

louden singletree

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FRASER VALLEY'S JOURNAL OF
CONTEMPORARY WRITERS AND ARTISTS

The *Louden Singletree* is UFV's literary and visual arts journal. Since its inception in 2009, the *Louden Singletree* has been a forum in which students, alumni, faculty, and staff of the university can share their creative work.

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ISSUE 13

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The *Louden Singletree*
acknowledges that it is located
on the unceded and traditional
Stó:lō territories.

Contents

1. Katie Diespecker / Cover Artwork	Anhedonia
2. Megan “Chuck” Barker	The Bathhouse
3. Scott McQuarrie	Bubbles Big and Bubbles Small
5. Sydney Hutt	Salt
6. Viveca Braaten	Korean BBQ, Tianjin (People’s Republic of China)
8. Sydney Hutt	Inoculation
11. Andrew Koole	The Tao of Trees
12. Graeme Beamiss	The Lion’s Roar
14. Scott McQuarrie	Follow the River
22. Samantha Pruss	What is beauty
24. Alyssa White	The Girls Who Will Not Be Erased
26. Luke Pardy	Untitled (from Twilight Express)
29. Alyssa White	The Loon Song
31. Michelle La Flamme	Vancouver Winter – Pandemic Style
32. Viveca Braaten	I’m a real girl
36. Chantelle Trainor-Matties	Anuhla’an
38. Alyssa White	The Girl in the Mirror
40. Aleena Stoochnoff	Harvest Moon
48. Lauren Ballard	The Storms of Women’s Lives
50. Sequel Adamson	Spring
52. Contributor Biographies	

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for their aid in this year's publication.



**OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT,
STUDENTS & ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT**

Editor's Note

Welcome to the thirteenth issue of UFV's *Louden Singletree* literary and visual art magazine! We would like to start off by gratefully acknowledging the unceded traditional Stó:lō territory on which UFV is located and for which this magazine would not exist without.

Over the submission and shortlist period, we were blown away by both the quantity and quality of the submissions we received which included many varieties of literary works and visual arts pieces. It was a gift to spend time reading and looking through the creative and moving works submitted. This year itself has been challenging for many due to the pandemic, which made receiving such work even more special. Subsequently, we chose this year's cover image to remind us of the vibrant and steadfast beauty surrounding us in a time when it is quite difficult to feel joy.

Although our editorial board looked a bit different this year—being that there's only two of us and that for the majority of our editorial duties, Covid-19 restricted us from having any in person meetings—it was an honour to be given the privilege to create an issue in a year where this seemed not likely to occur at first.

We give our sincerest thanks to each and every person who made this year's issue possible. This includes our faculty adviser, Andrea MacPherson, as well as UFV's Writer in Residence, Lindsay Wong for providing the foreword, our first readers (we could not have done this without you!), our sponsors, and our amazing contributors without whom this issue would not have come about. We are humbled to know we are trusted to be a home for these works.

Finally, we want to thank each and every one of our readers (yes, that means you!), for without readers, the *Louden Singletree* would cease to exist.

With this said, we now invite you to grab your beverage of choice and give yourself permission to delve into these captivating pieces. May you linger on each page to your heart's content. Happy reading!

The *Louden Singletree* Editorial Board 2021

FOREWORD

Can I Actually Be A Writer?

Dear Hopeful Writer:

During my time as UFV's writer-in-residence, I have fielded anxious questions from you every week. We're nearly twelve months into a frightening, confusing, emotionally exhausting pandemic. Our writing consultations are virtual, held over Zoom on Tuesday and Thursday from 9 AM-3 PM. I have met some of you through web cameras, and we have talked about your writing process, the world of book publishing, your current reads, your English classes. You tell me about your favorite professors, and you show me your beloved cats and dogs. Some of you don't own pets, but tell me about your latest Dungeons & Dragons campaign or share your vacation plans, post-pandemic. I give you advice about choosing BFA and MFA programs; perhaps discuss finding a literary agent. "Canada or New York?" you say, and I respond with, "why not try both?"

Some of you are extremely shy and don't ever turn on your camera, so even though we've chatted more than once, and I've read a few of your brilliant stories, I don't know what you look like in the real world. The point is, you are all very different. But what all of you have in common is a deep, pure love of writing, and every week, several of you ask me the same two questions: "Can I actually be a writer? Is my work any good?"

The answer is YES to both questions.

I say this not because I'm being "nice" or being paid to say it, but you do not need permission to write, certainly not mine or anyone's else's. You are a writer because you want to be one; you choose to spend your spare time spinning exquisite, compelling stories. You dream, examine, observe, and experience life deeply. You continue to tell your stories during a global health crisis, while attending your

university courses, working part-time, staying within your pandemic bubbles. I know all this because these past three months, I had the thrill and pleasure to engage with your supernatural horror stories, military science-fiction, your dark psychological thrillers, middle grade fantasy and contemporary realism about sisters, jealous boyfriends, and old married couples. Your stories were vivid, buoyant, moving. You made me think; feel.

Do not let anyone tell you that you cannot be a writer.

After all, you wrote a beautiful, wondrous story and shared it with me, a perfect online stranger. I know you were terrified about it. You agonized before hitting Send. You deliberated about not showing up on Zoom to meet me.

You are a real writer.

As for the work itself, all writing has merit, even an early draft. You know that all writing requires focus and revision. This is why you asked me for honest-to-goodness feedback. Writing is hard. Writing is revision, re-thinking, re-imagining, re-doing. Zadie Smith in her new essay collection, *Intimidations*, states that “writing is routinely described as ‘creative’ but “writers go further; they take this largely shapeless bewilderment and pour it into a mold of their own devising. Writing is all resistance.” You, the emerging writers at UFV, have made sense of, shaped, and pushed back against a global pandemic by creating stories that transport readers outside of our time and place.

You are a writer whenever you connect with your literary community. Your tribe of other writers and readers are sacrosanct; special. Hold them close, especially after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. For all the writers whose work is featured in this fantastic issue of *Louden Singletree*, congratulations on the start of an amazing, creative journey. I know your poems, short stories, and personal essays will resonate beautifully with members of UFV and the larger reading public.

Lastly, Hopeful Writer, what I want is to encourage you to take creative risks in your work, to explore different genres, subject matter, and come away with the full knowledge that you, too, can create work of devastating beauty each time you sit down to tell a story. Yes, you can actually be a writer. Yes, your words are spectacular.

My very best,

Lindsay Wong

COVER ARTWORK / KATIE DIESPECKER

Anhedonia

Anhedonia is defined as the inability to feel pleasure. It is commonly seen as a symptom of depression and other mental health disorders, and will affect many people at some point in their lives. The subject in this image is surrounded by bright, colourful objects: books, food, games, nature, letters from friends, and the general bustling life outside. These things bring pleasure to many people, but the subject cannot feel that joy. They are greyed out and unable, no matter how grateful they may be for those objects. It is a difficult and painful experience that can be hard for the sufferer to explain to those around them. Anhedonia is a condition that sometimes resolves on its own, or may require outside help, but once that happens, those things are still there—bright and colourful and waiting to be enjoyed once again.

MEGAN "CHUCK" BARKER

The Bathhouse

Strike my long dormant heart did this lonely
regal man. In the dimness he improved
daylight, an allusion to how only
in one look, liking, Juliet was moved.
Justify this: my foolish persistence.
Knots turn to heartache, pain back to yearning,
sustained closeness, yet decisive distance
to avoid humiliation. Burning
resignation. Chasing not what I seek.
Accuse me thusly, cowardly and meek.

SCOTT MCQUARRIE

Bubbles Big and Bubbles Small

Why not, Mama, why not?

The virus, Love, you can't go near.

But she's my friend, Mama! Why not?

