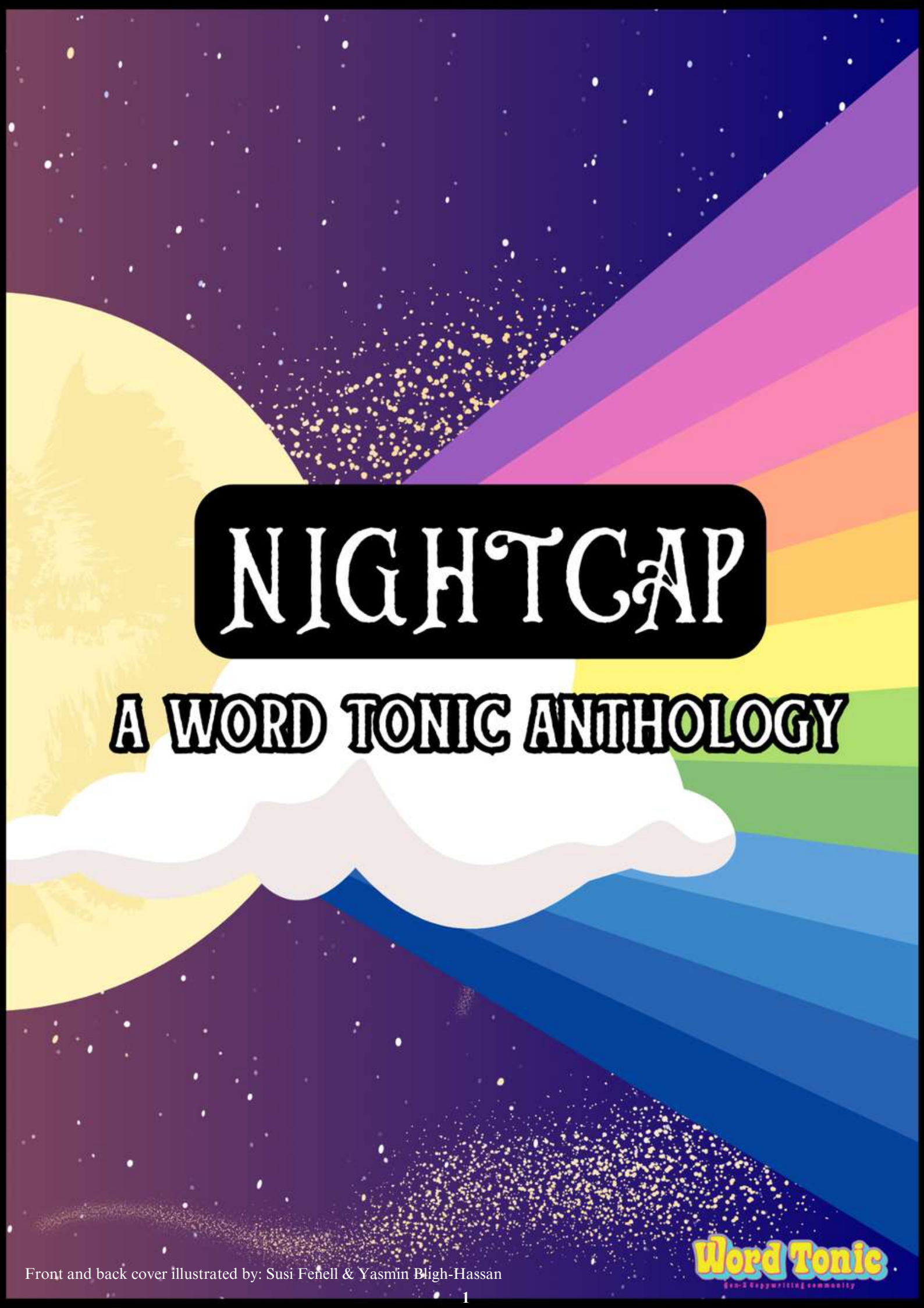




NIGHTCAP

A WORD TONIC ANTHOLOGY

Word Tonic

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A note from editor Roos: dinner is served!

At some point during my work on the anthology, I started to notice that I only used food-related puns and metaphors in my promotion.

Now, this would be alright, if it wasn't for the fact that this anthology is dream-themed.

There is an easy fix, however: We are already planning a new anthology. The theme of that one will be food, and I promise that I will only use night- and dream related imagery in promoting it.

Now, on to the subject at hand: The WordTonic creative writing anthology you currently have in front of you! Where does this suddenly come from, you might ask? Why, let me explain.

It all started when our dear WordTonic member Shaun mentioned the idea of creating an anthology of the works of all the amazing people in the WordTonic creative writing chat. I saw many people thought this was a good idea, and I thought, well, why won't I try and make it a reality?

(How I went about that whole 'making it a reality,' by the way, is that I googled 'how do I make an anthology' and went from there. Oh, and I used the excel-format from another project I worked on. Ta-da).

There were at first about six people who wrote down their names. In between the sign-up era and the deadline for submission, six more joined, so that we are able to present to you an anthology consisting of twelve wonderful stories and poems!

And I can't stretch enough how incredibly proud I am of all these writers, who poured their heart and soul not just into writing their own piece, but also in editing and illustrating the pieces of their peers. It shows, once again, what kind of incredible community WordTonic is.

A place where people can help each other and share their work, so that everyone keeps getting better.

You have the product of all this effort in front of you. Twelve wonderful pieces, all about dreams. Psychedelic landscapes, dreams that meant a lot, dreams for the future, fears for the future or for friends and family, dreams of love, dreams of fun and dreams of sadness. It's a wonderfully diverse banquet, which for sure has something delicious for everyone!

So, what are you still waiting for? The buffet has been opened. Pick a plate, flip over the page, and dig in!

A note from WordTonic founder Carolyn

At the heart of Word Tonic is community + connection. It was my big 'why,' behind co-creating this platform with my four other co-founders. I wanted to create a safe space for young copywriters and aspiring copywriters to come together to learn and grow.

And it has - beyond my expectations. Watching this anthology boom and seeing so many members come together has amazed me. And a very big thankyou to Roos, for being the brains behind the anthology.

This season of the anthology is all about dreams - the good, the bad, the weird, the scary.

Copywriting is important, but creative writing is JUST as important and knowing how to nurture and keep *that* alive will help you craft even better copy.

Copy that tells a story, copy that makes people feel, copy that inspires and pushes boundaries.

Go on, get stuck in!

Déjà rêvé

Written by: Isabella Frank

Edited by: Paula Espinosa

an instance of Déjà rêvé :

in innumerable before,
I've known you.
i can't deny them
behind my sight
i'm left ragged.
voracious in the torpid moonlight
i regard sable sage trees
and follow the scent.

the sorceresses tell me nameless things
and i recite them back
and with my sharpest bone
I inscribe our runes
a relief.

into what is
as we are one.
and the waves permeate your eminent flesh
and reflect your marrow
crystalline visions blind.
'till i can **feel** it too

that ancient afterwards that
lay beneath our vulgar sun
flashes dizzy amongst the others.
commanded
i obey your eyes
burning with abject fury
of all i know,

i refuse to let go.
as we are one.

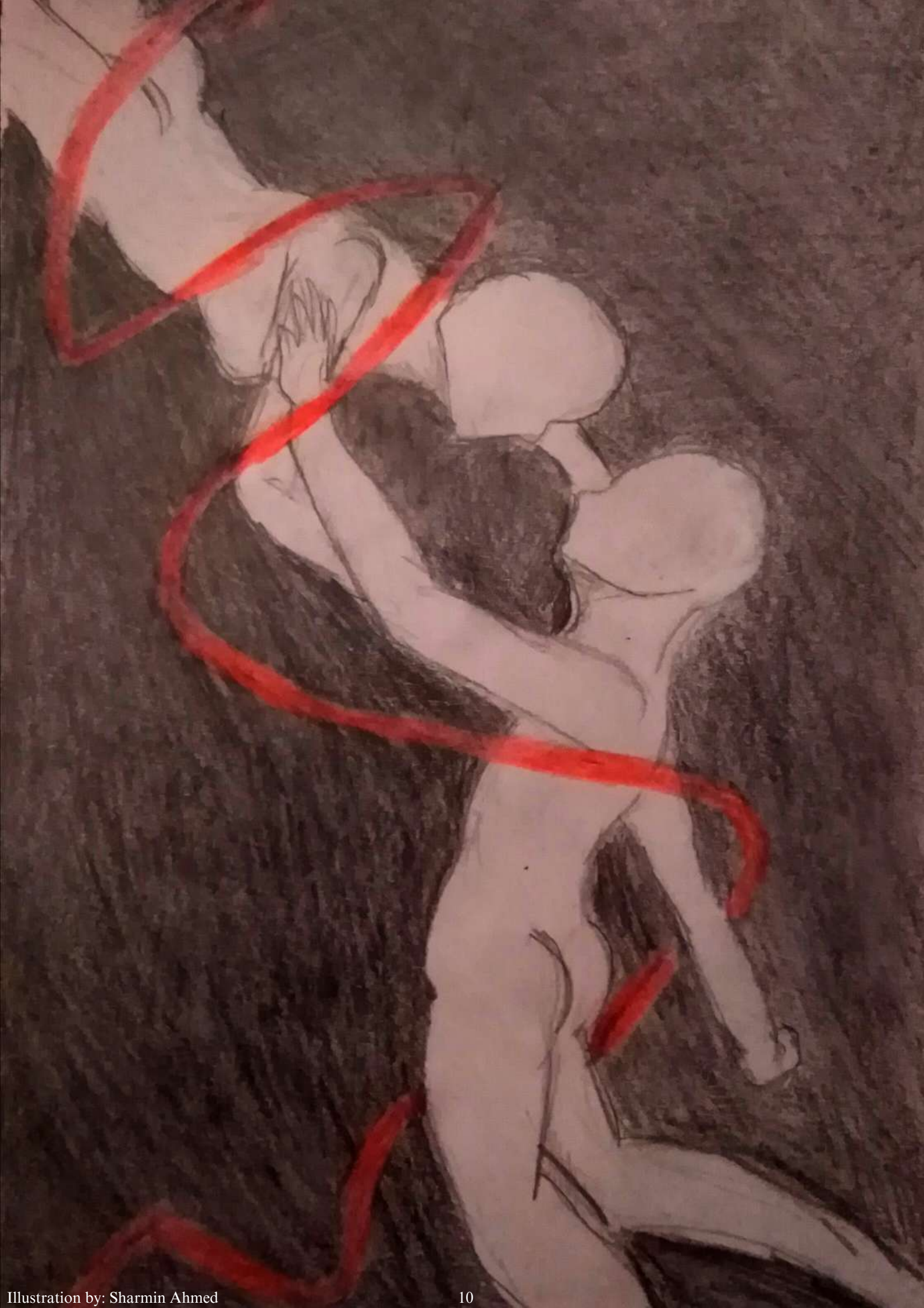
studying
the makeshift dirt beneath my feet,
i am wanting to an atomic level
to count your composition,
it burns, it burns
but i count all reagrless
and find
numerically yours is as mine
and so,

bloody through the bleak trench
i crawl
permeating our fallacious spacetime to
discover
we are confessed through sleeping visions
and blot all minds in secret code.
a preparation
for what is
begging to be known.

impatiently i sit, waiting
that we are destined to
come together:

axiomatic.

-- i.f.f.



Too fondly to be fearful

Written by: Paula Espinosa

Edited by: Rheanna Egleton

“Nice eyes, beautiful.”

Jeers and taunts. Sharp elbows and smelly bodies.

The haggling didn't bother me. No, I couldn't let it bother me, especially being alone and as insubstantial as I was, with barely enough food and drink to keep me going from day to day. I reached up and pulled the hood of my scarf further down my face. I didn't want anyone commenting on my eyes, or my hair, or my face for that matter.

This wasn't my first time walking through the old market, which was less a place of trade than the cesspit of humanity, tucked into some grimy corner of itself.

I'd come time and time again. Sure, it offered an escape from the soul crushing work I did down in the mines—choking under the earth, dust swirling with every movement, terrified I'd be buried alive any second. I couldn't stand to be underground that deep, I had to be able to see the sky. But I couldn't do anything about it.

Just one year left before I worked off my indenture. *Then I'll be free.* That thought seemed to echo through my brain every second of every day. Except when I was here. Something about this insipid place called to me ...and I couldn't figure out why. So here I was, again.

