

Spring 2023

Issue 2

# Spoken



The Oakham School Literary Magazine

## **Foreword**

Welcome to the second issue of *SpOken*, Oakham School's student-led literary magazine. Edited by the four of us (names below) and editor-in-chief Dr Reddy, we have here selected for your perusal a number of pieces which we believe represent the best of Oakham School this term.

In this issue, as always, you'll find myriad works with a wide variety of themes, topics, lengths, and styles. However, to reflect what students have been engaging with in learning this term, we have placed a focus on works related to or inspired by both the always-popular Third Form Battlefields Trip and the dystopian literature studied by Lower School students.

We would like to thank Print Services for their brilliant work in transforming *SpOken* into a fabulously designed magazine, as well as the English Department, especially Mrs Jones, for the generous contribution to prizes for outstanding writing. Thanks goes to the History Department for sharing superb photographs from the Battlefields Trip. Last but certainly not least, we must also express our utmost gratitude to the writers, artists and photographers who have submitted work, without whom there would be no magazine. Remember: if you submitted something that hasn't been included in this issue, fret not; it might very well be in the next.

Finally, if you wish to submit your own work to the magazine, you are always welcome to contact one of us or Dr Reddy via email. Send us your best!

**Dr Reddy - Editor-in-Chief**

**Lucas - Deputy Editor**

**Annalise - Editorial Designer**

**Theo - Associate Editor**

**Zeme - Associate Editor**

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# Lower School



Artwork by Ffion Reading, Form 5

## Entomon Nullity

Harry Fairweather

Fluttering in its jar, the last firefly on Earth flickered softly. Ant stuffed the glass case into a baggy, leather overcoat, rapidly pacing back and forth across his cluttered bedroom floor. Trampled into 2D, by months of neglect, newspapers were scattered. In his moment of perilous predicament, the headlines swarmed him like the clouds of insects that supposedly used to erupt from wrinkled hives. Headlines many, many years out of date.

*"Scientists in laboratories are rejoicing at the first chimera-donated organ transplant!"* read one message in subtle grey print, varying in boldness where the age of the letters varied. Ant stamped on the article furiously. *Rejoicing indeed. Rejoicing despite the havoc they'd eventually concoct.*

WHAM! WHAM! It wasn't his heart hammering; it was the door. Whipping his head around, the apartment door buckled and bellowed, as someone bombarded its wooden boards. His pathetic attempts at a barricade lay broken into matchwood on the haggard strings of a carpet. WHAM! Hearing heavy breathing, a breath pattern he recognised, it dawned on him that the person breaking in was no foe. Without further inspection, he wrenched the door off its hinges, such was the combined force.

In the door frame stood a greasy-haired girl around 14 maybe. Her eyes were plant green, sharp and suspicious. She wore a torn grey tracksuit and a charcoal black coat. Pressing a finger to her chapped lips she pointed to the fire exit. Ant surreptitiously shuffled towards the window and surveyed the wasteland before him.

Crouching on the cracked earth devoid of grass was a corpse. A corpse with tall stone fingers punctured with dusty windows and disused streetlights. Its long decrepit arms harboured an endless line of waste: bins vomiting dead leaves, skips shouting out glaciers of plastics, egg boxes, all the ordinary items that were never disposed of, never devoured by beetles and lice for there were none. No cars remain; no one remains. These settlements were called the Outlooks, abandoned cities strewn across the country - across the world. Ant was told when he was young that the citizens fled decades ago. Why? Ant never knew for sure, but he did have theories. Everyone left knew some facts about what had occurred.

But now was not the time to dwell on this.

When the girl tapped him on his shoulder, he was wrenched out of his thoughts. Her name might've been Wasp; they weren't friends and that was almost the only thing he knew about her. She redirected his gaze down to the streets below him. His heart stopped. His breathing stopped. Time froze. Down on the derelict road, glowed a white van with a golden wand entwined with twin serpents emblazoned on its glossy countenance. Figures in pristine white uniforms marched out carrying a plastic case. There was only one company they could belong to.

Wasp's stuffy, rapid breathing sent chills down his neck.

“Cades” she whispered. Cades. They'd found out. They'd found him. They'd found it. “Have you got it?” Wasp murmured.

Ant clenched the reassuring jar concealed in his overcoat, as adrenaline began bubbling in the dark chasms of his stomach. The faint glow of a firefly breached the flimsy fabric. Shaking, he nodded his head. Heart screaming and charging, brain spinning, hands quivering vigorously, he thrust his hand into the handle of the door for balance. He inhaled a rasping, shaking breath and a lump swelled in his throat.

The time was nigh. They had come.

It was Caduceus.



## *Hacker Detected*

Mollie Wheeler

I was blind. I couldn't see. Flashes of white and red crept into my vision. I could smell the alcoholic sanitizer as strong as the lies they told. The constant beep of my life support machine stabbed at my senses. Footsteps paced behind me as the cold overtook. And that's when I heard the life support stop...

2 weeks before

The world was getting stranger: people going missing, more car crashes and then the threats. As I slipped into the front seat and set the destination for the funeral centre, I thought about the lost, the disappeared, the vanished. But nothing or nobody can ever fully disappear.

A siren went off. Red lights flashed wild. I felt the car jerk, swerve. Thrown off balance, my senses were jumbled. I heard a crunch. Glass shattered. Screams echoed. Blood trickled into my eyes as I stared, glassy eyed, through the red haze. 'SECURITY BREACH'. 'HACKER DETECTED' was the last thing I heard as the blood trickled down my face...

Then

Mountains of blindingly bright silver and copper gleamed under the white-hot sun. I could see them. The enemy. They are within us. Their shining silver hearts, lined with red and blue dreadlocks of wires. Inhuman yet so similar. Made to learn, but what if they learn too much? I wondered what it felt like to die. Would it just be darkness? Nothingness. Perhaps I would finally know what it was like to sleep...





## *The Beast*

Aryan Sharma

We had lived in harmony. People and biologically created living side by side doing everything together. Well, that's what the world used to be like. Now, countless wars and attacks happen every day: the world in ruins.

He breathed heavily, his knees shaking, as if he were a baby zebra staring face to face at a deadly alpha lion. All around him, he could see derelict buildings and houses with extraordinarily little signs of life; he desperately craved to see the lush green foliage with people living alongside creatures, but all of that was just a dream now. It was gone.