She's not inside our bubble, Love, though you hold her dear.

Why not, Mama? Why not?

Dearest Love, she could make us sick.

She won't Mama! She's my friend!

Not on purpose, Love, just by who she has been with.

I can blow my bubbles big!

I've watched you blow them up with care.

I blow and blow, 'til they pop!

I know, my love, I've wiped your face, your ears, your hair!

Let's make our bubble big!

My love, it doesn't work that way.

Big enough for all my friends!

I'm sorry, Love. I hope so soon, but not today.

Why did bubbles shrink, Mama?

The virus made them all grow small.

Why Mama? It's just not fair!

You're right, Love, it's not fair. It's just not fair at all.

Mama? Mama? I'm scared.

Fear not, Love, there's no need to cry.

What if my bubble shrinks too small—too small for you to fit?

Then I'll shrink, too, crawl through, and snuggle by your side.

SYDNEY HUTT

Salt

I am filled lately
with unimaginable longing
for him, for every man, their
hands in the handles at
my waist. For a child's
hand in my hand, for a
hand on my heart, cradling.
I am hunger, fed but
always longing, longing,
needing, biting; let me
fill myself up on you. I am
a cave—each voice returns
an echo, recoils from my
stone walls; you shrink in
the discovery of all my
stone teeth. Stay, let me
lick the brine from your
rough cheeks. The salt
plays tricks and I am full
I am full
I am full
until nightfall, when
I feel the wind again,
whistling inside of me.

VIVECA BRAATEN

Korean BBQ, Tianjin (People's Republic of China)

He spoke
in staccato
sounds, murmuring quietly
across the tabletop grill,
between puffs of a thin cigarette.

Smoke poured
from his open mouth
like a ghostly cobra, choking
colour out of the room,
disguising his face
through a ghostly grey haze.

He laughed loudly,
a steaming cup of yellow liquid
sloshing onto his white suit,
burning his thighs,
dripping off his silver belt buckle.

He yelped, flicking the
burning cigarette
onto the restaurant floor
into a puddle of spit.

Artist Statement: This is both a commentary on the culture shock of restaurant etiquette in public Chinese culture and an underlying message about the torture methods that the People's Republic of China are still using on their people today. Some of the most common methods include cigarette and boiling liquid burning, beating with belts and venomous snake torture. As well, snakes are an omen of evil in Chinese culture.

SYDNEY HUTT

Inoculation

I saw an old friend yesterday, as I was pulling out of the grocery store parking lot. His familiar silhouette appeared to me in the driver's seat of an approaching minivan, and I realized with shock and delight that I wasn't imagining this figure—he was real. It had been eight or nine years since we'd last seen each other, since our late night phone calls, and long drives, and tearful soul-entangling friendship had ended—but, at that moment it felt as though time had brought us back around. I was eighteen again, and found that spark of joy in my stomach rising to my face in an open smile which had always lit up involuntarily when he was around.

He'd been like a brother to me during a particularly tumultuous time in my youth; we both came from imperfect, fractured families and connected over a transcendent understanding of life and nature. Together we'd shared music, and art—he was one of the most beautiful guitar players I'd ever heard, and his rendition of Neil Young's "Hey Hey, My My" never failed to bring a hard lump to my throat. He was the only person I knew personally who was more creative than I was, more spiritual in his interpretation of the world, and who could express that onto a canvas or into the lines of a poem. He was someone who was both completely absentminded and disorganized in his surface life because of all that bubbled beneath it—I remember the way he drove his car like a go-kart, seemingly unaware of the lines on the road. I knew his pain because I knew my own, and with him I always felt the safety and relief of being both understood, and loved in spite of it.

Shortly after graduation, a mutual friend of ours drowned in the local river, and that incident created sudden fractures in our little friend group which never fully healed. We all split off in our own ways, and my friend and I had a falling out which had more to do with our age and stage of life than any one incident. But I'd never stopped missing him, as I discovered in the parking lot, trying to roll my window down without crashing so I could stretch my hand near his. In the time of

Covid-19, where we all instinctively recoil, I felt touched by something different—by the wheel of time, turning me back to a teenager in the summer, when that season felt eternal.

Nothing is. Life moves on. I drove my car back home with tears forming unexpectedly in my eyes, my stomach flipping still from that backwards tumble into my youth. The mid-May sun beat down on my car and this time I figured out how to roll down the window, remembering as the breeze hit that one weekend when he'd let me drive his car through the back roads of our town, and unlicensed, I'd almost gotten us into a collision. We'd laughed until we cried afterwards, coated in sweat and invincibility. What is it about youth that grabs your heart and leaves a mark on it? I remember those days better than I remember my weekends now, the piquancy of friendships which mysteriously form and fall apart in equal measure. I wonder if I'll ever recall this time like I do that one; it all seems to move much faster now and I can never catch it. Worse, things seem to stick in a way they couldn't before—to mark me when I used to feel untouchable under a shroud of infinite possibility.

As I pulled into my driveway, I felt both grieved and rejuvenated. I was fighting with my husband that afternoon about something only significant in its insignificance, but the sighting of a lost friend had broken through the hard shell of my anger. It was May, and I was in high school again. The flowers along the driveway were yawning, the bushes blowing in the breeze, and the future still lay open and uncertain, full of realities not yet dreamed. I was nineteen and I was twenty-nine; I was both growing and aging. My children would turn seven soon, and did not yet exist; still to come was their unexpected birth, the trauma of their prematurity, a divorce and all the subsequent agonies which had crooked my spine a little over the last decade.

I forced myself back into the present, away from the dry summers of my youth and into the hot car where my groceries were wilting and my radio was covered in dust. My daughters were at their father's house for the weekend, and even from the outside our home felt empty without them. My hands on the wheel still,

I glanced down and caught sight of the ring on my finger. The small diamonds had twisted underneath so all I could see was the band. I turned it right-side up, and cracked the car door open, swung out a leg. Perhaps there was still time, I thought. The air entered, bringing cut grass that irritated my nose, and the past touched me again, as alive as the day. It was an inoculation; it was a petal on my cheek. I whispered for it to linger.

ANDREW KOOLE

The Tao of Trees

Trees will never disappear
completely; there will always
be a remnant ready

to repopulate after we've carried
the timbered ones away
on trucks down the bare hills.

Trees have never thought
too much about it—being cut
down by us for lodging.

They wait and sway with
no fear of falling.



GRAEME BEAMISS

The Lion's Roar

The Lion's Roar derives its name from a meditation on the idea that what we need is to be found where we least want to look. The visual motifs were drawn from the Tarot as well as features of Art Nouveau. By using a combination of coloured pencil, ink, and digital tools, I wished to convey a sense of depth, of honesty, and of sincerity in that universal human act of seeking.

Dedicated to Barbara and Geoff.

SCOTT MCQUARRIE

Follow The River

Follow the river. Follow the river. “Follow the river,” I try it aloud, in English. The river will lead you home. *Follow the river.* “Jedte po řece,” in Czech – it rolls awkwardly off my tongue. *Jedte po řece. Jedte po řece.* I repeat the mantra over and over in my head as I half-run, half-stumble through the forest. My feet, wrapped in six layers of worn socks and a shredded shirt, thud softly on the hard, frozen earth. *Keep hurting.* If they hurt, they aren’t frostbitten.

Follow the river. Twelve miles to the Czechoslovakian border. Run through the night. Seven hours until dawn, until the guards do the morning checks and radio the border to report us missing. Run through the night. Seven hours. Cross the border in the woods. Bypass the first Czech town—too many patrols, too many Nazi eyes. Get further east. Get to Hoštka. Three miles east of the border. Fifteen miles, if we could fly. A lot more on foot. Fifteen miles to Hoštka. The locals are sympathetic. *They’ll help us.* Unless they’re informants. Then we’re as good as dead. Gotta take a chance; soon, we’ll be too weak to even try. *Follow the river. The river will lead you home.*

It’s a good plan.