Every time I came, I could only take the stink and clamor and claustrophobia of it all for so long before I had to leave. My tolerance this time around was already dangerously low, having been berated at work for something I didn't even do.

I huffed in frustration and wove through the crowds a bit faster, my blistering feet picking up speed, hurting through the thin soles of my shoes. I looked around for the Artefact I kept coming back for. What could it possibly be?

I'd been balancing on this dangerous tightrope for months now, attracting attention as a young woman alone, enduring unpleasant confrontations and terrifying escapes from them when they escalated, as they so frequently did.

But I couldn't leave empty-handed. Not this time.

The vendors were everywhere, displaying their wares on rotted wood, pieces of rusted metal, even hanging from the branches of dead trees—whatever they could find. There was barely any space to breathe without having one narrow in on you like a vulture to its prey.

“Wanting to drown out your sorrows, sweetheart? Just one hit from my supply and you won't remember your name,” a slimy man materialized beside me, his blackened teeth leering.

He'd caught me off guard, grabbed my arm before I'd even realized he was there. His fingers dug into my skin in a way I was sure would leave a mark. I certainly didn't have any money for purchases, but the sadistic glint in his eye made me think there were other methods of payment he preferred.

“Let go of me, I don't have any money,” I hissed, not wanting to make a scene and attract any more unwanted attention. I squirmed, twisting my arm in his grip, trying to get away.

“Anyone with you?” he breathed down, his rancid smell making me crinkle my nose and double my efforts. This was *so* not the day.

A swift kick to the crotch and the pervert finally let go of me, flinging me in the opposite direction and making me crash against someone else. I pivoted quickly, ready to run away before causing more trouble as I looked towards the person I'd just collided with. An old woman, like countless others and completely harmless, her white hair in a loose bun, her frail hands speaking of the years. I started to relax a bit when something in her expression stopped me. There was nothing different about her, nothing remotely unique in her time-worn face, dirty and haggard. But nevertheless, there was something. The longer I stared at her, the more magnetic her eyes seemed, and my vision seemed to tunnel, zeroing in on her and only her.

Who was she?

Before I could take a breath to ask, the woman turned around and moved faster than I thought she would've been able to. I ran after her without really knowing why, not wasting a second. My breath came in short bursts as I panted, my eyes darting around as I turned a sharp corner and suddenly faced countless people. I couldn't see her anymore. I paused, feeling disappointed somehow for losing her, my brows furrowing as I tried to make sense of the last few moments. I reached up to swipe the sweat away from my upper lip, breathing out slowly to calm myself. I stood there, looking around when a bright glint caught my eye. My head turned first, my feet only seeming to follow in its aftermath, tripping over myself as I wove my way around the crowd to get closer to whatever it was. The shine had seemed to come from one of the many vendors, inside one of the piles of grime and overflowing scrap. Focusing hard on it, I could almost see how it seemed to be in its center. Without asking for permission or even seeing if the vendor was nearby, I began to dig through the piles frantically, all logic leaving my mind. I don't know what came over me, it was as though my body was following a stranger's command, making me scrounge through the filth, rusted metal bottles and sharp bits of wire, sharp bits digging into my skin and turning my nails black with grime. The rough textures were almost enough to make me stop. Almost.

There it was, the Artefact, its glint reaching me at last as though it were winking at me, teasing me for taking too long. With sharp movements, I shoved the rest of the objects out of the way, reaching forward with my other hand and meeting a smooth, polished surface, a far cry from the dirty objects that my skin itself seemed to sigh with relief. My fingers curled around it, surprised to feel it round out slightly. It felt as though it were made of marble and crystal, or something in between. Pulling it out, an involuntary gasp left my mouth as it shone brightly, almost pulsing, as if to the beat of my pounding heart.

Another glint, brighter than the first, reached my eyes from the pile, tearing my gaze away from the Artefact in my hand. Eagerly, I tore through the pile with my free hand, pulling out the second one much quicker than the first. Only when I held them together like this, both Artefacts settling perfectly in the hollow of my palms, did it click.

They were stars.

Two stars.

Twin stars, to be exact.

Twin stars that pulsed with life as though they had been ripped down from their place in the sky only moments before. Twin stars that seemed to belong to my hands, that looked and felt so natural to hold. A sense of rightness washed over me.

It was then that I remembered I was in the middle of the grimy marketplace, not somewhere one could afford to get lost in thought safely. You always had to be alert here. My bodily awareness came back to me then, my skin prickling with unease as though someone were watching me. Muscles tensing slightly, I pretended to still be examining the stars while raising my head slightly, hoping to catch a glimpse through my peripheral vision. Blurry and crooked, I saw the old woman from before.

Abandoning all caution, my head snapped up, eyes meeting hers. She was the one who had been staring at me. But her face... it looked changed.

There was something about this: the situation, the stars, the woman. It was as if I was looking at a constellation with all of its stars but without its connecting line. I couldn't see the bigger picture. There was something missing from this, something more.

My eyes were drawn down again, towards the glowing stars. In fact, with every moment that passed, the more it felt as though my eyes were burning right through them. Wait no, it was the stars themselves that were burning in my hands, growing hotter and brighter until it reached the point of pain.

This was it. The Artefact that had been calling my name for months now, making me come back each time. As the stars changed, I felt some of it in me too, change in my bones, in my very marrow, a truth too deeply entrenched to be called by any other name.

With a rushed inhale, I looked towards where the old woman had been standing, but gone was the haggard face and tattered rags. Instead, a radiantly ageless woman, simultaneously young and old in her appearance, stood in her place, with luminescent hair delicately adorned with a tiara of impossible light, tiny pinpricks that moved with every breath she took. She was pale, practically ghostly white; she should've looked sickly, but she simply didn't. Rather, her skin shimmered and glowed with health, looking as though dusted with pixie powder, or perhaps stardust.

She smiled. She needed no words, not with me at least.

Still staring at me, she began raising her arms towards me—such regal arms I couldn't help noticing, though they radiated strength as if she were Artemis herself.

Could she be? Some sort of goddess? Or perhaps a celestial being come to life? I didn't know, I don't think I could've known.

Her dress seemed to cascade from her very body, liquid silver, emanating from somewhere else, appearing at her exposed collarbone and disappearing as it reached the ground. As she stretched her arms out fully, her collarbone became more prominent still, bringing my attention to the trim of her bodice as it curved downward in an almost elven peak, embedded with some kind of crystal at its center. The trim seemed to blur the line between fine lace and metal jewelry, imbuing the gown with the air of casual armor, if such a thing even existed. A visceral instinct to touch the strange dress almost overwhelmed me.

Snapping out of it, I raised my head to address the being again, when I realized she had extended her hands out to me.

“Oh...” I breathed, hardly daring to move an inch. Eyes widening, I finally understood her gesture. So focused on her had I been, that I had completely forgotten myself and my surroundings.

The marketplace seemed to blur into the background, fading into nothingness. All I could see now was the being and... myself. Only I didn't feel like me anymore, the me I knew. I felt like Something Else, not a person nor object, but something living and stretching out its cramped wings as though it had been hibernating for a long, long time.

My soul somehow knew, but I looked down at what I had realized happened. Gone were my grayed clothes and thin shoes, my sickly skin and hungry frame. My skin now seemed dusted pale with the same fine shimmer as hers, the exact liquid-like gown flowed down, and I could feel the floating weight of stars atop my hair. I didn't need to look in the mirror to know that our faces matched as well.

We were identical. Twins. Much like the twin stars I held firmly in my grasp.

Eyes flicking up, I had a million more questions, but she tilted her head and stopped me before I had even opened my mouth. *What more? What could possibly be more than this?* I wondered, breathless and bewildered. A force bigger than me pulled me forward, my feet practically floating towards her. As I got closer, the stars I held began to vibrate in my palms, startling me so badly that I jerked back, yelping slightly and letting go of them, but they didn't fall to the ground as I had expected them to. They floated up between the two of us, vibrating more violently now, looking as though they'd explode any second.

"What do we do?" I nearly shouted as the vibrations were getting louder by the second.

There was no response from her, but she stepped forward. I stopped for a moment, knowing what she wanted me to do too. So, I did the opposite of what every cell in my body told me to do. I stepped forward, close enough to feel the vibrations in my chest, my soul. It felt like we were in the middle of a tornado, and at any moment we'd be swept away by the uncontrollable storm. She mirrored my movement, stepping closer, until our toes almost touched.

I inhaled to ask what the next step should be when the star in front of me flew into my mouth, riding on my breath and finding its way down my throat before I could process what had happened.

I frantically grasped my neck with both hands, beginning to panic as I couldn't breathe. It was jammed in my lungs. I felt it there, like some sort of heavy stone, blocking my airway and making me dizzy from the lack of air. My chest constricted and fear took hold of me. *This is it. This is how I die. And I can't do anything to stop it.*

My pounding heartbeat matched the roar of the blood in my ears. My vision was getting darker, blackening everything around me. The pain now overpowered any thought, any rationale. There was nothing else except that. I knew if I passed out, I would never wake up, never become the girl I know I could've been if I'd been free, if I'd reached that meadow. *Oh, god.* Tighter and tighter, my lungs couldn't take it anymore and neither could I.

I gave up. I let go. And I prepared to drown.

A beat.

And, miraculously, a breath.

I should've suffocated, I should've felt my body give out from beneath me. Instead, I only felt relief as my lungs stopped straining. I took a breath, without really taking one. One moment, I was in blinding pain, oblivious to the world around me and the next, I was perfectly healthy, standing still with a clear head. Well, more than healthy it seemed. I felt warm all over, could practically feel the heat emanating from my body all around me. I felt renewed, replenished, reborn.

I couldn't understand this. My head started to hurt from the confusion and rapidity of the recent developments. Where was I? Who was I? Or, more importantly, *what* was I?

The being hadn't moved an inch. Even her serene smile had remained in place. She looked the same, while I felt like my innards had

been ripped from inside me and replaced with pure light. My head clear, I remembered now what had been happening before the stars had vibrated like that.

I raised my arms, reaching out to meet her hands. I knew I had to hold them, that the next step of whatever this was would be complete, that maybe finally I would be complete. As our fingertips grew closer, I felt the same warmth within me radiating from her too, the heat calling to one another.

Like calls to like, the thought echoed in my mind. *Are you the missing piece of me? The final puzzle piece of my life?*

Holding my breath, I crossed that final stretch and felt our fingertips finally brush, awaiting our connection, until a sudden burst of light blinded me. I flinched and turned away.

Wait for me... her voice whispered in my mind as I felt a ripping sensation deep in my sternum, pulling, pulling, pulling. I had to close my eyes to fight against the nausea, it felt like my body was being squeezed and pushed into spaces too tiny for a body or soul to fit into, colors and sounds flashing through my mind, making me dizzy. I couldn't tell if they were hallucinations or visions. I couldn't tell what was real anymore.

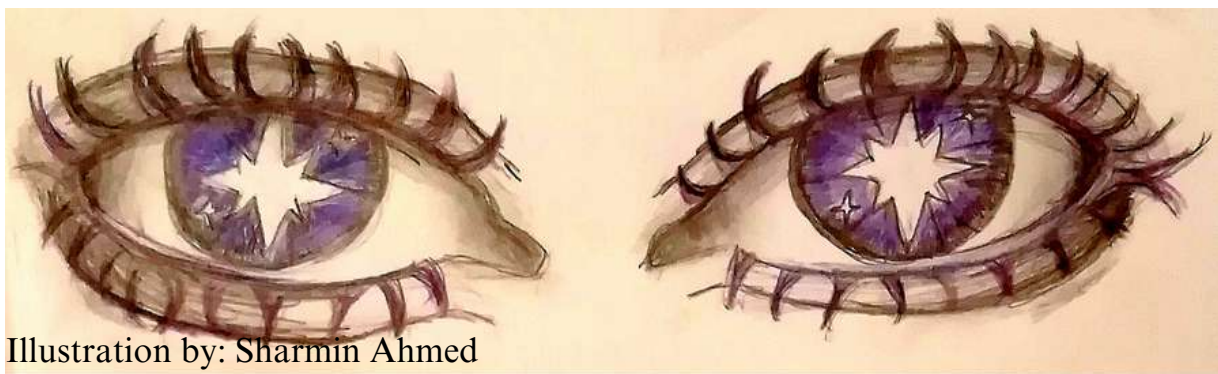


Illustration by: Sharmin Ahmed

With one final shove, I landed on my feet somehow, back in the grimy marketplace. I fought hard to not throw up, the sensation of being flung back here almost unbearable. I shot my hand out to grab a table or trunk or something to steady me while I took deep breaths through my mouth.

