

blueprint

Volume 17, Issue 1, July 2017

The Apocalypse Issue



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VOLUME 17 ISSUE 1 JULY 2017

“ *We are living on the brink of
apocalypse but the world is
asleep.*

JOEL C. ROSENBERG (1967-)

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COLOPHON

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NEXT ISSUE

Wonderland
On stands October 2017

The Apocalypse Issue

Let's start at the end, shall we?

After Breanna (our previous Editor-In-Chief) chose the Apocalypse theme, I told her I couldn't believe this is what she stuck me with for my first issue. How was I supposed to come up with an editor's note for *this*?

It came to me after a very emotional night, in which it felt like everything I knew was falling to pieces. I asked myself, "what do you do in a situation like this?" The answer: you fight.

The point of an apocalypse, when you feel like the world is falling apart, is to figure out what's important. What do you love? What do you want to save? What do you want to bring with you into whatever comes next? The point of an apocalypse is to answer that, and then fight to keep it alive. Take what you hold dear and, out of that rubble, make your legacy.

A friend of mine said something beautiful can rise from destruction, and I think she's right. And as long as we can focus on that beauty, it simultaneously makes the end more bearable, and also gives us a reason to strive even harder against it.

So, dear reader. Let's start at the end, let's figure out what we love and what's beautiful, and let's make this year of *Blueprint* a legacy worth fighting for.

Manreet Lachhar
Editor-in-Chief



COVER

by ALAN LI

When brainstorming for apocalypse-related cover ideas with my brother, we cycled through scenes with explosions, meteors, and zombies. Ultimately, I chose to settle on the idea of burning city due to pragmatic concerns — I am new to photo manipulation, and I wanted to create a cover that was relevant and not overly complicated. I think that the process of creating artwork to share with others is worth the time I invest into it because it teaches us important skills. I find that even having the courage to share your work with others when you know that it's imperfect or could be improved on is a skill you develop by continuously throwing yourself into the process of creating art.



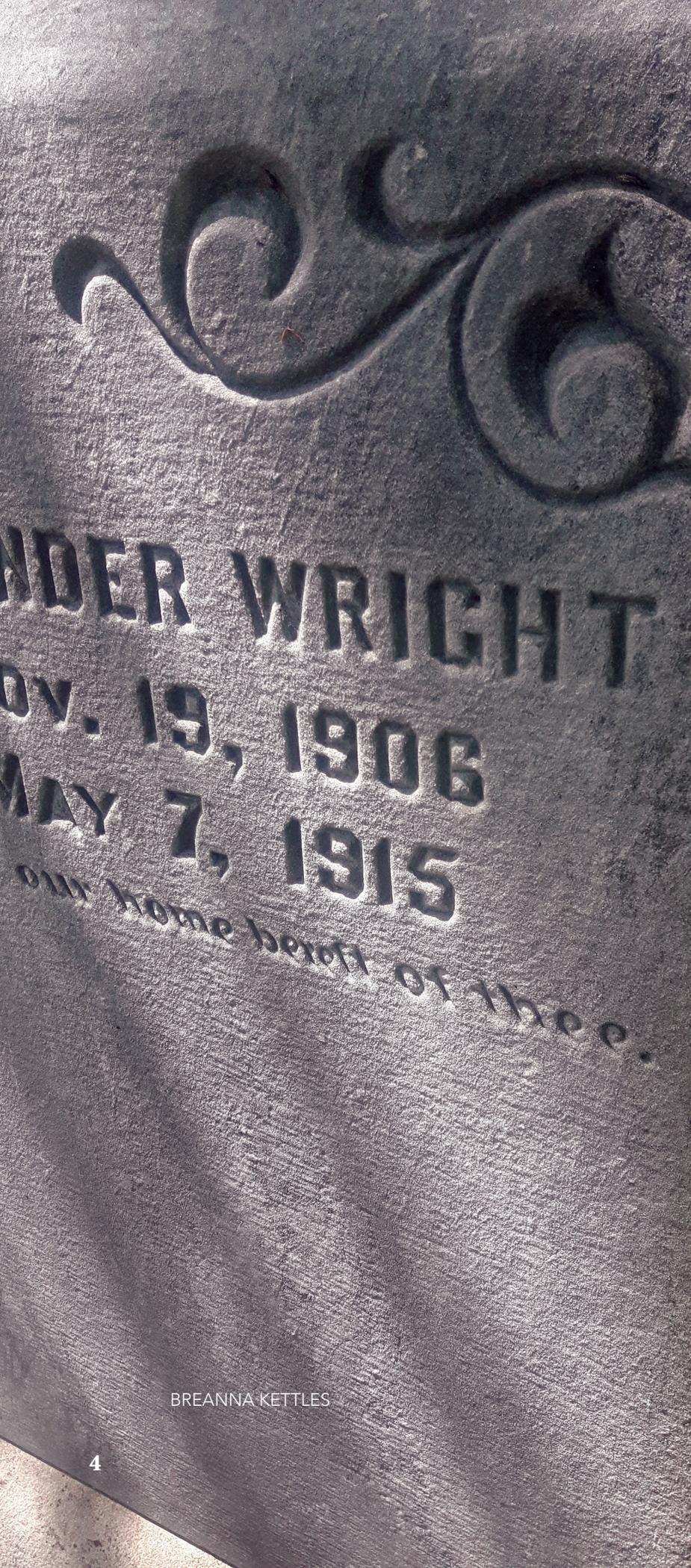
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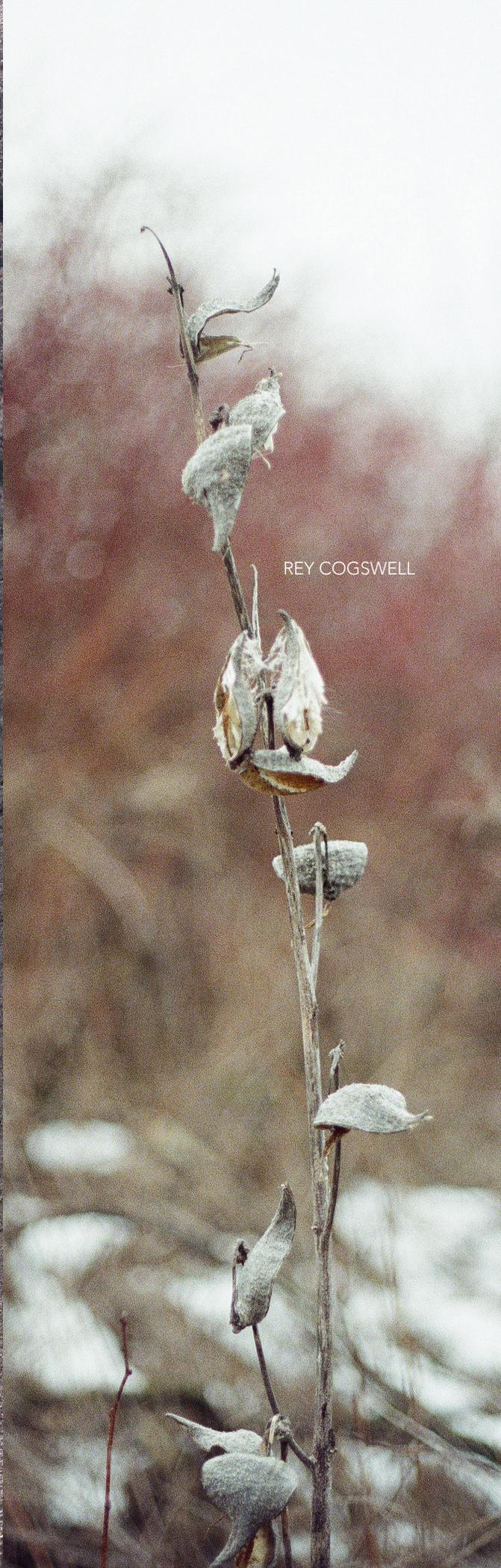
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REY COGSWELL

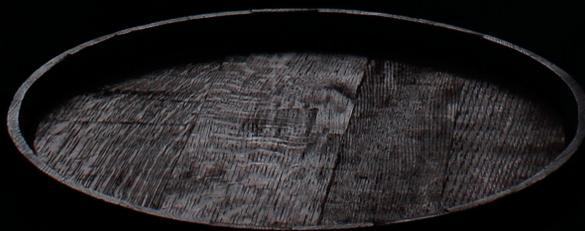


A Letter to the World

CHARIS HESKETH

Dear World,

I see you.
And you're falling apart.
You have mother against mother,
father against father,
you have people killing one another.
And why?
That's a secret I'm still trying to uncover.





