Spark

Young Writers Magazine

Featuring writing produced by young people living in the West Midlands



WRITING WEST MIDLANDS

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Spark Young Writers Magazine

Welcome to Spark Young Writers Magazine

Editorial from William

Spark Young Writers magazine is here to bring you the best young writing in the West Midlands and at the same time to bring the writers the experience of working on a real magazine. So there's a submission process and I will reject or accept pieces exactly as I have done on any other magazine I've edited.

Curiously, though, there has been one single element of working on national magazines that I haven't replicated here – until this issue.

This is the first time that as well as waiting for articles to be submitted, I've gone directly to a writer to ask for one. I'm used to commissioning writers to work on particular ideas or projects but this one was new even for me: I had seen a piece and I wanted it for this issue.

Daisy Aratoon read at the Bournville Children's Book Festival in March and I saw one piece of hers that was exactly what I felt was missing from this issue. So thank you, Daisy, and also her agent – better known as her mum – for allowing me to include it.

I really am focused intently on making each issue the best read that I can and this time I think I re-learned a lesson I'd forgotten. Writers need to get their work out there and when they do, you get editors like me noticing you.

I hope that Spark Young Writers' magazine helps this issue's exceptional writers go further and farther.

William Gallagher - Spark Young Writers Magazine Editor

Spark Young Writers Magazine is a publication of Writing West Midlands. We support creative writers and creative writing across the region.

More information about us can be found on our website: www.writingwestmidlands.org

This magazine features writing from children and young people aged 8 - 20 who live in the West Midlands. It is also available to read online at www.writeonmagazine.org.

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WRITING WEST MIDLANDS

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The Truth is a Lie

Elodie Turner Hurd

Why is it, that my mother is always so protective? I hate it. I can't do anything I want, without her trailing after me. I know she loves me and all, but the only thing I really want is for her to let me start dancing. It is my dream. I have to do it: nothing can stop me now.

Morning mum I say as I force myself to get out of my 'pit' as my mum calls it.

Morning sweetheart she signs back to me. I look her up and down and see that she is wearing her grey tracksuit bottoms and I think, seriously?

Mum, can you at least put something other than those on? You look seriously weird. I sign accidentally saying Mum can you at least put bushes that are blue other than those. You look trees house. Luckily my mum understood what I was meant to say. She chuckled self-consciously to herself and signed, you need to go back to sign language class but I can't let you out, so I'll teach you.

No way. I can do sign language, it is easy as pie! I signed making her laugh again but then she stopped abruptly. What's wrong mum? I ask getting worried as to why she was just staring into space. Nothing. She replied with a melancholy look on her face. Mummmmm, can I please start dancing class next week or even this week? I ask with a big smile at the end. Then she started to get angry No! You have asked me a million times and I have answered a million times! NO! NO! NO! And that is final! After this I stormed out of the house feeling angry, hurt and upset. How could she do this to me? I thought it's all I ever wanted. Then I thought something very bad indeed, so bad I walked straight out into the road and…

I wake up to see my mother looking at me and I scream, sort of. Woah, you scared me there mum. What happened? I say wondering why I was in some sort of… HOSPITAL BED! You got hit by a car, sweetheart. Don't worry, the doctors will get you fixed in no time and then we can get out of here.

Why do we need to get out of here, may I ask? Getting really anxious and confused, that my heart beat (I saw) started getting faster. Calm down, now just rest and it will all be alright tomorrow. Ok, I say, but tomorrow you have to tell me why we need to get away. Good night mum. Good night sweetheart. She says before I can say anything else.

I woke up remembering that I was in hospital after my horrific accident. A doctor then came up to me and said "the police would like to see you, young lady." However, I could not hear him so I had to lip-read him which I found very hard. But most of it I understood so I knew I had to see the police.

"Who have we found?" said the police officer, "You'll see, this is a very special job for you. I had to choose you!" the chief replied getting really excited which confused the police officer.

"Hello, young lady" said the chief who impatiently waited for my answer. I reached under the bed to

get a black chalkboard to write down that I was deaf. I AM DEAF, I CAN'T HEAR YOU. CAN YOU DO SIGN LANGUAGE, WHICH WILL HELP? Unfortunately, by looking at his worried face about doing sign language, I knew he couldn't. I sighed and wrote on the board: WHAT DO YOU WANT? WRITE DOWN YOUR ANSWER HERE. I looked up at the police officer who looked vaguely familiar and I saw he had my eyes. Coincidence I thought. When I looked down again, the chief had written WE ARE HERE TO TELL YOU THAT WHOEVER IS YOUR GUARDIAN IS, IS NOT YOUR REAL MOTHER. YOUR MOTHER DIED WHEN YOU WERE BORN, AND UMM I THINK I KNOW WHO YOUR FATHER IS BECAUSE HE IS STANDING IN THIS ROOM RIGHT NOW.

