

INTERROBANG



2021

Editor's Note

From the Editors,

Interrobang is a collection of some of the fantastic creative writing and artwork provided by students at James Hargest College. The students here are very talented, and this is reflected in the absolute talent portrayed in this magazine. All of the work submitted for consideration was great, but the ones we selected are the cream of the crop.

We'd like to say a big thank you to the designers; Emily Donlevy and Madison Harris, along with a big shout out to Mr James for helping us get this all organised. We'd also like to thank all those who sent in submissions, whether successful or not. They were all enjoyable to read and we hope everyone keeps creating. One last thank you to all others who helped out during the creation of this year's *Interrobang*.

We hope you enjoy this collection of wonderful pieces of artwork and literature. And with that, it's time for you to start reading!

Daniel Harley
Editor

James Bath
Editor

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Lockdown

by Sophie Merrilees

Lockdown
Immediate, Serious
Protecting, Managing, Frustrating
Isolation, Confinement, Solitary, Mask
Baking, Walking, Learning
Emotional, Paranoid
Quarantine

Lockdown

by Noah Thom

Our lockdown will end
Soon we'll be able to go
To school and see friends

Dreams of Joy

by Matthew Harley

He was but a young lad, full of promise and wonder, dreams of going out and exploring the world and the universe, he had joy and hope like no other. He didn't know where to begin, but that didn't matter, as he flew his cardboard box throughout the living room, exploring the outer reaches of the universe, from planet sofa to the chair asteroid belt. He was the childhood we all remember.

He was a hopeful young man, waiting in line at NASA, ready to sign up for his dreams, his wife and family at home... he had met all the prerequisites, he just hoped to be picked...

He was a broken old man, sitting on his rocking chair, looking out at a fading sun. His face was creased from sadness, and his last vestiges of hope had burned out long ago. 'Maybe dreams aren't such great things after all,' he mused. The sun faded away and the candle of dreams burnt out as he looked back at his childhood one last time and faded off to sleep.

He was a dying old man, discontent with his life, an old wreck of regrets and sadness. He thought once more of his childhood, looked over at his 10 year old grandson, watching the SpaceX launch on television with youthful vigour, and smiled once more...

Eeva (Eh-Va)

by Mikah Buchanan



Kodama's Island

by Onevai Pita

The sun is rising on Yakushima Island. The air is soft, sweet with rain. Light bathes the canopies of trees in its warm glow, highlighting their cedar leaves. Clear water flows in fluvial rivers, pooling in the welds of the mountains, moss soft and rich. The air keeps its composure in the mountains, unlike the humidity of the beach. The trees shroud the summit in myriad shades of green. Moss blankets the rocks and soil, dark and soft.

The Yakusugi tree stands tall amongst the smaller saplings, its curves and twists shaped over thousands of years by the winds of typhoons. Its leaves stay somber, shaken only by the balmy breezes from the beach. Its ocean surrounds the mellow sand, circling the island in its gentle deep blue. Weathered rocks spot the shore, wafting salt and sand on the air through to the mountains. The jagged peaks tower over the coastline, massive boulders protruding from the vast condensed forests. They stretch toward the ether, their gargantuan surfaces streaked with grey and white, sun-warmed and creased.

Dusk is falling on Yakushima Island. The air is calm, tepid here. A dark haze falls over the mountainous landscape, casting shadows over the outcrops. The coolness dampens the air, chilling it almost. Moss-covered rocks encircle the cascading rivers, white mist following in their wake. The foliage transcends from its collection of rich greens to dark blues and blacks as the sun sinks lower into the horizon. Its beauty is boundless. The twists and bumps of the Yakusugi tree cast contorted and dishevelled shadows over the darkened canopies.

Fog clouds its misshapen trunk, dewdrops fresh from its leaves. Thick sheets of water slick the stones near the rivers, pale and slippery. The forest is quiet, solemn at night, disturbed by nothing but the rush of running water. It winds through the knots of the mossy rocks, trickling steadily toward the mountain's depths. The tangle of vines and tree trunk are serpents, writhing and twisting together. A tree's heavy roots loll deformed and disfigured, curling around a long-fallen trunk. Its bark is knobbly and worn, tough and durable over its long-lived centuries. The area soon becomes veiled in mist, night making its presence clear.

Help!

by Georgia Donaldson

Help

Darkness envelopes my surroundings as I glance for a glimpse of sight. The pitchness of doom pricks me to believe I am somewhere else, a neverland of the unilluminated.

Help

Jolts and jars, judders and jounces. Flips upon my frame jerk unmoldable sharps of pain as I rock from side to side. Hallucination or honest truth, where am I?

Help

Questions in my mind, aromas upon my nostrils. One can only describe the lingering unpleasant fumes of smoke and fuel. The recognisable hoon of a car exhaust as it excitedly slides the steering wheel through their hands, jeering it around from corner to corner.

Help

Repeats upon repeats of the unfolded events. Glances, eye contact and dread, which weighed my stomach as heavy as concrete. The emotions upon their faces, and probably mine too after the realization of what was to come. Strides marching over, me running further until harsh hands grabbed and gripped me, trapping my further footsteps and dragging me to the deal. Ringing sirens engulfed my earlobes at once, whilst circles and blur covered my vision like clouds in the sky.

Help

Tumbles and turns, bumps and new formed bruises. The prickles and stings of tape, wrapped around securing my hands from any source of finding my way out.

Help

The car halts, doors slam and deep serious voices yell to one another. "She saw too much, she knows too much."