I was *not* going to throw up. I refused to.

After a few moments, the nausea subsided into a piercing headache, making me bring my hand up to my forehead, wincing with the sound of humanity suddenly back where silence had resided.

I couldn't believe it. I was back here again, right where I started, my blistering feet stepping on something sharp and my nose runny, exactly as before. Did I... dream that all up? Had someone drugged me and whatever it was made that powerful hallucination?

There was no way.

But the lingering sensation of whatever just happened told me otherwise. My skin felt tingly and alive in a way I'd never felt before. No, everything had to have been real. There was no other answer. Which meant that my twin was out there somewhere, waiting for me to rescue her from whatever force just took her from me. She had the star in her and I did too, that alone would guide me like a beacon in the dark. And what had just happened told me that there was so much more than this grueling life I'd come to accept. There was more I had to do, more for me.

I had to get out of this hellhole and get to her. Someone here knew something about that other realm, and I'd do just about anything to get that information.

The Crafter

Written by: Rheanna Egleton
Edited by: Roos van der Velden

A Crafter stepped into my tavern one night
It was empty, the elements were at impish play
Their cloak of star silver and deepest black
wrapped tightly around their thin frame.
And as they sat, their ivory skin flashed
in the lamplight.

I knew of the Crafters from my mother
Who whispered tales to me when the sun dipped low at dusk
Her breath tickling my ears, comfort in her arms
I thought the Crafters mythical
Not ones to roam this plane, but this Crafter,
this one was real

A fine-boned knuckle slipped beneath their sleeve
of gossamer and silk so delicately woven
And I swore the stars themselves paused their journey
As they raised it once but knocked twice
On the sticky, stained table I had glanced
at more than thrice

I halted the pouring of my nighttime ale
To glance over at this Crafter so rare, so striking,
so pale it seemed the darkness rippled in waves
As again they raised that knuckle
I watched the bones beneath shift and stretch taut
Before landing



With a resounding knock, it silenced my
soul, the candles, and my thoughts, the wind ceased its breathing
The clouds outside roiled as if in torment
And the sky shuddered and murmured
I held my breath as the Crafter's gaze
Moved to meet mine

That knuckle blushed and crooked at me, summoning
My apprehensive steps pressed into the wooden floor
Taking me ever closer to the Crafter
And the corner in which they sat
They pulled back their hood of night to reveal
A face untold-

That face! It was a mass of darkness,
Of dreams and nightmares with whispers of shadows and light
Of colours that breathe with the threat of nightmares
Wringing my hands I slid and sat
Their eyes held the ocean and songs unsung
And then they spoke;

"I have journeyed thus far through time and space
To find wisdom, awakening, to the threat at hand"
The Crafter paused and lifted their fist up high
With a flourish, the room brightened
And warped to show a scene beyond words
Dread dripped through me,

“Yes, you see, your fears now breed constantly
And leave no time for entering my soft realm of dreams
I wish for you to be dreamers of the day
And cosmos walkers of the night
But instead I hear a silent echo
Where sound should be.”

My brow furrowed in confusion and froze
What did this Crafter mean with me? There was no telling.
My pale bewilderment was surely noticed
But the Crafter forged on and as
they spoke I listened and wondered ‘When had
I stopped dreaming?’

Their voice had softened to the barest hush
My mind began to drift, my being sinking downwards
And I found myself in a quiet meadow
With blossoms and starlight and peace
Such beauty I had never known before-
I lay in bloom

And as I drifted I began to dream
Of a lush forest and bubbling laughter and fresh streams
Of a life where fruits were plentiful and ripe
Where silence meant the best of things
For in a dreamer’s keep, mouths need not move
When thoughts fly free

In this land where I wandered and wondered
Fingers brushing ferns and tingling in unchained delight
My eyes beheld a spectrum of moons ascending high.
Amongst the sun's glimmer I saw
The blissful sigh of a lilac-filled sky
I slumbered more-

When iridescent butterflies amassed
I began to sense an ethereal energy near
And the Dream Crafter appeared the same but new
Gone was their cloak of night and stars
It was replaced with phosphorescent shine
Forged from dawnlight

I loosened an easy breath and kneeled down
For this was the Dream Crafter of my mother's stories
Gone was my terror, their darkness, the despair
Before me stood my answer and
When the Crafter tilted my chin up
I understood

My mother's tales had always been the truth
The yearning that I felt had never been abnormal
And the times I watched from my bar and felt like
I did not belong, I was right
I understood what the Crafter needed
So I rose up

And I placed my hand in the Crafter's palm
I felt their strength flow into my bones, my eyes!
My eyes opened as if for the first time in my life
And I saw everything. The dreams,
The lack of dreams, the bounty of nightmares
So I transformed

I became the Crafter, they became me
With a vow fresh on my lips, I took to the heavens
To begin my work, to inspire the dreamers
and give solace in this world for
the people who gazed to the stars and wished
for a new start

A graveyard for my dreams

Written by: Saarah Hendricks
Edited by: Roos van der Velden.

My dreams are a graveyard for my dreams
And as I wander among these ghosts,
Wading through sites covered in promises long dead.
through what was, and your stories of what could be.
I can't hold on, for the hands I reach for are my own,
Here, where whispers of hope were sown.
In their graveyard, my dreams found me and brought me back to life



Illustration by: Sharmin Ahmed

Cimeterium Somnia

Written by: Ben Jenings
Edited by: Sharmin Ahmed

I mean to ask... what is there to a dream, Queentia? When you boil it to its essence, remove the whimsy, separate the sentimental... what is it? Why must we cherish it?

You're overthinking it, Certus. And thinking and dreams never mix well.

The rift was not open for long. A gap in time and space was never meant to be, for its existence complicated so much even in the scope of so very little. And the universe itself had split open. Wide open, no, but open, nonetheless. And two green adults, themselves barely imprinted on said universe, had no earthly idea of why an event like this had come to pass.

One of these adults, a woman with sienna skin and hair lighter still, crouched in a chamber of monotone stone bricks, admiring the dimensional divide before her with the fervent intrigue of an infant learning to walk. Her walnut eyes glistened with swirls of purple, and the light emanating from within the rift sharply illuminated her small, flat nose and unimposing cheekbones.

"Where do you reckon it leads to?" she asked her almost-identical male friend, awe-filled gaze still affixed to the rift's splendour.

"With any luck..." he replied, "back home."

The two had ventured out of their village, known commonly as *Volvunt Alea*, to travel the distant world and find a few good stories to tell before committing to spend the rest of their lives labouring. That was Queentia's goal, anyway; Certus was less enthused about exploring new horizons given that he was perfectly happy with the path that had been chosen for him.

A job laying road stones for trade routes with other villages, an arranged marriage with the stonemason's daughter, and a comfortable stronghold in a few years' time. Heaven.

"*Quizonga* – we've not been on the road longer than two moons and *this* is what we find, brother! Don't surrender yourself to retreat just yet..." Queentia did not desire the set life so strongly. For as long as she could remember, gazing out of her bedroom's skylight to the distant stars gave her pause to reflect on all that could be out there. All the possibilities, all the potential, all the journeys in which life could go – and all the fear that it might never go at all.

"Look, stay here and admire the purple hole for as long as you like, but I'm going. Might be a pub somewhere down the road..."

"Certus, wait!" she yelled, causing him to turn heel. "Look."

The rift had started to pulse violently, and with each pulse they felt the solid stone ground beneath them tremor. The once passive and beautiful strands of magenta energy had begun to sharpen into malignant strands, looking as if likely to pierce either one of them at any moment.

"I don't like this," said Certus, refusing to get any closer to the purple hole, but staring intently at it, nonetheless. "Back away from it, please."

"I-I can't," she whispered.

"Bloody hell, Tia, it's not important, leave it!"

"No, I mean... I can't—I can't move!"

The strands from the rift had wrapped themselves like an old vine around Queentia's wrists and neck, leaving her unable to stand. Her eyes watered as the air became thinner and thinner with each tightening grip, and it helped little that the once gentle light of the rift had illuminated brightly so.

"Unhand her!" yelled Certus, reaching for the short sword in his scabbard. He lunged for the rift with one solid strike, a strike of uncertainty but of passion too.

“No, Certus, don’t—” she choked out, but the protest was useless as Certus’ blade struck her elemental captor, quickly erasing all semblance of the world around them.

When their eyes finally reset, and life was breathed back into the space between them, Queentia and Certus saw only one thing still – a void of pure white. But their forms and apparel had not changed, nor had they grown miraculously younger or full of a divine peace. They felt not the calling of a great deity to bring them home.

“It’s not heaven... right?” asked Queentia.

“No... no, I don’t believe it to be, no.”

Queentia paused for a moment, glancing down at their feet. “Shoes.”

“What?”

She chuckled. “My mother... she used to always say that on the first day in heaven, you’d step out onto *white clouds, barefoot*.” Certus too glanced at his feet, chuckling. “Unless she made it all up.”

“A parent, lie to their child?” he said, sarcastically. “Perish the thought.” But Certus’ chuckles soon subsided as he looked into the horizon, a worried look dawning under his eyes like the setting of a newborn sun. “No, I truly don’t think this to be heaven.”

Catching his stare, Queentia turned to look and saw a sight that erased all empyrean aesthetic of this strange place. In the distance lay miles of tombstones – some old and enshrined in moss, some new, some grand and towering, some small. It was amusing how a company of inanimate stones could have that effect on the animate. She stifled a gasp with her hand, and her body sunk as if the invisible rod keeping her spine upright turned to dust.

“Which one is your favourite?” said a third voice. Queentia and Certus jumped, not out of their skin but physically, nonetheless. Behind them was a man in the recognisable but threadbare costume of a crow. A floppy black beak hung over his otherwise unremarkable face, which grinned kindly.

The rest downwards was a mess of overlapping stray feathers, complete with the odd splash of blood red or a crumb of old food. “I favour 228B, myself. A fitting testament to your childhood, Lady Queentia.”

“A fitting... huh?”

“Your childhood. Maybe it’s the nostalgic in me,” said the crow man, chuckling, “but there really is such ambition in the mind of the adolescent, eh?”

Confused, Queentia shot a look at Certus and then back at the crow man. “Could you start talking sense?”

“Ooh, sharp, I don’t like it. Not at all. But I forgive you – after all, none who enter the Cimeterium Somnia are usually receptive to warm welcomes.”

Certus raised an eyebrow. “The Cimeterium Somnia?”

The crow man hesitated, eyeing both of them with a bird-like caution. “How, uh... how did you come to this realm, hm?”

Neither Certus nor Queentia answered the crow man’s question, and in a flurry, he ran off into the distance, billowing cloak of feathers moving about with every gallop.

“What do we do?!” asked Certus in a panic.

“I suppose we follow him?”

“Sounds good to me!”

And so, the two travellers bolted off in pursuit of the crow man, running over the smooth white hills with ease – this was a far cry from the rocky moors they trekked upon in their homeland, and therefore much less fuss indeed. It wasn’t long before they caught up to him.

“Drat... draaaaaaat!” he yelled, glancing over his shoulder to see the two trespassers grow larger and larger in his beak-obscured vision. He spread his fake wings like a man crucified and began to flap wildly.

“C’MON, YOU BASTARD, LET ME SOAR!” He did not soar, instead tumbling down the ivory mound with quite some abandon.

Queentia and Certus slowed their pace as they approached the man in his defeated state.

Panting in agony and holding his side tenderly, he glanced at the two with frustration.

“Look what you’ve done now... twats...”

“Hey, you chose to run, bud,” said Certus, helping the man up.

“Fair. That’s fair. You’re a very fair man,” he said, regaining his composure. “But you shouldn’t be here! It’s not right, there is... an order to these proceedings.”

“What proceedings? What is this place?” asked Queentia.

The crow man looked up at the woman and sighed. “We’d best talk in my nest.”

The trio wandered for a few miles, trekking over the smooth and undamaged white hills of the wonderful and worrisome realm they had found themselves in. At a certain point, it felt as if there would never be an end to this ivory void, but Queentia and Certus wandered all the same.

“Do you have a name, sir?” she asked.

“Corvus.”

