

ISSUE 1  
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# VERBUM

LOGIC STUDIO SCHOOL'S CREATIVE WRITING MAGAZINE

7 CREATIVE PIECES  
OF WRITING FROM  
LOGIC'S FINEST

BY LOGIC  
STUDENTS  
FOR LOGIC  
STUDENTS

I believe there is power in words,  
power in asserting our existence, our  
experience, our lives, through words.

*Jesmyn Ward*

That which is creative must create  
itself.

*John Keats*

# F O R E W O R D

The worst enemy to creativity is self doubt

*Sylvia Plath*

The dictionary's definition of creativity is 'the use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness'. But creativity is so much more than this. It is not just a passion for creating that 'something new', rather, it is a fundamental skill and tool for a happier, more fulfilled and successful life. As a teacher of KS5 English and a poet, I am an avid believer that everyone has the potential to express creativity in so many different ways. *Verbum* aims to do just that: showcase creative writing from our KS5 students. The writing in this magazine nurtures the truly amazing talent that these young writers hold, and hopes that over time, they will continue developing their writing and share more of it into this world. As Sylvia Plath advises, do not doubt yourself, and Maya Angelou asserts, 'You can't use up creativity. The more you use it, the more you have'.

Here is a magazine that opens the reader to the power of the written word. Enjoy these words. Allow them to transport you to wherever they take you. And don't be afraid yourself, to pick up a pen and put it to paper, or touch that keyboard on the laptop – let your narratives, real or imagined speak to others, empower them with your words!

I would also like to say thank you to Ed Palmer and the Creative Media department for their creativity, and design of *Verbum*.

- Ms Studzińska and the English team: Mr Ovington, Ms Townsend, Ms Khan

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

As a KS5 student of English, I am pleased to introduce *Verbum*, Logic Studio's first Creative Writing Magazine. Being a part of this exciting project is an incredible opportunity, and I can't wait to see how it will develop and inspire others.

For me, writing has always been a way to explore my thoughts and creativity. It allows for the expression of ideas, tells stories, and enables a connection with others on a deeper level. Writing is a powerful means of self-expression and communication, giving one the freedom to delve into different perspectives and articulate their own experiences.

Writing is important as it encourages us to think critically, feel empathy, and use our imagination. It helps us understand diverse viewpoints, broadens our horizons, and enhances our ability to communicate effectively. For me, writing is a journey of self-discovery and a way to share my unique perspective with others.

I hope that *Verbum* will inspire others to discover the joy and power of creative writing. I wish for this magazine to be a platform where students can showcase their talents, share their unique voices, and gain confidence in their writing. By creating a community of young writers, *Verbum* can foster a supportive environment that nurtures creativity and encourages everyone to express themselves through writing.

- Diana Dumitrache

# FROSTBITE'S EMBRACE

DIANA DUMITRACHE

Northern winters had always been such vicious creatures. Their wind, razor-sharp, whipped the little boy's cheeks until they turned scarlet. Snow pelted from the sky and stuck to the knitted wool of his hat, sitting upon his lashes as he blinked rapidly. The blanket of frost was thickening- It covered the forest and settled upon the path that the boy had known so well.

Indeed, this winter was the cruellest in years. The boy whirled around and shouted from the top of his lungs. There was nothing but white as far as he could see, an alabaster void greeting him from all directions. The only sound that greeted his cries were the vexed caws of a murder of crows perched on the bare, veiny branches of the trees. They watched him with gleaming eyes of tar, beaming with morbid curiosity. He felt wretched desperation claw its way up his raw throat as he screamed.

He could only imagine the scowl on his mother's face when he returned home late again. Could only feel shame as he would sink his spoon into steaming gruel and endure his father's scalding words- after all, how could a lumber's son get lost in the woods?

But now, all he felt was a coldness that took seat within his bones, and made his teeth clatter. He had not noticed that the snowflakes had begun slowing their descent, no longer pelting onto him but rather falling into a gentle dance. The sleet turned into ouzels, small creatures that formed a maelstrom of ice on the path in front of the boy.

He stopped. Watched as the birds raised their little wings, let out a miserable, pained whimper. A chorus of woe before they slumped to the ground. Their petite bodies writhed, shuddering as they took their last breaths. The snow spun, like strands of melted sugar, forming into a woman.

