be a problem, but in reality he had the same question.

As the night went on and it slowly became dark, tension grew in the room. Pesach started to break down at the fact that at any moment they could be found and killed. They were all horrified at the thought and so they sat, playing cards and reassuring themselves that they were hidden away and unable to be found.

Suddenly, an aggressive knock pounded against the door.

"OPEN UP, THIS IS THE SS."

They all looked at each other in disbelief. Samuel quickly blew out the candle and they sat as still as possible. A loud bang went off as the SS shot the lock off the door. The three men trembled in terror as they heard the front door being slammed down and the furious clutter of two men with machine guns scouting the house. The SS stormed up the stairs and soon noticed a ladder leading to the attic hatch. As the two men climbed up the rotten ladder Pesach panicked and ran to the window. He heaved it open and glanced below at the two storey drop. He then looked back at his friends and they shook their heads, begging him to reconsider. But he had made his decision. As soon as he heard the attic door creak open, he jumped. Immediately the SS ran to the window and emptied their magazines onto the street.

Sam and Saul stood completely still, mortified at the thought that their friend had been shot. They looked at each other and their faces teared up as they heard one of the SS say, "Did you see how that one fell?" as they chuckled to each other. Then they turned around to face Saul and Samuel who instantly pulled out every cent and every thing of worth that they had, managing to bribe the SS officers for their freedom. Then they ran as fast as they could to a small hole in a barbed fence, and as they escaped, looked back as if to look for the body of their dead friend and the cage in which they had been confined for months. As if to grieve for a second.

**Thirteen years later in Melbourne, Acland Street, 1956.**

As a result of the war, survivors scattered across the world to many different countries, including Australia.

Acland Street, in St Kilda, Melbourne, was an inner city suburb densely populated with refugees from the war. This street was full of life and there were people everywhere. It was where many of the Jewish delis and shops were, so it was a logical place for people who had survived to catch up and congregate. Samuel and Saul decided to go out on a walk to meet some friends at a cafe.

It was a small cafe that didn’t get much attention, making it nicer to be around. As they sat down Saul overheard a conversation about a man named Pesach. He couldn’t help but ask the man sitting behind him about the story he was telling. The man, who introduced himself as Isaac, said that his brother had gone missing. He had disappeared from the Warsaw ghetto in the middle of the war and no one had been able to make contact since. Saul asked Isaac what his second name was and discovered that he was, in fact, the brother of Pesach.

So Isaac went on to tell Saul and Sam about his long lost brother. Once they had confirmed that they were relatives, Saul broke the news to Isaac about how his brother had jumped out of the window and was shot trying to escape the ghetto. The look on Isaac’s face when he heard this was pure sadness. He hated the Nazis for how they had killed all his family in the war. Now, he was told, his last hope, his older brother, had been confirmed killed, too.

After that ten minute discussion, the three men never really spoke again. Isaac had already married a woman named Hannah, with whom he had escaped the war. They had one son, Jacob, who later grew up to marry and raise two boys. Saul had moved to Israel while Sam had stayed in Australia.
February 2005, Melbourne, Australia.

My father used to tell me stories about his uncle and how he was shot while trying to escape the Warsaw Ghetto. I always found this interesting so I researched my family tree trying to find more information. I'm glad I did because I found documents that said Pesach had sought refuge at a camp in Hungary.

I then found another record saying that he showed up on Ellis Island and had gone from there to L.A. There were records showing that he had bought an apartment and there was a marriage and a birth certificate saying he had had a child as well. When I told my father, who was Pesach's nephew, he almost broke into tears and was in disbelief knowing that his uncle had survived somehow. He had made a life, not knowing that the rest of his family was alive. I asked him if he knew of any friends that Pesach had. My father told me that my grandfather had met two men who claimed to be friends with Pesach. They had both passed away recently, but I still couldn't find any information online.

March 2006, a retirement home in America.

Roughly a year later, after finding out about Pesach, I decided to take a trip to America. About three days into my trip I realised that Pesach could be in a home somewhere in the USA. So I pulled out my laptop and searched for homes where he could be living. I found one quite old housing facility for people over seventy years old. When I discovered that Pesach was living there, I felt that I should meet the man who had gone missing for sixty three years. I cancelled all my other plans and went straight to the home.

When I saw him and went up to him, my exact words were, “How did you survive?”

His answer was, “Why do you look like my brother?” So I explained who I was.

“How did you manage to survive being shot and then escape Warsaw?” I asked again.

“I wasn’t really shot,” he said. “The bullet scraped my arm and I then acted as if I were dead. From the open window I heard pleading voices of my friends bargaining with the SS. At that moment I decided to run. I ran up to the gate at the edge of the ghetto and snuck through the ghetto and snuck through the barbed wire. It was not easy to escape from as they were heavily guarded. The only things that came through those gates were trucks of dead bodies or junk. There was a horrible rotting stench. I couldn’t get the thought out of my head that the Nazis could kill as many people as they wanted and get away with it. They didn’t feel bad either. Eventually I thought of hiding in a truck of food scraps, and escaping that way. It felt risky and I thought it wouldn’t work, but it was my best shot.”

“When I jumped in the back of the truck, I buried myself in the piles of rubbish and kept as still as possible. Luckily, the gate keepers didn’t check the truck and I was dumped into a pit of waste and dead bodies. I waited a while for the truck to leave and then jumped out.”

“I then walked through the abandoned streets of Poland. All the houses were open and there was dried-up blood covering the roads and paths like paint. I searched them in hope of finding food because the slop that they fed us in the ghetto was probably not meant for human consumption. I found nothing and just kept moving. I thought after about four days of running around and taking food and water from houses that I would go into hiding and just run away from the Nazis terror for the rest of my life. In these situations there is no way you want to let people like this take your life.”

“Eventually though, when the war had ended, and I was near death from lack of clean water and rotten food, I was found by some Russian soldiers and taken to a refugee camp in Hungary. From there I wanted to go to America and caught a ship that took me to Ellis Island. I lived in New York for three years and finally moved to Los Angeles, where I have lived for the rest of my life.”

“I thought Isaac was killed during the war. I thought I was the only Urbinder left. I would have tried to make contact, I feel so much regret for not trying to make a connection.”

– Miles Urbinder, Year 9
**The Dark**

The Dark is what I welcome
When the flares show
The faces of my mates
I know they could possibly die
In the trenches is where we stand
Hoping to last the night
Bombs, shrapnel and fire erupt around us
We are not here on our own accord
Our leaders, whose agendas are those of a war monger
Do not care who fights their wars
More of my fellow soldiers fall around me
Faces mutilated, bodies in pieces and blood filling the trench
Our enemy, with whom we’ve never had a quarrel, attack us
The Turks, fighting for their land, that we wish to occupy
And us, who are fighting, because we were told to
There is a moment of darkness
Breathing heard all along the trench
The wounded lie screaming, unable to be treated
As the barrage will continue soon
Insults are thrown, back and forth
In English and in Arabic
The man next to me stands
Rifle cocked, and aimed, at the enemies’ trench
Before we can bring him down
To the safety of our trench
He is cut down by a hail of bullets
He falls silently
A scream of anger and despair erupts
From the mouth of a youth next to me
But before he can stand and shoot
He is stopped by other soldiers
The barrage continues with the flares again as well
In the Dark we cannot be spotted
In the Dark we can live
To see another day
The Dark is what I welcome

- Seb Piscioneri, Year 9

**The Whisper**

Freezing wind chills,
Penetrates through layers.
With a mind of its own
Whispering its thoughts through gusts of air,
Fragmented pieces of air travel along with the flap of a bird’s wings,
Flying like an autumn leaf, potential awakened with the simplicity of a breeze,
An ally of the smoke, of the mist.
Sometimes howling to the night
Out of loneliness.
Parched throat silencing the howl to once again merely a whisper,
Driving it to finally quiet down.
But still a tornado roams in the empty abyss where a simple breeze once lay.
Waiting to be unleashed
To be free.

- Elsa Skattang Stone, Year 8

**Fire; laughter**

sharp
and cracking
like the warm embrace of a solitary campfire.
sharp, cackling,
burning self-confidence, burning cheeks red, encouraging solitariness.
choking;
on laughter,
on smoke,
sometimes joyous.

- Kyle Borbiro McKinnon, Year 8

**Alone**

A constant contemplating of life has brought me to this truly and utterly bitter state of mind.
I am at a stand still; a fork in the road.
My best friends are almost enemies and the furtherest of strangers seem to understand more than I can.
This isn’t a pity letter, a final note that my mother will read.
This is loneliness, the true cold; charcoal-tasting loneliness.
The kind that scares you in the darkness and keeps you awake for hours,
Staring into the crying shadows that haunt your bedroom walls.
You say we are not alone yet when I reach for the phone
You’re on another call

- Jai Ninnes, Year 8
The Challenging Story

“Yawn.”

