

ANTHOLOGY 2020

The Anthology

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*In proud memory
of*



Naoise O'Sullivan

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FOREWORD

This Anthology has a little something for everyone - from controversial poetry to thrilling short stories. The submissions in this book are a mix of different genres, from horror to thriller. Some stories can be about real-life controversial issues, but that's the idea of the Clonkeen College Press ANTHOLOGY – to present writing that is controversial and eye-catching, and to allow students to talk about the issues which happen in our daily lives.

My job as part of Clonkeen College Press was to design the cover. I chose the image of the heart and the skull because it was very striking. It caught my attention.

My thinking in selecting this image as the cover for the 2020 ANTHOLOGY was that the heart is a symbol for passion and the skull, which holds the brain, is symbol for knowledge and creativity. Passion, knowledge and creativity are used in harmony to create all these poems and stories.

The students who submitted work for the ANTHOLOGY want their creativity, passion and knowledge to be expressed and recognised. We hope that

this year's publication, ANTHOLOGY 2020, has allowed them to achieve this through poetry, music, story-telling, essay writing and whatever written form they have chosen.

Eoghan Echivarre
Feb 2020

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PROSE

1ST YEARS

THE CIRCUS

Owen Bilag

Before our story begins let's do some history, the piped piper had gotten rid of the of all the rats in the king's kingdom. But when the piped piper's fee wasn't paid, he decided to then kidnap all the kids inside of the kingdom. This story was said to be fictional, but every story fiction or fact has their inspiration.

Well enough of that boring old history let's get on to the fun stuff you people want to hear. Meet Jayson or Jay for short, Jay loves the forest, practically he goes there every weekend and after school to avoid the stress of his siblings, parents and school. He loves the forest and all creatures inside. He loves the feeling of the wind through his long blonde hair, the felling of the rough dirt touching his pale hands excites him but what he loves the most is the fact no one knows he's here.

The blue sky soon faded into darkness and the warmth of the streetlights flashed on. But Jay couldn't see the beautiful night skies, his house was erupted in screaming , no matter where you went in the house you could hear "you worthless trash" "you gave birth to trash" "well

where were you today, NOT AT WORK OR HERE THAT'S WHERE!!!!".

Jay couldn't take it anymore he grabbed a coat and off he went running to the forest like an ostrich with its butt on fire. More shouting occurred as he ran out of the practically screaming house. Off he ran down the warmly lit streets, brick house after brick house until he reached the dark yet still beautiful forest.

But Jay didn't care he'd rather be in the freezing seas than in that house. So off he went deeper into the forest, not minding if he gets lost. He was running for ten minutes at least, until he wanted to rest beside a big tree. He clenched his coat for warmth as he poured-out tears that could fill a lake. He sobbed in complete darkness until the hungry howls of wolves filled the air. Jay jumped to his feet as quick as possible and ran off hopefully leaving the scary sounds of the wolves behind.

He slid back onto the hard floor until he heard the faint sound of an instrument nearby. The sound was faint but still loud enough to mesmerise and place Jay inside of a sort of trance. Jay felt his limbs become dough and being pulled like a puppet. His once pouring tears turned dry, his body felt itself going numb with the freezing cold temperatures closing around him. Jay wanted to scream his heart out for help, but his mouth was glued shut like nails on a board.

Jay felt like he was walking for hours until he reached a large dark red and white tent. The tent looked as if it had

gone through the wars, rips scattered around it, a horrid scent flooded out of a tent. The wicked scent smelt of socks, vomit and rotten meats, it was as if thousands of animals pooped in the tent and left it there. Jay didn't want to enter the horrid tent but at the same time he felt as if he had no choice to.

As he stepped inside, he noticed the floor was just sand and had pieces of grass sprouted in different areas. What appeared to be banisters surrounded the inside of the tent, they were broken and rotting it didn't seem like it could hold a cat on them. A snapped trapeze wire dangled from the roof swaying in the light wind. In the centre of the tent sat a small podium for the great ring master to conduct his circus. But in the very back of the tent was a door cutting through the banisters.

The howl of a wolf and his pack screamed through the air like a banshee in the sky. Quickly Jay ran to the distant door to escape the howling of the wolves. He ran into the random room and slammed the door behind him. Inside was white, the floor, ceiling and walls covered with the brightly lit colour. A single oil lamp lit the room with a singular chair underneath.

BANG! Came from outside of the door. Jay stubbornly opened the door hoping to not get mobbed by vicious animals. But instead of vicious animals there was music which brought excitement to kids, the dark colours turned bright, the once rotten banisters filled to the brim with cheering children, a red, yellow and blue coloured clown

directed the circus in a symphony sort of way and two acrobats swung through the air, as one spotted Jay she swung towards him and flew him through the air.

Hours went by as Jay had the most fun since he was little. He scored through the air with acrobats, told jokes with the clown, got sawed in half with the magician and tamed a lion with lion tamers. Jay was having the time of his life until he started to miss his old life. He would've loved to stay forever but he wanted to go home.

As he tried to leave the tent, the clown grabbed a hold of the defenceless boy, scaring him. The tent went silent, with everyone's eyes turning into a deathly black. As their jaws opened revelling the black souls of screaming and lost children pouring out of their mouths. But the clown, he was just laughing and laughing like a maniac in an asylum as he loosened his grip on Jay.

Jay found his chance and leapt for the door as he covered his ears to block out the terrifying screams of the lost children. He once again quickly opened the door and slammed it as fast as he went inside. The room now a blood red with a flashing bulb hanging from the ceiling. He couldn't take it anymore and smashed the bulb with the leg of the now broken chair.

The red pouring into the middle of the room like water. The lamp now setting the room on fire. Quickly Jay ran out of the room to not get caught on fire. The circus was crumbling as the screams of joy screamed throughout the

tent. As Jay exited, he saw satins tent for the last time as it dropped into the deepest depths of hell.

“JAY!” screamed a familiar voice. Jay was exhausted so he fell to his knees, laughing while crying. A tall man in police uniform came up to Jay and examined him. After a thorough inspection his eyes widened and shouted, “Everyone I’ve found the boy, he’s in bad shape get the medic!” he screamed as Jay started to shut eyes.

Jay woke up in a hospital bed with his parents at the foot of the bed kissing, his older brothers were tearing they’re eyes out whilst his grandma was knitting, which was usual for her. She took one look at him before returning to her knitting and said, “good job, you killed the clown,”. Everyone’s head turned to me and shouted, “Your alive!”.

And that’s how Jay killed the everlasting kidnaper of the children. That’s my story, what’s yours?

2ND YEARS

INFECTING FOOTBALL

Ajay Somanathan

Rewind back to the 1990s and the early 2000s, remember the excitement, enter Didier Drogba, Thierry Henry, Frank Lampard, Ashley Cole, John Terry and even "the special one" (Jose Mourinho). The times Nottingham Forest, Celtic and Porto won the Champions League? That will never happen again, unless a person with authority acts promptly which is likely to happen over Manchester United winning the league.

Today's game is flowing with money, think Real Madrid, PSG, Bayern and Juventus. It's a vicious cycle in which the rich just get richer. Manchester City have gone from residing in England's fourth tier of football, to winning the league in a matter of ten years. How is that even possible? Arab money, money saved a club from disaster. Think about Nottingham Forest and Porto, what person loaded with money would come and invest in them? '99, Premier League winners were Blackburn, '16 league winner were Leicester City... underdogs prevailing, things no one has ever heard of. This sort of thing should happen more often, but it doesn't due to the wealth of other clubs. The money UEFA gives to the

Champions League winner is 82 million euros and 15 million euro to the group stage contenders. Seems fair, right? The problem is the 67-million-euro difference. 67 million euros has become a norm.

67 million euros!?! A few years ago, 35 million euros was the highest transfer fee, 35 million euros for Sir David Beckham. Today the highest transfer fee for a player is 222 million euros. This is a serious problem. Clubs such as Bury F.C. are simply ceasing to exist because of poor management and a lack of MONEY. UEFA needs to do something about this.

THE ENTITY

Thomas Fegan

Sally had always been an unusual person. She was always full of questions that couldn't be answered, like why we existed or what happens after you die. But Sally never thought about this in a fearful or tense way, just out of curiosity. She would give anything to have these questions answered, to gain that supreme knowledge. But that was impossible.

"I suppose I should just stop asking", Sally said, walking through her local park in the pouring rain. Sally liked the rain. It helped her think. And then, as if by magic, everything froze, even the rain. A formless mass of colour and light had appeared before Sally, hovering in the air. Sally just stared at it, not knowing whether to approach it or to flee from it.

After about a minute, a man's voice echoed from the light, "Hello, Sally. Don't worry. I mean you no harm."

"What are you?" Sally asked.

"I am one of the many entities roaming the universe, creating planets, galaxies and solar systems. In a way, I am a God," it answered.

“Tell me more,” Sally insisted. “What you are capable of, how you came to be?”

“Think about people like Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein or Steven Hawking. Incredibly intelligent people like you. Well, when they ask themselves questions like you have, they encounter an entity, like myself, who explains the same things I am explaining to you and other things. As for what we Entities can do is another thing entirely. Like I said before, we can create planets and galaxies, but we can do more too. We could cause living beings to rapidly evolve into something new, or we could erase them from existence altogether. If we wanted to, we could even create a new universe!”

“That’s incredible!” Sally exclaimed.

“Yes, it is. But here is what I have not told you yet. The people we have revealed these glorious secrets to are given a chance to become like US, to have the same powers we have! What about you, Sally? Do YOU want to be an Entity?” it asked.

“Yes! Of course! How do we do it?” Sally asked excitedly.

“You simply walk through my shapeless form you see before you,” it replied.

So, Sally did. And all her questions were finally answered.

The End

4TH YEARS

ECHO

Joe Sweeney

A bead of sweat trickled down his temple and dissolved into his eyebrow. Noel Williams dragged his legs through the marshy undergrowth. Holding a machete in one hand and a hip flask in the other, he made his way slowly through the Congo rainforest. He had been travelling for almost a fortnight now. Each step he took reminded him how exhausted he was. He knew that if he stopped, he wouldn't be able to start again. He tipped his head back and swallowed the last few drops of brandy. He discarded the hip flask and removed a compass from his pocket. As he examined it closely, a bizarre noise shattered the silence of the rainforest. He stopped in his tracks, fear shooting through him like adrenaline. Abruptly, an arrow whistled through the air, passing barely an inch by his face before lodging itself into a tree.

Forgetting his exhaustion immediately, he began trampling through the undergrowth, not caring a bit for how much noise he was making. He was vaguely conscious of blurred shapes pursuing him to his left and right. He began to slow as the undergrowth grew thicker beneath his feet. He knew he wasn't moving fast enough,

and he knew there was nothing he could do about it. Pain shot through his ankle as he twisted it in a crevice. He collapsed to his hands and knees, as tears began pouring freely down his cheeks. He was more scared than he had ever been in his life. He began crawling forward, knowing that he was only delaying the inevitable. He reached out in front of him and dragged himself along the ground, until he reached out and his hand met a man's foot. He looked up, hoping beyond hope that it was someone who wished to help him. He looked into the eyes of the man who held his life in the palm of his hand. His hopeful gaze was met with a cold-hearted glare. Noel's heart sank. This man had not come to save him. The man raised a wooden club and brought it crashing down on Noel's head.

Noel awoke slowly and waited for the ground to stop spinning. It didn't. He tried to move his arms. He couldn't. He was sweating from an intense heat. Straining his neck, he tried to look around and suddenly realized he had been stripped. His head was aching, and the sun was blinding him. His heart quickened as he put it together, realized why the ground was spinning and why it was so hot. He had been tied to a horizontal pole and placed over a fire. He was being slow roasted alive. Panic set in, as Noel started twisting madly, trying desperately to escape. He cried out for help, knowing it was futile. A man entered the tent and stood there watching him panic.

He waited for Noel to calm down. He approached Noel slowly, before speaking to him in broken English.

“You are American... Yes?”

Noel nodded his head weakly.

The man held up a pouch of water.

“You must be thirsty, yes?” he asked Noel.

Noel nodded again, slightly more enthusiastically this time. The man uncorked the pouch and poured it over Noel’s head. The man laughed to himself as he did this.

“And you must be hungry, yes? Not to worry, my friend. We will eat very soon.”

Chuckling to himself, he rose and exited the tent, leaving Noel to roast.

FEAR OF DOWNSTAIRS

Robert O’Gorman

I made my way down the stairs one glorious morning for breakfast. I sensed the blazing sunlight beaming down on my back, it felt like nothing at all could go wrong with my day, but making my way down those stairs evoked memories of the first time I tried making my way down the stairs when I was younger.

We just moved into a new house. I despised my new house; it was not aesthetically pleasing at all. The exterior of the house was hideous, the walls were worn down with drab and dreary textures. The interior had the same problems and it looked like something straight out of a horror movie. The reason why we ended up with such a miserable house was because my dad got a new job as a lieutenant in a different county. There weren’t any nice houses at all within our price range, so we ended up in a worn-down semi-detached house in a sketchy neighborhood.

I was taking my first night’s rest in my new home, I really needed to go to the bathroom. It was all but pitch black throughout the house making it an arduous task to find the bathroom. I maneuvered around upstairs as quiet

as I could but there was no bathroom in sight. I realized the only bathroom that was in the house was downstairs. Going downstairs during the night-time was my biggest fear. I gazed down the stairs, as if into a black hole. Afraid of what lurked beneath.

I cautiously navigated my way to the first step and clenched on to one of the handrails for safety. I slowly levered down my foot trying to briskly feel the lush like feeling of the carpet staircase. I was very cautious with each advancement due to my obscured vision. I knew that any wrong step had dire consequences. My progression fell into a simple routine, I glued myself to the staircase bannister and elevated my right foot slightly off the stair. I adjusted my foot down slowly and treaded my foot lightly on my next step, then gently followed up with my other foot. I repeated this process throughout the journey.

I suddenly heard a sound from downstairs, I froze mid-step from fear and my whole body went static. I began to think there was some sort of intruder. My bladder was about to burst from all the shock. I couldn't decipher if there were actual footsteps downstairs or if my mind was going astray. I tempted to go back up to the safety of my bedroom, but I didn't come all the way down these stairs for nothing. I was raised not to give up as my father was a lieutenant in the army.