The wind was sultry now. It caressed the boy's cheeks as he took the sight of her in, breath knocked out of his lungs. She wore a crown of ice, its florid arches seemingly rooting from her very head. A long, silky fur coat wrapped around her lithe body, and despite the sheer cold, her neck was bare and pallid save for a necklace. The thing pulsed, pumping blood, and it bore the odd shape of a human heart.

He stepped back. Tripped and fell. Even then, he crawled away from the woman, despite the snow melting into his gloves and numbing his hands. She had the most beautiful pair of blue eyes he had ever seen. They stared at him intensely, gleaming like a freshly frozen pond. Her mouth caught his eye, too. The contrast stark between her anaemic skin and her lips. They were wet, redder than blood, and curved as they eased into a soft smile.

Her fingers dug into his jaw as she pulled him up from the snow. They were so, so glacial to touch that a shiver licked down his spine.

“Do you tremble from the cold?” Her voice sounded like the shattering of crystal glass. The woman pulled aside the fold of her coat, revealing skirts of spiked ice. “Crawl under my furs,” she whispered, and the boy rushed beneath the coat with bated breath. Her skirt dug into his face, stinging and scraping his skin raw, and yet he clung onto her, the furs wrapping around him as though they were the warmest blanket.

“Are you still cold,” she asked, and pressed a hand to his bloodied cheek. Her touch was colder than ice, colder than anything he’d ever feel again. The boy felt as though a spear had buried itself into his heart, half of which had already turned into a frozen hunk. His forehead creased as he released a pathetic, anguished moan. It felt as though he had died, if only for a second.

Then the cold vanished away, and although he could feel a frozen kind of numbness, he no longer trembled.

The boy’s brows lifted as his face turned serene, his shoulders no longer hunched. He could not remember what had him worried about returning home. After all, he could not think of anyone he had to go back to. No mother or father sinking to their knees next to the brick stove, gruel simmering away as they grieved for their son. Dead in the woods, surrounded by bleeding snow ouzels.

All he could remember was the agony that had lanced through him only moments prior, the pain ebbing into delight when he recalled the woman’s touch, a cool balm that soothed the burn of the cold.

Now, all he would ever know would be the depth of her cerulean eyes, and the feeling of her hand pressing against his tender cheek. And as he pulled back from beneath her coat, and glimpsed up at her, he saw the way she sneered at him, a grin so caustic he ought to have pulled away. The boy was enraptured. In his eyes she looked perfect, and his very being refused to recognise her as anything but. He found that he could not take his eyes away from her necklace; the writhing heart spasming as the boy’s little shouts of ‘Help!’ escaped from its gasping arteries.

# CHASED BY THE SHADOWS

OWEN WOODS

He runs continuously until he feels his chest tighten and starts to burn within. He looks back with fear at the mortuary as it begins to fade into the distance.

Each foot plummets against the cold ground, bare twigs fall from the dead trees and snap beneath him, echoing throughout the forest. Snow falls elegantly in his hair as he runs. The smell of rotting leaves and dead animal flesh overwhelms his nostrils, but the biting wind deters his attention from this scent and guides him towards the blistering pain the cold causes. The thorns that stretch out from the roots of the bushes like tendons, snag against his bare flesh, causing a small trail of red blood to trickle down his back. Paranoia takes over him. It blinds him. He is lost among the trees and their naked branches. The skeletal figure is still visible, sticking out amongst the fog shrouding his mind. The images of the mysterious figure come flooding back. Emerging from the forest, he comes upon a view of an ice blue lake, like a mirror it shimmers its cold reflections into the even colder air.

The driveway to the Anchorage Funeral Home and Mortuary was overgrown with weeds and covered in a thick blanket of snow, all too common during the harsh Alaskan winter. Snow crunched beneath his feet as he slowly walked up the long driveway.

As he reaches the top of the driveway, cold and out of breath, his gaze sets upon the daunting building before him. It is covered in vines and the roof is no longer visible, concealed by snow and moss. The window frames are eroded. Inside the fissures in the wood, small creatures nest, as they shelter from the harsh winter. His only reference is an old photograph he had found at the local library in the archive section.

He approaches the door and pries it ajar. The smell of death hits him in the face causing him to grimace and wretch. Holding his breath, he moves slowly. The mortuary had always had a reputation, and rumours spread about its closure, 'financial trouble' was reported but in reality, the truth was much darker.