Certus squinted. “Wait, in the old tongue, that’s—”

“*Crow*, yes, I know, I didn’t plan on that happening, lucky coincidence so let’s leave it at that.”

Queentia eyed Corvus with intrigue. “Well, that leads me onto my next question—”

“Why the crow costume?”

“Yeah, why the crow costume?”

Corvus sighed, rolling his eyes like a corrupt general asked to explain his war crimes. “Have you never heard of *Avis Caterva*?! The *Avian Knights*?! The *Battle of the Fishless Fjord* and the heroes of the slightly watery ground?!” The two shrugged with a pitying glance. “Gods... we’re a group of Avian enthusiasts who don the feathers of beasts mightier than we to serve a greater cause.”

Before either of them could even fathom a good question to ask for the purpose of elaboration, Corvus pointed to something in the horizon.

As they walked closer, the two saw it to be a large and mighty redwood tree that seemed to be flipped vertically so that its trunk and roots stretched out aimlessly into the clear pale sky.

“C’mon!” said Corvus, waving them into a small opening in the bushy folds of the tree’s crowded growth of branches and leaves. As they entered, they found a diminished but cosy quarters within the tree. Fairy lights, tablecloths, a record player spinning the records of an unknown artist, the works. Noticing their unease, Corvus pulled out some small wooden stools and smilingly beckoned for the two to sit.

Queentia smiled politely as she glanced around the odd abode, taking in all of the various knickknacks and strange adornments that made up the crow man’s life. Certus felt less impressed.

“Okay, so... why are you, of all people, here?”

“I assume you want to know where here is, first.”

“We’ll get to that,” said Certus, leaning forward and eyeing Corvus with intrigue.

“I was... reprimanded, let’s say,” said Corvus in hushed tones, looking down at the floor with mild embarrassment.

“What for?”

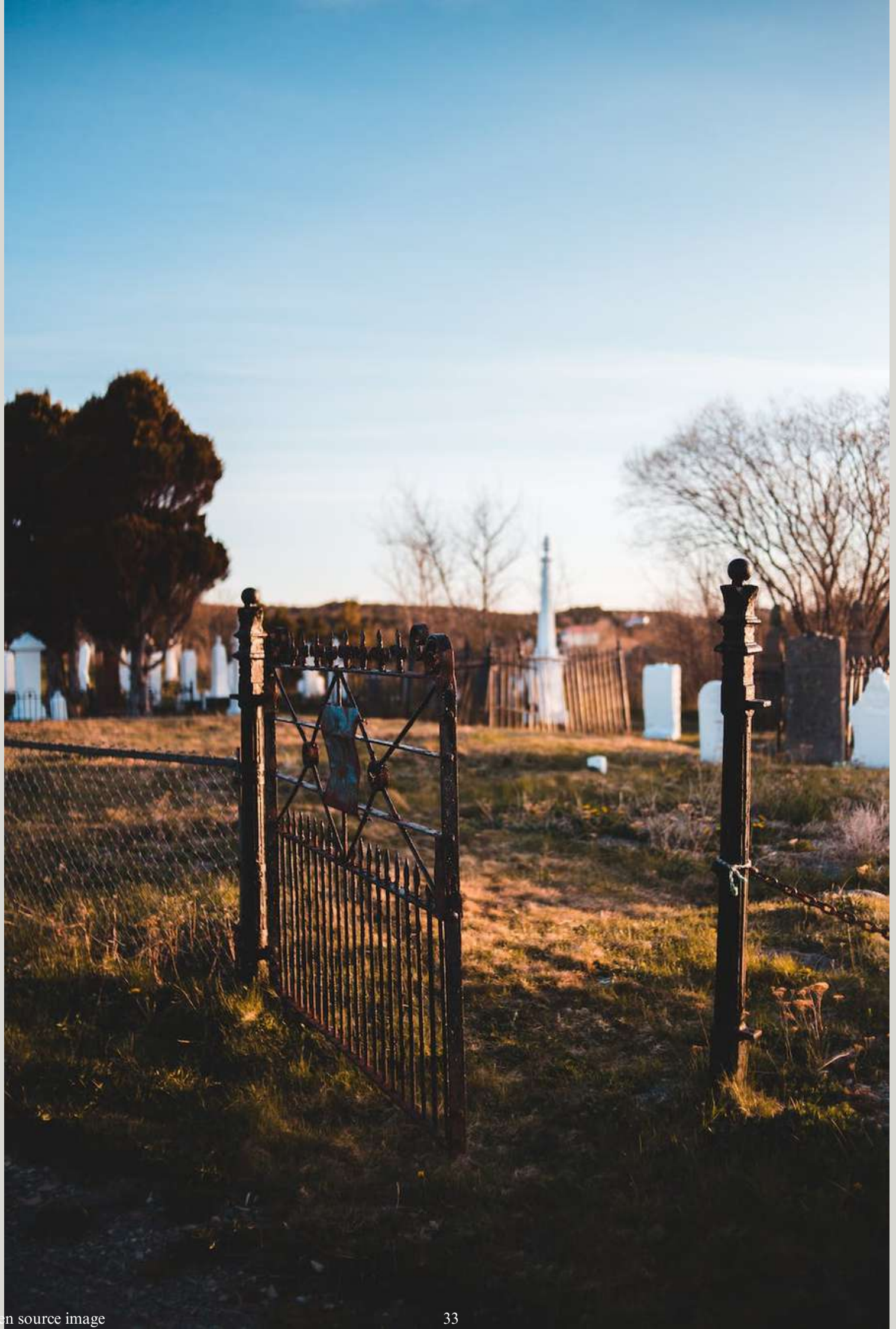
Corvus tutted. “I... sacrificed a swan.” Queentia and Certus weren’t quite sure they heard the man right, but their faces became intensely shaky as they tried to fight the blossoming laughter. “And apparently, the swan is a sacred bird even *outside* of modern-day England, so... here we are.”

Queentia breathed deeply and stared at the floor, attempting to calm herself. “You... sacrificed a swan?”

“Did you think it would give you powers, or?” added Certus.

“I DON’T KNOW... I... I was fairly high on moondust, it’s not... it’s not important.” Corvus too calmed himself. “Anyway, the rest of the Avis Caterva sold me down the river like a dead swan, which is ironic, frankly, because we never even used the river.”

“And you were sent here?” said Queentia.



“Yes! To guard the Cimeterium Somnia! In all of its... dull, dullness.” Certus grew slightly frustrated. “Okay, can you *please* tell us what the Cimeterium Somnia is?! Why are we here, how do we get out, what’s the tombstone business all about?!”

Corvus paused, glancing at both of them carefully and solemnly. “The Cimeterium Somnia is where dreams go to die.”

The two looked concerned, but mostly puzzled. For what was a grand revelation, it really only raised more questions.

“Whose dreams?” asked Queentia.

“It’s unique to all who visit it. ‘Cept me, of course, I achieved all of my dreams,” said Corvus, smugly grinning.

“Your dream of wearing a crow costume and killing swans?” asked Certus.

“I NEVER SAID THEY WERE BIG DR—” Corvus sighed and held the bridge of his nose to regain composure. “That’s neither here nor there – they’re your dreams, the two of you, so let’s just leave it at that, alright?”

Queentia stroked her chin and appeared introspective. This was not the destination she envisioned, but in her eyes, all of life was but a lesson. Why would she come to this place? “So... what do we do here?”

Reaching for a flagon on his shelf, Corvus shrugged. “Whatever comes to mind, I suppose...” He took a large sip of whatever was inside.

Queentia looked at Certus. “I think I have an idea as to why we’re here.”

“What’s that?”

“Cert, do you know why I asked you to accompany me on this adventure?”

“Yeah, you stink at killing things and I’ve got like five years of sword training.”

She rolled her eyes. “No, genuinely. I wanted you to experience everything that I experienced. See all the wonders that this weird little world of ours has to offer.”

“Tia, we’re in an upside-down tree with a man dressed like a crow.”

She stood up in excitement, passion rushing through each word.

“Exactly! How could anyone have predicted we’d be in a scenario like this one? This is life, Cert. I don’t know how we’ll get out of this place, but I know I’ll remember it.” She glanced at Corvus. “I will remember it, right?”

Corvus frowned. “How would I know? I’ve never left this shithole.”

She groaned. “Either way... what if we’re here to uncover all the dreams you left behind, Cert?”

Certus too rose to his feet, not in excitement but a passionate stance, nonetheless. “Woah, woah, okay... why are you acting like none of them belong to you?”

“That’s not what I’m saying!” she said, trying to neutralise his frustration. “It’s just... maybe this place is meant to motivate you to dream big.”

Certus chuckled sardonically. “I wasn’t an imaginative child, but I definitely never thought the height of motivation to be a never-ending grave.”

“Okay but... if I’m right?” she asked, grinning at him like a frog kid trying to score a second heaping of fly-ce cream (patent pending).

Corvus remained silent but eyed the two of them intently, enjoying what very little conflict he had seen in years that wasn’t just him being attacked by a real murder of crows.

Certus thought for a second and sighed. “Fine. We’ll go back to the sodding graveyard – but no uplifting speeches about destiny!” he said, pointing demonstratively at Queentia.

The walk back to the graveyard felt much quicker now that they knew the way. And although the more confident of the two beforehand, Certus walked with lead in his shoes. He wondered if she was right, if he had put more dreams to rest than he could remember. Even living only a short time in this world, he had made choices. And with every new choice, a new definitive path to walk.

He then wondered if there were graveyards all across the multiverse for every single decision never made. What a truly bleak sight that might be in its entirety.

Looking back at Certus' expression of barely-masking-inner-turmoil, Queentia felt a twinge of guilt. Had she been too harsh in suggesting that he never dreamed big? She spent so much time envisioning her own grandiose future that maybe there'd always be a bias in how she saw others. Maybe that was unfair, she thought.

Corvus, however, strutted happily without a thought in his feathered head. What a lovely day it was to visit the graveyard. "You know, I do miss the Old World from time to time." The two did not look at him nonplussed. "Okay, okay, all of the time." He shook his head in amusement. "Oh dear... I used to start my mornings on patrol in the Field of Stoics, just near the continent of Whorish Enterprise."

"The *what?*" asked Queentia.

"Yeah, a grand old time that was," he continued, ignoring her. "And my friend Larus, she used to carry this mighty—" he stretched out his arms as wide as they could go, "—Warhammer, scared us half to death it did." He chuckled nostalgically and smiled in a way that the two hadn't seen previously.

"Did you have a weapon?" asked Certus.

Corvus shook his head vehemently. "Oh no, no, not me. Never been much of the fighting type." Queentia nodded in agreement. "Once dicked around with a slingshot, but the only thing I had to aim at was birds... felt a bit wrong, if truth be told."

"I think we're here, again," said Queentia, looking over the ice-white horizon to the all-too-familiar sight of a million tombstones, spanning all the way to where the white of the ground and the white of the sky met in harmony.

"Not quite like returning to a cosy, warm house after a long day, is it?" asked Certus, feeling that lead become a little bit heavier with each mournful step.

Once they could go no further without tasting stone, they found that the graveyard was enclosed by a tall onyx gate, with each finial taking the shape of a large human eye that appeared to be both open and closed depending on how one looked at it.

“Strange, I didn’t see this before,” said Queentia, prodding the railing with her finger to test if it was an illusion.

Corvus tapped a finial with one of his artificial talons. “The Gates of Morpheus... designed to protect the tombstones from dreamoulds, I believe.”

“Dreamoulds?” asked Certus.

“Metaphysical vermin that feast on the corpses of dreams.”

Queentia shuddered at the thought of such a parasitic nuisance, even if what they devoured had no effect on her own being. “So how do we get in?”

“Close your eyes – you can’t dream with your eyes open, after all.”

The two followed his instructions and shut their eyes, almost hoping that this experience itself was a dream. But then, what kind of a story would that be?

Once they had opened their eyes, it seemed as if no time had passed at all, yet both felt a slumbering weight like they had been asleep for a millennia. It felt like entering a new day in a new world. Which was accurate, as the first thing either noted was that the once ethereal white realm was replaced with a crowded sea of mingling greys, with clouds fighting furiously overhead. No longer was there silence, either – a rustling and uneasy wind carried over them before it was deftly undercut by the infrequent yet terrifying boom of a far-off thunder. The all-encompassing silver light they had quickly grown accustomed to had faded severely to a mere twinkle that only illuminated the outlines of their forms and nothing more.

“It’s a bit shit here, isn’t it?” asked Certus.

