

Interrobang

Creative Arts Magazine

2024
James Hargest College
Hēmi Hākena



Editors' Note

Welcome to the 2024 edition of *Interrobang*! It is an honour to continue this amazing legacy of sharing Hēmi Hākena's artwork and writing again this year.

We have seen some amazing work this year, like some great pieces covering topics like climate change, to some pieces that will have you laugh out loud. There is also some technically crafted artwork that is sure to blow you away. We have been so excited to include some Junior Campus work this year and hope for this to continue in years to come.

To our wonderful designers, Carly and Harris, we greatly appreciate your time and effort in getting the best possible posters for the entire magazine. Your ability to put up with us adding more and changing things shows. We could not do it without your help. You should be very proud of what you have created.

This year, it has been great to have Ms Miles and Miss Haveron involved and to have more great people collaborating. The future looks bright for *Interrobang*.

To Mr James, thank you for all your time and effort over the past nine years on *Interrobang*. Your commitment to getting the best possible magazine every year is evident in your planning and enthusiasm. We are beyond thankful for your contributions. *Interrobang* would not be a magazine without you.

We hope this magazine inspires you to be creative, while highlighting the extraordinary talent of Hargest students. Creativity takes courage, and we are here to encourage and share the work. Hope to see you again next year.

Tēnā koutou katoa,
Charlotte and Amanda
Interrobang Editors

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What Did I Know?

Hailey Macpherson

What did I know? What did I know about speaking to people? Isolated on a small farm away from other kids I know. I didn't need to speak to anyone until I went to school. Speaking was silly. All I wanted to do was learn. Every second day, I sat in a cramped room with a venerable lady who lectured me to read. The lady always towered over me, intimidating me with every sour note she spoke. I didn't understand why they sent me to this small room to read words aloud. It was stupid; it made me feel like an idiot who was behind in class. I was only five.

"Repeat this again."

Same sentence, over and over.

"There was a sour lemon in the shower."

It made no sense. Are some lemons not sour, and why is it in the shower? The lady was mental. Day in, day out. While my classmates drew and coloured, giggling with friends every second, I sat and was barked at.

"Do it again."

Everyone knew I went to these "lessons." Other students refused to speak to me, fearing that the "stupidity would spread." My mother reassured me that these lessons were going to help me. I was only five. At the end of the year, I thought I was free. I thought I could rejoin the class and be a normal student. I was naive. This treatment happened for the first three years of my school life. Three years of repeating statements. Three years of being yelled at to do it again. I'm only a child. I don't understand why I had to do this. Everyone wants me to speak. Every time I tried, I got yelled at.

What if I don't want to speak?

I've been competitively speaking now for five years. With three first-place wins, I stagger in front of my audience. Adrenaline rushes through my thick blood, anxiety crashing into me like driving into a brick wall. In my trembling hands lies a month of work. A piece of art I am yet to present, praying that it's enough to please the judgemental audience. How does an anxiety-fueled girl turn their greatest impediment into their strength? This is a question I have been asking myself for the last seven years. The ability to manipulate fragile words into tools of control is a delicate skill I have been crafting for years. Why am I doing this? Why after countless years of mocking and torture have I

decided to partake in public speaking with a speech impediment? Am I as mental as that lady? The emotions don't matter when standing on the stage. All that matters is pulling on the heartstrings of my adjudicators. My adjudicator, the judge, the jury, and the executioner. They are the embodiment of my traumatic experience. My experience with that imposing lady. Everything has to be perfect, those years of speech therapy had to stay behind me. Any weakness is shown and I lose before I start. But I don't want to speak. I can't drown in the pit of my emotions now. I'm not five. Emotions are a delicate string to be playing with, one wrong move and the world collapses on you through hatred and aversion. Chain-like nerves holding me into place, I commence my fate. I just need to hook them. I need them to cling to every word I say. I need to be captivating. I'm doing this for them.

I'm doing this for you, Mother.



Savindu Konthasingha Acharige

The Door

Charlie Fletcher

Go and open the door.
Maybe outside there's
a bush, or a thorn,
a field,
or a goblin playground.

Go and open the door.
Maybe a squirrel is collecting.
Maybe you'll see a cyclops,
or a snout,
or a monster
eating the monster.

Go and open the door.
If there's rain
it will dry.

Go and open the door.
Even if there's only
the time rewinding,
even if there's only
the darkness taking over,
even if
nothing
is there,
go and open the door.
At least
there'll be
a place to hide.



Jay Wright



Blake van Uden-Smith

The Beeple

Ella Stewart

Heavy boots dig their heels into the earth, kicking up a cloud of noxious dirt. He screams, shouts, spitting curses at the bullet ants who pin his arms against his back; dutifully silent as their commander watches on from the head of the swarm. It isn't long before His Majesty is brought before the throne - his throne - and pushed to his knees against the regal red carpet that lines the floor.

There, lounging on the seat carved of cherry and stained pink, lays a man dressed in the finest silk spun by elder silkmoths - his cloak doing little to obscure the slight sway of his barbed tail.

“Wh- Leo?!” Archer finally calms his cursing enough to sputter out the name of his second in command, his royal advisor, his friend.

His footsteps are eerily quiet, as if the ground beneath him is afraid to make a sound. He moves with an unnatural grace and ease, circling the once-mighty prisoner like a predator stalking its prey amongst the fronds of the undergrowth. The silence is palpable, and time seems to have frozen around them as Leo approaches the kneeling form of the king. His king.

“Your Highness...” He says, a hum throughout his gruff yet not unpleasant voice - deceptively calm. Leo slowly exhales, a small puff of white escapes his hand-welded gas mask, the faint sound of his concealed chelicerae clicking together with each word uttered. “A pleasure to see you, as always. So glad you could make it to this... Impromptu meeting.”

“Oh- haha, yeah... Good prank, Leo! You, uh, you really got me... I didn't know you took on a side-job as a jester.”

“Take the cuffs off.” The scorpion barks at his soldiers, allowing Archer to stand and face everybody standing within the room... His two royal guards and the Council now stand before him, the door out of the throne room blocked. The guards are restrained, their posts taken up by two new hand-picked soldiers of Leo's own choosing, and the Council seem equally as confused as the king - as if dragged from their jobs unexpectedly.

“Today,” A hand claps down firmly onto Archer’s shoulder. “Is a special day. A shift of power is well overdue, you know... Too long have I sat in your shadow whilst you revelled in your ill-placed power. Today, we vote.”

“Leo-” He tries again, but Archer’s voice is quickly lost amongst the breath hitching in his throat when a stinger presses against the delicate skin of his throat.