I began to focus again on my task ahead and summoned all my strength to walk down those last couple of stairs. Trepidation was soaring throughout my body,

but I tried my best not to let the fear get into my head. I finally made my way down with the bathroom just five steps away. I tip-toed lightly as possible to the bathroom trying not to alert anyone around or in the household. Suddenly I heard the sound again and panicked. I closed my eyes tight and covered my arms over my head in fear. Once I opened my eyes, I realized it was just the sound of the radiator cracking up a bit. I stopped freaking out once I made it to the bathroom and stomped victoriously as quiet as I could for overcoming my fear.

Overcoming your worst fear is never easy and takes a lot of courage to do so. After that night, I never feared of going down the stairs again and walked down each time with more confidence. After a few months we gathered enough money to get our new house renovated and it was completely transformed. The dreary grey walls of our house were changed into a more pleasing and radiant white. The inside got the same transformation as the outside with it looking more like a house a normal family would stay in. Now going down the stairs is never a problem for me.

THE HOTEL

Rory Egan

It was a dark and gloomy night in Kilbride, Co Roscommon, Johnny was driving home from a holiday in Oughterard, Galway. He had been driving for about an hour and a half already and was getting hungry, so he pulled over into a Supermac's to get something to eat.

When he left Supermacs he continued driving and suddenly it started raining. Johnny did not like driving in the rain as it made him nervous. Then suddenly he heard a clang from the engine, and he started losing power in the car. He pulled over on to the hard shoulder and got out of the car. His car was smoking a lot and was underivable he called his insurance company to see what he can do so he decided to get a pickup truck to bring him to a garage nearby. To his disappointment the garage was closed as it was Saturday and could only get fixed on Monday, so he decided to book a hotel, but he did not have a lot of money so he could only book a one-star hotel which was rumored to be haunted.

When he went into his room it was awful there were dolls in every corner and in the bathroom. The walls were covered in black mold it was disgusting, but he had no

choice but to sleep there as there was not any hotel near him.

After he had dinner, which tasted horrible he went to bed, but he could not sleep as he kept hearing screams that sounded like they were coming from the bathroom. He went to check it out but there was nothing there but as he closed the door, he heard it again this time much louder he opened the door and to his horror he saw a clown. The clown then jumped onto his face. Johnny screamed as loud as he could, he then proceeded threw the clown off his face and tried to escape but the door was locked which he did not remember locking it he then tried to unlock it, but couldn't he turned around to try and escape out the window but all the clowns that were in the corner had all of a sudden come to life and surrounded him. He tried and tried to open the door but could not. The clowns had found a plastic bag from his suitcase and wrapped it around Johnny's head killing him they then cut his wrists making it look like a suicide.

THAT ONE BAD DAY

Evan Gormley

That day started out as any other day I woke up got changed, went downstairs, made breakfast for myself, my wife and my baby son the light of my life. I would soon realize after my shift in the biscuit factory how wrong I was.

Biscuit factory changing room

“Hey James, where's Gerald?” Simon asked me.

“No idea just because he's my best mate doesn't mean I know where he is all the time!” I said jokingly.

“Yeah fair thought I saw his car near your house so thought he might have been picking you up,” Simon said.

“Nah didn't see him maybe he came to drop something over since I told him that Jasmine has been under the weather for a little bit and stayed home for the day,” I said in a thoughtful way.

“Yeah maybe, sounds like him to do something like that,” Simon said. “Anyway how's the young lad at home hasn't caught whatever Jasmine has now has he?”

“No thankfully he hasn’t would hate to see him as sick as a dog like she is and yeah Gerald’s a sound lad glad I had him as my best man,” I said happily.

I get changed while talking to Simon and after I’m fully changed, I get my bag and leave. “See ye later Simon I’m going home not getting paid to stay longer so I’m heading out.”

“Bye James have a good day or whatever left of it,” Simon says sadly. “I have another 2 hours left of this I’ll drop over after work if you’ll have me?”

“Of course, you’ll be good company to have plus Sarah is probably sick of only seeing me and Gerald all the time!” I shout while walking away.

“Great see yeah later!” Simon shouts.

“Bye!” I said after that I walked out of the factory and jogged home. I usually walked but since Simon was coming over, I ran home to get everything prepared easier.

When I got home, I opened the door and saw clothes on the floor and banging upstairs along with screaming my heart dropped. I walked up stairs and opened the door to my room and saw Gerald and my wife having an affair.

I couldn’t breathe I was so angry. Lucky, they didn’t see me, I went downstairs and grabbed a kitchen knife. I knew what I needed to do I needed to end all of this. I walked upstairs and rushed in the room I stabbed Gerald

and then slit my wife's throat. I heard crying in the other room I knew it was my little light.

I went into his room and I realized how much he didn't look like me I grabbed a pillow and I ended the screaming. I have nothing to live for.

Third person

He walks over to the window and jumps out ending it all.

ESCAPE

Evan Gormley

Sirens are going off, there's the sound of feet hitting the wet muddy ground, rain hitting off a white untied straight jacket. A voice comes over the loudspeaker, "Prisoner 6895789 has escaped, be on high alert and he is armed and dangerous."

Outside the prison

A taxi stops in front of a forest the driver gets out to go to the toilet. When he gets deeper into the forest, he hears a rustle in the woods. When he turns around to head back to the car, he sees a man rushing at him with a knife; he didn't even have a second to react as the blade was stabbed into his heart.

The man drags the cold dead body over to the taxi leaving a dark red path of blood. The man takes the clothes off the corpse and pulls out his knife the sound of flesh ripping fills the area.

An hour later

"God, where the hell is this taxi!" a young woman says while waiting outside a bar in the woods.

The woman sees a taxi approaching. “Finally!” she said, “took them long enough.”

The taxi stops and the woman gets inside. “Where have you been? I've been waiting for ten minutes more than you said I would be, you're lucky I don't give you a one-star review.”

The man doesn't say anything, starts the car and turns the radio on, and the announcer says, “An hour ago a convict escaped from the insane asylum in the local area. He's said to be known for taking off the faces of the people that he kills and wearing them. Scary, right Jim.”

The man turns around and the woman notices that the driver isn't stopping at the turn that goes to her house, she looks up from her phone and says, “What the hell are you do...” She stops talking in fear after seeing that the taxi driver is wearing a mask that's dripping with blood.

A scream pierces through the woods only to be silenced suddenly.

THE PACK

Daniel Fishman

The plane streaked away as a ball of fire and smoke in the dark night. It smashed into the ground a couple of miles away and no doubt started a forest fire somewhere. I came to a sudden and violent stop as my parachute got caught up in branches and treetops. My training kicked in and after a 3 second drop I was on the ground and checking the shrapnel in my leg. A breeze blew over the forest down from the mountains. With it a chill went up my spine. Not from the cold but from the howl that split the nights serenity and shattered my mental shield. I hated wolves the vicious teeth and saliva dripping from the mouth. I spent many a night sweating in fear of them. I would prefer to be caught by the Nazis at this point.

I began running my training and knowledge of what to do was gone fear set in and I ran. Every part of my being was running in fear of being caught by the pack. Eventually I ran out of energy and collapsed to the ground. I lay there for what felt like an eternity listening to every twig crack every sway of the leaves. Any movement or noise immediately alerted me and left me holding my

breath waiting. I fell into a fitful sleep and woke every other minute.

When the sun finally raised above the mountains and caught the early morning mist it nearly glowed. When it then hit the fur of the animal that was looking at me, I could physically feel my face drain of all the blood it had. The very nightmare of my dreams stood in front of me. All nine of them staring at me. They seemed to have waited for me to wake up before killing me. Just to torture me when I was conscious.

I began to cry and as soon as I made a noise, one of them growled. The lead wolf stalked closer its eyes nearly glowing red. Scars were lashed across its body. I could see claw marks, bite marks and even what I assumed were antler marks along its side. I couldn't move I didn't even breathe. It was only a centimeter away when it stopped and sniffed the air. It glanced around and the rest of the pack encircled me.

I had already given up on getting out of this. I was frozen by fear and now encircled I knew I was dead. Dread filled me. I had never really feared death before. That was why I was in the army. But I feared it now as I didn't know what would happen when I did die. Before I could finish the next thought, I was dead. All the pack attacked at once and my thought and limbs were gone in seconds. The last thing I saw was the almost smug look on the wolf's face as I departed.

THE THING

Daniel Fishman

It was just a normal night for me as I walked home from the pub when all of a sudden, a black cat strolled across my path. I did the usual drunk thing when I saw anything. I walked at it making cat noises such as meowing and kissing at it. It stared at me then ran away. So, I continued on my walk. In the middle of the night all alone. As per usual.

I heard a sound behind me. Like the air going out of a massive balloon. I turned and saw the cat hissing like mad at something down a dark alleyway. Then out of nowhere a tentacle came out of nowhere and wrapped around the feline. The poor cat was then flung back into the abyss that was the ally and shortly after a sickening crunch followed suit. Now any normal person who saw this morning that call the police or scream and run but not me. No, I chose to stare at the ally and then proceed to walk towards it to see if what I had seen was real.

When I rounded the corner, I got a full view of what monstrosity that nature had created. It looks like a human, but his face was swollen with blister like things that pulsed and writhed like it was in agony. Its hands dripped

with the blood of the cat it was currently disembowelling. The organs squelched and burst between the teeth of the being as its nails ripped out the stomach and liver only to drop them back down again. After watching the thing gorge on the liver and intestines I was surprised and transfixed by this. Then the thing raised up and its entire body rippled and flexed. It seemed as though it would burst at the seams.

And then it did. The tentacles I had seen earlier burst out of its back-spraying blood that sizzled when it made contact with a surface. Chunks of meat flew in every direction and the smell of rotten meat seemed to burn my nose and eyes to the point of blindness for the latter. When I finally managed to blink the acrid burning smoke out of my eyes, I could see something so horrific that I wish I was permanently blind. So unnatural and scary I ran so fast that I couldn't see it very well. Just a glance was enough for me to run. But alcohol makes you groggy and when that thing chases you at top speed you can't really escape. But it was still a surprise when a tentacle grabbed me from behind and dragged me back to the alley. When I turned around again, I wish I hadn't. The being of unspeakable horrors was looking me in the eyes. When I was only a centimetre away from its nose it stopped pulling me.

As the being grabbed me with more tentacles, I was flipped upside down with my head still centimetres from the monster. It began to emit a sound that was shrill. As it

did this a crack formed in its face and a flash of white could be seen in the crack. I began shaking and crying out for help. I didn't want to die here. My dog was at home waiting for me. I had my family waiting for me. It was meatballs tonight. I couldn't die here. As I struggled, I realized I couldn't escape the tentacles. When I looked back the crack had split, and the maw of the being was huge. It looked like a flower bud opening but it was full of teeth. Teeth covered every inch of rotting flesh. It slowly moved towards almost like it was savouring the fear. I began screaming and thrashing about.

It was suddenly silent in the alley after a sickening crunch. The sound of slurping again began as the thing assimilated. The second victim of the night but not the last.

THE KNIGHT

Daniel Fishman

I frantically waved my sword back and forth as I tried to hold back the horde. The wraiths rushed past me not even slowing down. I realized what they were doing but I already knew that it was too late to save her. I sprinted after them, my heart squeezing with every step as I hopped to all hope that the luck we had hadn't run out. But it was not to be. By the time we got there the princess, the love of my life was already dead. When I saw her pale cold face, with lifeless eyes something inside me broke. I howled at the world, with anger and sadness at what it had taken from me. In my rage I killed every single wraith in sight. When they were all dead, I lay there next to my beloved. The tears in my eyes burned with pain at my loss. I only wished then and there that I would die and join her once more.

Then again that isn't what she would have wanted for me. As I buried her, I thought about joining her in the grave just so I could lay down one last time with her. But my work was not done. So, when a mantichore came because of the smell of blood I stood my ground. Even in death I would still protect my love. As I charged the beast,

I knew I would die. I welcomed death with open arms. When the time did come as I was pierced by claws, I didn't feel pain, if anything I felt happy. As I passed on, I met the love of my life and we once again embraced. As warmth filled me, I prayed that I would be here forever with the one I loved.

THE QUEEN OF THE DRAGONS

Daniel Fishman

It was one of those beautiful days in her village as Ezra exited her school. The sun was out without a cloud in the sky. It wasn't too hot either as there was a light breeze that tossed her dark hair to the side as she walked. Her house was on the other side of their small village. Her village consisted of a town hall a school a tavern and enough farms and houses to keep every safe and working.

It was a seventy-minute wagon ride from here to the capital which meant that they could easily travel to the capital to sell her wares with her father who was the town smithy. Her mother, while sick, was ironically the town healer and was the best in the country. While Lorraine wasn't the biggest country not many could say that they could heal the dragon's bane. Only my mother could in fact, and she was currently teaching my brother and I how to heal this sickness. The dragon's bane was a plague that had been named as such as it was the only known disease that could fell a dragon. When a dragon died so did his rider so when the prince's dragon was sick the king himself traveled all the way from the castle to request aid from my mother. Seen as she was old friends with the king

somehow, she agreed and saved the prince's life. I still don't know how she knows the king.

On the way home I went into the market as I had to buy fresh weed to help heal my mother. It would take the pain away from the myeloid. It was a sickness that plagued this land for centuries and while not fatal it was still there.

When I got there the mayor was making a speech on how the dragons would be making their choices this week and that anyone could be chosen to join a dragon. To join with a dragon was a great honor and it would mean that you could train in the capital city with the other chosen. Some of the chosen were even on the council and they worked to help and protect our country from all sorts of dangers such as other countries and droughts. The ritual of the dragons flying out to different cities and villages to choose their humans was an ancient one and was respected even by other countries.

When the speech had finished, I walked up to the local pharmacist and asked for my fresh weed. While she went to get it, I got talking to her daughter Leila about the ritual.

"Do you think anyone will be chosen this time around"

Leila looked up at me with her hazel eyes. "The last time someone was chosen was old tom my uncle and that was five years ago," she said.

"I know but the ritual only happens every five years, so it makes sense."

“Yes, but I hope no one is taken away this year because I never saw my uncle again except for in a casket on the way home after a fight with a dragon.”

When she finished her mother came in with the fresh weed.

“That will be five-seventy please.”

“What it was only five last time!”