“Just a bit...” said Queentia, wandering around and getting a feel for the place. “And I thought the tombstones looked bleak before.”

Corvus unsheathed a large wooden staff from beneath his feathered cloaks and struck the end of it with his talons.

There bloomed a bright blue flame that gave much life back to their surroundings, although it seemed to dwindle even by the second. “All yours, travellers.”

Watching his step, Certus inched nervously towards the first tombstone he saw. He knelt down on the coarse and cold ground in front and, seeing that the stone was covered by a layer of soot, attempted to wipe it clean with his sleeve. But it didn’t change, revealing nothing of this dead dream and all that led to its downfall.

“Uh, it’s not showing me anything. Does it need your flame?”

“Shouldn’t do...” said Corvus, who walked over and inspected it with his keen almost-avian sight. “I think this is one of yours,” he said, looking behind to Queentia.

“Oh... alright,” she said, walking over nervously. Taking Certus’ place – who seemed to breathe with a sigh of relief as he stood - she too wiped the tombstone with her fingerless glove. This time, the ash disappeared with ease.

“There we go,” said Corvus with an almost sinister smile.

“What does it say?” asked Certus.

She looked intensely at the face of the stone, trying to decipher its inscription. “It doesn’t... it’s not *words*, exactly, it’s a sort of... drawing.” The indentations seemed to animate with each glance, taking the rough but remarkable form of a young girl with a tiara of some sort placed atop her tiny head. “It’s a princess. I remember this; I wanted to be a princess when I was young.” As it faded with each word, her voice was mixed with both a semblance of happiness and a twinge of sadness. Her childhood was spent engaging in works of fantasy, and her favourite characters in those works seemed always to be the plucky young princesses who fought both mighty beasts and mighty gender barriers.

“Touch it,” said Corvus, to which Queentia glanced back nervously.

“Go on, it’s alright.”

She reached her gloved hand slowly, trembling with each extension of the muscle. As her bare fingers made contact with the dirtied stone, she once again felt her essence travelling beyond that which her limited consciousness could comprehend, and she was transported through both space *and* time.

Queentia felt herself step into a form that had become a near stranger to her, the form of a young girl, no older than a squire. The world seemed much bigger to her at this height, and all its surroundings much more engrossing. After all, who wouldn't forget what it was like to be an ant looking upon a leaf?

She looked around and noticed instinctively the room which she'd grown up in. A small circular enclosure with dark wooden floors and archaic stone walls – which were plastered in adornments of all variety – and above it all, a glass skylight that let in both cloud and star, depending on when one was to look up and admire them.

Gentle tears dropped as she scanned her surroundings with a nostalgic bittersweetness, a pain from which nestled deep in her heart. Life was so simple back then, so few things to consider and an unclouded lens to view the world with. Life was so free.

“Queentia!” yelled a light and feminine voice from another room – her mother, Claustra, she remembered. “Are you ready yet?”

She moved desperately to prepare herself for her lessons with the arch-tutor, but in all the years since she had forgotten where her things were kept. Before she figured it out, her mother entered the room, a frantic fury making up her face.

“Tia, you were supposed to be ready, mummy's not got long to take you to school before she has to ride south.” The ride south. Of course. The day in which her mummy died. She hadn't even connected those dots in her head, what with the shock of being transported backwards through time. This wasn't something she expected to encounter on any day, let alone this one.

Claustra pointed at the tiara on Queentia's head, which she'd only just realised was there. "What are you doing with that on? It's not time for pretend, Tia, take it off."

Queentia slowly removed the tiara, tears still welling up in her eyes. "Oh, hells..." said Claustra, running her hand frustratedly through her long locks of ebony hair. She crouched down to meet her daughter's height. "I'm sorry for being so impatient, today's just not a day that mummy's looking forward to all that much if truth be told." Queentia looked up at her, doe-eyed, taking in the marks of an aged woman carrying a heavy burden much more than she ever had as a young 'un. She could see quite clearly the bags under her bloodshot eyes, and the way she hunched herself over like someone had taken a crowbar to her spine.

"I'm sorry," said Queentia, unable to find more words than just that. Claustra took them in her arms, holding them firmly and with much compassion. "Oh, sweet child... I wish you were a princess too. You'd be so wonderful." She planted a gentle kiss on her daughter's forehead, which felt like it lasted an eternity to Queentia.

And in the blink of less than an eternity, she returned.

Upon re-entering the Cimeterium Somnia, Queentia fell to her knees, regaining the tears of her younger self and letting them flow much more heavily than she would have in the company of her mother. "I can't—" she choked, "I can't do this."

Certus too fought back tears as he felt the pain of her essence emanate, infesting all others with its corrosive cocktail of cerebral chemicals. Without saying a word, he crouched down in front of her and rested his hand on her weary shoulder. "Take us back," he said to Corvus, his face more serious than anyone might have seen before.

"Not yet," he replied blankly.

Certus got to his feet and stormed angrily towards Corvus. "YOU TAKE US BACK! NOW! NO MORE OF THIS!"

Corvus cowered from his fearsome resolve but did not change his tone.

“I wish it were as simple as that, I truly do... but the lesson has not sunk in!”

“What... what lesson?”

“You wouldn’t understand, Certus,” he said, meeting his stare of condemnation with a glance of pity. “You’re not like us.”

“Us?”

“Us dreamers.” Corvus walked several paces and sat down on the cold, dark ground, facing the sea of tombstones before him. “When I was young, do you know what I wanted to be?” Certus said nothing, only shaking his head slightly. “A knight.” Corvus chuckled to himself. “I read up on the greats, I trained hard, and against my entire family’s wishes, I went off to the Great Pavilion to make the next step towards my goal. I was laughed out of there faster than you could *blink*. They didn’t care how much I wanted it, how much I had... sacrificed.”

His voice flooded with vitriol, which spat out with every syllable. “I couldn’t stand the thought that I wasn’t good enough. Every night I’d read out the names of those knights before I slept, cursing their very lives and praying that I’d get my moment to make good of my name, to prove them *wrong*. And when I found the Avis Caterva, I felt... vindicated.” He sighed deeply, becoming lost in his own story of the past. “They didn’t care how strong I was, or how noble... they looked at me for what I was.”

Corvus stood up and turned back to face them, his glance fixed on Queentia. “I’ve had a lot of time to think, being stranded in this place with no company. And I’ve come to realise one thing.”

“What’s that?” asked Certus, eyeing the crow man with a bitter distrust.

“That us dreamers have to be resilient and allow our dreams to die from time to time. And it *hurts*, Certus. It’s like setting free a part of yourself, even when you know that it’s going to waste away with nobody to help it.”

“And that’s your purpose here, yeah?” said Certus, his nostrils flaring with indignation.

“Punish others because they need to learn how futile it all is?”

“Not punish...” replied Corvus, no hint of malice in his voice. He looked at the tombstones around them. “Enlighten. Queentia was wrong, the majority of dead dreams aren’t yours. They’re hers.”

They both looked to Queentia, whose tears had finally stopped streaming. She remained on the ground, glancing down at the miserable dirt beneath her and appearing more broken than Certus had ever seen her. “Take us back. I get it, I know now. But take us back.”

The chamber they had found the rift in felt much less exciting now that the rift had closed. Virtually no time had passed in the real world, but to them it did not feel like returning to that same moment. Maybe they weren’t even the same people as the ones that had entered the purple hole to another dimension. Or maybe they were and could finally show it.

Queentia regained her footing and wiped the tears from beneath her eyes. She walked to the small window in the opening of the stone brick wall and glanced at the endless fields of normal green and skies of regular blue with an empty heart.

“Hey, look...” said Certus, putting a hand on her back. “All of that shit... it doesn’t mean anything.”

“No... it does.”

“Why?”

“Because... he’s right. If you dream big, then you set yourself up to fall big.”

“That’s no reason not to aim for something you want, though!”

“No, I know. I don’t think it’s really changed anything. I’m just sorry I judged you for wanting different things.”

Certus smiled. “I wish I could have your mindset, y’know?”

“No you don’t,” she replied, chuckling and shaking her head.

“I do! I mean it is a bit boring, living in the same place and doing the same thing your ancestors did.”

“I wouldn’t say that...” She wrapped her arm around Certus’ shoulder and together, they looked out at the horizon with a newfound appreciation for the world they knew both so much and so very little about. Their futures, although disparate, seemed hopeful despite all they had come to witness of the past. After all, only one was set in stone.

They saw no more of the crow man. And they’d never see him again. But the things he said in that pitiful, hopeless graveyard stuck with them for years to come. Neither knew if the path ahead of them would be different because of it. Neither knew for sure if they were ever meant to be in the Cimeterium Somnia in the first place. But each developed an appreciation for what life must be like to give yourself to a dream, or to take comfort in the life you already had.

Headspace

Written by: Amy Worgan

Edited by: Roos van der Velden

In the hush of the classroom, her gaze drifted –
away from group exercises, teen angst, dirty windows,
away from facts she will forget or never use,
away from friendships making and breaking,
away from where any of that matters,

she found herself swimming amongst lavender skies
in Saturn's hexagon,
in swirling pools of space dust

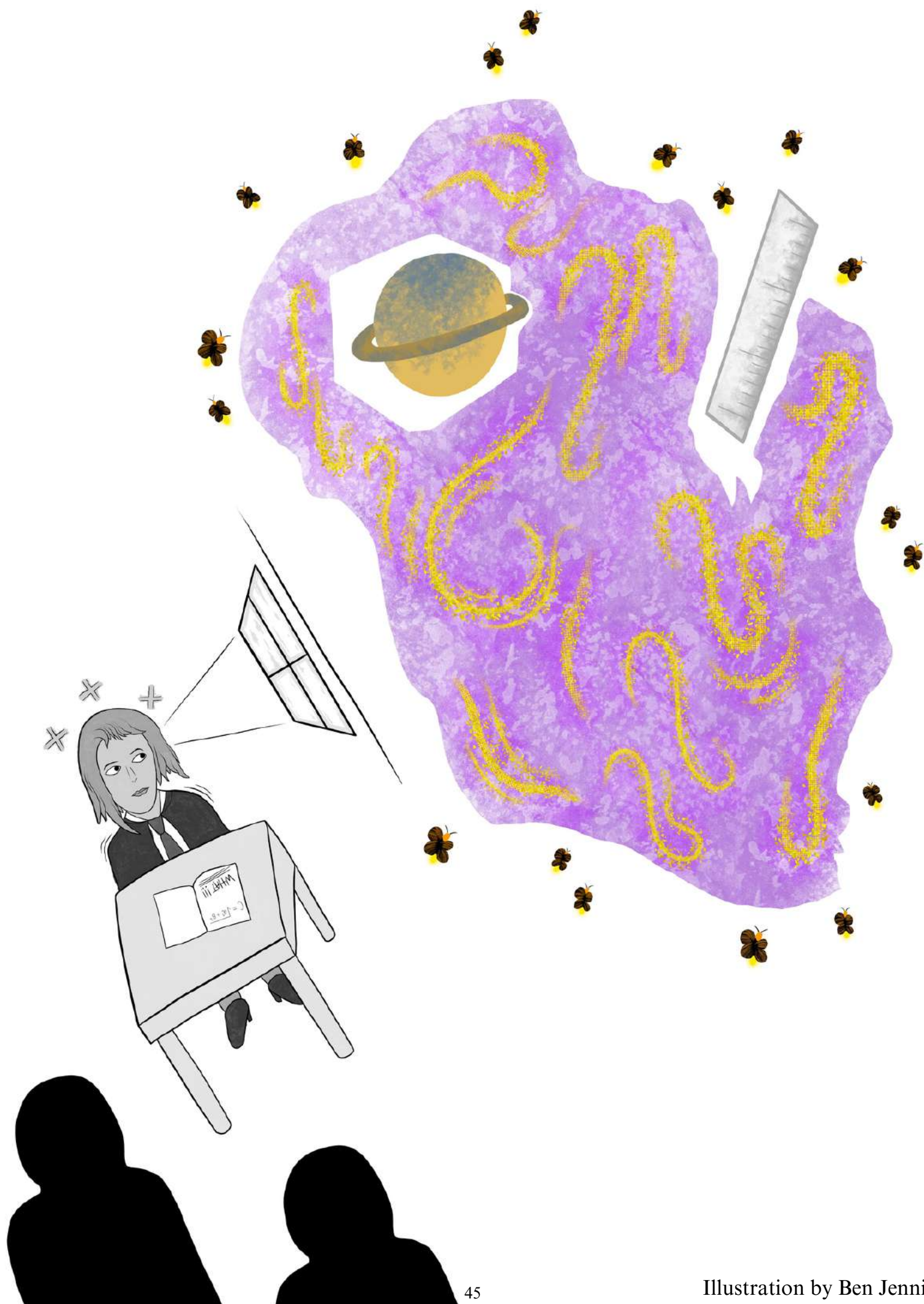
this glittering void kept her sane -
golden fireflies of the constellations
silent witnesses in her quest for space.

the cosmos doesn't file when you smile with too much teeth
or when your tender human shoulders might distract prying boys.

she could live here anaerobically, if only during classes
looking down on the blue dot that used to contain her.

