

Spring 2024

Issue 5

Spoken

The Oakham School Literary Magazine

Foreword

Welcome to the fifth issue of SpOken, Oakham School's very own student-led literary magazine. The purpose of SpOken is simple and straightforward: to publicise and celebrate the best works of creative writing produced by Oakhamians in one 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.

In this issue, you'll find myriad works with a wide variety of themes, topics, lengths, and formats – micro stories written in under 30 minutes in celebration of January's National Storytelling Week, memories of the F3 Battlefields Trip, playful homages to Tennessee Williams, Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney, and Dystopian openings. We hope that these works will transport you to new worlds. They come from a diverse range of students of almost every year.

A special thank you goes to the Marketing Department who lent us their wise guidance and advice in regard to the design of the magazine, to Mrs Pound and Mr Deane for their photographs, to Mrs Brass for her continued support, and to every contributor who submitted a piece to the magazine - without you, there would be nothing for us to collate. 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!

Lilly Seeberger - Deputy Editor

Victoria Wang - Editorial Designer

James Yates - Associate Editor

Maximilian Stamenković - Associate Editor

Dr Reddy – Editor in Chief

Front page artwork by Andrada Blejnar, Form 6

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Lower School



Artwork by Benjamin Hewson, Lower 1



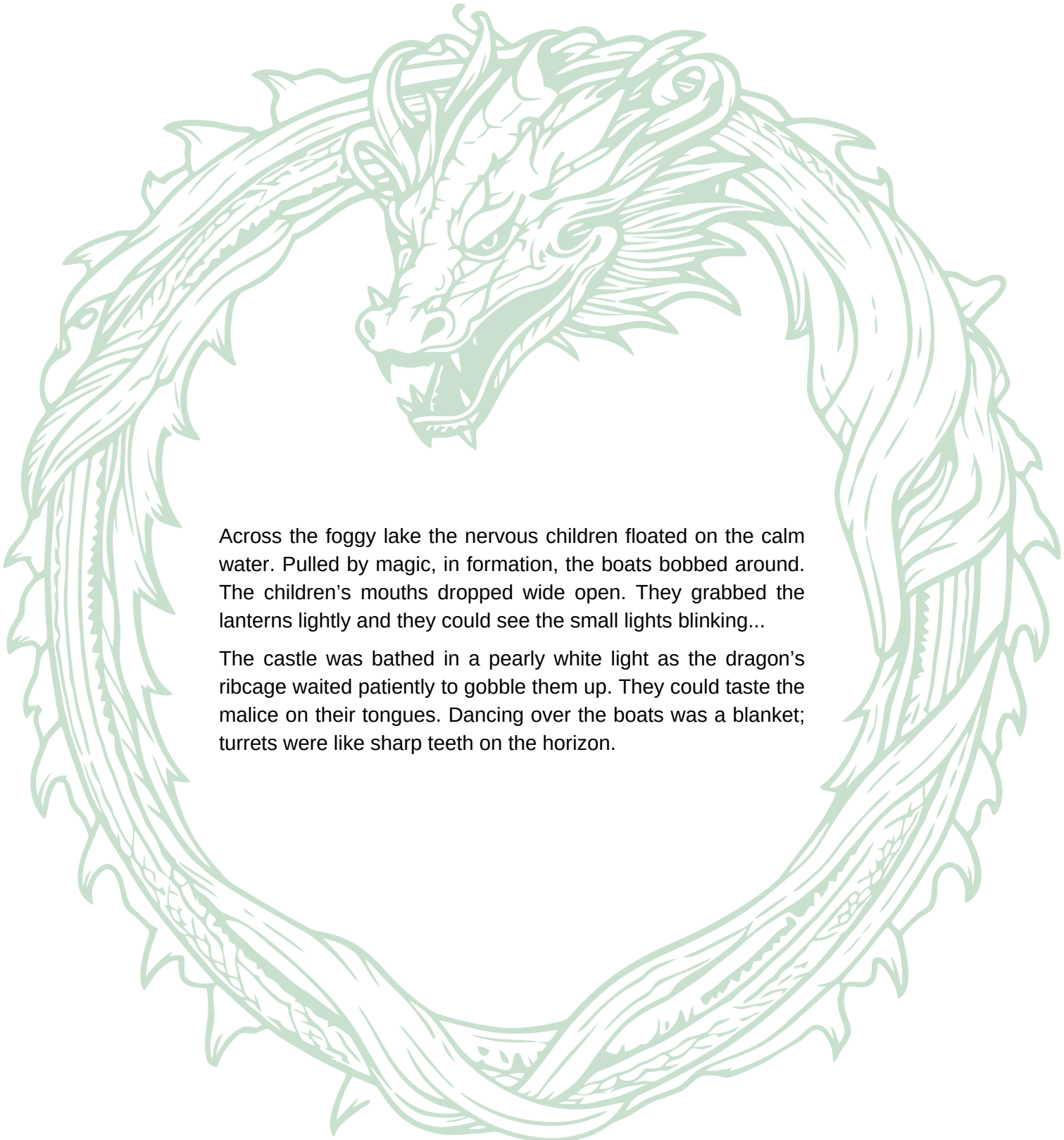
Artwork by Emma Chotrani, Lower 1



Artwork by Beatrix Bagnall, Lower 1

Hogwarts Scene-setting

Ava Stephens



Across the foggy lake the nervous children floated on the calm water. Pulled by magic, in formation, the boats bobbed around. The children's mouths dropped wide open. They grabbed the lanterns lightly and they could see the small lights blinking...

The castle was bathed in a pearly white light as the dragon's ribcage waited patiently to gobble them up. They could taste the malice on their tongues. Dancing over the boats was a blanket; turrets were like sharp teeth on the horizon.

What was in the Lab?

Annie Williams

Wandsworth, London, 24th November 2067

It had started as a normal day. Georgia - 12 years old with brown hair flowing down her shoulders and freckles splattered over her face – was eating breakfast: Coco Pops, of course, they were her favourite - when suddenly a strange whirring could be heard above her house. She clutched her cereal thinking it was a stalker plane, but then relaxed, realising it was the postman coming with their newspaper. Her mother told her that when she was young, a person would come and deliver their post on foot. And there were no stalker planes checking everything was in order. 'How strange that is,' Georgia would think.

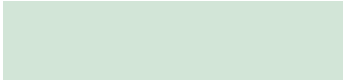