“A vote. A vote of the people. All in favour of a new emperor on the throne... Raise your hand.”

The room is silent, interrupted only by the low hiss coming from Leo himself - near mimicking the harrowing rattle of a western diamondback. Although Phillip raises his hand, none of the other council members dare to move, either too scared or confused or even suspecting this all to be one big test.

“Raise. Your. Hand.”

A flurry of hands shoot into the air. Sadie, Niko, Dante, Willow, Sienna, Cyran, Mateo... Along with Phillip, who’d helped orchestrate Leo’s plan, only a quarter of the Council seem to oppose. The majority, but not enough.

The barb of his tail suddenly pierces Archer’s chest, hot crimson blood seeping into the carpet as he slowly twists - taking his sweet, sweet time to pull it back out. The dragonfly collapses, iridescent wings spasming against the floor as his body convulses, clutching pointlessly at the gaping wound bursting through his ribs.

Every hand raises.

Illusion

Ellim Kim

I've come to the only conclusion,
That the world is a whole illusion.
The script written in our minds.
Revealing all the wonders we find.
Perhaps none of it's real.

The earth, sky, and moon,
seem like just a massive swirl.
The pouring rain, gentle breeze
and the shining rays of the golden sun.
What if it's all a dream?
Even the sparrow you just saw pass.

The people bustling the streets.
The cars drive to their destinations.
They, too, do not exist.
Just figments of our imagination.
Does our imagination have an end?

The figures who claim to be your friends.
The trust and friendship bonded in your heart.
What if it was fake?
What if it was all a lie?
Just tricks of the mind.

The feeling of not quite grasping reality,
washes over you like the waves on a shore.
Does it feel real, or unreal?

In front of us lies a landscape.
One that makes sense and shapes in our minds.
The mind is strange, scary even.
An illusion, the world may be.
But that does not mean you should stop discovering.

Seagull Scandal

Katrine Anqui

“Your attention please on Platform 14! This is a platform announcement. The next train to depart from Platform 6 is headed to..”

The announcement blared over the speakers, but I was too busy to listen. I had noticed a man sitting a few metres away from me with an open bag of fish and chips. The strange thing about him was that he wasn't eating them. He just let the smell waft in the air.

Soon enough a flock of hungry seagulls appeared. They curiously circled around the platform, little orange feet pattering against the stone tile, watching the chips in his hands. He dug out a chip from the bag and threw it into the crowd. They all squawked and dove for the chip.

Every time he offered the group a chip, he threw the chip less far than before. He was slowly drawing them closer. The crowd of them grew larger as passing seagulls found out about the food. Now there were around 15 to 20 of them. A tiny army.

SQUAWK, SQUAWK, SQUAWK!!

His army was becoming frustrated. He had started throwing fewer chips and they were becoming more desperate. Every so often he would toss another chip and they'd be satisfied, but only for a second. They kept squawking at him. Angry. From what I could tell, he was riling them up on purpose.

I glanced up from the show once I heard the squeak and grinding of steel rails. My train had arrived. The doors opened with a ding and we all got on. A bit crowded, but not so much as to feel stuffy. Suddenly, it happened.

To everyone's horror, the man threw the bag of chips into the train right before the doors closed. The seagull army followed along, flooding into the train in a flurry of feathers and angry squawks. The doors closed with the seagulls inside and in a frenzy.

The next stop was 20 minutes away.

Too Black to be White, Too White to be Black...

Anonymous

I walk into the red, distinctive structure. It's a Saturday, the sky is adorned with gentle clouds as I enjoy an outing with my light friends. My hair is pulled back neatly, and I'm clad in high-rise light wash jeans paired with a cosy hoodie, typical attire for a teenage girl. However, the only unique touch that separates me from the other girls is the carved whale bone hanging around my neck instead of the more common silver or gold chains adorning theirs. As we explore the store, all of us girls excitedly fill our bags with our chosen items before making our way towards the kiosks to make our purchases. Yet, upon being excited, a security guard stops me, suspecting theft. Confused and uneasy, I explain that I've made purchases like my friends, but he insists on me showing my receipt. Rummaging through my bag, the panic sets in as I realise I don't have it handy. Racing to find the parchment of paper with the guard hot on my tail, I glance back at my friends, bags in tow, untouched by the suspicion, waiting outside and chuckling, while I'm compelled to retrace my steps in search of the elusive receipt. Disheartened by the realisation that the bone around my neck and the colour of my skin hasn't shielded me from unwarranted scrutiny compared to my "friends," I keep searching, hoping to find proof of my innocence in the form of a simple receipt.

Too black to be white, too white to be black...

I struggle through the school's busy corridors every day, oppressed by a strong sensation of solitude. The laughter that echoed about me was not just taunting: it was a constant reminder of exclusion and hate. My peers, with darker skin, mocked me as "not black enough to be Māori," while their laughter pierced through me like a knife. Every echo of their amusement felt like an accusation, calling into question my own existence. The constant taunts, fuelled by racial stereotyping, the rejection accompanied by scornful laughter and comments on how I had never experienced any sense of racism were a poison that seeped into my spirit, destroying any sense of self-worth I had left. The audacity for people to presume they understand the depth of my experiences, by vehemently asserting that they know what I've been through, sends a surge of anger through my veins. How dare they claim authority over my life? How dare they simply reduce my struggles to their simplistic assumptions? When my lived

experiences are not a narrative for them to interpret or reshape to fit their narrow perspective. The hatred within me burns hotter with each inconsiderate word, fuelled by the injustice of having my truth dismissed and rewritten by someone who hasn't walked a mile in my shoes. But then again I can't blame them, after all I am just...

Too white to be black, too black to be white...

The infuriating paradox of feeling like an outsider, caught between worlds and belonging nowhere, is a painful experience. It's the frustration that strikes your soul when you're deemed "too white" within the Māori community and simultaneously "too black" for acceptance in the predominantly white settings. The constant rejection, the sideways glances, the accusations that they know what I've been through and the subtle yet cutting remarks that leave an unmistakable mark on the psyche. It's an infuriating process of not fitting into neatly defined categories, a relentless struggle to assert your identity in a world that insists on marginalising you based on imprecise notions of race. The anger that simmers within is both a shield and a battle cry, a defiance against society that attempts to erase the complexities of your existence.



A Field of Rebellious Flowers

Saranya Sarisa

What can we do?

Ellie-May Boniface

The cracks are like mouths,
Sitting there pierced by the sun,
Dry as a desert, parched,
Gasping for water, some moisture.
Begging, pleading,
But what do we do?
What can we do?