I snatched the board off him, and that's when my so-called mother came in. I was angry and deceived to find out that what she had solemnly sworn to, was a lie. Is this true? I asked her with an angry look on my face. She sighed and said yes it's true. I stole you. I saw you on your father's doorstep and I immediately fell in love with you, so I had to take you. That is why I wanted to get away today because you were starting to look so much like your father. I see he is here with you chief. My "mother" looked so sad, but I hated her for everything so I wrote on the board: WHERE IS MY FATHER? I WANT TO MEET HIM. AT LEAST I KNOW HE IS MY REAL FAMILY I was glaring at my "mum". "Officer" he said. Wait a second I just heard that. I thought I felt my ears go pop! "The officer is my dad. I thought I recognised him. Oh and by the way my ears just went pop and I can hear again!"

"Hi dad" "Hi darling," turning to the chief "so this is why I had to do the job for you." The chief just nodded.

Sometimes you should never trust the truth as in my case The Truth is a Lie. My "mother" was arrested for child abduction and now I have my dad to live with. I could finally follow my dream as he said I would able to start dancing as soon as my ankle had healed. My life was finally turning out to be my very own fairy tale.

Dear Agony Aunt

Daisy Aratoon

Dear Agony Aunt,

I am desperately in need of your help. My ex-girlfriend, Helena, is constantly badgering me and following me around like a lost puppy. Even though I have informed her continually that I no longer love her and wish to be released from our understanding, she persists in asking me questions and declaring that she loves me dearly.

Furthermore, since I believe my connection to Helena to be severed, I have a new girlfriend, Hermia, the daughter of the noble Egeus. I am besotted with her but she now idolises the feckless local poet, Lysander. My competitor clearly has bewitched my darling Hermia and she is interchanging love tokens with him – who would choose that scum over me? Having permission to wed Hermia, surely the marriage should proceed as I have a right to be her husband in the eye of the law.

Helena is Hermia's closest friend, and Helena would most certainly ruin my reputation by protesting about the marriage and thereby destroying my relationship with Hermia, calling into question my integrity. Why would Hermia rather marry Lysander? Moreover, Helena's presence makes me feel desperately nauseous: our connection could never be rekindled.

If I do not wed Hermia soon, will she perhaps elope with Lysander instead?

Honestly, the influence that hopeless romantic has on my beautiful-soon-to-be wife is befuddling. Clearly, Lysander lacks loyalty or any other characteristics befitting of a worthy suitor.

I implore you to consider the facts of the situation and apply your wisdom to guide me to the life my heart desires.

Yours truly

Demetrius, The Great and Athletic

Ivy's Journey

Rose O'Hagan

All my dreams. Gone. All my family. Gone. All my hopes. Gone. I stared at my destroyed house, my metallic tears piercing my cheeks like the blade of a knife. Why does it have to be me?

CRASH! Grabbing my parents like a dog, I screamed at them-they were just standing there a statue frozen in time.

Dead. It was too late. A bomb had hit us. Panic took me by the hand as I realised what had happened. Please just be a dream, please. For once, I felt alone. Alone from the world. It was like I was inside a bubble, separate from the whole world.

Anything might happen, but I am NOT going to the orphanage. After hearing countless stories about how horrible it was, I made my plan. Tonight, I would sleep in the 24-hour supermarket. Next day, I would hitchhike at the outskirts of our village –people would pity me more if I was next to a burning village. I would do that, ask them to take me to my grandma's city and it would be as easy as that.

After around an hour of waiting for a car to pull over, I finally got some luck. A mysterious man gave me a grunt after me asking him to take to my grandma's city. I assumed it was a yes so I settled down in his car. Before I knew it, I was fast asleep like a log, however even whilst I was asleep, I sensed something was wrong. I was right and learnt the hard way.

Confusion filled my head-why were we at the police station? Despite my suspicion, I followed the man into the building. Like a firework, he exploded into a roar of laughter. The glare of the police officer told me that I had to get out.

Don't ask me how, but my next attempt got me placed in a zoo in a giraffe enclosure. Sure, I am quite tall, but how did I get mistaken for a giraffe? I suppose life has its ups and downs because I managed to climb over the fence and it wasn't an electric one.

Breathless after the zoo incident, I scanned the street around me. A bus stop. Not just any bus stop though. A bus stop to my grandma's city. Happiness erupted like a volcano inside me as I read it. I couldn't believe my luck. In an hour or so my grandma and I would be together, both of us happy.

Before I knew it, my grandma and I were greeting each other with huge hugs and super smiles. Giving each other comfort because of my parents death, we talked about the adventures I'd been through.

King

Benedict Christmas

A mighty kingfisher swoops, silent,
disturbing the reclusive river,
their vibrant colours competing
for first place in a beauty contest.
A contrail of blue chases after the kingfisher,
in a game of tag.

A Day in the Life of Mossy the Dog

Gabriel Cooney

Lately I have been lounging on my soft, handmade bed without a single worry or care until Mom comes and moves me into the cold damp Kitchen. “Come on, Mossy,” she used to say but now it’s all sorts of names like Pickle O, Bitey Bitey or even “Come on, Silly Winkle!”