Justin cautiously opened the ancient, creaky door. It crashed like a cymbal. Rubble and debris came tumbling down from the open-top roof. An unused drawer sat patiently in the middle of the room, isolated. Justin put on his augmented reality glasses as he scanned the area for any signs of life. A fire-red hand crept out from behind the wall as a small, calm voice started chanting, "Gathering!" First quiet, then gradually getting louder. "Gathering!" Justin glanced across the room, desperately trying to locate the source. "Gathering!" This time it was yelled as loud as a yodeller.

Dashing out of the derelict building, thoughts flooded into his head about the strange chantings. As he sprinted down the abandoned streets, he could see a glowing blue dragon running rampage on the city. This was normal for the world now. Bolting to his collapsed home, Justin didn't dare to look behind him, thinking that the petrifying creature was chasing him down. The image of that hand gave Justin a bad chill, worse than he had ever felt before. The illuminating red creature emerged from the shadows like a magician entering the stage and hunting him. His heart pounded like a jackhammer. He was terrified as he sprinted as fast as he could while he heard the beast's pounding footsteps behind him, quaking the earth. His house slowly appeared into his vision with the golden sun glimmering beams of light, reflecting light at Justin's face.

The blood-thirsty creature pounced at Justin with its razor-sharp claws shredding his clothes until it crashed into the wooden doorframe. Barely, Justin escaped into the house with the creature banging at the door. Panting, he let out a sigh of relief as he slowly climbed up the stairs to lock himself in his room for safety. Staring at a picture of him and his dad, he thought how he had lived together with him his whole life until a few months ago, when he was brutally killed by one of the rampaging beasts. Now, Justin lived on his own, fighting for scraps of food and keeping himself safe.

Salty tears poured down his face like Niagara Falls. He remembered what it felt like. How good it was to have someone with him.

With fiery, burning passion, Justin raced down the stairs to avenge his fallen father. He charged outside to stand face to face with this deadly, ferocious beast. This was it.





## Ground Zero

Elija Radomilović

They were onto me. I heard their mangled, terrifying groans. Gentle rustling followed me as the food packs in my old backpack bumped into each other. Aching pains shot up my legs as I sprinted through the derelict deserted streets. My heart pounded, almost hurting my chest.

Suddenly I stumbled, falling onto the old, cracked road. I shot up as quickly as I could though, as the horde was closing in on me. Only a little bit further, then I would reach the bunker. Deserted houses trailed behind me as I sprinted through the old downtown neighbourhood. The owners had most likely been taken or eaten alive.

Then, one of the beasts jumped on top of me, its rotting face staring me down. I tried to heave it off as its blood-tainted drool dripped down onto my dirty face. I struggled but I got it off. It rolled on the pavement, unconscious but not dead. Swiftly, I pulled out my crossbow, and without mercy, shot the measly creature.

I checked to see if the anaemic monster was still breathing. Finally, it was dead. And, apparently with luck on my side, I could see the bunker. As I sprinted towards the rusty, thick steel hatch, a sense of relief washed over my body. Finally, I reached the hatch, spun the stiff wheel and heaved it open. Before I went down, I had to check to see if any of the mangled devils that plague me were around. But as usual, there weren't. Slowly and gently, I pulled down the hatch and went inside.

I crawled down the ladder into the main room, where my little family dog, Henry, greeted me with a loving lick on the hand. My stomach was rumbling, and I could see Henry was hungry too. So, I started a fire that would cook our meal tonight, baked beans. After about seven minutes cooking they were hot enough to eat, so I gave Henry a small bowl of the steaming delights and poured the rest into my own bowl.

I laid on the old sofa in my makeshift home, eating my beans. I fell asleep thinking of how the world became a living horror story. My dream moulded into the night it happened.

It was about half ten at night, three years ago, when it happened. I was fast asleep, but a loud explosive noise made me startle and wake up suddenly. I ambled over to my windowsill, which was still cold with the winter air. I pulled the curtain to and saw a mushroom-shaped explosion cloud. Later on, I heard that a top-secret government science lab had a chamber leak. The chemicals they had been experimenting with had gotten to the scientists, and somehow after that, a global virus had occurred.

Most people were taken or eaten, only leaving a few struggling survivors like me. I still don't understand how a small town in Yorkshire had begun a global catastrophe. I also don't get why I survived. Me. A sixteen-year-old boy in the middle of nowhere. I call this place ground zero. It just makes sense to me. I guess I just have to get through all these questions and live my life, at the end of the world.

## *Where Death Becomes the Only Option*

Darcy Cook

They're Coming.

What will tomorrow bring?

I ran for a while trying to escape from reality. Breathless, I lay in the grass staring at the sky depicting the clouds, looking at the world from a different perspective. Flowers danced in the wind, a petal took flight and landed on my nose. Whirling wind swept it away and it soared through the air to find another destination. The sudden silence was disturbed.

The sky was becoming grey; the blue disappeared never to be seen again. The world paused for a moment; the ground shook, trembling with fear. The dirt beneath my feet began to give way and I ran for my life.

Where death parts us.

I ran. My heart pounding, my legs screaming, the world begging me to stop but I didn't, not for one second. I just kept going. I turned my head. Robots were emerging from the lamp posts, trees, anywhere my head turned. The lights flickered. It was dark, so dark the only things I could see were flashing lights of robots that were unable to be hurt by man. The ear-piercing beeps of the robots rang around my head. It didn't stop. It wouldn't stop.

By this point I was on my knees, buildings falling but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get up. I just couldn't. A car, once in front of me, was now above me - somehow hovering. The last thing I saw was the menacing, penetrating look on a robot's face.

Words, thoughts spinning round my head. A robot came from nowhere. It was getting closer, nearing towards me. What should I do? Run, hide, try to escape but at this point my only option was clear.

Today is the day where death parts us.

The day it all began.

There I was, watching MY invention come to life. I couldn't believe it at first, but it was finally my time. As the lights flashed and flickered, people gathered around my monster. The screen glistened as the testers slowly climbed up the ladder and into the pod. The battery purred like a hungry cat, as it slowly sauntered up. The roof revealed the glowing, radiant crescent moon. The pod floated elegantly towards the midnight sky. It then slowly drifted up, up and away. It disappeared into the setting sun. The earth's outer atmosphere was getting closer by the second, the mist fogging the glass shield. There was a sudden wave of force as the pod entered space.

The earth shrank behind them, and the stars illuminated the dark night sky. They reported that they could see the “Milky Way” and the “Outer orbits”. Then the pod detected something in the distance pelting towards them. The ground crew started to worry and zoom in on what it could possibly be. Was it a shooting star? Or, was it worse?