Peter lifted his lifeless body up from the warm embrace of his silk doona and sat up. It was Sunday morning and he was not ready for the long day ahead. Peter rolled out of his double bed and fell on the soft-carpeted floor. It was warm, like a hot shower in a fancy hotel. He pulled up his head and found his way to his closet, putting a warm tracksuit on, ready for the cold outside world.

While he was putting a sock on, a large envelope came under his door. He crawled over and found the envelope in his firm grasp addressed to him: Peter Queen. He pulled it open and a large book fell on the floor. Peter couldn’t believe it. It was a new comic book title called The Book of All Books. Peter screamed in excitement, causing his mum to run in.

“What in God’s name is going on? What was in the envelope?” asked his mum, with a strange look on her face.

Peter showed his mum the comic and told her it was a new comic book. She looked at him and said, “Well, you will have plenty of time to read it while I’m at work.”

He stood up, gave her a kiss and said good luck at the library. Then she left. Peter opened the book to page one, and the book looked at him. So he read the first sentence, and, to my amazement, it said, “Hello Oliver, do you accept this challenge?”

“What the hell, why on earth would it say that?” Then, BAM! The book closed shut. Then the title slowly disappeared, like smoke on water, and then the title reappeared, saying “wrong answer”. He dropped the book, stepped back onto his bed and called for his mum like Peter had never called for her before.

“Mum, mum, come quick!” There was no answer. Then the door opened slowly. Then a humongous shadow appeared. It was his cat.

“Farley, what are you doing? You scared the hell out of me!”

“What, isn’t that what my kind are supposed to do?” the cat replied.

Peter’s face was shocked, and his eyebrows were almost up to the top of his head.

He was lost for words and, with his eyes wide open, said, “What the hell is going on with this book?”

“When you decide to say the words to this book, you will embark on a magical journey inside a world you could not imagine” purred the cat...

Then the cat left and Peter sat and thought through what the cat had just said and was still shocked at what the cat had just said and then said to himself, “What words, what other world?”

Then he picked up the book and opened it to the page where he had been before and said, “I accept this challenge”.

Then, without warning, Peter was sucked into the clutches of the book, with it closing and Peter falling about twelve feet down into its pages where he hit a concrete floor. Quickly standing up, a long, black, stretched car then pulled up and the man inside said, “Get in”.

The man introduced himself. “Hello, Peter. I am Dr Cage, and welcome to New York City in the year 2017. We have been expecting you.”

“We?” said Peter, in a mysterious voice.

“Yes, we. You will meet us all soon and everything will be explained.”

The car halted outside a building as tall as the eye could see. Then a red sports car rammed into the back of the car and two men in torn clothes jumped out. They were holding two bats and ran towards Peter. Then Cage grabbed the bat of the first man and smashed it over the man’s head and then jumped and knocked the second assailant out with a mighty blow before the building guards came and handcuffed them for the police to come and get them.

“Who the hell was that?” James said in a shocked voice.

“Deadbolts gang,” said Cage. “Let’s head inside,” he said, fixing his tie.

They walked inside the office building and Peter looked around. He saw Cage near the elevator and walked towards him. They entered the elevator together, as soft music played, before finding themselves at their desired level, where the door opened with a thud, walking towards a heavily steel door.

Peter thought to himself, “Whoever is behind those doors must be very important”. A tall man in a black suit opened the door and Peter and Cage walked into a large room that had an amazing view of the city and very expensive furniture. Peter saw in front of him a large desk and two men behind it with dark glasses who looked very tough. The man in the chair stood up and Peter couldn’t believe his eyes. It was a cat in a suit.

“Hello Peter, I am Mister Pugsley and I am the boss of this building,” he said, licking his paw and wiping it on his ear.

“Ok, what is going on?

“All is going to be explained in a few minutes.”

SMASH!

A man on a hoverboard came through the window wielding a sword and was about to stab the man/cat. Peter jumped, even though happened so fast, delivering two direct punches to the man’s arm, making him drop the sword then he winded him with a blow to the stomach and he fell backwards in mid air, falling back to where he had come from.

“How the hell did I just do that”? said Peter, huffing and puffing.

Mr. Pugsley came over and put his paw on Peter’s shoulder and said, “That’s why you are here.”

“What do you mean?” said Peter

“Yes, you are our new hope.”

- Alex Caunce, Year 9
I am plagued by regret, an unchangeable regret, a regret that my mind refuses to let go. My crime being nothing, I did nothing; it is what I didn’t do rather than what I did do.

A woman’s scream I heard, unmistakable. Could it have been an insy-winsy spider falling off the water spout, landing in front of the lady and scaring her near to death? Or could it have been a human-shaped shadow, stalking then startling her, in a trick of the mind something all too familiar to until alleyway walkers.

I wish it was these things. I wish it was the over-frightfulness of the woman, a peculiar sequence which caused enough temporary fear for the woman to cry a scream only for to realise later that the fear was not recognized by her senses.

The sin of omission is greater than the sin of commission; I, the omitter was guiltier than the committer, as to not act is to condone. Many small men like to wait for the sunset and watch their shadow stretch to double their height so they may feel tall. But in the moment the sun is at its zenith in the sky it is also beating down mercilessly in the tropics.

We ants, under a magnifying glass perspiring, a spotlight following without relief, heat, sweat pouring off, everywhere going with the spotlight following. The heat intensifies, with no shade to break the concentrated glare; a wall, a tree, it does not matter, the light burns holes through it. The flesh inside of me, turning white, with the spotlight sun roasting me alive.

The dark, my accomplice in my crime of inaction, allowing me to be a coward and hiding me, I, a stowaway in the shadows, while the crime was being committed. I console the night, as scared as a child seeks consolation in a tattered, stuffed animal, burying my eyes in it, whispering to it and waiting for it to whisper back. The dark being my only friend but also the creator of my fear. The dark is another one of life’s dichotomies, the very thing to which I turn for solace, whilst putting me in the very peril in which I find myself. No person truly gets over the fear of the dark born from childhood; such is our instinctive primal attachment to light and aversion to dark.

This fear expanded and advanced by my malevolent imagination, the frightfulness perpetuating it to panic levels. I have nowhere to turn but the darkness itself, resulting in my further attachment to it.

I digress. A man standing in the glory of the sunset will look down upon me, his shadow casting me into the lower thoughts of society. I am marked as “a man who did nothing”, “a man who would watch the world burn and not raise a pail of water to ease the flames”. My world is burning from self-torment and there is no pail of water in sight. I digress, My shadow cast is only that which lies beneath my feet, nothing more.

- Benjamin Gibson, Year 11

**Track Marks**

1. It started in late summer when the grass faded to yellow and heat leapt off the concrete like trout from a river. The streets of our suburbs became like cemeteries, lined with trees that shrivelled and drooped and hung their heads in mourning. Lines of graffiti grew like tendrils on fences and climbed the sides of houses, and the flowers that peeked through the cracks in the footpath were a reminder that beauty can come from nothing.

   Female idealisation was difficult to imbue. It was the constant fear of shadows in dark places and sculpting yourself to an ideal you didn’t know you reviled. Strangers’ eyes were like claws, with sharp talons that could pierce your security with a stare. Words could wound like bullets.

   When the first accounts of soul theft reached my father’s ears, the shadows that I feared grew faces. The badge my father wore said “protect and serve”, and he described the women that would stumble into the starkly-lit police station, disoriented and heavy-limbed. The only tangible evidence that they were missing a piece lay in an insect-like bite in their forearm, where a sole syringe had opened their artery and unspooled their humanity.

   For my thirteenth birthday my father presented me with a pocket knife which bore a handle the same shade of pink as my skin. There was something about having soft peach skin and the instructions to kill if necessary to defend my soul. There was something about violence and fragility.

   I watched the seeds of concern in my father’s mind grow into fear for the safety of his wife and daughter. More women appeared on the steps of the station in the hot night air, broken and disjointed with puncture wounds in their wrists. They described the men that attacked them. My father would ask, “Why didn’t you defend yourself?” By then the only symptom of having part of your soul stolen was depression and a slight uneveness.

   Our souls were soft and vulnerable, but valuable. I was told no boy would ever love me if I wasn’t whole. The women that drifted within the walls of the police station like entombed aquarium fish were worthless.

   As teenagers we scurried to our destination like mice. Gossip became ugly. The topic of conversation concerned what men wanted with our souls and the possibilies were stems which grew into trees.

   My parents would take me to the city where I’d watch the river run over my pink toes. I didn’t know I’d left my childhood to die in the mud.

2. My mother was diagnosed with breast cancer and emanated a sense of longing and concern from her hospital bed. Even in illness, she retained a fierceness as sharp as my pink dagger. The cancer spread to her lymph nodes, travelled through her veins and intertwined with her organs. The disease was a weed, a white clover delicate on the outside as its petals.

   The hospital was white floors and blood bags and broken women, who were being attacked or drugged or coerced into giving up their soul, and the more the men with the syringes devoured, the more uneven they became. The doctors suspected that if enough soul was taken, they would die.

   Pink posters climbed the clinical hospital walls and they read “Help Us Help Women”. No one really wanted to help us.