Also I never get to see Sarah, because she has a spiral staircase to her room and she is the only one who seems to live up there. “Ooow ooo,” I howl but the response is only “Shush I’m working!” If I could, I would climb up those stairs and tell her the story of “The Boy Who Cried Wolf” – this is nothing to do with not being able to go in her room, but at least it teaches her a lesson.

Ben is okay but he is unfair. If I come into his room he will fuss me to death but if Tom follows me he will get kicked out of the room. Ben is always working but he stops when I come in. I love a good bit of a stroke.

One day, Tom and Dad took me to Sutton Park for a run. The car ride was dramatically bumpy but the run was terrific. We went round the bend and there was a rabbit! As a hunter I was ready for the chase. I belted off.

“Where is he?” Tom would say.

“He is like a rocket!” Dad always said.

As I sped past them, I jumped up and play-bit Dad’s arm. We do this a lot. To tell the truth we do it so much that in the garden all the grass is ripped up.

There was once a time when Dad was taking me to the local park and I dashed off. My heart was pounding. I had spotted a squirrel, when – splat – I banged into a little old lady going for a walk. I saw Dad making his way towards me- I was in big trouble.

“Sorry about that,” Dad said soothingly. “My dog is very wild when he is hunting,” he added as he helped the lady up. I knew Dad would be furious. (Luckily he was not).

I also remember the time when I pee’d on Ben’s dressing gown but let’s not go that far; it is, as I would say, simply gross!

As you can see I am a very active and silly dog. Not as silly as my family though! Shhh.

Faces in a Crowd

Nayantika Chaudary

The sky is a canvas of dark solitude, charcoal grey clouds camouflaged in a charcoal grey sky embedded in a charcoal grey world. There is no gentle tranquil breeze here, no lush green tufts of emerald grass, no wise old knowing trees swaying, no smiling sun in an azure sky. There never will be.

Hidden beneath the endless blanket of smog, there are the ones that move, the blurred faces, that meander through the infinite steel towers that ascend into the ashen skyline, they march to the same old song ,trapped in a concrete black and white world, so hopelessly, helplessly, so utterly mercilessly imprisoned in their meaningless lives until the grave, but even then, they will forever be chained to the same old rhythm, they will forever be the puppets on a string, forever the pawns of politics, starved of sunlight, turned into bitter heatless machines by a cruel society, unable to break free, to cry out or spread their clipped wings, all of them will only ever be just another face in another crowd of a million stony faces that mask a million voices.

They wander aimlessly, so uselessly engrossed in living in their comfortable mundane little bubble, lost in their mindless slumber unable to listen to the pulsing heart of this mechanical world, to listen to the engines that cough and splutter in agony behind a perpetual trail of suffocating gasses, ignorant of the chocking chemical fumes that engulf their home, so deaf and blind to their dying planet's desperate plea for help.

They drift through the land manufactured for them, the same feet dragging dragging on, the same poignant cloud of misery hanging above the same dreary face with the same old dreary eyes with no lustre for life. All that remains is a fallen army, left abandoned, in ruins, for all of them will only ever be faces in a crowd.

Homeless

Anna Williams

Alice was a girl who had no proper clothes, looked lost, had dirty red hair and lightning blue eyes. She was sitting on a broken, wooden bench in a local park. Well, you couldn't say that it was local because she had no base, like a home, so really nothing was local.

Looking around her, she could see a murky pond, dead brown flowers and a dark sky above, and birds gloomily sitting on the branches of a giant, withered tree with no leaves covering its bare body. If the birds did sing, it was an off-tune, depressing song.

Slowly, Alice walked down the gravel path, dragging her feet behind her, a gloomy look on her face and slowly fingering all the dead flowers that stood horrifyingly still.

Alice brought her feet together; looked up, closed her eyes inhaled the bitter, salty air. As she opened her eyes, everything seemed to have colour; the flowers, the sky, and all the trees. She looked down at her stubby feet but saw black, leather, studded boots and black jeans. A pink t-shirt with a Dalmatian on, blue denim jacket and her long, smooth, auburn hair in a neat, side plait. Ahead of her were people: children playing tag, skipping, singing, cartwheeling and parents sitting on new, fixed benches, coffees in their hands, laying out picnics and taking dogs for walks.

Alice walked onward, fresh green bushes bordered the new tarmac pavement. Walking on, in thought of finding the local newsagents, she approached a big, golden cathedral, intricate designs everywhere.

Inside, there was a big choir full of beautiful women with giant smiles painted on their faces. One pointed at Alice, though not in a mean way and as if she knew her, and suddenly they all turned and waved at her, signalling for her to come over. She found herself skipping joyfully down the aisle, to go and greet them.

Beach Scene

Hannah Tilt

The sea is an image of calm and tranquillity, like an old dog, learned by the wicked ways of man. It stretches out as far as the eye can see; it seems to twinkle and beckon you in with peaceful ripples.

