

ANTHOLOGY 2022

THE ANTHOLOGY

2022

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First Published 2022 by
CLONKEEN COLLEGE PRESS
Clonkeen College, Clonkeen Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin

www.clonkeencollege.ie
Twitter: @ClonkeenSchool
Instagram: @clonkeencollegepress

Cover by: Simon Hume

ISBN:

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FOREWORD

This is the 11th edition of The Clonkeen College Anthology.

Our Anthology is a collection of stories, poems, and writings, Majority of these stories are written students of Clonkeen college. Students who are at an age when they feel the need for their voices need to be heard, at an age where they want to express themselves in some way and share their interests with anyone who wants to hear about them. As technology becomes increasingly more popular people begin to read books less and less and that is why writing and reading stories is even more important to maintain, it is becoming less of a hobby, less of a thing that is done, and we would hope to change that ideally. Nowadays if a book is written well and is read widely it is made into a film or a TV show and while that is good it does take away from the book.

There is something for anybody who wants it in this anthology. The good thing about having the opportunity to be able to write freely is that you get the opportunity to explore parts of your mind and parts of yourself that normally you would not get the opportunity to. This anthology is about how we use our words, selectively choosing words that we feel will tell our stories in the best way possible, the words we think will get our message across.

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We at Clonkeen College's Creative Writing committee would like to thank all who contributed to the production of this Anthology. For someone to put themselves and something they have written on display like this is worthy of great admiration, so thank you.

We would especially like to thank our chairperson, Jack Porter; our secretary, Thomas Fegan; the Editing Team - Philippe Jasinski, Sean Cortes, Dev Joshi, Evan Mulligan; and a thank you to Isaac Kelly and Lewis Bishop for their help all round.

We hope that this anthology is a continuation that is up to standard with the previous Anthologies.

Rafe O Midheach
April 2022

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PART I

Fiction

Luden

John Murray

Homer awoke gasping for air as if he was drowning. He was drowning, not in water but his own sweat. He quickly realised he wasn't in a nightmare anymore and his countenance turned nonchalant as usual. This was a quotidian occurrence for him. He didn't mind it. The two seconds of fear were much better than the sleepless nights he had endured that were too familiar for his liking. The middle-aged haggard man emerged from his bed. After a rainwater shower, clad in the same warm clothes he had been wearing for the past decade he opened the freezer. About five minutes later he finished his breakfast, which was identical to lunch and dinner: fish.

He stepped out of the prefab out into his small world. The island was the size of the average school yard, give or take. Probably more take. The whole isle was a hill, Homer's home for the past how many years was atop it. He looked around at the teal grass, the grey shore and sky and the navy sea. All darker than he original perception of those colours. Homer's whole world were these cold colours, he only saw yellow when he didn't drink enough water. Homer descended to the shore of grey grains of

sand where the vacant dock was. He monitored the fishing machine and the unused fishing rod next to it. He figured he would have gotten so bored he would feed himself by doing it the old-fashioned way, Homer didn't get bored on his own. He looked out at the ocean and saw it. It had moved. He hastily scaled the hill to obtain binoculars. The fog now engulfed half of the desolate town that was two clicks from where he was. It was him, then water, then town and then fog. Sooner or later one of those factors would be gone. There might even be only one left by a week.

It could be innocuous Homer thought as he stared at the one flower, a black wildflower that inhabited his island as he pondered. *Flowers can't reproduce anymore.* Homer stopped himself from getting lost inside his head. The Uprooting of the study of biology was a whole other thing. *No*, Homer had been perpetually skeptical. He distrusted governments before it was popular to do so and he was very skeptical of this thing, this entity. *It's okay it's far away from us it won't hurt us, so it doesn't matter.* That's what people would have said- did say. Humanity made that mistake once and had its population knocked down three zeroes. Homer decided he would watch the fog even more fastidiously now.

Later, Homer was startled from his typical day of daydreaming by a cacophony he hadn't heard from before. His radio was ringing! Homer arose and almost tripped while stumbling over to it. HELP

ALERT the monitor read. *A person? Alive? Here?* Homer was aghast. He took the mobile walkie-talkie mobile like radio off his wall mounted one. MESSAGE RECEIVED 30 SECONDS AGO: 16:59 08/11/2039. Homer looked at the message for a long time in the palm of his hand. The fact that something was alive prostrated Homer for the guts of about half an hour. However, he made his decision in the seconds that followed his inert state. He could be stuck here forever waiting for the fog or something else to end him. Or he could bargain with the unknown for the possibility of his survival. He stepped outside. He couldn't see the town anymore. The fog had mobilised very quickly.

Galvanised, Homer raced back into the prefab and analysed the coordinates of which the alert was sent. The fog wouldn't be there, hell he was closer to it than whoever posted it was. It would be there soon, however. Within an hour Homer was ready. He had food, water and all the technology he would need. He was in the prefab for the very last time and would premier the technology that came with it in the finale of its occupied time. He entered in a slew of coordinates and fired. A salvo of jets of liquid spouted out the mortar atop of the prefab. Homer raced to the shore, slowed by his cargo and changed shoes. He took his first step off the island. He slowly and carefully began to skate on the newly formed layer of ice that now was what used to be the baltic ocean. He had used the same chemicals they tried

on the ozone that resulted in the earth being ten degrees cooler instead of the dreaded five degrees warmer. That was the only defense Homer had and he couldn't have used it on the fog.

A virus and the environment gave humanity a one-two sucker punch but evidently not a hard enough one as the man ventured across the ice to land.

The Golden Vale Bar

Eoin Farrelly

The Golden Vale Bar didn't have much to boast about. The wooden tables sprawled throughout the poorly lit room were adorned with marks and toned by years of stains. Most of them stood unevenly, and would loudly wobble if touched. Any inspection of their undersides would expose large stalactites of gum. The crimson leather seats of the chairs showed their age, cracks spreading over their surface like lightning cast on the night sky. The corners of the room have been overtaken by mould, its sickly blotches reaching up into the walls. Every time someone entered, the thick, aged, alder door let out a high-pitched, whining squeak. The exterior isn't any better. It's run down in appearance; shabby walls holding up a roof that creaks and sways with any noticeable amount of wind. The name painted onto the front of the building is almost completely faded, and most of its letters are illegible.

The Golden Vale Bar wasn't always like this. When it was built, its once gleaming façade and luxurious interior used to be the pride of New York, thronged with people every evening. The owner and barman, Norman Levy, would know everyone who walked through the door, and welcomed them all equally. However, time passed and the world transformed.

The city grew. Huge apartments rose. Skyscrapers were born. Other bars were built. More modern bars. Nicer bars. The Golden Vale Bar became lost amongst them. Slowly but surely, it fell out of favour, started losing customers. Norman Levy was horrified, yet refused to change his prized bar in any way. He swore to himself, to his family, to the world, that he would never change the original Golden Vale Bar. The city continued to change, and soon the bar was swept under the shadow of time, forgotten about by its city and its people.

I stepped up to the mic, swaying to the beat, arms hanging freely by my side. Everything was instinctive. Everything felt natural, felt right. I felt truly alive. Whenever I stepped on stage, and voices quietened and ears turned to listen, the world seemed to fade away. Until it's only me standing here, with my voice, with my song.

I looked up, around the bar. From my elevated position I could see everything, the rows of unorganised, speck-riddled glasses and cups that lined the shelves behind the counter, the discoloured tables seemingly placed at random throughout the room, and most visibly, the empty seats that encompassed them. There was only three people sitting around the bar: two ladies (what looked like a mother and daughter), who were fixated in their conversation at a table off to the side

of the room, and a man, slumped on a stool, facing the bar counter with his back to me. It wasn't great, I'll admit that, but it was the best gig I could get.