We watch as the earth slowly dies,
As the gasses are put out.
But we're behind a fence,
Watching.
Is it safe to come out?
Is it safe to breathe?
Is it safe to live?

New Zealand alone produces 76.8 million tonnes,
I smell it polluting the air.
Smoke is begging to be free,
so is Earth.
The Earth is choking,
It can't breathe.
We're poisoning it.
But what do we do?
What can we do?

I watch through my tv,
the polar bear walks on rubbish and dirt,
it wasn't always like that.
He used to walk on thick ice,
Jumping around with his friends,
Now he has nothing.

The polar bear looks so skinny,
it wasn't always like that.
He used to be so full after going fishing he wouldn't eat for days.
Now he does the same,
He doesn't eat for days.
But the reason?

Now he has no fish.
Now he has nothing.
But what do we do?
What can we do?

We look out our front doors,
Our streets are filled with black sludge.
Drowning out the earth's wails and pleads.
Once town was full with life,
Now it's full of water.
I can hear the worry in people's voices,
I can taste the dirty water.
But yet we blame, and I'm sure no one regrets.
We're pleading, begging
Earth is too.
But what do we do?
What can we do?

The water used to be so clean
So clear I could see everything
I used to smile when I felt it crash onto my knees
Now I'm scared of it
I watch as it destroys.
I wonder, if it will ever go back
From brown to blue.

Will I have a future?
Will I get a life?
We say we can't do anything
we blame,
But yet we don't regret
That's our problem
But what do we do?
What can we do?

The answer is
a lot.



Poppy Turner



Alexander Sandiford

What About the Cicada?

Anonymous

Why is a pomegranate more favourable than an orange? An orange has an entire colour named after it, a pomegranate doesn't. Why do we never use puddles to compare blue eyes to instead of the ocean? Puddles not only get stomped upon, jumped in, and run over but are also taken for granted. They hold as much life as does the sea, and mystery as the blue eyes we goggle at. Why not use a spoon instead of a mirror to show your readers that a character has finally noticed who their true self is? A spoon has two sides while a mirror only has one. So many more metaphors and similes could be used for the reflection of a spoon. One side distorts the face, and the other flips it upside down, just as does life. And, just as we are by the people in our own lives, a spoon is used endless times. A mirror has only one side, showing one image and one reality. I can bet that you've already seen it too.

Then again, why do we always use a butterfly to talk about change and beauty?

What about a cicada? It burrows and hibernates for years on end. It changes out of its old skin and is left with a sparkling new suit. And, they let their viewers hear their nostalgic songs. Allowing for its gawkers to become enveloped in its beauty. They grant their company the ability to use more than just one of their five senses to let them know they're nearby. Its screeching music can remind almost everyone that they sat on the concrete in the hot summer sun, plucking out prickles from the soles of their feet. Listening to their squealing sound and feeling the rhythmic beat boom from a small insect. Instead of saying that someone was as fast as a cheetah, why not say they were as fast as a swordfish? The long and round fish that's known for having a thin, sword-like bill. A swordfish is one of the more interesting sea creatures that we know of. And yet, we never speak of them. We never describe their ability to pierce and skewer their prey, despite how similar their methods are to our own. We never speak of the speed they can acquire, despite being underwater. We never speak of the excitement fishermen feel when pulling up the swordfish from inside their net. We only ever use the cheetah.

Why do we favor roses over forget me nots when a character gives a bouquet to their love interest? Forget me nots can be blue, pink, or white and, a rose can be orange, yellow, or black, but a rose isn't named after a German myth. One that entails a knight walking alongside a river with his lover. Admiring the rambunctious currents and unruly rapids. When he notices a small flower in the core of the river. He jumps in and begins to surge through the currents. He was looking at the little blue flowers but he only saw the smile the delicate petals and round fuzzy leaves would put on his lover's face. But, as he crosses the river back to his lover, he becomes trapped in a rapid. He is yanked from the warm arms of life. He lobs the bouquet to his lover shouting as loud as he can with lungs full of water: "Forget me not". And so she doesn't. However, she slowly forgets how to live. And so she eventually died with little blue petals and fuzzy round leaves in her hair.

Creating literature was once an everyday form of expression. It allowed those struggling to comprehend their thoughts to finally grasp what they were feeling. Jotting down your troubles on a piece of paper just to toss it away was therapy. It gave the authorisation for wheels and cogs to labour away in the brain, exploring its inner depth. Discovering its true innovation and the reason for its creation. Generating metaphors and comparing similes that were particularly perfect in their context. Their uniqueness is used to convey the feelings they felt to the readers of their pieces. In creativity, the object or noun they used was moulded, showing the reader the exact visual imagery they too saw. And the depth. The depth that poetry, analysis, creative writing, and opinions used to hold above our heads. Allowing us to read and think simultaneously. Analysing the further meaning of the mirror or the cheetah. Why the legends and folklore led to these cliches.

But no. A rose is, of course, the most romantic flower in the garden to pick and plant inside your poem. A pomegranate is the most symbolic fruit in the bowl. The butterfly is the best bug squashed in the fly swatter to show beauty and adaptation in a character. Of course they are. They're known as cliches because they are so loved, for good reason. They show what's needed and everyone's already heard the comparisons so we don't have to visualise a new concept. But, what about the cicada?

The Lovesick Fool

This piece by Irene Tendeau placed second in this year's Dan Davin Literary Awards.

There's a part of him that still doesn't believe it.

When he woke up after that fateful day, he could only stare blankly at his equally-blank ceiling. He kept asking himself if that had really happened, only to chicken out on an answer. His ceiling, of course, did not give an answer to his internal ramblings.

That morning was spent in a daze. Like an automaton that can only mimic humans' true nature, he stood up, got dressed, made and ate his breakfast in auto-mode. There, but never truly present.

He had blushed so much that day, both from embarrassment as he tumbled through the day, and whenever he caught a glimpse of her blinding smile.

And oh gosh, he still can't believe it. They're dating now. Like, a committed one-year relationship kind of dating.

He's accepted that they're an item now, accepting them and accepting how he had changed. He's kind of scared, but also likes her a lot. Likes her overwhelming confidence and her snort whenever he throws a terrible one-liner. So yeah, they're doing great—awesome, really. For one year of relationship in high school, for God's sake, they're perfect.

She's perfect.

From her pathetic flirts to her tendency to "borrow" his things. From how she lets him sink into her tender hugs and hold her warm hands. From the little scar on the side of her neck to the single dimple that's almost always there.