The sun is strong and powerful, forcefully projecting its last rays of light onto the sandy beach as if it knows that the night will take over soon. Desperate. Determined.

Below this other-worldly fight of light and dark, a small crab scuttles along the sand, ruining the seas almighty efforts to smooth out the beach. The crab is in a fight of its own. With incredible speed the tiny crab hurries through the thick sand, aware of the seagull, swooping closer and closer. It seems to utter a sigh of relief, and the seagull a cry of rage, as it jumps into the water.

Unaware of the drama going on above it, a mysterious creature lurks in the debts of the deepest part of the ocean. It swishes its almighty tail and moans restlessly. Whales are supposed to be gentle animals, but this one seems to have other ideas.

“I am hungry, but I can’t eat, for no food is here and I can’t move. Nobody knows that I lurk here- but here I am and I will stay. Oh gracious lord! Please help me sir, give me a second chance I beg of you! Unimaginable anger controls my soul, I am not a harmless being- I will kill the first being I lay my fins upon!”

Up on the surface of the sea, a little girl swims over the mighty brute, concentrating on perfecting her front crawl. But try as he might, the blue whale simply can’t move onto the girl. He is stuck. Stranded by the heartless sea.

A few minutes later, a little girl runs out of the sea with her hair in tangles, happy with herself- she is just a child, she cannot feel danger.

Back on the beach, seagulls are cawing wildly, intent on deafening anyone within a 100 mile radius, and the sand is steadily drying out for another day. The suns efforts are not enough, day has turned to night, light has turned to dark, warmth has turned to cold. The sea drifts in and out, calmly lapping against the beach: it doesn’t care, it goes through this process every night.

Salted Water

Brianna Wright

Salted water makes its way towards the corners of my mouth, sliding down my cheeks like sparkling pearls. These gems sting my eyes and I blink to rid myself of them.

Each tear is my connection fading away. My connection with nature, the stars, the sea – dissolving away into millions of pieces. I cry a thousand oceans in sorrow of what mankind has become.

We are separated from our ancestor species, hiding away in sprawling cities while our closest relatives die from our own selfishness. We steal land that is not ours, cheating its rightful owners, destroying their homes and imprisoning them in cages to be ridiculed and jeered at until the end of their days.

We are barbaric. We are tyrants. And it saddens me. People often believe I am weird, going through a "phase" which I will grow out of in the end so that I can be a productive asset to the economy. I do not care about the economy, or trivial political matters. Humanity is not a "phase". It is a disappearing trait slowly suffocated by modern life, pressed into the ground like a flower in a book. A flower… Nature again. I cry some more.

I cry for unborn generations – generations who may never experience the joy of seeing a bud about to blossom, or green shoots escaping the imprisonment of winter trees, or butterflies flapping their wings to the melodies that birds sing. I cry because my children may only know concrete and the mantra, "If it's green, it's got to go!" They may be brainwashed to believe that grass, or trees, or flowers, or bushes, or wildlife are nothing but a myth. That humans and cities are the only things to ever have existed and that anything opposing these beliefs is dangerous and harmful to social stability.

I cry for the world. Not the world we think is ours, but the world beneath the mountains of commercialism, which is now decaying with the rot of corruption.

They Do Not See Me

Maryam Alatmane

Suspicion was breathed in and compassion exhaled. Silence asked the questions everyone was afraid to utter.

Who is it that tells them?

We look away when we pass one another on the street. Maybe I knew her once. I shake the thought away.

Is she the one who tells them about us?

Step by step, moving forward, passing row upon row of grey. A gunshot sounds. I flinch. Carry on walking. Step carefully around a pool of blood and finger the yellow star, stitched onto my fraying coat.

How can anyone want to do away with all of us?

The rumble of motorcycles, growing louder. Curtains twitch. A baby starts to cry. Head down, my pace quickens. Don't look up. Don't look up. Don't look up. Footsteps approaching; one of them. Our eyes meet.

Do they know what we think?

A woman is pushed out of a doorway. A child with a thin, angular face clings to her skirts. Tears stream down her face. "Please don't do this," a snippet of their conversation wafts through the air. There's no time for sympathy.

How can we believe that one of us would help them?

I turn right. They are standing there, like they always are. Check the coast is clear. Whispered words, frantic gestures, the feel of crisp bank notes. Until next time.

How can I ever admit to anyone that the person we are all looking for is me?

Agent R

Kate Maloney

Dear Agent M –captured – Dead Drop C – murdered – help – Yellow Belly – Starfish

The message was so broken that she could hardly make it out. Roseta was shocked, Mom – Agent M? Starfish? Captured? Dead Drop C? Before she could message back – boom – the message self destructed and the computer popped out a spy suit. Should she..?

Through the thick, black, smoky air emerged Roseta. She wore a black'n'pink off the shoulder spy suit. Suddenly, her mother came charging (like a rhino) into the room. "Roseta!"

Rosetta squeaked: "I forgot about the rule for not touching the computer."