Our hands started to shake. A flaming meteor was coming straight for planet Earth. Thoughts started whirling round our heads. ‘Was this the end?’ It flashed past the camera. People started screaming and howling from inside the pod. It started growing slower and slower. Radars beeped crazily around the lab, it felt like a nightmare.

The head of Lab called the news and warned them. Sirens started all over the country. Radios and TV were flicked on. People were told there would be a “HUGE meteor” to scare them so they would stay safe. We ran into the bunker underground and locked the door, tight. Fear rose in our stomachs, and I could feel the worry from my crew.

I slowly zoned out, hoping that it would never happen, hoping that their life wouldn’t end before their eyes. I was counting down. The horror was there, swimming up my stomach, crawling up my spine. I felt the ground give way beneath my feet.

And that’s when it happened.



Iceland, freezing cold and damp. AI-controlled robots terrorized the world to complete their first and final mission: 'Take over the world.' Ela and her younger brother Ivor are the only scavengers left in Iceland. Their only option left to stay away from the tiny but mighty robots that controlled the streets, assuming control. The once loved and cared for stood in the town, longingly waiting to be destroyed.

The dense trees mirrored sunlight back into the gloomy sky. The derelict town was deafened by the humming of small engines. The smell of burnt rubber floated around the town as if it was a car factory up in flames. Ela looked around the town from the trampled and deformed hut they made in the woods, using her father's binoculars. Through them, Ela glared at robots misplaced around every corner. The small boxes waiting lifeless, until something awakened them. The only way to take out the menacing monsters on wheels: to sneak up behind them, shoot their metallic skeleton and wait until they shut down like when a power cut strikes and a blackout awakens inside. The buzzing started again. Getting nearer and louder every second. Then there it was...

The miniscule, grey rover climbed up the embankment of the hill they stood on. Ela alerted Ivor quickly and intensely. Ivor snapped into action as if he was a gun being fired. He picked up the bow and arrow he had made earlier that day using sticks and rubber from the intimidating AI-controlled robot rovers. Ivor poised the bow at the rover and slowly pulled back on the rubber line. He fired the arrow howled through the air like a wolf in the night. CLUNK! The sharpened arrow pierced through its metallic skull. It lay there lifeless. Nothing left. The arrow blowing around in the wind through the shell of the rover snapped abruptly sending a deafening crack over the town. The engine humming began again.

They were coming.

**THAT DAY!**  
Finley Watchorn

I still remember that day, Monday 22nd June 2222. It was a dark night. The starless blanket of sky loomed over us. The sinister smog swallowed everything it engulfed, except one part of Panama. I jumped into my jet (which could travel at light-speed) and observed the mistless area. My eyes widened. My jaw hit the floor. I looked left and right flabbergasted. Ominously, there stood South America's military face to face with North America's elite robot forces.

I scanned the battlefield: it was barren except for a ramshackle shed southeast of South America's troops. I felt the tension radiating off them.

Without hesitation, bang! Half of South America's army sprinted away as the razor titanium bullet ricocheted off the head of the lead robot. I watched the robots draw out their particle blades, made of plasma and charged at light speed, slashing down all organisms in sight.

I heard the lead robot say, 'Operation M.O.B is a go.' Bushuum! My body trembled as I saw a petrifying Asia-sized robot decloak. It had shiny metal armour, glowing crimson eyes and a gigantic horrifying shoulder canon.

Surely this was Armageddon!

It began to charge up its shoulder canon, aiming towards the dome which kept South America safe from the traitorous water which was now higher than the London Eye. Suddenly a blood-red laser was fired and cut a huge hole in the dome.

The water flooded in.







## *Listen*

Finley Watchorn

Humans are damaging the masses,  
By burning fossil fuel gases,  
Using coal and oil has such an impact,  
If we carry on, we'll be in trouble - fact.

Our lovely world is getting really hot,  
The weather in our country is changing a lot.  
Draughts, rising sea levels and melting ice,  
All of these issues causing such damage to life.

The Greenhouse Effect is really here,  
The emissions in our atmosphere are clear,  
Use solar power and wind to be wise,  
Or we'll have further disruption and demise.

## *Saving our Earth*

Timothy Matta

Our Earth is slowly dying,  
It needs us to save it,  
Protecting our environment,  
Is where we need to start.

Houses and factories are taking over,  
Our majestic lands and flourishing plants,  
Are slowly disappearing.

Everyday, trash is dumped into the sea,  
We are polluting our planet,  
That has been given unto thee!

Hurry! Let's not delay,  
And come together,  
To create a better Earth,  
For both you and for me.

*A Winter's Day*

Fraser Cameron

Winter time is the coldest of all  
Huddled by the fireplace, cuddled and warm  
Sipping hot cocoa to the early birds' calls  
Wrapped for the cold, snuggled like a ball.

Listen to the crackle of the fire,  
The cat's comforting purr grows louder and louder.  
Let your tired body sit and retire  
On a cold winter's day down in the park; remember it: a flurry of calm.

Although winter's coat may seem cloudy and grey,  
Just remember to stop, admire and say:  
"Nothing beats a calm winter's day."