He edges further towards the centre of the entrance walkway, and immediately feels as if he is being watched. There is a lone door at the end of the hallway. Despite its peculiar appearance, there is something surprisingly enticing about it. Apprehensive but determined, he moves towards it. He grips the walls as he moves closer towards the door, then hugs the walls like a scared child hugging its mother. Debris is scattered everywhere, hindering his approach to the door. Upon reaching the handle, he extends his arm and places his hand upon the cold door knob. He twisted the handle, pondering momentarily

before pushing it open. The room is dark. The putrid smell of decay fills his lungs.

He sees it then. A looming figure. It stands in the corner of the room, illuminated by a gap in the window that allows the bright winter sun to pierce its body of light through the cracks.

His breathing becomes laboured and he begins to sweat profusely. He is paralysed by fear. The figure moves closer towards him. Its arms reached forwards, its fingers twitching. He stares momentarily into blankness and then bolts for the exit. He trips over the debris. Time seems to slow down. The door which was only a few feet away, seems like miles in the distance, unreachable. He sees the figure approach him.

“Oh god” he whispers.

In that moment, he is frozen, as if something is holding him down, a power so strong, beyond the human touch, pressing him down, deeper into the ground. From somewhere, he finds the strength to run, to escape from the clutches of this shadowy figure. He runs and refuses to look back. He runs like a wolf's prey. He runs until his body and mind can no longer hold him. He runs until he finds himself standing in solitude gazing across a lake covered by a dense layer of ice.

Standing in solitude, he absorbs the peaceful landscape. Its silence is almost deafening. It's peaceful. Almost too peaceful.

A lone wolf stands on the adjacent side of the lake. Blood around its mouth from its latest victim. The tranquil scene is tainted by death and despair.

He takes a seat on an old decaying log. He looks out across the lake, and watches a low lying mist cascading around the trees. Snowflakes fall elegantly and land on the layer of ice, causing a crackling sound to fill his ears. His mind fluctuates between present and past. He remembers every miniscule detail that torments him. He breathes slowly. His eyes gaze toward the wolf. The blood around its mouth drips onto the white cold ground. Each drip marks the snow with its own deadly message.

The wolf begins to move towards him, and stops at the edge of the lake. The snow crunches beneath his heavy paws. The look of primal hunger is etched on his face. The wolf howls and his body almost changes shape, or so it seems, as the snow starts to fall heavily, and the feeling of isolation disappears as the wolf moves from beyond his sight. There is an air of uncanny resemblance between the world and the lone figure that lurked in the mortuary. It was almost too alike to the point the two were indistinguishable, perhaps it had followed him and he was going to be another nameless and forgotten victim.

He stands up slowly brushing the dead bark off his trousers. The snow is almost blinding. His wounds hurt. The wind curls its cold body around him, and he shivers as he begins to walk away from the lake. One small step at a time. And then he notices the paw prints. The air looming with stillness. He hears another piercing howl behind him. He has no strength. He does not look back.





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# DRIVING

## ANONYMOUS

I can feel her slithering inside my bedroom walls, taunting me, playing me. I can feel her everywhere. In my room, my car, my classroom. Her eyes are always following me. I hear her, you know? I'm not crazy, I know she is real.

Black-Sparrow Boarding School is not for the weak. Parents send you here to get rid of you, as if you're their dirty little secret. It makes sense too. The walls are lined with painted mahogany crowns, the colour akin to rust. A symbol of shame in the bloodline, rusted crowns reminding us that we are nothing more than a skeleton in our parents' cupboards. But they failed to realise something. They weren't the only ones with a skeleton in their closet.

I walk around the room and suddenly, I can feel her again, near the closet. The lights start to flicker, depriving me of sight. As darkness engulfs the room, a sense of dread washes over me. The whole room shakes. She is coming. Why now? She has toyed with me this entire time. What am I to do? I'm not ready. I'm not sure I'll ever be ready.

But she is here, haunting me. All colour leaves my face.

I am frozen. She is too, it seems. Did she not expect me here? She must have heard me, right? Limping towards me ravenous for revenge. I can feel it.

I look at my feet to avoid looking at her grotesque face. I never acknowledged my socks before, they're fluffy, they're- STOP ... What am I doing losing focus like that? There is literally someone behind me and I am focused on my feet being covered in fluff? My life could be on the line. FIGHT, DO SOMETHING!

She is still moving. I can hear her breathing behind my back. I slowly turn around, lifting my gaze. Slowly. Slowly. I can't see her. The lights still flickering as she shuffles until she is there just as she stops moving, the lights stop flickering. I shut my eyes in fear.