MATT SMITH

Boys' Night

CARINA RAMPELT

It's Friday night and the four horsemen are playing cards at Death's house. Well, three of them are, anyway. Red is late. It's Death's turn.

"Got any nines?"

White glances at his cards and shakes his head. Black bangs his fist down on the table, cackling. "Go fish!"

Death draws from the deck and sighs, leaning back against the sofa as he looks at his new card. "Useless. Utterly useless."

White's brow furrows. "Wait — uh sorry, I do have a nine after all."

"What! You can't say that now — he already drew his card!" Black smacks him across the shoulder, harder than he means to.

"I thought it was a six," White mutters, rubbing his aching shoulder.

"It doesn't matter—we can't go back now! It's not fai—" Black is interrupted by the thunk of the heavy iron door swinging open.

"That you, Red?"

Red pops his head around the corner, grinning. "Who else?" He undoes his boots, caked with an ashy grey substance that couldn't quite be called mud. "Sorry I'm late, boys. Traffic was a nightmare around purgatory."

Death shakes his head. "It's the construction. If they had just finished the road expansion four millennia ago when they said they were going to..."

"You're telling me," Red claps him on the shoulder and sit cross-legged on the floor in front of the coffee table. "Anyway, what have I missed? Who's winning?"

"Well, White was just in the middle of CHEATING," Black fumes.

"It was an honest mistake!"

"We should start over anyway, now that Red's here," Death says, reaching out to collect the cards and reshuffle. "Come now, why don't you get us something to drink from the kitchen?" he nods towards Black, who's still pouting. "I'm in the mood for some finely aged spirits."

"Fine," Black rolls his eyes and stands up. "Who else wants a drink?" The other three horsemen raise their hands. "Ugh." He stomps off.

"Don't mind him," Death whispers, dealing out the deck. "He's just really bummed about work right now. Thought things were finally moving forward." The other horsemen nod knowingly.

There's a brief shriek from the kitchen as the cork comes out of the bottle. None of the horsemen look up.

"This one's potent, eh Death?" Black chuckles from the other room, his mood seemingly improved. He returns with four shot glasses of a swirling, reddish liquid, which he sets down on the table. Death sets down the cards to take one.

"To boys' night!" he says, lifting his glass.

"May there not be too many more of them," Red says, holding up his own glass and winking at Black.

"Amen to that," Black says. They all drink.



JONATHAN COLLIE

JUDGEMENT DAY

MADELINE MCINNIS

I've always had a keen sense for timing, so I knew that my time was nearly up.

My alarm blared for what must have been at least the seventh time. I hit snooze. My feet hit the floor and I shuffled through my daily routine. The water still ran, the air conditioning still whirred, and I still needed that scalding coffee to get me out the door.

I always pictured that judgement day would come in a flurry of hellfire and brimstone, smoke hurling and consuming. I pictured rain of metal instead of water and the screaming of the masses. I know enough about the Book of Revelation to know that the end of days would be an event for all time that would end history. There would be no survivors when the apocalypse came, and we would all be doomed to fall to the pits. And pity on all of us, there was no hope from there.

After a mundane life, it all seems a bit exciting, but judgement day really began with missing the subway and a busker playing the latest tunes.

I never thought I'd spend years of my life on the commute and even more sitting in an office chair and staring at a computer. I pictured travel and adventures. I wanted to be remembered, and I wanted to be heard. I guess I thought business was the way to do it. But now, here I was, just another face in the crowd, working for the system until I rotted or died — whatever came first.

Here I was, late again, and dragging my feet for another seemingly useless day as a shell. This was supposed to be the dream, but I was never a hero. I stepped into the sun, beating down as it always did this time of year. I didn't want to go up into that tower of terror. I wanted to run. I didn't want to go back. If only I knew then. I rode the elevator up to the ninety-first floor, took the thirty-five steps to my cubicle, and slumped into what felt like a million pounds on my shoulders.

8:46 A.M. Panic.

A huge crash above us and the building quivered and heaved. Smoke plumed into the air and no one knew what was going on. People were screaming.

8:47 A.M. Evacuation.

I froze. This type of thing only happened in movies. We all ran for the stairs, becoming machines for survival.

8:48 A.M. Choices.

There are few times in life when we are faced with the decision to change our lives and the lives of others, and that day was one of those days. My life, I felt, was useless. I was just a shell with nothing to lose. But these other people, they had families. They had purpose beyond what I had for myself. I was given the opportunity to change my life and I took the path that I think I was always destined to take.

I shouted directions, helped people through the smoke, and tried to help clear the floors below me — tried to make sure that everyone was moving. It was an impossible task. Most were already moving down the stairs, but others didn't want to believe. They didn't want to accept reality. But I had to help the ones who were willing to listen. The world is a purgatory and we are the test. What we do here determines the amount of peace we can take forward, regardless of a life in the great beyond.

Yes, I was mundane. I didn't get a chance to do anything I wanted to in life, and that's my own fault. But I hope I gave those opportunities to so many of the others. That's my hope.

10:28 A.M. Judgement.

Judgement day came in the form of a plane and a tower. It was the smoke and it was a fall to the pits. But we were all wrong about the most important part: there will always be hope and there will always be goodness in the darkness. The world will always go on, regardless of what is happening on it.

Our choices, no matter how small they are, have the power to change the world.

There was the sight of the apocalypse that day in the form of an earth-altering force. After that morning, we began fighting wars we could never win in an effort to alleviate the terror the world felt when looking on New York. It felt like an end, and for me it was.

My perspective died with me that day. I will be forgotten and no one will remember my name beyond a brief glance of it on a plaque. But to me, I made a choice that caused all the difference. That day was the end of my world, but it wasn't the end of THE world. As a collective, all of the dead will forever live on with the memory of the events we never wanted to be a part of. We will always be remembered as the innocent and the brave. I hope I helped. I hope that I caused some hope. I didn't survive, but I was part of something that always will.

My life, I felt, was useless. I learned that we're only useless if that's what we believe ourselves to be. We're only useless when we turn away from those rare instances of choice. When you face your day of judgement, I hope you make sure it's worth the pain. Despite the hellfire and the fall, you're the reason for someone else's hope.

The end is never really the end. It was catastrophe, death, and doom. But from the ashes, our heads are held proudly high. We will not be intimidated because we are special and we will always defend what is right. We will meet a challenge with determination and we will claw our way out of those pits of despair because we have the choice to make a difference.

A mundane life and a forgotten name. I'm proud of that for what I accomplished and the choices I made.

10:29 A.M.

Life goes on, as it always will.

A Play in the Theatre

PREYETA.

When I think of Eros, I picture him like the Eilorian god Ember who entertains his whims with the peril of his people. My situation with Sean Ficke certainly felt like it.

Every day with Sean was wonderful; he made the air smell like electricity every time I breathed. Like countless young lovers before us, we caught fire and revelled in the heat. We dirty danced in sweaty clubs, drank, talked, cried and feared the fact that we would not last forever. However, we were going to be the smart ones who didn't pretend that the end would never come. When it came, we would not drag it out in pathetic hopes of survival; we would take our memories and leave.