   The ghosts of the Soul Ward haunted the halls. The women with a fragment of soul to cling to were corpses and paced in hospital gowns with bodies that would fit a clear plastic lining. There was nothing medically wrong, and the hospital was forced to discharge them. The doctors would say, “Your soul is precious, stay safe”.

   In the years my mother suffered, the ward became a dollhouse whose walls would open to soulless figures draped lifelessly over the furniture. My presence in the hospital halls was reflected by the glass of a vending machine which would distribute small pink cans of mace in exchange for a coin. The words which adorned its exterior mocked us collectively.

   “Are you safe from the men with the syringes?” As my mother wasted on the white sheets, I released she didn’t want to get better. It was easier to have machines breathe for her, than to accept the reality of a world in which girls no longer owned
their souls. Her blood turned septic from chemotherapy which flowed through ghostly clear tubes like sewage and poisoned the words that gushed from her mouth. ‘I will die whole,’ she said. She died cradled in cancer’s branches, and with nothing to cling to, its diseased undergrowth gripped the rest of humanity.

When the first deaths began to surface, I saw the girls who would cling to life and expire on the linoleum floor, with their eyes clouded and their consciousness completely lopsided.

3.

I moved out at eighteen into an apartment with cracks in the pale floral wallpaper and duck-egg blue sheets on a lonely mattress. Dust would collect on my housemate’s eyelashes as we lived, trapped by terror, and the need to be preserved. We were dolls in an attic, suffocating and forgotten, and it was the men with the syringes that boxed us up and stored us there.

We wondered if having our soul stolen was a real threat. It seemed easier to throw our lives away than live in fear, and we paced from bar to bar, armed with our youth and my pink knife, and drowned our worries with venom that made us laugh and stumble. The futility of life was as crystal clear as the liquid that made us forget our vulnerability. I demolished the walls I built to keep the danger out and soiled my mattress and femininity with blood and carelessness. I created my own track marks with heroin on my arms and filled my body with drugs which bled from my loosened seams.

There was nothing more steadying than a scream piercing the air and a familiar voice calling ‘help me!’ from a nightclub bathroom stall, and your best friend’s blood staining the porcelain. We watched as it swelled under the paper towel I held to her forearm and marked it red. I saw rain clouds form in her eyes. ‘How do you feel?’ I asked. ‘I’m fine,’ she insisted, ‘It’s supposed to bleed the first time.’

4.

My father was a horrific spyglass into society, one that I was forced to look through. The red and blue lights that bounced off the river’s reflection suitably proposed the mixture of water and blood. The bodies of women who had drowned themselves washed up, bloated and glassy-eyed, on the banks of the river far from the city. He commanded a taskforce to retrieve the bodies and raised them from the water, like strangely complacent trout in a fisherman’s net.

My father floundered for words to describe the sight of women packed into plastic bags like garbage, with their body whole but their soul in pieces. “I would never do something like this,” he would say. “Not all men do this.”

He was right; not every man wanted the high of stealing a soul. But one bullet in the gun was enough to stop me from holding it to my head.

It was hard to not replace their cold ceramic faces in my mind with women I knew. I pictured my mother, and had no doubt that these women echoed her sentiment to die. untouched and untainted. I pictured my friend, sterilized on the mortician’s slab, make-up painted over her long eyelashes and chalk skin, and the porcelain cracked up her torso and neck. Fragile and unmoving.

The façade of femininity needed to be constantly maintained, even when our coffins were swallowed by the ground and our soft pink skin devoured by dirt and insects. The dead women fished from the water were more like the flowers on their grave than the person buried.

5.

The figure beside me on the soiled mattress filled the air under the covers with his breath and the sound of his beating heart. I lay beside a rabid dog that wanted to sink its teeth in me.

I found me in the winter, when the grey clouds were the same colour as the soulless girls’ eyes, and they dragged their limbs as they walked along the city streets with arms adorned with bandages to cover the marks. I revered their ability to endure life with a fragment of themselves left.

The boy had beauty and wrath, and I knew the marks his fists left only too well.

We could see the city’s veins from the balcony of our apartment, and the river where the metropolis had been split down its sternum. The water where bodies drifted ceaselessly, contaminating the waves with decomposing flesh, remained a surging life force. We’d sit together in observation.

He said, ‘One day someone will knock all these buildings down, and bury them in the ground they suffocate. Then you’ll be safe.’

I imagined them six feet under wrapped in a casket of dust and rubble.

‘You can’t bury anything without digging it up.’

I knew he was stealing my soul when the track marks I made with heroin no longer looked like constellations. The sole syringe marks were bigger, and left holes like insects had buried themselves in my skin. He’d steal my soul while heroin’s warming arms embraced my remains and I drowned in the blue of my mattress, drifting through highs and unable to struggle. I knew heroin’s loving warmth was an illusion. I knew a dead body would feel warm compared to mine.

The preventative posters and flyers thought my attacker would be a figure in a dark laneway, or a violent shadow in a bathroom stall. They never told me it would be a boy I loved.

He taught me why the men did it. The more they took, the more inert we became. It was easier for us to be weak and dependant. My soul became so uneven I was catatonic, but remained alive enough to think and breathe.

The boy had become an unhinged puppeteer, and I was his marionette, who only moved when he manipulated the strings he’d pulled tightly around my wrists. When he stopped, I ached to be wrapped in grass, consumed by dirt, under a warm blanket of earth.

6.

It ended in late summer. The sun on my skin was the only sensation I could feel and my body was covered in his bite marks and infected with his rage. The dog in his soul made him rip me apart.

We waded the path along the bank of the river, where the city’s concrete hands clasped the waters throat.

I told him, “As long as you have a life you’ll use it to do bad things,” and I slit his wrists with my soft pink knife and watched his blood bathe the pavement, his body turning as pale and limp as mine. Now he was one of the lifeless dolls, and I heard the crack of porcelain as his body broke the waves, and I watched him sink into the bloodshed that he’d caused.

I lifted my limbs over the railing and parted the water’s surface, and floated with the other incomplete, inconvenient women, waiting to wash onto the banks as a collection of tender teeth and bones.

It was harder to be perfect than it was to be dead.

-Shona Flynn, Year 12
Prologue
All envied the happy family on the hill. Nobody really knew them, but they were perfect. A happy marriage, two beautiful kids. It’s the “dream” for so many people. The Eastons were, to the neighbours, the image of the perfect family.

Chapter One - Wallace
It was quite often that Wallace Easton found himself in the dark alleyways of the worst part of the city. He knew the way, as he travelled it frequently. He was in “The place”. This was a very special place. It was a place where a Very Special Person was going to meet him. And the only cue, that Very Special Person emerged from the shadows. Wallace didn’t know where he had been, or how he had been hiding there, but he didn’t question it. “Do you have it?” “Do you have the money?” “Yes it’s... it’s right...” Wallace opened his wallet, only to find that it was empty. He had not anticipated this. He remembered very distinctly putting money in his wallet especially for this occasion, however he also remembered taking narcotics, which might have skewed his memory. “Where’s the money, Wally? I have other clients you know, and you’re wasting the time I could be spending with them. And I’m sure you know that I hate people who waste my time.”

Then the Very Special Person took out a small knife and pointed it at him. It was at this point that Wallace considered the situation at hand, and decided that the best course of action would be to end the life of the Very Special Person. As the very special person approached Wallace, he pulled a gun from his jacket and shot the Very Special Person three times in the chest. Then he took the things that he was going to buy from the Very Special Person’s body, and loaded the body of the Very Special Person into his car.

Wallace didn’t feel much after he killed the Very Special Person. He had always thought that he would. Almost anyone else would have, but Wallace was under an influence, and it was easier to blame that than to question his state of mind. Wallace knew that nobody would notice the death of the Very Special Person, and he would likely never be a suspect.

But he had to get rid of the body, and so he got in his car and took the fastest way out of the city. He drove very far away. Nobody would notice his absence either. Wallace’s family believed he was attending a conference in the city. And so he kept driving. He drove until he couldn’t see the towers of the city any more. Out here, nobody knew Wallace, and nobody knew the Very Special Person. Wallace would be safe.

Chapter Two - Charlene
Money in hand, Charlene walked through the town to the clinic. Charlene had been the victim of an unfortunate accident leaving her with horrific facial scars. And, thanks to her classmates, she now had marks of mental scarring. And so, through any means, she had to get rid of the scars. Luckily, there was a clinic near her school willing to overlook the legality of giving an underage girl facial surgery, if given a generous enough tip, something that she was more than prepared to do. She had momentarily questioned why her father had filled his wallet with hundred dollar bills when she took them, but that thought was quickly overwritten by wave upon waves of anxiety and excitement at the hope of ending the mental torment she had been subject to. It was wrong to take the money, but he probably wouldn’t notice.

The clinic was a shabby looking institution. The shadow it cast seemed to harbour every dark thought Charlene had ever had over the last few years. She entered the clinic. They’ll be happy if I’m happy. As she handed over the money, she questioned why her family hadn’t done this yet. Such a simple solution. Always something else to do with their money, I guess.