Soon after this she went to fetch the post when something serious and chilling caught her eye. The headline on 'News Today' was 'Scientists begin extracting human cells for monkey hybrids'. She frowned. Georgia thought the experiment was due to begin in a few months, though she knew some people had already put themselves forward for it. As she passed it to her mother, she saw something flicker across her eyes. It was only brief, but Georgia knew what it was. It was fear.

As her mother placed the paper down, she opened her mouth as if to say something, but then closed it. This carried on for a few minutes as though she were in a time loop. After a while, she clasped at Georgia's hand looking worried. Then suddenly she spoke. Her quiet, husky voice echoing around the room. "You know about human-monkey hybrids, don't you?"

"Yes," Georgia replied.

"Well, don't ever go near the science lab. I'm afraid the science they're doing has gone...well...rather chillingly mad."

A shiver passed down Georgia's spine as she took another glance at the picture on the front cover. A picture of a monkey with human eyes and brain. She had had enough, Georgia thought. She excused herself and went for a walk.



Outside, it was cold and crisp, even with her jacket on, and there was an unnerving silence draped all over the city. Georgia thought back to the news earlier this morning and shivered. After about ten minutes of walking she approached the crossing where you could turn into the park or turn down the road where the lab was. Replaying her mother's warning in her head, Georgia thought she knew what to do. But then her brain was clouded with the thought that one trip would not hurt. It was as though the wind was pulling her and as she walked down the road, Georgia saw the huge white block of building where the experiment was taking place. She thought one look wouldn't make a difference. She never would have known. One look could make a huge difference.

Walking down the road, Georgia felt something brush her back. She peered behind her yet nothing was there. Unsteadily, she kept on walking though soon she heard a leaf crunch behind her, yet nothing was there. Georgia began to feel something was wrong. She had to get out of there. Her heart began to pound, her feet sped up and her breathing became more urgent and ragged. It was as though the path along the lab was everlasting.

Glancing around her, Georgia saw a shadow. She looked up and froze. Her eyes were wide, full of fear. There was someone standing behind her, their arms raised as if to grab her. Georgia knew she should run but there was something strange about this person. Its rigidness and its eyes! The eyes! They were like fake, almost mechanical pools of darkness. There was definitely something inhuman about the thing standing before her. However, hesitating had been a mistake. The last thing she saw was the human, the thing, lunge forward before it all went black.

The Diseaser

Isobel Styles

I sit on the sofa. Anxiously waiting for mama and dad to come home. I glare at my ugly, dark tabby cat, Louis, as he sits on the window sill, grooming his long, matted pelt. I sigh heavily as I turn my glare away slowly and settle on what is behind the window's glass.