It seemed like a good plan.

It’s a fucking stupid plan.

A noise to my left. I throw myself down on the earth, frozen leaves and frozen dirt waft up into my face. Dead still in the dead dark.

“It’s me.”

It’s Marsh. I thought he was on my right.

“Dammit, Marsh.”

“Sorry,” he whispers back. “I lost you for a bit.”

Marsh. Marshall. Something Marshall. Funny I never got his first name. He's Marsh to everyone, anyways. An American. Good guy, other than that. Ritchie, quiet as a ghost, joins us from the right. Ritchie is another Canuck, from my unit. The guys at camp call us Lucky and Luckier. I was the third Canadian on the beach on D-Day and Ritchie was the fourth. Most of the first wave never made it.

"Let's go." I get up, and Marsh moves back to my right, Ritchie shades off to my left. It's fairly open forest, thank God. If it was scrub and brush we'd never make it before dawn.

We've been running for three hours. Three hours of pitch-black frozen fear. Expecting any second to hear the dogs. The Nazis love their dogs. Damned near as mean as them. I can outrun a German, but not a Shepherd. And Marsh and Ritchie are probably faster than me—they've got boots. The dogs would get me first.

Four hours to dawn. Bypass the town of Rozvadov, get to Hoštka. Find a house on the outskirts. Knock. If someone answers, say the pass phrase. Then pray. Hell, pray before you knock. Seven hours. Pray the whole damn way.

A black ribbon of road stretches out before us and we clump up on the edge.

"Let's take it," says Marsh. "It'll be faster."

"Too risky."

"We're not gonna make it before dawn."

He's right. Ritchie nods. We run along the road's edge, keeping close to the trees. We run. The wind picks up, blowing through the bare limbs flanking the road. Between that and the crunch of our feet on the frozen gravel, we don't hear the vehicle before we see its headlights shining from around the next bend. We dive for the trees, lay flat and still.

Breathe through your nose. It keeps the steam down in cold weather. Funny how useful things come back to you from basic training.

A shot shatters the night. Another. Another. Something blazes past us, a shadow. Hooves. *A deer. A fucking deer.* Voices. German. Another shot. Five more.

I hear whizzes through the trees around us. The vehicle pulls up. Footsteps. Some German curse words. Laughter. A beam of light plays through the shrubs above me and Marsh. I can't place Ritchie. Footsteps, closer now. Closer. I reach my hand down to my make-shift knife. A lot of good it'll do me against automatic rifles. German barking. Orders, not dogs. The footsteps stop. More German cursing. The footfalls retreat. The vehicle roars and recedes into the night.

I crawl over to where I last heard Marsh.

"Let's go."

No answer. I whisper louder. "Marsh, we gotta move."

Nothing. I crawl around, my eyes readjusting to the darkness. I see him. Ritchie is crouched over him. Ritchie's black eyes meet mine. He shakes his head. The night's cold seeps deeper into me. I roll Marsh onto his back, my hands recoil at the sticky wet. Marsh stares up at me. Past me.

*

I can't help it. The images flash in my mind. The boxcar. The peephole. The game the guards used to play. It was the only way to see out of the boxcar. One peephole. Everyone took turns, three times a day, to get info. To keep our sanity. Peek out quickly, shuffle back away from it. Guards would walk by, day and night, randomly put their gun up to the peephole and shoot inside. Bang! It took them two days to remove the first body. It stared at us for hours, past us, until someone got up the nerve to crawl over and close his eyes. We all crammed into the far side after that, living in only half the boxcar.

*

"Goodbye, Marsh. Rest in peace."

I take his boots. We run.

Two hours until dawn. Must be getting close to the border. My feet are screaming, even in the boots. Lead boots, or might as well be. My legs are jelly.

Ritchie has to pause every so often for me to catch up. He's a machine. Never shows any emotion, rarely talks. He just does what he's told. *Kill 'em Ritchie!* And Ritchie would kill them. He'd kill them all. Eyes like a Nazi, someone once said. They were right. I'd seen eyes like his before.

*

We had made it through D-Day and the day after, moving slowly inland, when we ended up cut off and surrounded in a field near Caen. We never had a chance. We surrendered and were marched further into German occupied France. We'd heard rumours of Canadian POWs being killed. There was a name that always went with the rumours—Meyer. Nicknamed Panzermeyer. An SS officer. Rumour was he didn't believe in prisoners. We'd been marching most of the day, but suddenly veered off the road, over to a rock-walled abbey. A couple dozen prisoners, all Canadians. We lined up outside the abbey, and they called us one at a time around back. A shot would ring out, the German soldier would reappear and beckon the next of us.

Just before my turn, a vehicle rolled up behind us and a German officer got out. He walked down our line of prisoners and stopped next to me, in front of Ritchie. Ritchie stared back at him, no fear, no emotion, no nothing. Dead eyes to dead eyes.

The soldier reappeared from behind the abbey and beckoned me forward. The German officer held up his hand and said something in German—I didn't know what. My German stinks. But our group was turned around and sent back to the road to continue our march to the railway for transport to Stalag 13B in Germany. As we walked, I asked Ritchie what the officer had said. His German was decent. He glanced at me with those dead eyes and responded, "Enough for today."

I can still hear those shots. Every one a murder. At a fucking abbey.

*

We're running out of time. Less than an hour till dawn, and we haven't crossed the border. Or maybe we have; it's impossible to know in the dark forest. I stumble on, no longer able to think clearly, relying on Ritchie to guide us. I can't feel my feet anymore, and I'm actually thankful for it.

Ritchie must have got it right, because he stops and points through the trees to some lights in the distance.

"Rozvadov," whispers Ritchie. I nod. We run.

It's a race against the sun. Even though we are past the border, once the call goes out over the radio, every German soldier within miles will be on the alert and searching for us. There are only so many places we could go. Already, the sky is lightening ahead of us in the east. We run toward the light.

I can make out the leafless limbs easily now, before they swat my face. I am no longer cold. Fear warms me and gives life to my dead limbs. We run. Faster than we have all night, no longer concerned about conserving our energy. If we don't get to Hoštka soon, the town will be on alert. We run for our lives. I no longer stumble. My heart hammers, my mind is focused. I weave through the trees and bushes like a deer fleeing the bullets flying over its back. I have only one singular purpose.

I run.

Then it happens. From out of nowhere, a German soldier appears just yards ahead of us. We must have ventured too close to town and surprised him. Maybe he was skipping off patrol to hunt in the woods. Maybe he was just looking for a quiet place to take a dump. It doesn't matter. He has a rifle slung over his back and he's reaching for it. We're goners if he gets a shot off—every soldier in a mile will hear it.

He has a rifle, but I have Ritchie.

Ritchie doesn't hesitate. He doesn't stop to think, like me. Ritchie, who never found anything he was good at until he joined the army. I remember the sergeant and commanding officer pointing at him during training, nodding, wringing their hands in delight at the discovery of a murderous savant. Ritchie the prairie

kid. Ritchie the farm boy. Ritchie the killer. He runs straight at the soldier, never slowing, accelerating, even. I watch his hand reach around and pull his makeshift spike from the small of his back. His arm arcs up over his head, matching his body, and sweeps down, coming to an abrupt stop as the side of his fist hits the top of the soldier's head.

The soldier crumples silently, his mouth agape, eyes round with shock. It's over in seconds. Poor bugger didn't have time to realize he was dead.

I come up beside Ritchie. He already has the soldier's knife and gun. He doesn't say a word. Just points the knife toward the sun.

And we run.