There's so many poems he could write, so many songs to sing. But he knows that it'll all never be able to compare to the real thing. Even this entry is just a sad attempt of painting his praises into a beautiful string of words, never able to truly replicate his tangled feelings and racing heart.

And so, true to the infinite ramblings about how he can never take his

eyes off her, he stands transfixed as his date walks in.

He can't help it, she's just too damn gorgeous for him to not stare. It's not the glittery dress or the shining slippers of glass. Not the slit on the side or her bare shoulders—mentally, he makes a note to give her his suit jacket.

But no, it wasn't any of those things that captured his attention. Instead—as cliché as this might be, it's her face. And he doesn't mean her sharp jawline or subtle cheekbones, nor her perfect ponytail or lustrous lips.

No. It's her eyes that held him captive. The enchanting sky that invites him to fall forever with the birds and planes. Always glittering with mirth or rage or mischief, never without its ever-changing emotions. He falls again for the dimple that shows up when her eyes meet his, with how her whole complexion brightens as she wobbly jogs towards him.

He doesn't catch her when she almost topples over. Didn't need to either, since she's already dusting herself off when he reaches her. Always so strong, this princess of his.

But no matter how strong someone is, they'll have moments where they break apart. Like a rock slowly being broken apart by a stream, a person will break over constant, grueling challenges. No one's free from the dark sides of being human. Even if we bounce back, unlike material things, we'll still bend and break. That's just what it means to be human.

For them, it was around four months ago. To prove that not all bad things happen at nights or rains; they fought while basking in the bright sunlight, the gentle breeze only fuelling their raging fires. It was an ugly sight, where their exploding emotions clashed frighteningly with each other—a storm seething inside a seemingly serene scene.

Trepidation creeps in from its corner in his heart. Long forgotten doubts and distress, strewn between a mix of anxiety and fear that's always present. His mind starts to wonder, questioning whether or not he can do this. To go in deeper with her, venture the unknown charts of their relationship further. To take her hand so confidently and whisper sweet nothings to each other till the end of time.

Can he really be her knight in a not-so-shiny suit?

A slender hand covered his, offering warm comfort.

He almost sinks right into her embrace, chasing more, remembering that he isn't alone anymore.

"You okay?" Worry laced the edges of her voice. "We can cancel it for a night indoors, if you'd like."

Not wanting to ruin his carefully created plan, he mumbled, "It's okay." He takes her hand up to the corners of his lip, lips brushing with skin in a pitiful attempt at romance. "Sorry for zoning out on you."

His girlfriend rolls her eyes, looking away to hide the blush on her cheeks. "Of course you are," she muttered. "Let's go in, shall we?"

And in they go. For a restaurant befitting of an important dinner, he found none of it attractive enough to take his attention away. Not as they go by exquisite dessert tables or sparkling ceilings made for pictures, not even when they were ordering mouth-watering dishes from the menu. His eyes are glued—that's the only possible conclusion.

As the night goes on, as their chatting turns into something quieter, more intimate, he starts to get drowsy. Drunk on the sight of that beautiful smile, accompanied by a laugh in front of him. He sighs contentedly. This day can't be any more perfect, he sappily thought, nothing can ever be as perfect as her.

Then, when the lights dim and the little candle becomes a warm light that encases them both; when the chatters dampened and their plates almost empty, the perfect moment strikes. The tone was set, the timing perfect, his belle in front of him— It's like a bubble was created for them, a tiny space in the universe, where they're the two main characters and this is their happy ending.

He pulls out a box, as delicately and gently as he can. There's a soft gasp from the person before him, but he focuses on keeping his breath and hands steady.

"Happy anniversary," he whispers, one hand grasping hers and the other presenting the glimmering necklace he had prepared carefully.

“I hope you like it.”

I hope you like it, because he'd taken more than half of his year contemplating his choice. I hope you like it, because he wants to be remembered whenever she looks at the picture in the little locket.

He slowly closes their distance, enough that they can hear each other's every breath. Leaning even closer, both of their eyes closed, sealing in the swirl of emotions hiding inside.

I hope you like it, because I hope you'll change your mind.

But of course she wouldn't, he laments as he's pushed back to his chair, breaths even shallower than before.

Their faces are closer than ever, their foreheads touching.

A pity. It would paint a prettier picture if he currently doesn't have a knife embedded between his ribs. He wishes for a better ending as he feels his life fading.

It'd be a nicer picture if his girlfriend of one year isn't towering over him with a stoic smile and hidden tears. A gun appears in her grasp. He can't even reach a hand out to soothe the pain that contorted her beautiful face. The most he could do was to continue his loving smile, even as the knife twists his insides more than the pain of acceptance.

For the world is cruel, it is unforgiving to even those who are kind. He's not kind, not at all, and the same could be said to the sharp-eyed girl in front of him.

Oh, they could've been those two childhood lovers, or the meet-cute in college. They could've been, could've been, could've been... But of course this is where their love ended.

For they have fallen in love's game, more merciless than the world itself. There was a reason love and war are considered to be as vicious as the other. Because once you've taken a glimpse of the alluring flower, all of your escapes have been thwarted.

You are lucky if the flower doesn't bite back when you've gotten close enough. Lucky if you are accepted into its tiny bubble.

These two kids, however, as experienced as they were in the battlefield, fell into the most vicious bubble of all. Still the main characters, but it was no longer a happy ending.