Suddenly her mother saw Rosetta's own black'n'pink spy suit and she froze. "Did your Father get into trouble?" Roseta just stood there questioning herself. Starfish: the family surname.

"To the MomMobile!" She snatched Roseta's hand and dragged her to the car.

Roseta thought: mom's these days – how do you know what they're up to? Grandmother would never do this….

All of a sudden the car turned into the Mom-O-Copter. Roseta's mom's eyes darted and fixed on Roseta. She snapped: "ROSETA! You pressed the –"

"I couldn't resist – it was bright AND pink!"

Her mother just looked at her like her head was about to explode. Before Roseta could say anything more, she added: "Hop out, we're at Dead Drop C."

Roseta just stared at her. "How did you know we needed to get to Dead drop C?"

Her Mother stared back. "Your Father always gets into trouble, I popped a tracking device on him. " Clever woman. They marched out of the Mom-O-Copter and Roseta that realised they were at Grandmother's house.

Roseta was concerned that everybody in the family was involved. Sensing danger, she said: "Mom, since I love you soooo much……wouldn't it be wise for you to go first? After all, respect your elders!"

Her mother snapped back: "I'd rather go in with Donald Trump than you!"

Roseta admitted that the elders part had gone too far, but Donald Trump. That's low. Even for her.

"We'll talk about it later, young lady," said her mother.

Roseta kicked the front door – repeatedly. “There goes the element of surprise,” said mom, rolling her eyes. That’s it, Roseta pressed the button on her belt. She didn’t know the picture was a missile – she thought it was a grenade. “Wooooops.” The door was definitely open now. They stomped through.

“Sweet mother of cheese, what did you do to my door? It was open!” scowled Grandmother. Roseta’s Dad (Starfish) stared at Roseta and rambled “You’re grounded… wait…but…if you get me out of this, no grounding for a year.”

“Get you out of what?”
“I can’t eat cabbage,” pleaded Dad

“Cabbage isn’t murdering you! You’ve not been captured! I was in the middle of taking a hot bath,” said mom furiously

Her Dad looked at his wife and with fired up eyes he moaned, “But cabbage..!”

Suddenly, the grandmother jumped out of nowhere. “The cabbage won’t murder you – but I will!”

“Whooooooa…” said Roseta, “this has gone too far. Granny, let it go, there are other greens”

Granny stared at Roseta. “Everybody needs cabbage! ”

Under her breath, Roseta said: “Boy, this Gran really loves cabbage.” Then, audibly, she added: “How about this, if you let my Dad off with not eating cabbage he will eat his greens daily.”

“Including cabbages?” asked Granny

Sensing she wasn’t going to let it go, Roseta agreed: “You betcha.”

“Noooooooooo,” screeched Dad.

“Off you all go,” groaned Gran. “See you for Cabbage Festival,” she said smugly.

“There’s a festival?” said Dad open–mouthed. “What have I signed up for? I should never have sent the message.”

River Boat Ride

Chloe Watkins

The river boat ride was calm.
The fish swam, the birds chirped.
The kingfishers flew and the water rippled.

The river boat ride was peaceful.
The trees swayed; the leaves rustled.
The ducks slept and the water was steady.

The river boat ride was adventurous.
The cave held treasure; the monkeys were ninjas;
the other boats were pirate ships and
the lion was king of the jungle.

How the Artist Lost Her Colour

Lyanna Choi

When I was a child
I saw all the colours
Of the world
From the warmest sunset hues
To the deepest ocean blue.

I picked my palette
From the colours I saw
And could not see
And painted the world
On a canvas that was me.

As the years went by
And duller became the sky,
I looked for the colours elsewhere
As the world was stripped bare.

I thought of the colours there
There that I could not see
And I realised it was not the world,
But me.

Missing

Abbey Pickess

Butterflies in my stomach, heart racing, brain all a whirl, I head into the court. My dyed red hair is all in a knot from the hours I spent alone in the cell. I can't think straight. The judge is speaking to the small cluster that is the jury and suddenly he's addressing me.

"Molly Hoppingdol. You have been accused by an individual, who shall rename nameless, of kidnapping this young girl," he indicates a photo of a little girl with blond hair and freckles, "Louisa Lows. Do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," I reply quickly. Too quickly?

I don't know what happened next. I was staring at the floor. There was a lot of talking. Suddenly the judge declared: "Not guilty." I stared at him. After a whole sixteen years of lying, the first truth I tell saves me. As I leave the court, I wonder how I was accused and why I wasn't charged. I think that what made a new question come to light, where now?

Louisa Lows. The name rings a bell. Ignore me. I'm not going forward, I'm heading back, back to the start of Molly Hoppingdol. Molly was never born.

She came when I was six. I ran away from home. How or why is a mystery to me now and so is my whole past life, actually. I don't even remember my name. Only one thing stuck: my address. I can't forget it. It's like the remnants of my old life, staying forever to haunt me. I stayed around for a bit but then 'Missing' posters starting appearing and I ran off. That's when Molly began. It was just the name to start with but soon enough I dyed my hair and began to cover up my freckles.