Help

What did I see? What did I know? The adrenaline of fear blinded me from all senses of reality. The terrors and trepidation from strides upon strides of pavement, such a stupid pavement indeed, causing such grief, such unchangable damage. One might say that the pavements next to a gang house would be like no other, but indeed they are different. They see the unseen deals, kidnappings, murders. They hear gunshots, whispers, yells of pain and fear, yet they are supposed to be like any else. Shouldn't these pavements see hopscotch, smiles, dog walking and people talking in a happy manner? Shouldn't there be sunshine and rainbows when one pictures a house on a street with a pavement? No, not quite with this one, the one street, filled with darkness and doom, no life, no peace, no...none. None, causing runners who have to go past the pavement to have fear levels risen, anxiety kicked in and fear of the future. That was me, that was the pavement, no turning back now, nothing to save me...nothing.

Help

My heart leaped out of my chest as to know what is coming upon my future. As footsteps trudge past me, so close but so far. I hear glugs of liquid being slushed around me and as soon as my nostrils come into contact with the tang, dread overwhelms me.

Help

Time freezes, reality stops, I am transcended into an unwanted consideration of life. Life...Death. Peace...War, but what for? For relieving my stress and going for a run? For a mistaken glance at a drug deal? Or was it something else?

Help

The stupid things in life that determine so much, so much indeed. Family, friends, love, life. For if I die, those are the things I have lost, for something so pitiful. A stroll along

the street, the bread once eaten, so sweet. The places of love and prayer, to end up dying being with no air. Regrets, no, but that doesn't mean I am finished living.

Help

Breath after breath, gets harder, gets shorter. Splash and splurge is all I can hear. My skin gets soaked by the cracks of light through the boot of my...newfound death place? My nostrils are heavily singed from the stench of petrol and it almost seems as if my life is life a book on the last page, coming to an end. Drenched at this point, my body shakes, my heart aches and all I hear is the strike of the match...

Help!

by Kate Hickey



Head in the Clouds

by Rebecca Johnstone
Medium - Acrylic on Board



He Died That Day

by Nicole Lina

"I was going to change the world," she mumbled.

All he could do was gaze at her in awe. Lately, it was as if she was losing herself. The shadows under her eyes grew darker as she became friendlier with the moon. Her cheeks sunk deeper with each passing day and her radiating smile was nothing but a memory.

He looked at her closely now, like he would then. The girl would constantly ramble to him about her plans for the future. Who only let him know of hidden aspirations for the world. And, of course, he believed that she could do it. Her passion was irrepressible. Untouched. When many called her crazy for even thinking the world was worth saving, she would simply chuckle at their ignorance. How he loved her for it. For she made him see that beauty still existed. Often, she would tell him to listen for the whisper of the winds or watch as the rain danced with it. But it was her adoration of the world that he focused on, her transfixed gazes and the silence that would play as she got lost inside earth's stage.

But now, her eager rants and toothy grins made a mockery of her slumped shoulders and shimmer of tears.

"You changed *my* world," he pleaded.

She closed her eyes, the tears slowly trickling down her cheeks. He wanted to beg her to look at him. For her to smile at him again. How badly he wanted to tell her that he was hurting too. He lifted his hand to wipe away the wet trail, but this time, she didn't lean into his warmth.

Pulling away, she finally looked up. The sorrow on her face was enough to morph into daggers, each one aimed at his heart. "What if that's not good enough for me?"

And with each word a dagger struck.

Her eyes were away from his own now, but instead trained at his chest as if she could

see the effect of her words.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered.

But he knew she wasn’t. He realised now; realised that all her plans for the future never mentioned his name. Never considered his presence. The daggers drove deeper through his heart as he began to understand how little she cared for him. How she cared more for the world than she cared for him.

So he laughed.

This one bitter; unlike the warm ones he shared with her in his backyard. This one dripped with such malice that it was hard to notice the underlying despair in his tone.

“Lie to me again.”

She stiffened, aware of his newfound hostility. But still, she gazed up at him again; Ready to deliver another attack.

“I love you.”

For a second, he softened. Then the realisation that those words weren’t meant to comfort him gripped at his throat. The shock left him still, almost serene, if not for the helplessness he revealed on his face. But before he could respond, a woman entered the room. The calming white of her uniform couldn’t distract from her regretful expression.

“It’s time,” the nurse announced.

And so she died that day. The fact that it was of her own volition, made the heartache excruciating. And yet, she died that day. Though her family supported her, he hated her now. For still loving her, for leaving a world she was supposed to save. And still, she died that day.

by Tiana Turnbull



How to Grow Tall

by Anna McIntyre

Have you ever had to ask somebody at Countdown to pass some vanilla down because you just can't reach? Have you ever had to leave Disneyland because you're too short to go on the rides? To those of you out there who have been in an embarrassing short-person situation, I have good news for you. The recipe for height is at your fingertips, the ingredients are right in your kitchen.

WARNING: This process may cause side effects, see bottom of the page.

Before you get started on your easy 8-step growing journey, you need to make sure you have all the appropriate equipment.

For the task you will need:

- 1 pair of thick socks
- 1 roll of super strong duct tape
- 2 large handfuls of brick dust, AKA powdered brick
- 1 measuring tape
- 1 shovel
- 1 bag of cement
- 1 chair
- 1 friend

ALL materials above can be found at "Eddie's Essentials," your local super-store. Eddie's Essentials will provide you with a variety of products (all of top quality) as well as excellent customer service from our superbly trained, polite employees.