A ruler, plastic, sharp and loud.
Daydreams can't last forever.

Welcome back to reality.



Cherry blossom apple pie

Written by: Roos van der Velden

Edited by: Sharmin Ahmed

‘Miss Dazzle?’

I turn around, champagne glass still lifted in the air. Johanna, head doctor of the sickbay that caters to six-hundred universes, stands in the doorway of the ballroom. In her hospital uniform she looks rather out of place between all the glitter and gold and expensive gowns.

I have to give it to Johanna, she knows how to pick her moments to enter. Like, in the middle of important, official speeches. The whole room has their eyes on me when I giggle nervously and ask, ‘what is it, Johanna?’

She sighs. ‘You must come with me immediately, Miss Dazzle.’

I lower my glass. A waiter quickly takes it from me. ‘Is something wrong with Ronald or Ban?’ I can’t think of any other reason why I, the janitor of all people, would be called for a medical emergency during something important.

Johanna crosses her arms behind her back while I walk closer. ‘Both Ronald and Ban are sick with a virus they probably caught while on mission with you,’ she explains. ‘Therefore, it is quite likely you are sick as well. You need to be examined and, if necessary, operated on immediately.’

I am well aware of the deadly silence in the room behind me. The people (it’s mostly people in this universe. People with skin, eye and hair colors in every shade of the rainbow, but people) glance at each other. Some of them sip their drinks nervously. No, this is not really the happy ‘welcome to our cluster of universes’ party any longer. My ball gown feels heavy and tacky, all of a sudden. ‘Johanna, what-’

She smiles, which makes crows’ feet appear by her eyes. ‘Follow me, Miss Dazzle.’

I nod, feeling rather numb.

I take one look over my shoulder and the crowd of confused and scared party guests look back. Then, Johanna puts a hand on my shoulder and takes me through a stream of light to the sickbay. I have gotten used to the sickbay, but objectively speaking, it's a strange place. There is a large, white waiting room where everyone comes in. From this room, doors lead seemingly everywhere, and doctors and patients of all shapes, sizes, colors and materials hang around until they know where to go or where to take their patients. Johanna is the one making sense of it all. The way I am a janitor of the multiverse, taking care of its every calamity, she is the director of the hospital, taking care of its every calamity — on top of being a doctor as well.

Without Johanna, I'm afraid we'd all crumble. Literally. There has got to be a place where that's a disease.

She takes me to a bed on wheels, which has a few of the nurses already crowded around it. Hospital scrubs are laying on the bed and the nurses start helping me out of my gown, shoes and fancy hair-do and into the scrubs.

'What is the issue?' I ask Johanna as we roll down an endless hallway. She winks and takes a left turn to I don't know where. One of the nurses answers in her place: 'We are going to make a radio scan of your lungs to check for Tauw,' she says.

'Táuw?' I swallow. 'Like, the black slime in your lungs that eventually slips into your blood vessels, that Tauw?'

'There is no other type of Tauw,' another nurse says. 'So yes, that one. The goldmine you, Mr. Ban and Mr. Ronald were in during your mission probably had traces of it in it. First, we'll scan you.'

I take a deep breath as I lie down on my bed. 'If I do have it...' I began, 'we should have everyone who was in the ballroom tested as well.'

'We don't have to mingle into universes,' the first nurse says.

'We do if we are the one bringing an illness there,' I say dryly, before I am wheeled into a scanning chamber.

I see it in their faces before the nurses say anything. I sigh.

‘Surgery it is, then?’

‘Ban and Ronald are already recovering,’ Johanna says. She is wearing the outfit of a surgeon now. No clue where she found the time to change.

The bed is wheeled down yet another series of hallways, into yet another room. An operating theater this time. I close my eyes as they lower the bed and start preparing everything that needs to be prepared. When all is ready, Johanna touches my cheek. ‘Sedative,’ she says.

‘Open your mouth. Just a few drops should be enough.’

I don’t feel like opening my eyes for it. A honey-like substance drips into my throat.

‘What does it taste like?’ Johanna asks, while I feel like the steady ground falls away under me. There is no more substance around me; there is only a greenish color, like the color of willows reflecting in the lake on a fifteen degrees September day. I think I smile as my arms go limp, but I’m not sure.

‘What did that taste like?’ Johanna (*I think?*) asks again, from a far-away distance.

‘Like...’ the honey she means, no? I see trees, and pie hanging from them. What did it taste like? My feet are on the soft grass and the sky is a lovely shade of the pink and blue you find in the baby corner of a candy shop. It smells like a sweet popcorn store, but a haunted one, like something from the 1800s.

‘Miss Dazzle? Dawn? What did that taste like?’

A soft hand on my forehead. ‘Like...’ I take a deep breath. I see the lamps of the operating theater, and then the butterfly-pastel skies.

‘Apple blossom... cherry pie...’ I mutter.

‘Sleep tight, dream safe,’ Johanna says. I hear her and the nurses murmur among themselves, but I can’t hear what they are talking about. Birds are singing and the crickets on their backs are chirping high up in the purple and red and HP-scale coloured sky. I fall down in the cool, velveteen grass, close my eyes and sigh.

When I reopen my eyes, I am under water, yet I can still breathe.



The water is an unnatural tint of blue, like the gowns of dentist assistants.

'Or like the light they all had in their eyes, like fire in the lamps of fairies.

I bring my head above the water. I see spheres of fire, or it looks like fire, but rather it's electricity. They zap and thunder, and before my eyes, their sparks touch each other and they intertwine. I sink a little below the water and find that I can't get back up. The spheres turn into a single white ring, which disappears as the water ebs away. I find myself standing on sandy concrete, with the rosy-magenta sky stretching above me.

Magenta, I think. There is a lot of magenta here. I look around, to see if I can find Ban and Ronald anywhere. It's magenta, I want to tell them. We need to figure out why it's magenta.

But they aren't here, and I feel like I am being pushed back, like a hand pressed against my forehead is trying to stop me from walking away.

Above my head, the sky turns to sand and the floor muddies black.

I try to breathe, but a sandstorm of gold takes the air away. I reach for my throat and try to push away, but there is only more sand, and it envelopes my body. It tickles, but it doesn't hurt. It feels like it is scraping off my skin, but it doesn't hurt.

When the golden sand is gone, I am left standing in a simple, white dress, in a high, empty marble tomb. I can see the sides, but I can't see all the way up to the ceiling. It's too dark.

I take a few steps. On the walls, feverish flowers start to grow in the five plus two colors of the rainbow.

The flowers creep higher and higher and sprout from the wall to the middle of the tomb, until they grow everywhere but in a small circle around my feet. Sunflowers as big as the king's cat turn their faces my way and smile.

I feel happyish. Afraid, maybe. Weird, but it's normal. I keep walking, through the forest of flowers around me. Up ahead, there is still nothing but cold, marble darkness, even if the plants shed a light that allows me to see the ceiling.

It's the ceiling of a cathedral, but instead of warm and golden, it's white and cold. Busts of angels hang from the ceiling, and I can't say if I find them comforting or predatory. I hear the screeches of eagles and flapping wings. I stop looking up, crouch down and continue my way over the green moss, unsure of how long it is going to take. Something tugs at my chest. The taste of metal pierces my mouth for just a moment.

Another screeching eagle. The light seizes and flickers on again. Flapping wings. Voices singing, like fiery angels, but I don't think they're demons.

I try to keep myself from falling onto the ground, but eventually my arms give in. I fall down, and my arms and head slip through the floor. I find myself looking at the flowery room from up above, among the angels. They don't look at me, but I can feel they don't like an imposter among them.

I kick with my legs until I fall from the ceiling. I'm not afraid of falling, I've never been afraid of falling. I like falling. It's better than flying, it doesn't take any steering. What I don't like is the army of angels trying to stop me from falling. I scream at the feathers and red spatters and black cobwebs falling down around me, as something scratches my back.

I end up falling, luckily, through the sunflowers, into a world of blue, with clouds made of glass.

There is nothing to hold onto. I keep falling, falling, falling, until I land onto a big, glass cloud, which bounces me gently.

I look around. The other clouds are diamond-cut-crystal-clear. This one is filled with a purple gas, or something like that, fabric maybe, or flapping butterflies.

There are tubes which lead inside. I slide towards one, not entirely of my own will — more like I am pushed forward by something, the dull part of a knife or a pair of scissors — and drop down into the purple.... It's soft, that's all I know. Soft, and it passes me from purple wave to violet fold, as I sink in, deeper and deeper.

The purple turns a deeper color too. It feels like someone cut into my dress and tore it off, leaving only a sheen. The purple has turned to black which then turned to burgundy, and I hang unsuspended but stable.

A little bit of gas enters my mouth. In an instant, I see the blue operating lights, the nurses and Johanna tugging at me and pressing down on me, and the open wound on my chest.

‘What does it taste like,’ Johanna asks, calmly, kindly. Another drop. More red, and purple, and black, and I feel safe, in my cocoon of many colors.

‘What does it taste like, Dawn?’ You had such a beautiful answer, just now.’

Taste? I don’t really taste. I see colors and I feel cold, smooth silk, maybe velvet. The glass around me, I see, and a bit of the bluest sky outside...

‘Dawn.’ Now I taste something. Right, it was something. What was it again? ‘Cherry blossom apple pie,’ I mumble. ‘They had the trees... over there. Not here. There is only red and purple and silk... here.’ ‘Good.’ And I don’t hear her again.

I wake up with a massive headache and a pain in my chest, lying down upon a wad of pillows, under a thin blanket. In front of me, I see two other beds, set up in such a way that the three beds form a triangle.

‘That’s the fifth time they’ve put us up like this now,’ I hear Ban say. I twist my tired head towards his voice. I see a blurry image of black hair, pale skin and blue fabric. That should be him.

‘Like what?’ I try to say, but it comes out as ‘whick aht.’ My mouth is drier than the sandstorm I saw.

‘Dawnie is awake too,’ Ban mutters.

‘Owny bawnie.’

‘I don’t understand anything, Dee, but I’ll take your word for it.’

‘Mwa.’ I yawn and it hurts like a truck hitting me.

‘To fill you in, Dawn,’ I hear Ronald say in his cool voice,

‘We’ve all just had surgery to remove a string of Tauw. It’s gone now, but they are also testing everyone in the ballroom you were in.’

‘Un et cam frun teh mines,’ I mumble, getting slightly more understandable.

‘Miss Dawn? Are you awake?’ A nurse walks in. She hands me a cup of water. I gulp it down before she can say another word.

‘It came from the mines,’ I mumble. I think Ronald would nod if his head wasn’t hurting as much as mine.

‘Shitty stuff,’ Ban says as he pulls the blanket to his chin.

‘Thanks,’ I say to the nurse, as she hands me another cup of water.

‘In an hour, I’ll give you a check-up,’ she says. ‘Rest, for now.’ She smiles and walks off.

I sigh and look at Ban and Ronald. ‘Forced hour of quality time,’ I mumble.

‘Party,’ Ban replies. ‘My head hurts like hell.’

‘As do all our heads,’ Ronald says calmly. ‘Just give it a few hours.’

‘You’re even a stick-in-the-mud at pity parties,’ Ban snaps back.

‘Hey, guys,’ I say. ‘Important things first, for a bit.’

‘What important things?’

‘She wants to ask us what we dreamt, Ban.’

‘She can say that outright!’

‘Hey, quiet,’ I grumble. ‘For me it was a desert. Cathedral, with plants. Glass clouds.’

‘Underseas,’ Ban says. ‘No desert. Flood in the cathedral. Like... a ferryman, or something.’