There stands the Empire State building. A towering tower with lights covering it from head-to-toe. It's the heart of New York City.

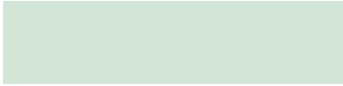
I rest my head gently on the back of the sofa and cross my legs comfortably. Suddenly, there is a loud, thundering, clashing sound as the rain pounds on the window, begging to be let in. The black, gloomy clouds sweep in, crushing all of humanity's happiness within their deadly grasp. I curse and rush to Louis, grabbing him firmly and almost dragging him back to the comfort of the sofa, holding him close and tight.

I hold my breath sharply as I watch thousands, if not millions of lightning strikes slap the antennae on top of the enormous building.

I fight myself. Doing everything in my power to stop myself from screaming as the lights give way and instantly switch off. What's happening? I think. I stare out of the window and watch the lights in house after house flicker like a candle being blown away. Suddenly, it feels like the whole world has plunged into darkness like a cloak wrapping around me, keeping me warm.

The only light that is still working is, somehow, my tv, which blares out the latest and most terrifying breaking news podcast I have ever heard in my whole life. It starts off with a basic accident on the motorway or two, but, then something catches my eye. A tall, stern lady tells everyone to stay in their homes no matter what the situation and that everyone who doesn't will be severely punished. Or worse.





All of a sudden, my phone begins to ring. I pick it up with a shaking hand, still startled by the news, “5 years,” it says. The caller is unknown. The location is unknown. The answers are unknown.

I throw my phone away from me like there is a huge spider on it. Louis hisses slightly and curls back in my lap for a night-time nap. My whole body shivers, sending odd tingles up my spine as the cold seeps in through every crevice imaginable while my head aches with many, many questions, needing to be answered.

Then everything goes red as an extremely loud siren howls words that have and will scar me for life: “Warning! Warning! Warning! Subject 477Q has escaped from captivity!” It doesn’t stop. Instead, the words burn themselves into my brain, getting louder and louder, repeating those life-changing words.

Louis screams and slashes my cheek, opening a large, dangerously deep wound. I clutch my cheek and howl in pain as his long gnarly claws dig into my leg. It is all happening so fast! The siren. Louis. My cheek. The storm. I sink to my knees, sobbing. In the corner of the room a shadow looms and sways slowly. Right to left. Left to right. I can’t cope with it all. I start to close my eyes, slowly losing consciousness. I fall flat onto the hard, wooden panels of the floor.

Darkness swallows me whole.

To Question

By Harriet Devenyi

It was a blisteringly cold afternoon, mid-June time. Kat Carter, aged sixteen, stumbled across the cracking concrete street, her hair flailing wildly upon her filthy scalp. In a desperate attempt to escape the chilling winds, Kat burrowed her icy hands further into the dusty grey jacket draped upon her skeleton-like frame. The faint echo of bells sounded out, drifting from what seemed like a distant location. Once the fifteenth chime had ceased, darkness fell instantly upon London. A chilling, impenetrable blanket of death.

Kat

You can't trust anyone anymore. The feeling of uncertainty is so deeply embedded into our minds, that it is utterly impossible to unpick. APS have patrolled the streets for as long as I can remember, hungry for blood and suffering. Since the war of nations, land over the waters have been ruled cruelly by the British. How many years exactly? It is incredibly hard to say. First rule of the Worldwide Deception Organisation (WDO) enforced upon citizens such as ourselves:

Never question time.

Time is control.

To question control is to question the WDO.

I glance down at my ring, the one, singular item I still possess. A dim, green light flashes upon the smooth surface. It is time. One hand slips from within my pocket and, with slight hesitation, I press my fingertip to the warm, neon glow. One second. Two seconds. Three seconds. The light flashes briefly, then turns grey. A sharp sensation floods through my body, accompanied by an excruciating pang of pain.

It is done.

I have become one of them, once again.

The Robots are Coming

Theo Swann

When I wake up, I feel for my contacts. They aren't there. Someone must have moved them in the night.

I prop myself up on my pillow. I can see my brother snoring at the ceiling. His muddy-brown cat is sleeping on his horse-hair pillow. I get out of bed and get dressed and slip into my hunting boots. I look out of the window. There is a squad of EPF robots. I duck down as quickly as I can.

EPF bots were the Earth Protection Force. Until it all went wrong. The AI malfunctioned. The EPF killed a lot of people. They say the robots killed 75% of people on Earth. It all started at a football match. The fans were exiting the stadium, when the robots shot them stone dead.