Email: Eddiesessentials@superstore.com

Call: 0800 123 321

You will also need:

- 3 poles/bars - 1x 1m long, 2 x 3.5m long (these can be found at your local park)
- 1 large amount of free time

1. Things needed: shovel, cement, 2x 3.5m long poles. Begin by digging two 50cm deep holes around 1m apart. These holes should be around 5m away from your house. Place one 3.5m pole in one hole and the other 3.5m pole in the other hole. Fill the holes with cement (make sure that when the cement sets, the poles are standing upright (90° from the ground))

2. Things needed: roll of duct tape, 1 x 1m long pole, chair

Once the cement has set (this should take 1-2 days), use the chair to stand on and lie the 1m long pole across the top of the two vertical 3m high poles. Fasten with a generous amount of duct tape.

3. Things needed: socks, brick dust, duct tape

Take one of the thick socks and carefully push a handful of brick dust right down to the toe. Repeat this process with the other sock. After both of your socks have been filled with brick dust, pull one sock onto each of your feet. You now need to secure the sock to your leg. Use a generous amount of duct tape.

4. Things needed: Friend, chair, duct tape, bar contraption

With your feet now in the socks and the socks attached to your legs, you need to now place a chair beneath the bar contraption then carefully stand up on the chair. You will now be able to reach the 1m long horizontal pole. Place both hands firmly up on the bar above you and get your friend to duct tape your hands tightly to the pole.

5. Things needed: Friend

Now that you are firmly attached to the pole contraption, politely ask your friend to remove the chair from under your feet.

6. Things you need: Friend, patience

You will now be hanging from the horizontal pole by your hands. Stay hanging on to the pole consistently (day AND night) for around a month. This is the most time-consuming part of the growing process and there is a chance that you may experience a side-effect called boredom. If you experience boredom at any point (be sure to have a friend nearby), shout loudly and your friend will come and entertain you.

7. Things you need: More patience, friend, measuring tape

After hanging from the pole consistently for a month, you will notice some definite changes in the length of your body. Get your friend to start taking daily measurements of the length of your body. After you have reached your desired height, or your feet touch the ground, get your friend to use the chair to stand on and un-duct tape your

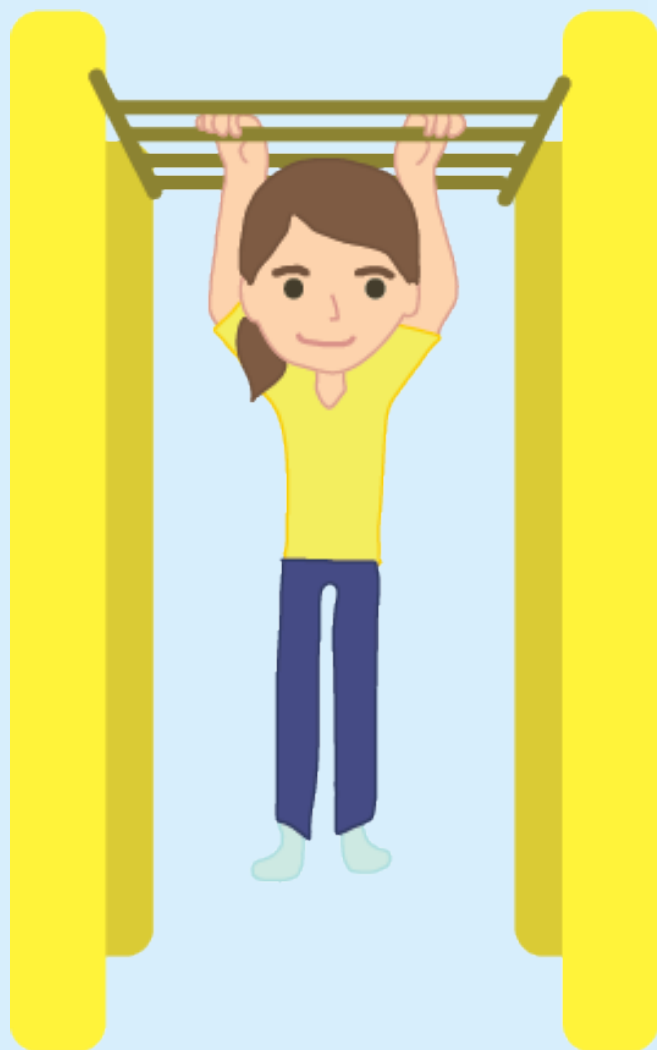
hands (peel the tape off). You can then unpeel the duct tape from your legs and the socks.

8. Things you need: Nothing, you're TALL!

Now that you're tall, enjoy bumping your head when walking through doorways, enjoy being asked, "how's the weather up there?" Enjoy trying to find clothes that fit, enjoy trying to get into your car, and most of all enjoy being asked to pass the vanilla down from the top shelf.

Potential side-effects of hanging from a pole with a weight in your socks:

- Nausea
- Headache
- Muscle cramps/pains
- Sweating
- Depression
- Loss of a friend
- Starvation
- Hypothermia
- Dislocated joints
- Rashes
- Measles
- Foot fungi
- Fever
- Mumps
- Tuberculosis
- Spondylosis
- Influenza
- Death



Letters To Home

by Rhianna Short

Dear Mother and Father

May 14 1915

Sorry I haven't been writing as often as I promised, there has been a great deal of heavy fire up at the front line. As you know we landed on the 25th in Gaba Tepe. We are commencing what I know as the Dardanelles Campaign. It's only been three weeks here but the Medical officer Major Hollingsworth has determined that my foot pain has been caused by the extensive amount of sludge water in the trenches. It would seem I am going to be stationed here for a long time as there is an abundance of military gear being transported to our location. The weather is slowly getting warmer and that means I will be able to remove my khaki wool jacket which I have found rather uncomfortable to sleep in because of the unfailing putrid stench of flesh that never leaves it. Although the rations here are scarce, Sergeant Davis always gets us the best supplies of cigarettes to make up for that. I hope all is well with you and that my little ones are behaving themselves while I'm gone. Please tell them I miss them dearly and would much rather be home with them. I will write again the moment I get the chance...