# Middle School



Photograph by Mrs Fear, taken on the Battlefields Trip 2023

### *Vimy Ridge*

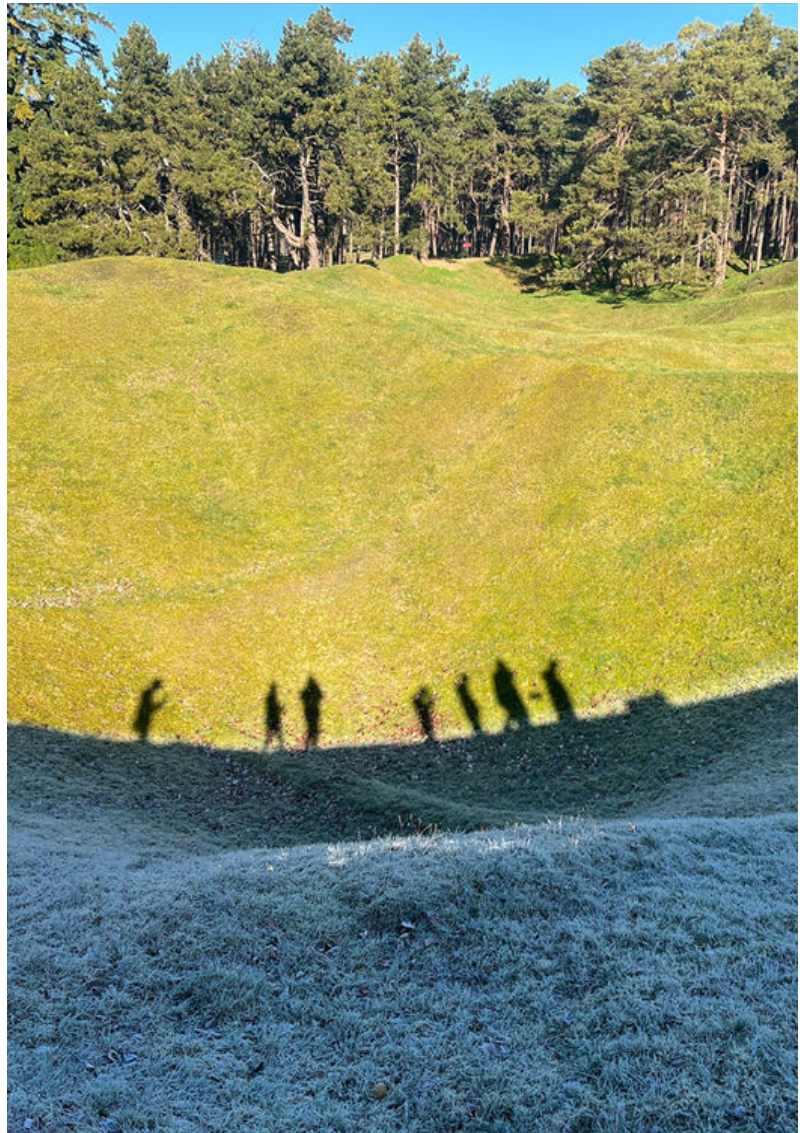
Jess Day

The rich sun was laid against the blue sky. The bark-encrusted trees which stood like uniform soldiers waiting for a signal. Mist hung in a pale grey wash, catching the beams to create streaks of faint yellow light.

The trees surrounded a wide-open area shrouded in lush, vibrant grass, picked out with lighter shades of limes and yellows. Bursting out from underneath came tumbling hills, ridges, and miniature ravines, the sort where children would roll down on their stomachs and sit atop the highest peak to eat their sandwiches.

But amongst the maze of winding tranches, huge, deep bowls sat carved into the land. Birds still, and leaves rustle. All gunfire, blood and pain leave no trace here now.

**Photograph taken on the  
Battlefields Trip 2023,  
by Ivan Krutkov, Form 3**





### *Newfoundland Park*

Marni Lennard

I saw the blazing beams of the bright sun, gazing down onto the emerald hills. Bumps in the land, we were told were muddy and hostile to gas, were filled with fresh daisies and freshly cut grass. Beautiful. The pine trees created a shadowed wood; again the sun gazed upon and through them. These trenches - merely dips in the land now, were eye-catching and natural. Surely this land was created by the wind and water. They lay there almost smiling. Beautiful.

I saw all this beauty. But no pain. I saw the hours of effort put into this field to make it effortless. But no mud. I saw natural land. But no death.

The longer I looked, the harder it became for my brain to contemplate and imagine the horrors that this adult was telling me. How? I pondered on how this beauty was made for horror.

### *The German Cemetery*

Finley Young

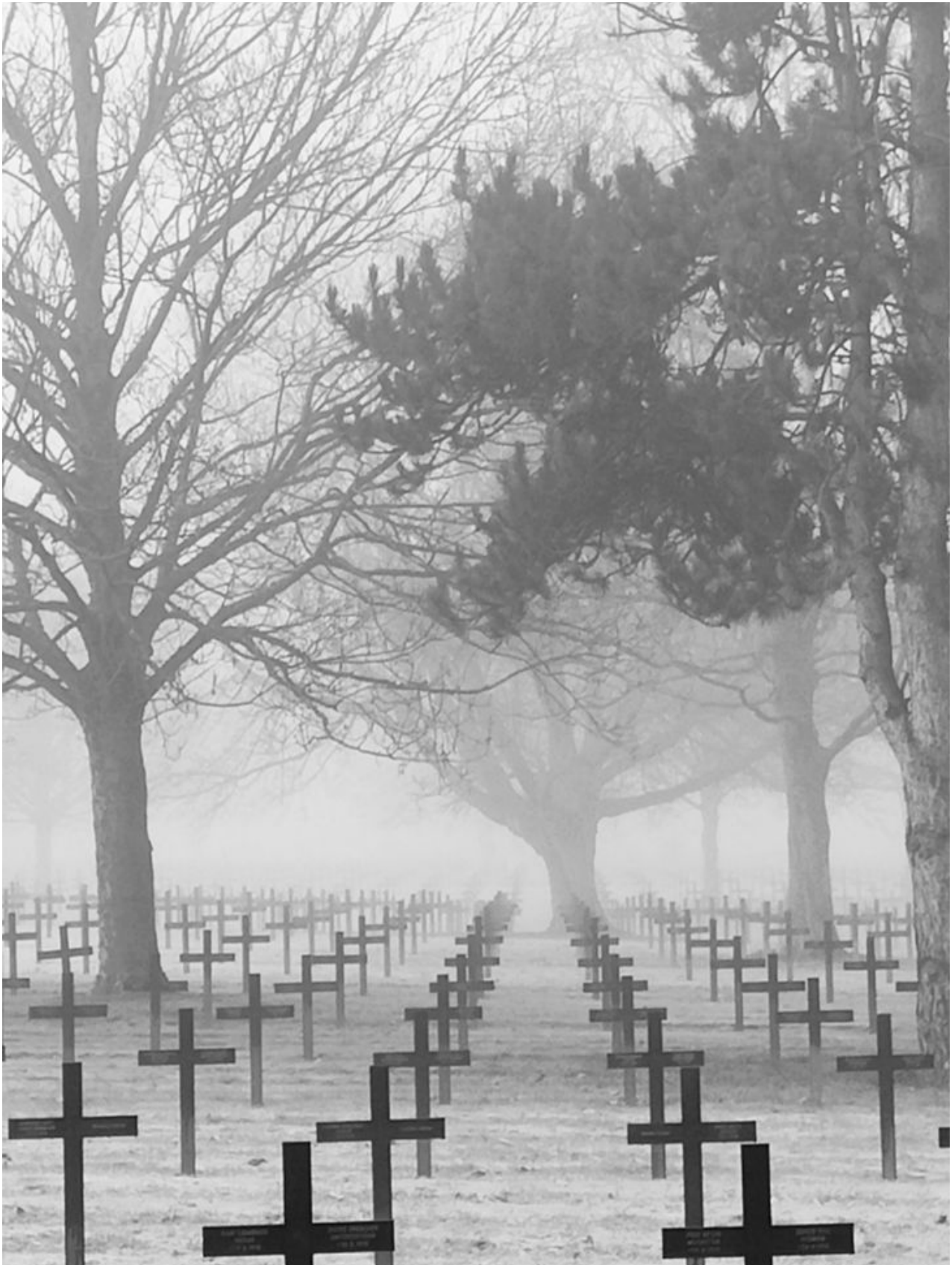
Crosses in the gloomy fog. You could see the giant cross in the centre in beams of sunlight. The trees were slowly drifting side to side. The birds were an orchestra playing peacefully. Why was the cemetery hidden away, out of sight? The trees were like huge books, full of the knowledge of what had happened. The grass was crispy-cold. The German cemetery.