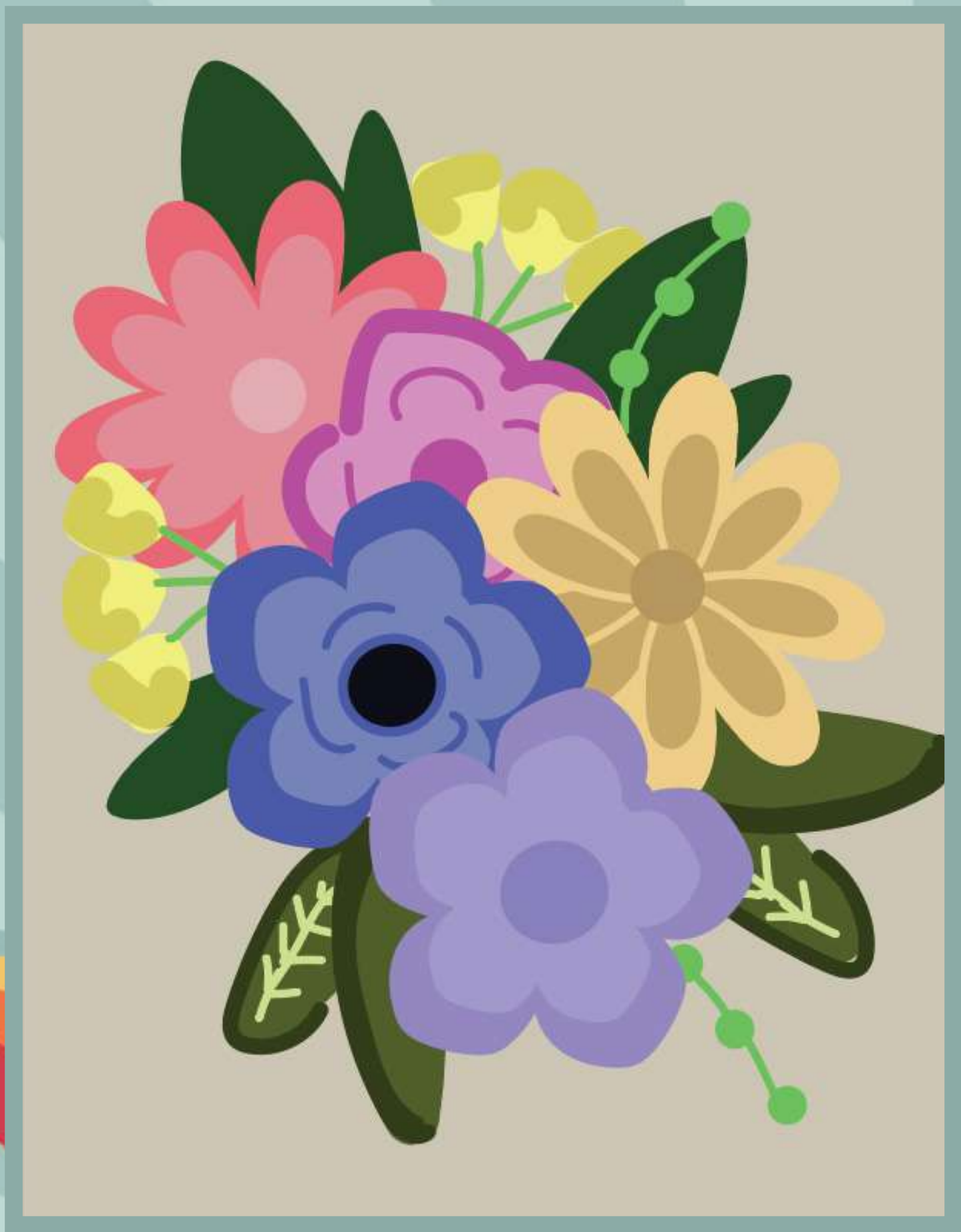
“Juliet...?” he rasps quietly.

“I’m so sorry, Romeo.” The tears are now freely flowing down her cheeks as she raises the gun to her head.

“What about the mission—” He tries to ask, but it’s too late.

She falls right on him, twisting the knife more as the last of his consciousness faded.

For when they got close enough to the flower, it turned into a snake whose poison killed them.



Seri Smith

Swish

Hunter Beck

The morale of the team was at rock bottom. Coach was screaming his head off,

“Do you guys even want to play? It looks like you don’t even want to be out there!”

It was halftime and the score was 52-31. We were down 21, in the biggest game of the season. I knew we couldn’t carry on like this, something needed to change. I stood up and looked at all of my teammates,

“Guys, we are here for a reason. We worked hard to get where we are and we can’t give up now! Let’s change our mindset and win this game!”

We stepped onto the court ready to play. On the first play I saw Jason cut to the basket, his defender was slow to react. He was wide open under the hoop. I whipped the ball to him and he laid it in.

“Good pass Ricky,” I heard Coach say.

I could tell that the other team already thought that they had won, they started the 3rd quarter with multiple careless turnovers and allowed us to score eight quick points. I could feel the momentum shifting in our favour, we had cut the deficit to thirteen, still big but not insurmountable.

Halfway through the quarter I intercepted a sloppy pass and ran up the court. I looked back and saw Ben, our team’s leading scorer trailing behind me, he was pointing up. I understood. I went to lay it up but left it short, I turned around just in time to see Ben fly. He leaped off the ground, snatched the ball out of the air and slammed it in with a monster reverse jam. He hung on the rim. The bench was on their feet. The crowd was going crazy. Coach was shaking his head in disbelief. It felt like we were unstoppable, nothing could slow us down.

Then the worst possible scenario happened. Ben was still hanging on the rim after his crazy dunk, but when he hopped down he landed on someone’s foot, rolling his ankle badly. There was a loud pop, and everyone in the building went silent. Ben was rolling around in pain holding his ankle. Coach had no choice but to call a timeout to get Ben off the court.

This was a huge blow. Not only was Ben our best player, he was our leader. Without him on the court it would be almost impossible to get back in this game. The other team immediately took advantage of Ben's absence, they outscored us the rest of the period, at the break we were down 65-35. I knew someone had to step up to fill the gap that Ben left, it was now or never if we wanted to win this game.

Something clicked for me after the huddle, I came out of the gate and splashed a three. The player I was guarding started talking trash, which fuelled me even more. I drained two more threes, back-to-back. I was in the zone, no one could stop me. After I hit my seventh triple of the quarter, the other team finally called a timeout. I looked up at the scoreboard, 73-64, with four minutes to go.

We continued to trim the lead until we were all of a sudden down one with thirty seconds left.

It was their ball, they were running the clock down, but they would have to put a shot up. The player with the ball drove into the paint and rose up to shoot. I came across and met him in the air, snatched the ball from his hands and landed back down.

I looked up at the clock.

Ten seconds.

I pushed the ball up the court.

Five seconds.

I crossed over my defender.

Three seconds.

I stepped back, and put up the shot to win the championship. Everyone was on the edge of their seats.

Swish.



Amanda Henderson

Save Them

Hannah Woodcock

No one knows why this happens to me, why I fade from the present and subconsciously drift from the very face of reality into vile, nightmarish blurs and eventually, the time of another being. Why I open my eyes to the sight of places like these. Places that inflict terror like no other. So as the beaming light clears my hazy vision, and I stumble to my feet, I'm confronted with a smooth white lab building enclosed by an intimidating barbed fence, though what catches my breath and momentarily stops my heart is the prominent metal and stone structure that towers before me. My mind flashes abruptly to one of my previous high school history projects, and the dots are simple to connect. What stands so vast over me is the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

Internal sirens blare within me as I observe the building, realising there is no hint of damage and the sounds of civilisation echo only a brief distance away. Without a second thought, I run. The world tilts and twists before my eyes. I scavenge for an exit. I have to know the date. I have to warn the civilians. I am the only soul who knows. Who knows reactor 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant will explode. Who knows the town will be enveloped in a radioactive blanket and become uninhabitable. Who knows the children will grow sick and everything anyone here has known will all be left behind. I can feel the minutes slipping from my grasp and sinking into my spine, and I don't know how many are left.