May 27 1915

After the last time I wrote to you Ma, it was like the colour was drained from my world. The General of the Army has demanded great haste on the campaign, however the hearsay is that we don't seem to be making any real progress. Everyday I am sent to the front line. I don't mean to be so abrupt but I'm not the one in control anymore, it's like I'm a puppet in my own life, there is no longer room to be tardy even when we have to move sand bags the weight of myself. In my few hours of down time I have learnt to wrap my own bandage coverings. My own coverings. It has become rather useful when under the clatter of heavy fire so I can keep working. I have also developed a new fear, falling off walkways. It was the most horrid thing when a comrade from England fell off. All we could do for the poor bloke was to shoot him

quickly. The stagnant mud around the walkways is so thick that once it has grabbed hold of you, it never seems to want to let go. It sucks you in. And it is slowly getting a hold of me...

Nov 9 1915

I've been here forever. I can't escape my duties. Our rations are watery pea soup with horse meat from those they have killed - they killed them. This place stinks. I am covered head to toe - no I don't have all my toes - bandages from the chlorine gas assaults. They ooze Ma, they ooze. Bugs are crawling over me. Reeks. Hollingsworth has treated me for burns in my lungs. It is so sore. Blindness after the most recent one. I'm scared. Will it linger like the aroma of chlorine gas - don't sniff that. Like the rifles in my head, and their bullets that whistle over me. The whistles scare me. We are back in our woolen uniforms - you should be here to help mend this shabby coat. It pongs - I pong. The new boys call me crazy - they don't seem to understand my reasons. It's like they are having a completely different experience. That damned noise. Hurts my brain. They aren't really here are they. If they knew the full extent of the enemy's power, if they actually knew instead of their deadly silence, they would not call me crazed. They wouldn't, would they Ma? I want to be alone - no Christmas for me, maybe it's just for the sake that my torment could become easier tomorrow in this never ending war. It's rotten flesh.

Fear

by Daniel Harley

Sometimes, fear causes us to do unthinkable things, like running from our friends in their moment of need, or cowering in a corner while others fight for our lives. However, fear does stranger things to me. It empowers me, causing me to fight out against the cause of the fear. If I'm afraid of the guy with a knife in front of me, I'll attack them. Not the smartest thing, but I'm still alive, so I guess it works.

So when I witnessed the start of a horrific murder, I denied all sense and rushed the attacker. The attacker, startled at my foolhardiness, momentarily stopped, allowing me time to crash into him full force, scared out of my life. We tumbled to the ground and his weapon clattered clear of our struggle. We battled for control over this brawl, and scared as I was, I emerged the victor, pinning him to the ground.

I looked around for the victim, and see them sitting there, on the ground, terrified of us, not just him, but me as well. I wished I could assure them that I wouldn't do anything to anyone, but I didn't have the words. Their body, battered and bruised, shivered, and they started moving away from us, slowly. The guy beneath me, knowing he was trapped, had stopped trying to resist, and just lay there, awaiting his punishment.

I thought about what to do, ultimately deciding that I would make sure he understood his faults. I slowly relaxed the tension on his shoulders, and allow him to sit up. I motioned for him to not get up any further and move over, picking up his weapon. A monster of a blade, with minimal balance, this was for beating up helpless and defenseless victims, not for fighting anyone with a weapon of their own.

Turning back to the attacker, and putting the weapon in my back pocket, I got him to stand up, and told him quietly and calmly, what he did wrong. He hurriedly agreed, obviously scared of me too. I didn't take notice of this until later however, and told him to move on. The empty park around us seemed to be holding its breath and it suddenly released it, the chattering of squirrels in the trees along with the bird song, livening up the place a bit.

Having now realised the scared look on the guy's face. I sat on a nearby park bench and

reflect. Realising now that this ability of mine, was probably as scary as it could get. To not just laugh in the face of fear, but to fight it, this was a scary thing to have. I then realise the gist of it all. I seemed like a madman, and maybe I was, I thought to myself as I started the journey home. I laughed like a maniac, ignoring the connection there and telling myself, "I'm as sane as can be, as sane as can be."



by Destiny Morgan-Fletcher



Red Card

by Kate Johnstone

“Are ya alright, mate?”

There was a thud and a cry, a ball sent spiralling in a direction I didn't quite catch.

The voice came from my coach, Mark.

I could barely breathe, I had sprinted half the field and was taking in gulps of air like a fish left to dry on a dock. However, the strenuous exercise wasn't a factor in this equation. It wasn't because I was out of breath that I was breathing like I was. It was the realisation of what I had just done beginning to wash over me in a wave of dark emotions that quickened my pulse and forced the air out of my lungs.

I paused midway through shoving my shin pads into my socks. I wasn't sure how to answer. If I said yes, I'd look like a dick because I was so obviously not alright, but if I said no, I'd run the risk of being taken off. We had two games to go, and so far I'd played in all seven of the ones leading up to them. If we won this one we'd be in the play-offs for third and fourth, a lapse in judgement had let a goal in during the previous game in the last five minutes.