I step outside, hugging my crossbow. I walk past the destroyed Westminster Abbey and the rubble of St. Paul's Cathedral.

I turn a bend and walk down Downing Street. Corpses litter the ground. At the end of the road, I am met by EPF bots. They open fire. Suddenly it goes black...

The Future

Blake Beevers

Luke hid. This had never happened at work before. His cold, freezing fingers that felt like they had frostbite, made him shake in fear. He didn't know what to do so he did what he would do in situations like these. RUN!

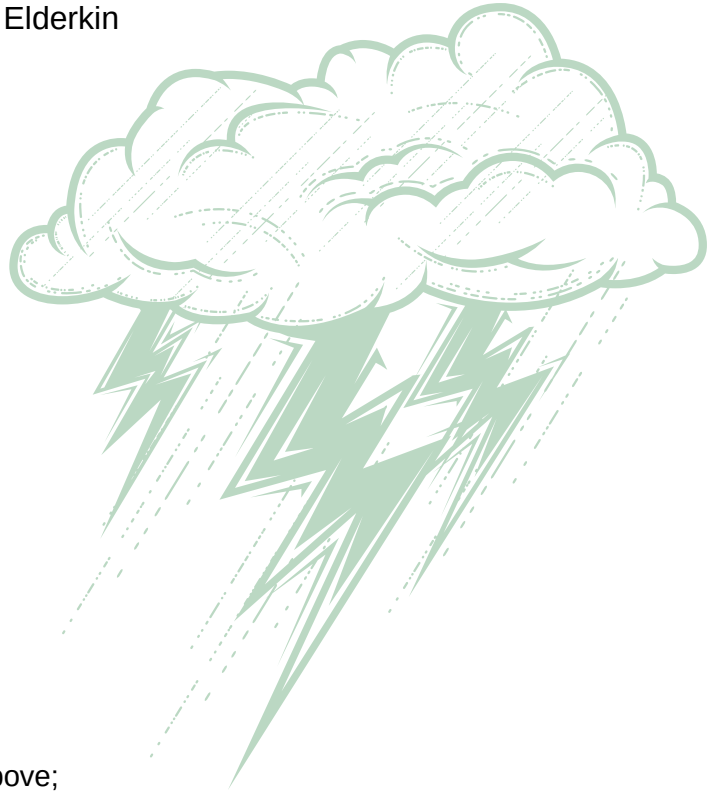
He just escaped the warehouse before the thing with big, heavy legs found him. As soon as he got out, he didn't even contemplate what had just happened. He just darted in a random direction.

When he thought he had got far enough, he checked his back pocket for his phone. It was not there. He screamed for help, but his cries were helpless. Luke was so scared that he could have let out a tear.

As his feet squelched through the wet, stinking brown mud, he heard a noise, a noise that he had heard before but couldn't actually piece together what it was. "Help, help, help!" Luke stood still like he had just seen the scariest thing on Earth. He now knew he had to go and save the voice.

Luke was brave this time. He manned up and marched back into the forest like he had forgotten what had happened. He was hoping for a reply until he heard something behind him...

The Storm!
Alana Elderkin



The lightning thundered and flashed above;

Splodges of rain fell from the sky like tears that had been cried many times.

There I lay, in my hidden cave watching the palm trees rock from side to side,

A terrifyingly low rumble growling in the sky making my eyes widen with fear.

Anger filled me like wildfire - the tops of my fingers burning with hatred.

I wanted to go home.

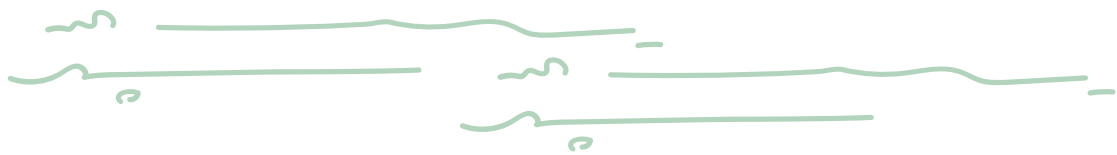
I wanted everything to stop, my world was whirring as I thought about my family.

I hated everything, everyone that night

I just want it to be over.

Don't be depressed
Bella Price and Feena Oxley

The wind was wild,
The noise was vile,
The rain was washing away the poor poor child.
The lightning was harsh,
Struck me in the heart,
I fell to the ground,
And I was about to pass out.
The thunder was loud
The thunder was proud
The thunder hurt my ears
As it shook the piers.
The world was in ruins,
So, watch what you are doing,
Say goodbye to what is left,
You might need a minute to digest?
DON'T BE DEPRESSED.