“Yes, but the drought is costing us more and drying up our stock were lucky we have any and so are you.”

“Oh well thank you then.” I handed her the money and left the shop.

As soon as I stepped out, I stared straight into the reptilian eyes of a dragon. I was in awe at the size of the beast and stood there gawping at it. A breath of hot air rolled over my body and in that moment, I immediately felt that there was no connection between us. I moved to the side and Leila walked out and was practically flung onto the dragons back by one of its massive claws. Before Leila could even shriek the dragon was in the air and away.

Her mother ran out and immediately shouted when she saw that it wouldn't do any good and that her daughter was probably gone forever, she gave up knelt on the ground and began to cry while quietly saying “not another no not another”. It was then that I thought that Leila's uncle was her mother's brother and he too had been taken. He too had also died. She was whisked away by her husband back into the depths of the shop.

When I got home, I told my mother and father what had happened at the marketplace. When I began to wash the fresh weed, I noticed them share a glance. My brother wasn't home yet, so they sent me out to collect berries. I knew that they would be talking about all the secrets they had kept over the years. All my questions could be answered. But I was smart I knew that they were smart. If they didn't tell me there was a reason behind it so it could wait. When I finally got to the berry bushes, we had I stooped down to pick some up when I felt a great gust of wind buffet me. I looked around. Nothing. I was in a sheltered area so that shouldn't have happened.

Then I saw it a black dot heading toward me getting bigger by the second. It was just a bird. I felt a little prick in my head. Almost like it was in my mind. I turned just in time to see the thing that made a thump sound as it landed beside me. A giant black dragon stared down at me and bared its teeth. In less than a second it grabbed my bag in its teeth and took me away. Immediately two thoughts went through my head. I was either A: going to die or B chosen and about to start my new life.

It was about halfway through my flight that I realized that the dragon carrying me was massive. While I didn't know many dragons, I had seen them from far away and they weren't nearly that size. The fact that he was choosing would mean that he was still quite young. Or he had lost his rider. Or he was hungry. It wasn't uncommon for dragons to eat humans and when it happened there was

great turmoil in the land. Most people still loved the dragons but there were those that hated them, mainly up north as the main reason that they lost the war was because of the dragons.

The dragon above was still winging its way towards the city so I assumed I was chosen. I wondered who I would meet and what friends I'd make. In my head an image of what I thought was a training hall appeared. I felt a tug somewhere in my head and I knew from my studies that it must be the dragon bond I had. He must have sent me the image. Then he spoke in my mind.

"Hello dragon-sister."

Immediately I knew he was my dragon.

"Hello," I said out loud.

"Silly human, you can speak to me in my mind."

"Hello, my name is Ezra," I thought at him. How did I know it was a him?

"I know your name is Ezra as we are bonded," he said? Thought?

"It is more like feeling a thought or image to you" That made sense.

"It's magic it doesn't make sense."

"What's your name anyway."

"I can't tell you that just yet."

With that he closed the link between us, before I could ask him why. It was then that I felt truly alone. I creaked my eyes open slowly. I was immediately bombarded by a blinding light that realized was the sun. As I blinked the

spots out of my eyes, I felt the wind whipping past us. I looked down and saw us soaring past fields of crops and cows. The roar of wind in my ears drowned out everything else there was that I could possibly hear. There was something in the distance that was growing bigger by the second at the speed it was going it had to be a dragon with either it's rider or another chosen on their way to the city. I look toward the city to see the golden houses and citadel's shining like a lost jewel among the dirt. The way the sun glinted of the gold and silver made it look like the city of God's. Then I thought of the huts that some of the people in my village lived in and some of that childish awe and amazement turned to anger but only some.

As that thought finished a mighty crack split the air and nearly burst my ear drums. I felt the pain ricochet through the dragon as I remembered that he had better hearing and must be in some serious pain. I heard him roar through the bond and even in that moment I felt happy to hear him in my head. I look around to see what had created that devastating sound and I saw that the ground itself had been ripped apart and a crevice had formed under us. I became very self-conscious about being held by the dragon's claws above the gaping maw with unknown depths and dangers.

Suddenly beings began to spill out of the crack. They were grotesque creatures that should never have seen the light with mangled bodies and differentiating number of limbs and heads. They must have been down there for a

long time as a stench so foul drifted upwards it made me gag.

After the last of the beings had groped and clambered their way out of the hole a plant followed. It looks harmless at first, but anything would while beside the shambling army of messed up and armed things in their thousands. I saw a rabbit bolt from its burrow to escape the onslaught of the things. The plant noticed this somehow and a flower head reared up and spurted forth a vile jelly like substance that clung to the fur of the rabbit when it hit. The poor animal began screaming at the touch of it and I watch from above as it was melted down to a boney and soupy consistency.

I lost sight of them in the clouds as we raised higher and I noticed why when the flower heads looked up at us. The rabbit had been going full speed away from them and had started off about 20 feet away so the plant could have reached us if it had been faster. Again, I was thankful to have my dragon and be over that mess then in it.

When there was a gap in the clouds again, I saw that the army had turned to face that capital and had begun to march towards it. I urged my dragon on in my head as we had to get there before and warn the riders, or we wouldn't stand any chance against our new enemies.

As we flew towards our new lives, I prayed that we would be able to actually live them.

UNDERNEATH THERE IS...NIGHTMARE!

Andrew O'Donovan

I can't breathe, I don't know why but I can't breathe." He looked above him, the ceiling was sinking. He didn't know what to do. He just sat there and let it happen to him, there was a force shoving him, pushing him, choking him he slowly stopped moving until - BANG!!!!!!He jumped up.

"Come on, It's time to go" His 9:00 alarm was sounding.

"Time for school," his brother said. He sprung up, got changed and went straight to school.

"Mr. Ryan O'Donnell please can you attend class, you're late," the principal shouted across the hallway. Ryan ran to class in a hurry. When he entered, the whole class just gazed at him, he looked back in confusion and sat down.

"Alright class, please hand me your homework."

Ryan places his homework on the desk and continues with his day. Ryan stepped out of school and strolled to the bus stop.

“And where do you think you’re going tiny????” He turns around and stares at the commenter.

“What now?” Ryan asked. This unknown person pulls out his hand and asks for his bag. Ryan hands it over. The person takes out his money and his bus card.

“Alright you can go now shorty.”

Ryan turns slowly back and walked home, he was distraught. He continued home and read his comic book THE SHADOWS WITHIN. It is about monsters who haunt people and their nightmares come to life. Ryan was into monsters, but his mom would never let him read those comics because he would have nightmares. But Ryan would always continue reading and reading...

“Hey Mom I’m home,” Ryan shouted. He walked into the kitchen and sat down with his family.

“So son, how was school today?” his father asked.

No reply. Ryan just stared into his food stirring it around and around and around, over and over again.

“And why were you so late?”

Still no reply.

“Come on speak up, why were you so late for 1 school and to dinner?”

He just sat there, not a sound and continued his dinner. Once he had finished he ran upstairs and continued with his comics. He grabbed his water bottle and read on. His

head would slowly fall onto the pillow and he would shut his eyes.

A voice called his name repeatedly.

“Ryan, Ryan, Ryan.”

He followed the voice into a cave that seemed endless, but he came to a stop, the voice that was calling him, came from his comic book ‘The Shadows Within’ He opened it and a sentence was formed on an empty page

“When an innocent mind is taken into my grasp, there I am, when this happens, the deepest fears are awakened, what am I?”

He sat in confusion and turned around, and saw something, he looked up and a huge shadow was standing over him, it seemed to be a bear. It moved its head forward, close to his face, Ryan looked into its face and saw a skull looking at him. Ryan froze, the bear lifted its paw and loaded back to strike...

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

“Hey son, can I talk to you?”

Ryan sat up alerted and confused, looking around for that creature to come out.

“I shouldn’t have shouted at you at the dinner table, but you have to tell me if there’s anything wrong, Ok?”

“Ye, ye, sure thing dad, thanks.”

His dad looks at him and smiles, then leaves. Ryan can hear his name being called again. He jumps out of bed and grabs the first thing he could find - a hair brush.

The voice asks him, "Why are you scared Ryan?" The voice deep and fearful, keeps getting nearer and nearer "Don't fear boy. I'm not here to hurt you."

"No leave me alone."

"Why do you fear me?"

"Go away."

"There is one thing you should know, boy, monsters are coming back to take what was rightfully ours."

"And you are telling me because?"

"Because I'm the devil's messenger and you are going to spread the word, if your people don't listen to you, boy, the human race will come to an end."

"Why me though? There is nothing special about me," Ryan questioned the beast's decision.

It replies, "You are the only human that knows that underneath there is nightmares, which makes your soul compatible with both worlds."

The beast submerged into the darkness and Ryan sat in fear, confusion and disbelief.

He woke up, beads of sweat dripping down, Ryan gazed at the ceiling and thought if the nightmares were coming into reality. But he knew that he had to go to sleep to get up early. He said to himself, "Tomorrow's another day."

Ryan went into school the next day, he was looking around in fear, He feels someone tapping him on the shoulder he spins around rapidly, and goes into a defensive position,

“Hey, it’s okay, I’m not gonna hurt you.”

Ryan looked up to a face he has never seen before, she had blue eyes, blonde hair, tallish, a kind looking face with hints of freckles.

“Oh hey, sorry about that I thought you were one of them bullies”

“It’s ok, my name is Aoife what’s yours?”

Ryan looked up like he was looking at an angel, he stumbled his words. “Oh eh my....my name is eh Ryan.”

She pointed at the seat beside him. “May I?”

“Yeah of course.”

She took out her lunch and looked at Ryan with a question on her face. “Do you work at the petrol station just around the corner?”

“I do yeah, why’d you ask?”

“I just recognized you from school and all and I’d thought you had a friendly face, that’s all”.

Ryan just sat there and smiled.

“What you smiling about?”

Ryan looked up. “Oh nothing.”

She looked away and smiled.

Ryan reversed the question and Aoife replied, “Oh nothing.”

The bell sounded.

“Well I hope I see you around.”

“Yeah, you too.”

Ryan waved goodbye and opened his bag to check if everything was still there, he opens his lunch box to find a sticky note “Call me sometime, 087 546 1223” Ryan looked up and looked around to see if he could see her but she was nowhere in sight. He put the sticky note in his pocket and spun around in happiness and ran to the bus stop.

When he returned home he ran up to his room and grabbed his phone, He was staring at the sticky note and was nervously tapping the table - TAP-TAP-TAP-TAP-TAP! And he picked up his phone and dialed in the number – MMM! MMM! It rang multiple times until she picked up.

“Hello?” she asked confusingly.

“Uh hey its Ryan.”

“Oh, Ryan, how’s it going?”

“I’m good thanks.” Ryan looked outside at the weather and look at his table. “Do...ehh...Do you want to come over?”

Aoife replies, “Yes, sure. Now?”

Ryan jumped back with, “Yeah, now, if your able to.”

“Yeah. I should be.”

“Okay, see you then.”

“Ryan, I don’t know where you live?”

“Oh yeah, its 224 Abbey street, it’s near the gas station.”

“Oh ok, I’ll see you in about fifteen mins.”

“Alright, see you then.”

Ryan hung up and jumped up in excitement. He went to go tell his Mom that he was bringing Aoife over and the beast’s eyes were poking through the closet door.

“So a new friend?”

“Uh, yeah, why do you care?” Ryan looked it dead in the eyes.

“Just asking.”

“Listen here...What’s your name?”

“Nightmare.”

“Well then, Nightmare, you better stay away from Aoife when she’s here, you hear?”

“Hmm, I might have a little taste.”

“Ew! You are disgusting.”

“Isn’t that what you want, a taste.”

The doorbell chimes in the halls and Ryan runs down the stairs to answer it.

“Hey, Ryan,” says Aoife.

“Hey, come in.”

Ryan shuts the door and follows Aoife up to his room.

“Your room is pretty cool,” as she spins around the room.

“Do you want to see something cooler?” Ryan opens the window and walks out onto the roof which was lit by candles and had blankets with some chocolate and popcorn.

“Oh my God, Ryan this is so cool.”

Ryan looked down to his feet and smiled.

They both lay down and looked up at the stars and Aoife turned and said, “Ryan, this absolutely beautiful.”

“I know right, anytime I’ve had a bad day I come out here and star gaze.”

Ryan turned and looked at her, she looked back they made eye contact. Ryan closed his eyes and leaned forward...

“Ryan, can you come in for a second?”

Ryan jumped up and ran inside to see Nightmare looking at him.

“Nightmare, what the hell, how can you do such a good impression of my mother?”

“I’m from the underworld, what do you expect? But you are being summoned.”

“By who?”

Nightmare looked down and said, “He is waiting.”

Ryan looked up in fear, he walked to the window and said, “Aoife, my mom says you have to go home now.”

She sat up. “Already?”

“Yeah, she says it’s late but I say otherwise.”

Aoife sat up and said to Ryan, “I’ll see you in school, loser!” **Kisses on his cheek**

Ryan spins around in joy and jumps up and down, “I can still hear you.”

Ryan corrects himself and hears himself being called, “Ryan...Ryan...Ryan.”

He grabs his comic and closes his eyes...

...The air was filled with dust and fog, nature with no life, streams of some sort running through the ground. A full moon blaring its song in the sky and howling of a wolf sounding. Ryan looked around him in mystery.

“It’s about time you showed yourself. I’ve been waiting for you for – Wow! Ten thousand years! - so Ryan I believe you have what I need.”

“And that is?” The demon pointed at him.

“I don’t understand.”

“Your soul is the only one compatible with your world and mine, and I want in.” Ryan looked up in fear. At first he turned and looked for a way to run, he looked down at his comic.

“You can have it.”

“Where is the fight in you, Ryan?”

“My family don’t love me, I’m doing horrible in school, no one in school likes me, and I’ll never get a

chance again, so go ahead take me! I've got nothing to lose." Ryan looked up with tears in his eyes.

The demon turned and laughed at him. "Pity human, but I admire your pity. You would fit in well with the slaves."

Ryan levitated off the ground. He could feel his chest being pulled apart and says, "I can't breathe. I don't know why but I can't breathe."