The speakers to either side of me began playing. Not quite the same as a live band, but it would do the job. First the bass guitar began to play, then the soft, rhythmic beat of drums, followed by the tranquil murmur of a sax. I opened my mouth, to begin singing the first words of my last ever performance.

'Two Coffees?'

'Yes. That's us. Thank you.' Mother replied. I liked when she spoke like this, briskly, with confidence. Even in her elderly age I could still hear the command in her voice. It reminded me of when I was small. Whenever I was sad, or upset, she would comfort me with that voice, and always give me a glass of boiled 7up. Holding it to my lips, she would let me know that everything's going to be okay.

I didn't have the heart to tell her that we actually ordered a coffee and a latté.

'So', I said, 'how was the first week there?'

She rolled her eyes.

I took a sip of my coffee. It was horrible, but I barely noticed. I haven't been noticing a lot of things recently.

I continued, 'The nurses seemed very nice, and the other inhabitants seemed very frien-'

She cut me off, 'Oh the others are all ancient snails, hobbling around on Zimmer frames. That's

not me! I'm perfectly fine,' she waved her hands for emphasis, 'I don't understand why I'm stuck in there, why can't I just go home, to Trevor?'

I took a deep breath.

'Mother. I've told you. Trevor is gone. He passed on two years ago.'

She was silent. She opened her mouth, as if to speak, then closed it again, her eyebrows burrowing in confusion. Her eyes had a distant, glassy look. A look that I knew all too well. I already regretted what I was about to ask....

I asked it anyway.

'What's my name?'

Her mouth hung open, quivering as if to pluck out the name that balanced on the tip of her tongue, but no name came. She reached for her cup of coffee. Her eyes looked scared, frightened. Her hands trembled badly. She started raising the cup to her mouth, but it was all trembling, it was going to fal-

No text yet. 17:01. I glanced around. There was no one else here, except the barman, whistling to himself while he ran a rag over the outside of a glass. It was filthy, the bar. Everywhere I looked was coated with dirt and dust. Even the rag the barman was using was filthy. If anything, he was making the glass dirtier than it already was. I looked down to the black duffel bag on the stool next to me. I put my hand on it. Felt the contents. Still there. I cracked

my knuckles, stretched by back. Checked my phone again. Still no text. 17:02.

Ten minutes passed. Fifteen. Twenty. Half an hour. It reached six and there was still no text. All I could do was wait. Nerves started taking over. I began to rock back and forth as I sat there. I cracked my knuckles. I stretched my back. Beads of sweat began to steadily form on my forehead. I checked the bag. I checked the contents. I glanced around. The barman would occasionally do odd jobs around the room, half-cleaning a table, wiping a filthy brush over the even filthier wooden ground, then go back to behind the bar, furiously wiping the rag over the glasses. Why hadn't I gotten a text yet? They said they would text this evening, any time after 5pm. They said I had to reply immediately. They would then come, and take me to lead a new life, where I would be free, safe, and (I looked at the bag beside me) rich.

I was still reeling from the previous day. It was going so well. Everything had gone to plan, we were away with the money, but then... the cop appeared from nowhere. He shot Oliver in the leg, then turned his gun towards me. Staring down that death-barrel, there was only one thing I could do.

Nobody was meant to get hurt. It was supposed to be a clean job.

My hand shook from just thinking about it.

Where was this text? Every moment was another moment where they were out looking for me.

Another moment where they could find a picture of my face or figure out my name. Where was this text?

The first other person to appear in the bar was a woman with a small, graceful frame, and wore her hair puffed up around her head in an Afro. She appeared at 19:30 on the dot, her arrival announced by the piercing squeak of the door. She introduced herself to the barman as the singer. He told her to make herself ready, he was expecting a big turnout tonight.

‘Nothing draws a crowd like the sound of live music!’

She smiled at that, but after glancing around the empty dingy room, I could see doubt creeping in.

A short while later a woman and what looked like her elderly mother entered. They asked the barman for a coffee and a latté, then took a seat at the side of the room. Music started playing, followed shortly by the singer, her voice soun-

‘DING!’ My phone screen lit up as my heart leapt into my mouth.

One new notification from: News.

I let out a sigh. Still not the text. My heart rate started to drop back down again.

I clicked on the notification, and as soon as I saw the headline, I froze.

‘Oliver Channing, detained culprit of Citibank robbery, faces charge for murder of hero cop.’

No. No no no no no. I put my head in my hands. The door of the pub squeaked loudly again, but I

didn't look up to see who it was this time. I scanned through the article.

'If proven guilty, will face life sentence in prison. Weapon found at the scene. Other robbery suspect yet to be arrested.'

How was this happening? Oliver? Murder? Weapon found at the scene? Oliver didn't have a weapon. And I didn't leave mine at the scene. Oliver should only be looking at five years' imprisonment for the robbery. Was he really going to spend the rest of his life in a cell for what I did? Bile rose in my throat. My stomach felt sick.

'DING!' Another notification appeared at the top of my screen. A text message. The one I had been waiting so longingly for. All it said was: 'Where?'

This was it. All I had to do was type in the name of the street I was on. Simple. My left hand hovered over the keyboard.

But... a lifetime in prison, for a crime that he didn't commit. A crime that I committed. Would I be able to live with myself, to sentence Oliver to such a fate? My own brother...

I could turn myself in. Plead guilty for the murder of the cop. Save Oliver from the life sentence, but sentencing myself to life imprisonment in the process.

My right hand came to rest on the duffle bag. Felt the loose wads of cash roll under hand. \$3M. All mine. Enough for a new life. Oliver knew what he was getting into.

I had to decide right now.

Drops formed puddles on the car window. Smaller droplets then leaked from the bottom of these puddles, and my eyes followed them as they ran down the window, tracing a path in the fogged-up glass. I turned my head over, looking directly at Charlie. A puddle had formed in his eye, and right before my eyes, I saw a droplet leak from the bottom, and run down his cheek. I knew that if I looked in a mirror, I would see the exact same thing.

My attention turned back to the window. Trees flowed past, bustling offices, crowded apartments. A building flashed by. There was something about it, something different to the rest. It was small, dilapidated. Even though I only got a brief glance of it, I was still able to make out 'BAR' painted in large faded yellow letters on the outside.

'Stop!' I cried.

Charlie slammed on the brakes, the car skidding to a halt (luckily there were no cars behind us). He whipped around to face me, a confused look etched onto his face.

I explained my outburst slowly, 'There's 3 hours until my flight, and I saw this bar, and I thought, that maybe, there's enough time, for you know, a final drink together?'

Charlie started at me for a second, most likely in disbelief, then agreed.

The door squeaked as it opened. The place was nearly empty, the only other customers being a pair of women, sitting on the far side of the room, lost

in their own world, and a solitary man, sitting at the bar, head in his hands, a phone placed in front of him. Charlie got two drinks, and we made our way over to one of the tables placed in front of the stage. There was someone on stage. A woman, swaying gently in front of a microphone. Just as we neared the table, she began to sing. It was a soft tune, melancholic, yet blissful.

We sat down in the chairs. The seat was hard, uncomfortable. But I didn't notice. I was too consumed by my own thoughts. This didn't feel real. I expected that I would be an emotional mess today, overcome with despair, with regret, with guilt. But instead I only felt... empty. As if all my feelings had converged and collapsed in on each other to form a black hole that was now silently swallowing my insides, sucking every single feeling from my body.