'Open your eyes', her raspy voice exclaims, 'Don't look away. Look what you did to me', she accuses.

Shaking, I abruptly open my eyes. I am transported to that night. That night that plunged me deep into this pit.

I had been drinking. I thought I would be able to swerve in time. I made her stand there knowing she would die. I made her do it. Anger consumed me and only continued to fuel my hatred as I slammed my foot on the pedal, increasing my speed to create a substantial impact on her. But I didn't swerve in time. I ruined her. I got out of that car thinking that she deserved it. She did, didn't she? She thought she was so much better than me. Her body lay there on the ground. Ruined. Death cradled her in its arms.

I knew she was dead. Yet, she is in front of me now. Making my blood curl, making my skin crawl. I stood, paralysed in fear, shocked and confused. Her head, filled with tire marks rather than hair. Her face sagging, as if I had drowned her. For someone who was so young, she had many wrinkles. Mud and blood were oozing out of her. Her cheeks had now sunken. It was as if she was a skeleton with a thin sheet placed over her. One broken cheekbone, making her face bleed. The carpet absorbing the droplets of blood.

Half her body is crushed and mangled. I crushed her.

'Please-' I beg her, before she cuts my words off with something that resembled her finger. But she pauses as she softly caresses my face. Whilst her bone presses against my top lip, the excess skin hangs on, draining its blood onto my cheek and flooding my face.

'Don't.' She hushes me as she drags me by my hair to the same road I ended her life. It was freezing. 'You owe me a life'. She screams at me, as she knocks me down. Still dragging me by my hair, I fall backwards, scraping my back against the road. She starts to drag me towards the middle of the road, I begin to thrash my arms and kick my legs as I scream 'let me GO I am sorry'.

As soon as the words leave my mouth, she turns and faces me before I realise what is happening. Her arm rises. She strikes me across the face. She stands me up, I can't move. She places me exactly where she once was. She summons my truck and begins to climb in. Seconds later, the headlights flicker blinding me to my spot. I can't move. I am helpless just as she once was.

It's too late now. She is driving straight at me.



# JOHN 4:8 'GOD IS LOVE'

ANAHITA RASOOLPOOR

Another scribbled lyric. He hated it. Ezra looked up from his notepad, blue and grey sky above him again, welcoming, stretched thin over the chilled blue and grey town. The sky was something akin to the fragile skin of the stomach of a dying animal, shot by an arrow and bleeding out slowly, painfully, aching to turn to dust. Remnants of evening rain have splattered the platform, the air hung with the scent of smog and broken promises, the two colliding to sprinkle down on Ezra's shoulders in light after-showers. Ezra would usually think of a deeper meaning for the rain appearing at this time but right now he has no time for sentimentality. He is running late yet the taste of anticipation on his tongue is that much sweeter.

With a heavy sigh, he leaves the station as the hours begin to bleed into night, the street lamps winking on in weak mimicry of the long-forgotten day, the cry of the bustling town centre begins to die down slowly but surely. The streets fill with sleepy cars, passing by in abstract blurs, the smoke from their exhausted pipes sticking to his skin like sickness. It is an expensive sickness if not a cruel one, and it makes his heart beat with more vigour than it ever has. Night suits the town well, he thinks, fits it like a glove as the blue little buildings grow tenfold, all seated comfortably in the lap of shadows, ominous and yet exhausted as they watch him with their tired but mesmerising yellow eyes, blinking, sometimes winking.

But he finds this empty affection meaningless, instead he turns his attention to the vehicles jogging past him with blind eyes, resolutely refusing to turn his way as they plod on. Despite the fatigue growing in his bones, he feels strangely comforted.

Ezra enters the taxi; a small, posh cave of metal with pristine, white seats and windows down. It's cold and his flesh prickles in protest. The drive is long, soon away from the bustling city, there is barely anyone else on the road now, no humans in sight, save the driver—an old man—and the ghost of his own secrets, the town outside calling to him in unfamiliar tongues.

He says nothing, this is no time for new beginnings.

'..Eh, you wanna get off?' He turns his attention to the driver, his voice a deeper rumble over the deep hum of the engine, 'There's nothing but the Fontana's place out here and trust me, you don't want to be face-to-face with them crazy old folk.' 'That's actually where I'm headed, thanks,' Ezra replies, the corners of his mouth lifting skyward despite himself. The driver's bewildered face in the rear-view mirror along with his gruff mumblings only deepened the lines crinkling the skin around Ezra's eyes as his smile widened wickedly. Despite months of preparation, he had never thought this day would actually come. Never thought those words would belong to him.