Nothing's changed. Molly stuck and I forgot my real name but the address still hovered there, a never-tired ghost. Apart from this new feeling. The only feeling I've ever felt before is being lost.

But now I've got a longing, a longing for home. Not my flat. Home, home. Mum, dad etc. I don't remember any siblings but I could have hundreds for all I know. But I can't go back. I'm two people now: if I go Molly will go missing and if I stay whoever I was will never be found.

I'm too young to make that decision. I've kidded myself around me that I'm eighteen but really I'm young, sweet sixteen. But I'm not getting older. I'm getting younger, like I said, going back…
The next thing I know I'm there. Yes, there, there. At that address, at that doorstep. My hair is back to blond and my freckles are on display. Deep breaths. My finger reaches out and knocks. I want to run away but I'm glued down.

An old lady answers it. Her mouth drops open.

"M… Mum?" I stutter,

"Louisa?" she breathes back. And then – click – the last piece of the puzzle falls into place, I'm Louisa Low.

My Life

Isabella Piggott Kwofie

I am scared.
I have lost all hope.
I no longer remember my family.
I feel like I am in a dark hole.
A feeling of hunger surrounds me,
I feel weak, tired and hopeless.
My memories are bent and I don't remember anything but bombs.
When will I feel safe?
I can still feel blood trickling down my face.
My life is mixed up and I feel invisible.
When will my prayers be answered?
I feel dirty and bedraggled, I'm tired but no one cares.
In my mind I hear people crying and running.
It's so overwhelming.
How will I cope.
But I deserve to be treated well.
I deserve a home and family.
I deserve to be treated well.
I AM A REFUGEE!

Owl

Sofia Williams

I slowly approached the owl. “I need your help again,” I said. He twisted his head looking puzzled. “What makes you think I can help you?” he asked, turning away from me.

How could the great owl not be able to solve my problems? “I’m not the same as my friends,” I stated. “They know it too, they don’t look at me the same anymore and my dreams…” I paused. “They don’t make any sense. I’m always floating but I can’t control what I’m doing. Please help, you’re the only one I have left!” I expected him to just ignore me again and turn his back but instead he just asked a simple question. Well, it should have been simple.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“I’m a girl and I’m called Holly?” I replied wearily, not knowing myself what the answer was.

“No, I’m not asking what your name is, your name does not define you. What does define you, Holly?”

“I… I don’t know, nothing really. I’m just the same as everyone else.”

“Then how are you different?”

“I… I don’t know, look at my hair, my eyes. How am I normal?”

“Then you know what you are and you don’t need my help, you should know that, seeing how wise you are”

“I can’t be a human and also be an… an… a “ I huffed. “I’m not going to say it because you know what I’m on about. Anyways, someone might hear.”

“So?”

I was confused, how could I be both? It just didn’t make any sense. No wonder everyone thinks I’m a freak when I spend my spare time asking owls for help.

Am I mad? What if this is all in my head and I’m just imagining all of this. That would just make me even more weird, right?

All these thoughts whizzed through my mind when suddenly it all made sense and I knew what he meant. But I refused to accept it. Instead I hid it in a box in my mind and pretended to stuff that box under my bed or in the back of my wardrobe, never to be seen again.

I ran. I ran without any direction. I ran until I came upon a tree.

Then I climbed. I climbed until I reached as far as I could go and the wind was gushing in my face.

My hair flowed in the wind as I took it out of my tight pony tail. I felt like a princess who had finally been freed from a tower by her prince charming.

But I had no prince charming, instead I had myself which was good enough.

Being up there made me feel free and like I was finally home. Finally, where I was meant to be.

In the distance, I could see the bustling city that was once my home. When I was little, I used to think that it was the best place in the world and that I would stay there forever. I was hypnotised by the big buildings and the busy high streets filled with unique stores full to the brim with everything you could imagine.

In the forest, I could be myself but I knew that in the end I would have to return to the one place I hated the most. The one place where I couldn't be me. A place where I would have to put on a mask every day. I couldn't take it any longer. I had to prove to myself that this was real and not one of my crazy dreams.

So I did it. Slowly my fingers let go of the tree.

I opened up my arms and closed my eyes. I didn't realise how high up I was. As I felt I could feel my arms and hands tingling. When I opened my eyes, I wasn't the girl everyone expected me to be. I was me, the real me. I soared through the sky until the sky was a beautiful shade of pink, red and orange all merged together to make this shade that was almost perfection. It was then I knew I had to go back.

Reflections

Aisling Rogers

It is getting dark. The young woman walks into a bar. She orders a drink. The man serving her looks up. She is the prettiest girl he's ever seen. Some drinks later, they leave together. In a side alley, they kiss. It is her first kiss. It feels good.