I stood up from the ground. I looked at the lines of white that marked the grass, I was on the inside of the 18 yard box and there was no way in hell the opposition weren't getting a free kick.

A free kick between the player and Emma, our goalie.

We didn't recover it, meaning that first and second were now out of reach. I hadn't been subbed off once the whole tournament and I took pride in that, it made me feel as if the mistakes I'd been making up until now were inconsequential. Being taken off meant that they weren't. It meant that I wasn't doing my job right. It meant that the dark feelings and thoughts swirling around in my head and heart would slowly begin choking me.

The referee walked over to me, heavy footed and heavy expressioned. My face was

a crimson red, and so was the red card shoved into my line of sight. Tunnel vision. Red was the nose of the girl on the ground, red on the sandy grass, red on my white uniform, red boots, red sky, red in my eyes.

I took too long to answer the question.

“Right,” Mark began, he crouched down to look me in the eye, balancing on the balls of his feet.

“You need to take a deep breath.” I hadn’t realised I’d been holding it. I resisted the urge to do as he said. It made me feel icky, and icky made thick fat tears try to break their way from my eyes to my cheeks, welling up until they then made the journey from my face to the dry ground I was sitting on. Building up my resolve, I brought a dirty hand to hastily wipe them away. The tears were not breaking out today.

My team mates gathered beside and behind me, the red wasn’t just for me, it was for the team.

“Nah, nah, nah, that call is bullshit, did you not see the way she went in??”

Mana, the other centre, back spat at the referee in disbelief. With an imposing look on his face, he made his way over to her, his large figure making T, the most fearless of us, appear small and insignificant. He did not like being talked back to.

“Oh, shut up would you, she’s just doing a bloody Hollywood,” came the voice of another team mate in response to a snarky comment from the opposition’s captain. The argumentative remarks went through one ear and out the other. Hands were raised, complaints about previous dirty plays from the opposition brought up and asserted to the staunch referee who stood in front of me like a stone man. My eyes were glassy. I couldn’t believe what was happening.

“I know you’re stressed and tired, and that’s alright, it’s been a big day.” Mark held my eyes. “I’m going to take you off for the first half.”

My heart sank and I immediately began to protest.

"We haven't got any other center backs though, I'm not even that tired I'll be fine, I just made some dumb decisi-" He cut me off and put a hand on my shoulder.

"Drew, Drew, Andrew," A tall athletic man was jogging towards our caucus of angry teenagers. "That was not deserving of a red, she barely even touched the girl! Can you not see it wasn't deliberate??" It was my coach, who had seemingly magically appeared by my side. I didn't pay mind to the girl on the ground, her face as screwed up as her stupid attitude that only moments before was on full display. I instead paid attention to the looks on the faces of the spectators.

Red eyes stared back at me.

"You're playing fine. Better than fine, actually, you've been phenomenal." He took away his hand and picked up a bottle of water before continuing.

"You're worked up. I've trained players like you before and I've come to notice when you get into a negative headspace and honestly, the only thing you can do to solve that is to take a break."

I could feel the sun on my face, adding to the reddening of my cheeks. Red, red, red, bloody red. He was right, I knew he was right. I didn't want to admit it out loud though. He handed me the water bottle.

Never in my life had I experienced such a look of disgust or such a dryness in my throat. All of a sudden I wasn't the hero. I was the bloodstained villain that everyone hated and wished would die.

"Take a drink, take a break and we'll put you on for a short spell in the second half. We need you more for the finals than we do right now." He paused. "The team needs you more in the final. Don't forget that. We don't play for ourselves, we play for each other." And with one more reassuring pat on the shoulder he stood up and lifted his whistle to his mouth.

I didn't mind at all. I knew that I just wanted it more.

“Line up girls, kick-off in five!”

This time the voice came from the referee. I brought once more a dirty hand to my face, wiping away any indication of stress from it, and consequently from my mind. I stood up and stretched a bright yellow bib over my uniform. It was see through and resulted in an ugly orangey colour whenever it intersected with the blood on my uniform.

The break wouldn't be forever, I knew that when the time came I'd be ready to get back on the field. Not ready for myself but ready to play for each other. The red card was history. All I knew now was the angry red that pushed me to the top of my game. The red of the onlookers who despised me, the red anger of those who hated seeing me do well.

Red after all, was the colour of victory.

(Kate entered this piece in the Dan Davin Literary Awards, placing second in her division.)

A Lady on a Train

by Liam Devery

she wears a yellow hat, in a contradicting sense,
Plumped roughly on her greying, brown locks, it does not hide her true colours.
she is surrounded by the busy chaos which a train provides,
Subtle chattering of duffle bags and briefcases lying at the feet of those standing,
Overspoken by a tired mother shushing her two young children,
A baby's muffled cry seeping through its covered pram.

she sits in a loud silence.
Frozen in time, music flows to her ears alone.
her heavy eyes weighed down, towards the floor, by the heavy day they have endured.
They peer thoughtlessly into nothingness.
A lifetime of worry, and of stress,
Carved into her forehead,
Dug under her eyes.
her face; a story of sorrow.

she is alone.
Magnetising the eyes of others, but a sorry sight for those to behold.
The seats beside her remain uninhabited, yet people stand, not willing to disrupt her in
her thoughts,
Fearing the tales she may tell,
Afraid of the energies she emits.
They do not wish to be possessed.
A man leaves, three women enter,
But the lady on the train stays,
Sinks.

she works for a big brand store.
A cobalt t-shirt shines through her big puffer jacket,
Name tag barely visible.
Working long hours for minimum wage? How tough her life could be.
she knows how to fake a face.
All the smiles she must give. They are long expired now.