Ryan remembered this from a past nightmare, his eyes slowly closing and the demon said, "Underneath there is... **NIGHTMARE!**"

OPPORTUNITIES LOST, NEW ONES MADE

Andrew O'Donovan

He zipped up his guitar case and closed his bag then put it on his back. He whistled along the small estate and waved back to the friendly neighbors who waved at him. He held his guitar case in one hand and his gear in a suitcase, amp, leads and a microphone.

“Off busking again are you Callum?”

“Of course I am Mr. A”

“Keep it up kid, one day you’ll be famous, like I was.”
Mr. A laughed to himself.

Callum walked to his favorite spot to busk, he placed his guitar case down, unzipped the bag, took out the guitar, the leads and setting up the amp.

“Testing testing, one, two three.”

He looked up to see if there were people walking by, he strummed up and down in a slow motion. He closed his eyes and got into full emotion with the song

“CLING, CLANG, DING,” as the money drops in it takes Callum out of concentration, but he continues anyway.

A loud clap arises when he had finished.

“Thank you very much.”

As the day progressed, fewer and fewer people listened to his songs heart and soul, until a man in a suit, in the distance, sitting in the shadows watching him. Callum looked at him and as soon as they had made eye contact, Callum looked away and started packing his stuff and started his journey home.

“Excuse me, sir?”

Callum turned around. “Yes?”

“I’ve been listening to your playing for a while now and I was wondering if you would like to come in and play a few songs at our pub, maybe a few celebrities you could meet.”

Callum looked at his guitar and looked back at the man, standing, waiting for a reply.

“I’ll think about it.”

Callum walked home, the clouds roaring with thunder and sitting on the porch was his father.

“Your late, again.”

“I know, I was talking to this man and he offered me to perform at his pub.”

“Is that so?”

Callum looked down at his feet, trying to keep his eyes busy.

“And will you get paid?”

“I don’t know, but it could really put my name out there.”

His father continued to inhale the long cigar, and looked up at Callum and asked, “And suppose your name doesn’t get out there, and this guy doesn’t like you, what are you going to do?”

Callum looked up and looked at his father in the eyes and said, “I don’t know.”

His father slammed his newspaper down and stood up with anger and shouted, “Do you think that you can go around and say, ‘I don’t know’ to everything? You will make it nowhere if you just go around like a headless chicken waiting for an opportunity and let it go by because you don’t know!”

Callum's dad sat down holding his head and inhaled the bit of his cigarette.

Callum walked past him and said nothing closing the door at speed, Callum says under his breath, “I hate you! Why mom is still married to you I have no clue but I hate you,” and he walked up to his room and closed the door.

“Callum!!!”

A voice calling his name. “Callum!!!” It repeated over and over and over again.

Callum jumped out of bed and ran across the hallway into a room, curtains closed, window open at a slight angle so a light breeze could cool the room to a perfect temperature.

“Hey, you okay? You’re screaming like a lunatic.”

“Of course I’m okay, just wanted to see that beautiful smile of yours.”

Callum looked down and smiled.

“So how was busking today?” she asked.

“It was okay, this man came up to me and he asked if I wanted to perform in his pub in front of celebrities and stuff.”

She looked up and smiled, “Callum that’s ama...” As she was interrupted by an infectious cough she put her hand on his shoulder and said, “I’m so proud of you, that’s an amazing achievement.”

Callum smiled. “Thanks mom”

“No problem, son.”

Callum stood up and asked, “I’m going to head up to the shops would you like anything.”

“Yes please, Jaffa cakes please.”

“Of course, as long as you don’t eat them all in one go.”

Callum turned and laughed with his mom. “I’ll see you later mom”

“Be careful.”

“I will I promise.”

Callum closed the door and strolled to his room and lay down on his bed looking at a poster, forcing his eyes to close slowly and eventually fall into a deep sleep.

DING DONG!

Callum shoots out of bed to answer the door

“Hello Callum. how are you?”

Callum looked up in shock like he had seen a ghost,

“What...what..... what are you doing here, how did you find me?”

“A lot of questions that need answers like, are aliens real or if ghosts exist or if my wife really loves me or if you would play in my pub in front of many famous celebrities?”

“As much I'd love to I have to take care of mom so....”

Callum turned around to see that no one was standing behind him. He looked up the stairs gazing at the picture of his mom, then the door, and back to his mom. He ran out the door, looking around in desperation. He saw the man hopping in the car. Callum ran over, knocking on the window, it rolled down.

“Can I help you?”

“I'll take your offer, if it's still on the table.”

“Grab your stuff and get in” The man smiled and Callum walked back to his house.

“Now, tonight we have a new guest, he busks on the streets of Dublin, please give a warm welcome, Callum everybody.”

The crowd applauds while he walks to the golden spot.

He plugged in his guitar, and he looked at the crowd and paused, and from one strum of his guitar he had caught the attention of the crowd, and all eyes were on him. One strum led to another and he flew through his song like an eagle soaring through the sky.

The door of the pub closed behind him and the strange man tapped him on the shoulder and asked, "So, did you enjoy that?"

"It was alright, I guess."

"Well, there is another performance, just down south in front of a recording company I want you to do."

Callum stopped walking, "Listen sir, my mother is sick and I need to get home and stay home so I can take care of her, so please save your breath and leave me alone."

Callum walked home in a sulk and on the porch was his dad, just sat there, no cigarette or newspaper. Callum knew that something was wrong.

He ran upstairs to see a bunch of his family members in the room and a priest. Callum popped his head through the crowd of his family members to see his mother on the bed, eyes closed hands linked over her stomach.

Callum just sat there in regret and sadness.

"I'm so sorry mom, I wanted to stay here with you, I promise, I promise."

Callum sat there for hours, beside his mom, just writing lyrics for a song. His dad walked in and handed Callum a cup of coffee.

"I know for a fact that she loved you more than anything and she wanted you to have this."

Callum opened the envelope and read the message inside.

“12:30 in the recording studio on Monday, room 1 to be exact. You’ll meet your new boss and he’ll show you around and make sure you get used to your new studio, love mom.”

Callum looked up in happiness, as a tear ran down his face he said, *Thank you, mom.*

ZERO TO HERO

Garvan Molony

On a bleak, dreary night of 03', a boy named Alex was brought into the world. He was born in Homerton Hospital, Hackney, an area infamously known for its high crime rate.

His family of five lived in a jammed three-room council flat with no central heating or hot water. Alex shared a bedroom with his younger sister, Kiesha, and older brother, Dominique.

Alex always looked up to his older brother and always aspired to be him. He would do whatever it took to be like Dominique, whether it be buying the latest shoes or garments.

At an early age, Dominique started to make friends with the wrong people. He began coming home late, after hours of smoking and drinking with his "mates". It was when Dominique was only in year 10, age 14 when he did heroine.

After that experience, Dominique started to fall down the rabbit hole, getting caught up in copious stabbings and robberies.

It all caught up to him though, when one night, Dominique was out collecting pay for a drug deal when he was mercilessly stabbed. A collection of rival gang members knew Dominique was involved in the stabbing of their friend. They were out for revenge and were out for blood. That night, Dominique never came home.

Alex fell into a deep depression in the following weeks without his brother. He started to drink and smoke, coming home later and later. He ultimately found himself doing everything his brother did that he vowed he'd never do.

It wasn't until Alex's best friend, Ryan, was murdered right before his eyes when he realized he had to get away from the life of crime.

Alex would play football with his friends from school but never played at a high level as he just wanted to have fun. He knew he had raw talent in football compared to others around him.

It wasn't until Alex's school won the London Regional Cup when he piqued the interest of many scouts. At the time, Alex was only 15 playing at under 18 level with his school. He had a stellar display, netting three times. It was this performance that skyrocketed Alex to stardom.

In the weeks that followed, Alex found himself inundated with offers from clubs up and down the country. One that stood out to him was from Chelsea, the current champions of England at the time.

Due to the rules set in place, Alex was not eligible to be signed for a club as he was only 15. However, Alex was turning 16 very soon. The wait for Alex was excruciating. The minutes felt like hours and hours like days.

It felt like Christmas all over again for Alex the morning of his 16th birthday. He caught a train into Chelsea as quickly as he could. He was met at the door by an extremely enthusiastic Antonio Conte. Conte had the most exciting young talent in England, and he knew it.

Alex pushed through a 5-year dream deal. His starting salary was a whopping £25,000 a week after tax. A goal he scored in the London Cup started to go viral among Chelsea fans and football fans alike.

His name started to pick up traction in the media and on the streets. Before he knew it, he was training with the first team.

March 18th marked the best moment of Alex's life, his Premier League debut aged just 16. It was the quarterfinals of FA Cup against a solid Leicester City side. The game took a lackluster start, with both teams looking keen to concede.

The contest went into extra time with the score being 1-1. In the 92nd minute, Alex was substituted on for a worn-out Willian. It was potentially the only chance to impress he would get all season, and he knew it.

It took Alex time to get adjusted to the blistering pace of the match. It was something he was not used to at all.

In the last minute of the first half, Alex was gifted with a golden opportunity. Ngolo Kanté received the ball out wide on the right before glancing up and spotting Alex hungrily waiting in the box. The ball came in, the goalkeeper called for it but didn't get there in time. Alex headed the ball into an empty net and sent Chelsea into the semi-finals of the FA Cup.

Alex was ecstatic, he started from the lowest a man could in London and completely turned his life around. He owed it all to his family, though, without them, he would be either dead or in prison.

THE JOURNEY OF LYRICAL LEMONADE

Aaron Maher

The modern-day MTV.

Created by Chicago native Cole Bennett, Lyrical Lemonade was originally created as a music scene for underground Chicago artists who were getting little to no mainstream spotlight. Nowadays, Lyrical Lemonade features icons of rap music and sells actual lemonade. But how has Lyrical Lemonade grown so big.

Cole got the name from his mother, when they were both throwing out names for the idea of a hip-hop blog that Cole came up with in school. His mother said Lyrical Lemonade and Cole instantly loved. Now that Cole had a brand name, he had to start the brand. It started out as a blog that Cole wanted to be a ‘Chicago thing’. In an interview with Genius, Cole told them “I just wanted to write articles on unexposed talents from the city,”. After Cole finished high school, he enrolled in Digital Cinema at DePaul University in Chicago. College took Cole’s focus away from Lyrical Lemonade, so he dropped out midway through and turned to Lyrical Lemonade as his main priority.

Cole decided to expand the Lyrical Lemonade brand and started directing music videos as he had a passion of videography, for the Chicago artists who weren't in the spotlight. He created a YouTube channel where he could post his videos. YouTube wasn't the major content distributor platform. The first video he directed was for T0N3's Self Demise. For the next year Cole directed dozens of music videos for underground Chicago artists.

Cole's channel started to gain recognition on YouTube when he released 'Hit Em Wit It' by Famous Dex. The music video now has 19 million views on the Lyrical Lemonade channel. Looking at the previous videos on the channel the average video on the channel averaged from 1k to 10k views. The next five music videos Cole directed were all by Famous Dex and have since all surpassed 1 million views on the Lyrical Lemonade channel. To date Cole has directed 14 songs for Famous Dex, with the pair helping each other reach the top.

Cole went to Coachella in 2016 and there he got the chance to meet some of the artists who wanted him to direct a video for them, including Soulja Boy. While there, he met Miami rapper Stitches who offered to fly him out to Florida to shoot a music video.

The trip to Miami gave Cole the opportunity to expand his brand outside of Chicago and into Florida. He met Smokepurpp in Florida and directed the visuals for his trap song 'Ski Mask'. In those visuals the rap world was introduced to then 15-year-old Lil Pump.

Cole directed the music video for Lil Pump's song 'D Rose'. The song went viral. This music video caused the Lyrical Lemonade brand and channel to blow up. 'D Rose' became the first music video he directed to go RIAA Certified Gold. Cole then linked up with Lil Pump again to shoot the video for 'Flex Like Ouu'. That song also went viral and now has 99 million views on the Lyrical Lemonade channel.

Cole's first music video for Ski Mask the Slump God is arguably his best video to date. The song is called 'Catch Me Outside'. All the techniques Cole used in the editing of the video was the first time he had tried them. They now are unique to Lyrical Lemonade and Cole Bennett is renowned to using the techniques. It is an iconic music video because it feels special as everything is done spontaneously. Cole Bennett and Ski Mask the Slump God went to Times Square and they shot that video on the spot. Cole is known for having to direct with the bare minimum while directing his videos. This makes most of them unique.

The next video that went viral was 'Betrayed' by Lil Xan. It is the second most viewed video on the channel to date with 269 million views. It is a simpler music video as there is nothing really going on. There aren't really many effects going on. It shows Cole Bennett's ability to tell a story that helps amplify a song. This music video is a landmark for the Lyrical Lemonade brand as it was

really the first unknown artist to have their career take off due to the Lyrical Lemonade music video being so good.

Cole then collaborated with Pennsylvania prodigy Lil Skies on the track 'Red Roses' featuring Landon Cube. It gained 180 million views on the channel. Skies got recognition in hip-hop from being heavily featured on the YouTube channel Cufboys before becoming a part of the Lyrical Lemonade channel.

Two months later Lil Skies and Landon Cube were back with another classic for the Lyrical Lemonade channel with 'Nowadays'. The video is the third most viewed song on the channel with 272 million views. The song is about a teenager who is lost in the world. For this video Cole brought Skies back to his old school and videoed him and Landon with impressive graphics.

Cole then introduced the world to Juice Wrld, a Chicago born artist. Juice Wrld recorded a mixtape called '999' on Soundcloud and Cole liked his music. Cole shot the music video for the song 'All Girls Are the Same' off Juice's 999 SoundCloud mixtape. The music video suits Juice's style and told us that Juice was going to blow up over the next few years. The song got 116 million views and is one of the top videos on the channel.

The next music video was 'Lucid Dreams' by Juice Wrld. The song was relatively unknown until Cole shot the music video. The song blew up and peaked at 10 on the Billboard top 100. It spent 37 weeks in the top 20.

This song really put Juice Wrld on the map. It is the most viewed video on the Lyrical Lemonade channel with 427 million views. As this song was on the charts more people saw Cole's videography skills. Together, Cole and Juice helped each other reach the next level, becoming very good friends in the process.

In the following months after Lucid Dreams had been released, we saw more music videos on the channel being released at a more frequent rate. We saw new artists like Lil Mosey, YBN Cordae and Blue face appearing for the first time on the channel. We also saw Lil Skies, Juice Wrld and Ski Mask the Slump God make more appearances on the channel.