Charlie remained quiet. But the last two and a half years had thought me how to read his face. I could see his sadness. Engulfing his eyes, crawling out from the corner of his lips, burrowed into the creases of his forehead. I expected him to burst into speech, begging me not to go, a final last-ditched attempt for me to stay. But none came. It looked like he had finally resigned himself to my departure, forgiven my need to move. The last few years have been great. The best years of my life. And I love Charlie. So, so much. But there's nothing left for me here, I need to move, push own career onwards. And I didn't know if I'm to ever come back, or ever see Charlie again.

Explaining this to him was the most difficult conversation of my life.

Suddenly, he stood up. He gently reached down and took my hand. He led me away from the table. In front of the stage, amid the clutter, was a small clearing, the pitiful remnants of an old dance floor.

It was midway through the song that it hit me. This is my last gig. My last time performing on stage. The thought made me falter. I continued singing, while I let my mind wander

As far back as I can remember, it was always my dream to be a singer. I had my first gig at 19. Ever since then, for the last eight years, I've been chasing that dream. Going from gig to gig, band to band, constantly fighting to make ends meet, a permanent struggle to keep my head above water. Every single day, hoping that my big break would come, that I would get noticed by the world. But it never came. And now here I am, by myself on a sorry excuse for a stage, in a sorry excuse for a bar singing to a sorry excuse for an audience. I'm tired of this life. Of constantly running around in a loop, hoping that someday lady luck will come down to scoop you up. I don't have the passion anymore that I once had for it. I decided a short while ago that this will be my final gig, and then I'm going to try find a more stable job. Perhaps I'll get to try start a family as well.

I was nearing the end of the song.

I reached out and caught a hold of the trembling cup before it fell. I brought it up to my mother's lips. My thoughts once again wandered to reminisce when I was small, and whenever I was sick or upset how my mother would comfort me and give me a glass of boiled 7up. Holding it up to my lips, she would tell me everything's going to be okay.

Now it's her who's sick, and I'll have to take care of her. How she thought me to, with a steady hand, and a reassuring tone.

'Everything's going to be okay.'

'SQUEEAAK.' The door of the Golden Vale Bar was flung open. Oscar Channing hurried out. At the bar where he left, lay a phone, open on an unanswered text message, and on the stool, a large black duffle bag.

We seeped together, effortlessly, and began to slow dance, swaying as one to the music. My ear picked up a soft click as Charlie opened his mouth to say something, his warm breath tickling my ear.

'I'm gonna miss you Will,' he whispered.

'I'm going to miss you too.'

I sang the last note. I gave it everything I had. It felt raw, a note of released, pent-up emotions. A note that captured a feeling of finality, of a dying dream, of goodbyes, of new hellos, of change.

I stayed until the last customer left, a lady gently leading her elderly mother to the door. I thanked them for coming. I smiled. An end to another successful day. Live music always helps the crowd come in. And the singer today was extraordinary, her band were awesome. I gazed up to the small, framed photos hanging behind the bar counter. My father and his father. William and Norman Levy. I hoped they would be proud of the job I was doing.

As I did at the end of every day, I ensured that all glasses were gleaming and back on the shelves they're meant to be on. Looking back to view them reminded me of the windows of a jeweller's, shining, dazzling colours everywhere the eye turns.

Then I took the sweeping brush and ran it over the floor, gathering any final specks of lurking dust off the polished wood.

As I was making my way around, I noticed that a large bag of trash had been left on one of the stools at the counter. I thought it was strange, I couldn't remember ever leaving it there. With a shrug, I brought it out back and dumped it in the large trash container.

Finally, I grabbed the keys and put out all the lamps. I stepped out onto the street and swung the door smoothly shut. I locked the door. I paused and stepped back to admire the building. It looked as pristine as it has ever been. There was no better feeling than looking up, and, even in the dark, seeing those bright golden letters towering above you.

ANTHOLOGY 2022

That's how The Golden Vale Bar is. How it always has been, and how it always will be.

Wake Up

Keelin McCarthy

Just to be clear, Cameron hated hospitals.

There were probably a lot of reasons why, but really he just hated the atmosphere. Just being there, in a place with shiny floors and white tiles everywhere, made him feel ill.

The last time he had been here - well, the last time he'd been here for a reason other than the person sleeping down the hall - he'd been having an operation. A blood transfusion, to be exact.

He walked through the double doors, glancing around. A young woman was there, as well as an elderly couple. A teenage girl was struggling with two very loud kids.

The visitor's area was like this a lot. Usually pretty empty, especially in the ICU.

Cameron walked up to the receptionist, who looked up from where she was busily typing on her computer.

'Robin Holmes,' Cameron told her. She tapped something onto her keyboard before nodding. 'Okay. Need me to show you the way?'

Cameron shook his head.

'Right down the hall, third door on the right,' the lady said anyway.

'Thanks,' Cameron said. The woman smiled sympathetically at him.

Cameron headed down the corridor, resisting the urge to go back and snap at the woman.

He knew she was just trying to be nice, but he had grown to hate the consoling smiles and pitying glances people threw his way. Robin had always loathed pity of any kind, and Cameron now knew why.

He pushed open the door with the name *Robin Holmes* written on it with a marker. The name was written on a whiteboard, and starting to smudge.

Robin Holmes, Cameron's little brother and the reason Cameron was here today. Robin had been the only person with the same blood type as him. Even Cameron's own twin hadn't been a match. But Robin had.

Dad hadn't been sure, worried Robin might get hurt being a blood donor, but the boy had shaken him off. He'd been so determined to help Cameron. And he had.

Cameron, on the other hand, hadn't been the slightest bit of help to his little brother when he'd had the accident.

Cameron stepped inside the room, quietly shutting the door behind him. The hinge creaked slightly, making Cameron wince.

Inside, on a bed in the middle of the room, Cameron's little brother lay sleeping. At least, he looked like he was sleeping. But sleeping people usually woke up.

Robin hadn't. He'd been in a coma for six months, three weeks, four days and two hours.

Not that Cameron was counting.

Cameron walked over, sitting next to Robin on one of the hard plastic chairs that stood at his bedside. They were bright orange, in the ugliest shade possible. Cameron shifted, trying to find a more comfortable position.

He slung his guitar off his back and placed it in the chair next to him. He brought it every day, in the hope that maybe when he played, Robin would wake up, like some stupid fairytale. He remembered one of the stories in Shay's book of Greek mythology, about a man named Orpheus, the most amazing musician in the world. He'd gone to the Underworld to bring his wife back, playing beautifully enough to wake even the dead.

Unfortunately, real life wasn't a fairytale, or a myth. Real life sucked.

Cameron cleared his throat awkwardly. He'd never get used to being the one to start a conversation, especially with Robin. Robin always just said whatever was on his mind, always able to start a conversation. Or an argument.

Cameron would give anything for Robin to sit up and start arguing with him right now.

But his brother stayed sleeping. Cameron always thought of it as just sleeping, even though Robin would never have slept like that, just lying on his back, completely calm, like someone in a coffin.

Robin slept in the weirdest positions possible, usually hanging off the side of the bed, snoring.

And he looked far too neat to be just sleeping. Robin's blonde curls were always wild, sticking up and falling in his face and going everywhere. Now they were neatly brushed back, giving Cameron a clear view of Robin's pale, almost ghostly face.

Cameron shivered, glancing over at the open window. He considered closing it, but he didn't. Robin preferred open windows.

Robin's not here, whispered a dark, selfish, pessimistic part of Cameron that he ignored. Robin *was* here, and he was going to wake up.

Cameron picked up his guitar, and strummed a chord. Maybe he imagined it, but he thought he saw Robin move, just slightly.

'Um.' Cameron cleared his throat again. 'I've been writing a new song, Robbie. D'you wanna hear it?'