Others smile,
her mask is slowly crumbling.

she fidgets.
her fingers intertwined,
The only animated features of her limp body.
Like kings and queens dancing, tracing, twirling down the paths of her palms.
Attempting to rub away her worries,
But she is stained,
Distraught by her days.
And so the music plays, suspenseful and apprehensive.
Her lap is her ballroom.

I stand.
I sit beside her.
Still, she sits. Picks up the pieces of her mask,
Floats back to the surface,
Stops dancing to the silence.
An awkward glance, a flicker of a smile.
“Kia ora, e hoa.”
Quick glance. A giggle escapes.
Smile. Genuine this time.
The yellow hat comes off.
A breath of fresh air, our curse has been lifted.
She and I reminded,
That we are not alone.

by Aaliyah Wright



To Make a Mark

by Saranya Sarisa

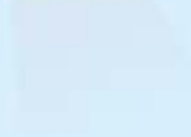


To make a mark
To make a mark
you don't have to live in a big city,
but should dream big,

To make a mark
you don't have to fight a war,
but should work hard,



To make a mark
you don't have to be a leader,
but should support people in need,



To make a mark
you don't have to be smart,
but should do the right thing,

To make a mark
you don't have to be famous,
but should make sure that people can trust you,

To make a mark
you don't have to be successful,
but should be proud of who you are,

To make a mark
you don't have to be wealthy,
but should be happy with what you have,

To make a mark
you don't have to be a hero,
but should help people in need,

So make a mark,
because no one else will do that for you.

Aussie Red Riding Hood

by Sophie Byrne

Once upon a time, not so long ago, in the land down under there lived a little girl. Her name was Little Red Riding Hood, her namesake, the red cape she wore.

One day Little Red Riding Hood was sent out by her mother to visit her grandmother who lived in the middle of the outback. Her mother had packed an esky full of treats including vegemite scrolls, Tim tams, fairy bread, and some ANZAC biccies. She put on her thongs and set off down the dusty path with her esky.

After 20 minutes of walking a dingo stepped out from behind a bluegum.

"G'day there little girl," the dingo growled.

"G'day," she replied. The dingo had pearly white teeth with sharp points. Its rusty fur matched the dusty path they stood on and his black eyes held no emotion.

"Where are you headed?" the dingo asked.

"I'm off to visit my rellie, she lives at the end of this path." The dingo smiled deviously.

"Wouldn't you like to pick some flowers for her?" the dingo enquired.

"What a bonza idea," chirped Little Red, "but where could I find some?"

"The old billabong is abundant with them," smiled the dingo, "just watch out for any crocs."

"Hooroo," Little Red exclaimed as she rushed off to pick some flowers.

By early arvo, Little Red had arrived at her grandmother's shack with a bouquet of lilly pillies and bottle brushes. She knocked at the door,

"Come in!" a shrill voice called out.

"I bought you some treats and flowers," Little Red said.

"Oh you little ripper," the shrill voice replied. Little Red walked into her grandmother's bedroom where her grandmother lay in bed. The doona was pulled up high, covering her nose. She wore a floral nightcap and her glasses sat precariously on the bridge of her nose.

"Why Grandmother, what red skin you have," Little Red commented, "you've forgotten to use that sunscreen again!" Little Red looked at her grandmother for a second time.

"Blimey, what big ears you have grandmother," Little Red remarked.

"All the better to hear you with my dear," her grandmother replied.

"And crikey, look at how black your eyes are,"

"All the better to see you with my dear," The doona slipped from her grandmother's nose revealing a set of pearly white teeth.

"Wh-what big teeth you have," Little Red stammered.

"All the better to eat you with!" the dingo yelled, jumping out of bed in a nightgown and pouncing at Little Red.

Little Red ran out of the door, the dingo following closely.

"Help!" she screamed, "help!" Luckily for her nearby was a hunter out looking for some tucker. As he heard her pleas for help, he grabbed his rifle and his knife before hurrying towards the source of the screams. The dingo continued to chase Little Red but when the hunter arrived he was shot clean through the head. The dingo fell to the ground with a thud and Little Red slowed to a stop.

"Thanks mate!" she exclaimed, walking towards the dingo's body.

"No worries," the hunter replied, as he bent down to slit the dingo's stomach and retrieve its meat. As the hunter finished slitting the dingo's stomach Little Red's grandmother stumbled out.

"Grandma!" screamed Little Red running to smother her with hugs.

"Oh my sweet child," said Grandma, "you are a beauty!"

The pair hugged as the hunter finished gutting the dingo. He stood up beginning to wish them a good arvo when Grandma ushered him into her shack so she could put 'some shrimp on the barbie' and together they enjoyed the treats in Little Red's esky. It was not until the sun began to set over the dusty horizon that the hunter left.

"Hooroo," Little Red and her Grandmother yelled to him as he walked off before going back into the shack and everyone lived happily ever after.

The Charm

by Ruby Bath

Prying eyes spy my mother's crimson jewellery box. Amid the velvet partitions, I examine the treasure it beholds. A small bike charm stirs my attention, clutching the trinket in my small, pudgy hands. I want it.

This small piece of inexpensive metal that hangs around my neck appears worthless to most; people question where I got this necklace, determined to know for themselves. Little do they know how I received this piece of history.