But when the time came, things spiralled out of control. We argued, and he made a mistake that I couldn't forgive. Although, I did throw up mid-kiss one time, so it was already downhill from there. Our downward spiral was a spectacle. When the show started, it was like Sean and I were thrust in the middle of a play where we were the leads. We were pushed from behind the curtain, into this stage of anarchy that had been brewing for some time.

Nonetheless, Sean and I rose to the occasion with the poise of a well-mixed pancake, rising above the heat of a carefully greased pan. We tried to do the right thing, but the slope was far too slippery. Costumes and lights were already in place. Our friends sat by with popcorn and emotional support in their laps. But, sitting front row was our good friend Xander: the beautiful demon child that pushed us over the edge into this dystopia onstage. On the stage, there was toilet paper everywhere, laser guns fired, short monks cried tears of mascara, and wounded fairies limped to safety across the stage as tiny hover crafts dropped bombs from above. It was rough.

I think they should write stories about us and put us right up there with those idiots who both die at the end of the play. If, for nothing else, for being silly enough to think that acknowledging our demise might abate it some. We knew we were not meant for more, but knowledge doesn't help much when you're in love. Like how the knowledge that your favourite opioid might one day kill you doesn't stop you from using. Besides, when you meet someone who makes the air smell like muffins, you're never quite ready to go back.

At the end, we could breathe again. The tsunami of sadness that had wiped out many lovers before us came charging from behind the curtain as we stood facing the ruins. We felt it, so we shut our eyes, then let it swallow us and turn the ringing shouts of the crowd into silence.



CHANEL WASE

The Fallen Ones

STEPHANIE SILVA

Shushhh
there is no noise in here
in here the birds won't chitter laugh
or whisper when you stumble

Hushhh
there are no worries here
in here our roots won't wither thin
or waste away with hunger

Shushhh
you need not cry in here
in here our branches bare no arms
we deal not death but wonder

Hushhh
there is no noise in here
until you make us fall

Curtain Call, or: how I learned to stop worrying and love the bomb

B.K. MÉNARD

I think we gained such an ability and sealed our fate

That's when the countdown started

•

There is something insidious about war when it's cold
And something that seems too on-the-nose once things heat up

I can handle on-the-nose

But the creeping cold and the slow drag
The one that keeps a nimble mind on its toes...

•

I know that destruction is possible
Destruction is beautiful
Destruction is change

Chaos as a constant urges flowers to bloom in dark rooms

•

If I leave my window open when the time is right
I can hear a crow
clawing its way into the light of day
Its song sickening me slowly

Madness

•

I used to think that they watched out for me because ... I convinced myself that when something went wrong they would take the blame

That they would take the pain as well

•

The arrow of the clock;
Its aim impeccable

Doom comes from within

Each time you close your eyes

The world ends

•

Destruction is inevitable

we are all the same.

CAMILLE DEGHAN

I haven't done anything. I haven't gone anywhere. I haven't learned anything. I haven't loved anyone. I will leave the world the way I came: with nothing.

The person beside me has done everything I haven't, but we are still the same. She may have loved ones, she may be successful, she may even be happy, but she is the same as me.

The person with everything is a reflection of the person with nothing. The end entertains the prayers and pleads of no one. We will both die. We will both cease to exist. Both our worlds will be over.

Nothing really matters. So stop trying. The bucket lists, the impulsive confessions, the frantic search for adrenaline. It's pointless. The end is coming for all of us, and it will not take refuge on those with fulfilled lives. It will not take pity on those who have not lived.

Like a blanket, it will cover us all into a suffocating blur of emptiness.

A GROTESQUE SYMBIOSIS

COREY ROSS COLE

I saw through the eyes of the prisoner, sitting in a dank and dark cell, holding a paper with the words 'Patriot Act' stamped on the top. Over a loudspeaker someone exclaimed in frightened tones about something called 'WMDs'...

Upon a television screen in the corner of the cell, two soldiers in desert combat gear stared out into the camera, their eyes dripping with thick black oil as screams filled the background of the scene. As I inched nearer towards the set, the channel switched of its own accord to a channel zooming in on rapidly fluttering still shots from somewhere the announcer called 'Abu Ghraib'.. The soldiers in desert combat gear held dog leashes, attached to which were men, naked and beaten and covered in human filth.

As I recoiled in horror at such sights of brutality and evident torture, a loud humming filled the air, and overhead I heard what sounded like a small plane hovering directly above the cell. The channel quickly switched to a flickering image of what looked to be a President sitting at his desk in the Oval Office in the White House. Upon his head was an orange-tinted furry rodent beast. I recoiled in horror.

In a blinding explosion, the roof was blown to pieces, and as I grovelled upon the concrete floor desperate for cover, I saw the dark drone zooming up back into the sky, on towards another target. I mustered enough energy to climb over and out of the cell walls and dropped to the ground, exhausted.

When next I opened my eyes, I was a beggar sitting on the street in Paris next to a lively cafe. Live rock music not dissimilar to Radiohead played for a young, appreciative urban audience. I rested my head upon the cafe's hundred year-old cobblestones and enjoyed the break from the chaos I had come out of. Just as suddenly as the drone strike had come to me in my cell, another explosion rocked the cafe, sending me flying into the middle of the street among bleeding and dying Parisians. I ran as best I could, down towards the Seine river, and collapsed once more upon the Earth.

Falling slightly into the river's coldness, I was jolted fully awake, and looked around to find myself not in Paris, not in a cell somewhere in the Middle East, but at the small beach where white swans and Canada geese lounged, at the Harbour Front Park, in Hamilton. I was never more happy to be home again than in those brief moments of recognition. I sat up on the beach and lazily watched the swans and geese and water spiders amble along, without an apparent care in the world, oblivious to the chaos rumbling just beneath the surface.

Indeed, the surface of the water broke, and out sprang one orange-tinted furry rodent-beast the size of a football, a beast which never ceased to revolt me with its grotesqueness. Flashing vicious teeth, it lunged into a wandering white swan's vulnerable long neck. The neck snapped with a sickening crack and the bird collapsed under the feeding rodent. Blood filled the harbour as dozens more rodent beasts sprang from the depths and leaped onto gaggles of unsuspecting Canada geese. The birds' frantic and helpless shrieks terrified me as I tried to scream in horror but had no voice.

Rising uneasily to my feet upon the shifting sand of this reality, I closed my eyes to the blood-drenched harbour and tried to transport myself to another place, a place free of this rodent menace. Unfortunately, even after several minutes of wishful thinking, my eyes opened to a more horrifying sight: the furry rodent beasts, their teeth red with the blood of swans and Canada geese, were making their way out of the water and up onto the beach by the hundreds. They seemed to multiply at will, like some malignant cancer upon the harbour, upon this city, and the world!

Out on the harbour, looking out towards the steel factories by the Burlington Bridge, I could make out what must have been thousands of the beasts; hordes of this devouring cancer was coming from across Lake Ontario, my dream-vision showed me now, coming up from New York State and filling up the lake completely... And my vision flashed to the cancerous horde devouring and completely consuming all of my hometown. The people in the library, the books even, Mark's Chinese restaurant, This Ain't Hollywood, St. Mary's, Cheapies, Jack's living room, Dundurn Castle — everyone and everything I loved, my home, invaded, devoured, and destroyed in a mere instant by the rabid horde of orange-tinted furry rodent beasts. One devoured me, and I became one with it, in a grotesque symbiosis.

Obsessive Compulsive

MADELINE MCINNIS

Blackness.
Void.
The end of the world each moment.

Nothing has point.
Nothing has purpose.
Wandering aimlessly through the days,
Passing me by without regard.

“It’s already mid-June.”
It’s already mid-June.
Already.
Passing, racing days.
No connection. No regard. No purpose.

Keep pushing on.
Pushing on.
Pushing forward.
Pushing beyond.

Keep going harder.
If it’s harder, it’ll get it done.
If it’s harder, I’ll rise above.
If it’s harder, I’ll find a purpose.