Middle School



Artwork by Annabel Hiles, Form 3

Micro Stories for National Story Telling Week

Izzie Mason, Bea Reynolds, Genevieve Gandy

"Roll the dice, don't be a whimp." It's one in the morning in a Holiday Inn at the side of the A25. Six players..... surely the chance of my number being chosen is small. "I told them this game would be stupid." Someone abruptly calls number 3. That's my number. I feel like backing out, but I would never get away with that. I slowly and hesitantly dial a random number. RING RING. It feels like a lifetime before someone picked up.

"Hello?" mutters a low voice. My mouth is so dry I can't answer.

"Who's this? Why are you-" the line hangs up. An eerie silence fills the room. Before long another ring interrupts the silence.

"Pick up!" my friends chant. This time my hands are shaking and my instinct refuses. The girl to the left snatches the phone out of my hands, and before I can speak, she picks up. After a few seconds she turns white and freezes in shock. A slight panic gets muted by a knock on the door. The girl still clutching the phone signals for us to hide. The knocking gets louder, and by the time I turn my head, everyone has gone. I dive under the bed. The door flies open and an ear ringing scream echoes through the room – I suddenly make eye contact with an anonymous figure.

"Breaking news, six teens found dead in Holiday Inn. Unknown time and cause of death."



Hattie Jackson, Helen Erler, Isobel Mitchell

Silence. The beeping stopped, the engine sounds dissipated, and I became conscious of my own thoughts for the first time in three years.

1939, "Go enroll!" they said. "Follow your dreams!" they said. "It will be fun!" they said. I wish I hadn't been so naïve. I gave my life to a country I love, but a government I hate. I was blinded by their views and their words. They led me into the worst trap of my life that I would never escape.

I am thankful God has given me the gift of death. I have escaped my duties as an unbelieving soldier, but I will never be able to escape the crimes that I committed.

Ruby Abbott and Evelyne Irving Walker

It all started when I met them. My friends introduced me to them. They were older, more mature – I didn't think anything of it at the time.

We started to get closer. We texted all the time. That's when he told me the truth.....

The day it all happened, nothing unusual, the same old cloud, dull British weather. We met at the park that day. He came in his van, blacked out windows, juddering down the road. I instantly knew it was him when I heard it.

He stepped out. He looked down at me, towering over me. His voice cut through me like a blade. We walked round and chatted about everything, and anything. I didn't realise how late it had gotten until I looked and saw I had 7 missed calls from my mum. I told him I needed to go. His face dropped and his eyes darkened. He started to become more reserved but offered to drive me. I politely declined as I could easily walk. He insisted, I then again, declined. He shouted. Grabbed me and threw me into the van. I kicked and screamed, telling him to get off me but he carried on tightening his grip. I asked him why, no reply....and that's all I remember Officer.



Ceci Astill and Fleur Lloyd

"Rachel, Rachel! We've been left behind!" I heard Sarah's voice as I arose from my slumber.

"What?" I replied in a confused haze.

"We must have fallen asleep, look at the time....It's 3 am."

I shot up from my seat in a blur of motion. I could hear Sarah's heart thumping out of her chest. We slowly turned around and this was when we heard it.....

The pages were rustling and the floorboards were creaking as if someone was edging closer and closer towards us. There was a loud bang as the bookcase toppled over and the books darted our way. We ran faster than ever before, using every ounce of our strength and power, I gave a quick glance behind me thinking we were safe, but there was an army of books marching towards us. Sarah scrabbled to find the door handle, but it had mysteriously vanished. We turned to look for another way out and that's when it all went black.



Alexander Wilson, Jack Joice, and James Young

As Bill drove towards the abandoned castle, he couldn't help but feel a chill as he entered the gate. He quickly parked and entered. As he wandered through several dark hall-ways, he was watching the curtains sway eerily in the evening wind. As he neared the door to the kitchen, he edged inside and caught a glimpse of an apparition of the night, slowly walking around his skull, still riddled with flesh and bits of cloth. As it turned and caught sight of Bill, he slowly pulled the knife out of his neck, gleaming red in the moon's glow.

The ghost smiled the smile of a madman and started to gravitate towards Bill, arcing his hand with the knife in it. Bill, realising what was about to happen, ducked under the ghost and launched a fist at his back. However, all it achieved was to make Bill lose his balance. The ghost sensing his disorientation rushed forward holding the knife in front of him. Only his primal instinct saved him this time; he sidestepped, and sprinted out of the kitchen. He then heard his younger brother's scream. As he charged towards it the ghost reappeared at the doorway. He heard the scream once again. Bill rushed into the cloakroom, the cloaks only acting as a hindrance. There he found his younger brother Peter writhing on the floor with a ghostly presence filling the room. The ghost was holding a knife and was slowly dragging it across Peter's arm, the warm blood trickling down his arm, pooling at his feet.