The year was 1992. Under the blistering New Caledonian sun, the man pedalled for the sixth hour for the fourteenth day in a row. Sweat dropped off the man's nose and crystallised on his jersey as heat radiates off the heavy viscid tar, popping beneath the wheels of the suffering mass of cyclists. The peloton of 80 hearty men diminished to 75, 65, 50 as the day dragged on. His legs were massacred, yet somewhere buried inside him, he drew out the last remnant of energy from his empty legs as the peloton entered a lush jungle trail. Another rider attacked, sending warning bells to resonate throughout the riders. Faster and faster, the men rode tirelessly under the verdant leafy canopy in the torrid heat.

Unusual figures on the mountainous roadside push tree trunks that smack the bitumen. Chaos. Blood. Riders. Bottles shatter. Yells in English. Brutal outcries in a foreign mess. Furious protesters foam at the mouth, demanding justice. Thick glass shards hack at bodies. The loud blast of a gun rings. The man seeks order, yelling, commanding riders to carry on. Police shout out, "Arrêtez! Arrêtez!" aiming their handguns at the protestors on the hill—police fire at the slope. Bodies slump down into the syrupy tar, wailing. The thudding of bodies endures as the man advances, bounding over logs, people, bikes, taking anyone who can keep up with him. In the shock of an instant, he continues pedalling. Fleeing the disaster behind without a single glance over his shoulder.

At the end of the race, the man receives a charm; a tiny bike for his resilience and character.

Prying eyes spy my mother's crimson jewellery box. Amid the velvet partitions, I examine the small charm. Carefully, I pull it out from between the silken crevices. I carry it out to the living room, pretending like I've never seen it before. "Whose is this?" I question.

"It's mine," my Dad replies. He smirks and recounts the story of the younger man.



by Tiana Turnbull

Patient 43

by Thomas Walker

Nowhere to go. Nowhere to hide. No one to contact. Trapped. Only these walls which confine me. Anticipating certain danger. They are concrete. Exceedingly cold. Dense. Limited in size. Every second feels like they are getting closer and closer, about to cave in, and crush me. They are illustrated. Exhibited. Painted with human stories. Not by markers though. Instead layers upon layers of dried up blood from previous victims. Splattered. Decorated throughout these walls. Not solely blood. Scratches. Grazings. Markings. Either counting the length of captivity of others. Or fingernails that represent the torment endured.

Look. About three centimeters. That's all. Only three centimetres that slightly illuminates this cell. It's my only lifeline. If it were to die out. I would too. When shadows pass, they cast a small view into my cell, not big enough though for me to possibly generate a description of the person, or even persons which are keeping me here. I don't think I am alone. I believe there are others like me. Others who are prisoners. Others who are victims. Others who are going to die. I want to try to help them. Save them, Rescue them. But I have no indication of who else is out there. Or even what else. I want to call out. But I fear. Fear the power possessed behind this door; the total mystery. Only the horrid screams, shrieks and shouts that travel beyond these walls are able to suggest the gruesome reality which there is.

Smell. Rotten flesh. It lingers throughout here. A thick, rancid and completely disgusting stench. It's the type of foul odor which you can taste in the back of your throat, making you want to vomit. Even though the putrid smell of this flesh isn't mine, I am mentally being eaten alive by non-existent corpses. The addition of blood marks on the wall with the sickening smell of decomposed corpses give me no hope in escaping here. Am I going to be the next one who ends out like this? Or is it someone else?

Listen. Quiet. A voice. A woman. "Get patient 43!" I believe that's what I heard. Patient? Who's the patient? It can't just be me here. There are others. There have been others. Why are we being labelled that? I am being held here. Not as a human being. But as an animal. They are treating me like a creature. A prisoner of theirs. Keeping me inside of this tiny area, without any lighting, for them to do what? Testing on me?

Experimenting on me? Torture me? All of this now makes sense now. The terrifying screams and wails for help. The blood on the walls. The rancid smell of rotten flesh. I am going to be up next. I'm going to be hurt. I am going to be killed. Swiftly, my three centimetre lifeline turns into 200, blinding my eyes. However, this was no lifeline. This was death calling. A deep, dark shadow spoke "Your time has come... 43."

(This piece was actually written some time ago, but this year Thomas entered it in the Dan Davin Literary Awards, and was Highly Commended in his division.)

Don't Worry it's Not You!

by Ellie McWilliam

My teacher is a sloth
Shaggy and grey
With black beady eyes and miniscule ears
Vulnerable and languid
She doesn't always see the dangers there can be

Working solitary
Tapping the keyboard with her long dirty claws
Hanging about in her canopy classroom
High above the predators of the school

As the predators encroach
She awakes from her sleepy snoozy state
Cumbersomely drags her body
Down the lower limbs of the classes rows
Smacking her firm lips
Ready to crush the words of young juicy predators

A Guide to Making Small Talk

by Sophie Byrne

We've all been in a situation where we need to make small talk before. You know, talking to that great aunty or stuck in line at a grocery store trying not to make eye contact with the scanner. Small talk is an essential life skill and by reading this guide you will become an expert.

Step One-

To begin you will need to be in an awkward situation. Let's say, hypothetically, you are at a family reunion and have been seated next to the old, busybody aunt who is definitely going to ask you questions that are too personal.

Step Two-

Now of course you will need to strike up a conversation first, so make sure to choose something you know about, like the weather. Try to make an obvious statement on this topic such as,

"Lovely weather isn't it?"

Step Three-

You have now found common ground with this aunt, so continue on with this topic. This might include talking about...