The old woman leant her head against the cold glass of the mirror, staring at her reflection. Her tears ran down the shiny surface and her mirror image cried as well. She sat there for a minute, wallowing in her own memories, then got up, dusted herself off and walked to the door. She stopped only to kiss the yellowing picture of her husband, proud and erect in his sailor's uniform, a happy smile on his face. "You were so proud!" she whispered, "So handsome, so caring, so kind, I miss you so much!"

She opened the door and walked unsteadily through the deserted corridors of the asylum. The automatic doors slid open and she tottered out. The brightness surprised her. For twenty years, she had lived in a darkened room. The smell of disinfectant hung in the air like sickness, remorse, fear. Every day, she would be led to the dining room with all the other inhabitants, along brown corridors with polished floor tiles. She could still hear the squeaking of the nurses' sensible crocs moving along the floor. But now, now she was free!

"Nevermore!" she cried to the heavens, her voice cracking.

The woman lies in a hospital bed. She cries tears of happiness as she cradles a baby in her arms. Perfect, in every way. Her proud husband watches,

"What shall we name her?" .

"Charlotte."

"Perfect."

She half walked, half ran down to the lake edge. A girl was playing there. She looked into the girl's laughing eyes and felt a jolt of recognition. That auburn hair, those emerald eyes, that pale skin It had to be Charlotte. The girl stood up, dusted herself off and ran into her house.

The woman picks up the phone. The voice sounds tinny. "I'm so sorry, the HMS Galactica has sunk."

"And my husband?" The woman's voice is urgent. Charlotte is doing her homework, trying to pretend she hasn't heard. The tinny voice resounds around the room.

“No survivors.” Charlotte drops her pen.

The woman pushed the boat out into the water. She rowed to the middle of the lake, trying to shake off her remorse. The last time she had seen her husband, she had shouted at him. She stopped rowing and looked into the water. Her reflection looked up at her and so did another one – her husband. She turned and looked into nothingness.

He wasn’t there.

Her tears made ripples and blurred the reflections. She barely felt herself slip into the inky blackness of the lake. By the time the ripples had cleared, the only thing reflecting clearly in the water left on the lake was a slowly drifting boat.

The Rapids of the Fresh New World

Vil Borodi

A wave of mysterious energy
crashes against
the strong, sharp rocks.

A flare of majestic blue
swoops down underwater;
shoots back up again.

The turbulent wind finally calms down
and slowly blows against
the exotic trees.

A course of treacherous rapids
reflects off the side of the boat.

Peaceful ducks cruise along
the sandy bay.

A blanket of darkness and stars
covers the extraordinary land,
and night swallows up the world.

Incognito Popcorn Twins in The Case of the Magic Sausage

AJ Neto

It was a calm Sunday morning when suddenly… Tim was calling: “Whoa,Twiler! Look at this!

“Meow?” meowed Tom, lifting an eyebrow up.

“Hmm? What’s up?”’ asked Twiler, nearly splashing his face in his own cereal bowl as he always does.

“Isn’t this amazing? Another man who can fly and who has superhuman strength! He’s the fourth man this week!” Tim exclaimed, showing Twiler the paper.

After this, there was a long silence when Tom finally broke by slamming his fluffy paw onto the remote and turning on the Sunday morning news on when the reporters just began saying: “The mystery of the flying men and super human men has struck for the sixth-no-fifth-no-wait, what was it again?”

Instantly, a man came in and said “You’re fired!” and pointing his fat finger at the reporter who argued “But-but-but”.

“No buts! You’re fired!!” the man answered him.

Surprisingly, the screen went black, with white letters to read “Technical Problems”.

“These reporters are crazy, I tell you,”’ said Twiler, tapping on his head rapidly. “Well, as we’re detectives, I think that this is fishy.”

“More like sausagy. Haven’t you read this? All the millionaires who were affected said that a sausage did it.”

Afterwards Tim chimed in by saying “That’s just weird!”

Even Tom nodded his fluffy head, whilst almost scared by a BEEEEP! followed by the announcement “Letter from the sheriff for Tim, Tom and Twiler!” A mysterious driver had just zoomed past Tim’s house and thrown a letter at his doormat, almost catching Twiler’s face.

“What does it say?” asked Twiler.

“Listen carefully,” responded Tim, starting reading to Tom, Twiler and Tim. “I urgently need your help, detectives.
I’ve got a suspicion… a Chinese kung fu wrestler escaped prison just before the millionaires were affected by the super sausage… This might sound crazy put I think that he’s behind it all… Because he was especially trained for it.” Signed by Head of Police. “P.S. Meet me at 10 to midday

tomorrow. Good luck."

Expectant to discover the mystery, they went to bed.

By early morning Tim, Tom and Twiler woke up to see the newspaper on their doormat with the headline saying: "The mystery of the magic sausage continues"

"We should get ready to see the sheriff," reminded Twiler.

"Once and for all you're right, Twiler!"

Of they went and even Tom was looking smart!

"Oh thank goodness, you've come! Now, if you don't mind, I'll give you your orders right away," rushed the sheriff.