My second wind is blown out. I begin to stumble and stagger again. Ritchie waits for me. *How am I ever gonna pay him back?* We flee into the growing day. It shouldn't be far now. Maybe a mile. Maybe less. God, let it be less. It's day now, or near enough. The guards back at camp will be doing their rounds. It won't be long now until they know. But it shouldn't be far now. Maybe a mile, maybe less.

Follow the River. Jed'te po řece.

Just ahead, Ritchie stops suddenly. Throws me the stop signal. I freeze. He disappears into the bushes ahead. I wait. I trust him. I have no choice. I trust him. I wait.

*

"Jed'te po řece. Follow the river," said the British Warrant Officer quietly. Ritchie and I had been in the prison camp for five months. We were tired. Tired of eating rats and sleeping with lice. Tired of working in the coal mines. Most of all, tired of being constantly cold and starved. At least we had it better than the Russians. The Germans kept Russian prisoners on the other side of camp. Russia never signed the Geneva Convention on POWs and they were treated like animals. Worse than animals. Like Jews, or so the rumours went. *How fucking evil can can one guy be?*

“There’s no river, blockhead,” said Marsh unhelpfully, as he looked down at the faint, hand-drawn map spread out on the flea-infested bunk.

The WO sighed. “I know that, fool. It’s the pass-phrase. For the Czech resistance. If you make it across the border, you knock on a door and say the passphrase. If they are connected to the resistance, and many of them are, they will answer with the correct response.”

“And if they aren’t connected to the resistance?” I asked.

The WO shrugged.

“But it doesn’t make any sense,” continued Marsh. “There’s no river. It’s a stupid passphrase.”

“That’s the *point*,” said the WO, obviously annoyed. “No one would accidentally say that.”

“Well, it still seems stupid to me. I’d use something better. Something more fitting. Like *“roast beef and gravy. Or turkey and stuffing,”* Marsh replied.

“Or pizza, *Chicago style*,” chimed in someone else.

“Nah, *beer!*”

“*Scotch!*”

Whispered shouts resounded around the circle, calling out everyone’s favourite food or drink. Everyone laughed.

You had to laugh at camp.

*

Ritchie reappears silently, beckons me forward. I come up beside him and he leads me down through the scrub to an opening in the trees. He points. I see a small farmhouse a hundred yards or so below. Smoke curls up from the rock chimney. The sun is peeking through the bare branches of the trees beyond. I nod to Ritchie and we start to flank around the open ground to check out the house.

We make it halfway around when a low wail sounds out from further east, in town.

Shit! Shit! The siren continues to blare. Word is out. The guards have radioed ahead. No time to check the house out now, to look for signs of Nazis. Not that they'd have a flag flying. Not here, anyways. No time now. Gonna have to chance it.

Ritchie ditches the rifle and we make our last run for the house. Panting, exhausted, scared, I reach up to knock, when the door suddenly opens from within. A middle-aged man, black beard seasoned with gray, stares at us. He looks us up and down and I realize suddenly how we must look: dirty, gaunt, dressed in rags. No need for a pass-phrase—it must be obvious we're escaped prisoners. Still, I know what I have to do.

“Follow the river.”

He tilts his head, looking confused. *Idiot.* He's Czech. I try again.

“Jed'te po řece.”

Understanding flows down his face.

“Řeka tě dovede domů,” he replies, nodding.

The river will lead you home.

Author's Note: This is a work of fiction, but is based on the actual experiences of a family member. He took part in D-Day, and, according to family, was the third Canadian on Juno Beach. He was captured a couple of days later and taken to Ardenne Abbey where many Canadian prisoners of war were executed under the watch of SS officer Kurt Meyer, who was later convicted of war crimes. Years later, he visited Meyer in Dorchester, New Brunswick where he was imprisoned, to thank him for saving his and Ritchie's life that day at the abbey. The family doesn't know what was said during the visit, only that it was an “interesting conversation”.

After joining the Czech resistance, he and Ritchie participated in raids against the Germans, until one day there were no Germans at the planned raid site. They were told by locals that the war was over and the Germans had left. Refusing to believe it, they stayed hidden for several days until they could confirm the allied victory.

SAMANTHA PRUSS

What is beauty?

The vibrations through the linoleum floor boards rustle to a stop,
bringing my gaze from my sneakers to the window at the front of the bus.
My hair untucks from behind my ear and brushes softly against my cheek.
I notice the buildings stop moving,
or maybe I did.

But it doesn't matter,
because when he climbs the third step into the bus all I can smell is
his romantically intoxicating cologne.
I breathe in hard, and my stomach whirls like the wind.

He looks over and smiles,
his teeth shine like ocean pearls,
he holds my gaze with birchwood eyes,
and I can't help but stare longingly into them.
He is beautiful,
tall,
muscular,
well dressed,

What more could I ask for?

My heart skips a beat when he finds a seat next to me,
fire blazes to my cheeks,
colours of crimson replace my soft peach undertone.
A single bead of sweat rolls down my forehead and splashes onto my shoulder.
He
chuckles,
and says to me,

you could be mine if I wanted, but red's not my colour.

My heart sinks into my stomach,
turning the fiery embers in my cheeks to washed out coal.

I choke for fresh air.

His cologne is no longer romantically intoxicating,
but sour and toxic.

A smirk widens across his face,

I look away, avoiding my naïve mistake, his body is perfect but his words,
pierce sharper than a knife.

16th avenue comes into view,

I spring from my seat,
eager to get off the bus,

I slither past him,

he doesn't bother to move,

he grabs my arm,

pulling me down enough to whisper in my ear,

know your worth.

ALYSSA WHITE

The Girls Who Will Not Be Erased

An erasure poem of Tishani Doshi's "Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods"

Girls of the woods,
 wrapped in cloaks
 of scars.

Girls

with tied lips,
 impossible
 to hear.

Girls

lifting
 broken legs,
 leaking secrets.

Unfastened lies
 whispered

who
 put bullets in their chests
 and their faces to fire;

who
 decorated
 their coffins.

Girls

scatter their stories;
even those
found naked,
forgotten,
and buried.

They've crawled
their way out

of remembrance;

humming,
until all you can hear
is their
bright desperation
of sound—

coming out of the woods.





LUKE PARDY

Untitled (from Twilight Express)

“You once told me that memory is a choice. But if you were god, you’d know it’s a flood” – Ocean Voung, *On Earth We Are Briefly Gorgeous*.

After my grandparents passed, I had a conversation with my aunt in which she described them as “good people in an ordinary way”. The conversation made me reflect on the remarkably banal moments in life that still caused me great grief. They were two people who had a significant impact in my life, and although they are now no longer with me their presence is still felt every day. They continue to live with me in the most ordinary ways, in how light shines through the window, in the last place we went on a walk together, and in the things they left behind I can’t seem to part with. These mundane experiences are the ones that I wanted to reflect on as they are the ones that haunt me with the most profound flood of emotions. As much as their absence is felt during special occasions it is their absence in my daily life I feel the most. In this work, I explore my own flood of memories and how grief becomes an everyday phenomenon.

ALYSSA WHITE

The Loon Song

For Jerrica

I hold white roses in my hand, and watch as wilting petals drop, one by one, falling like the hot, acid tears down my cheeks, like the rain cascading against the windshield of my car. Stepping out onto the old gravel parking lot, the air is heavy in my chest. Gravel crunches beneath me, sounding like brittle trodden leaves; remnants left to decompose as fall turns to winter.

I follow our foot carved trail—a relic of summers spent at the lake sharing cigarettes and sunburns. You always said that the Great Spirit of the earth called out to you here, reminding you that you weren't alone, but I had never believed it. A wispy breeze rustles through the crowd of fir trees, almost as if they were *whispering their condolences*.