## Never thought that he would win

At the edge of the city, the Fontana residence stood high. Ezra was rather relieved to no longer be assaulted visually by the hostile architecture found in the cramped, crowded city he had just narrowly escaped through the taxi of which its engine could still be faintly heard. Truthfully, Ezra wasn't intimidated by the grandiose building; he was charmed. In fact, if he could murder Lord Fontana and take his place right then, he would, regardless of how uncharming it would be. Ezra cared about his charms but he cared about living a beautiful life more. And oh would he live lavishly in this estate! He'd finally be with his woman too, he thought to himself.

When Olga opened the door, she gave him a toothy smile. Fortunately, he knew Olga well, she was a cleaner at the conservatoire he studied in years ago. She recommended him to the illustrious owner of this home: Cornelius Jebediah Fontana.



'You're lucky you're not too late!' Olga said, loud enough to jolt Ezra slightly but comfort him too, a human presence amongst the dreary atmosphere. He was led through the long dark hallway by her, amused by the paintings filling the gaps between the tall windows. Suddenly he froze, noticing a painting of her.

Oh but it was enchanting! It captured her large eyes perfectly, those dear saturated pools of blood, dark yet inviting. She always tantalised him with her imperfect yet ineffable beauty. Her aura was holy, something to be worshipped, a Saint in the sky. But he knew she was not a real star. A north star, guiding him here and a morning star, a mere mimic of purity.

'Mrs Fontana's portrait always shocks me too,' Olga's words shook him out of his daze and he realised he'd stopped walking, standing still in front of his angel (or his devil?), 'I heard you gasp, my boy, don't think I didn't realise your affinity for her!'

'Mrs Fontana...' He whispered to himself, repeating her name to himself mockingly, brows furrowing as he looked at her face once more, 'She's only 25 and yet she married this man who's 50 years older than her!' Olga was busy pushing the door open so his quiet rant went unheard so he continued to mumble, 'Why is it that I, at the ripe age of 30, had my love stolen by a putrid senior citizen with nothing to him but money and a holiday home in Marseille? Why must I, a musician, travel here just to indulge this old man who spends his life as an eternal summer holiday?' Though Ezra had to admit, this is a perfect holiday home.

'Did you say something?' Olga asked tentatively. 'I just said it's a lovely painting,' Ezra responded with an evidently fake, tight-lipped smile. Straining his eyes to pull away, Ezra continued to walk, right into the hall towards the piano and even if he couldn't see her now, the image of her was burnt into the back of his eyelids. Every step led to him blinking and every blink had him deliriously staring into her wide eyes, darker than the sharps and flats on the piano.



A large, irregular splatter of red ink or paint, resembling blood, is positioned on the left side of the page. It has a dense, textured appearance with various shades of red and some darker spots. The splatter extends from the top left towards the center of the page.

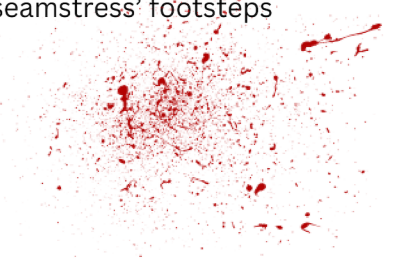
# UNTITLED

HODAN MAHOMOUD

I watch as the first crimson drop trickles slowly. Soon it is a steady pour, leaving a tinge of warmth on its painted trail. It wars with gravity for a moment, the blood contemplating its fall, leaning and drooping further into its demise, before finally accepting its fate and colliding with the hard wooden floor. My failed tailoring attempts sprawled along my legs, my wound is throbbing and warm. Pre-marital jitters are truly a curse. My dress looks identical to how it was when I bought it, but my mind tells me that's not enough.

I make the decision to leave my dress in the hands of a real seamstress, someone that has at least the skill to bring my borderline unattainable vision to life. I board a train, grasping my gown, and head for the lively rush of downtown. My mind wanders to him. My fiance. An established man. Our meeting was disgustingly cliché. A distressed damsel drops the ridiculous amount of items she was carrying, and a generous hero lends a helping hand. I can still recall the day he looked at me, with his eyes like no other. He's an army general, returning from deployment, but his eyes are not hardened at all. He isn't hardened at all. He is gentle, kind. He is sunshine. The sun itself, and the rays of light it beams. Unfamiliar with darkness and negative emotions. He illuminates lives. I can't compare, nothing in the solar system could compare me to him. The brightest star, but I'm not a star. I am space debris, floating through nothingness for eternity, until I'm in the path of an asteroid and I'm blown into oblivion. I wish I could be blown into oblivion. I yearn for a moment when I can just vanish, leaving all of my worldly concerns behind. Though extremely morbid and depressing, life is futile to me. Completely devoid of purpose, I don't have the attraction of mystery or fascination. My existence is veiled in fear and uncertainty. He is the only thing I'm sure of, spending the rest of my life with him is the only thing I haven't thought twice about.