Somehow, I manage to crawl under a gap within a faulty area of the fence. My weak knees are now dragging me through the streets of a doomed town. I mindlessly cut corners, running towards the uncanny noise of Chernobyl residents. Until eventually, I make it to the main street.

The minutes feel like hours as I search for an English-speaking person. I interrogate all kinds of people, but all I get is confused glowers in return. Although eventually, I discover a fox eyed girl who looks the same age as me. She tells me her name, the date and time while a thick Ukrainian accent smothers her fortunately English words. Her name is Zlata Kovalchuck. It's April 25th 8:27pm. The time is running out. I have to get everyone out before it is too late.

My disassociated mind refuses to catch up with my words or body, but I manage to tell Zlata everything, and it takes just a flash of my iPhone for her to believe me. I watch the Terror flood her eyes, and with the drug-like effect of adrenaline, we split our ways into the bitter crowds to warn the civilians. I cannot see Zlata, but I can hear her stomach-churning screams of forebode.

A blur, a waste, that's what the next hour is.

Laughter.

Disbelief.

Scolds.

Sarcasm.

Backs that turn from warning.

That turn from their own lives.

I can feel my body grow limp in defeat as the minutes go by, as April 26 1:23:58am plummets closer to the present. My trembling fingers begin to pixellate abruptly and irregularly. I am beginning to fade away, Nobody has listened. Nobody will listen to two teenage girls, no matter how ridiculous their claim is.

My vision is clouded, I am just a hollow shell of a girl, being dragged by strangers who believed their daughter into a car overflowing with luggage like a jammed jar of fruit. Zlata's family car. Nobody speaks, except a young boy that sits with a cat.

"Minky,"

the boy says, jabbing a finger into its orange fur.

Words are stuck in my throat. I can only watch Chernobyl disappear behind me.

And finally,

A blood churning roar.

Distant screams of despair.

A town in poisonous flames.

"I couldn't save them."

As the words creep out of my mouth, I know I am near gone. "I'm sorry."

Zlata's father turns to me.

"He who saves one life, saves the world entire."

A door is...

Fionn Fortune-Harris

A door is a block between hot and cold,
Sometimes opened in curiosity,
Often closed in fear.

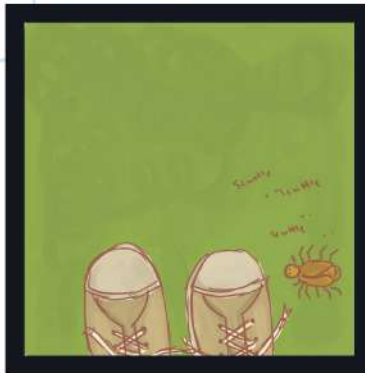
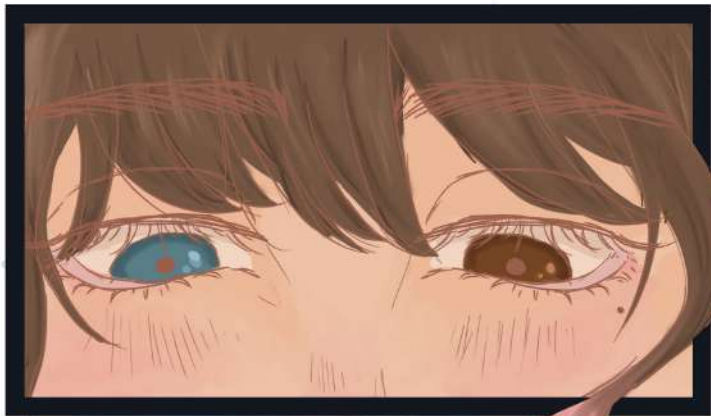
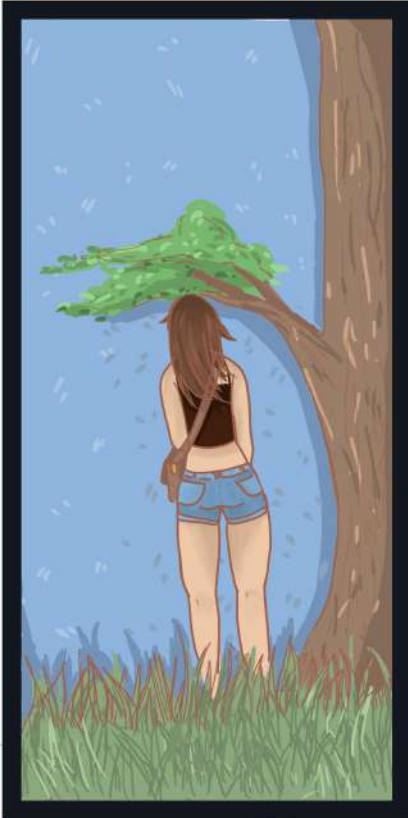
A door is a pathway, a way to adventure,
An escape to excitement,
An unseen land.

A door is a shield, protection from attack,
It shelters and defends,
It hides and forgets.

A door is a gateway to a non-existent
forest,
A path to secrets,
To voyages never done.

A door is magic, many unknowns,
Neverending paths and possibilities,
In the tunnels of our thoughts.

A door is the end, strong and unopened,
Waiting for explorers,
To travel to excitement.



Anonymous

World in a Bottle

Alicia Purdon

1.

We are a world in a bottle.
We are trapped with no escape.
The glass sparkles and we see the stars.

We see the stars as signs of hope
Like there's more out there,
a second world waiting for us.

A world waiting for our fires,
a world waiting for our pollution,
a world waiting for our
disfigurement.

2.

But here we are in our exploited
bottle,
trapped with no escape.
It feels like the air is depleting

Our bottle is shaken
and tossed around like trash.
We don't look after our measly
bottle

Our bottle is landfill now
so is our earth
But they're not the same.

3.

The bottle is plastic.
Bit by bit it's cracking
taping it over is only a quick fix for
survival.

Our trees will leave us,
our ground will leave us,
All that will be left is the tops of
mountains.

Change our bottle.
Like snakes change their skin,
like we change our minds.

4.