The path reaches the lake, but in the absence of a golden sun it looks darker, solemn. I find our spot beneath the weeping willow, laying the roses at her feet. Her wrinkled body embraces me like a friend as I sit down, gently pressing myself against her outstretched rooted limb, supporting my crumbling frame as if she was what held me together. I look across the cold lake to the greying mountains, resting like unmarked headstones, and *the sky cries with me*.

I take out my lighter and a bundle of sage from a worn backpack. Shielding the flicker of fire from the elements, I think of you while the thin dried leaves soak up the flame. Memories flood my mind; I can hear the sound of your warm, hearty laugh as we sat here under the willow that last day, hand rolling cigarettes and playing cards. I can still hear the sound escaping my lips as the voice on the other side of the phone told me you were gone; it sends a sharp pang through my stomach. You left me with no goodbye. Breath catching, tension welling in my throat, the woody aroma of the rising smoke wraps around me like a soft blanket. Pulling the folded, crumpled paper from my pocket, I stare at the letter I wrote you; the one I never wanted to write. I read it out to you, but only *the willow hears me*.

As I lay against her strong motherly arm, the rain breaks. I take out the last cigarette, the only thing that I have left of you, and walk towards the water. The spark of the lighter is hot against my skin, protecting the small flame from the cold wisps of air kissing my cheeks. The long inhale of smoke sends a rush to my head, while the familiar smell of fresh tobacco surrounds me; it smells like you. The slow burn of the cigarette releases its ashy remains as I near the end. The ashes spread like dandelions in the wind. With my final exhale, I watch the smoke fade away. The air stilled as the weight of your absence pulls me to my knees, leaving me with nothing but forlorn despair. *The earth was silent.* But then I hear it—

a solitary voice calling out to me from the wilderness, her haunting melody breaking through the deafening quiet, as if she could hear the heaviness in my heart. The small silhouette caught my eye, ripples extending behind her through the water. As the loon glided along the dark lake, I listened to her song echoing across the deep. In that moment, it was like *the earth herself cradled me in her arms, as if to remind me that I am not alone.*

A note from the author:

This flash fiction piece was written for a good friend that died very suddenly last spring. We were unable to have a funeral for her at the time, due to the pandemic restrictions, so this story was inspired by how a couple of us found a way to honour her life and say goodbye to her. Out of respect for significant cultural ceremonies, I want it to be noted that the burning of sage and tobacco referenced in this piece does not depict a ceremonial smudging, as it does not accurately represent or portray all of the aspects that are a part of this sacred practice of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. All of the images and items in this piece were chosen because of their symbolism of healing, and also because of the significance that these items had to my friend that passed away. All imagery in this story was intended to speak to the deep connection to nature that this young woman had, as well as the lasting impact she had on her family and friends.

MICHELLE LA FLAMME

Vancouver Winter — Pandemic Style

We have a bright wind blowing here.
Snow is dusting light and bright, icing-sugared North Shore mountains.
Take a breath. Crisp.
Maple leaf-clogged street drains,
grass trampled to mud,
streets of denuded and de-pinked Sakuras,
and kelly-green evergreens holding strong
as the “warm” and the “busy” fades,
almost imperceptibly, towards Canadian hibernation time
where we have been cuddling and creating,
fireplace on
for months.
Vancouver Winter—
Pandemic style.

VIVECA BRAATEN

I'm a real girl

I. Winona Nobody (Johnson, 1892)

She stands in a row of tribeless creatures
just like her, factory-produced,
love-sick, desperately cliché.
Suicidal Mania is printed on her red-beaded dress,
moccasins stitched in English rhetoric.
Stereotypes like feathers
are pinned to her crow-black hair.
“I used to be a princess,” she tells her reflection.
“So, did I,” the Squaw responds.

She is not a real Indian girl,
descendant of the Steqó:ya, Sp'óq'es, or Spá:th,
she is a slave to the white
man's pen, photocopied from a fantasy book,
spray-tanned skin, latex actions.
Look in the index and find
her description
a disowned princess, lovelorn noble savage.

She gave up everything for her John
and he stole away her
surname.

Unhappy with her Euro-centric portrayal,
unnatural relationship,
she stands at the edge of a cliff,

toes digging into the dirt like an eagle's talons, curling
before she steps off
to plummet,
reuniting
with
the
land.

II. Princess Squaw (Mojica, 1991)

Her buckskin, pageantry dress tears
on an outstretched branch as she runs,
cigars arranged atop her hat, peeling off from
the floral-like arrangement,
her English fascinator.
Grandmother Spiderwoman watches her leave,
already spinning cautionary tales, *Dark Virgin of Guadalupe*.
Another Indian girl trapped
by a blue gaze.

Dip her in the river!
The blue dot
at the base of her spine
bleeds like an inkblot,
the macabre Coppertone
will wash right off her face.
Cut off her hide,
moon-white skin will appear once rinsed
with a brew of cultural appropriation,
her black tresses turn gold once brushed
with a steel comb, a real-life Cinderella.

Now she can walk up to her
Captain John Whiteman.
“I’ll give myself to you,”
she says, a sacrificial virgin.
“I’ll rebel against my family,”
she does.

But Captain Whiteman leaves her
at the edge of the precipice,
she swan dives into the churning waters of Niagara Falls.
“I could never live without him,” she howls,
before sinking to the bottom.
Her concrete heartstrings pulling
her down
to the
depths.

III. Mrs. Johnson (Highway, 2005)

She wraps her body in a muslin tablecloth,
mummified in white.
She takes the plunge
with a needle, over and over
stitching the fabric, tying herself up in
a bridal gown, then a burial dress.
“I’ll kill myself with these materials,”
she clucks.

Under the swaths of ivory
betrayal weighs heavily in her womb, a milky parasite,
tiny feet kick the breath from her lungs,
sucking out her spirit

animals, absorbing her cultural nutrients,
infected with a mania in its infancy.

He conquers her
heart, this
Billy Boy Johnson, who appears to her like a ghost,
an invisible man dressed only in a cowboy hat and promises.
He steals her away
from her sisters, her Catholicism, her sanity.
Her confession for Sunday church
on her knees, praying to a foreigner's god,
"this cowboy, has my heart
wherever he is."

She impersonates Clotho, turning her sewing scissors
to cut her and her half-breed's fated threads.
"I made the mistake,
of falling in love with a white
boy," she croaks, red blood
leaking from her stomach.
She carries her unborn son to the floor,
a Madonna painting, the tablecloth drapes around her shoulders,
an Indian Deposition. With her last breath
she neighs.

Artist Statement: These three parts represent portrayals of indigenous women in literature throughout the years given by inspirational indigenous writers. The first is inspired by E. Pauline Johnson and her essay on the subject "A Strong Race Opinion: On the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction." The second is on Monique Mojica's *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* and her critiques. Lastly, is inspired by Tomson Highway's *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout*. This poem digs at the roots of POC representation in literature and media.



CHANTELLE TRAINOR-MATTIES

Anuhla'an

The sound of the drum gives me goosebumps. I grew up not knowing a lot about my Nisga'a and Métis heritage and over the last few years I have been exploring that part of myself through many pathways including art. I have been fortunate to have my Indigenous work sold all over the world! I have illustrated this formline design of my four late ferret companions for this drum that my husband and I assembled together at a drum making workshop.

ALYSSA WHITE

The Girl in the Mirror

An ekphrastic poem inspired by Margaret Keane's painting, "Young Girl" (b. 1927)

She only appears before dawn
after dusk falls deep into slumber.
Footsteps creep towards my bedroom door
down a long, blackened hallway.
I count the creaks of the floorboards,
holding my breath; laying as still as the dead,

as the small figure reaches the doorway.
The silver light of the moon illuminates
her ashen skin, like stone and ivory,
stark against long auburn hair.
With not a word or casted shadow,
she drifts to the chair by the window.