Cameron already knew he'd get no response, but he asked anyway. 'I'll take that as a yes. You probably don't get to hear much music in here, right?'

Cameron could almost hear Robin's voice. *Yeah, except for when you come and play every week, idiot.*

Cameron strummed another chord. 'I know, but the doctors reckon you can hear what's going on around you. So, you know, that's why we all keep talking. So maybe you'll hear us, and wake up.'

Cameron looked up from his guitar hopefully, but Robin didn't stir.

'Right. Well, I'm gonna play it now. Tell me what you think?'

Cameron took a deep breath and began to play. He'd practised this song so many times he knew it by heart, though he hadn't put any words to the music. It was a sad, mourning tune, not like the songs Cameron usually wrote.

Cameron lost himself in the music, closing his eyes and playing. He tried to forget he was in a hospital, playing music for a brother who might never wake up. He tried to imagine he was at home, playing in his room, while Robin listened, enraptured.

Too soon, the song came to a halt, and Cameron reluctantly opened his eyes.

Robin had not moved.

Of course he hadn't, Cameron thought bitterly. He'd done this hundreds of times. Why would today be any different?

'Did you like it?' Cameron asked anyway. 'Look, Robbie, you don't even have to talk. You can just blink, to tell me you like it. Or just move at all, really. Even if you didn't like it. Just so I know you're listening.'

There was silence in the room, except for the quiet beeping of the machines Robin was hooked up to.

'I'd appreciate some constructive criticism,' Cameron muttered.

Of course, even awake, Robin's criticism was rarely constructive, but Cameron didn't care. He just

wanted some sort of sign Robin was actually there, that he knew what was going on. The doctors had told them that coma patients often heard things going on around them, so Cameron had learned all of Robin's favourite songs and played them for him, in the hope that he'd wake up.

He hadn't.

'I better go,' Cameron sighed, standing up. He wasn't very good at sitting around for long. He picked his guitar up. 'I'll be back next week, Robbie. Or sooner, if you wake up.'

Robin's chest rose and fell gently, but apart from that, the boy might have been dead.

'Goodbye, Robbie,' Cameron whispered, slipping out the door.

Iesha

Rafe O'Midheach

There once was a world not so different to ours but as if more extreme, a world where one foot even slightly out of line could cost you your life, where the government had absolute control over everyone and anything, where the soldiers have been genetically enhanced so that they will follow and fight for the people in power while having absolutely no freedom to themselves and only exist to fight for The Power.

And in this world, there existed a girl who had a strong lack of respect for anyone in power or anyone with any sense of authority. Whether they were particularly good or not was irrelevant to her. She did not like to be told what to do. Her and her family were the poorest of the poor in this world and, therefore, were under the most scrutiny by the power. This girl's name was Iesha, and this story starts when she was walking to the market one cold morning - the climate engineered by The Power to be cold, so people would avoid the market.

As she walked outside the exit of her sector, she saw a woman who she knew her entire life, blood pouring out of her mouth and chunks of hair having been dragged out. The woman was trying to scream

but did not have the energy, so instead she let out dry whispers.

Iesha ran as fast as she could over to her and asked what had happened. She let out yelps - 'Please, we can't live like this. Please escape, for your sake Iesha.'

Iesha without even saying a word ran towards the market to ask what had happened. She heard various stories, but they all generally agreed on one thing - the woman gave too little money to the butcher, out of confusion, and the guards overheard the small argument between the butcher and the woman and started trying to find out what had happened in the most aggressive way they could. When they found out the woman had not paid enough, they took her outside and dragged her by her hair and attacked her repeatedly, until the butcher ran over and told them to stop. He told them that he'd pay the money himself. But the guards continued to attack her for another five minutes and then, eventually, stopped said if anyone were to help her up, they would get the same treatment. So, she was forced to crawl home.

When Iesha heard this story, she was filled with rage and immediately stormed towards the butcher's and grabbed money out of the box where the butcher kept his earnings. She said, 'This is going to where it belongs!' in a very serious tone, with her face making absolutely no expression. The butcher started to beg her for the money bag as she ran towards her sector, on her way to give the

money to the woman. As he ran after her, everyone in the market took advantage of there not being anyone in the butcher's and took as much as they could carry.

The butcher, who was in no shape to be running at the speed he was starting to run, ran out of energy and started to beg Iesha to give him his money. He was saying that his daughter was sick and dying. This did not phase Iesha and she got to the old woman who was now sitting against a wall rather than crawling or lying on the floor. Iesha gave her the money, which she was happy with. She did not know where it came from, but she was in no state to be fussy.

After about five minutes the butcher arrived and explained what'd happened and begged the old woman for the money back. After hearing what happened she unhappily went to give the money back until Iesha started shouting, pointing aggressively at the man, 'HES LYING! LOOK AT HIM! HE CAUSED YOU THIS PAIN AND IS NOW TRYING TO TAKE YOUR MONEY!'

The butcher looked shocked and didn't have the heart to argue with either of the women, but he did manage to let out a slight whisper, saying, 'Why fight your own people, your own allies?'

Iesha ignored what he said and rolled her eyes. The old woman, practically blinded by the idea of having the money, agreed with Iesha and asked her to walk her to the nurse's house. The nurse's house had absolutely no medical supplies, it was just the

house of a woman who was quite good at helping people. Iesha and the old woman walked away as the butcher sat on a wall, his face in his hands. Iesha looked back at him with a smirk, as if to say, 'I won!' As if there was any winner in a situation like this.

As months went by the butcher had become the poorest of the poor and The Power were growing suspicious that he might not be able to pay his fines any longer. The people in the village had been able to get him this far, as far as fines went, but now he felt as if he had failed himself and his now dead daughter, as he couldn't pay for any medical help for her. He had started to go slightly insane and didn't have a good grasp on reality.

Iesha somehow still saw all of this as a win but Iesha was still aware that if The Power did get a hold of him, the people of her sector would turn on her and blame her for what would happen to him. They already didn't like her for what she did to the butcher and that was only amplified through the daughters passing. Iesha was scared to go to the market again, for various reasons but most of all she knew the public did not have the full respect that they used to for her. However, she did have to go to the market as her and the old woman had no food left. She was now living with the old woman.

She walked to the market with her face and body as covered as it could be without raising suspicion. To protect her identity. She walked through a field and saw a scarecrow that was pointing in the

direction of her home. She looked at it and thought for a minute if it was best for her to go home. But she thought about how the old woman needed the food to get through the coming winter.

As she walked into the bakery, the door got caught on her clothes, the clothes being used to hide her identity. She did not notice and kept walking and within seconds all the clothes being used to hide who she was, fell off. She was just left in her normal clothes.

The baker immediately started screaming at her to get out and screaming at her that she killed the butcher's daughter. The fury in the baker's face showed all Iesha needed to know about the public opinion on her. Iesha, felt overwhelmed and a small sense of betrayal, as the baker's was somewhere she had always felt welcome and safe. Rather than feeling guilty or having an attempt at an apology she went back into the baker's and started screaming. Except this time there were guards there who began to say, 'Iesha Stronghold, you are under arrest for disruption of the peace in sector 10.'

The guards sounded just like robots. Iesha's face completely dropped and she began screaming and kicking, which did nothing to affect the armoured guards. The baker looked at the whole situation with a smirk. Two of the other guards lifted her by putting their hands under her armpits and dragging her towards the sector hall, which was where the guards slept and where all-important meetings happened.

After three months of assumed execution - although it was rumoured people heard her screaming in the early weeks of her capture - Iesha was released.

But she was not the same as before.