Bill hit the blade out of Peter's hand and dragged Peter back to the car, adrenaline pumping through his veins. He put his foot on the accelerator, but just before they managed to get through the gate, the possessive ghost let out a roar of anger and released a ghostly blast of energy igniting the fuel in the tank of the car in a fiery explosion, incinerating everything within.



Refuge poem

Theo Adkin

In the heart of the storm, a refuge I find,
A heaven of silence, in the back of my mind.
It is a fortress of dreams, a castle of thought,
A sanctuary where my battles are fought.
It is a garden of peace, during a war,
A shelter of love when I cannot take anymore.
It is my escape from the chaos, the noise, and the crowd,
A refuge, my refuge, where silence is loud.
In the refuge, I am strong, I am fearless, I am free,
It is a place where I can truly be me.
It is a home for my spirit, a rest for my soul,
My refuge, my haven, makes me whole.



Photograph by Mr Deane, Teacher of Computer Science

Battlefield Memories

Alexander Wilson

1914-1918. The bloodiest war in history at that time. Remorsefully, I gazed upon the resting place of so many soldiers, the black cross the only sign that they ever existed. It was a sea of graves, moss partially covering some of the headstones, making the moment even more breathtaking – even more heartbreaking. The light drizzle, its many drops made me wonder: just how many soldiers had given their life and rest here now? I felt their grief weighing me down like a dumbbell. It was a sombre second, the first time I saw the extent of that cemetery. Rest peacefully, eternally.



Lucy Carr

This is where they were. Where all of those brave men overcame their fears and fought for our country. Creepily, the howling wind blew the lonely blades of grass in every direction. The danger tree that stood proudly thirty meters from the British Front Line was a tall, crooked monster, beckoning the uncertain soldiers to emerge and greet it. How could they live their lives like this? The thousands of craters between the two front lines were as deep as graves and as dark as tunnels. Where I am standing, is where huge numbers of terrified troops funnelled out of the trenches through the barbed wire, and out into No Man's Land as they transformed into sitting ducks for the German machine guns to obliterate. 1 July 1916.



Henry Jordan

The trenches were very compact. Muddy footprints lay gathering water on No Man's Land. Proudly, trees nestled where there once was war. The grass stood as soldiers in the fields. How could anyone fight in such bad conditions? The trenches were like muddy ditches filled with water. The horror hit me when I realise that men fought in this exact spot just 100 years ago. The sad truth. No hope of getting back home to sleep forever.



Photographs by Mrs Pound, Teacher of English

What's Hidden

Faith Taylor

There is a pain when I look at you.
 It is hidden, dormant beneath
 Every scene we run,
 Every milestone that comes.
 It is the brick out of place in the bridge between us.

And no matter the hours or workmen.
 Brandished with steely hands and hearts
 To build the bond,
 To right the wrong.
 It is cemented in souls as the blotch in our paintings.

HE

Agnes Reddy

Regardless, the kind eyes filled with rue,
 How countless the happy times seem too.
 There is a pain when I look at you.

He's always there to comfort you,
 Whenever you are downtrodden,
 Forsaken or sorrowful,
 You'll never be forgotten
 For He knows you and He loves you.

He showers you with blessings round the clock
 Even on a challenging, rainy day
 He fills your head with joyful thoughts
 And wipes your puddle of tears away
 For He's our shepherd who tends His flock.

His mercy flows like a stream
 And His grace we do not deserve
 Yet we are indebted to Him
 As he came not to be served but to serve
 For He so loved the world he deems.

He's always there to guide and guard
 As He's wiser and knows what's best
 All of our burdens He carries.
 On his shoulders we rest,
 For Blessed are those that seek the Lord.

He watches over us like Stars in the night sky
 He's laudable and, like the Sun, shines radiant.
 He sits on his throne in heaven with choirs
 Of angels. He is triumphant!
 For He is exalted in the highest!

Upper School



Artwork by Liv Tyler, Form 7



***The Invisible Genocide** (inspired by
Heaney and Hughes)*

Fatimah Dhariwal & Maximilian Stamenkovic

The orangutans yawned, as they
Adored their fleas in the sun.
Imperious trees reaching high for the skyline.
Flying insects wove a strong gauze
Of sound around the shrubs.
By the bang of Blood in the Brain,
Deafening to the ear.
Splattered red on a green canvas;
Mottling the beauty with
Death.