Don’t deserve to rest.
Rest when it’s done.
Rest when it’s perfect.
Rest when I’m dead.

The end of times.
The end of the world.
The end of hope.

Everyday inside my mind.



FARHAD OMARZAD



MATT SMITH

Sunset

JUDY BARAZI

I met you on your journey to immortality. I wanted to join you on every step, and you welcomed me with open arms. We started walking together. Halfway there, I realized the way you wanted immortality wasn't as pure as I thought at first.

We were driving together to the sunset, but I ended up alone at midnight. And it's always in those dark hours when you figure things out — you found me an easy shortcut to live forever, because you knew when a writer inks words about you, you never die.

So you went ahead and inked all your words and actions into every piece of my soul.

We were driving together to the sunset, but I realized there was never a sun to begin with. I was in disbelief for months and tried to chase something nonexistent. I forgot about my pens and papers because I couldn't see clearly. You still lived in my soul but I could feel you dying — your journey to immortality had failed. You were driving to your last sunset on your own.

When I finally wrote about you — I killed you. Turns out, my words have the powers to both kill and revive.

Now I drive to every sunset and look at the different shades — I missed them when I was stuck in my late night thoughts, but I definitely never miss you in the passenger seat.

Clearing

MANREET LACHHAR

CARINA RAMPELT

here's something a little lighter.

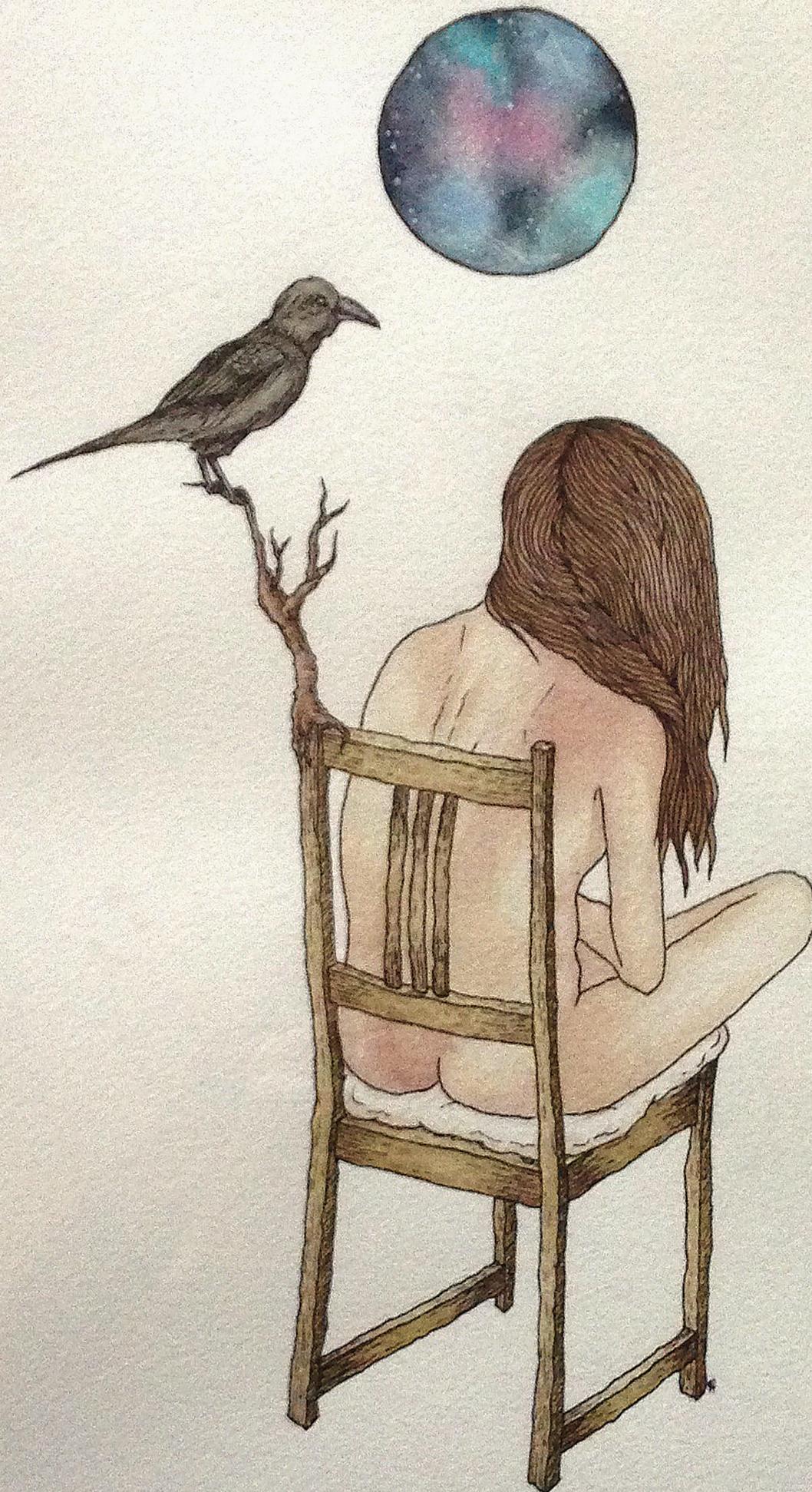
because there I was,
in the dark, dark ocean,
floati n g aimlessly until I was
just about d

r
o
w
n
i
n
g
dying

and suddenly I wasn't.

up,
up,
you pulled me,
sticking out a single hand
and latching on to me.

and
suddenly I remember
how to breathe again,
like all I was
ever waiting for was
you.



For You

JOVANA DJERMANOVIC

You always arrive uninvited,
Reminding me of what it feels like
To be dead inside,
To be dead to the world,
To be dead to everything around me.

When I don't know who to blame for my faults,
I leave the shame to you.
When you don't know where to hide next,
You choose to get lost in me.

You take everything away from me,
Knowing damn well there isn't anything left to take.
Only you hold the power to leave when you want to –
It would be foolish to ever try to stop you.

You rarely ever bring me any comfort,
Yet you never fail to remind me of who I really am,
My depression.

Only you can ever be the death of me,
My depression.

The end of the world doesn't have to mean the end of good oral hygiene! Introducing the ONLY radiation-proof toothpaste, Radioactive Pasteland!

How did we get it to protect your teeth from the flesh-rotting properties of radiation? Why, with MORE RADIATION of course! With enough radiation, anything is possible!

Who knows? Maybe your teeth will even gain superpowers!

Radioactive Pasteland can only be bought on what used to be Main and Fourth! Between the hollow remnants of an abandoned Walmart and what I think is a zombie-riddled Pet Smart. And for a limited time only, Radioactive Pasteland will only cost you ONE GALLON of clean water! That's right, ONE GALLON!

So hurry down for your very own tube of Radioactive Pasteland!

*supplies are limited as the lead scientist was eaten by zombie dogs. Hurry now before the store is overrun too. Side effects may include: headaches, vomiting, more tooth decay, certain cancers, dehydration, and death. Radioactive Pasteland is not responsible for any health problems you may encounter while using our product. If your symptoms progress, please see a doctor. OH WAIT YOU CAN'T THEY'RE ALL DEAD.

MADELINE MCINNIS

Wonderland

Dream/Nightmare
Fear
Imagination
Curiosity
Whimsical
Otherworldly
Unusual

Due: September 28, 2017
submissions@blueprintmagazine.ca

FREE EVENT #SherwoodShindig

SATURDAY JULY 29th NOON — 11PM

The 2nd Annual



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HOME

TERRENCE J MROZ

2- "Hello and welcome to-"

1- "Hello! Can't believe I finally made it. I thought I would never get here."

2- "Rest easy, we're more than happy to have you. Please, right this way."

...

2- "Just in here. Please have a seat."

1- "Great, thank you."

...

2- "So you're interested in joining us?"