### *Battlefield Memory*

Rebecca Cao

The cemetery is really beautiful. It is a quiet and memorable space. Silently, I walk in. The dark trees are tall figures guarding it. Who sleeps under this ground forever? The tombstone is like a person standing in front of the grave and praying. The mysterious mist diffuses the cemetery. Germans sleep here.





Photograph taken on the Battlefields Trip 2023, by Rebecca Cao, Form 3

### *The German Graveyard*

Immy Williamson

An endless stretch of final destinations. Vibrant signs of life were dulled down by a deathly white frost and murky fog which laid still throughout the graveyard. The one hope of light made an attempt to push its way through this wall of grief; however, it failed to do so. Slender spiky fingers stretched out away from the trunk, as if they were trying to reach everlasting rows of sunken crosses. It was an overwhelming experience of gut-wrenching realization. One could ponder whether the weather always appeared like this: a reflection of the grief and past. No flowers would rise, dainty and littered with luscious colours. No blue sky would smile down kindly at the sweetly singing birds, perched on the branches of high-reaching trees, as they cared for their young in the nest surrounded by pale green leaves.



Photograph taken on the  
Battlefields Trip 2023,  
by Elena Limonova, Form 3



### *Lest We Forget*

Archie Ingram

The cemetery held many soldiers. It held the lonely souls of fallen warriors. The neat blades of grass swayed soulfully. Pillars stood to attention like a saluting soldier. I thought of the people resting here and asked 'why?' The large gate was like a door between life and death, from earth to heaven. Each gravestone represents sacrifice and service. Lest we forget.

### *Battlefield Memory*

Ella Chan

The trenches were deep. The sky was clear and the sun shone all over the field. Slowly, we wandered. We stopped and lay down on grass as soft as a pillow. Does the beautiful, clear sky come to an end? I looked up at the tree in front of me: it was tall like a giant. The giant generously offered me its strong arm to rest on. I felt safe.

### *Death Seeks all those that Dare*

Alexander Lewis

Tragedy surrounds them all. The shock of the shells penetrates the air. A thick fog holds the smell in a deathly grasp. Men, hurriedly man their guns. The smoke from the artillery creates a flag that seems to beg for mercy. Will the men see their families again? Death surrounds them like a full bath. Gunshots roar, raking through the ears of those who hear them. Death fears nobody.

### *German Cemetery*

Bronwyn Reading

Silence. The ongoing silence continued. Quietly the school children got out of the bus shook by the eery atmosphere, the fog was a blanket covering the graves. Did all these people really die here? In the distance, school children looked like soldiers going to see their loved ones. Everyone seemed astonished and amazed by this place. We will remember them.

## *German Cemetery*

Coco Evans

The cemetery was sadly never-ending.  
Plentiful blocks of graves filled the ground around us.  
Silently, the men lay.  
I remember how the graves were as grey as the ground they had once fallen on.  
I remember looking at the names; could this have been our names too?  
To me the graveyard was like an old painting, full of memories squished into a small place.  
It seemed to me that every grave had a sorrowful story.  
My powerful trip.

## *The Somme Statue*

Mimi Pain

The Somme statue was beautifully still.  
Gigantic pillars looming with the death of many.  
Beautifully, the graves protruded from the ground into the horizon.  
I remember how the walls were as white as clouds printed with the indents of the fallen.  
I looked at the names, how could I feel so saddened?  
I stood in the middle, names on every wall, like mirrors reflecting the vast space.  
I was sad at the soft feel of the sacrificed lives.  
My lasting memory.