The next milestone on the channel was when YNW Melly asked Cole to shoot the music video for his song 'Mixed Personalities'. This song featured Kanye West, a hip-hop icon. It was Cole's dream to work with Kanye as he was also from Chicago. Cole wanted this music video to be memorable for him as he was working with one of his heroes. He did though come into conflict with Kanye on the phone as Kanye asked Cole to shoot the video in black and white as that is Kanye's brand. Cole had to tell Kanye that this was YNW Melly's moment and he was going to shoot it as Melly wanted it to be like. Cole said that Kanye seemed to agree with Cole after their conversation and said he was terrified that Kanye would cancel the chance for Cole to work with him. The video has 100 Million views on the channel.

Channel favorites Juice Wrld, Lil Skies and Ski Mask the Slump God reappeared on the channel in the following months. The next new star to appear was Lil Tecca of New York. A 16-year-old at the time Tecca came from Soundcloud after Cole heard him and wanted to direct the video for the song 'Ransom'. This was yet another young artist Cole gave the opportunity to blow up. The song reached number 7 on the Billboard top 100. It is the 4th most viewed video on the channel with 206 million views. As Tecca was unknown he didn't have a great budget for the music video. Cole rented a house in the Bahamas and shot the music video of the messing around in it. Cole's skills and effects made the video have a summer vibe.

Within the next month of the Ransom video Cole was back with a new artist and gave him an opportunity to grow his audience. He shot the video for NLE Choppa's 'Shotta Flow' remix featuring Blueface. The song was also popular on SoundCloud but unknown to the mainstream world. Yet again NLE Choppa didn't have much of a budget and Cole did an excellent job of directing it as a barbeque in a back garden using great filters to grab your attention. The video has 121 million views.

Juice Wrld was the back on the channel for his 6th and final time for a music video for his song 'Bandit' with NBA Youngboy. Cole had to direct the video in Florida as Youngboy was on probation and couldn't leave the state. This music video is a milestone as it showed the

heights Juice reached. Cole brought Juice Wrld from up and coming status to superstar status. This isn't the only artist that Cole has helped reach the next level, but it was the artist Cole was the most influential on. It shows us how far Lyrical Lemonade has come. It has a true impact on shaping artists and the paths their careers take.

Lyrical Lemonade has become so much more than just a blog or a YouTube channel, it is a hip-hop empire. If it wasn't for the fans who tune in to see what new up and coming artists are going to make an appearance on the channel we may have never seen the likes of Juice Wrld, Lil Skies, Lil Pump and many more that reached the star level that they are at today. Lyrical Lemonade started off as a simple blog created by Cole Bennett. It has now turned into one of the biggest hip-hop platforms on planet Earth.

THE BREAKUP

Billy Clucas

As soon as I saw her I could tell we were perfect for one-another. She was wearing all black leggings with a blue Champions jumper that was too big for her, at first I found that weird but then I recognised that jumper and whom it belonged to. It was Toby the captain for the volleyball team - like seriously who even plays volleyball! Like come on!

Toby is 5'9 with black hair and glasses. I forgot to mention his parents are the founders of Uber so he is hella wealthy.

Jessica is 5'7 with long blonde hair and gorgeous blue eyes and oh no she is looking at me and she is walking over (starts to panic).

"Oh no, what do I..?" (Pauses for a second) "I got it - will fake an asthma attack!" (Brain: *Dont do that you idiot! Just relax and play it cool then you will be fine*).

Suddenly I looked up and Jessica was right in front of me I tried to play it cool and lean on something behind me but I didn't look before I put my elbow out and I let my body go so I just fell straight to the ground. Everyone

started laughing at me and I got really embarrassed but then I heard an angelic voice say, “Are you ok?”

It was Jessica.

My mood went from thinking, “No!” to excited.

She reached out her hand to help me up so I gripped her hand and started to get up off the ground. But suddenly I looked down and realised I fell in a lot of mud so I hesitated and pushed her away from me and shouted at her, “Im fine, please go away!”

She went so red with anger and sprinted over to Toby and shouted at him – “Are you just going to let him talk to me like that?”

Toby then said, “I wasnt watching. I was talking to Chad, Sorry.”

Jessica then stormed off over to her girlfriends and started to cry and said, “He never pays attention to me and im sick of it.”

One Week Later

It is 9:08 at night and Toby and Jessica have been broken up for an hour and 3 minutes.

Ding Dong

I ran down stairs with a smiley face on me. Then when I opened the door I saw what I my eyes couldn’t believe, it was Jessica...crying.

I thought to myself - *why is she at my house?* But I wasn’t too worried about it.

I welcomed her inside and got her a box of tissues to wipe the tears running down her face. I asked her if she would like a drink of water, tea, coffee or Fanta but when I was about to say coke what I heard was suprising. She asked if we have gin and tonic, which I found odd but I gave it to her and poured myself a glass too, as my parents had left town for the weekend to stay in a hotel.

A couple of drinks later and really boring conversations – well, scrap that, she was just blabbering about her and Toby. So I tried to move the conversation to a different topic, like if she played any sport or anything. She then said a sport she played was badminton.

I then asked her why did she stop?

She replied, “I got to an age where I found it boring.”

I asked her what age was that?

She said, “Eleven.”

I looked down at her glass and it was empty so I asked if she would like a refill?

She said, “Yes,” so I took it her glass downstairs and poured her another.

I walked upstairs and handed her the drink.

She said, “Thank you.”

I replied, “No bother.”

We are both sitting there in dead silence not knowing what to talk about...

Suddenly I get a message from Jessica.

It is a paragraph saying: Thank you for letting me in with such short notice and giving me drink and tissues and caring for me. So to really say thank you I would like you to look up from your phone.

I look up from my phone and say, “Why do you want me to look up?”

I look up and Jessica is in my face and she says, “Thank you!” Then she kisses me.

In my head I am like *Why?* but my body is like go with the flow. So I kissed her back.

But then she whispered into my ear and said, “I really appreciate this.”

In my head I was like, *I am a good guy and I am a decent person*, and decided stop kissing her because I knew it was the alcohol. I said, “It’s pretty late. You can stay in my room for tonight and Ill stay in my parents room or you could walk home.”

She said, “Are you sure its okay for me to stay in your room? I mean we could share a bed.”

I then replied saying, “I’m knackered and I didnt get much sleep last night.”

She said, “Understood. I will see you in the morning.”

I went to sleep at two o’clock that night because I was just up thinking - *Why me? Why my house? Out of all the people she chose me. She only kissed me because she was drunk. She wont even remeber this tomorrow.*

The Next Day

I woke up to a thumping sound on the door so I rushed downstairs and opened the door.

When I opened the door there were two Gardaí standing at my door step.

I asked “Is something wrong?”

They responded, “Did Jessica Gregory Doyle stay here last night?”

I responded, “Yes. Why? Is something wrong?”

THE ALIEN, THE ENEMY AND THE ALLY

John Murray

The vessel careened across the universe. The alien manning the vessel was engrossed in monitoring the fickle control panels fixed to the interior of the finite spaceship. So much so that it avoided being in awe of the infinite scenery, that waned in every direction manifesting the nothingness that existed on the other side of the infiltrating universe's border into more universe. It didn't care. It was bemused. It knew what the universe looked like; it didn't know what the semblance of its mission's result would. Its mission was straightforward. Find planet. If planet contains no sentient life and inhabitation is possible, report such planet's co-ordinates to be colonized. If planet contains sentient life, report corrupted planet's co-ordinates to be destroyed.

The alien finalized running its ship's diagnostics and stretched out on its seat yawning. Its ship sped across space with a light humming whirr sounding

from its engine. The alien felt strange, really it had been feeling strange for a while. Its coping mechanism for this strangeness was to focus on its mission, but it was unachievable to do so permanently. It sat there for a while, paradoxically so still and fast at the same time. The interior of the vessel flashed. The alien glanced down at its contrastable dull radar compared to the phosphorescence of the rest of the control panel. The alien altered the ships course slightly, and soon the alien's gait and gaze simultaneously met that of a modestly sized planet. The ship encroached at a rapid momentum and just as the alien pierced the planet's atmosphere the ships monitor flashed static and began spewing out white noise. The alien looked confused then very anxious as the ship began to fall weightlessly....

The engine gutted to a stop. The man brought his arms off the steering wheel and sat straddled in the driver's seat for a few seconds before letting out an exasperated sigh. The man was on route whatever, south of whatever town, just west of wherever. The man's eyes languidly looked at the steering wheel, then the arid dashboard to the arid desert surrounding that the windshield showed through the dusty glass. He then looked to the rearview mirror which showed his eyes fixed back on his own haggard face. The man was tired, he was always tired, yet he was never tired enough to sidle to somewhere where he could

put food into his body or get the remnants out of it. His stomach rumbled. It was time for breakfast, at what looked like four o'clock in the afternoon judging by the sun.

The man dragged himself out of the car door, before slamming it shut. He wandered over to the diner he had left his haggard car adjacent to.

As he stepped on one of the reoccurring yellow lines that divided every road, he glanced up at a troupe of three vultures, doing a salute in the process to shield his eyes from the intensive sun. "Not today," he muttered.

He plodded up the steps to the doors and entered the building with the mellow sound of a bell that door rang. The tawdry diner was quiet but not as tragically populated as the ones he'd seen before, hell he could have been here before but after a while they all looked the same. There were a few people chowing down on food that looked either fried or toasted, he couldn't really discern the two. Through the ajar door behind the counter he could see a waitress emptying a dishwasher. A man who looked like the manager but was about to play the role of a waiter was approaching him with a notepad presumably to take his order or maybe play a game of x's and o's with him. The hungry man wouldn't mind either though the latter would probably bolster his headache.

"Hello Sir, would you like your usual?"

"I have a usual?"

"Yes," informed the manager shrilly, he had a Spanish accent.

"What is it?" man asked, sounding about ten percent more energetic.

"Anything that will get rid of my headache, is what you usually ask me to fetch for you, Sir," the manager chuckled.

"Well shoot, that was just what I was going to ask for," the man said while shrugging weakly.

"I'll have my usual then."

"Right away Sir," the manager said while smiling before rushing off.

The tired man scanned the diner. *I could buy everything in this diner and itself*, the man thought to himself. *I could probably buy every diner in Nevada, or Utah or New Mexico or whatever sorry desert wasteland I'm in.*

The man chuckled quietly and shook his head. It always entertained him, surmising over what he could do with his wealth. The man looked a tier or two above homeless on whatever stupid tier system some psychologist spent his whole career generating. The man looked around, he looked at the truckers eating BLTs, he looked at the two ranchers tucking into burgers and fries.

He looked at the fussed waitress doing the dishes. On the outside he just looked like a roughed- up guy getting a bite to eat but that wasn't who he was. He felt alienated. He felt he was an alien. The man had too many zeroes next to his account number to feel welcome.

The food arrival of the food killed that thought as the need to appease his hunger hijacked the man's brain. Not food for thought but food to kill thought. The man preferred the latter. *Should I feel belonged?* the man thought. After finishing his meal ten minutes later, he put down a fifty, wiped his mouth and shifted out of his seat. *Either they have a restroom outside, or a bush is getting lucky.*

The man passed the waitress behind the counter on his way out. He felt her curious gaze pierce his back. The palpable feeling ended when a hinged plank of wood was put between them. He then heard the excessively loud approach of motorcycle engines as his lungs met the fresh desert air, like the waitress's stare, another hinged plank of wood belonging to the much-appreciated restroom gave him some peace and privacy.

The woman slammed the dishwasher shut. This was the second dish run of the day and the useless machine had started sputtering after it finished up the first run earlier around four. "It's emptied!" she exulted.

The manager replied, "Thank you, see you tomorrow!"

The waitress gleaned the sweat off her brow with her hand and made her way to the back of the diner. She took her bag from her dilapidated locker and continued down the short corridor to the restroom to change. She inspected herself in the mirror, at the letters “arreiS” on her nametag, which would normally display the name Sierra, and within two minutes she emerged newly clothed with a freshly washed face.

As Sierra passed back out the corridor, she passed the strange framed photo by her employer's office. It was a picture of a red human skull facing to the left, slightly downwards, with huge heart like tubes of flesh extending outwards and reaching down the back of the skull. The skull had two pockets of veins which resembled a bare tree in autumn, one placed on the temple, the other where the ear would typically be found if the skull had a life host. Her manager would always site to her about how the head and the heart were the core of the conscious and blah, blah, blah. Sierra had to give the photo some credit, it looked cool.

Sierra went out front by the ghastly dishwasher and strolled over to the door, as she did another picture caught her attention. The photo of the mountain range she was named after. The Sierra mountains of Nevada. She had been found there as a very young child. She was of Native-American ancestry and one of the cops at the police station she was brought to - a very tough cop, who she now knew as Uncle Sam - became infatuated with her.

Utterly distrustful of childcare from a firsthand experience, Uncle Sam drove her across the Rockies where she was entrusted to a Native American tribe, led by a chief who Uncle Sam had helped find a missing child for a few years back.

With that, Sierra was raised in the desert by the New Mexico-Utah state border and was now jumping from one low wage job to another where every cent counted. She didn't mind, college could wait. "Where there's a will there's a way."

She loved her tribe; what she didn't love was how she was treated sometimes by her fellow "Americans". Her elders had endured much worse in the past and growing up with their stories had made her feel as if her existence was a crime to others. Like she was the enemy. Sierra snapped out of her daydream upon hearing her boss chuckle, "Sierra, go home. Your shift is finished, I don't need you doing overtime by staring at a picture."

Sierra sighed lightheartedly, "See you Tomorrow Juan".

She stepped outside and faced the setting sun. She came trotting down the steps and walked by the restroom door. As she passed the corner of the building, someone heckled at her, "Hey, red girl," and before Sierra knew it her evening now involved five bikers and one gun pointed at her.

The alien seemed very displeased. It lay sat behind a large series of boulders which were situated aside what these creatures called “highways”. The alien had also gathered from an inscription on a sign stating the area's population of fifteen thousand that the creatures of this planet were called “humans”. The alien knew this because its mission had taken a dramatic turn for the worst. Its ship had been exposed to a weak signal that interrupted its ships radio causing its engines to fail (a big issue to be taken up with the engineers later). When it neared the ground even further the ship encountered an even weaker signal, around twenty-fold the original. When its ship began to fall, it attempted to signal its co-ordinates in order to get a replacement vessel deployed to wherever the soon to be battered ship would inevitably land on the foreign planet. Its attempt failed. Then, whilst hurtling towards the surface at an intense momentum, it squeezed itself into the impact-proof cubby hole in the base of the ship and awaited a load bang.