I get off the train and step onto the platform with a sense of eagerness and the slightest bit of optimism. I make my way to the tailor, so I can at least attempt to settle my dissatisfaction with my dress. Upon arrival, I am met with a pink door. The entire store itself was pink, with a sign up top written in cursive which read 'Heather's Haberdashery'. The walls, floor and furniture are all pink. Not an obnoxious pink but a baby pink, one that's easy on the eyes. My admiration of the store is suddenly interrupted by the intoxicating scent of warm vanilla. The smell floods my nose as I begin to turn my head to find the source of the scent, just for me to be interrupted by the seamstress' footsteps approaching me.

A smaller, more concentrated splatter of red ink or paint is located in the bottom right corner of the page. It is similar in style to the larger splatter on the left, with a dense, textured appearance and various shades of red.

“I got your call, the 14:00 wedding dress tailoring, right?” she smiled as she approached me from behind. Turning my body to face the voice, I’m faced with a sight for sore eyes. Beauty that’s unseen and unheard of. It’s the type of beauty written by poets, pained by unrequited love. Beauty that makes your surroundings beautiful too. I’m struggling to make eye contact, her eyes are far too alluring. They’re an aquamarine blue with threads of brown: a russet brown rather than a chestnut brown. Like fire in water. I quickly pull myself together to snap myself out of the trance she put me in. I completely forget to answer her question.

“Yes, sorry, that’s me.” I fumble with the dress as I attempt to present it to her, “Here’s the dress.”

She goes to the back to assess the mess I made of the dress. My mind is filled with her, with her beauty, her alluring aura. The way her ebony hair frames her face, compliments her smile, and dances as she walks. The way her soft lips flash me an honest smile.

“Hello?” she gently touches my shoulder, the soft touch making me jump, making me lose focus again. “Sorry, I wasn’t sure if you could hear me. I’m ready to fix the dress, let’s get it on you.” That smile again.

A wave of emotions overtakes me as I see the outfit on my body. I examine my appearance and feel a wave of hatred wash over me. I still find myself repulsive, no matter how I picture myself being broken apart and reconstructed. Nothing about me seems even vaguely appealing, including my dishevelled hair, lifeless skin, tiny lips, and unattractive figure. I feel the same pair of hands on me, repairing the failed modifications I had made with complete ease. Her passion and drive, her captivating beauty, her kindness. I yearn to be Heather. I want to embody her. A woman that can match his level of excellence. My mind runs rampant. With every second my frustration grows. The constant smile she flashes as she sews and sews.

The overpowering smell of vanilla disappears as the store is filled with an air of envy and anger. Tears well in my eyes. Why must God be so unfair? The scissors beside her glare under the lamplight, calling to me, calling to be used. My fingers grip the rough plastic handles, turning towards the seamstress. Her smile disappears, a look of terror replaces the once warming expression she had. The corners of my mouth curl up as the fear instilled replaced the look of superiority she previously held. I make my way to her, my advance making her more and more fearful. Screaming and begging for mercy as my weapon gets closer and closer to that beautiful face of hers.



# SAVE ME

SARA BELAHCENE

I am here. Where he told me to go. But I do not know really where I am or how I could find him. He was lost. I was lost. We were both lost together. He had been missing for ten days. He is probably dead in the eyes of the police. But not mine. Because after all he is my friend. Right?

The trees like crippling, disfigurements bite me. Taunting, torturing and teasing me through their echoes of horror. The emerald leaves in the forest obscure my vision as the moon reflects her own shadowy visions. These moonlight rays interrogate my mind, pierce my soul with grotesque images of the past. I shake them away like a bad omen. It was like these sadist trees knew why I was here, but wanted to savour their time with me by pointing me in the wrong direction with their gaunt, uncanny, vengeful fingers. Above in the sagacious sky, her eyes meet mine. Her eyes look like they pity me. She knows why I am here and what is about to happen. Of course I had no idea.