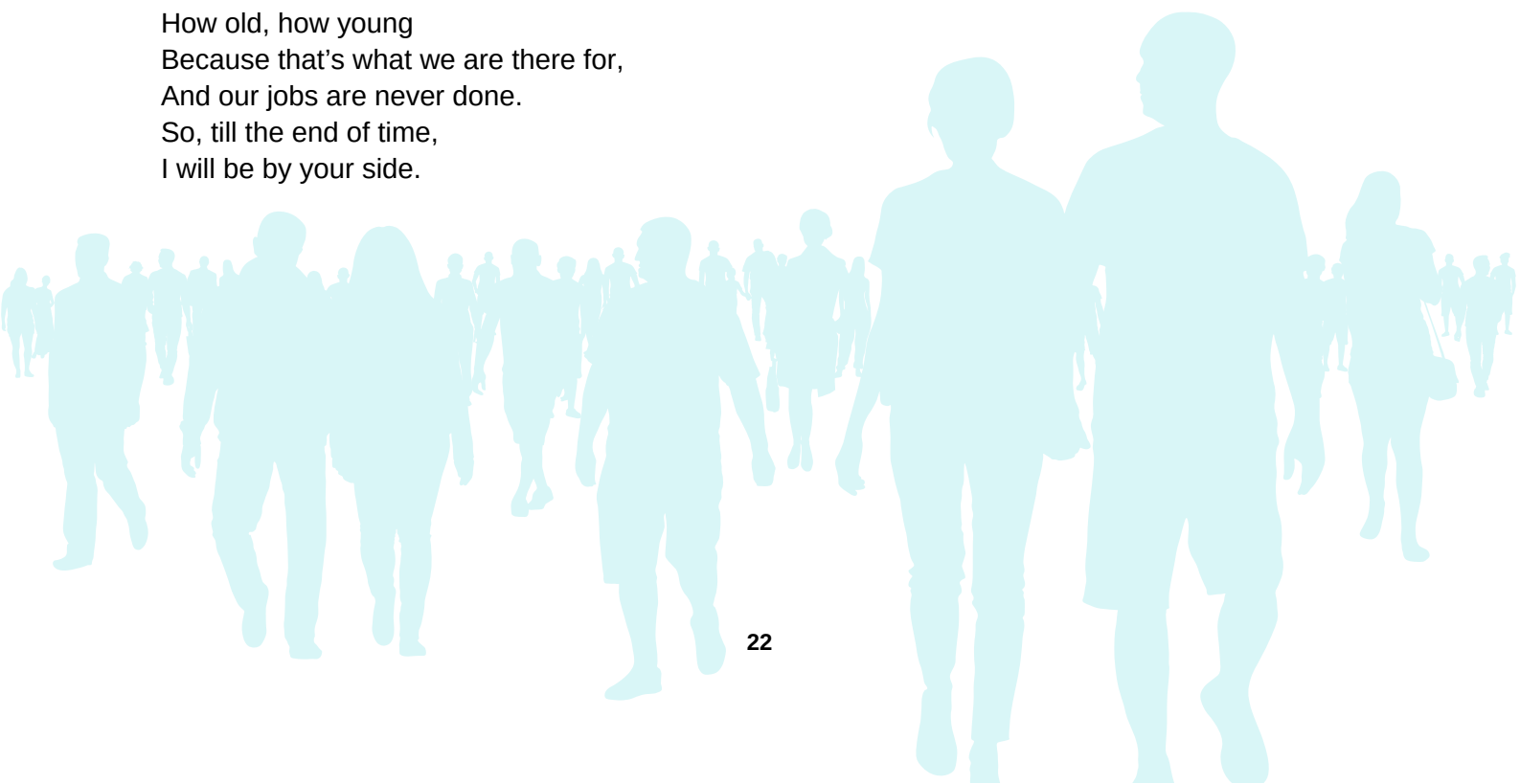


*The People*  
Charlotte Byron

Whenever I feel like light,  
You are always there,  
Playing in the past,  
We didn't have a care,  
We would chase  
Build  
Hide  
As if we were one  
Alike  
And for that I'm grateful  
I'll remember it for life.

Whenever I feel like fire,  
You are always there,  
To sit  
To talk  
To help  
With whatever fear,  
You help me with so much,  
And always happen to appear,  
At just the right time,  
To allow me to sing and cheer.

Now whilst I feel the earth,  
I know you will be there,  
To stand by my side  
As I fight my biggest fears,  
No matter  
How far, how close  
How old, how young  
Because that's what we are there for,  
And our jobs are never done.  
So, till the end of time,  
I will be by your side.





Bore Da! Was the greeting,  
A kind, gentle phrase  
The type where you'd smile  
And wave as you say

Bore Da! To the by-passers  
As you'd run off to play  
The simplest yet sweetest  
Start to your day.

Still, nights came and went  
The sun rose and set  
The times changing for worse.  
Bore Da! Was gone  
Unspoken, unheard,  
Lost to those cruel English words.

The knot was tied,  
bound and unbroken  
A new set of rules,  
A language was stolen.

Gone were the days of  
Bore Da! And Croeso  
Forgotten with the cadence of time.

Cymraeg was falling,  
The future unchartered  
Have mercy on this home of mine.

All hope was gone,  
Shattered and lost,  
How could our land ever go on?  
A nation deserted to shadow and shame,  
A hollowed husk of what once was.

Bore Da was abandoned,  
Hung, drawn and quartered,  
Skinned by the claws of time  
With hope wearing thin,  
Revolution would begin,  
A new word was shortly proposed.

The same tongue, unspoken,  
All new rules were broken

As Hiraeth stepped out from the shade.  
A longing, a beckoning,  
Time's benign calling,  
A wish to find your way home  
Hiraeth was the saviour,  
A hero, messiah,  
Cymru's new spark of hope.

The knot was untied,  
Destroyed and broken,  
Freeing Cymraeg of its prison.

Our nation was freed,  
Gone were the chains  
And Bore Da was sung once again.

### *Dusk*

Elodie Hiles

Softly in the dusk a woman is singing to me  
Reminding me of things I had forgotten  
Relighting a forgotten melody and tune

Apart from the melody of the tune  
I focused on the gentle hum of the insect's sound  
Unable to distinguish what each is  
The light reflecting all around

The tune gently fades away  
Leaving me to think in a certain way  
As the dusk slowly fades into a dark night



## *Family is...*

Elsa Milne

Family is...  
The warm embrace and soothing counsels  
Of a mother,  
Ironing out the creases cumulated that day,  
The spinning limbs and cheery chorus  
Of a father,  
A jovial partner for a distant melody,  
The warm bakes and proud words  
Of grandparents,  
Smiling benignly out of dusty photographs,  
The breathless chases and endless giggles  
Of a sister,  
A comfort and a constant confidant,  
The relentless teasing and loyal support  
Of cousins,  
Who know you better than you'd like to admit,  
The gentle compassion and limitless favours  
Of aunts and uncles,  
A patient safety net and source of advice,  
The summers and winters we spend as  
A carefree commotion,  
Talking perpetually and laughing so loud,  
Leaning in for the snap of a camera,  
Everyone together,  
A vast array of beautiful memories.



## *A Poem of Advice*

Fin Sandham

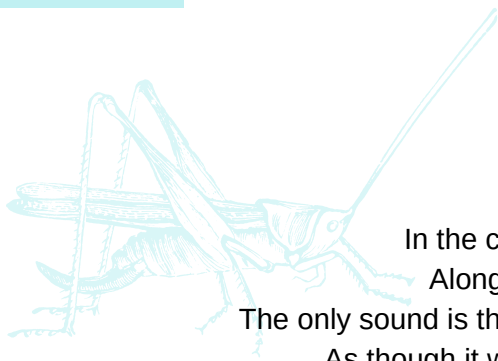
When life gets too much  
And It  
Feels all  
Up in the air. With  
Too many trains flying through  
The station, it's hard  
To find the correct  
One to take.

When there's hundreds  
Of targets, but  
Only one shot  
To fire. You can get stuck  
At each intersection not knowing  
The way.

If there's an audience  
Of trusted  
Family  
Friends  
Or foes  
Waiting on each  
Movement you make  
And you freeze,

Breathe!

Deep breaths in and long breaths out,  
Take a minute to think about,  
All the goals you've scored so far,  
And how you're going to clear that bar.



## **Sounds**

Jimmy Lu

In the calm night he is finally alone  
Along with his day of thoughts.  
The only sound is the calm wind and a few crickets chirping,  
As though it was a concert from nature and he

Is an audience listening to the calm sounds.  
Mozart, Pablo Casals, Bob Marley. All sound is a piece.