When the bang came, the alien then managed to writhe out of its correctly foreseen wreck of a ship. It had found itself in the middle of a desert biome and began following a weak stream of H₂O. The alien then found its first of many interconnected “highways” where it seemed that what happened

with its ship earlier had occurred again, only instead of a vessel colliding with a planet, a vessel which seemed to be restricted by the force of gravity colloquially called a “Car” had collided with another “Car”.

Then it encountered its first of the plethora of human inhabitants on the planet. The alien was very pleased as it had succeeded in its mission in finding a planet to be destroyed. Only that it was utterly enthralled in the behavior of these humans. This species had two variants. A taller more muscular variant presumably a male and a shorter less muscular variant presumably a female, however the two it witnessed did not seem to like each other. They stood by their separate collided cars and communicated loudly and aggressively to each other.

Then more humans appeared from a car equipped with intermittently activated lights and a loud “siren”. Then the humans continued to communicate with each other loudly and then began sparring! This proceeded until all the humans ended up inside the flashing car. The alien thought this was incredibly uncooperative behavior of a species.

It then began traversing by the “highway” until it reached another structure called a “Diner” as inscribed on the “Diner”. Located outside the

“Diner” was another car but this car, although retaining the support of four circular, hard textured tubes used to rotate on surfaces and a similar shape and design as the ones the alien had seen prior possessed an awful odor.

The alien approached the car and had to hop up and down in a repeated fashion to peer inside. The car looked as though it was used dually for transport and for habitation. The alien stood in awe, in awe of the thought of living in a vessel and using it for travel. It hopped up and heaved itself through what seemed to be a shorter panel of transparent rock that the alien believed to be called “Glass” that didn’t seem to encase the car.

It rummaged through the interior and inspected each object found within the car quizzically. In a sense of panic however it forcibly ejected itself from the car as a female human emerged from the diner. The alien who had scurried behind the boulders it was presently recalling these events from now, glanced to get a good look at the human and was highly confused when it saw five male humans appear from beside the dinner, one of which bearing a weapon familiar to the alien.

The humans once again engaged in a loud aggressive tone and one of the males snatched an object the female had been carrying with her right “Arm” with the help of a strap. Then two of the

males rushed over to the poorly maintained car the alien had rummaged about in and one of them began fidgeting with these small wires located beneath the steering wheel, the car then activated and began to mobilize.

Soon after, the other males followed commandeering strange “bikes” that utilized only two of the rotating short tubes that cars used four of. The female human remained, stood outside the diner, gazing down at the ground with the ends of her two limbs located on her head.

The Alien was very puzzled as to how this seemingly very intelligent species could exist with such animosity existing between those who were so similar. The alien deemed this species dysfunctional and necessary for elimination.

The man began to wake up, he heard an argument ongoing outside but couldn't really make out what was being said in his confused dozy state, until of course he heard his car engine start... He shot up and darted outside without realizing that he hadn't pulled his jeans up. He fell forward and hit the pavement, before scrambling up and pulling his jeans up at the same time. He looked in the distance and saw his car waning in size. His car had been hijacked! To his left was a distressed and at the same time horrified young woman aged most likely a few years younger than him.

“What the hell! Who were they? Why did they do that?” the man yelled out.

The woman looked at him. “I could ask you the same questions.”

Sierra profiled the mess of a man in front of her. “What’s your name?”

The man who was still zoned-in on his now out of sight car, looked over at her. “Eric.”

Sierra thought for a few seconds. She was sick of this happening to her; it was always the same goddamn gang. This was the third time this had happened to her and she’d had enough. She was at this point, scrapping the other side of the bottom of the barrel, if she couldn’t hold on to any money that she worked her ass for. She wanted to retaliate. This guy was in the same situation as her only he had lost his car. He didn’t seem precarious. She wouldn’t be able to fight him, but she was very confident she could run away from him. She needed and longed for that money back more than she feared “Eric.” He could make a useful ally. Plus, he had a charm about him even with the haggard appearance.

“Hey Eric, you don’t seem like you’re from here and no offence, you seem like you were living out of that car. I’d say those thieves will be wasted over by their warehouse. How about we take back what’s ours?”

Eric burped and began walking away. “No thanks, you want your money back you can go take it,” he yawned nonchalantly.

“I’m goin’ back inside to call - ” Eric patted his pockets, and his whole character changed. “My credit car! Where the hel-” Eric then looked to the direction in which the biker gang had driven off to. He then slumped and raised his eyes from the ground to meet hers. “How the hell are we going to find them, daring one?” he asked glibly and with as much enthusiasm as a rock.

Sierra grinned. “I know where they hang out, by the old warehouse east of junctio-”

“I don’t know where that is or care!” Eric interrupted dryly. “How are we going to get there?”

Sierra walked in the direction she would have continued had her evening not turned for the worse. She walked round the back to where Tomahawk was. Sierra hated how she was treated sometimes because of who she was, but one thing she loved about who she was, was how she and her people got around. She even convinced Juan her manager to travel the same way too. She went and unlocked the gate to the makeshift stable round the bag. She guided Tomahawk out of the stable and brought him to the road.

Eric looked up bemused and in disbelief, “A horse?”

“Hop on,” Sierra grinned as she patted the space on the saddle behind her.

The Alien was very puzzled by now. It watched as the male and female human rode away on another species, known by the name of a “horse”. This time, the humans didn’t fight with each other,

they didn't communicate loudly, they did so quietly and calmly. The alien possibly wondered if they were going to confront the other hostile humans, maybe that's what the humans who came in the flashing car were trying to do earlier at the collision. The alien wondered though if that process could be fair and conducted unscathed from the maleficent hands of corruption. The humans now however seemed to possess the ability to cooperate not only with each other but outside of their own species. The alien wondered if they would be able to coincide with itself. The alien quickly grew dubious about that thought and swiftly dismissed that idea. If they were to spot it, they would probably enact a responsive mechanism. The alien would likely be seen as an enemy, a threat. Which it was, to some extent. The alien intended no immediate harm to be conducted by itself but through other indirect means of making the humanity extinct.

The alien decided its mission would retain the highest possibility of success if it remained hidden. The alien was enthralled about the connection between these two humans, it hadn't seen anything like it before and so it sauntered over to the diner and imitated the female's path. The alien found another "horse" in a box shaped enclosure. It mimicked the way the female mounted the

creature and did so with relative success. The alien encountered another quagmire. How to get out of the enclosure. The alien mimicked the movement the female did prior with her limbs involving the straps attached to the horses feeding mechanism. With that the unprepared alien was irked forwards and the horse charged both over and through the enclosure barrier at the same time. The alien was irked again but not physically as it looked to its right. On the wall of the structure was a portrait of its own face. The mural seemed to have been sprayed on with a gas like substance. Depicted was a green face ovular face, thinning at the bottom with a small mouth and two wide black big eyes. The alien was perturbed. How did these creatures know of its existence? The horse started to move, and the alien remembered that its own personal side quest: following the pair of humans.

As it followed the tracks engraved in the sand by the horse that came before them, the alien and its new acquaintance embarked on its newly thought of mission as the sun it had once seen from space earlier, was underway its descent into the a far sandy horizon.

Am I crazy? Is this woman crazy? Eric thought to himself as they galloped across the desolate desert. "You're sure you know where you're going?"

“Yes,” exclaimed Sierra.

Eric may have grown dubious about Sierra’s sense of direction, but he did not possess a shadow of a doubt in her ability to mount a horse. She rode it like it was second nature.

“I can tell you’re uneasy, do you have somewhere to be?” Sierra beckoned sarcastically.

“No,” Eric rebuked responsively in a succinct manner. Sierra had read him very well, the truth was he didn’t have anywhere to be, he didn’t have anything to do, nor had he for nearly half a decade, if he were to guess how long he’d been in this state. Eric didn’t know what day it was or date it was usually. He didn’t care. He had no reason to care, no purpose, no sense of belonging. He saw himself as just one of the hundreds of myriads on a giant rock floating around in space, until nuclear doomsday, until a meteor hit, until humans were colonized by aliens like they had colonized other humans in the past. That was why he agreed to come along, he didn’t care. He didn’t lose his credit card, it was in his back pocket, he changed his mind after he rejected Sierra’s proposal he just didn’t want to embarrass himself, which he ended up doing afterwards by pretending to search through his pockets. even if he did, he could just snap his fingers and summon another. He didn’t care, so why not go on a suicide mission with a

woman who obviously leaned way too much into the fight half of fight or flight.

Eric looked up - the three vultures who he had denied dinner to earlier flew overhead above them. *Smart birds.* Eric thought.

Sierra pressed on as they passed a road they would eventually have been on had they conducted this pathetic assault via more conventional means of transportation.

In fairness to her, she knows what she's doing. Eric glanced at the phrase, "*YES TO WEALTH TAX,*" which was scrawled all over a large billboard which hadn't have been used in a long time.

Ah yes blame the rich.

Eric agreed with the notion. He didn't even deserve his own wealth, neither did the person who he inherited from did, his grandfather. He made millions by installing first wave radio towers when the age of communications kickstarted decades, he put them all over the inner west. Not with the intention of providing a quality radio service, but to make as much turnover as possible. The towers were state of the art at the time but grew obsolete quickly. They were also apparently very expensive to remove or modify due to the government being very picky about any development in the area and the real problem for people and competitors was the

towers emitted a weak signal that would disrupt any other advanced technology that would be unfortunate enough to come within range of. This meant a very different way of life for the shadow of the once prominent population. It was a dead zone. It was common theory and still remains so that the government who still operate a military base in the area to this day preferred it that way. This slumped investment in the region and was probably the reason why the vandalized billboard that sent Eric down this rabbit hole was not in use. His grandad cashed in initially through classic enterprise elbow grease, but once handed a monopoly the money went to his head and after the towers, he was never the same again. Sure, somebody could have come in and drove his family's business to the ground, but why bother? In this day and age, nobody lived in the inner west anymore, and even if they did it wouldn't have been fashionable. The only places businesses like being seen at are by vertical coasts in this country. Then his grandfather used his profits to invest in the oil industry. *Then the six zeroes each had a baby together and became nine.* Eric's wealth left him with no purpose, what it did leave him with was a big target on his back. He agreed with a wealth tax, he agreed with anything, he didn't care but he felt like an enemy to society, his relatives who held the mantle were, but he wasn't.

Eric's deep thought was converted in brooding as Sierra halted whatever her stupid horse was called and stated, "We're here," as she did so.

The sun had set, and the stars had come out from hiding from humanity. Sierra slid off the horse, with Eric following but not at all as smoothly. They surreptitiously sneaked by the side of the rundown warehouse. The warehouse looked barren, there was more rust than grey steel on the exterior. It looked like a next level three-dimensional battlefield map with one long term prevailing victor: decay.

Eric's face lit up when saw his car; it looked a travesty compared to the bikes owned by the bikers which was a bar not set very high. Eric realized that for the first time in a while that he wasn't experiencing a headache, probably the reason why he had thought more today than he had in weeks.

Sierra hunkered down and pried the vent cover clean off the wall. She cautiously placed it flat down on the ground and beckoned Eric over to her with the use of hasty hand gestures.

Eric blinked stunned. "You've done this before" "Haven't you?" Eric asked.

Sierra grinned lightly. "Not in a long-time and not alone." The smile faded.

"I'm here," Eric argued.

"You don't count," Sierra rebuffed quickly.

"You asked me to come," Eric muttered while kicked the sand the ground.

Sierra shushed him and pointed to the vent. Eric declined the invitation without needing to speak. Sierra rolled her eyes and lay down on her back and pulled herself through the vent.

In that moment, Eric was content. He couldn't remember the last time he had this much interaction with another person. He had made an ally, maybe even a friend. He didn't have to go through the vent. His car was right there. He would have expected himself to just bail right now but alternatively he found himself inside a destitute warehouse, littered with cans and glass, passed out bikers and a woman getting very frustrated with a safe.

"Here, let me help," Eric uttered at Sierra quietly.

"No, I can do it," Sierra grunted, with an ear next to a lock that was being furiously rotated.

Eric hurried over and put his hand on the lock and Sierra capitulated. A minute-long cycle of twisting and silence passed and was then broken by the sound of a click.

The safe's contents were then revealed.

Sierra reached inside, grabbing only a single stack of cash of the plurality that was at her disposal. She gently then closed the safe, relocking it.

Eric was aghast. "Why did you only take one?" he pressed.

Sierra was about to defend herself, when both their ears tensed. A loud hissing noise which was becoming increasingly sharper not only in frequency, but volume reached their ears. Galvanized, the rushed to the vent. Sierra dived through the vent lubricated by her newly broken sweat. A pummeling volcanic crash hit the ground, right on top- or more correctly through the warehouse. The dissipation of the energy from the impact of such a magnitude resulted in... tumults, sparks, vibrations, noise, shaking, explosions, followed by darkness.

Sierra got to her feet. She couldn't hear anything; her ears were ringing, and she was covered in cuts. Adrenaline was pulsing through her veins. She could walk, but she couldn't tell if any part of her was hurt badly.

Then she remembered Eric. Eric! She screeched, "Eric!"

She frantically fettered around her. Then she recalled how they got in and out of the warehouse. She peered through the vent and there he was, lifeless. She dragged him out pressing her feet against what remained of the

wall the vent belonged to and pulling with all her strength. She felt his chest. He was breathing, for now.

The dire situation became a lot less dire. She dragged him along the sand towards a very startled Tomahawk. She placated Tomahawk and pulled the still unconscious Eric up onto the back of Tomahawk. She followed and then they were off, she didn't look back, she didn't know what happened, she didn't know if any other people survived, all she did was what her tribe told her to do when she felt a harrowing feeling within her. Run. This day had been surreal, she didn't know what to think of it. She just kept going. She looked back at Eric the very badly injured leg attached to him, her comrade, her ally. "I hope you've got good insurance" Sierra said as she passed another one of many radio towers that had been decimated due to the shockwave. Suddenly a huge gust of weird wind startled her and Tomahawk from behind as she turned and then looked above, with a whirr an aircraft by the likes she'd never seen before flew up above her and up into the sky. *I've never seen an emergency service aircraft like that. Must be from the airbase, that's why we've such a weird signal here.*

Sierra didn't have time to speculate as she continued steadfast through the growing cold desert.