Winter's Invisible Hand

Max Stamenkovic

At first, it's a subtle brush against the door;
No more than a whisper of what is to come.
A white coat of frost on the morning grass,
A sudden yearning for a blanket in the evenings.

Then it's a light tap, notifying some of its presence,
A warning to prepare for the future.
Plumes of smoke begin to rise from every chimney as fires are lit
Warmth is sought after,

Long-lost hot water bottles are unearthed to shield away the invading cold.

Finally, it's a single knock.
Bold and obnoxious.
The cruel white hand telling the world the time has come.
Gentle flakes of white saunter down to the ground like ash after an eruption.
They drown everything.
The world is covered in a blinding white as if the earth had pulled it on like a jumper.

Everything is frozen, everything is still.
Winter is here.

Scene 12 of A Streetcar Named Desire: After the End

Mesi Johnson, Lucas Leung, and Brook Robinson

A week later. The dark blue lighting overshadows stage left with melancholic lamentation. Stage right remains shrouded in darkness. The 'blue piano' rises in volume with a newfound eerie intensity. STELLA is sitting stiffly at the dining table, her face contorted with discomfort. The baby's wails echo from behind the portiere. There is an element of hoarseness in the cries that suggest neglect. STELLA slowly refills her tumbler. STANLEY enters, oblivious to the tragic scene, coming back from bowling.

STANLEY: you won't believe this, baby. Mad Riley tried to have a go at me and... *(STANLEY becomes aware of the desperate cries from behind the portiere. He sidles up behind STELLA)* What's goin' on, baby doll?

STELLA remains unresponsive in his embrace. Her gaze is vacant and unfocused.

STANLEY: you been lapping up that liquor like a pussy cat.

STANLEY leans in as if to kiss her, but STELLA has an adverse reaction, jolting away. The 'blue piano' rises in intensity.

STELLA: *(clutching her head)* not the time, Stan.

STANLEY *aggressively flings his bowling gear onto the dining table.*

STANLEY: *(forcefully)* what's goin' on. Your motherin' instincts gone awol or some'in?

Stella remains silent. She scrapes the chair back with a look of defiance and storms over to the portiere, wrenching back the curtain. STANLEY looks after her incredulously, then stalks after her. He seizes her by the wrist and spins her to face him.

STANLEY: how long are you gonna be bangin' on with the cold shoulder? You gotta get over yourself-

STELLA slaps STANLEY across the face. Her face remains blank, but with a cold stare. STANLEY steps in shock, anger slowly dawning on his face.

STANLEY: *what is going on, you crazy woman!*

STELLA: *do not call me crazy, Stanley!*

STANLEY: *since when are you so feisty?*

STELLA: *(with meaning) yes well, I'm sure you'd prefer someone who doesn't fight back.*

The lights turn off, plunging the stage into the curtains of night momentarily. Then, the harsh, industrial glare of a spotlight illuminates stage right to reveal BLANCHE. She is dressed in a plain white frock, the standard garb of the mental asylum, and sits upright on a wood-backed chair, keeping up the facade of ladylike decorum with which she has been reared. The music of the Varsouviana returns.

DOCTOR: Miss DuBois, how are you faring?

BLANCHE: *(vacantly)* My best, good sir.

DOCTOR: And how have the - let's say, maids - been looking after you?

BLANCHE: Of course, of course! *(beat)* Though they could afford to be less forceful at times-

The Varsouviana rises in volume. A countermelody is played in counterpoint to the main tune.

BLANCHE: *(suddenly seeming lucid)* Good doctor - do you hear the polka?

DOCTOR: *(unfazed)* I'm afraid not, Miss DuBois.

BLANCHE: It's stuck in my mind. Has been for so long, sir. *(with pitiful hope)* Could the marvels of modern science help me?

DOCTOR: *(reassuringly)* We try our best.

BLANCHE: *(with a smile, beat)* There's no shot.

DOCTOR: Pardon?

BLANCHE: The gunshot. It's not - *(her expression becomes vacant again)* Ah, it is no matter.

A NURSE enters, clutching a small envelope in her hand. She passes it to the DOCTOR and whispers something in his ear before exiting.

DOCTOR: Ah! Miss DuBois, a letter from your sister.

There is a pause as BLANCHE does not respond. BLANCHE remains smiling vacantly, but her eyes reflect a profound and incomprehensible sorrow. The music of the Varsouviana reaches a crescendo.