The receptionist led her to a back room. The white lights were blinding, leaving no darkness in the clean-cut, sterile room that was the operating theatre. She lay down on a bed and was given an anaesthetic. As her consciousness faded, she thought only of the future, a future that would be infinitely better than the life she had been living. This will end the pain. This will end my suffering.

Chapter Three - Sparrow
“Ay, I’m going out!” Charlene yelled from downstairs. Sparrow replied, but it didn’t matter. There was a much more pressing matter at hand. Sparrow had received a text from a blocked number. And there was a picture attached to that text. And while that picture showed things that Sparrow would reveal eventually, Sparrow was far from ready to reveal them just yet. One day I’ll tell them... One day.

However, whoever sent the text had only blocked their number, and Sparrow had ways of working around that. Three hours, Sparrow spent tracking that text message. Is it worth it, just to wait until I’m ready? And after all that work, Sparrow found the culprit: a student by the name of Xene Katsaros. It occurred to Sparrow at that moment that everyone had something to hide. Nobody is completely open with everyone, and so, if Xene knew Sparrow’s secret, Sparrow could find Xene’s secret. One day I’ll have to tell them. I can’t lie forever. It wouldn’t be hard to find the secret. After all, secrets are just lies that haven’t been told yet.

Chapter Four - Serina
Wallace is a horrible person. Serina’s thoughts were almost all along those lines as she dug through the box. I knew there was money missing, I knew it! Unbeknownst to Wallace, Serina knew that he took drugs, and she knew where he kept them. Nobody goes on that many business trips.

It was too much, Wallace’s drug habits would kill him eventually. But there was little Serina could do about it. If she confronted him, it would only drive them further apart. And so she put the box back where it was completely open as it had been. I need a drink. She poured a wine for herself. Wine quenches one’s thirst, but leaves one longing for other things. And Serina didn’t notice this as she poured out glass after glass, but who would?

She drank so much, that she almost forgot about her doctor’s appointment later that day. And out of necessity to be able to still drive her car later, she finished her glass of wine, and didn’t pour another. Damn Wallace and his drug habits. This has gone on for years. Why did he turn to this? We could have been happy. I have to confront him. There’s no other option.

Chapter Five - Wallace
Wallace was pleased with himself. Six kilometres from the city he had found a house, a house that the owners had conveniently left for the day. And so he took the body of the Very Special Person and dug a hole for him in their backyard.

Dig, dig, dig. He merrily excavated a small hole in which the Very Special Person comfortably fit.

Bury, bury, bury. He tossed the lifeless corpse into the ground. The earth would, in time, consume whatever had been left of the Very Special Person.

Cover, cover, cover. As he tossed mounds of dirt into the hole, Wallace pondered why it was that the owners of this house had no grass in their back garden. It was convenient. Less likely that they would notice. It wasn’t like anyone would ever suspect Wallace. He lived very far away, and was in a respectable position. Nobody
would even know he had been there. And so he left. The Very Special Person was dead and buried. He would never be a suspect. And so he returned to his family. His wife was at a doctor’s appointment, but she would return soon. And he dined with them. Everything was as it should be, because nobody would ever know the truth.

Chapter Six - Charlene

Charlene’s last thoughts had been something along the lines of “This will end my pain” although in a very, very different way. The surgery had been an incredible success, as stated by those who performed it, yet it had left her with a residual ache in most of her face. This was probably normal, according to the minds behind her surgery, and so she paid it very little notice. She was already noticing the effects. People no longer stared and stared and stared, children no longer pointed fingers. It was a liberating feeling, being unnoticeable. And this was at the lowest level. She had removed the grounds she was insulted on. This will work. She kept telling herself that, over and over, as if she had to convince herself. Another thing to which she paid very little notice was the fact that repeating three words in her head over and over and over again was probably cause for concern.

Her mind eventually drifted from the repetition of “This will work” and she began to think of those less fortunate, as all upper-middle class white people tend to do from time to time. Many things came to mind, from the thousands of Syrian refugees, to the widespread starvation in Africa, to the person who had been reported missing 4 hours ago police were looking for. They approached Charlene at one point, asking if she knew anything, and as all upper-middle class white people would do in that situation, she said “no” and kept walking. Which wasn’t a lie, but she was far too busy thinking about those less fortunate to get invested in this.

And so she returned to her home. The family was extraordinarily happy to see her smile once again. None of them even seemed to care where the money had come from. They must have assumed she had just saved up. And so she dined with them. Everything was as it should be, because nobody would ever know the truth.

Chapter Seven - Sparrow

Modern schools had a tendency to constantly make attempts to keep up with the times, with digital integration, and blogging, and an atrocious textbook app, despite the fact that most of these programs were crowbarred into the system, and more than often terrible. But nevertheless, all of the terrible technical integration made it very easy to find people and information. And so Sparrow searched all the class lists for someone. And then Sparrow remembered someone. A certain student who was, for all intents and purposes, invisible. This student did their work, didn’t talk, and observed. And this person would, without a doubt, know something. And so Sparrow sent that student a message about it, and the student in return, sent him a video of Xene Katsaros and his friends cornering someone on the street, before belittling that someone.

Sparrow knew what was possible with this tape, and it would, without a doubt, silence Xene Katsaros. And even though Sparrow’s secret would be revealed in time, Sparrow was far from ready to tell anyone about it. And so Sparrow gave the tape to the police and the school, and Xene Katsaros was sent to Juvenile Hall. For, while conducting an investigation into Xene Katsaros, they found proof of many other offences, from shoplifting to much more serious abuse. But the positive side of this was that, now, Xene Katsaros would be unable to prematurely reveal Sparrow’s secret.

And so Sparrow went down the stairs. Sparrow’s family never even suspected Sparrow’s secret. And they probably wouldn’t know that Sparrow had been responsible for Xene’s imprisonment. And so Sparrow dined with them. Everything was as it should be, because nobody would ever know the truth.

Chapter Eight - Serina

Visiting a doctor was a very routine activity in the First World. One would enter the clinic, sit down, be told that they’re healthy and walk out again. This is all Serina expected when she walked in. And the doctors spoke to her: “Look, I hate to tell people this, and there’s no way to sugar coat it so: Your liver is shot and you are going to die in twelve months.”

Serina was surprised, asked several questions, but evidently, it was too late. As the doctor said, Serina had drunk too much, and she was going to die. There was nothing that could stop it. And Serina thought for a very long time about whether or not to tell anyone, before finally settling on not telling her family. She would have died eventually, better not to worry them with it. She owed Wallace nothing, and her children had nearly come of age anyway. She felt almost bad for such thoughts but still thought it might be better if her family didn’t know she had doomed herself through alcoholism. And this gave her but a year to confront Wallace. Otherwise the pain he had wrought on Serina would be transferred to the children. And Serina would not stand for that.

I will confront him... eventually... I should think first... But one thing is certain: nobody will know of this until the day that I die. And that day isn’t too far from now. And so she returned to the family. They asked few questions about the appointment. She told them all was fine, even if it wasn’t.

Wallace had returned from his “business trip” and was probably still coming down from the high he’d had for the last few days. And so she dined with them. Everything was as it should be, because nobody would ever know the truth.

Epilogue

The Eastons dined and laughed together, as was routine for their family. They skimmed over the day’s events, none of them even making the slightest reference to the true things that had taken place. And that is the image that everyone saw of the Eastons. Only the Eastons knew that they were murderers, and thieves, and liars, and alcoholics, because everyone looked at them and saw only a happy family.

– Alex Boyes, Year 9

Self-deprecation

Noun

a special form of self ‘harm’ in which one talks on and on of their minor or non-existent flaws, scrambling for refutation of them.

begging for compliments, praying for support, for a self-inflicted egotistic attack.

more like obsession than deprecation, fuelled by an irresistible hunger for attention.

‘fat’, ‘ugly’ and ‘dumb’? how about ‘manipulative’, ‘controlling’ and ‘selfish’? complementary to the passive-aggressive and insecure.

– Kyle Borbiro McKinnon, Year 8

Time’s Pace

When I’m in my safe place
Time itself in a race
When happiness is found
Sadness is drowned
Time choses its pace

– Isabel Bennett, Year 7
A Windy Autumn Day

Crisp auburn leaves fall from the trees
Scattered onto the warm chocolate earth
Cold winds push back my hair and it
streams behind me like a cape
I hug myself trying to stay warm, the
weather becoming cooler

It is one of those days where the warmth
of the sun shines down on you like a hot
chocolate
but the cold breeze collides with your
face, turning your nose ruby red

Through the trees I watch the sky
I see clear aqua-blue sky, with patches
of white fairy floss that seemingly float
there

I watch in awe as a pair of beautiful
butterflies flutter with amazing grace
before my eyes

They are the most amazing colours, one
is scarlet red, t’other as black as night

The other is sapphire blue and crisp
clean white, I find myself wishing I had
the ability to fly

- Maria England, Year 7

Society

Walk by
An empty house but your family is home,
Walk by a park
No one and everyone swinging on the swings,
Walk by an old school
Where everyone is young but with old souls.

