

Spark

Young Writers Magazine

Featuring writing produced by young people living in the West Midlands



Issue 12 July 2017

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Spark Young Writers Magazine

Welcome to Spark Young Writers Magazine

Editorial from Emma

Spark Young Writers magazine not only offers readers a collection of outstanding work, it also presents young writers with an early opportunity to have their work published in a magazine.

Having worked with young writers' groups for the past two years, I'm quite used to being impressed by the imaginative works of young writers. So when I was asked to be this issue's Guest Editor, naturally I jumped at the chance.

I was blown away by the submissions from our talented minds. Only in the works of young writers will dark, unnerving poems and zombies encounter cloud-watching on a sunny afternoon. On the whole this issue does have a rather dark undercurrent, from the haunting chills in *Ancestors* to the relatable anguish of conflict and heartache in *Friendship* and *Untitled*. I felt empowered by the strong characters in *Beauty* and *The Rightful Queen*, and Kay Flower's powerful, solemn poetry is simply wonderful.

The standard of the work we received for this issue was remarkable, and I admire each writer we received work from. One of the things I love most about the young writers' works is that they appeal to the widest audience and can be enjoyed not only by their peers but also by the more mature reader.

So, thanks to all of our young writers for having me this issue. To edit their work was a privilege and I envy you as a reader, about to enjoy it all for the first time.

Emma Freelove - 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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The Street of Sun and Soot

Kay Flower

In the street of sun and soot,
noon had already past
but laughter was not yet late
as I long for the hour to leave.

There is an unspoken truth upon those stones;
am I Webster, Wharton, Todd or Tesla
and as I stand below my gaze
I'm melded with the doors,
the glass,
and displays,
making my form incomprehensible.

My own sight is blurred,
Yet despite my skill
I am reluctant to change.

The distance is what I see
and as I stand,
disguised and watchful,
someone watches back.

There is a boy I see
at the end of the street
where clear stones, salted smooth
are laid across the dirt
in an attempt to smarten
our street of sun and soot.

Ancestors

Claire Howland

I never really believed in ghosts
I never liked to think
that they could linger, watching

too many fears are nurtured in our youth
of silent shadows in the cobweb dusk
and eyes which under beds are lurking

ghosts are inside everyone
our hands, our hearts, our minds and souls
are all reflections of the past, we're living

along the paths our ancestors have made
the bridges that we build along the way
are forming branches of a tree, connecting

and as you walk along the paths
the trees are looking down at you
and upwards to the sky they're always growing

they're watching, smiling, knowing.

A Lament for July

Lyanna Choi

Don't you still remember
The days before September?
When blood ran hot through our veins
Instead of cold on the sidewalk.

Was it the sharp winds that killed us?
(Razor chills raking across damask skies and young skin,
Leaving us to reap the memories.)

Or was it the evening twilight?
(I saw your face once crowned in ethereal suburban fire,
And I burned under your molten eyes.)

Either way,
Autumn made corpses of us both
Yet we still pretend we walk amongst the living.

The Power of People

Maryam Alatmane

Tap, tap, tap. The sound of feet striking the concrete drags the girl out of her slumber. She jumps to her feet. The glass door slides open with a hiss and a masked guard steps forward.

“The judges are waiting for you.” His monotone voice indicates that he is a bot; no respectable person in their right mind would work down here. Although the desperate ones sometimes do. The facilities are deep underground – a cold, damp warren of corridors with the stench of mould hanging in the air.

The bot leads her forward. She ignores those slumped against the glass and looks away when she meets someone’s gaze. Their eyes are filled with empty hope, like there’s no point in fighting anymore.

Her resolve will not be weakened so easily.

A thought flits through her mind. Why do they bother with the formalities? I will be judged guilty. In their eyes. She fiddles with the plastic bracelet with a number printed on it-5170; like cattle, packed underground. Property of the government, it screams out, you can never escape.

She trips and feels a sharp burst of pain, and then nothing. She’s suffered worse. The bot makes a high-pitched, grating noise-presumably a laugh-and drags her to her feet. She notices, for the first time, the staircase-winding around and around.

“They don’t want to be kept waiting.”

Walking tentatively up, she runs her hand along the rough, brick wall. Calm, composed. Almost as if it were anywhere else but here.