BLANCHE: (softly) Sister?

The music abruptly halts, and darkness cloaks the stage once more.

The 'blue piano' rises further in volume and intensity, echoing around the space.

STANLEY: you need to let go of this pack of lies she been feeding you. Aren't we so much happier now she's outta our hair? Aren't things like they was?

STELLA turns away from him, going to the baby's cot and picking him up. She begins to rock the baby, still blankly staring. STANLEY's agitation increases.

STANLEY: Stella! Stop ignorin' me!

STELLA: not now, Stan. The baby's crying.

She continues to rock the baby in increasingly erratic movements, speaking to him in rushed, quiet tones that, although used to comfort the baby, sound increasingly frantic and disjointed.

STANLEY: (concerned, although still growing more agitated) be careful love. I don't think you're in the right mind to be-

STELLA suddenly lets out a strangled cry, thrusting the baby into STANLEY's arms.

STELLA: you rock him, Stanley. I don't care a goddamn bit. I cannot keep acting like nothing's wrong when... when-

STELLA rushes out of the house, grabbing loose change STANLEY has dumped on the table.

STANLEY races after her, a snarl on his face, shouting through the open door.

STANLEY: you're crazy, woman! Both of yers are crazy! (beat) Stella? Honey?

A Streetcar Named Desire – Scene 12

Violet O'Neill, David Harrison, Maxim El-Sheikh, and Jemima Ashton Roberts

It's early February. Stella and Eunice are cleaning up empty beer bottles. The light is dim and cool and the baby is softly crying, a paper lantern over his crib. The Blue Piano is heard lightly in the background. Stanley is bathing.

STELLA: here, hand me the broom Eunice.

Stella takes the broom, pausing, staring numbly into space. Around her, Eunice collects trash and prompts Stella to carry on.

A knock at the door ends Stella's daze. Stella opens the door to the funeral planner. He is a tall, stooping man with a gentle demeanour and soft features.

FUNERAL PLANNER: How do you do? *(Gentle tone)* Lovely evening out there.

MEXICAN WOMAN: flores para los muertos, flores flores...

STELLA: Isn't it? Please come in – take a seat.

FUNERAL PLANNER: Thank you *(takes a seat at the kitchen table)*.

EUNICE: How about yellow and mauve carnations?

STELLA: Blanche thought they were garish. She thought their only place was in the entrance hall of a brothel.

Eunice nods sympathetically.

STELLA: We'll do white lilies instead.

FUNERAL PLANNER: That sounds lovely.

EUNICE: She would've loved that.

Stanley emerges wrapped in the red satin robe. Steam follows him out the bathroom and his skin has a dewiness to it. He walks over to the kitchen table and leans on the back of Stella's chair. Gentle murmurs continue. Stella remains still.

STANLEY: Is this Dame Blanche's final act?

Without speaking, Stella moves to grab him a beer from the fridge. He caresses her shoulder, slightly exposing more skin. She moves away and sits back down.

STANLEY: Thanks baby -a hot bath and a cold drink solves it all.

MEXICAN WOMAN: *(Softly)* Flores para los muertos.

STANLEY *crosses the room to the baby's crib.*

FUNERAL PLANNER: Had you thought about the words to commemorate her?

STELLA: No dates anywhere.

EUNICE: Ain't there so much to say about Blanche? Her pretty clothes, her pretty looks, her gentle soul. God, such a loss.

Baby starts crying.

STANLEY: So who's coming then?

FP: We haven't quite got there yet.

STANLEY: Is Shep Huntleigh making an appearance for our dame Blanche?

FP: We do things one at time, Mr. Kowalski.

STANLEY: Like Blanche never did. *(Under his breath.)*

STELLA: We need to get this right. *(Pauses)* For Blanche. *(Pause)* 'La Belle Dame Blanche, qu'elle repose dans ses rêves.' Hopefully that should do.

FP: That's very touching Stella.

STANLEY: Shame - Blanche would've wanted a three-gun salute and a parade.

STELLA: *(head in her hands)* Stanley please - can you just hold our baby?

A phone rings

FUNERAL PLANNER: Hello-yes-I'm here now-everything has been decided- we will make our way over now.

He hangs up and opens the door.

FUNERAL PLANNER: Shall we head over to make our final decision?

Eunice: That's a lovely idea. We can make the most of this pretty evening.

They all get up, numbly and proceed off stage, following the funeral planner. The baby is asleep in Stanley's arms, no one turns back.



Artwork by Vicky Hu, Form 6



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