‘Mystic rocks. Cathedral with mystic rocks. Dark kittens.’ Ronald pulls a face.

‘Sounds like sweet dreams, Ronald.’

‘Ban, if you say anything you aren’t asked to in the next five minutes, I’m going to strangle you, headache be damned.’

‘You can be so funny,’ Ban replies immediately. To his credit, Ronald doesn’t strangle him.

‘But cathedrals.’ I slowly close my eyes. ‘Gotta remember that.’

‘Or, well, it will just happen.’ Ban buries his head in his pillows. ‘We’ll have cathedrals in our missions, somewhere down the line.’ I blink. A world of purple, red and black particles flashes behind my eyes. ‘Isn’t it scary, sometimes? That the line between dream and reality ebs away the longer we do this job?’

‘That’s what you get for choosing to be the janitor to 273 universes,’ Ban replies.

‘Ronald, I’m helping you. But only after I take a nap.’ I close my eyes and, without even hearing the answer, fall into a dreamless sleep.

We three share a pair of blue eyes

Written by: Beth Norris
Edited by: Margarida Madeira

She gazes at me with a vacant stare,
eyes burning through me like we've never met.
She tilts her small head with unfamiliarity,
blind to the woman she hasn't become yet.

A doppelgänger doll lies rigid in her grip,
and the toy itself wields a paintbrush and pen.
The girl worships this figure like a crystal ball,
wondering if she'll be like it - and when?

There's nothing to occupy her limitless time,
but fabricating tales where her doll plays the lead.
The book of her life has empty pages to fill,
so she'll scribble a future where fantasy is freed.

She gazes at me with a vacant stare,
never knowing that she'll become me someday.
I hold neither a paintbrush, nor a pen,
and can't remember the last time I let myself play.

Then a quick, cool breath tickles my neck,
and a fragile hand holds my shoulder in care.
I recognise the ridges of the nails but now,
it's brown spots of age that these fingers bear.

The woman behind me cannot be seen.
I can't know my future, for fear of it fading.
But peace leaves her lungs and breathes through her smile,
as if to say, 'Trust me, you won't mind waiting.'

Her warmth tells me that she lived and loved.
Drifted to her dreams and bolted from nightmares.
It whispers, 'Fear not, your time will soon come.
You'll tread solid ground and breathe lighter airs.'

We three share a pair of blue eyes and a name,
and scribe several chapters of the story we own.
The beginning is written. The last page is set.
What a joy that the middle remains unknown.



40 winks of Orca whale

Written by: Alex McNeill

Edited by: Roos van der Velden

Yet another closing shift at work that has left an ill taste in my mouth. Not that anything bad happened, it was just so tedious it gave me an existential crisis. Having left the shop with such a negative attitude makes my ride home all the more sour. Thoughts are spinning around my head. I watch the snow chug down from the sky and form a thick layer on the tarmac. Considering it's July, it does take my mind off of things for a bit.

My small car struggles as I slowly and steadily plow through the white blanket. I understand living in Ireland means high chances of summer storms, but I had never imagined there might be snow during the summer.

As I focus on the road ahead of me, I notice something laying in the snow up ahead. At first I think it must be a dog that met an unfortunate end. As I get closer, I notice the object is much bigger than any dog can be. It's a large, round object, as pale as the snow it lays in. Perhaps it's just a heap of snow. it wouldn't take long for such a mountain of snow to gather on the road. Not to mention that I am the only one regularly going up- and down this remote road.

When I get even closer, I realize the snow around the object is speckled red.

My motor edges closer.

The objects mass increases in my field of view.

My eyes widen.

It's an Orca Whale.

My heart drops.

There is a wounded Orca Whale, right there, on the path.

Questions swirl around in my brain. I'm frozen still, clutching the wheel, gripping it forcefully while trying to comprehend what exactly I am looking at.

The mammal heaves with every breath it takes. Every time it exhales, crimson speckles fall onto the snow.

I can no longer sit frozen. I fling open the car door and jump into the snow. Within moments, my trainers are soaking wet.

I gaze down at the creature as it tries to look back at me. It blinks slowly. It breathes raggedly, but steadily.

I know I have to help her. Even though I don't know how to help others.

Somehow, I manage to haul the whale into the back of my car, laying her down on the backseat. I'll probably have to buy new ones, but it doesn't matter. It's worth it if it means saving the Orca Whale.

My heart beats in my throat the whole drive home. In the inside mirror, I can see one large, orca eye looking at me. In it I see misery, but also trust. It fuels a fire in my stomach that gives me the courage to drive on.

I manage to drag the orca from the back seat of my car and into the hallway, where I wrap it into a soft blanket. At this point, I am losing hope. Not in the orca so much, but in myself. I couldn't possibly do this all by myself. I can barely look after myself, never mind a dozen foot orca whale in my hallway. I held eye-contact with her as I think of what to do. Get out the first-aid kit? Pray? Call for help? It's trust in me never felt more misplaced.

I take out my mobile phone. The first person I try to reach is my mother. She picks up, and when I explain the situation to her all she says is: 'All you can do is be there for the Orca Whale.'

It stuns me. It seems so poor. Of course I would be there for the orca whale, what does she think I am doing right now?



I sit down next to where the orca whale is resting, trying to heal, surrounded by cotton. I sit by it and stroke it's head, over and over again, until it's eyes closed. I take a deep breath, and I weep.

I mourn so heavily for this animal. Even though I had known it only for a little while, that little while had been enough to create a thick bond. I cover my face with my hands and wept, wept over the majestic creature laying by my side. Sorrow gushes over my hands as I hold them against my eyes, like barriers to keep the floods of mourning in. All you can do is be there for it. And look where that brought me! The orca whale was so grand, so wonderful. It could have been saved, it could have lived on!

She was this huge beast with a titanic heart that I didn't understand but wanted to. But no, death has to come for everyone. Even when it's unfair.

I take my hands away from my face and rub the tears out of my eyes. To my surprise, what is laying on the floor is not an orca whale, but two plush lambs. One black, one white.

I reach out and hold them against my chest. It is as if I can feel the heart of Orca Whale beat against my own.

It's like I can feel the mighty organs thump inside of these little lambs. I find comfort in the fact that the orca whale is now immortalised in two plush lambs that I could keep with me forevermore. Almost as if she wants me to have these remnants of her soul. Despite her outstanding size, the Orca Whale had a good heart.

Why? I don't know. Maybe because the orca whale knows I would understand the meaning of her offer.

You can't always save everyone. Yet, you can be there for them. You can show even a stranger, even a gigantic orca whale, love. I saw that now, and I think it's what she would have wanted.

Inside

Written by: Yasmin Bligh-Hasan

Edited by: Margarida Madeira

A dream contains an internal thought
a matter felt, forgotten, or lost.
But beneath a dream's frivolous dance
lay truth, preserved by heart's frost.

Since childhood, the insomniac bounce
of sparkling dots behind my eyes
kept me curiously captured, travelling the
Fantastical Cosmos that reaches far, deep inside.

Nighttime's visions in the mind delicately play
like translucent frames of film, turning on repeat.
Imagination is incessant in dissecting them,
but sometimes capricious. Retreat!

Dreams are full of wondrous things,
full of risks you'd never dare to take.
Sometimes they can petrify,
like kissing (luscious) forbidden lips on a first forbidden date.

Often, they can be of an absurd, surrealist nature.
You awaken puffy-eyed and confused
from babbling in fluent gibberish, clutching your covers...
You were chased by a hysterical head of humanoid garlic!

Other nights you awaken drenched,
from your worst fears aroused like demonic pleasure.
Perhaps your teeth detached from your gums like rapid raindrops,
Or you were arrested for indecent exposure. *Naughty!*

However, the dreams we should cherish most
Come with a truly bittersweet, final farewell.
Those loved and those lost, those fluffy or not,
Want us to hold their hand (*or leash*) as they climb up Heaven's
stairwell.



**THE INSOMNIAC BOUNCE
OF SPARKLING DOTS
BEHIND MY EYES
KEPT ME CURIOUSLY
CAPTURED, TRAVELLING
THE FANTASTICAL
COSMOS THAT REACHES
FAR, DEEP INSIDE.**



The Dreamboat

Written by: Anastasia Arseniadou

Edited by: Isabella Frank

Xenia doesn't remember when she left her home, her city, her family and friends. It could have been years ago, it could also have been mere hours. Time passed differently on the Dreamboat, if it dared to pass at all. The other crewmates could feel time lingering in the air. On the boat, it was possible to feel many different senses. They could see beyond the most far away horizon, hear sounds from other planets, taste the salt in the air and the drops in the clouds, touch the rays of the sun, and smell time. Xenia would shrug her shoulders and beat her head to try and imagine what time would smell like. In spite of not knowing what it smelled like, Xenia could agree that it was impossible to measure it. In order to comprehend this, it's fundamental to understand what she was doing on the Dreamboat in the first place.

“The thing I touched, what is it?” Xenia asks the woman next to her on the railing.

She carefully gathers her eyes and looks at her, for the first time.

“A star.” She seems cautious. “You didn't swallow it, did you?”

“I don't... remember.” Xenia admits. “I guess not?”

The woman backs off and ignores her.

Why would she ask that? Did it matter if she ate the star? Xenia got more confused as the days went by. Xenia doesn't even remember when she left her home.

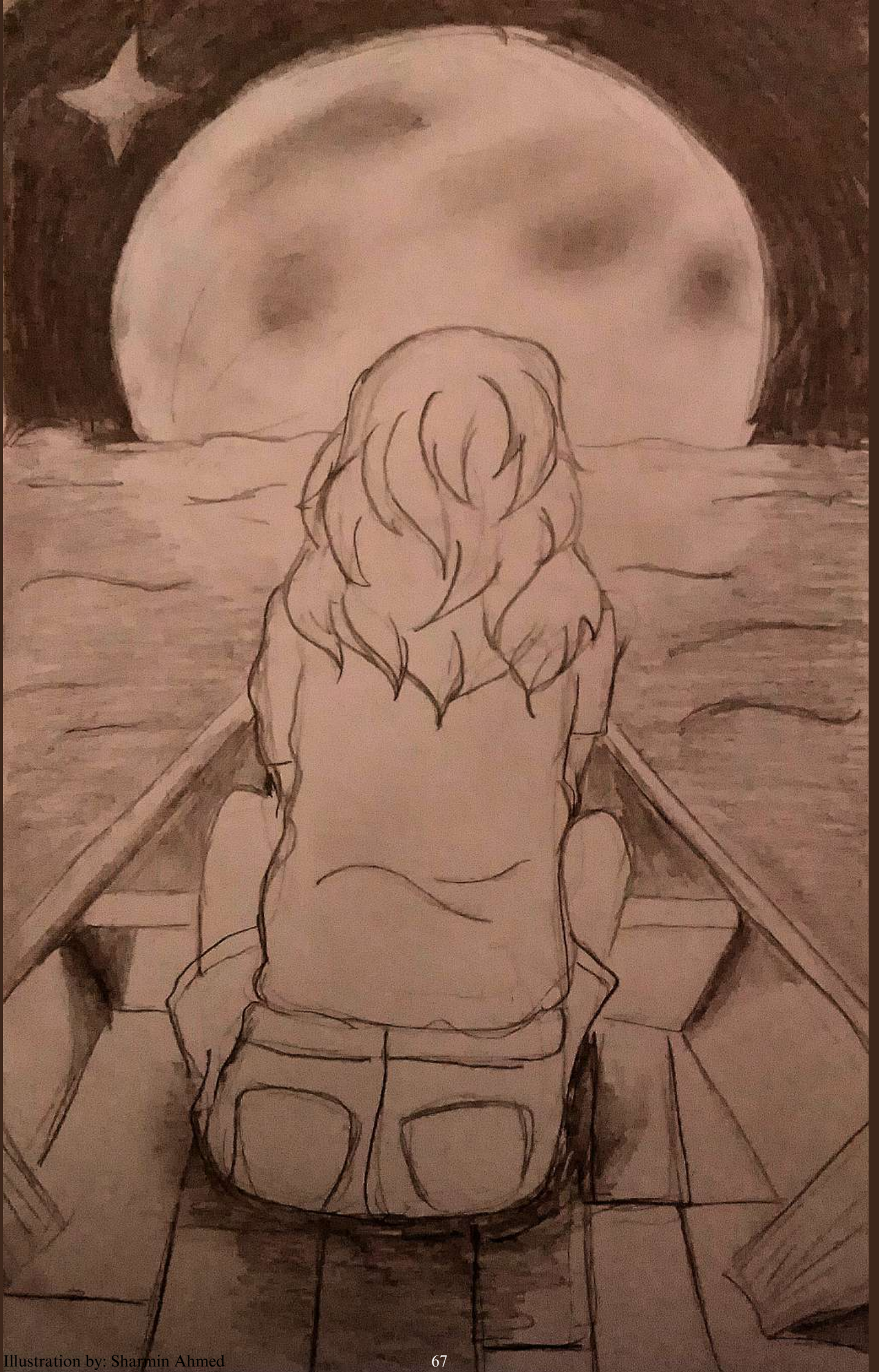
There were about four, or ten, or eighteen, or more than forty crewmates. She couldn't really tell, or remember. Some of them were passersby, some of them actually stayed here. The boat had a mind of its own, it guided people on to it depending on what it needed them to do. Xenia wasn't sure why it chose her. She was in for a ride, flying above the world and all its wondrous places. But no, what she had realized that the boat was doing, was that it simply traveled through dreams. She can't quite explain it, but one moment they're flying among the clouds, the next they're going through a house where an architect is designing a building, then they're going above the sea surface and the boat is a small fish boat, then they're in the middle of a wild mountain range along some hikers and volunteer doctors, then they're in the middle of a university lecture on statistics and at the same time right next to a field where teenagers are having a basketball training. And more. And more afterwards and at the same time and before and always. Xenia experiences numerous feelings and ideas all together, seemingly in a single second or in the span of months, if she had to name these made-up time measurements. She could simply not tell. It always felt something different. She always found herself crying silently, not knowing why, or smiling, again not knowing why.