She walked out of the town hall, nearly unrecognizable. Her back was straight and her hair straightened. She would never betray The Power again. She became The Power's pet and obeyed whatever they asked of her. She was there to listen and hear what the people were saying, to ensure there would be no fightback.

Element 348

Sean Cortes

As the room slowly enveloped in an ivory light, a large chrome lab was revealed to me filled with all kinds of advanced looking machinery never seen before by the likes of the OSS or Allied powers. There was one gargantuan piece of metal that stuck out from the rest, it was the biggest one out of them all that had an extension that reached all the way up to the roof of the lab. The intel we were given couldn't describe how insane it all was. Whatever they found, it was not from this world. They have done everything they could to keep this place hidden but burying it over 20,000 feet underground wouldn't keep it hidden from us for long. They always overestimate the loyalty of their workers.

I walked down the cold steel stairs thinking of the amount of destruction they could cause with this kind of equipment. I searched around the lab for any research notes that could explain what any of this was supposed to do. The air was cold and still, and there was a strong putrid smell coming from almost all the machines I walked by. Eventually, I managed to find something on what the contraptions did. It was hidden away next to the

hulking piece of machinery that caught my attention when I first entered this place.

The notes were created and compiled by a man called Dr. Heinrich, the lead scientist according to the builders of this place. He oversaw the construction of the lab, making sure that everything was perfect. Heinrich was loud and eccentric, always demanding the progress of what they were assigned to do. He was described to be an average sized man in his late forties with coarse grey hair and dark hazel brown eyes that pierced into anyone he talked to. He wore the attire of a high-ranking German officer for his service to Germany in WW1. He was skilled in combat and had experience on the battlefield. A woman would usually accompany him wherever he went, usually wearing a lab coat. The workers rarely saw her since Heinrich always told her to wait for him at the entrance of the research facility. Not much was known about her. Wasn't sure what role she could play in all this madness, what does she know for Heinrich to allow her to follow him everywhere?

I hoped to find an answer that could explain everything going on in this place in the notes he compiled. The notes were hastily written which made it difficult to read some texts on a couple of pages. What I managed to get from them is the discovery of an element that wasn't from Earth. It came from a meteor that crashed into one of the German trenches during The Battle of The Somme, it had broken open revealing a glowing sphere that

shined a bright iridescent purple. There were reports from British soldiers of seeing the meteor, but they were written off as just artillery strikes. The soldiers in the trench were affected by the sphere, they went mad and started ripping and tearing into each other's flesh. Few survived the slaughter, only four men managed to escape. They were mostly sane, though they often talked about strange nonsensical things when left alone with each other. Talk of other realities like our own but are desolate and destroyed with mindless abominations roaming the universe.

Heinrich heard about their account of what happened and became intrigued about what the men saw. He wanted to know more about the element's effects on the environment around it, so he sent the four men back to the blood drenched trench with a team of twenty heavily armed soldiers to recover the sphere for research. The survivors pleaded with him to get out of the recovery mission, but he denied their request saying they have the most experience with the element so far. It took three days for the team to get back with the meteoric rock. Only four survived the recovery mission, the same four who reported the element in the first place. They were more dishevelled than before with blood staining their uniform and skin. Apparently, the rotting piles of bodies that littered the trench rose back to life when they tried to move the sphere. Their flesh was still torn off, some even had missing limbs but for some godforsaken reason

they were able to move despite their necrotic appearance. The reanimated remains of their comrades began to rush the platoon in an attempt to stop them from getting away with the luminescent orb. The soldiers tried gunning them down but they just kept on going. The gunfire only seemed to slow the decaying horde. The four survivors avoided the gruesome fate the platoon had met by using them as a distraction. They made off with the blood-soaked space rock while the men holding their attackers back were torn to shreds.

Heinrich was ecstatic to see the element in person. He seemed to grow more fascinated with each second spent viewing it, he then realised that himself and the four survivors weren't being affected by the orb. Why weren't they ripping into each other? He sent the four disgruntled men away to start experimenting on the rock. He first used small animals as test subjects to see if they were affected by the sphere, and they were. The rats, rabbits and pigeons he used for his experiments all tore their own kind apart with the remains being eaten and rising after a couple minutes of being left alone. He was overjoyed to see the results which soon led to him experimenting on bigger animals like dogs, cats and horses. Every single one of them had the same result of tearing into their own kind and feasting on the remains with the leftovers rising soon after. Heinrich began to wonder if he could control the animals affected by the element.

I wasn't able to read any more past that point, some of the pages were missing. I got what I had come for and it was about time I left. As I tried to leave the facility, I heard a faint sound coming from the corridor behind the entrance. The sound grew louder, then I realised it was the sound of footsteps echoing through the narrow concrete tunnel. I quickly hid behind one of the steel machines in the middle of the room before the strangers could see me. When they finally entered the lifeless chrome lab, I was met with the voices of an old but enthusiastic German man and of a young dulcet British woman.

'The progress we have made is simply outstanding!' the German said. 'I could never even dream of such miracles happening without the use of this element. I cannot begin to fathom what else we could do with the properties of this sphere...'

'We must take our time with this. We still don't fully understand the capabilities of this orb and with the Führer breathing down our necks about what we're doing down here I think it's in our best interest to halt experiments until we have more space.' the young woman responded.

As they talked and made their way down the steel stairs, I listened to what they were saying while also manoeuvring around the lab avoiding detection trying to get to the exit.

'Maybe you're right. But why must he stop our progress from becoming leaders of the future? So what if we have a few casualties here and there,

sacrifices must be made for Germany to rise and win this bloody war.'

'He does not have our vision. Even so, we still must follow his orders. For now. It is vital we get the time needed for further experimentation; we cannot afford to mess this up.'

I wanted to know more but I had to make sure Headquarters knew what they were doing here. I tuned out and focused on getting to the exit when they made it off the stairs. I slowly crept up while they continued walking on. My heart beat faster with every step made, but I finally made it up and left the room without them noticing. I took my time making my way to the elevator to avoid making any sound and while I walked down the stainless-steel tunnel that seemed to never end, I reflected on what I had just read and heard.

'How does any of this make sense?' I thought to myself. 'Why did it have to get in the hands of a Nazi?' As I neared the elevator, I stopped thinking about the sense of it. All that mattered was for me to get this intel back to HQ so we can prevent whatever they're doing down there.

Blitzed

Mattia Minella

May 11, 1941.

10:00 p.m.

The night was bleak and misty that evening in London. The heavy rain pounded relentlessly on the murky grey cobbled streets, illuminated only by the faint and ghostly glare of the tall, flickering streetlamps. The sky was tinged an inky black, as a pale moon glistened dimly in the dreary night sky. The streets were enveloped in a still and unwavering silence as, not too far below, people slept, hidden safely in bunkers, for they knew what was to come. It had been happening for months now. Tonight, would surely be no exception. For far away, German soldiers sat promptly in their bombers, ready to strike again.

Gradually, a rising crescendo of distant noise rippled the air. It rose and rose, until the thunderous roar of hundreds of engines suddenly pierced the voiceless silence like a knife through paper, and the city was immediately plunged into a smooth and velvety blackness as all the lights faded. The city remained devoid of any light, refusing to shift until the acrid noise had passed. The glacial night breeze was then immediately shredded violently by the speeding wings and tails of hundreds of screeching

airplanes, their glaring lights directed straight at the now pitch-black city, aimed fixedly towards its blackened streets. The bombing was soon to resume. For the fifty-sixth night in a row.