1- "Yes, very. I've been contemplating the move for some time now."

2- "Of course. You've done your research then, I presume?"

1- "Admittedly, not as much as I should have. It's been a pretty overwhelming process so far."

2- "Naturally. First let's start with your current financial situation. Pricing won't be an issue?"

1- "No. But I am very interested in who the current inhabitants are. What are they like?"

2- "Understandable. From what I've personally experienced, the inhabitants embody many traits."

1- "Such as?"

2- "Well... they have a surprising capacity for love, devotion, and intelligence. They care for those around them in need, and forgive those who don't deserve it. Collectively, their intelligence is unprecedented and fantastic feats of technological and cultural advancements are achieved daily. In times of prosperity, their loyalty and kindness cannot be shaken. Instead, humour fills their hearts, and song fills their lungs."

1- "That's incredible to hear. This place must rea-"

2- "In times of peril, they will almost certainly turn on each other. Few can be trusted, especially those closest to you. The inhabitants steal, rape, and murder, and sometimes just for fun. Quite often, the weak are preyed upon and the strong are plotted against. Even those most innocent are persecuted without consequence. Alone, the inhabitants are increasingly lost, scared, selfish, and ignorant to all that is around them. Vices, bias, and false prophets consume them completely, and guide their judgements."

1- "... Excuse me?"

2- "Is there a problem?"

1- "Yes. Who... would coincide willingly with such inhabitants?"

2- "Many actually quite enjoy it here."

1- "I simply don't believe that."

2- "I can assure you many do, and I'm sorry if this has shaken your confidence in joining us."

1- "Killers? Liars? And rapists? No one in their right mind would agree to live here. I'm sorry but I cannot in good conscience continue with this process."

2- "I'm really disappointed to have affected your decision in this way. Please, is there anything I can do to change your mind?"

1- "No, nothing. In fact, I think we're done here."

2- "Right. Well... please follow me and I'll see you out."

...

2- "My apologies again, we really hope to see you back."

1- "Goodbye."

...

3- "Hello! I believe I'm the next appointment."

2- "Yes. Welcome to Earth."



Papercuts

CORA VANESSA HAVEN

The end of the world feels like paper cuts.

It feels like a thousand of them —
sharp, concentrated,
stinging in the most vulnerable places.

It stings like onion-cutting tears
and like a broken heart and
like numbness.
My numbness
and my fear.

Because wasn't *this*
what you wanted?
To scare me back
into the warmth of the castle,
lest I live in the ruins I've made?

Why aren't I running back,
just like you would?

Because I'm not like you.
I refuse to feel guilty,
because I am tired of hiding
and I am tired of being afraid
of the skeletons in my closet
(like love and passion and hope).

So, here are my ruins.
Let everyone see.

(Oh, you should know better by now.
Paper cuts heal and
I've got something to prove
and a world to rebuild.)

MADLINE MCINNIS

Critics

REBECCA ALLISON

The stars stopped shining. Tired, they ceased looking down. The specks below blast and blow across the stage. The curtain call met no applause. The rage of mountains and molehills. The actors proud of their performance. Amalgams of stardust and atoms. Said to have made them. In his image. The stars never desired a mirror. Our light dimmed.

keep fading, I'm not watching anymore

SHANNON BRYANT

You fade each day,
And I wonder how much of you I still carry with me.
You fade and your image travels into monochromatics,
Bursting with white and grey and black
The least inspiring rainbow you'll ever see.
You taste like fleeting vapour on my tongue,
Something once so solid rendered to dust, sublimed,
Something vanishing before I got a chance to see it once more,
A final mental image before it disappears.
And you fade
A ghost pain, barely hurting.
I think I left you on the doorstep
I think I carry you no longer
I think too much of if I remember you the same as you were,
And I resign myself to letting you leave.



THE WORLD AND THE DEVIL, SITTING FIVE FEET APART

ALEXANDRIA CLÉMENT

It would be easier just to feel nothing at all, but you can't do that. It's a mistake to go forward and take this as love. You fight in the living room and kick up hell so high it shrouds the sun. The storm will wash away everything; the storm will wash away all the houses and all the buildings and the bar and the stores and the church. When the world ends, the storm will swirl so loud that you will forget that you cannot live on desire alone.

It would be easier just to feel nothing at all, but you can't do that. You stand in the middle, beneath the cruel eye, and when the dust settles, you stare at each other, waiting for lightning: a last resort. You stand in the middle when the cold silence falls, when a cloud passes over those eyes so briefly no one else would notice: what's the point of wrecking everything? What's the use in killing you, cold blood or not?

It would be easier just to feel nothing at all, but you can't do that. If there is a space between descent, and the dissident, you stand in the middle and bite your thumbnail. You stand in the middle and cross your arms. You think about God so much you see His son in the coffee stain on the rug. If there is a space between hearsay and heresy, you stand in the middle and picture them in bed together, running a line down the cold center of it, ruining the new sheets with good old cosmic falsehood.

You stand in the middle: between the storm, and the desert.

You stand in the middle: between the devil, and the deep blue sea.

Your heart is in his hand.

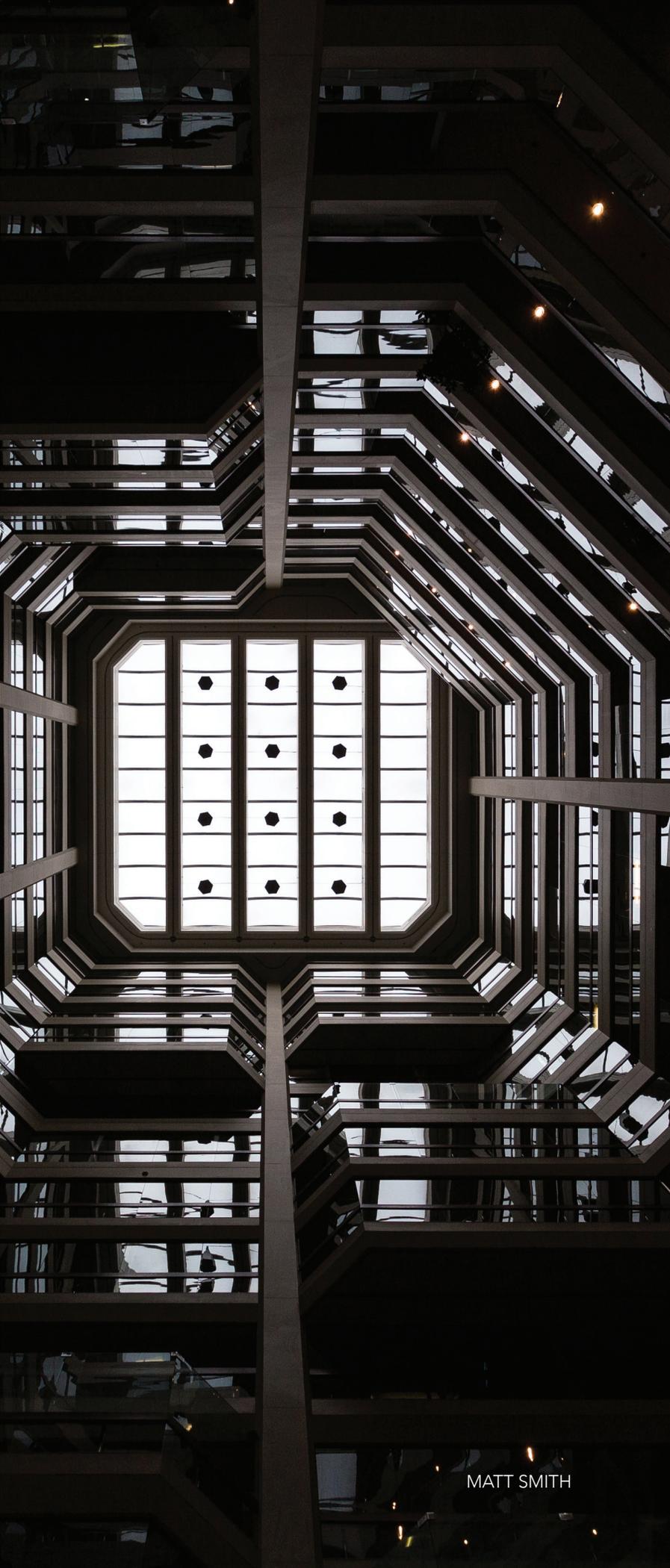
Sitting on the counter when he's brushing his teeth.