‘Come it will be a laugh, it will be fun,’ he said. Maybe those were the last words I ever heard him say. Right before his disappearance, he told me of this deserted house, and begged me to spend the night there. But of course, his description of this morbid house was nothing like its reality.

Sudden fistfuls of thunder and beams of lightning devour the ashy sky. Then there is silence. Complete silence. No moans of nocturnal creatures trying to inticse victims into their foreboding veil of corruption, no pounding whimpers of the waves, no serenading sounds of possible sirens that I heard once before. Only a fetid pervading stench of disembodied flesh could be smelt. It seemed to be coming from underneath the macabre soil. So I started to dig.

I could see them, all of them. Well what was left of their bodies. Something about these bodies were familiar to me like I somehow knew them.

There was one boy and two girls. They all looked so young and peaceful, their pallid faces looking up at me. They all died of the same cause. Strangulation. They all possessed the same morose marks and bruises around their necks and all over their bodies. Then I discovered that this was not the end of their suffering. They were stabbed a hundred times. I wonder if they were all murdered by the same man.

I decided to look for the house he told me about. I remember he mentioned that the house was engulfed with moss and ivy. I knew I would be able to find the house.



Standing outside the house, I shivered and felt that the air had suddenly become colder. I noticed an ominous figure in the second floor window. It had moved behind a curtain, but then reappeared fleetingly. This unnerving figure bore the same tattoo on his arm, the same tattoo my friend had before he went missing. It was the grim reaper's scythe. I felt every muscle in my body paralysed in fear. But I managed to yell out his name, foolishly hoping that he would appear out of the shadows. Suddenly, the undistinguished shadow froze immediately like a child that has been ridiculed by their mother. It then darted back into the sinister shadows. Was that him? It couldn't be. Was that him? What was he doing here? Why was he hiding in this house in the middle of nowhere? In my heart I knew I found him. But why was he running away from me?

My hands were shaking and sweat patterned my palms as if it was drawing the blueprints to this house. Reluctantly, I shoved the door open and it crashed against the wall, which then caused the whole house and me to uncontrollably shake. A wave of suffocating dust invaded my lungs, forcing me to make a distressed attempt to pry open one of the windows. Once all the dust had settled on the bare floorboards, a worrisome image clouded my eyes.

The room was filled with furniture. There was a vermillion coloured two seater couch, which was disturbingly clean, considering the blanket of dust that had just polluted the place. There was an industrial scarlet fireplace that spewed a newly lit fire, a rouge rug that was again unusually clean, and a miniature pocket knife that was left carelessly on the couch. The room was spilling red of every shade. Whoever this house belonged to wouldn't have to clean up after themselves if they had committed murder. The blood would just blend in. How convenient.

I could hear whimpering and wailing. A deep unsettling noise that stabbed my own body with fear. The sound was coming from a concealed door to the right of the couch. It was the door to the basement. The voice belonged to a girl, and it sounded like she was getting stabbed a hundred times. I picked up the pocket knife and remembered what my feminist mother told me: 'if a woman is in trouble, then she must be saved'.

Steadily, I made my way down the winding tail of stairs, with each step, her screams grew louder and more excruciating. And then there was a deafening silence. I couldn't hear them anymore.

As I entered the basement, the air was heavy with pain. And then I saw her.

She had the same eyes as me, the same colour hair as me, and she was wearing the exact same thing as me. She even had the same birthmark as me. She was me and I was her. And she was covered in the exact same marks and bruises that the three bodies had. Looking down at my own body, I noticed the same bruises and marks started to appear on me in identical places.

I peered back at her and she mouthed 'run'. But I told her I was here to rescue her. Suddenly a colossal machete impaled her causing both of us to collapse to the ground in agony. Above my wasting body, he appeared.

'Don't worry, you will soon be reunited with the rest of our group,' he said calmly as he scooped up my limp body.

I felt his words seep deep into my skin like they penetrated every blood vessel, every muscle, every organ in my soulless body. His once friendly face was now gaunt and pallid from starvation. His face was going to be the last thing I saw. My body started to rise like it knew I was ready to be saved.

# THE FOG

HAMDAN VOHRA

The dense, bleak, misty fog covered the forest, obscuring my vision. The forest was rumoured to be a vessel of long-lost spirits. Forbidden to rest. It is said that these spirits haunt those who enter it. But I had to enter this forest. This was a trial I had to face to gain full membership as a coven member.