Resting on the emerald fabric,
her slender corpse appears frail,
draped in an alabaster nightgown.
She remains in grave stillness,
solemn countenance unchanging.

I pale when she firsts looks at me,
unsettled by her ghastly aura.
But fear loses its grip as I hold her gaze.

With eyes like ebony, as striking as an eclipse,
she captivates me with an eerie gentleness.
Her eyes, full of a haunting innocence, disarm me,
shattering all sense of apprehension.
With eyes that seem to embrace me,
I am touched by a lingering desolation.

Her eyes, as bearing as a looking glass,
reveal my inner emptiness; forlorn
like a blue moon on a starless night.
Her ethereal presence becomes a comfort
in our deep, echoing silence.
Not a word is ever said between us.

But the longer I look at her,
staring into those soft, pensive eyes,
the clearer I see the ghost in me,
and I wonder if I'm the departed one?

ALEENA STOOCHNOFF

Harvest Moon

September 14th, 1962

The best things are born before breakfast, that's what John always says. The sun rises, crops grow, the earth warms, and the fine mist that clings to the grass and the corn husks melts into the air like steam from freshly brewed coffee. John Miller can't wait to wake up. He often finds himself conscious at the same time every morning, and it's always before daybreak. His wife, Dora, is fast asleep beside him; she is too tired from the day before to join him. John rolls to the edge of the bed, he stretches out the knots and listens to the cracks his body makes in his wake. He's not a young man anymore, that fact he knows for certain. But, he'll be deep beneath the dirt before he sleeps in past sunrise. There's work to be done.

As John makes his way towards the stairs, the old floorboards groan and creak with every step he takes. Sighing, he stares down at his protruding belly, and blames Dora's well cooked meals with every heavy step. Her dinners have been heartier than ones previous, despite the fact that they've barely been able to make a steady profit from the farm. Even with the price and demand of corn rising over the past decade, there just never seems to be enough. Now, about to descend the stairway, John pauses beside Billy's room. Lifting his hand, he moves forward as if to knock, but drops it back down slack beside his thigh. His son, Billy, was up late last night up on the rooftop, gazing up at the stars. John had wanted to tell Billy to get to bed, that there was plenty of work to do tomorrow, but John was fast asleep before he could say a word. On the opposite side of the hallway, John notices the door adjacent to Billy's room ajar. *The house is old, John thinks to himself. It's the damn framing, the house moves often.* Everyone in the house knows not to enter that room. Even the air that escapes through the vacant room's cracks smells stale and lifeless, like the inside of a casket. After closing the door, John descends the stairway, paying notice to the pictures that hang alongside the railing.

Each photo displays a different generation of the Millers in front of the family barn in Scales Mound, Illinois. John can see himself in the third photo down as a young

boy, sitting on his father's lap upon their brand new tractor. John remembers that ancient thing, how it was so old it didn't even have a battery; he remembers cranking the Farmall at odd hours of the morning, and despite the lack of water during the Depression, they still managed to stay afloat. The photo has faded slightly, but John can still see his childlike, toothy grin, while his father holds a somber expression. Further down, there is a vacant space where his family's most recent photo used to hang. The faded wallpaper reveals its prior place upon the wall. The space exposes a vibrant, floral pattern at its center, before bleeding out into the now dull, beige spread that covers the majority of the downstairs kitchen. Dora had requested the photo to be taken down, claiming it was just too hard to look at day after day. John didn't argue. Even the empty space is too much for him to see.

Outside on the porch, John sips his coffee while gazing out towards the fields. He clenches his free hand. With the colder weather creeping in his arthritis is acting up again, but that's just all part of the job. Finally, the last of the stars fade into nothing as a hazy light emerges from the east end of John's crops. The horizon wears a pink glow where the sun begins to stretch out her delicate arms, illuminating the few clouds that litter the sky. John listens as the rooster calls out, and thinks about the day's work ahead of him.

Inside John hears the clamoring of dishes, and the excited barking of the farm dog as the rest of the household begins to wake with the rising sun. Soon the smell of bacon and eggs will make their way into John's eager nose, and his stomach will start to grumble.

"Chores first." John places his coffee down upon the railing, and makes his way towards the barn as he tries his best not to think about the hot breakfast waiting for him inside.

*

The house is quieter than the inside of the chicken coop, but not by much. John rubs at his face, scratching at his whiskers while he waits for Dora to bring him his breakfast plate. Billy is not downstairs yet. That's too late in John's mind. Working hours began long ago, and although Billy's only eight, he has a lot to catch up on if he's going to do both school and the farm.

"Dora, dearest. How late was Billy up last night?" John inquires, yelling into the kitchen where Dora is making breakfast. He tries his best to sound non-accusing, but the furrow set deep within his brow gives him away.

“Oh, I don’t know. Maybe a bit after midnight?” Dora shouts over her shoulder, scraping the strips of bacon off the bottom of the cast iron pan. “There was a certain star... or constellation or something he was trying to look at. He said that it might be too hard to see so close to the full moon, but that he still wanted to try.”

John’s expression darkens. “So, there’s work to be done, and he’s sleeping in ‘cause he was up too late *stargazing*? Unbelievable.” Crossing his arms in front of him, he shakes his head in frustration. “That boy’s gonna learn somethin’ real quick.”

“Now, don’t you be too harsh on him John,” Dora says, turning to point the knife she was using to cut the toast in his general direction. “If this helps him, we should just leave him be.”

“Well *I* need his help, the farm needs him,” John mutters quietly to himself, fading his voice out after hearing a jumbling of footsteps making their way down the stairs.

Billy’s auburn curls are askew, and the right side of his face is imprinted with wrinkles from the fabric of his pillowcase. To John’s disappointment, he isn’t even dressed yet.

“Thank goodness, I’m starved!” Billy rushes over to his mother, scooping up a plate after receiving a kiss on his forehead. “There were only a few clouds out last night, but maybe tonight will be even better.”

“Maybe it will be. Maybe we’ll even see a *Telastar Satellite*,” Dora muses, raising an eyebrow at Billy. She then teases at his hair, but he waves her hand away as he sits down at the table opposite to John.

“It’s called *Telstar*, Mom.” Billy shakes his head, but smiles anyways. “Soon, they’re gonna put a man on the moon, just you wait and see.”

“Well, if they keep putting stuff up there, before you know it we’ll all be glowing green.” Dora throws her hands up in the air, accidentally spattering bacon grease on the ceiling. John has heard enough.

“I want no more of this nonsense, now that means the both of you.” John’s voice booms across the room. Standing up, he makes his way to the kitchen. Grabbing a plate, he loads up his food and sits back down at the table, “Billy, after school today I’ll need your help around the place. There’s a lot that needs to be done down here on the ground, you hear?”

“Understood.” Billy’s voice was small, but nevertheless coherent. Dora places a

hand on John's back before she finds her way to her spot at the table. They all bow their heads down to give thanks, and they eat the rest of the meal in silence.

*

Despite the cool September breeze that makes its way through the Miller's farm, both John and Dora manage to work up a decent sweat during the height of the day. While Dora tends to the chickens, who need plenty of feeding, and the cows that need milking, John prepares for the corn harvest that is bound to happen within the upcoming weeks.

The corn silk is no longer the pale colour of cream, but instead, a rich earthy brown. Grabbing one of the husks, John peels the fibers back, revealing the muted yellow kernels beneath its surface. It is almost ready, which is earlier than John expects. He glances over at the tractor that still needs work done to it, and sighs. He'll get Billy to help him later this evening.