Next to the empty bottle of Cimarron Blanco on his bedside table.

You're in the whirlpool when God's head spins.

You're on the ropes, and Jesus — he is still swinging, but you're so hopeful. You're so hopeful.

It would be easier just to feel nothing at all, but you've already felt everything, twice, three times. Wish you could go back and take it back, save some of it for yourself. For someone else. You fight in the living room and kick up hell so high it shrouds the sun. You are not fireproof. You are not immutable. You are not making any sense. When the world ends, and the dust settles, you can crawl back underneath and wait for the sun. And the wait will last so long that you will forget that you cannot live on desire alone.





ADINA TURKONJE

She

BRITTANY TENHAGE

She.
She is the beginning and the end.
She shines like the sun and the moon,
She smiles like the end of the world.
She is so beautiful, she inspires tears of wonder,
She is so powerful, she inspires tears of fear,
She is so intelligent, she inspires tears of joy,
And all I can do is cry.
I am not the beginning or the end,
I do not shine like the sun or the moon,
And I do not smile like the end of the world.
But my love for her inspires tears of wonder, tears of fear, and tears of joy.
I am not special.
She is a goddess, and to love her, I bring doom and the end of time.
I do not need to be special to rain down fire and brimstone just for a glance.
I do not need to be special to cause an apocalypse for an embrace.
I do not need to be special to bring doom for her to love me back.
I have brought doom, and she loves me.
We are the beginning and the end.



MADLINE MCINNIS

i. sad traditions

*(Hello to the discord
welling up inside of me,
compelling me to ask
"Of you, will I ever be free?")*

Fight or flight.

Sink or swim.

Do or die.

Once again, the world is shattering and I only ever have two options. All these clichés that tell me to embrace the fractures, or else get lost in them. But if either path I take gets me to the same place, is it even really a choice?

And I am used to being forgotten. I am used to getting lost, and to losing. I know how to fit myself into small spaces and the tiny alcoves no one uses, because I have always known I was never meant to be big and bright.

Because that means explosions and explosions mean everything in ruins. And if all that will be left are the ruins, what do I do with them?

(fight. swim. do.

everything will be okay.)

(flight. sink. die.

you damn coward.)

Shall we dance? I guess I better figure it out quick.



MADELINE MCINNIS



REY COGSWELL

ii. undone phases

*(Hello to the thunderstorm
raging in my heart,
causing me to wonder
if, with it, I'll ever part?)*

It is my terror that causes me to freeze. My fury is the only thing that warms me up enough to do anything.

Move left.

(Who are you to tell me what to do?)

Step forward.

(How dare you keep doing this to me?)

Take a right at the fork in the road.

(After everything, why am I still not good enough for you?)

That's right, feet. Lead me to the devastation of all things, where I am meant to lie. And I've set myself a ridiculous number to reach before I stop writing, but is forty-five words really enough to express how broken you've made me? To express how my brightness turned bitter and how you always strike at my fears in just the right way?

(Oh, dear, wouldn't it be nice to rest your head and not fear what awaits you when you wake?)

And maybe an outline would be nice. For it to all be laid out to me, all the reasons why I am a sad, sad disappointment of a girl. I would have an answer, and you would have a way to explain away all your wicked, wicked behaviour. Maybe you can tell me why, when all the angels sing their heavenly choruses, I am struck still.

But even still, I have to wonder.

If the world is going up in flames, then why is it so cold?

iii. the wailing lady

*(Hello to the darkness
drenching me to the bone,
causing me to think
I may always be this alone.)*

Oh, hello, all the old monsters in my closet. It's been so long since you've visited.

(It really hasn't. You're all still here with me. You just look different now. You look older and softer. More like people. In fact, you look like people I love.)

It's funny how, as I go along, my own patience with myself dwindles. Even I am tired of living as a screaming mess, simultaneously begging for attention and wallowing within myself until I burst. I wonder what the rest of the world thinks, hearing me time and time again complain about my same sorrows.

Are you tired of the darkness too? Am I now the girl who cries wolf? I would stop if I could, I swear it. I'm sick of my demons and ghosts haunting me too.

(I wrote a letter on the back of the math sheet you made me do and I won't send it. After everything, I still love you too much to hurt you this way, and believe me when I say I can do a lot of damage.)

Merlin wandered with madness and madmen. I have been wandering with loss and a lost soul, and I have to wonder –

Well. Never mind that. If you want a monster, maybe you'll get one.



iv. ending/beginning

MATT SMITH

*(Hello to the discord,
tumultuous to the nth degree,
because I'll always know
of you, I'll never be free.)*

Chaos may not be my friend, but it is a consistent companion.

And now I'm right back to where I started. Lost and afraid, fumbling through an intricate choreography I don't know. The music swells for the grand finale and I am stuck still in place. Struck frozen with fear and unpreparedness. You ripped apart the moves I had planned and now I'm unsure of how to orient myself. I just know I need to do it fast.

Where do I step now?

We've Heard It All Before.

AMANDA SCHEIFELE

[Our heroine] (#girlpower) tells us about the normal-ish life she leads [in first person]. It probably isn't totally normal today however, because today is a big event or happening or celebration that is going to change said norm. She probably feels strongly about it — either for or against — whatever her feelings, she is far from neutral.

A wall, abandoned, stands
still as can be.
There are cracks, peek holes,
through which grows ivy.

[Our heroine] is a little different than most. She's a little more rebellious or determined or powerful or passionate and no one else is as [see above] than her. Oh, and there's a boy whom she is head over heels in love with or who is head over heels in love with her (but she is too dense being [see above] to notice). Of course, she hasn't acted on any of these feelings yet.

Bright, hardy, heedless of design,
curling and queuing,
the small white veined leaves
refuse to stop gripping.

[Aforementioned event] takes place, throwing [our heroine]'s life out of whack. She is now a major player on the post apocalyptic world's stage and people, usually very very extra people, begin to take notice of her. Note: she would never ever have wished to be noticed (#somedest) and she just wants everything to go back to normal.

A garden in the dust.
A favourite metaphor.
But so aesthetically pleasing-
Just one Polaroid more!

Some big hullabaloo comes up where [our heroine] must dress up, and we learn, if we haven't already, that she hates dresses and make up and anything 'prettifying'. Of course, she's drop dead gorgeous regardless.

Snow or frost, hail or ice,
ivy will prevail.
It cares not for nature's jewelry,
it's purpose remains plain.

[Insert some form of love triangle with original boy and new boy — one is ruddy and macho, the other is soft and gentle but both are probably ripped].

Choices are scarce
in the end.
It must grow where its planted.
#growwhereyoureplanted *send

[Our heroine] becomes closely watched and becomes more of a danger to the corrupt leader(s) feudalistic society.

Ivy is one of the
strongest vines.
It will not give up,
it only climbs.

A break down occurs and [our heroine] is comforted back to her previous strength by one of the boys. [Insert intense action sequence and one — or both — of the boys to add emotional conflict].