Sunlight blinds her. With a clang, the metal door swings shut. She opens her eyes and steps into another world.

The fragrance of flowers in bloom fills the air and a tall fountain pours clear water. Birdsong echoes from all around, as if it were some sort of paradise. Compared to the places she’s seen, it is. On the surface, it’s beautiful. But look closely – the flowers are not flowers at all, the water is slowly turning a murky shade of brown and there are no birds to be seen, just fake sound coming from concealed speakers. Nothing is left untainted. Not anymore.

The courtroom is almost empty; silence is stretched taut over the room. She stands to attention. The verdict has already been decided, they say. Of course it has, she thinks.

A loud, tired voice echoes through the empty space: “Number 5170, you are perceived-” the judge stops-for what reason? Suspense? “Guilty. You have committed numerous offences that have proved your disloyalty to the government. Take her to be tattooed.”

Pushing her forward roughly, the bot propels the girl into a corridor. And straight into a young boy. His bright blue eyes widen as she crashes into him, but she only has time to register the star shaped scar on the back of his neck before she is pulled away.

The girl leans back on the black leather chair, eyes screwed shut as the mechanical needle digs into her skin. You need to stay strong. You need to stay strong. You need to stay strong. She repeats the mantra in her head, sitting up straight and opening her eyes. Dark, blazing with unspent fury and determined to succeed.

Motionless, she stands near the window, looking out over the barren landscape. Maybe it was a beautiful place, once upon a time. Tiredness overcomes her; the smell of something sickly sweet attacking her, choking her. She slumps to the ground, taking one last look at the bold v forever imprinted on her hand. V for villain.

Beauty

Aliya Waseem

My immortal beauty is a great weapon, my mother would always tell me. I am strong, independent and quite cunning. My beauty, she says, is something that adds to that deadly asset. It is a power that very few can understand; a power as deadly as a pair of twin daggers.

My magical and physical abilities are the best in the entire clan, yet she always preaches to me to use the strength of beauty. Despite the fact that there are many ways to make it a weapon, I have my pride. I'd prefer not having to stoop to deception to win a battle; I have the skills required to win.

Although war is where I battle the most, I still relish the boundless thrill of an adventure. It would be just me, Asterin and Hester. We would sneak out in the protective cloak of night and begin one of our many perilous adventures.

Sometimes, we go to locate treasure; others to hunt legendary weapons that have been rumoured. Mostly the latter, because legendary weapons can seriously help in a to-death battle. Take Mistfort, for example. The notorious blade that was used to kill the King of the deadliest army our clan has ever had to encounter.

At the time Mistfort was formed, I was only five; it was the sword of my father, bestowed upon him by Deanna, the Goddess of War. But that was five centuries ago, he is now deceased; however, his warrior blood, forged with my mother's witch blood, surges within my veins. I always use Mistfort in battle as it is the only reminder I have left of my father.

"Manon, are you listening to me?"

I jerked in my chair as I was dragged back into reality.

"I'm sorry, mother. Could you please repeat that?"

I bit the inside of my lip, hoping that I had not just got myself into trouble. She sucked in a breath and dramatically blew it out.

"You are lucky – very lucky – that I am in a good mood today, otherwise that would have earned you many lashings. Anyway, as I was saying, the heir to the other witch clan is trying her hardest to ruin your image."

I frowned in confusion and inquired, "how so?"

She rolled her eyes and replied, "Daft child of mine, she is jealous of your beauty! She is making you out to be an ugly hag!"

That is what this is all about? Honestly, mother must think that I am really stupid. I am always one step ahead in these games.

“Mother, I know. I have already left her a little... let us say gift, for her actions,” I said venomously.

She gave me a dark smile, liking my answer.

They say that beauty is to be taken seriously, but it amuses me how men fall at its power. It is my body, so it is my choice how I make it into a weapon.

No one can stop me.

The Rightful Queen

Aliya Waseem

I took my place and sat down, the frills of my dress gliding across the floor. It was a silky, black gown with red decorations of a flower stemming out.

“Majesty, what do you suggest we do for the upcoming war with Blackbrook?” Lord Kerrick asked the horror sitting next to me.

‘Majesty’ is my adoptive father; I have to call him that, despite our ‘close relationship’. He is the King of Rifthold, Gavin Hallivard. King is just a nice title; the people (me included) see him as a power-hungry tyrant.