The concert finishes. The sounds fade whilst the man left,  
Along with the calm night and his answers for the night.

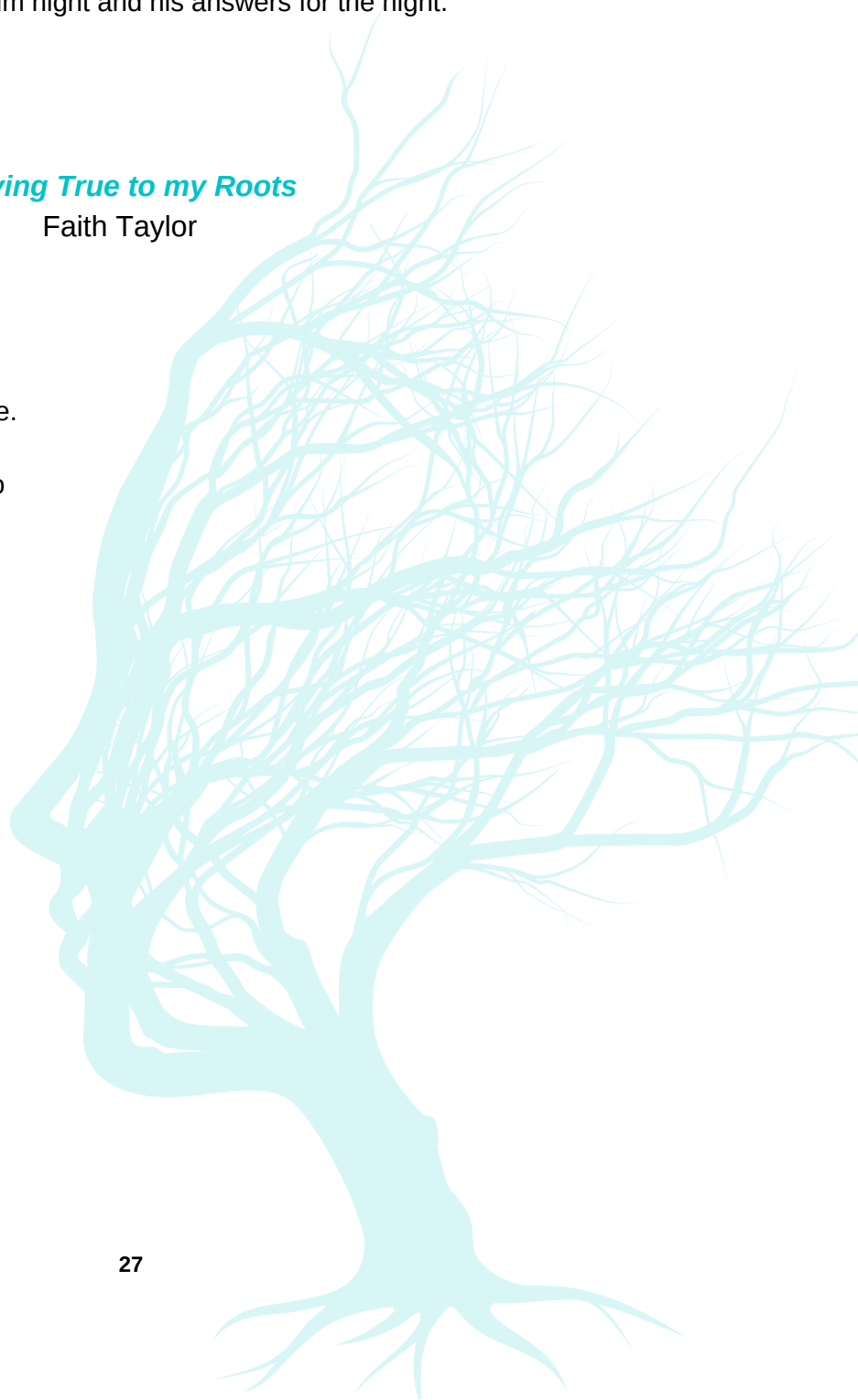
## **Staying True to my Roots**

Faith Taylor

I often feel without a clue  
of how I ought to stay so true.  
What's black and white while I am blue.  
An elixir, a mixture, one strange brew.  
Of which one plus one is definitely two  
and paper, pen are surprisingly new.  
Oh what am I supposed to do?

I feel neither like the earth the sun  
nor the wind within the sails.  
Instead, when all my mettle's done  
I accept my path, my trail.

To be something new,  
something sometimes blue,  
something utterly true.





## *An Interview Somewhere*

Max Stamenkovic

An old woman was crumpled up on a dusty armchair in the corner. On an equally dusty old sofa opposite her sat a young man. He looked out of place here: too clean, too new.

'You must know something, surely?' he probed. In response the old woman released a hoarse laugh. There was no humour in it. 'There's nothing here for you. I have nothing to say. All you people, you come in here with recorders,' she took a second to nod slowly at the little recorder sitting on the coffee table in front of her, 'and you ask the same bleeding question. What happened? Who did it? Well, I'm not telling you \*\*\*\*.' She spat out the last word, as if it contained a filth she wished to be rid of. The man opposite her took her in for a moment. Her head lulled slightly, and her face was sullen, although that could've been the natural sag her skin carried. A small bottle of pills stood next to her, the discarded cap lay by her foot. The man wondered how old she really was; he guessed at least late eighties, although no one really knew.

'Then why did you open the door?'

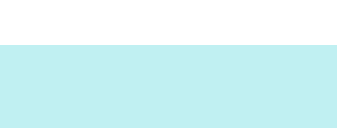
'I like the company.'

'I don't understand why you choose to hide.' This evoked another laugh from the old hag, only this time followed by a slightly alarming coughing fit. Once composed, she wiped the spittle from her chin and gave him a smile fit for an asylum. 'Hide? Hide? No. No I don't think so, not me. They persuaded me, gave me all of this.' Her hand moved slowly to motion around her, and the man's gaze followed. The home was certainly grand with ornate paintings captured by ornate frames, grand staircases leading to spacious rooms, and ridiculously large chandeliers hanging precariously from cracking ceilings. This was only another piece in the puzzle surrounding the old lady, why such a grand estate for one woman? Only to be left to rot and splinter as the invisible tools of time hammered away. 'Who will it go to?' he asked after a moment. 'The Earth.' A glint sparked in her eye. 'I hope the ivy tumbles through the windows and the birds come and lay their eggs in the sink. No one will want this place. No, not the haunted manor, owned by the old bat with a foul mouth. I know what the people say,' she winked at him. 'The birds tell me.' For a moment he couldn't tell if she was joking but the madness in her expression made him think not.