I walked through the fog as it attempted to suffocate the very living essence out of me. Whispers of the forgotten trickled down my spine. A cold harrowing breeze lured me deeper into the bleak fog.

Memories that I sealed away, came running into this disturbing reality. Glimpses of my nightmares stood before me. Memories mixed with nightmares, nightmares mixed with memories. I could not decipher one from the other. Dark ominous figures in hoods holding a book and a dagger swirled before me. My curiosity edged me forwards but these illusions of forests and figures, books and daggers, dispersed in a matter of seconds. I was surprised. Confused. Bewildered. Was this supposed to happen? Branches snapped and leaves rustled in the near distance. There was nothing in sight. The fog continued to obscure my vision. As I turned back, the mist began to ascend and retrace its steps. I was astonished by what I was witnessing. I ran towards the fog trying to follow its retrieval. But it had forbidden me to do so. I was stunted by the roots of this hallowed forest. To use magic in this situation was out of the question. Drawing upon magic in this forest would mean facing death. Suddenly, a gateway created by the mist appeared before my eyes. The roots that bounded me to the ground, released me. Cautiously, I walked over to the gateway of mist and the threads of air sucked me in.

My brain throbbed as I lay on the ground, clueless of what had happened. Agitated, I attempted to stand up but stumbled and saw a new form of fog unravelling. A burst of light ignited from what I could tell was the sun. It shattered the fog, and a spectrum of light beamed in my face, drawing upon threads of light from each colour of the rainbow. The weakening sun was beginning to set and promised the darkness of this impending night. The sun departed fiercely with courage and honour, making sure you would not forget its very essence. As my eyes averted from the cosmic dance in the skies, from the corner of my eye, I caught something scarlet, glowing from the ground. The scarlet glow lured me forward like a string. Upon my arrival, blood was scattered everywhere, in all sorts of sizes. The colours of the blood consisted of scarlet, ruby and vermillion, which stretched all around the earthy soils and grass. I was terrified of these sightings. The scattering of these droplets led to a trail. A trail that was familiar but not too familiar. I walked with caution and scanned my surroundings, a burst of visions clouded my mind. All resembling grimoires, daggers stained with blood, shattered mirrors and a circle of hooded ominous figures. Who were they? And what did they want? Distorted echoes formed a new mist in front of me. This made me curious, and dragged me to these distorted sounds. Sounds that were harmonious and hypnotising.

As I got closer to the source, the whispers and echoes amplified in volume. The fog dramatically dispersed and revealed to me an abandoned mansion. A mansion that had a familiar scent and feel. I opened the gates where ivy was spawned onto it. The gates screeched. I entered the house and was greeted by an overwhelming chill that funnelled into my bones. A gust of wind threw me over. The door slammed and the door handles in the house rattled like snakes. As I ventured into the darkness, the floorboard creaked. My magic was somehow suppressed. I was not able to ignite a flame or any source of light. But threads of lights crept out of the broken windows and shone on the portraits on the staircase. I noticed that these portraits resembled my visions. A silhouette of fighters behind a grimoire and a dagger. Next to the portrait was exactly my vision: hooded figures in a circle. But this time the grimoire had a pentagram engraved onto it and the hooded figures all had an omega emblem, at the centre of their cloaks. This was an emblem that was always associated with our ancient enemies. This startled me slightly. These enemies were nothing more than bloodthirsty monsters who craved insidious amounts of power by performing unholy sacrifices. I looked around, desperate to learn and see what this place was really about. But, I saw blood spread onto the walls, where portraits of some sort of leaders hung. Suddenly, alarming images appeared in my head screaming to save them. Then another sequence of images emerged, where men with hand-lit flames called my name to join their ranks. I ran upstairs, hoping it would go away. The chaos stopped once I came across a partially opened room. All the other doors were shut, and had marks of blood on them.

With an impulse of curiosity and a demand to open the door. I pushed it open with my trembling hand. My eyes started to bleed. I was petrified. The room was a scene of carnage. It was a bloodbath. There were decapitated bodies of dozens of my coven. Their lifeless eyes stared at me. The sight and smell of such horror made me scream. A scream that shattered the windows. The dying light of the candles were also dispersed. There was no light. There was nothing but darkness and my echoing scream. Hyperventilating, I turned to flee, only to be seized into the arms of a hooded figure whose chest was carved out in the symbol of the omega. His touch was ice. There was no escape for me now.