You are probably wondering how he came to adopt me. Well, let me tell you. When I was eight years old, my home Kingdom was attacked and everything in it had been destroyed. My parents, and most of the Kingdom, were killed that night. I know of who had survived that night, and they know of me.

There was very little of us, however to me, it was something. That night, we all gathered together to talk about what shall become of us. We were up till who knows when, unsure of what to do.

Finally, I spoke. I announced that, for now, we shall all go into hiding. When I come of age, I shall make some sort of dramatic attack, signalling the birth of our counterattack.

I was snapped out of my nightmare-like thoughts when my father said, “My dear Aelin, please be a sweetheart and fetch the five of us some tea.”

He gave me that sickly sweet smile that said, “It better taste nice or else!”

I stood from my seat, curtsied and said, “Of course, Father.”

I tucked my chair in and left the sweat-smelling room. Honestly! Those men do not know how to clean themselves! It makes me sick as soon as I see any of them. I began to walk down the long, towering hallways and let my thoughts take over.

Today is my eighteenth birthday, the day I come of age. Tonight, I shall wreak such havoc, that it will be known through all of Erilea! No tea for you, Majesty.

I am going to unleash deathfire at the bottom of this palace today, to destroy the damned lock against my legendary power. When I was adopted by Gavin, I did not realise at first, but he built a machine that pushed a force against my power, rendering it helpless.

It took me years to find out where it was, what it was and how to destroy it.

But now that I know, I will make him pay for a decade of pain.

Firstly, I have to get out of the palace and set off a green flare into the sky, a signal to the remains of Falconedge. Then, set off the deathfire. Increasing my pace to a jog, I carried on down the corridor whilst readying the flare.

Running away from one place, only to run back into the awaiting hands of another.

Queen Elentiya Galathynius of Falconedge is back.

The Bastion's Beginning

Kay Flower

A false window of a world, bleeding the spring of a flower's paradise. The mademoiselle's music fearing the stranger, and the birth of man ending in shame.

For in this darkness the petty will prevail, the flower will fall and the withered garden will breathe its dream once again, reunited with the world and setting its silhouette in stone.

The rounded table of four was filled only by three. The edge as sharp as the tiger's tooth and its wood stronger than the tallest tale. Behind the Flower sat a singular small pane of glass, depicting in its tiny glory the grey and cubed world outside.

The Mademoiselle was a dreamer. She would sway to the sound of her own music and smile at the strength of the words. Her companions enjoyed the songs, yet as the darkness crept behind her, a fear of strangers consumed the Mademoiselle, and soon she left.

Sadly, the Toy Soldier was a pessimist. He'd played his part many times in fields of ash and muck, and saw their group's decreasing numbers as nothing more than fate. But even he couldn't ignore the call for aid, and soon he left.

Thirdly, the Flower was a lonely hoper. She'd sit for hours staring into nothing, pleased with her own passing thoughts. But as a breeze blew over her shoulder, the rounded table revealed itself to be empty. Yet, to the Flower's delight, the singular small pane of glass began to flow with the blossom of spring, and soon she left.

Time had passed slower for the fourth member, and in the mystery of his land he discovered calm. But loneliness was a pondering price to pay. Perhaps a guest was all he needed, perhaps a newcomer was all that awaited. Yet as the days dawned blind, and the nights rose bright, there was more than expected, and in the end, a friend is what was demanded.

Zombie Apocalypse

Orla Fay

The shiver of horror creeps up my bones,
silence falls in the earth.
Beggars stop and fall to the ground.
For they have come.

Dark shapes in the shadows emerge,
slimy blackened fingers rip throats to shreds.
Moth eaten clothes with a worn sensation,
sleepless faces contorted by others.

Bloodshot eyes stare at me,
arms stretched out they stumble towards me.
Nothing I say or do can stop them.
They are forever.
I walk towards them waiting to embrace death,
then everything goes black.

Untitled

Iona Mandal

Who knew, that distant memory of my cold palm
Curling around my chilled frame
Could morph into cold blood - egged and ebbed
Ebbled and egged on by my cold heart

Who thought, my unthought reveries would make me cry
Cry cold tears
The tears you cry over cold, spilt milk
Tipped over without a thought

Who guessed, my soul
Would be under lock and key
Treated like cold coffee
Left on the kitchen counter

Who remembered, that once
My heart was not crystallised with ice
My soul wasn't a blown out candle
The warmth in me was intact

Who knew?
Who thought?
Who guessed?
Who remembered?