The Alien activated autopilot and did what it had neglected to do during his arrival. It glanced down at this strange planet, appreciating its

surroundings. Its mission had been extraordinary, it had learned so much from the humans. It took the energy clip out of the size alterer that had come with the emergency ship it was now a flight in and placed the blaster away. The alien was immensely dissatisfied with the chaos the emergency ship's landing had caused on the new planet. It had completely decimated possibly even desecrated a structure, out of all the nearby co-ordinates from the alien's location they could have sent to ship to, the outcome had been quite unfortunate for the humans. The size at which they sent the ship too was excessive, it was much bigger than the structure it crushed, luckily for them the smoke it created had masked the ship and it was unnoticed but the alien didn't appreciate having to shrink the ship before taking off, getting its single meter long body inside the huge ship to obtain the size alterer was a challenging task, but the alien had prevailed.

The alien was lucky, whatever caused the weak signal that had led to the alien's unforeseen descent must have been dealt with as it wouldn't have been able to have lifted off had it not been. The alien picked up the newly shrunken car that it once had been inside and placed it carefully in a storage orb. It would finish inspecting the intriguing contents of the car when its surroundings permitted it.

A high-pitched neigh was emitted from the aliens' new pet. The alien felt like the thing it had been missing in its life had finally been found. The humans were not solitary creatures and the alien could see why. The alien sat there and watched the stars with its new friend. It had found an ally on its adventure. The alien thought about how it changed its mind about the humans. After seeing the way that the two humans co-operated, it gave the alien hope. Its own race couldn't operate at all in such a way and the alien wouldn't have been on this "mission" if it had been content at home.

The alien decided there and then to embark on its own mission whatever that would be. The humans gave the alien hope, hope that peace across the universe could be tenable...

...We're interrupting this segment with some breaking news for our listeners tonight. At five past nine a large tectonic anomaly occurred by the Nevada-Utah border. scientists stationed at the US airbase near where the tremors occurred who are investigating the occurrence say that it may have been due to underground renovations that hit a large pocket of gas underground, we have no images to show you as the area has been sealed off for more "extensive investigations"...

THE FALSE MOTHER

Salmaan Bari

A boy was playing football outside when his mum called him in to the kitchen. He swiftly put down the ball and ran inside. There was no one in the kitchen. He proceeded to call out his mum's name.

She responded upstairs, calling him up again.

As he was running across the hall, the door from the storage under the stairs opened and a hand stuck out. The boy was pulled in hard and fast.

Inside, was his mum. She ushered him to be extremely quiet.

She whispered, 'I heard it too.'

THE RUBY

Zach Hall

Caleb stood before the pyramid, gazing up at the peak. The sun shone down on his leathered face. Caleb said a prayer and made one last call to Gordon. Gordon, the technical guy, explained the layout of the pyramid.

“Just don't get killed,” Gordon shouted.

So, with that uplifting comment from Gordon, Caleb ran into the pyramid. It was easy going at first except for the occasional arrow that almost nicked him on his shoulder after Caleb escapes from the arrow he was met by a thick layer of spider webs which to a normal explorer would be nothing to fear but to Caleb it was terrifying. Caleb has always feared spiders since he was a child after he woke up with a spider on his face. Caleb took once last look at the webs before sprinting as fast as he can through them.

After Caleb cleared the webs off himself, he looked up and saw a beautiful red shining ruby. The ruby sat high on a pedestal, which Caleb climbed up the side of. He grabbed the ruby from where it lay, and suddenly he could hear crunching and grinding noises.

The whole place was coming down! Caleb jumped from the pedestal, landing hard on his left ankle. Caleb pulls himself back onto his feet and starts running like he has never ran before, as he is running he glances back to see the tunnel cave in on itself Caleb pulls himself over a rock and escapes from the pyramid, just as it collapsed, behind him, into dust. Caleb's phone rang. Out of breath, Caleb answered, "Hello?"

On the other side, Gordon asked, "Are you still alive?"

After a moment of silence which felt like it went on forever, Caleb answers, "I'm fine and I've got the ruby!"

PAUL'S BIG WIN

C.M.

It all started the day Paul received his leaving cert results. Paul was attending school in St Dominic's National School. Paul was never a perfect student and struggled with many of his subjects. Paul was 18 years old and on the 6th of August 2007 when Paul received his leaving cert results. He had only got 225 points meaning he wasn't able to get into his first-choice college. His parents were furious about this and felt like he hadn't put in a lot of effort for his leaving cert leading to a huge argument between himself and his parents. They were begging him to re-sit the leaving cert and when he denied his parents made the rash decision to kick him out of their family home.

Paul was banished to the streets with no food, no money and no spare clothes. Paul over the next 3 months bounced from working in fast food restaurants never being able to hold down the job for enough time to gather enough money to move into a home. After losing his last

job he was unmotivated to get another one. This led to Paul taking up a life on the streets.

Paul lived on the streets for 3 months spending all his money he was getting on sausage rolls and cups of coffee. Most days he would get in or around a fiver. One lucky day someone generously put 7€ into his donation cup. Paul decided that he would treat himself to a chicken fillet roll and a cup of coffee totalling up to 5.50€. Paul spent his change on a 1.50€ lottery ticket with a cash prize of 163 Million Euros.

The draw wasn't until the next morning so Paul went to sleep that evening not knowing that tomorrow, he would be in a completely different situation than he had been in over the last three months.

The next morning came and Paul was rooting through his pockets for the lottery ticket. He found it and ran into the shop to get it scanned. Disaster was striking as his QR code would not scan in the machine. It was not until further attempts where it would eventually have a positive read.

Paul didn't know how to react. He had been living on the streets for the past three months and had suddenly been told he had just won 163 Million Euros. Paul went back outside and sat back down where he had been for the past three months.

Paul ran to the nearest payphone where he decided to ring his parents. There was no answer on his parent's

behalf as they let it go to voicemail. He decided that he would just go to the nearest post office to claim his rewards. They told Paul to come back tomorrow as they would have a camera crew waiting to take his photo and get a few words on behalf of Paul.

The next day came and Paul was strolling along to the post office happy as could be. He walked in and there's a camera crew already rolling he didn't know how to react. He had just been handed a cheque worth 163 Million Euros. The broadcast was live being aired on RTE 2. Pauls parents were at home watching and they were completely speechless as to what they had just seen. Pauls dad Tony had recently been made redundant and they were struggling to make ends meet. They decided to give Paul a ring to ask Paul to forgive them. Paul rightly blanked them as they threw him out onto the street when he had no money, or no clothes and they had been ignoring him over the past 3 months.

Paul cashed the cheque and the first thing he did was get himself a haircut. He was still only 18 at this time so he got the only possible haircut he could think a skin fade with a lot off the top the barbers refer to this haircut as the KC chop.

Paul went right into an Estate Agency and bought himself a five bedroom, three bathroom, luxury modern house in Los Angeles. He was set to move in in four days'

time, so he booked a flight for Friday and he was set to move in on Saturday.

Wednesday came and he got another phone call from his parents. This time answered and spoke to them. They were begging him to forgive them for what they had done but Paul just couldn't forgive them for what they did. He was happy enough with 160 Million Euros Left and he claimed he needed no family to have great life living in Los Angeles.

This was true for the first five years. He was now twenty-three. Paul was engaged to his girlfriend of three years Rachel and was expecting a child any day soon. As the days came and went back in Ireland Pauls parents had just received a letter from the bank on the top of the letter in bold red writing it had EVICTION written they had been unable to come up with money for the mortgage as Pauls dad was out of a job and was unmotivated to get one and his mother's wages were insufficient to maintain the monthly mortgage payments.

A couple of days later Rachel went into labour and this was meant to be an incredibly happy day for Paul and his fiancé Rachel until Paul received a phone call from his dad. On Pauls end all he could hear was sobbing and shouting. They were shouting that it was all Pauls fault as to why they were on the streets as he wouldn't help them

financially after his big lottery win. Paul responded calmly saying they did the exact same thing to him five years prior after he didn't want to re sit his Leaving Cert. He hung up instantly and began to sob as he felt bad for the situation, he had supposedly put his parents in for not helping them financially.

As Rachel was in labour Paul was thinking as to how he could financially help his parents without ever having to see them again as he never wanted to see them again no matter what circumstances. A couple of hours passed, and Paul finally got to see Rachel and his new-born child. Paul was already in a bad state before seeing *his* new child. Rachel was reluctant to hand the new-born over and she was sobbing as Paul was ready to finally see the new-born, he knew something wasn't right once he placed his eyes on him, he knew that the child wasn't his.

It was there and then when Rachel admitted to Paul that she had been cheating on him for the last year and had been using him because of his wealth. Paul stormed out of the hospital and didn't return home that evening or the evening after. When he eventually did return home, it was to an empty house. Rachel had taken absolutely everything that Paul had bought. Paul was devastated he had no family, no friends and most importantly he now had no child something he had been looking forward to having for the past nine months.

Paul entered himself into a mental hospital as he felt if he didn't do that, he would badly hurt himself or someone else.

Paul had spent three months in the mental hospital where one day he decided that he was well enough to check himself out of the hospital. It was here where he woke up drenched in sweat surrounded by his family. They explained the entire story to him and told him he had been in a coma for the past five years of his life. Paul asked how and they told him his sausage rolls he had been eating daily took a toll on his body and one day he just collapsed onto the ground and everyone feared that he was dead. The doctors had him on 24/7 support and they thought he was never going to come out of the coma.

It was only in the past three months where there was a significant turn for the best in his health. The doctors explained he would make it but would need constant support for the rest of his life as he would need to re-learn how to read, walk and write.

It was in the hospital where Paul's parents apologised for leaving him out on the street when he was vulnerable and had nowhere to go. Paul accepted this apology as in the coma he learned the true meaning of family and how much they meant to him.

Paul spent the next few weeks learning the basics of how to walk a short distance. He returned home and was happy to be home. Paul asked his parents how they knew

he had fallen into a coma. They replied saying that they saw it on RTE 2 when the headline was eighteen-year-old falls into coma after falling over outside of Centra. They rushed to the scene as they had a bad feeling it was him.

Outside of Centra the ambulance crew was loading him into the ambulance where he was identified as Paul. Then over the next five years they took turns visiting him as they still needed to pay off their mortgage.

It was when Paul took a turn for the worst his dad quit his job to make sure he was with Paul 24/7. Paul's family were struggling to pay off the mortgage, but they managed to make ends meet whilst Paul was in the coma.

Paul then went on to pass his Leaving Cert after resitting it. He became a successful realtor.

5TH YEARS

NO TURNING BACK

Josh Kelly

“**F**inally, it is done, an experiment in which thousands of humans have attempted to complete, but never seemed to succeed. An experiment that, well, took me thirty-three years to complete. Albert, I present to you, the time traveler.”

“You’re kidding me, right?” exclaimed Albert. “I thought you gave up on this bad boy a long, long time ago, as in decades ago!” Albert proceeded to stare down this giant modernized machine, stroking his hands down the smoothed edges of this masterpiece.

“Pretty good, huh?” boasts Raymond as he scratches his overgrown beard as a result of staying up too late. Both men proceed to admire this masterpiece, talking about how it could affect the future of the human race, and more importantly, how these lifelong friends will soon be put down in history.

“You know what, Ray,” slurs Albert as he gently puts his glass of Whiskey back on the table, “We really did it this time, I mean, we’re going to’ be millionaires, we’re going down in history, brother, yet you don’t seem all that excited about it.” Albert sits up straight and points his

bloodshot green eyes towards Raymond for what felt like ten minutes.

“Listen Albert, do you have any idea how long I spent working on this beauty, I mean, you may as well say I’ve spent my whole life working on her, and, forgive me if I’m wrong but I have the feeling that you’re going to try to take all of the credit for it”, Ray says as he adjusts his glasses.” You said it yourself, buddy, you forgot I was still working on this.” At this point Ray is in a shiver, breaking into a cold sweat, as this is one of the first times, he’s ever spoken to Albert like this.

“You’ve got nothing to worry about, Ray,” explains Albert with a sort of evil grin on his face. “I’m going to head up to bed now, I’m exhausted, I’ll see you in the morning.” Albert begins to stumble out of the sitting room, grasping onto every armchair he walks by. He suddenly turns around, doing his best to maintain eye contact with Ray. “Oh yeah, I forgot to ask, when are we sorry, I mean you going to tell the world about this, I mean, people need to know about this, sooner rather than later buddy.”

Raymond sits up, attempting to make himself look more intimidating than he really is. “I haven’t really thought about it yet, I mean, this is a huge invention, maybe in the next week or so.”

Albert nods his head and slowly stumbles up the stairs.

Wednesday morning, 6:30am, as birds chirp from the gutter of their little apartment in Arkansas, another early start for Raymond. He dashes straight for the basement with no breakfast, no clothes, just a pair of pajamas, no hesitation. He quickly gets the banners he had bought from the dollar store the previous night. ‘The teleporter’ hung proudly across this 6.6ft device. What felt like twenty minutes, turned out to be three hours, as Raymond heard the footsteps of Albert getting out of bed.

“Morning fella, heavy night?” asks Ray as he begins to prepare breakfast for both men.

“Meh, could’ve been worse,” Answers Albert. “Hey, have you put any more thought into when you’re going to let the public know about our - apologies, I mean your invention?”

Ray turns around and places a plate of buttered toast in-front of Albert. “Yeah actually, I have. I was thinking maybe today. I mean, it’s not too late, it’s only 9am and I woke up especially early today preparing a presentation for this bad boy,” says Ray as he adjusts his collar.

“Why didn’t you ask me to help you to prepare the presentation? Hey, between me and you, it’s pretty obvious that I’m the more creative one. I think we both know that, deep down in that little stubborn heart of yours.” Albert takes a bite into his cold toast, avoiding eye contact with Raymond. The air in the small blue painted kitchen became more tense, both men sitting awkwardly eating their lukewarm porridge.