The world in a bottle is smoking.
The fumes leaked through the
cracks we've made.
Our bottle is weak.

Grey corrupts our vision.
Eliminating our sight
But not eliminating the problem.

Maybe we should try to fix the
cracks
before we leave them behind.
Help our world in a bottle.

SLAM!

Carly Nicholls

I would stay at peace in my little corner at ABC Kindergarten, building my towers or making a crazy coloured mess with some sort of paint or pencils. I would usually be picked up between 3-4pm, depending on how traffic wanted to treat my impatient father that day. This day was different. It was just past 5pm as I watched the last toddlers get dragged out of the doors by their overwhelmed parents. Dad still hadn't arrived. Anxiety and worry flooded my brain as I watched the teachers slowly pack up for the end of their shift.

I was thinking of all the possible outcomes that could happen to Dad...
Is he in a car crash?
Did he get a heart attack?
Does he not love me any more?

Thoughts rushed through my head but not as quick as my Dad barging through the doors of ABC. I felt relieved, until Dad grabbed my bag and apologised to the teachers. Before I knew it he was rushing out of the door and shouting, "Hurry up, I don't wanna get stuck in the 5:30 rush hour!"

Tripping over my feet in a rush, nothing could've prepared me for what happened next.

Screams echoed around the room as blood gushed from the tip of my "wedding ring" finger.

"Brendan, come back, your daughter!!" the teachers yelled as my ears started screeching a high-pitched noise. Hands reached for me as my brain was going fuzzy with confusion. All I could remember was the horrendous sound of the heavy metal door connecting with my finger.

"CRACK"

Dad pushed through all the teachers to reach me as they all kept yelling,

"CALL AN AMBULANCE!"

"WHERE'S THE FINGER TIP?"

Seconds pass by and before I realise, I'm strapped in my Dad's old and rusty car **SPEEDING** through traffic. You know that sound where

the cork in the champagne pops off and the champagne sprays everywhere? That's what my finger felt like. But blood. Lots of it. A huge "Southland Hospital" sign caught my attention as my eyes began to focus again and panic emerged from me. So much panic that my screaming and crying turned into a blackout.

My droopy eyelids slowly opened to pale blue curtains and very bright lights blinding my vision. As I sat up, it felt as if a boulder was attached to my left hand. I was wishing it was a huge diamond ring but instead was surprised with a fat pink cast on my hand.

"This will stop all those young boys proposing to you now," was the first thing I heard my Dad say.



Ella Byatt

I Head Outside

Kobe Low

I head outside, the wind is cold,
a breeze across my face.
Have on my coat and gloves,
as I walk down the street.
There is crunchy grass covered in ice,
crushing under my feet.
Frozen puddles on the side of the roads,
breaking as I step through them.
I can see my breath as I walk past the frozen cars.
As I come home, I head back inside to the warm house.

I head outside, there is a bit of rain,
droplets landing on my face.
Have on my hoodie with the hood up,
as I walk down the street.
There is slippery, damp grass,
that my feet are sliding on.
Small puddles on the side of the roads,
splashing as I step through them.
I can just see my breath, though it is very faint as I walk past the wet cars.
As I come home, I head back inside the cold house.

I will head outside and it will be flooding,
rain soaking everything and everyone.
Will have my waterproof jacket on,
as I will struggle to get out of the house.
There will be soaking wet grass,
that I will be falling all over.
The roads will be flooding as if they are rivers,
pushing me over if I take a step.
I will be scared to even take a breath,
as I will see cars getting washed away from the floods.
As I will struggle to come back home,
my house will start to move cause it's about to get washed away.

Scrumdiddlyumptious

Mercedes Checketts

“Oh no, Peanut, what have you done?” Mum screamed. Oh boy, Peanut was in trouble now.

Peanut wasn't your ordinary dog; he didn't have a loud bark or LOTS of energy like other dogs. He was lazy. Partly because he had a terrible disease called obesity. Despite this, Peanut had a love for healthy green vegetables. His wandering brown eyes would follow you around the house like a shadow begging for food. He had a shiny golden coat, perfectly clean teeth, and was loving and kind.

Peanut's best friend was Daffy, a black, sly, and agile cat. They had countless adventures together in the back yard, playing games and snuggling on cold nights. Peanut and Daffy were best friends and that was that!

One day in the kitchen, Peanut and Daffy spotted a tempting piece of defrosting meat. They hatched a plan to get it off the bench. Daffy had a brilliant idea: Peanut would help her reach the meat. She would then jump on the chopping board and send the meat flying. Perfect. Absolutely purrfect.

She jumped and the bloody red raw meat went flying. Peanut caught it and eagerly started to gobble it up. Daffy grabbed a piece and ran off with it. Peanut was left puzzled as Daffy disappeared.

“Peanut, what have you done?” screamed Mum. Oh boy, Peanut was in trouble now. His tail dropped in between his legs and his eyes became a worrying river. Out into the rain he went. Peanut always gets sent out when he does something bad. He slumped down on his bed and placed his head on his paw. Gazing, over at the hole in the hedge.

Mum scrubbed the meaty mess from the floor and prepared dinner. She placed a fresh plate of scrumptious green vegetables on the table. “Eww, yuck,” said little Tom. “Where's the meat?” asked Dad. “I guess we'll have to be vegetarian now!” said Jerry.

Then a black blur came flying around the corner, it was Daffy, but wait! She had a big chunk of meat in her mouth. She was the crook. The

thief. The master mind. And yet poor Peanut got in trouble. Little Tom ran outside to let Peanut in and surveyed the empty yard in dismay. “Mum he’s GONE!”

Mum dashed outside into the rain, calling. “Peanut! Peanut, where are you?”

There he was soaked and shivering under the old oak tree, lonely and cold. Daffy, realising her mistake, found Peanut and nuzzled him for comfort.

Mum eventually found them and wrapped Peanut in a warm blanket.



Natalie Smith

A Little too Late

Macey Ellis

Learning a little too late. Learning the pigmentation of my five Year old self made me a target for decorative purposes; nothing more, nothing less. It was shown off, from school to school as a decoration of “progress”. “How Far I’ll Go” sung by an untalented Year 4 to indulge crowds of people, believing it was progress. Believing it was diversity. Believing that getting the oldest and only māori kid in Year 4 at school (instead of the multiple Year 6’s), to sing a solo was an achievement.