I had been woken incredibly late that night by the ranting roars of our stern general bellowing at me and my fellow soldiers in rapid German, as we lay sleepily in our dimly lit tent. His straight and silky grey moustache flailed about wildly as he spat instructions at us, at such a rapid pace it was barely possible to understand what he was saying. His burning red cheeks glowed with a sort of raving determination, and his puffy grey hat seemed to swell up with rage. Furious at us for having slept in, he had not hesitated to instantly direct us to the nearest cluster of bomber planes that were yet to be boarded. Still sleepy and dim-witted, we clambered slowly out of our tent. Before we had begun to even comprehend what we had been told, we were trudging sleepily through the damp muddy field that was our base camp and began climbing into the ripped seats of a set of rusty Junkers Ju bombers.

Once we had sat ourselves down in the cockpits, still struggling to grip the controls of the planes, a harsh voice instructed that we were to depart, and in unison, the planes surrounding me had begun to rise quickly and smoothly into the sky. Startled at the sheer speed at which this was all happening, I

fumbled around desperately through the controls, and eventually managed to rise, still wobbling, into the air with the rest of the jets. As we flew further away from the gloomy clump of tents and wire that was our base, the torchlit ground seemed to become smaller and smaller, until it was bathed in a swift black cloud of mist, and all I could see was the mass of jets darting swiftly through the night sky alongside me, and all I could hear was the ear-splitting roar of engines filling my ears. I was surrounded by a still darkness. Finally, we stopped flying upwards, and instead made way for the distant place we had set out to reach. Still slightly uncertain as to where I was headed, as the full details of the mission had not been entrusted to a 'reckless infant' such as myself, I lagged behind the racing swarm of jets and followed slowly in their path. A sudden sense of foreboding began to loom over me. I did not know where I was headed, did not know what I was to do. All I knew was to follow the crowd. Follow the crowd who carried guns and bombs, follow the crowd who had killed, maimed and tortured. All I could do was follow them as though I was one of their own. Because that's what I was. Just another German soldier in his grey uniform. Once we put on that uniform, that is what we all became. The personality and emotions were sucked out of us, and to the rest of the world, we were merely seen as enemies.

After a few minutes had passed though, a bitter sense of realisation suddenly sluiced over me, like a cold wave of dread had sprayed me from head to toe in panic. I was probably going to die; in fact, it was almost certain. Wherever we were off to must not have been any place important, or at least my role in it wasn't. Whenever they sent new recruits out on these kinds of missions, especially without any details, they would either wound up injured in hospital carts on their return, or simply not come back at all. The latter being the most recurring one, as the soldiers' distraught families would often tend to prove. This situation was evidently, no different than those before it. I wiped my wet palms on my trousers and regained my grip of the now slightly moist controls. A small bead of sweat trickled down my forehead and fell, gently onto the radar. I wiped it off. Looking out of my window, I saw no more than I had been seeing for the five minutes I had been up here. No houses, no cities, not even a single sign of human life, just an infinite expanse of icy darkness. According to the others around me, this meant that we had been doing well so far, and that it was best that it stayed that way for as long as it could.

A few more minutes of this silence passed, but then a flash of light caught my eye. I looked up. A sudden, dim glimpse of light had momentarily almost blinded me with surprise. I had grown so complacent to the musty darkness I had been flying around in for the past hour that once the distant flecks of light had caught my eye it startled me. I

had been too busy delving in my own head to realise what was actually happening, what I had been sitting through for the past couple of minutes. For a moment, I had felt almost allayed in my thoughts and in my mind, as though I had escaped the brutal reality I was in now. But that feeling was long gone, and the reality was now hitting me more than ever, like a blunt rock. It was almost a relief to see the distant, glowing slivers of light growing closer to us as I flew. It felt reassuring to see that I was not aimlessly floating around darkness anymore. But soon after this glimpse of hope, I would've given anything to be back in the darkness once again, flying as far away as I could from this group of looming planes.

We had reached a city now, a big one. Multiple buildings could be seen, each one outstripping the last in size and detail, and lampposts illuminated the falling rain as it thundered down upon the dampened streets. A hoarse voice pierced the silence, that of our general. I did not hear the orders it gave, not clearly anyway. My resolution had finally got the better of me and my conscience was aching. I did not hear what I was to do, but I could tell that it would be in no way pleasant. Not for us nor our soon-to-be victims. I tried moving, tried asking for the instructions to be repeated, but my body had frozen in shock.

I was broken out of this immobile state by the first pillar of blinding light and smoke that rose from one of the houses beneath me. My sweating

hands gripped the controls and I fell, pulling the control back as I did so. Another boom ripped through the air and this time a towering mass of golden light lit up the surrounding city streets as it rose direfully up through the sky. Golden raindrops pounded on my visor and cockpit as, again and again more bombs struck the ground, each one manifesting a new glimmering haze of light. By now my shock had gotten the better of me, and I was propelled forwards into a second plane in my horror, my ears ringing from the huge cacophony of explosions that now filled the once quiet night air. I could hear an earsplittingly loud scraping noise as my wing burst into flame. Smoke filled my view along with the constant blinding flashes and streaming raindrops, and I began to lose balance. I started to fall, gripping the controls for dear life. As I plummeted through the blazing array of fire, smoke and rain in a dwindling nosedive, I could hear now closer than ever the relentless pounding of bomb after bomb hitting against the firm surface of the shattered streets. I was brought down to the ground in an almighty crash and as I hit the floor of my jet, my seatbelt ripped viciously and the cockpit shattered. Darting flecks of debris and glass flew every which way and one struck my leg with an ominous plunging noise. Another scraped against my chest and my uniform was stained in a sudden splatter of deep crimson. Staggering, I hurtled out of my plane and fell to my knees, barely able to remain upright. A bomb then landed a few feet away

from me, and the shock thrust me into a nearby car. Blinded by light and blood, I stood up, shaking and stared over at the closest building to me, a house by the looks of it. Though it was hard to tell now. I sprinted desperately through the haze of light and thrust myself through the splintered door before me.

My chest searing with pain, I staggered upright next to the splintered table next to me, only to feel a burning gash tearing across my right foot. Caught by surprise, I made as though to fall again but this time I remained standing. I had heard something over all the muffled bombing and flying. Footsteps.

Then gunshots.

Then, as one, a stampede of soldiers dressed in green thrust out of the flames, accompanied by a rising, flaring cluster of speeding jets. One by one, our own bombers attacked, as a volley of shots sounded obstreperously, darting both at our fleet of bombers, and at the now thousands of British jets flying through the golden night sky. It soon became apparent that we were both outmatched and outnumbered, ten to one. Planes dropped from the sky like flies, only adding to the discordant anthem of blasting sound and crinkling flame I had been enduring. Eventually, the rest of our men came to their senses and sped back to the inky black waters of the coast, rippling them as they darted in a speedy retreat. A few more planes fell out of the sky with a sickening thud. A few more screams could be heard. But the din of bombing, thudding and yelling

was soon soused. And all that was left now was a barren street, encircled still in a swirling mass of flickering flames. Cheers sounded. A celebration emitted from the last few standing houses as dazed townsfolk exited their homes and bunkers cautiously to view the battlefield. It became apparent, that victory had now become a false hope.

May 12, 1941

5:02 a.m.

I was woken by a small sliver of orange sunlight. Dazed, I staggered to my feet again, a trickle of blood still oozing slowly through my shirt, dyeing my uniform redder and redder as I watched. I was not sure how much time had passed, but the sun could now be seen rising above the murky remnants of the once-standing street. Looking up, I saw a small clump of green, apparently getting closer and closer to me. A gun held, promptly in its trembling hands. They were searching the rubble, the rubble merely a few metres away from me. I knew that I had to act fast if I was going to survive this. I picked up my gun, and crouched behind the towers of debris now scattered around the city streets. Still half blinded, my eyes only able to muster a blurry, distorted representation of what actually stood in front of me, I took aim.