Centuries seem to have gone by and they are flying over a battlefield. The opposing forces are giving their everything in this fight.

“Why are they fighting? Isn't it hopeless?” someone asks.

Xenia has a moment of epiphany.

“I was told that a very certain meaning of it all is to believe in your dreams no matter how brutal they are. Now I don't know whose dream is this and what they're dealing with in their life, but it is... disorienting.”



Whoever asked, is not here now. Xenia looks over the horizon, wondering where she heard that. Time is such a bizarre concept. When did she ever escape from home? When will she go back? She feels something heavy in her pocket and reaches to get it. She isn't quite sure, she has never seen a shape like it, but she could tell in her bones that it's the star. She considers putting it in her mouth. She does. It's salty. Maybe the sea air traveled over it. She chuckles and puts it back in her pocket. Let's not go back so soon. It would be nice to sit here a bit longer. Dreaming, sensing the freedom and the otherworldly atmosphere all over herself.

Am I a fever dream?

Written by: Emily Mayled
Edited by: Roos van der Velden

To give myself as half of a person that is undoubtedly whole?
The dream

To live to live and not to give myself up to
Who wants what from me
The expectation that I am smart, and therefore
I am going to keep killing myself to impress
You, when and how you need it
In a certificate here,
A sum of money there
Ripped into shreds of myself
And dished out accordingly
So you can clutch at your piece of me,
Smile like it should mean something
Only to throw me into the drawer full of clutter

To keep half of me for me and
Live to live,
Smile when I've accomplished something
For myself
Hold the half and keep her safe
Wrapped up in a childhood blanket
Far, far away from the clutter you made
Of yourself

I would like to offer half of myself but
only because I dream of keeping her whole.

Biographies



Roos van der Velden

Roos is a twenty-year-old woman from the Netherlands. Besides getting her bachelor in film- and literature studies and working part-time as a waitress, she takes the time to write, both creative and copy. Oh, and then she has to breathe, as well. Previously, she has been published in TalkVomit and in Dutch magazines, and now, of course, in the WordTonic creative anthology.



Ben Jennings

BJ is a writer from the West Midlands in Great Britain, with dreams of penning product copy for RSVLTS shirts and a Silver Surfer comic for Marvel, but ultimately a cushy setup where he can work from the comfort of a table in his local Wetherspoons (K'ford represent!). After studying Creative Advertising at uni where he won a YCN Student Award, BJ's on a journey to put his dexterous document digits to enough projects that it'd make a copywriting standards board go "bloody hell, is there anything this cunt can't write?"



Beth Norris

Beth is a 21 year old writer from the UK who enjoys penning poetry and prose in her spare time (whilst also hoarding a book collection courtesy of BookTok). She is entering the third year of her Bachelor's degree in English Literature and Creative Writing, where honing her craft and having some of her poetry published has been a pleasure. Lastly, not forgetting Word Tonic, which has provided the best community at the beginning of her Copywriting journey.



Paula Espinosa

Paula Espinosa is a bilingual Mexican-American creative currently in her third year of undergraduate, where she is double majoring in Theatre and English with a minor in Music. She is interested in musical theatre, costume design, poetry, jazz performance, and is an avid reader. While she's had poems published previously, this is her first prose piece she is sharing, of which she is equally nervous and excited for. She's a current member of Word Tonic and a working copywriter with all the spare time she boasts of.



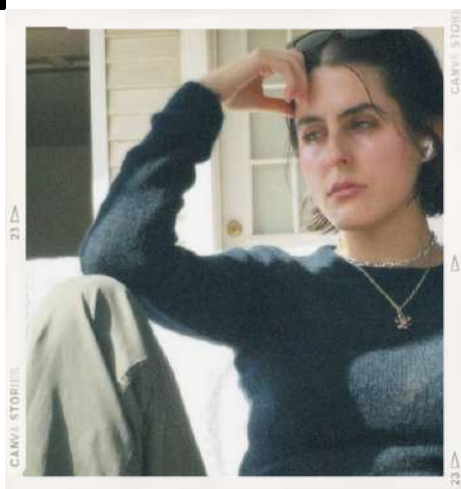
Amy Worgan

I'm a freelance copywriter from Manchester, UK, working with Word Tonic to turn my passion for words into hard-hitting copy. I have a BA and MA in English and Creative Writing, so I'm fairly often found reading or writing poetry or personal essays. When I'm not obsessing over my golden retriever Enzo or making my seventh cup of tea for the day, I can be found in a 10-page deep Wikipedia rabbit-hole, researching some incredibly niche topic, or singing badly to a cheesy pop song.



Yasmin Bligh-Hasan

Yasmin is a half-Palestinian and half-Israeli (tri-ish-lingual) 21 year old intern and part time artist residing in South East London. She is doing her best to learn about copywriting and earn enough money to afford adopting animals, mostly cats (or familiars for a better term). She has previously published work on an individual level but this anthology is the first collaborative project she has participated in. You'll find her writing stories, painting, learning a new hobby that'll probably only last 2 weeks, and avidly searching up every actor's IMDB bio while trying to watch a simple movie with her friends.



Isabella Frank

Isabella is a writer who was born and raised in Miami and Bogota, Colombia. She currently lives in a cave on the outskirts of Houston where she practices witchcraft, salsa, and operatic singing. She likes to write poetry, sketch, and sing. Pondering the wonders of space and time is one of her favorite pastimes. She is a hopeful romantic. She started writing poetry while studying English in college and now, it is her vessel to transport the world in her mind to the real world. Check her out, she's pretty cool (reportedly). Thank you for reading. peace.



Rheanna Egleton

Rheanna is almost a quarter of a century old and lives in the southeast of England. She's been copywriting for a few years but joined Word Tonic while trying to figure out how to turn her career into something she can travel with. A couple of her creative pieces have been published before, though she'll leave it up to you to find them. You can normally find Rheanna on a plane, snuggling her cat, or with her nose buried in a book. In her ideal world, she'd be doing all three at once.



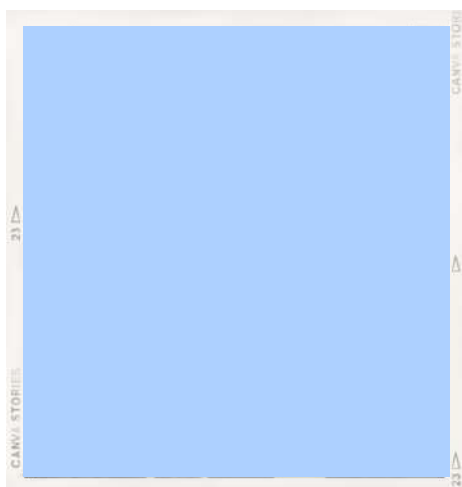
Alex Mc

Alex, from Northern Ireland, has a creative spark for many mediums including art, video & image editing, acting and writing. Although working on many video editing projects including Instagram reels for WordTonic, this is the young Irish's first published piece of writing. The 22 year old enjoys putting pen to paper to passionately scribble her thoughts of the obscure & uncanny. If you find yourself checking over your shoulder or the hairs on your arm rising after reading her literature or viewing her art, just know you've succeeded in making her pleased.



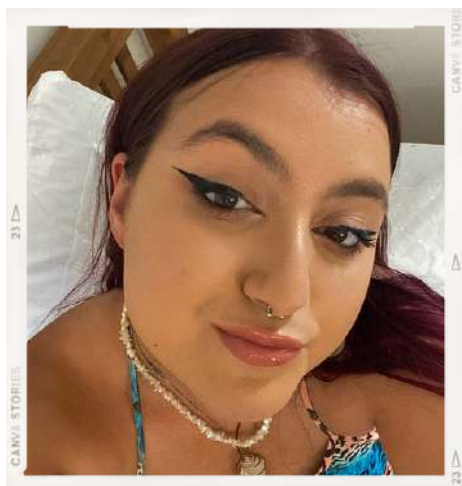
Anastasia Arseniadou

Anastasia Arseniadou is a young archaeology student that is passionate about writing, and many other things. Interests include theatre, hiking, reading. She joined Word Tonic to learn new things about copywriting and creative writing. Among favourite quotes, there's "believe you can, and you're halfway there".



Sarah Hendricks

I am a South African student with a BA in Social Science and currently studying to complete my Honours degree in Social Science majoring in Psychology. I joined Word Tonic to learn copywriting so that I may work as a freelance copywriter as a creative outlet, alongside pursuing a career within the field of Psychology.



Emily Mayled

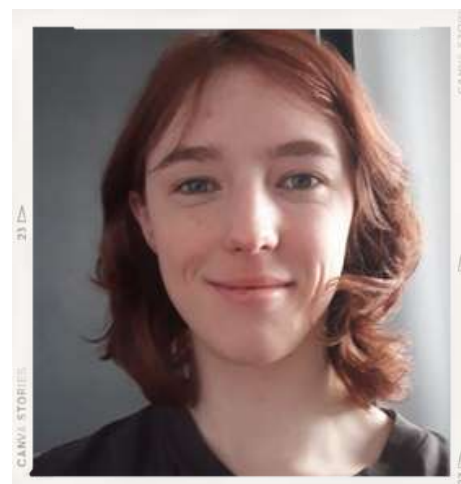
Emily Mayled is a queer poet and content writer from Gloucestershire in England. Through her writing she aims to convey the contemporary young adult experience. Her primary goal is to inspire other creatives to use their medium to help them process their own experiences and emotions. Additionally, her status as (L)GBTQ+ means her passion lies within activism. She aims to use her voice to encourage others to shout as loudly as she does and write to facilitate change. A few of her previous publications include Bloom, honeyfirelit, and COSYLAND. Find more of her work at @ej.mayled on Instagram!



Margarida Madeira

Margarida started telling stories even before she could walk. Reading books and writing in her diary soon became their favorite hobbies.

She started her own business in sales when she was 19, but after a few years, she finally realized what she really wanted was to write. Combining both the sales knowledge and her creative side, she started copywriting at 23 and never looked back. When she's not working or writing something she's usually reading, watching Netflix as a good Gen-Z specimen, eating sushi or daydreaming about her next trip.



Susi Fennell

Working as a concept artist for this anthology, Susi helped design the cover. She has been writing since she was a kid, and has been practicing art and design for the last few years. Creating experiences by working as a freelancer has helped her prioritize self-improvement over outside pressure, and she continues to learn and grow through real-life lessons every day.



Sharmin Ahmed

Hi, I'm Sharmin, and I helped edit and create illustrations for this cute little anthology.

Currently, I'm a recent Creative Writing Graduate and a fledgeling copywriter. While I have not published any of my prose, I've been flittering my pen around the speculative genres. I like to watch cosy cartoons, read webtoons and watch video game playthroughs. To sign off, I'll leave you with a cookie 🍪