Walk by happy faces
Smiling yet annoyed at the faces reflecting their
own
Thinking that maybe those faces are happy for
real,
Walk by them
Thinking you’re the only one with a fake smile
plastered on your unoriginal face,
Walk faster
Afraid someone will uncover that you’re just like
everyone else
Just an empty shell....
Knock knock is anybody home ?
No!
Cause’ if home is where the heart is how can you
be home when you’re heartless.

So focused on yourself
That you just walk by
Forgetting about everybody else
Only you alone in the world.
Walking by all the emptiness, accepting it.
Because you made it this way,
You and all the predetermined opinions of society
So now they walk by you.

- Elsa Skattång Stone, Year 8

Remembering Saturday

Do you remember the day I gave you all my love?
Do you remember when I said that you were the one?
That you were fixing me? Inside and out?
Do you remember that later that day I held you while you
slept?
The morning after?
How we made passionate love until the sun came up?
How every time you fell apart I held you in my arms and didn’t
let go for hours?
How I told you I needed you?
How you just dropped everything I gave you and threw it out?
How you destroyed me?
After that Saturday?
I still wonder if you think of that Saturday?
Because I sure do
Everyday.

- Thomas Wall, Year 10
My husband had a soft and tender heart. Most didn’t see this. Rather they saw his furrowed eyebrows, forehead creases and clumsy hands, dismissing him as your average small-town, grumpy old man. He built himself a ten-foot high wall around himself, concealing himself as myths were created around what he was creating.

The kids watched too many American films. They watched them at the Roxy Cinema, and dreamed, if not of America, then at least of their capital city. We all did. While he was locked behind his barbed wire wall, I gaped at the emerging modernity. The people painted their houses bright, only to find the paints quickly fading. While they dreamed, he created a dream out of them.

The wall Gleason built physically manifested into a physical wall as his resentment grew towards the town’s occupants’ ‘American meandering’. He intended to show them the beauty of the town and the simplistic, little dream it was, with the hope that they would let go. But they clung even tighter to their dreams of colossal Christmas hampers, 2-car garages, towering milkshakes and fame...it drove him to his death.

His resentment grew from deep adoration.

“They use this little valley for nothing more than a stopping place, dear!”

He paid the utmost attention to every little curve of each town member’s face and the character of each of their homes. He was perverted by American dreaming; his patriotism was just that. His contempt grew from their excessive consumption of dreams which led the town to rot and the occupants to fester in their sleep states.

“This town is a dream factory.”

I stayed home, working on the vegetable garden, orchid and rose bushes. My most vivid memories of Gleason are those of him pushing and pedalling his bike home from work at lunch to piece together his figurines of the town. It became a great hobby for him, but more of a compulsive obsession. His resentment grew and he hired Chinese workers to build the wall. He was possessive of it and wanted full control over it.

Members of the town greeted me with those plastered smiles full of questions they’d never ask me, while I possessed no answers to their unspoken words. I carried a pram around with all his goods. After his death, I neglected it. It’s made the grieving process all the more strange.

The tourists compare Gleason’s art to the now ill-fitting reality of the town. Gleason could not have foreseen the events that have unfolded. The Americans came looking for me with the rucksacks and curious grins. Herb Gravney sells them extra film for their cameras and they come down with their special maps to hunt for the real people who are now deteriorating. They want to photograph me cutting the rose bushes, but my back has grown weak and my smile feels weak. They ask if I’m really “That Mrs Gleason”. I nod my head and direct them to Mr Dyer’s house where they are growing ever more disappointed.

They grow older and sadder, and dream nostalgic dreams of the once-green hills, thick woods and clear streams untouched by the Americans we once longed for.

The town was soaked in melancholy. The smells and sounds were all too distinctive and couldn’t be escaped; the soft hiss of bicycle tyres on the street, the smell of rotting meat cuts from Mr Dyer’s butcher shop, the dirt on the hill. Gleason had spent years perfecting every detail of our tiny town and they all stood around in groups, surveying every detail he had done, marvelling at every one of them. A small boy whose name I now cannot recollect took the roof from Mrs Cavanagh’s house to find Gleason had put her in bed with the young Craigie Evans. We saw everything, but mostly stayed quiet about it. Gleason spoke loudly enough through his model of the town. Before the flood of Americans I was interviewed by some newspapers. I told them it was a hobby of his, which didn’t entirely add up to the truth as it was more a compulsive mission, his life source.

Gleason and I had grown up in the big city and found Bald Hill when we were just passing through on our honeymoon. We would run through the woods, hiding behind the trees. He’d spread his arms out wide, breathe in the thin air, look at me and say, “Isn’t this the dream, my love?” He possessed an insularity of patriotic desire and wanted to show “we’re here and we belong, too”.

Then, with the flood of Americans, they trampled on our little dream valley, carrying with them their dreams of development. They brought with them most of what the town dreamed of, but still we have been left deeply unhappy.

On the days he had nothing to do, he’d sit on the green, plush area in the corner of the lounge and nap well into the hours of the day. He had grown bitter and had little to smile about. The corners of his mouth dropped down and everything grew saggy. I could physically see he was growing weary of the town.

Now the streams were overfished, the woods were over-cut, and the town reduced to his model town with model occupants. The town’s charm was now shattered by jumbo refrigerators filled with the food that makes them ill, the food they dreamed of in their American Dreams, with the town now also sullied by huge television sets programmed to keep the dreams in motion and big, smooth cars cruising away from happiness.

Much of our lives we spent waiting. Waiting for the sun to shine. Like the sun in California, when it already shone so brightly. All I see is road kill, carcasses rotting in our own bright sun.

I see the excessive dreaming as a malignant tumour on the town. With all the tools it took to build it, along with the remnants of strength in my frail back, Grimson’s model came tumbling down to where it now sits in ruins, like the limp bodies soaked in the artificial light of American soap operas.

- Rebecca Van Wyk Year 12
There’s that tension. That knowledge. I can feel him below me. Waiting. I am baiting him. Some would suggest, teasing. But I know otherwise, for I’m doing as he wishes. Biding my time, letting him take the initiative. Moving slowly. Once, twice, and three times I go out onto the landing, placing a single doll on the stairs each time.

I place them there, not to frighten, but to allow them to see, to move, to experience the world with their own eyes. The brightness of the Monopoly money and board isn’t always enough for the more adventurous souls. They hunger for more. My reassurance that we will soon have more means little. These are the impatient souls.

They are hairless, eyeless and painted white from head to toe. The way it should be.

The third time I descend the stairs, knowing what I would see when I entered his room.

A gentle tap at the door. He’s been waiting. I shoot my eyes towards the milk bottles, and pretend to be shocked by a scent I can’t experience. He meekly apologises, bowing his head as he beckons me in. I smile. The flick of orange between teeth, the brown of his eyes as they meet mine. It is almost a taste underneath the antiseptic. He smooths a spot for me on his bed. Green striped sheets and a blue pillowcase. Another scent, another taste, another colour that I can feel under my fingertips.

I ask of his situation, that of the employment market. His response is slow. Pensive. He is slow and pensive. Imprecise but slightly brooding. I play with the corner of the green sheet absentmindedly. I imagine such a hue seeping into my skin and bathing in it. It’s new to me, there’s something different that accompanies it. The thought is frightening. I stand quickly. He is still talking, heading for the dishes still in the sink. I think I have upset him with my distractedness. He wishes for the small talk to continue, until special occasions come about, like Christmas and his birthday. I have too much on my mind for that.

He follows me to the sink and takes the rag to dry the crockery. I can hear the rustle of purple cotton in rhythm with his movements as he dries the plates and put them on the drying rack. He grazes my hand as I pass him the plate, still dripping with porridge; a stray blueberry falling back into the soapy water. I don’t say anything. Nor does he. It’s the synergy of silence as we work in harmony. He always leaves them dirty, filled with mush and enticing swirls and textures that linger on my skin.

They are but a tool to lead me back here. Occasionally, very occasionally. I let him think he’s persuaded me into sharing a meal.

“You know George?” I say.

He grunts in response. I know he doesn’t wish to know. He wants to untangle the knots slowly, with precision. He doesn’t wish for the bindings to come undone, so as to make the most out of what short existence he has left.

I made him up. He was but a daydream. I say.

He remains silent. I see him clench his jaw out of the corner of my eye. Another colour. Another red splotch on his skin that I see. Illuminating this world, this house, his body, one colour at a time.

Every hue leads to a new doll, every abortion fills that doll. I give them life. A name. A home. I am giving them his.

I hear his stomach rumble once again. He has been saving for oysters after I’d told him they were my favorite food. I had lied. I’d never even eaten oysters before. I’d smelled them once, or rather smelt fish. It was the first smell that pierced that of antiseptic. Broke through the barrier and gave me but a taste, a hint at what could be in this bright, blinding, rainbow world.