Before I knew what I had done, my hand was thrust backwards by the sudden recoil as a loud bang burst through the air, and the nearby walls of the standing houses were momentarily lit up once

again. Not by sunlight, but by the flash that exited the barrel of my gun. There was a grunt of pain, and then the light left the street again as a loud thump rang out. It was not louder than the gunshot, in fact not even half as loud, but the unearthly noise that had rang from it seemed to spread across the city like wildfire. It was then that I noticed that the piles of debris had now been dyed a dark, ruby red, and a small scarlet river protruded slowly from behind the shattered rubble, glistening softly under the purple glaze of the sunrise. I felt a sudden jolt in my stomach, which made me clutch my chest. Not in pain, but in guilt. In disgust.

It was then that I realised that I did not want to continue fighting this war for any longer, as too much damage had already been done. I walked up slowly atop the pile of debris that now surrounded the remains of the city streets, and stood up as high as I could, perched on the rubble like a bird on a branch. In all but a minute, a distant soldier had already seen me, and he began to walk, crouched in my direction. Another loud bang burst from a gun, but this time it did not belong to me. A razor-sharp bullet pierced my chest, causing me to fall backwards onto the cobble. My breath shaking, I laid myself down gently onto the dirty ground, in a small garnet puddle. Relieved, I let myself drift off into blackness, finally at peace, and slept. Only this time, I was not to wake again.

May 12, 1941

5:11 a.m.

Another soldier is lost to the Second World War, one of many, with many more to come. Neither side gained nor lost anything through this death - but the soldier's family friends and loved ones had.

While a solitary life may seem insignificant to the countries fighting, it means the world to the people closest to it, those who hold relationships with them. And it seems absurd that that relationship can be decimated in a second, with just the pull of a trigger.

Remains

Alexander Bailey

Nathan Smith slowly walked through the unusual hallways of the unknown ship. His wrecked, polo shirt sat undisturbed, while his baggy trousers rustled with every step he took. His body was riddled with scars, blood dribbled calmly from his face, yet he still had his catchy smile.

‘Is that all you can do?’ he managed to cough out.

The alien ship’s walls rattled around him as a strange, ugly creature shoved him. The creature was tall – maybe even seven foot, Nate guessed. Its skin was scaly and coloured with a disgusting grey. It murmured something to itself quietly and continued onwards.

Nate wondered what it had been like before the war had broken out fifty years ago. Earth had been overwhelmed by the alien’s advanced technology. The war had been lost within days. Humanity had been enslaved and massacred. The alien’s only weakness seemed to have been their delicate skin.

An automatic door smoothly opened in front of him. It was a metallic purple with a white *X* and sensors on top. It reminded Nate of his sister. Her favourite colour had been purple. They had both been captured together, because of the alien’s

abnormally strong hearing. He wondered if she was still alive. His thoughts travelled back to his current position. He played with a sharp glass shard in his pocket he had swiped up earlier. The creature pushed him through the door, but Nate hesitated. The creature pushed him again, this time with much more force. Nate fell to the cold, dusty floor. Nate climbed up slowly and suddenly jerked the glass shard into the creature's long, giraffe-like neck.

Dark, oily blood leaked out and fell to the floor, where Nate had been moments before.

'Didn't expect that, huh big guy?' Nate laughed as he kicked the corpse. Nate quickly ducked behind cover as another one of the creatures strolled by in a parallel corridor. He didn't notice Nate or the corpse. He wore sparkly purple armour and a strangely shaped helmet on his head. He didn't smell like the other creature. It was a smell Nate had never smelt before.

'He smells of power,' Nate thought to himself.

Nate slipped off his shoes to avoid being heard. The creature was talking to himself. Nate didn't understand much of the alien languages, but he was able to make out *Engine Room*.

'Perfect,' Nate thought.

He then carefully and methodically began following it. He ensured the alien couldn't see or hear him. He wouldn't let himself get captured again.

Nate kept his distance as he quietly followed. He was still unsure if he could do it. He had read about

the alien engines before. He was quite familiar with them - big, sensitive cores that had to be handled with care. He had heard stories about the same cores being used as weapons at the peak of the war. Destroying this ship would cause a chain reaction throughout the fleet. Humanity would have a chance. But at what cost... Nate was conflicted. He would be killing millions of humans on the ships - his sister, and himself. It was suicide.

Eventually, he and the creature made it to the engine room. It was unlike anything he had ever seen before - the room was massive. It had hundreds of the engine cores running along the right side. The creature had been sent to check-up on some other creatures who were meant to be doing checks on the cores. Instead, they had been feeding on a rotten human corpse. The smell of rotten flesh made Nate gag. He covered his nose with his right hand. The creature Nate had followed pulled a whip out from around his waist. The other creatures began shrieking like nothing Nate had ever heard before. This was Nate's chance. They couldn't possibly hear him over that. He ran from the left side of the room where he had been, to the right side, next to the engine cores. Nate couldn't do it. He refused. It would kill millions of the people he so badly wanted to help. His sister might still be alive onboard one of the other ships...

Nate's thought felt like they were attacking each other. His head seemed like it was about to explode. He had to do it, he concluded. He raised his right

hand, which was still placed on his nose, and jabbed it into the core.

‘Please work,’ he said, then his body was blown to literal pieces. Starting with his right-hand, pain seared through his body. Blood splattered over the walls; his insides turned outside, and he died. The explosion had ripped through his skin, piece by piece, causing his last moment in life to be unbearably painful.

He had failed.

Mystery

Filip Jasinski

I started crawling in the snowy leaves, making as little noise as possible. I looked through the scope and saw soldiers relaxing thinking they were safe. I watched them for a while and nothing was going on, I could not see my target anywhere yet. I waited for hours and still no sign of him. However, I stayed a little longer just in case something did happen. Suddenly everyone started running and shouting in Russian. I did not understand what they were saying. I saw that some people started trying to attack others. This scared me so I thought about running until helicopters began to hover above the area dropping bombs on the camp. At this point I knew that someone did my job for me, I headed back to base without being seen or followed.

I reported back to the general and he said to keep a close eye on the rest of the camps when I go on my missions. He told me to look for similarities in the circumstances leading up to the panic if one happens again. I said that I would do my best. I went to go watch every day for a couple of weeks and still have not had any opportunities to get a clean shot with nobody around and other days where I would not even see him for a split second. One day when I

came back from my recon mission horror struck there was blood everywhere, dead bodies of soldiers scattered the surrounding area of the camp and many in the camp. I saw some writings out of blood on the walls saying, 'No one believed it was possible until it happened.' I was confused until I saw it. Dead bodies of a mysterious creature and broken parts of what looked like an advanced technology. A helicopter landed to look for any survivors and I was the only one left, the rest already escaped. Nobody said a word on the way back to the airport in Moscow. I was offered five hundred million dollars and retirement at the age of 26 to not say a word about what I saw. I must have been the only person with memory of what I saw.

Five years later

Time has passed since it happened. I have a family that some could call the American dream. Nothing out of the ordinary has been happening since, unless the government is good at hiding it. Some secret agents do come by every now and then to ask if anything has changed with me. I was only told that they have been conducting experiments on the bodies and dead creatures. The broken pieces of advanced technology looked like some sort of batteries, but I still cannot be sure since I am not one of the mysterious creatures. I have heard rumours that they might be some type of alien species. I began to think about whether I should start going to the gym. I started to get a little out of

shape so I might as well. Suddenly, I got a phone call. I remember changing my ringtone for all my contacts except for one, and it was that ringtone. However, it was not who I expected it to be. It was the president calling me to inform me that they might need me for some tests.