Peeking around the barn, John catches a glimpse of his wife as she shovels out the pig pen. The top few buttons of her dress are undone, revealing a glistening sweat that covers her collarbone. John eyes her longingly, but hides himself back behind the barn. Her body does not carry the weight of a mother of two, for the steady work on the farm keeps her that way. Almost too skinny, John would think to himself, *she needs to eat more—she keeps too busy. But, her face is weathered, and carries the weight of the sadness she hides beneath its surface.* These were stressful times, and John wouldn't dare judge Dora, however she decides to cope.

*

When Billy returns from school, John spots something bright red within his small, clenched hands. John looks excited at first. Thinking the object is a wrench, he is elated that Billy has remembered his asking for help around the barn. Making his way towards him, John is about to ask Billy to join him on the tractor when the details of the object in Billy's grip become more visible to him.

It is a rocket ship, or at least a spaceship of some kind. To John's eyes, it looks cheaply made, but Billy still clings to it like it's a precious metal. "Look what they gave us in science class today!" Billy waves the plastic object above his head, weaving it through the air like a bird in flight. "It's like the one they're gonna send

to the moon, isn't it cool Dad?"

John, not knowing what to say, simply nods his head, and trudges over towards the tractor. He expects no help will come from Billy that evening.

*

John's aching fingers fumble beneath the hood of the tractor, checking the wiring and tightening any loose bolts to make sure everything is in order before harvesting time. He purchased this one after his father passed away. They were just able to afford a decent model H tractor, but time still catches up to all things. So, the sun constantly bleaches the hood, the weather chips the paint and rust eats at the frame year after year. Billy, running circles around the barn, resorts to making a noise which John can only assume is what he thinks the sound a rocket ship would make. It is distracting, and John cannot help but feel the heavy weight of disappointment.

A few years ago, his oldest son, Jimmy, was always the first one to the tractor, beating John there every time. But that was before Vietnam. Now, John can't even recall what Jimmy wore when he left, only that he left much too soon.

Now, Billy runs about the yard, ignorant to the wars around him. He was too young to remember much of Jimmy, which almost makes the feeling worse. John watches as Dora comes back from around the barn, wiping her brow with the back of her hand. Billy jumps onto a metal doorway that protrudes from the ground, leaping off its surface as though it were a launching pad.

"Don't jump off the shelter door, Billy," Dora yells out from across the yard. "That's out of bounds, only for emergencies! And don't let me catch you near the Smith's field again. I don't care how close to ours it is, you know the boundary. Remember, they'll shoot anything that moves on their property."

"Alright already!" Billy's voice fades out as he runs along the road to the other side of the house. Soon the sputtering sound of the rocket ship becomes too silent to hear, and the farm is silent once again.

As his thoughts regain clarity, John saunters over to the bomb shelter and kicks the side of the container with distaste. It was Jimmy's idea to build it before he left. Now, it seems to mock John with its very existence. As if this would protect them should a

nuclear bomb go off? Thoughts of the Cold War, Vietnam, and this stupid man on the moon nonsense washes over John like a tidal wave. With Kennedy in, it was just one crazy thing after another. First, all Jimmy used to talk about was the C-47 Skytrain and “electric goonies.” Now, John has to listen to Billy going off about rocket ships and moon landings. John places his hand upon the rusting tractor, and mutters quietly to himself. *There’s more down here on the ground than we’ll ever need. There’s only God way up there, so what’s the point of wasting so much time racing up there just to beat the Russkies?* John runs a calloused hand through his greying hair, wincing as he stares up at the sun. It’s all been too much for him to handle.

*

Over dinner, John observes that Billy’s thoughts are no more grounded than they were after school. The red rocket remains stationary upon his lap, since Dora has already yelled at him twice to remove it from the table. The chunks of potatoes and corn grow cold on John’s plate as he stares across the table at nothing in particular. The kernels are still tough, it will be a couple more weeks until they’d be ready for a proper harvest.

With his elbows perched on the dining table, John rests his hands beneath his chin. Billy has been rambling on about science class and the *Friendship Seven* Mercury spacecraft for the majority of the meal, and John can feel his patience wearing thin.

In-between chews, Billy spouts out the most random of facts. “Did you know John Glenn made *three* orbits around earth? Two of them he did all on his own.” Billy shovels more food in, barely taking the time to breath. “My friend Sam’s dad knows a guy who works at the Marshall Space Flight Center. He says they’re trying to decide which way’s best to get to the moon. I mean, the center is only a day’s drive away. Maybe we’ll go there one day, since they’re teaching us so much about it in science class already.”

“What they should be teaching you is how to work the land,” John states grumpily. Placing his hands by his side, he takes a deep breath. “All that space junk will be useless when you take over the farm, there’ll be too much for you to do to worry about what’s going on up there.”

Dinner is later this evening since John had extra stuff to do in the barn, and Billy had extra homework that needed to be done. Out the kitchen window the sun has slipped away, replaced by a dark blanket of blue and black. The day is over, and John is tired. Every

time the sun goes down John finds it hard to keep his eyes open; he hates when the daylight disappears. He needs artificial light just to see, especially since his eyes are worse than the years previous. The air is cool, developing a frost that will eventually kill the crops, and everything sleeps. The night was John's least favorite time of day, but Billy reveled in it.

"What if I don't want to work the farm?" Billy's words cut through sudden silence, causing John's knife to slip off of the plate. It makes a cacophony of sounds as it dances its way down towards the dining room floor.

John refuses to listen. "Of course you do, and you will. Someone needs to take over the farm when your mom and I are gone, so you're gonna have to step up to the plate soon. You can't have your head stuck up in the clouds, or the stars, or wherever they are forever, boy. There's plenty to be done here on the ground."

"John." Dora stares wide-eyed at him from across the table. "Not now, please."

"But Jimmy was a pilot, and he got to fly!" Billy's voice carries over the table in a frustrated plea, but he just digs his hole deeper, worsening his case. "Why can't I?"

"Jimmy flew right to his grave, now didn't he?" John yells across the table, pounding his fist against its surface. His cheeks grow a dark shade of crimson, and his heart beats heavy like a lead weight deep within his chest. "Look where that led him. Sixty thousand feet up in the sky, now six feet underground, is that what you want? Nothing good will come from this space nonsense, so you better forget it, now! That's final."

John regrets the words before he can stop them from flooding out. He can see Billy's eyes glistening like stars outside flickering before he runs from the table, slamming the door behind him. John places his hands upon his face. He hasn't cried since he heard of Jimmy's death overseas over a year ago, yet he feels like he could almost now.

"He's not Jimmy, remember John," Dora states plainly. She picks up her plate from the table and walks over towards the kitchen sink.

"I know that, Dora." John throws his hands up in the air.

"Then don't treat him as such, you gotta let him be his own person instead of forcing him to be something he's not. He's just a child, and he's still got some growing to do. You wanna lose him too?"

Out in the distance the sound of a gunshot echoes out, freezing John in place. An icy wave passes through his body, and his heart sinks to the floor. Dora barely has the time

to raise her hand to her lips before John stumbles out the door, sprinting as fast as he can towards the Smith's field.

The harvest moon climbs its way up the sky, illuminating everything in its path. The large oak tree that stands beside the house casts shadows upon its surface, and the cornfield is coated with an ethereal glow. John is already out of breath before he reaches the property's divide, and the steady stream of condensation that escapes John's lips blurs his hazy vision. He turns his head around frantically. He is about to call out Billy's name, but that's when he sees him.

Lying on his back, Billy is unmoving. John's legs feel like jelly as they attempt to carry him across the way towards Billy; hot tears streak the side of his face.

"Billy? Billy!" John calls out, but there is no reply. Finally reaching Billy's unmoving body, he stares down at Billy's wide open eyes and sighs.

"Look at the moon, Dad," Billy says quietly, his eyes wide with wonder as he points up towards the night sky, completely unharmed. "It's full tonight."