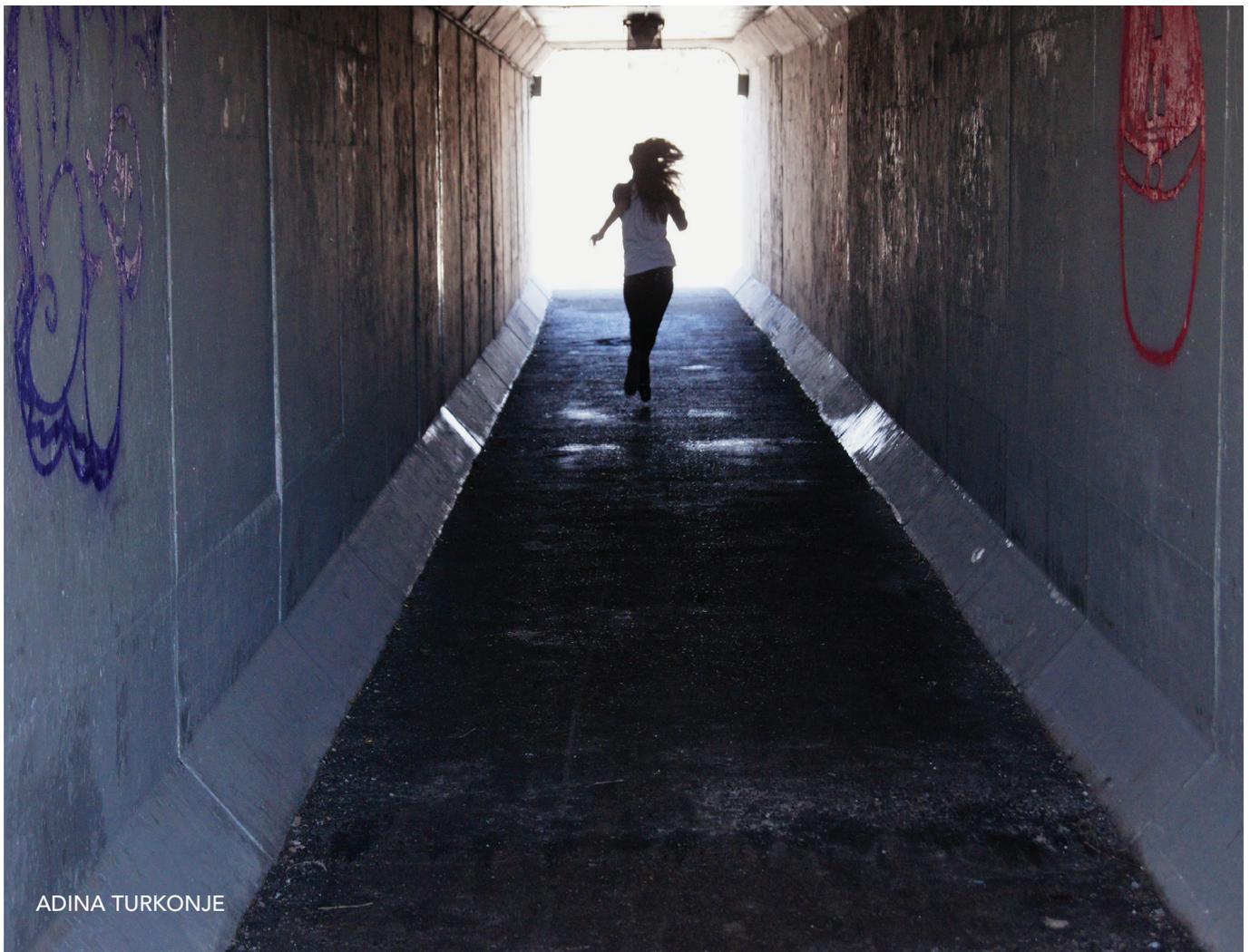
Do plants have goals?
Do they ever stumble?
Does the wall know
it's going to crumble?

Without meaning to, because remember, [our heroine] never ever asked for this — she becomes a symbol (#cantforgetthesymbolism) for whatever she is now working against (usually-always the government) #breakcapitalism!

Perhaps without meaning to,
perhaps not,
what the ivy has clutched,
cracks form where it's caught.

There's a big confrontation, probably a death of a young person to spur on the hatred, [our heroine] takes down the leader(s). Don't worry, the boys are fine — they wouldn't die so early on, they're needed for the further development of [our heroine] because wait! It's a trilogy.

Why the appeal?
Why come back for more?
Because, I believe, we like things
that we've heard before.



ADINA TURKONJE



MATT SMITH

Forward

JANE EDMISTON

There is a point. When the end is not feared. Its nearness savoured. The apocalypse, a sun emerging over the horizon. The clocks toll whispers to stop fighting. A soothing lullaby wishing you to calm. Peace in the quiet. It claims to be the hope you seek. Yet somewhere the whisper emerges. Lies. The voice does not yell. It barely outmaneuvers the clock's toll to your ear. It is quiet but sure. The heartbeat echoes in your chest. Grab your weapon. Today is not the end.

A Long Time

CAMILLE DEGHAN



ADINA TURKONJE



MADÉLINE MCININIS

It seems like a long time that I sit on my bedroom floor. My head melodically bangs against my door as I try to drown out the nothingness. I guess I thought there would be more. I thought aliens would come and wreak havoc on Earth. I thought the sun would explode. I thought a foreign disease would sweep through the nation. Instead, there is nothing. You wouldn't even know anything was wrong, if you didn't know something was wrong. Just the slightest tilt of the fragile balance known as existence. Here today, gone tomorrow. Forever. It seems like a long time.

The Hollow World

STEPHANIE SILVA

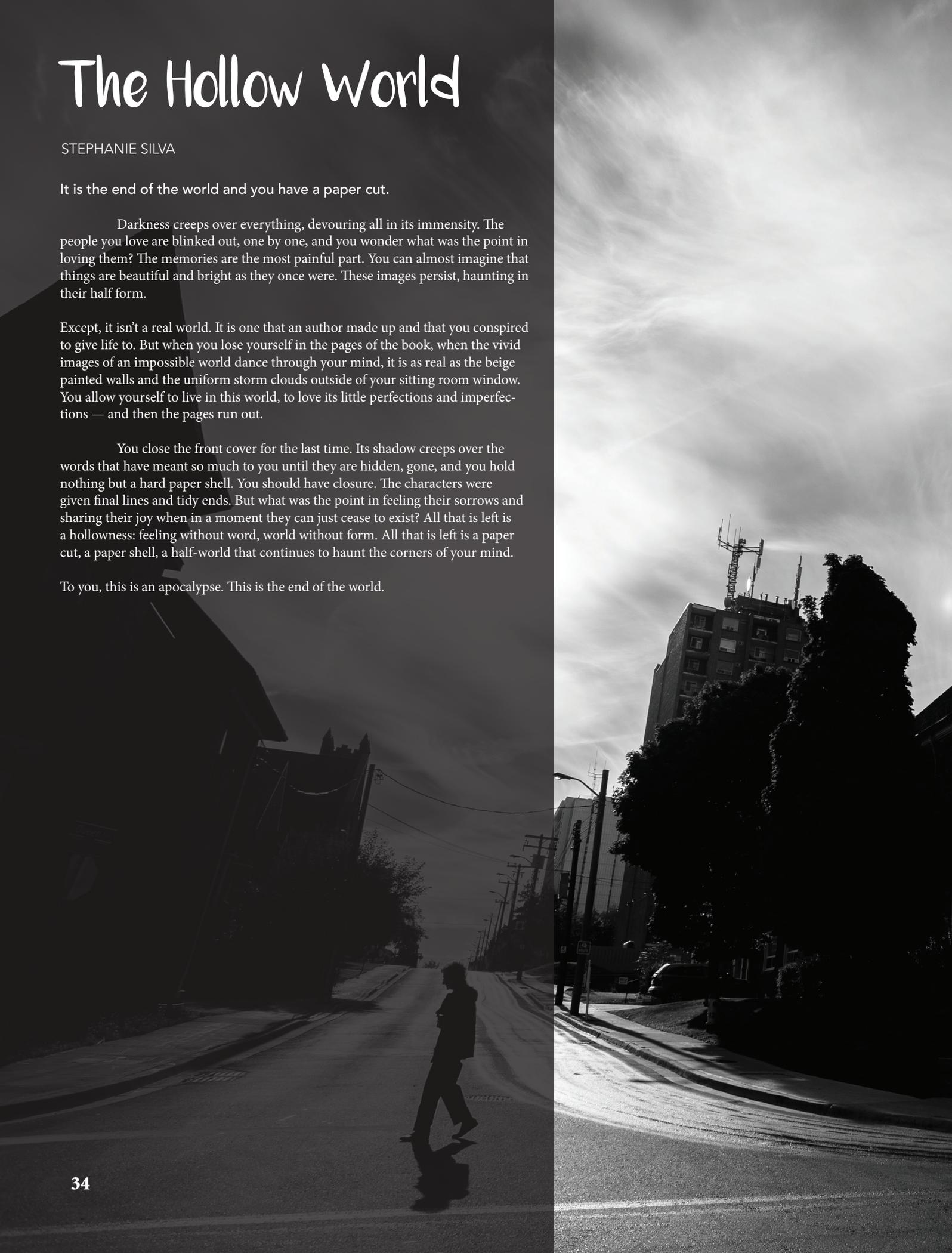
It is the end of the world and you have a paper cut.