“Today, I’m presenting it today, whether you like it or not. I’m going to go call the local news station to see if they can get some crew to record this.” Says Raymond as he proceeds to walk up the stairs covered in stained carpet. Ray walks into his room full of posters of aliens and science fiction jokes. He sits himself down on his un-made bed and throws his head into his hands. After a while he walks towards the house phone and begins to dial the number of the local news station. “Time travelling, 33 High street, 4pm, this is history”, is all he says. He doesn’t want to give any more information, he wants to leave it short and sweet, to give a kind of mysterious vibe.

Later that day...

Raymond is in a panic; the noise of the room being filled with “What if.”

3:45pm, there isn’t a sign of Albert, anywhere.

Raymond walks down to the basement to give the time travelling machine, which was later named “The Original”, one final check. Everything is up to date. A minute or two later he hears a loud knock on his front door. Doing his best not to make a loud noise running up his stairs, he dashes for the door handle, right after fixing his tie.

“Evening, Mr. Harris. You know at first, I didn’t believe you, I thought you were insane, but something

about you convinces me you're not. May I?" The news reporter steps foot into Ray's apartment.

"Right down here, sir, I can't wait for the world to see this." Raymond leads the way down to the basement, what he is about to see is indescribable. Ray steps foot into the cold basement, with the time travelling machine in a heap welcoming the camera crew. Albert was up to no good, all along.

"No way this is happening, there is no way Albert would do this to me," Raymond thinks to himself. He quickly rushes towards the time teller device, sitting comfortably above the machine. '1939' was the only thing that was read, followed by the time in which Albert had made his move.

'3:41', Raymond falls to his knees in despair.

"Time travelling disaster." The headline of the daily newspaper was on every kitchen counter, with a photo of Raymond on his knees.

Raymond is in utter distraught, he must make a life-threatening decision - will he go back to the past and attempt to bring back Albert, or does he just stay in the present and forever feel guilty?

The following morning, Raymond finds himself on the edge of his bed tying the laces of his steel toed boot. Bringing only a few days' worth of bread, fruit and water, he makes way to the basement.

“Lord, protect me and guide me on this mission I pray, help me to find Albert, amen,” Raymond prays as he kneels before this six-foot six devices. “Well here goes nothing.” Raymond steps into this intimidating machine, not knowing what to expect. He is followed by a wave full of chaotic sounds and visions, clocks surround his head as if he had just been knocked unconscious.

Three hours later, he finds himself waking up on a filthy, bloody battlefield, right in the center of no-mans-land. His vision is extremely blurry, his head is spinning, but he knows he needs to get out of there. Gunshots and explosions fill the air as he runs in slow motion as far away from the noise as possible.

“Why, Albert. Why would you let jealousy get the better of you, why?” yells Raymond as he falls to his knees and looks up to the sky, tears running down his face onto his messy beard. It seems as though all hope is lost. He’s not returning home; he thinks to himself.

Nine and a half hours later, he finds himself nibbling on the last piece of bread he had brought with him. After shouting obscenities and walking endless miles on end, he comes across a run-down little shack. He cannot help but approach it, for all he knows, this shack could be full of soldiers ready to blow his head off. He completely disregards this thought. As he gets closer, he is welcomed by a voice, humming a familiar tune. As he approaches the front-door, the voice grows louder. “It cannot be....” He thinks to himself.

Raymond knocks gently on the wooden door of the shack. After about thirty seconds he hears footsteps creaking on the wooden floor inside. As his heart rate drastically increases, the footsteps get closer and closer. Finally, the door-handle moves downward, followed by a dramatic opening of the door. Raymond cannot believe his eyes.

“Boy am I glad to see you,” Raymond says after a ten seconds stare at each-other. “What are the chances I happen to come across you in the middle of a warzone that happened seventy-nine years ago. I just can’t believe it.” Raymond proceeds to stare back at Albert who hasn’t said a word this whole time.

“You have no idea, do you?” asks Albert as he grins sinisterly at Raymond. “Let me explain. I assume you thought I was dead, correct?”

Raymond nods convincingly. “Well, would you believe me if I said that I’ve been here for nineteen years, working on the exact same model that you had built in the present?” asks Albert as he walks back into his little shack, arms folded. “Follow.” Albert proceeds to stroll into this little room to the left, the other room being a pigsty like kitchen.

“This don’t make no sense, none of it. Nineteen years? What in tarnation!” Raymond’s face became saturated with defeat. “Yesterday, it was yesterday when I followed you to the year of nineteen thirty-nine.” Raymond buried his face into his dirty hands.

Raymond follows Albert to the time travelling machine. Raymond's face beamed with jealousy. This machine was mightier, better looking, and more accurate than Raymond's. "She's a beauty," says Raymond has his face filled with despair.

"You've came right on time, too. I've been working on this baby for nineteen years, man, that's the only reason she looks sleeker than yours", says Albert as he grins and walks closer to it. "See, there must have been a fault in your machine. I didn't arrive here in nineteen thirty-nine, more like nineteen-twenty fella.' I've been living off the scraps of food the soldiers leave behind them for the past year. Before that? A bottle of water and some stale bread the locals would throw at me. They thought I was crazy, dude! When I first woke up nineteen years back, in the middle of a farm, I thought I went insane. I found myself running and screaming uncontrollably for hours on end, telling people that I'm a time traveler from ninety-nine years in the future. I made a name for myself 'der psycho' meaning the psycho. I had never been so frightened in my life, as I'm sure you're frightened right now. But guess what?" asks Albert, eyes wide open and bloodshot, "I'm a bust us outta this hellhole!"

"How? Is she done? I don't know about this, Albert. But sure, anything to get us out of here." Raymond shakes Alberts sweaty hand one last time before setting the date on this masterpiece. A loud irritating noise came from the base of the device.

“Three, two, one.... Go!”, both men jump into an ecstasy of blurs hoping for the best.

2 days later....

“We’re not going to make it, we ain’t gonna make it Al, we ain’t makin’ it home.” Albert sits up swiftly. After scratching his head for thirty seconds, he looks to his left, only to see Raymond in a rapid eye movement form of sleep, still in a state of anxiety.

“We’re home, Raymond were home! Oh my gosh the basement has never seemed so welcoming. Home sweet home!” Albert stands up as if he had just run a marathon and walks over to the small dirty mirror over behind the time traveler device. “I’m still nineteen years older, though”, he thinks to himself.

Grunts and groans come from Raymond’s direction. Albert looks around in slow motion, as if they were in some sort of a dramatic movie. Expecting a scream of panic or a temporary short-term memory loss, instead, he’s only greeted with a grin.

POETRY

ANOTHER MURDER TO ADD TO THE LIST

Eoghan Echivarre

I thought I would mention about my murderous
intension
I am not doing this for something as stupid as fame or
attention
so, the first person that I killed was that weird kid in
detention
I drugged him with an anaesthetic injection
I dragged him home and put him on my operating table
I hear the voices in my head whisper that I am unstable
I planned to skin him from head to toe season his organs
with oregano
kept his skin in the freezer cut his body up with a meat
cleaver
made it on the front-page title's states unknown cannibal
rampage
The modern-day Hannibal is hitting the main stage
bodies found skinned and hollow this is very disturbing
and hard to swallow
if I get hunted down and killed tonight

at least I will go without a fight
when I die I will join the ranks of
Dahmer, Gacy and Bundy too
real serial killers that made fiction really come true

DREAMLAND FANTASY

Eoghan Echivarre

I think I am going insane
so, I fabricate a world in my brain
where I am superman and you are my Lois lane
I escape out of reality and enter my dreamland fantasy in
there that the world is colourful and happy
you can say it's a cheesy movie where it's all nice and
sappy
but the real world it's all dark and dreary and damp and
eerie
where every five seconds you see a little boy being scared
and teary
but that's all it is a fantasy in my head
life is boring and pointless I am still going to end up dead
everything I say and do doesn't make a difference
I am not going down in history I won't solve murder
mystery's
SO WHATS THE BLOODY POINT IN LIVING!
I give up there is no other reason to live
Goodbye ...
oh, wait that was a lie but to be honest I am ready to die

don't start crying today I am already gone to my fantasy
where I am flying away

A HOLLOW SHELL

Eoghan Echivarre

Nobody understands my pain
all these dark thoughts filling my brain
in class I am clowning I put on a fake smile but really, I
am frowning
I feel like I am drowning and everyone around is
surrounding
My heart is pounding people find it astounding
I cry everyday wanting to die but at school I make jokes
but it's all a lie
On the weekends I drink and smoke just to get away from
life for awhile
I try to adapt but really, I am not versatile
Looking for a high that couldn't supply
I know it will be temporary but, in reality I know it isn't
necessary
Life becomes real again and I start to feel again
My wounds won't heal again

BLOOD RED LIES

Eoghan Echivarre

Don't think you should mess around with that insane kid
Because you don't know what pain he is going through
These bullies call him faggot and queer He wishes they
would all just disappear
He lost his sanity
you can blame that on humanity maybe
You can blame society

He kept saying school isn't right for me
He has a few screws loose up in his head
He wishes all his enemies would get shot by bullets made
out of lead
He wants all them to be covered in crimson red
He has a mental illness and people don't realise what they
have done
In his brain he already has won

I guess that's another psychopath to add to the list

With scars on his wrist

He is walking around starting fights getting angry talking
about his rights there he goes blasting music through his
earphones wishing

He was left alone but these bullies don't understand fully
then that day came, and those bullies were to blame

To him it was all a bloody game

DEATH OF RADIO

Robert O' Gorman

I remembered the days when I used to get played
Now my very essence has very much decayed
I now rest on the cupboard gathering dust
People don't care for me as I lack lust

Strangers look at me like I'm some sort of antiquity
They think I'm broken but I've still got my dignity
They don't dare turn me on or test me
When they want to turn on music, they don't dare suggest
me

Soon enough I'll be disposed of and die in the attic
For most of my other friends like the newspaper and
television it will be problematic.
Society doesn't need us anymore were all just history
People got their phones now, so their life is devoid of
mystery

A garage sale was coming up and I was being ignored
They disposed me in a box where all the irrelevant stuff
was stored

An old aged neighbor came in and was interested by my
presence

The man loved me and took me in as a present

I was pleased to know that I still had purpose

Even though the amount of people using phones is on a
surplus

I see the man enjoy the music I play like I used to do

I'm happy that my life has been given a renew.

A WASTE OF TIME

Jordan Leane

I Spent all day and night,
Trying to finish my assignment,
It is starting to get bright,
I feel like I'm in a confinement,

I go in to present,
But the teacher is not there,
Are they absent?
I fell into my chair,

I wish I had known back then,
Before I spent all that time,
Writing and writing again,
At least I had it done in time,

When I had arrived at home,
I was greeted with hello,
My voice was so monotone,
I felt down, so low,

THE SCHOOL

Anonymous 1

The dark and messed up school is like prison.

We wear a uniform that isn't comfortable,
and it feels like pure s***

I wish we were able to wear our own clothes
but alas we are forced to wear this horrible sense of
“clothing” -
it's more like a prison jumpsuit.

The classes drag out through the day
and it feels like it will never stop,
the 40-minute classes feel like hours
when they are nowhere near that.

It can get dark and depressing
because of the way that people act
and how they deal with their own problems.
The problems that they don't talk about build up
and then come out as abuse of others.
These people can make the school day horrible
and make people not want to come to school at all.
This becomes unbearable and people can't cope with it.

Therefore, school can be depressing

as it can be something else than it was made for.

Therefore, it needs to change
for the good of the pupils of others.

RINGING

Anonymous 2

That look in your eye worries me to the core.
Every time you must walk in with that face, that
composure, that dread, it worries me.
You drag yourself over, unable to take that weight off
your shoulders.
Your burdens crawl along your back.

I don't know what I should do.
I honestly haven't a clue,
If I could change the course of fate, I would in a
heartbeat,
But I have to face this head-on, as I am just me, and you
are simply you,
The clock will keep ticking and tocking.

That murmur, whimper-like, that unwillingness behind
it, like a child who has done wrong.
You got a phone call, and they're sick.
No, worse than sick, but you're afraid of reality.
So, the white lie leaves your lips.

So, I sit here and pray that never shall that phone ring

out like the church bells do.
I'll never be ready if that ringing was yours.

Often you ask me,
"What would you do without me?"
And I simply don't know.

MICHEAEL

Josh Kelly

I woke up on the wrong side of the bed that morning,
My uniform in a heap, ten minutes behind – cold coffee.
A maths test 9am sharp – not a hope,
Though I knew there was something glorious waiting for
me,
Far before that 9am bell.

“Wasn’t expecting to see you here so early”,
I remove my earphones. I turn around.
My stale eyes are met with a rather luminous pair,
Silver hair and a freshly shaved face.
“I’m always early, Micheael, you know that”

In awe of his ability to be so joyous,
So full of energy on a morning so dull,
An ability to make the grouchiest teen in the room
Out of breath from laughing
An energy like no other, an energy to be missed.

But he was so much more than a caretaker,
Never failing to plant a smile on a stranger,
That flutter of bliss in a corridor full of depression
What a legacy that has been left behind.

About Clonkeen College Press

Clonkeen College Press is a Transition Year project. It was set-up in the 2012-13 academic year with the aim of creating a space for students to write creatively and, ultimately, to produce and publish an annual collection of student writing. This has now become what we all call THE ANTHOLOGY. We publish this collection of student writing each April.

Since its inception, Clonkeen College Press has increasingly become the work of the students themselves - they write, edit, and layout the book, as well as designing the cover, produce promotional posters, pricing the book, marketing it and selling it.

In addition to THE ANTHOLOGY, 2019-2020 has seen the launch of the Clonkeen College Press website –

www.clonkeencollegepress.com

We hope that the website will support and extend the possibilities of THE ANTHOLOGY project in promoting our young writers in Clonkeen College.

Of course, we are always open to supporting and publishing students from other schools too and would encourage students from other schools to send us their writing if they would like to see it published.

We would like to thank everyone in our community - students, teachers, our admin staff, school managers, parents, sisters, brothers, friends, grandparents, uncles, aunties, and everyone in between - for their continued support.

We would also like to thank former Clonkeen College student, James Brennan, at The Smart Group, who continues to sponsor our efforts to promote and sell THE ANTHOLOGY each year.

If you have any questions regarding either Clonkeen College Press or THE ANTHOLOGY series, you can email:

ccp@clonkeencollege.ie

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