John stares up at the moon, then back down at Billy. In this light, Billy almost looks like Jimmy when he was a young boy, but he quickly dismisses the thought. Climbing down beside Billy, John lays his stiff back upon the damp grass, and stares out into the stars.

"It's so bright, you can't even see the stars," John states, looking over sheepishly at Billy. "What do you see?"

"I see Jimmy up there." Billy points up to the one bright star that manages to shine out against the moonlight. "That's Jimmy's star, he told me he'd be up there when he left the farm. I look for it every night. You know, I wonder what it looks like from up there in outer space. I hope I can see it like that one day."

John, not knowing what to say, remains silent for a spell. It's light enough now to see the childlike details of Billy's face, who looks over at him and smiles.

"I'm sure you will, son." John turns his face back to the direction of the full moon, closes his eyes and breathes deeply. "I'm sure you will."

Gravity pulls heavy at John's body, and for a moment, he wonders what it would feel like to be weightless in the vast emptiness of space. Flying above the clouds, floating above the stars, free from the damage the world below provides.

LAUREN BALLARD

The Storms of Women's Lives

acid rain doesn't occur everywhere
or all the time in every place
but it's fallen and hit me. I was on my way to school
running through the back alley to catch my bus
when it started pouring

he grabbed me

rain that burnt my skin

his touch seared my skin

and made me yelp in pain

his hands held me too tightly to the alley wall

i tried to hide from it

i tried to run away from him

but there was no cover around me

i stopped trying to run and let it happen

i have never seen a tornado where i live

i never thought it would happen to me

but the winds picked up today

it was the wrong moment and the wrong time

and my shutters banged and crashed against my window

the pounding of my head against the floor of his trunk

my instincts kicked in and tried to get me away from the winds and to safety

i felt warning lights blaring in my head telling me to get away

there wasn't enough time

everything happened in nanoseconds

forest fires are common nowadays
ravaging and rampaging our pristine forests
 it was just a comment from one of my coworkers
flames uproot thousands of people every summer
causing blue summer skies to turn a burning orange
 my cheeks flushed a bright pink colour when his hand found its way to my ass
when a forest fire is near your house
you are to wait until the evacuation warnings are sent out
you are told to leave your house within moments with all you can carry
 they make it out to be my fault
 it's the skirt that i wear
 i'm supposed to be wearing pants
 it's the provocative manner i walk
 i should probably just stay sitting
 but nobody ever looks at the man

SEQUEL ADAMSON

Spring

Devour me.
Remove my skin.
Tear apart my muscles.
Grind my bones with your teeth.
Throw up into my lungs.
I want to be a carcass.
Bury me in compost,
leaves,
sticks,
and yesterday's dinner.
I will dissolve into dirt.
Nitrates to feed your anger,
I have become nothing but soil.
Tuck me in the garden,
dig into my flesh,
plant a lilac bush
so you can remember me,
but only
in the spring.

Biographies

Sequel Adamson is in her third year at UFV. Sequel only writes when angry. She has a very short temper, so she writes often. Her other talents include crying when overwhelmed, hitting every pothole while driving, and making a mean black forest cake.

Lauren Ballard is a third-year university student with a major in history and an extended minor in creative writing. Her plan is to become a high school teacher once she graduates university in a year. This is her first published piece of work.

Megan “Chuck” Barker is a student at UFV.

Graeme Beamiss was born in Melbourne, Australia, and grew up in BC, Canada; drawing and painting have been constant companions through this and many subsequent shifts. It is a means of meditation, exploration and expression. Graeme finds inspiration in philosophy, psychology, esoteric and occult mythology and artists like Gustave Doré, Stanislav Szukalski and William Blake. Graeme aspires to create art that inspires others to look more deeply into the connection between the inner and outer worlds.

Viveca Braaten is from Chilliwack, and is currently in her last semester at UFV for her Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in English Literature and mental instability. Most of her time is spent being a complete nerd, hoarding cheesy fantasy novels and playing video-games. But she sometimes writes poetry and short stories, and is lucky enough to be published occasionally. A pantoum of hers appeared in the 49th issue of *The Claremont Review* in 2016.

Katie Diespecker is an artist and UFV Alumni who currently lives in Halifax, NS. Katie likes experimenting with a variety of different materials and subjects, from life drawing to abstract painting, with themes including nature, media, and internal human conditions and conflicts. Katie has also done design and illustration for UFV's Academic Success Centre.

Sydney Hutt is in her final semester at UFV, completing her Bachelor of Arts degree in English. She is a writer, and many of her poems and essays which blend themes of motherhood and feminism with Gothic romanticism have been published extensively online and in print. She lives in Chilliwack, and has wonderful seven year-old twin daughters who make her world go ‘round.

Andrew Koole is UFV alumni.

Dr. Michelle La Flamme was born and raised in traditional unceded Coast Salish territory and currently teaches in the English and Theatre departments at UFV. She is a mixedblood woman whose Indigenous roots are Métis (Mother) and Muscogee (Father). Dr La Flamme is a passionate educator whose teaching areas include Canadian literature and Indigenous drama. She has taught at SFU and UBC and she has been a guest lecturer in Germany, The Netherlands and Poland. She is also an avid performer, playwright and poet. Michelle loves to ride and show horses in her downtime and she is a proud grandmother of two.

Scott McQuarrie is not an author—to be an author, you must have a published book, and while he has written a book, it is not yet published. If you are a literary agent looking for upper middle-grade fantasy, Scott would like to talk to you about an as yet undiscovered gem of a manuscript.

Luke Pardy is a fourth year student currently finishing his BFA. His work focuses on the ways local, social, and personal histories manifest themselves in mundane contemporary existence. He works primarily with large and medium format film combined with digital post-production, allowing for a wide range of display and distribution methods. He has been the recipient of multiple scholarships including one from the University of Fraser Valley and FotoFilmic. His current projects examine the legacy of masculinity in the Canadian west, living with grief, and community connection in the age of Covid-19.

Samantha Pruss is a second-year student here at UFV. She is currently taking her Bachelor of Integrated studies in hopes of becoming an elementary school teacher. She is passionate about writing and reading and is very excited to share her work

now and in the future. Samantha will continue to write poetry and one day hopes to write a novel.

Aleena Stoochnoff is a third year UFV Student, majoring in English. Aleena is currently taking multiple creative writing classes to help spark her creative drive to aid her journey in (hopefully) finishing that novel that sits patiently on her desktop. She is an avid lover of the outdoors, and the idea of being able to create worlds with a pen and paper. In her spare time, Aleena can be found reading, working at her favorite bookstore, hiking and enjoying the twists and turns that life has to offer.

Chantelle Trainor-Matties is a Canadian artist with Nisga'a and Métis heritage who graduated with her Visual Arts Diploma from the School of Creative Arts at UFV. She specializes in illustration, graphic design, and painting. Trainor-Matties works for herself and does freelance work for private and commercial clientele. Her work ranges from bold formline to charming cartoons to painterly realism. She participates in a variety of events such as showcases, markets, trade shows and exhibits her work in galleries. Her late ferrets are her main inspiration; other favorite subjects are flora and fauna, pop culture, the macabre and North West Coast art.

Alyssa White is in her second year of UFV. She is studying Kinesiology and Creative Writing. She aspires to publish motivational books, and work in a coaching position to help others reach their goals and become their best selves. Alyssa has had a love for reading since childhood, which sparked her passion for creative writing. Her favourite genres to write are creative non-fiction and poetry, because she likes the freedom and level of creativity that they offer to speak to issues that matter to her. She is very grateful for the opportunity to be published in the Loudon Singletree.

The *Louden Singletree* is UFV's literary and visual arts journal. Since its inception in 2009, the *Louden Singletree* has been a forum in which students, alumni, faculty, and staff of the university can share their creative work.

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