Learning a little too late, that getting the only māori kid to lead as kaea since Year 5 wasn’t just an accomplishment for a young mind but a way to show representation without facts being told that one day without me no one was singing, that these kids, so adamant on doing anything to keep them occupied, couldn’t (or wouldn’t) sing without there singular māori, one singular kid was the reasoning behind the kapa haka groups rising or falling. But was it really that deep? Couldn’t these young minds be taught how to sing these “complex songs”? Couldn’t the school put more funding into kapa haka and māori class time as they do for the jump jam teams, getting their costumes done professionally instead of wearing a toga as acceptable dress wear?

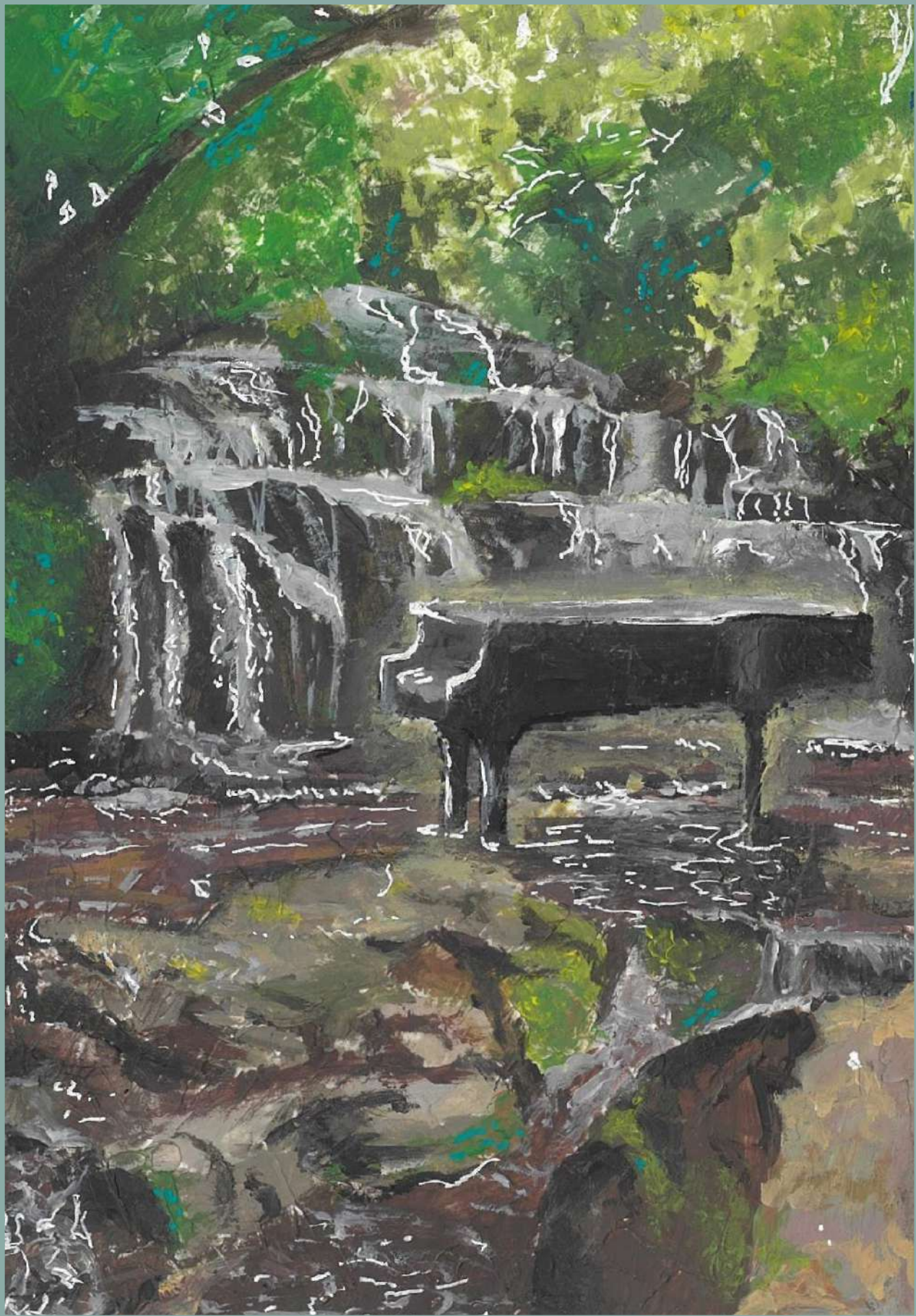
Learning a little too late, that I was not the lone brown leaf in an evergreen tree, that there were other people like me, skin showing signs of sun during the middle of winter. Learning a little too late, that the songs I sang in kapa haka were more than just songs, but stories, stories of love, stories of war and hate, stories that weren’t stories but knowledge, songs that showed a culture. Learning a little too late what my culture was. Coming home to my whanau, asking, begging to know more about a life I hadn’t learnt I was living, family members knowing nothing more than what an 11 year old knows, going through records of our one-sided family history, knowing there was something more.

In Year 9 I found something more, being fully surrounded by people exactly like me, some knowing nothing of their culture while others were immersed in the culture from day one. Finally getting knowledge of my family through records, my Nana finally being able to find my grandfather’s whānau records. Tohiora Tossy Kuru lived on his family’s marae till the ripe age of 18 then left to discover more about

his “modern world.” I never knew my Grandfather, he died before my Mum even knew about me, but for some reason, I always felt closer to him than most people in my large family. He was the only one on our family side that knew about culture so extensively, he knew knowledge that I’m still trying to figure out today. I never met him, how could I but yet I saw him, shining like a lone star amidst the sea of unknown, sometimes I like to believe he saw me too, saw me and became a map of stars, lighting a path of knowledge and belonging for me to follow.

Although I learnt a little too late, it seemed the rest of the world had already labelled who I was before I could even label myself. The rest of the world had decided how they’d treat me, only being seen for my skin, nothing deeper. I learnt this the hard way, slowly seeing the stares pointed my way, finally understanding why workers were following me through their workplace, noticing my darker friend group getting stopped continuously, the lighter ones continued with their heads held high, as though the thought of being stopped would never cross their mind.

I learnt a little too late. The feeling of not knowing has always stayed with me, and the feeling that I may be used for decoration and false progress still haunts me. However, I now have people around me who see me for more, more than a “decoration of progress.” I am surrounded by people who understand the haunting shadow of people’s ideas of false progress, just waiting to drag you into the feeling of hopelessness. Now I am surrounded by people who are like an open book, complete and knowledgeable about themselves, exuding confidence and certainty. I am still reading my book, reclaiming my identity, embracing my heritage, and understanding the deeper meaning within the song I still sing. I may have learned too late, but my story is far from over.



Ella Byatt





Want to get involved next year?
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