I once had a flame in me?

Friendship

Hattie Gennard

Friendship can be hard in life

It can be like the sharp blade of a knife
It can send your heart sinking to the bottom of the ocean

Sometimes you may feel like you need a potion
When you have that devastating fight
You would cry yourself to sleep at night

But let's forget about the negatives, and think about the light side

Where you seek and hide
From class to class
The memories pass
Leaving your heart
You have played your part
Being an incredible friend
When you forgive, your heart just mends
Amazing times
The music chimes
Hand to hand
The sleepovers and play dates you have planned

But sometimes it can break your bones

When you fight, oh all the negative moans
When you break up
And then you make up
Leaving the bad behind
It suddenly leaves your mind
Just spending some time together
Whatever the weather... to me, this is what friends are.

Magpies

Claire Howland

Navy-tuxedoed inspectors strut
across the street, creep cunningly
exploring filthy footpaths but
they do so with regality.
Intelligence sparks in agile skips
climbing roof tiles without care
black tail in feather flutter flicks
leaps from roofs with gymnast flare.

Arrow-headed, flashing white
swoops at me like a bullet, then
it disappears high out of sight,
then dropping into view again.
The ruffling plume demands respect
cocking heads at those beneath,
superiority in their pecks
scavenger, but such beautiful thief.

Symbolic of something I can't explain
a superstitious, sinister sign
they seem so simple yet arcane
see black and white or blues that shine.
Lit up by the setting sun
on gutter-edges without glance
like the light, they're quickly gone
before beauty gets a second chance.

Villanelle

Mark Chappell

My happiness soars above the clouds.
The high-flying success of my career,
Lets my feelings free.

Even in times of greatest sadness,
My laughter echoes around the world.
My happiness soars above the clouds.

The light surrounds me,
Projecting my figure against the darkness of the sky,
Lets my feelings free.

You are on the bottom rung of the ladder.
I am on the top rung, ready to leave this world, but even so,
My happiness soars above the clouds.

My friend, don't waste your life with tedious jobs,
Focus on changing the world.
Let your feelings free.

You only have one chance to achieve something,
So try and be happy.
Let your happiness soar above the clouds.
Let your feelings free.

Cloudwatching

Similoluwa Osunsanmi

One of the things you do as a child is cloud watching, if your imagination is wild.

Up in the sky, you see the strangest of things like the shape of an elephant or a crocodile...with wings.

My dear mother once said “The sky’s like a stage! So shiny and blue! The clouds are its actors, I can watch them with you. Up in the clouds...what do you see?”

I replied, “I see a mother duck looking at me! She’s in the water, I see her glide, with her ducklings beside her trying to hide! What are they hiding from, mother, tell me!”

“They’re hiding from a crocodile, look, can you see? They’re scared of the crocodile’s chomping jaws, they’re scared they’ll be dragged away by his sharp claws...but look!”

“Mother! There’s a fairy coming to save the day! I hope she can make the croc go away!
“I’m sure she will, darling, I’m sure she will! We can watch what happens. Now, isn’t that a thrill!”

“Mummy, what happened, I cannot tell! The clouds have gone dark, has she cast a spell?”
“I think she has...and she sure made it snappy! The crocodile is gone and the ducks are all happy!”

“Thank goodness, dear mother, thank goodness he’s gone!

“Here’s a new story... I spy a swan, she is so elegant, head held high with pride. Along the big blue sky, she so gracefully glides. There’s an old man, jolly and kind. What’s he digging in his pockets to find?”

“He’s giving the swan big chunks of bread, as the swan does look like she has hardly been fed. Mother, what’s happening now? The sky is still blue, but not a single cloud!”

My mother stood up “I think that’s enough. The clouds are too tired, and they cannot play. That’s the end of the story, let’s call it a day.”

So, on a warm sunny day, just go out to play, and take a good look at the sky. Why not lie on the lawn, if it’s lovely and warm, you may see some shapes passing by.

Most imaginative of people can see things like this, go on, give the sky a stare! Once you have seen it, it’s too hard to miss. So tell me, what is up there?

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