Darkness creeps over everything, devouring all in its immensity. The people you love are blinked out, one by one, and you wonder what was the point in loving them? The memories are the most painful part. You can almost imagine that things are beautiful and bright as they once were. These images persist, haunting in their half form.

Except, it isn't a real world. It is one that an author made up and that you conspired to give life to. But when you lose yourself in the pages of the book, when the vivid images of an impossible world dance through your mind, it is as real as the beige painted walls and the uniform storm clouds outside of your sitting room window. You allow yourself to live in this world, to love its little perfections and imperfections — and then the pages run out.

You close the front cover for the last time. Its shadow creeps over the words that have meant so much to you until they are hidden, gone, and you hold nothing but a hard paper shell. You should have closure. The characters were given final lines and tidy ends. But what was the point in feeling their sorrows and sharing their joy when in a moment they can just cease to exist? All that is left is a hollowness: feeling without word, world without form. All that is left is a paper cut, a paper shell, a half-world that continues to haunt the corners of your mind.

To you, this is an apocalypse. This is the end of the world.





They're dead. They're all dead.

Caerleon tried to blink away the blood that dripped down from his forehead. It was one of many wounds, and he was mostly numb to the pain at this point; he was in shock both physically and emotionally.

When the soldiers had first appeared, Caerleon had watched in awe and horror from his vantage point atop the barricades as more and more of them marched towards the castle.

He'd tried to protect the King; he'd tried to protect them all. He'd shot countless arrows into the frothing sea of violence, but it wasn't enough.

With an empty quiver splattered in blood — some his own and some from the archers who'd died beside him — Caerleon climbed down to the battlefield knowing that they had already lost.

He was hit in the head, knocked unconscious, only moments after his feet reached that blood-soaked soil. But, just before the world went black, he'd found Carrick.

The King was slashing and jabbing with a single sword. Its twin must have been dropped already, and judging by the way Carrick's arm swung limply by his side, Caerleon knew that he was injured.

When Caerleon woke, his head aching along with the rest of his body, the battle was over.

The field was quiet. Although his ears heard no sound except for the beating of his heart, the rest of his senses were overwhelmed.

As far as his eyes could see was death and destruction. Bodies piled upon bodies, bloody and broken. The whole world seemed darker, shrouded in a sheet of death.

The smell was almost unbearable. He retched, emptying his stomach, burning his throat with a pain that was negligible compared to everything else.

Slowly, he rose to his feet, though he only travelled a few short paces before collapsing again.

Gwydion.

He'd almost tripped over his body. He almost hadn't recognized it. The body in front of him wasn't the same one he'd touched and held just days ago. No more could he see the beautiful man he'd fallen in love with. All he could see was a horrific mess. This body was not his lover. This pile of torn flesh and broken bone was not Gwydion Marrock.

Pulling himself away from his lover's remains, Caerleon continued to stumble across the battlefield. He saw familiar faces everywhere he looked.

There were others too, fallen foes who lay side by side with the men

he'd once known. In death, they were all the same; their fight was over now.

When at last he found what he'd been looking for, he almost blacked out from the pain it caused him. The world fell away and he fell with it, into the abyss.

He crawled to the King's body and pulled it onto his lap. His trembling hands ran over Carrick's face, remembering how full of life it had once been. They'd known each other for more than two decades, grown up under the same roof, shared more memories than he could count, and formed a bond unlike any other. There was no one who'd mattered more to him, no one whom he'd loved like he'd loved Carrick.

Something inside Caerleon finally gave way and he was overcome by the unspeakable agony and heartache that flooded his body and soul. Tears flowed down his cheeks; he couldn't hold them back any longer.

He should have been dead — perhaps he already was. Yet, somehow, Caerleon managed to climb to his feet, leave Carrick and the others behind, and make his way back to the castle.

Once he crossed the threshold, his feet carried him through the halls, knowing exactly where to take him. This was his home. This was where he belonged.

The castle had been ransacked, but Caerleon hardly noticed this. His mind had already left this reality and was drifting to a happier place. Each room he passed, each corner he turned brought back a memory.

That was where he'd first met the King and Queen of Capria, where he'd hid after accidentally starting a fire in the stables, where he'd caught Carrick crying after the death of his parents, and where he and Gwydion had stolen a kiss when the guards weren't looking.

Every step he took was a step through time, through the moments that had made up his life, made it worth living.

When he finally reached his room, his vision was beginning to blur. He hadn't realized how much blood he'd lost, but the trail he'd left through the castle spoke volumes.

He climbed into his bed and lay his head on his pillow. His eyes grew heavy and his breathing slowed.

Opening his eyes for the last time, he was met by a beautiful sight. His mother was crouched beside him.

"Rest now," she said, smiling and stroking his cheek. "You're not alone."

Carrick and Gwydion appeared behind her and Caerleon's heart swelled as he took his final breath.

He wasn't in pain anymore and never would be again.



ERICA PARNIS

Time Capsules CONNOR HOTZWIK

To those who come next,

You, you who finds this, whatever you are, let me assure you that we knew our end was coming and that we met it gladly. For in our last days things are calm. We find ourselves more and more alone and yet more together.

The boundaries that held us apart no longer stand, though whether that's simply the weakness of age or the weight of what we final few represent, I cannot say.

All I know is that there must be something more. To have it all fall to nothing undermines all the effort we put in, all the damage we fixed, the problems now long resolved, even if it was too late.

So here we are. And here we are left.

What you see before you is all we were, our mark, our hopes, and our dreams now petered out. But you carry them on, you give them new life. Care for and appreciate them, as we failed to do. Take our art, our writing, our knowledge, and our plans. Take them forward beyond our petty squabbles.

And oh did we squabble, we fought and killed over such simple nothings. We found solitude in ourselves, and our own, without any attempts to reconcile. I assume any others, if others still live, did the same, but no one talks much about that time anymore.

I hope there are others like us, other bastions holding out, hoping for a future. Perhaps they will be granted some measure of luck and overcome what we will not. But hope is all that is: they too have the same expiration date, and it is absolute.

We do not dwell on the past, and we see no future for us to look forward to.

You — you chance at meaning. We will never know that you saved us from being forgotten. We cannot guarantee that our remains will bring you some good, but hope is what we need. And regardless of whether you exist, you give us that.

Good luck,

From those left behind.

phoenix

ERICA PARNIS

After the world has burnt itself to the ground
the embers will settle,
and the smoke will leave our lungs;
there will be
light,
and birds that sing hopeful melodies
from branches of trees untouched by age.
New life will grow from graves and ruins,
between cracks in ancient stone
and cracks in time;
centuries shattered by war and hate
will end
but the world will not.



MADELINE MCINNIS

AMANDA SCHEIFELE





FARHAD OMARZAD