"We´re all ears!"' answered Tim.

"Well, firstly I've discovered that the prisoner took a boat called 'PP' which stands for.." He was interrupted by the phone.

Following up the next happenings of these brave and courageous detectives, there they were, inside the boat, waiting for it to take sail off when suddenly they were caught red-handed inside the hold.

Tiger Bee

Gertie Bielstein

A humming sound it makes you know
Though it's very big you would think
it would make a great big roar.

For the smell you could not tell
it took a bath every day.
It's a sluggish brown colour
with a hint of red

He stays up all night long
and never goes to bed.

The Long Struggle of Writing

Tanita Patel

I pick up the pen and begin to write
Although I don't really know what to say
And I don't really know how to start
But it makes me feel free
Doing what I want to do, being what I want to be
But as I write I don't really know what for

Alone behind a closed study door
Stop! Writer's Block!
But I can't just end it here
A million random thoughts flow into my mind
And some of them are left behind
And I'm back, with my mind in control of the pen

Now what to write about then?
A story about magic and monsters or an international spy
Or a rocket to space or humans that fly
Now my imagination is running
And it is going to win the gold
But I have to concentrate, just put it on hold

Now focus; back to the writing part
I need to write a poem
Something that expresses how I feel
Making it all seem so real
But wait, I seem to have almost finished

It's a piece without me knowing
Expresses myself and it's flowing
It all happened so quick and fast
Like a cross-country train just passing the station

Chloe and Lily and the Giant Goblin

Samra Basha

In a tall wide fairy class, in a tall wide fairy school, in a tall wide fairies land, lived two pretty girls named Chloe and Lily.

Chloe was a sweet, popular type of girl whom everyone loved and looked up to apart from the goblins Nommera and her husband Nommetry. On Chloe's dainty feet she wore shiny pearl white shoes to match her frilly short frock. Hanging down by her soft pale ears was her silky brown hair swaying to and fro. She had beautiful colourful wings which shone in bright lights.

Lily Portalls looked a little bit different. She had jet black hair and a pink dress with a violet hem and an everlasting red rose. On her feet she wore crimson high heels.

As soon as the geography lesson started in fairy school one tall, slim ugly hooked-nose man pride fully strode into school. He called Lily and Chloe who nervously flittered their way to follow this mysterious eyesore of a fairy. Suddenly they stopped in mid-air. The gentleman threw out a small ball which most surprisingly transformed into a portal. The shaky girls shivered with fear as they were taken into the portal.

Thud! Bang! Were the only sounds heard as the girls were dragged into a smelly bird cage. Lily almost burst into tears and Chloe's light was now dim.

"Hello pets," boomed the fearsome creature as he took out one gigantic fist and grabbed Chloe.

"What have you got there Nom Nom?" asked a familiar voice. It was Nommera! Nommetry told her Chloe would make a fine night-light as he dropped Chloe into his wife's hands.

"Shine!" they said. Poor Chloe had to shine her brightest 24,7! (which was similar to stretching as wide as possible non-stop).

Meanwhile, Lily had managed to get out of the bird cage but had to chop off her wings to do so. Lily did this even though they won't grow back. So Lily now had to go by foot. Finally she arrived to find a very tired Chloe but still they were overjoyed to see each other.

The giant plodded in the room causing the room to shake and lily to fall off the bedside table. She got to her feet and hid underneath the smelly goblin bed.

Mysteriously, the lock opened and Chloe fluttered out before you could say the word goblins.

For a few minutes they took a rest underneath the large bed before racing off and sliding underneath the door. Poor Lily was so tired as she did not have wings.

Luckily the girls found a portal in the town square and without being seen hurried off inside the portal.

They squealed with delight as the portal whisked them off back to their home, Fairyland where it was Saturday and they slept throughout.

And as for Nommetry and Nommera, They got quite a shock the next night.

They spent the rest of their lives locked indoors and always trying to get revenge.

Waiting

Tanita Patel

I sit there patiently, waiting for the right person
Now or then a little child will pick me up and say,
Please can I have this one! Look, look this way!
But they are dragged out by their parents

I have heard so many excuses over the days
He's too expensive, he's too old or that's a rubbish bear
I have feelings too, does anyone care?
And then they leave again

There must be a reason, but I cannot work it out
I have many that are replicas of me on my shelf
But to be honest, I'm different from everyone else
I want to be free

They find it comfy, where we are supposed to be
But I find it horrible, here night after night
This isn't our place, I know it's not right
Nobody will choose me though

I'm losing all hope now, nobody has bought me
I promise to be good and I won't lick my paw
I'll do everything like a good teddy if you take me from the store
Yet no-one seems to hear my pledge

But the next day in walks a girl up to us on the window sill
The next thing I know I am being scanned at the till
She picks me up in her arms, this is what is like to be free
And the twinkle in her eyes as she cuddles me says: forever, you and me

Spark

Young Writers Magazine

Featuring writing produced by young people living in the West Midlands

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