We sat back on the bed and picked up the paper. I saw him watching me out of the corner of my eye. Perhaps today would finally be my day. Our day.

I read the obituary to myself. Making a show of it, moving my lips, squinting my eyes and dragging my finger across the page. I avoided eye contact with the lifeless black and white still of a smiling couple who were featured in another article. I beckon him in. I offer him the chance to tug and unravel the threads.

I finally ask, “Don’t you think they should put them in?”

He responds in a cracked voice. “What?”

“Babies…..Abortion babies… They’re never listed,” I say.

I don’t really expect them to be, of course. The bodies aren’t yet merged with the souls. It’s not really murder as some call it. It’s a rescue mission for souls that are waiting for a vessel. I am their rescuer.

He didn’t want to hear about the foetuses. I should have known better. He wants to be slow, to learn slowly, gently take the threads that he can catch and let things unravel at his pace. I don’t blame him. It is bittersweet knowing everything about another too soon.

There are yellowed nicotine stains on his fingers and teeth and I feel myself tipping the scales forward as I dangle this information in front of him. He’s so close. We’re so close.

“Do you think they have souls?” I ask.

I am patronizing him. He wrings his hands together and runs one hand through his greasy hair. I have made him nervous. The purple of his shirt seems to seep into this feeling and I watch as it briefly engulfs him. A mist that separates itself from his body and hangs limply in the air, it tastes salty in the back of my throat as I breathe it in.

I don’t stop there. I want the orange too. I want to paint my lungs and breathe it deep into my stomach. I tell him about my job at the abortion clinic, I offer him a melodramatic facet of my personality. Begging the existential question of do foetuses have souls?

I know the answer of course.

It seems I revealed too much. He is not watching my lips as he was before. Yet the agitation is stronger now, the flick of a pink tongue darting out from his thin lips and I tug forward on another thread, drinking in the gentle pink as the arousal builds in his stomach.

He watches my shawl, and whispers to me. Tells me he is old. That soon he will die. That he wishes to take things slowly. I say that he is only morbid.

He’s removed the pendant now and anticipation begins to build in my chest. I want to speed up the process, I am unraveling myself to him and he is responding to this, by forcefully unraveling me. Trying to beat me.

He doesn’t want to know me, he wants to see me.

I raise both of my hands to his face and I urge him to smell them. He leans his head down without thinking and sniffs them. He seems to smell them for a long time and all the while his hands continue to absently remove ribbons and plastic threads.

He watches my shawl, and whispers to me. Tells me he is old. That soon he will die. That he wishes to take things slowly. I say that he is only morbid.

He’s removed the pendant now and anticipation begins to build in my chest. I want to speed up the process, I am unraveling myself to him and he is responding to this, by forcefully unraveling me. Trying to beat me.

He doesn’t want to know me, he wants to see me.

I raise both of my hands to his face and I urge him to smell them. He leans his head down without thinking and sniffs them. He seems to smell them for a long time and all the while his hands continue to absently remove ribbons and plastic flowers from my sweater. He is like a dog desperately digging for a bone beneath the earth, only to be begrudgingly tugged away by its owner.

He says he smells washing up.

I retort quickly. It’s antiseptic. I feel I have become soaked in antiseptic, to the marrow of my bones.

I wasn’t lying. Every foetus I set free, every soul that wasn’t meant to be here, every spirit that was meant for another time seeps into my skin and I carry them home. I see flashes of all
that they once were, and all they will ever be when they sink downwards and that’s why I came to him.

I needed a home. I needed energy to maintain them, to maintain myself. He came. Blindingly bright, with pink cheeks and umber eyes. I felt it immediately. Those shades, those hues, all intermingled and spiralled around me, raising me off of my worn feet and drawing me to him. His slow pace let me in. He didn’t want to know anything, wanted to wait. Allow time to reveal our secrets to each other. This time was what let me bleed him. He didn’t think much of it when the last strands of brown faded to grey in his hair.

He murmured something about wanting to end this conversation as I reached out my arms to allow him to remove my sweater.

He says I could have saved this conversation for Christmas. He wanted to go slowly. He says that he is in no hurry. He has perhaps five years left and he wished to fill them. I respond, “You are speaking strangely today”.

He says, “It was forced on me”.

He wasn’t wrong. He reached the powder blue sweater. His hands stop. He’s finally drinking in the colour that I am offering him. It’s but a shove to keep going. I’ve been wearing it every day for the past week, waiting.

He says, “What a beautiful blue”.

I say, “It’s a powder blue”.

He says, “It’s a very beautiful blue. It suits you”.

I respond with, “It’s not mine. It was my sister’s. My younger sister’s”.

He stops again. He clenches his jaw again.

“I didn’t know you had a sister,” he says casually.

I lick my lips. I am close now. It’s almost over. I utter three words that send him over the edge. The dog has found its final straw for his body.

I wish I could laugh. There is a loud noise before this structure dissolves and disappears through his breath. I sense their souls are free from bondage, free to move on now. To prepare for the next vessel.

I wish I could smile as he falls to the ground.

I watch his body shake, through empty eye sockets. Hairless, eyeless and painted white from head to toe.

- Charlotte Ayres, Year 12
Macbeth's Diary Entry

Upon the heath we hath met prophets, filthy and foul in figure, yet holding intelligence of a prospering future.
Swathed in rags their wither’d faces seteth ere me, hailing mine presence as Thane of Cawdor,
Yet how is this to be when he still bears a beating heart. Furthermore cameth the most glorious prediction of prosperity.
The blood which fills my noble corps shall become that of a king, yet by which course of events, they fail’d to reveal.

They foretold the fortunes of Banquo as well. I feareth the prospect that thou shalt get kings whilst upon my head is plac’d a fruitless crown. Banquo, faithful and allegiant, I feel as though he is that of a kinsman to mine cause.
I haste before divulged to Banquo my contemplation of becoming king and I find myself aghast’d at his suspicions.
Mine face is a book whence men may read strange matters.
I must encave my thoughts and play the wolf dress’d in the lamb’s fleece.

As I demanded they vanquish mine curiosities, the three prophets eluded my sights.
Hath the insane root taken hostage of my mind, or art such things as I speak the mere musings of my fantasies?
My mortal mind yearns for the knowledge of such fantastical conceit as these of which I has't tasted.
Alas! The fruitful chalice is snatched from my lips ere the wine of knowledge is pour’d.
Dismal creatures of rag and bone, how thee torture mine desperate, craving mind.
How cruel to plant the seed, and yet fail to quench the dry earth in which it withers.
Shalt chance has't me crowned or dost this prophecy require my meddling...
I cannot fathom the thoughts I've had'st to be mine,
How dare I be so bold as to let my deviant thoughts stain the pages of this book,
How dare I desert my allegiance by any means. This persisting thought which infects my judgement
Pervades my mind like the divine aroma of a newly blossom’d rose.
Yet the sweetness is prick’d by thorns of murderous intentions.
I doth fear such prospects will provoke the Lady to excite within me
A strong urge to be crowned through the course of deceitful actions.
Her lack of conscience at times is frightening,
Thy Lady liveth from the sustenance of power and ambition.
Feigned as a sweet and innocent lambkin, she plots and schemes her way
To deep and dark desires.
I mustn’t let her romanticize cold blooded actions.

A true and loyal bawcock is our royal Duncan to which I has’t pledged my allegiance,
And I now feel the notions of deceit and deception.
Is it the work of the heath dwelling hags?
Is it they who art to blame for my unnatural yearnings?
Oh! What a wreck I feel I has’t become,
A torn man fallen victim to greed and lust for the absolute ruling.

– Renee Lee, Year 10

My Little Maple Tree

She sways side to side
Like she is doing the tango
Her hair is so bright
Like a colourful mango

She stands broad and tall
Like an army cadet officer
Standing still
When nothing’s moving around her

Her arms reach wide
Brown from the sun
Sturdy and strong
From the miles she’s done

We sit side by side
Chatting and singing
In our language
The language of bustling

She lives in my area
Very close to me
My lovely lady
My little maple tree

– Keely Raymond, Year 7

Hard

My warm water runs out too fast,
I have too many chores,
And responsibilities,
And homework.

I hardly get pocket money,
My house is small
And I have no girlfriend.
My life is hard.

I’m only fourteen.

They have no water,
They have to feed their family,
They have too many responsibilities,
And are oblivious.

They have no money,
They have no house,
And people to bury,
Their lives are hard.

They are only ten.

– Natasha Grant, Year 8
People crowded the waiting room of the Chance Centre. They sat with entwined fingers, pursed lips, and eyes gleaming with a thousand shades of hope and fear and defiant confidence. A gaunt old man with papery skin. A woman with a face ballooned and punctured again and again by Botox injections. A small boy of seven chewing his lip. The air was thick with the promise of new beginnings and tragic ends.

‘Carla.’

I lifted myself from the chair and followed the Fasta technician through a dingy corridor.

‘This is your first chance, yes?’ I meekly replied.

‘I wish you luck.’ He said it with nonchalance. The customary well wishes.