The types of clouds in the sky

The shade of blue the sky is

Or maybe even the fact that when gas is suspended in the air the UV rays will scatter more. (This fun fact will be sure to impress.)

Step Four-

Continue to talk idly about the chosen topic. Agree with everything she says. This is very important because under no circumstances should you upset them. Refer to the following if you do make this mistake.

If you do indeed make the mistake of disagreeing with your aunt you will need to evacuate immediately. Make excuses. Maybe you need the toilet, or maybe you left the oven on at home. No matter what, you will need to leave. Very quickly.

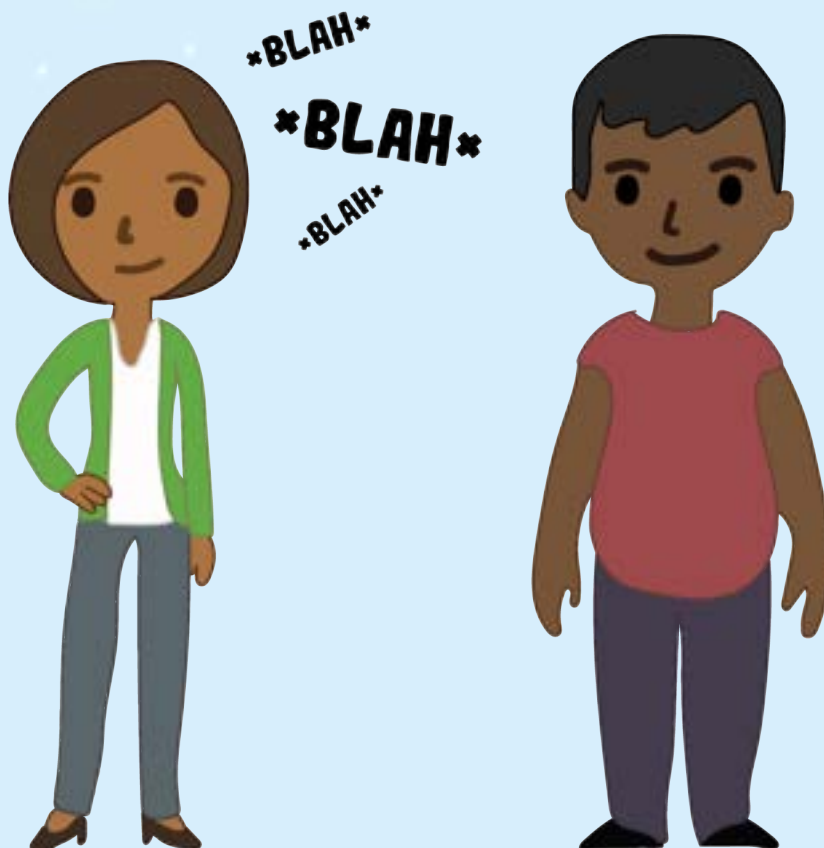
Step Five-

Of course, if you haven't had to evacuate, you will need to leave at some point. So when you do decide to go, bid them goodbye like so; "It has been lovely chatting with you and I wish you all the best." Then stand, push in your chair and walk off politely.

Now let's recap this all quickly.

1. Find yourself involved in an awkward conversation
2. Strike up a conversation on something you are knowledgeable about
3. Impress them with interesting facts
4. Agree with **EVERYTHING** they say
5. If a disagreement occurs evacuate immediately
6. If not evacuated, leave and farewell them in the proper fashion

By following these easy steps you will have learned one of life's most essential skills, congratulations, you are now an expert at small talk.



Music

by Charlotte Dassen

I always listen to music.

Sometimes I listen to escape. Cannonball off a cliff into liberty, salt-water tears or volatile truth – on a lengthy adventure, rope-bound by possibility, awed by strings or light piano keys. Escape from my woes, from anxiety, uncertainty, doubt... to escape from myself. For hours, I can lose myself in a labyrinth of falling worlds: escape, escape, escape from reality, fight back against the tyrannical government or the flames of cut-throat villainy. I can soar high above myself, blaring raspy-acoustic sounds, find myself in clouds of opportunity, dreams. When I listen to escape, I create an ocean to swell myself into, head-first, off the cliff into a ticking time-bomb of cassette tapes or music playlists.

Other times it's to provide a backing track to a dismal day. Staring out a dusty bus-window, watching lazy hedges pass by, seeing blank-slate sheep. After teasing subjects and tiring math equations, blasting a song feels incredible. The tunes are upbeat, fast paced, almost racing with the vehicle vibrations, prancing ahead to see who gets home first; sunlight creates the perfect atmosphere, combining with the beat to create a joyful bounce with every step. On these days, I am the main character, the protagonist who lives happily, healthily, learning my life lesson and becoming a better person. Maybe that's why I listen to music: to better myself.

And, in the depths of the blackened night, I listen to music. At this time, it's different. I listen to understand, seeking my soul in their heartfelt meaning. In the day I bury my doubts in holes of myself, valuing worthless multiplication over happiness: and at midnight I can dig them up again, those solemn notes. Staring out the midnight-blessed window, the turbulent puff of occasional clouds, feeling the quiet, supportive stars. As the instruments weave their world, I wonder if I could ever create music like that, under the silk-bleeding moon, create lyrics that delve into my misery and unworldly joy. Enchanted, in a world far away, most nights I find myself sleeping to unexplainable dreams and sorrowful strings. The gentle smile I create weave my dreams, bleeding into the new morn.

So maybe that's why I listen to music. To be happy.

Down the Rapids



by Hazel Gray
Medium - Acrylic