'Who are they, the ones who gave you this manor?' he asked.

'Them? I don't know anymore. As I said, I have nothing to give you.' Her eyes were downcast now, she looked defeated rather than defiant. He had one last card to play. One last chance to reveal the truth. 'What about Vincenzo? What would he think of this manor, of your silence?' Her eyes shot up wildly to meet his. They were wet with tears. Her voice was barely a whisper now and he had to lean forward to capture her next words.

'Who told you of him? What do you know of my Vincenzo?' Her chin quivered and her breath wavered. Just then a low whistle came from behind him and he looked around to see the wind



blowing through a hole in one of the windows. Then it began to rain. Not a polite pitter patter but a heavy, unforgiving rain, ferociously trying to scrub the earth clean like a surgeon, or a killer, trying to scrape the blood from their shaking hands.

He turned around to see her tears replaced by fury, although when she spoke her brittle voice was level. 'Leave,' she croaked. Her breath was ragged now.

He leaned over and switched the recorder off, he met her eyes and whispered just as quietly as she had, 'I can take you to him.'

Silence.

After moments of utter quiet, she barely even breathed, she said: 'No. He's dead.'

The young man sat back and a plume of dust erupted from the cushion behind him.

'No. He's not.'

# Upper School



**Artwork by Oliver Zhou, Form 6**

*Going. A Parody of Larkin*

Jemima Ashton-Roberts

There is an English lesson coming in  
Across the town of Oakham, never seen before,  
That light all lamps.

Silken it seems at a distance, yet  
When it is drawn up over the kilts and ties  
It brings much comfort.

Where has this lesson come from, that connects  
Earth to Sky. What is under my hands,  
That creates this feeling?

What lightens my hands? – English Lessons!

## *The Sky's the Limit*

Oliver Medcraft

My arms wrapped around my mother one last time. I could sense the air being pressed out of her lungs. We had driven too far to turn around now. Two old, weathered straps whipped around my body and were fastened by a simple click as well as a smaller one which slid in between my legs to make sure I wouldn't fall out. We were over fifty kilometres from the nearest village. Surrounded by sand and mountains in the distance, there was no chance of reaching help from here. We had travelled across the scorching heat all the way from Cape Town out into the middle of nowhere. A small, dried out bush beside me had lost its colour and had started to shrivel. It looked similar to the trees around us. A few had managed to cling on for the remaining heat of the summer but looked as if they were on their last drop of water. A man shouted my name, indicating that it was time to go. I climbed fearfully onto the back of the pick-up truck, squeezing myself between two strangers I had never met before.


I wasn't quite sure why I was doing this. My whole life I felt like a disappointment not only to my parents, but to my teachers and friends and family. I had always been the odd one out for not taking part in things that I wasn't comfortable doing. My parents always talked about extreme sports and how it was the bravest thing anyone could do. This was finally my shot to prove to everyone that I was a more than just a frightened, pathetically lonely boy.

We were six in total. The man next to me jeered in excitement and called out to the driver to take us away. I had one last glance at my parents before we set off down the runway. We sat, squeezed together on the thin rims of the back of the truck. My back began to ache from sitting this way, but the adrenaline was rushing through my blood which helped to drown the pain away. A few of the instructors were laughing and joking around. They seemed to be as relaxed as someone off on a beach holiday, but the rest, myself included, were anxious and sat silent. We pulled up on the side of the runway; we were at the end of it. In front of us, glistening from the sun, was a pale white Cessna. Its engine was already up and running, roaring in the wind.

One by one, we jumped off the truck and marched forward into the back of the plane. I seemed to find myself as one of the last to get inside since I was glued to the spot. I looked inside the cabin: the seats were torn out of the plane and a cheap wooden board was drilled across the floor. No seats. No seatbelts. No nothing. Thankfully, the man behind accidentally barged into me. It gave me the energy to get on board. I was strapped to the front of one of the instructors. He saw how pale I was and tried to cheer me up. Relaxed and calm were two words which I could use to describe him. His friendly smile was made up of toothpaste white teeth and a grin which stretched across his whole face. When he spoke, his voice sounded smooth but damaged, potentially from smoking to calm the nerves. I had to lie down right next to the door. The driver gave one last laugh and slammed the sliding door shut. I jumped in shock.

The engine became louder and louder. Its roar rattled the plane and it felt like my ear drums were bursting. Ever so lightly I felt a small kick, followed by a force pushing everyone backwards. The plane began to roll down the tarmac runway. I glimpsed over the metal door and through the window. The ground began to race away as we gained more and more speed. With one last look outside, I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. Everything seemed calmer. I opened my eyes again and looked down through the window. We were in the air.





My instructor shouted in my ear, "It will take us ten minutes until we're at the top!" At the top? "How high are we going?" I screamed back under the thundering mixture of wind hitting the plane and the engine roaring on.

"Thirteen thousand feet is when we jump out."

Thirteen thousand feet?! My stomach churned. I let out a soft cry, and I faced back forwards. The thought of falling from thirteen thousand feet and relying fully on a large layer of fabric to stop you from smacking the ground at over 200 kilometres an hour made me sick down to the stomach. My palms were covered in sweat and I could feel my heartbeat increasing dramatically again. I closed my eyes in despair and prayed that this would all be over as soon as possible.

The time was flying by. I glanced over at my instructor's arm and read that 9 minutes had passed. It was almost time. My body was shivering, not only from fear but also from the ice-cold wind rushing through the small gap in the door. Just as I tried to look around the cabin, I heard the captain. "We're approaching thirteen thousand feet."

One of the instructors climbed over us and opened the door. A blast of wind smashed into me, making me lie down completely. I finally had the chance to look all the way down. We were so high up I couldn't even tell where the runway was. Crazy, my instructor pushed us both forward till my feet hung out of the plane. My fear had finally got the better of me. I was absolutely petrified. As my feet poked out of the plane, they slammed against the side by the vigorously vicious wind. Everything was happening so quickly. I had no time to pull myself back in. My heart felt like it was going to burst out of my chest as a result of it beating so fast. I thought I was going to pass out. My mouth was as dry as the wind, yet my hands were filled with water. My instructor counted down. With each word he said, I felt like fighting him to stay inside of the plane. Three. He pushed us further towards the edge. Two. I tried to breath in, but my lungs felt cemented. One!



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