I felt guilty. Of course I did. I had lied to Paul; cheated him of his last day. The cause was bigger than both of us, and it was my duty as a Hup to retaliate against the Fastas. Although I was certain of this, a wave of guilt still washed over me at the thought of Paul asleep, oblivious to my actions.

I was finger-pricked, heart-monitored and injected. I was stripped and examined. My body lurched forward, stomach twisting, was clasped over my mouth. My body was now a foreign vessel from which each moment was dissipated, but they only dug further in.

Which bird is fairest?

The bird that flies.

Yet a deep sting, a tangle of nettles, had made its way into the pit of my stomach. I felt nauseous. Yes, but this was something more. This was a painful hollow; a crushing emptiness so fresh and raw. I willed for the nettles to dissipate, but they only dug further in.

3.

I skipped the Hup meeting, instead resolving to sit in the park and drain a few cans of beer. I listened to the rustling of an oak tree’s branches in the breeze. Foil wrappers littered the grass, catching the sunlight like glowing orbs. The world surrounding was still the same, yet my body was now a foreign vessel from which each moment was experienced differently. For one, my long-distance eyesight had depleted. My thick stump legs were also a greater strain to walk on. It would take some getting used to.

Paul lingered at the threshold of my mind. The beer made his image all blurry and soft-edged but it didn’t make him disappear. ‘I said I would not return.’ I’d told Paul the pain of rejection. It curdled in my mind writhing in a haze of bitter reproach.

4.

On the chair by his bed I watched Paul sleep, wishing to touch his face, to feel his embrace one more time. He tossed and turned as if caught in some dreadful nightmare. In my drunken stupor, I couldn’t reach out to him anymore. Paul awoke, blinking through the darkness. His eyes watched me, transfixed. Then, discarding recognition, he groaned, feigning sleep, and turned over.

I stayed by his bed until morning, weeping softly. As the first glint of sunrise hit the concrete sides of apartment buildings, I left his side, my mind writhing in a haze of bitter reproach.

5.

Everything changed after that. The air temperature increased once more, exuding a hot stickiness that clung to our skin in a thin, rancid film. Soon enough the Hups and the people became separate civilisations. We continued our own revolution, building weapons and devising battle schemes to take down the Fastas. The people continued their bland, controlled lives, mere pieces in the Fastas’ game. They spent their days saving for a Chance, ensnared by the shining prospect of a body better and more visually pleasing than before. That’s all they cared about. It made me sick.

With Jane Larange and the other Hups I connived for the revolution, fuelled by the pain of Paul’s rejection. It curdled within me, only constraining my desire to fight harder, with more ferocity.

Damaged by the pull of society, Paul was lost in an illusion beyond the extent from which I could have pulled him out. We’d always been from different worlds, our love an absurd intermingling of conflicted priorities. We can change our bodies, but we cannot change our ways. My physical transformation only presented our differences in a lucid form, bridging a gap that had always been there. This revelation brought me a strange mix of relieved finality and grieving. Ours was not a story of saving. It was a tragedy of inevitable parting, no matter how despondent. No matter how many nights I lay awake with red eyes and trembling hands. I see that now.

That’s not to say I didn’t still love his stubborn-hearted self. I do love him. I always will. But the love I feel is no longer pure and sorrowful but now tarnished with the stain of bitter dismissal. If Paul had seen beyond my mask, if I had made my way into the pit of his stomach, I might have survived. Although this realisation delivers me comfort, I know I am feeding falsehoods; impossible instances that not even the depths of the universe could have produced.

– Stella Smallman, Year 12
Gone

A drop, clear, heavy
Falling, falling
Almost dancing
Creeping down her craggy face

Faster, faster
Seeping into the wrinkles, deep
Eyes wide, mouth quivering

Emotion, breaking
Angry, frustrated, upset
She breathes, loud, laboured
Exhaustion covering her face

Step, step
The movement underfoot hasty, mysterious
Wind swirling violently
Trees whispering, muttering to one another

The air around, damp, cool
Frozen like ice, she stands there
Still, still
Like soldiers at a stance

She tries to run, but she can’t move
Possessed, possessed
She stands there still

A drop, clear, heavy
Sliding, sliding
Down her crumpled face
She hides, she’s gone,
Silence.

– Rose Ireland, Year 8

Champion

Champion they shout, Champion they cheer
“How do you do it?” they shout and they scream
I succeed as I am willing
I will fight against the odds

I am not chained by fear
I swallow it to feed my fire
I fight from my fire within
I do not get up for pride, I get up for accomplishment

That is how I do it,
That is how I do it
But the day will come when
They’ll chain me to my bed
When I rack with coughs
They’ll say you can’t
But why would you cheer me on
Only to chain me to my bed.

– Lalli Kirby, Year 7

Pencils

Dancing between the fingertips
Of men
And women

Leaving ashen traces
Like footsteps
Telling tales

Truths and lies
Answers to questions unasked
Without a whisper

Linger for a while
Then rubbed out
Impermanent yet recording

Written in stone
Soft and grey
Eroded over many lifetimes.

– Kyle Borbiro McKinnon, Year 8

Words

Words, used the right way
Can make the world around us
Switch to fantasy

– Ella Barlow, Year 7
Loneliness

Loneliness,
The feeling of not being needed,
The bitter taste on my tongue,
 sitting in the darkest night,
 watching the midnight glare.

Moonlight is relaxing,
 But it doesn’t change what is fact,
 I am alone in a place that I call home,
 Every person in my world, gone...

The next day comes,
 Not knowing who I am,
 Help is needed,
 I hear footsteps in my mind,
 But there is nobody there.

– Angus Whiting, Year 8

The Truth

A silent prayer never to be sent,
 A false faith which ought not be trusted,
 Unravelling lies spilling around,
 A twisted world all swollen and bent.

So knowing but then yet so stubborn,
 Blinded by bindings and many white lies,
 A truth that’s so morphed it’s there no more,
 New thoughts and a way of life is born.

A paved way with a fence surrounding,
 For they like sheep will follow blindly,
 No knowledge to guide is otherwise,
 Our willing hearts with no light shining.

– Raven Maloney, Year 7

Lovers Lost

(song lyrics)

I’m running through space and time
 You are still on my mind,
 Are the things I’ve heard true?
 About him and you?
 My love for you was true
 Not that it means anything to you

Day by day
 Hour by hour
 You still have all the power
 I was yours and you were mine
 But it won’t last this time

I heard the rumours of you two
 About him making out with you
 I ask you “Are they true?”
 And all you say is, “I thought you already knew”

Day by day
 Hour by hour
 I remember our time in the tower
 I kissed your lips, you kissed mine
 I wish we could go back to that time

I showed you love, you showed me pain
 I will never feel that way again
 The warmth in someone’s arms
 The feeling of the beating heart

You are all I knew
 You are all I had
 How dare you forget the past
 Through thick and thin
 I will never ever let you in

Day by day
 Hour by hour
 You will never have any power
 I’m done with you, you’re done with me
 This is how it has to be

– Thomas Wall, Year 10

The Boat Race

There were ripples in the ruptured water
 As the frail boat hit the surface
 The small boy then caught her
 And put her back on her face

The little boat rocks side to side
 As it gently travels downstream
 The little boy runs beside
 As the only one in his team

The current picks up
 The boat starts to fly
 Originally, a smooth paper cup
 But it’s expectations were high

He ran to his mum
 The little paper boat had won

– Keely Raymond, Year 7
I sighed and looked at my photographs again. From then on they’re all by myself or with Matsuo. But we’re not together. There’s a rift between us. He’s in his American shirts and denim jeans, or his American suit. He’s a writer now. A successful one, too. He’s had a novel published. It’s about the emperor. He didn’t write about the bomb, I don’t think he knew how. Only I know what that pain was, and I alone share it.

Lightning flashes.

I’m back in Hiroshima. It’s been a long time since I came here last. Last time I came it was still rebuilding. I wasn’t sure how to feel. I expected to see people like me but I didn’t. They were just like everywhere else. The city had rebuilt and was growing. The endless prosperity of Japan. And even here people looked at me like I was a monster. A demon spirit. All that remains of the bomb is a statue commemorating it. That and me. There is no place in this prosperous Japan for a monster like me.

I turn away from the photos and look towards the television. I remember the day that it delivered the fateful message.

It is the nineties now, and panic has gripped us. The unthinkable has happened. The economy has crashed. It has shrunk in size and the endless prosperity and growth is gone. Not since the surrender has such panic struck the people. We were supposed to overtake America soon. Yet again we have been struck down. Surprised.

In the end it was just like the war. The government promised us everything, endless prosperity. But in the end it proved to be unsustainable, and they couldn’t deliver. We were defeated again. The government will think of something to promise soon. They always do.

I look out at the city of Tokyo once more. Still one of the world’s great cities, it is no longer the centre of the world’s envy. We have grown stagnant, and our time in the sun seems to be over. But things have changed little. The Chinese are still enemies, but this time they are not godless bandits or backwards opponents. Now they are powerful and growing quickly, the envy of the world. People say they will overtake the Americans. But they said that about us. Now the Americans are allies and we do not fear them anymore. But I don’t know. Few understand the power they wield, what they can do. I turn towards the computer again. It’s a Mac, an American computer. Easier to use, Akio says. For the first time in my life there is no future prosperity. A promise that things will be better. People are unsure of what the future holds now. There is no victory awaiting us if we do without. There is no honor from our death. There is no endless progress and prosperity. There are no promises.

- Loughie Foley, Year 11

Hiroshima

The light and warmth hits the side of my face. It blinds me with its radiant. The flash from the laptop has subsided. Loughie Foley has been telling me to learn how to use a computer. He’s not so little now at fifteen years old. But still too young to know what the flash means to me.

The photo is a good one. Almost as good as the last photo I took with Father. Big Sister was there and so was mother. It was after my burns. Standing up, I walk away from my computer, leaving the photos behind. You need to close things, Akio had chastised me last time he was here. He didn’t visit often, only when his father came back to Japan.

I reached my balcony and looked out over the lights of Tokyo. There is a storm going on. My life isn’t bad, I can’t complain. I live alone, not many do. A flash of lightning and I’m brought back. Honorable death before surrender. The emperor had signed a treaty, the radio announced. The Fatherland has lost. I feel tears flow down my face. How could the emperor surrender after what the Americans had done to us? I felt a desire to keep fighting, more then anything. Is this what knowing Banzai is? I look to Big Sister to see what her reaction is. She has bent over, prostrated herself for the emperor. I go to do the same, but I see Father looking at me. In times of war some people continue to honor their gods. Big Sister says the Emperor must be right, and I want to care about our gods. Big Sister says the emperor has surrendered. He is unaffected.

The burns aren’t painful anymore, but the way people look at them is. Pain. Even the pain of childbirth was nothing compared to what followed. My son is born. It has been fruitful, the old bushido spirit in me. I nod. Very prestigious. His study has turned into several universities, he says. “Which ones?” I ask. “University of Tokyo, Kyoto University and Osaka University.”

Matsuo breaks it. I’ve been accepted to two of those, as well as another. I. He has grown since he was young, his mouth looks normal now. We are eating at the table, Matsuo and I. He has grown since he was young, and his mouth looks normal now. We are eating rice with red beans, not soybean rice. I haven’t eaten that since I was young. We are eating rice with red beans, not soybean rice. I haven’t eaten that since I was young. I was young. We are eating in silence. We are eating rice with red beans, not soybean rice. I haven’t eaten that since I was young.

I look at my computer once more and think of little Akio, unaffected by the bomb, by the pain. Is it only me who remembers?

We are eating at the table, Matsuo and I. He has grown since he was young, and his mouth looks normal now. We are eating rice with red beans, not soybean rice. I haven’t eaten that since I was young. We are eating in silence. We are eating rice with red beans, not soybean rice. I haven’t eaten that since I was young. I was young. We are eating in silence. We are eating rice with red beans, not soybean rice. I haven’t eaten that since I was young.

I expected to see people like me but I didn’t. They were just like everywhere else. The city had rebuilt and was growing. The endless prosperity of Japan. And even here people looked at me like I was a monster. A demon spirit. All that remains of the bomb is a statue commemorating it. That and me. There is no place in this prosperous Japan for a monster like me.

I turn away from the photos and look towards the television. I remember the day that it delivered the fateful message.

It is the nineties now, and panic has gripped us. The unthinkable has happened. The economy has crashed. It has shrunk in size and the endless prosperity and growth is gone. Not since the surrender has such panic struck the people. We were supposed to overtake America soon. Yet again we have been struck down. Surprised.

In the end it was just like the war. The government promised us everything, endless prosperity. But in the end it proved to be unsustainable, and they couldn’t deliver. We were defeated again. The government will think of something to promise soon. They always do.

I look out at the city of Tokyo once more. Still one of the world’s great cities, it is no longer the centre of the world’s envy. We have grown stagnant, and our time in the sun seems to be over. But things have changed little. The Chinese are still enemies, but this time they are not godless bandits or backwards opponents. Now they are powerful and growing quickly, the envy of the world. People say they will overtake the Americans. But they said that about us. Now the Americans are allies and we do not fear them anymore. But I don’t know. Few understand the power they wield, what they can do. I turn towards the computer again. It’s a Mac, an American computer. Easier to use, Akio says. For the first time in my life there is no future prosperity. A promise that things will be better. People are unsure of what the future holds now. There is no victory awaiting us if we do without. There is no honor from our death. There is no endless progress and prosperity. There are no promises.

- Loughie Foley, Year 11
The Man Everyone Sees

In the window
the misty figure
stands like a wisp
He stands still
He stands straight

Here to deliver
through his eyes
Your story
comes like flecks of light

You see your soul reflecting,
   His eyes,
An abyss of stories

Your recognition
Your fear
Your joy and
Your humiliation

Through his eyes you see,
   Your story go
His job done
He disappears

The job done
– Lalli Kirby, Year 7

The Moon

The stars, they share tales;
They tell tales of the sun,
That shines when I’m not there.
I never see
I never see,
The beauty that I am told

Yet, why do I love?
Why do I feel like I lost something... Someone?
I am lost myself,
I mount the stars...
The stars represent romance.
Why do I sit lonely amount love? If yet I do not feel any.

– Zoë French, Year 8

Seeing You

The bursting of excitement
Is hard to keep in confinement
The waiting game begins
As the time between us thins

The journey to you is long
And small things can go wrong
But it’s all worth it
When I hear you admit- I missed you...a bit

How time flies when we have fun
The weeks shorten and run
But then will soon end
When the last day will descend

To say the word I feared
And you disappeared
My heart explodes in two
How can I live without you?

– Ella Barlow, Year 8
**Truthful Lies**

your lies won’t become us
And whilst this may be true
Our lies will mould us and shape us and change us
Like a sculptor and his statue
Like an artist and his painting
Like a writer and his words

They say our lies won’t become us
And whilst this may be true
Our lies will surround us and constrict us and choke us
Like a spider and its web
Like a baby bird and its nest
Like entering the water, letting it envelop you
Letting it become part of you.

– Tara Gowers, Year 8

---

**A Double Standard**

I was born and raised in a white neighbourhood my entire life and the things I’ve seen and heard and had to encounter would shock you.

I’ve dealt with a lifetime of racism, from not being accepted into kindergartens for my skin colour to not being able to volunteer at the old folks’ home because the old people were too racist. Black oppression exists in places you wouldn’t believe from the people you deem to be the politest.

My story is simply minor racism, but overseas, police are stealing the rights of black lives once again, killing and beating young black lives into submission. You love our culture but spite our people.

Does that make sense?
No, it doesn’t. Just because you like rap music and wear cornrows doesn’t mean you’re not a racist.

– Sarah Yusuf, Year 10

---

**My Nana**

My nana is
The strongest person I know
Day after day
In the sweltering sun

Managing nine acres of land
She tends to
Plants, birds
And sheep

Veggies and crops
Scour the land
From the gully
To the house

In the summer
Raspberries cover the bushes
In the winter
Potatoes lay beneath the dirt

From trees to vines
Lemons to apples
Carrots to onions

Birds to sheep
Curly, because he’s spiky
Brown, oldy
Lambry, Suty and Suzy

Over forty birds live in her care
How she manages this every day
I don’t know
But she is stronger than anyone else I’ve met

– Isabel Bennett, Year 7
**Editor’s Choice:**

**Stories**
- Shona Flynn - Track Marks
- Charlotte Ayres - Peeling 2.0
- Miles Urbinder - A True Story of Life and Death

**Poems**
- Jeremy Topakas - Misgivings
- Tara Gowers - Truthful Lies
- Seb Piscioneri - The Dark

**Honourable Mentions**
- Sarah Yusef - A Double Standard
- Noah Sole - A New Life
- Loughie Foley - Hiroshima
- Eugene Lombardo - Perpendicular
- Stella Smallman - Carla’s Chance
- Rebeccaa Van Wyk - American Dream Epilogue
- Jai Ninnes - Pompeii
- Molly Russell - The Walk
- Renee Lee - Macbeth’s Diary Entry
- Maria England - A Windy Autumn Day
- Lalli Kirby - Champion
- Kiana Mokhtari - Waves
- Zoë French - Society Ruined Me

---

**Award Winners:**

1st: **Shona Flynn** - Track Marks
2nd: **Zoë French** - I Live a New Life Every Day
3rd: **Eugene Lombardo** - Perpendicular

**Honourable Mentions**
- **Kiana Mokhtari** - Waves
- **Lalli Kirby** - The Man Everyone Sees
- **Tara Gowers** - Bombed
- **Jeremy Topakas** - Misgivings
- **Sarah Yusuf** - Reverse Racism is Not a Real Thing
- **Loughie Foley** - Hiroshima

---

**Cover Art** – Adelaide Norris
**Title** – Ellen Carey