I had to say goodbye to my family because I was about to get tested by the military for about a fortnight. I was nervous but prepared. When I arrived, I had to be disinfected through several different secure disinfection points. I had full trust in the scientists. I was shocked to hear that I am not supposed to be alive right now. Everybody in the vicinity of the dead alien-like bodies without a form of protection experienced side effects from extreme radiation apart from me. Most people either lost limbs or their lives. This interested me and I began to examine the bodies with protective gear this time. Every time I looked at what I believed to be their eyes I began to get chills down my spine. It was as if I had seen them before somewhere until I realized. I remembered the words that my parents had told me when I was more grown up. When I was around nineteen years old my parents told me that they were scared because they thought I had been possessed since I used to doodle weird disturbing images when I was bored in class. The memories started to fly back into my head. I started to realize that these creatures were from my dreams. However, my memories with them were very vague. I told the scientists and the expressions on their

faces made me rethink my decision of telling them. They told me to tell them everything I knew about the aliens. Suddenly, disaster struck the aliens began to wake up as I was talking. They began to surround me and the scientists. We had no time to react. They began to repeat, 'The worst is yet to come.'

Evil Bob

Dev Joshi

Bob is about to rob a store! He hasn't eaten anything for the last 3 days. Bob has never shoplifted, his parents taught him that stealing was dreadful. He was extremely poor since he lost his job as a cobbler. He hasn't paid his rent for the last five months. Bob was going to get evicted from his house soon because he didn't have any money to pay his rent. He was compelled to shoplift, so he decided to buy a gun. Bob didn't have enough money to buy an actual gun because it costs \$499, so he chose the Fortnite Nerf Gun which was \$39.99.

Bob was ready to rob. He went to the city centre to rob a store. As he took his Nerf gun out to shoot the shopkeeper, suddenly a car crash took place. A red car was going fast, that it flew in the sky and crashed into a billboard with a beautiful picture of a lady advertising a hairspray.

DOOSHHH! Everyone on the street started to run because they heard a gunshot. The blind guy acted like he was blind, but he wasn't. He shot a businessman with a suitcase with a lot of money in it (about \$1 billion). The blind man started to run with the suitcase. Bob saw the man running with the suitcase, so he decided to shoot him in the eyes. The

blind guy started crying, he was dying from pain. After a while he realized

that the suitcase was gone, he couldn't see anything since he became blind after bob shot him in the eyes. Bob took a bike from a child so he could travel faster.

Bob cycled all the way over to Ireland, he didn't want to waste any money on flights. He settled in Kerry and bought a bungalow, Lamborghini, a 72' TV, Xbox and an iPhone 13 pro mini.

After six years, the blind guy arrived at his house. He knocked on the door, bob opened the door for him. He was shocked to see him after a long time. The blind guy had eye surgery so he could fight Bob. The blind took his water gun out and started shooting Bob, they both had a scarp.

No one knows what happened, but people still think that they're having a scrap to this day. The endless scrap went on for seven years. They kept bandaging themselves so they could keep on with the fight. One day, Bob got sick of the scrap, he pulled his Nerf gun out and shot the blind man.

Bob won the fight, he went to McDonald's to celebrate his victory.

Visitors From Another World

Thomas Fegan

It was a peaceful Texas night in the Summer of 1955. The moon was bright and full, the stars were shining and all the animals on the farm were sound asleep. And then a flash of white light exploded over the farm, through all the windows in the houses and every wooden crack in the barn, followed by a high-pitched echoing sound.

Beth slowly opened her eyes, sat up and brushed her hair out of her face. What in the world was that noise? Why hadn't it woken up the rest of the house? Mama and Papa would have been down in the kitchen yelling for her to get down there by now.

'One of the cows must have broken the damn fence again,' Beth whispered to herself as she pulled on her white nightgown and grabbed the lantern she kept at her bedside locker.

Heading downstairs, Beth grabbed a match from the kitchen cupboard and lit the lantern with it, then made her way out the door to see how much damage the cows had caused. What she found was no cow, however instead she saw a green skinned, black eyed being with a large head and skeletal figure. The fence was not broken either. Beth thought she might still be groggy from just having woken up, so she

lifted the lantern higher to get a better look. The figure, who had previously been watching the cows inside the fence, turned around and focused its large black eyes on Beth. It outstretched its hand and motioned for Beth to come closer, which she did.

As if things couldn't get any stranger for Beth, a brilliant white light surrounded her and the strange figure, slowly lifting them through the air. Beth looked up and realized there was a hole in the sky where the light had appeared. She didn't have time to think about this though, as she and the figure were quickly floating through it, into what felt like another world. She looked below her, expecting to see grass and trees, but found instead that they had stopped floating and were now standing in a large white room with other strange green beings. What looked like very advanced machines were everywhere, as well as a small white bed, akin to that of a hospital bed. The being gently squeezed Beth's shoulder and pointed to the bed, as if directing her to sit on it. Beth followed the instruction, and almost as soon as she touched the sheets, the beings gathered around her and began to examine her. One felt around her skin, poking and pulling as if to see what it was made of. Another took out something that looked like scissors and cut off a few strands of her hair. Others simply stared curiously at her for a few seconds, before turning to their comrades and chattering away in bizarre and otherworldly language.

After five minutes of being thoroughly examined by the strange green creatures, the one Beth had met in the field slowly walked up to her and placed its fingers on her forehead, and Beth fell into a deep sleep.

Immediately after the human female had fallen unconscious, the aliens tidied her up and lay her comfortably on the floor. Next, they wiped her mind with the memory wiping device. Finally, the floor opened again and she was slowly levitated back into her bed in the house through the window she had left open. She would have no recollection whatsoever of these events, at least not until the aliens decided that humanity should know about their existence.

With the experiment over, and the specimen safely back in their habitat, the aliens flew away in their spacecraft with the speed of a falling star, to report.

THE END

Tank!

Richard O'Donovan

1971. The Cold War was raging between the two superpowers: The United States and the Soviet Union. One of the wars that were currently happening around this time was The Vietnam War. Vietnam was split into two: The Communist Northern Side controlled by the USSR, China & North Korea, while the Southern Side was controlled by the US. One of the bases that the US had on the South side was an army base that was about 10km away from the dangerous and deadly border. The base was operated and owned by Governor Joe Daniels. His second-in-command was Thomas Kelly. Who knew that one day, these two would be roped into the greatest adventure of their lives...

On April 17th, 1971, a black car arrived at the gates of the US Military Base. In the car was a UN representative, who was asked by the United Nations to inspect the base. He arrived at the main building that held Daniels & Kelly. He walked into the room and was greeted by Daniels and Kelly, along with other soldiers in the room.

'Mr. Inspector!' Daniels greeted. 'How are you--'

The inspector walked right past him. He looked around at the room, which was bombarded with pictures and medals, as well as some, shall we say, 'explosive weaponry.' The inspector grabbed one of the bombs on the shelf to his right. It was a very large, golden bullet. He looked at it, and looked back at Daniels and... laughed. He began to laugh and jitter around with the bomb. Daniels and Kelly looked at each other, confused, but then they just joined in without knowing what was happening. After 20 continuous seconds of laughing, the Inspector finally said something.

'Damn it, man!' he said while still laughing uncontrollably. 'This is what I'm talkin' about, man!'

'Wait... really?'

'Hell, yeah! A thick, golden plate with enough explosives to blow up an old women's orphanage!'

'Yeah, you probably shouldn't hold that. It might explode.'

'You know what? You're damn right!'

The Inspector then proceeded to open the window and throw the bomb out.

'So...'

KA-BOOM!!!!

'...what are we talking about?'

'Uh, I was going to show you around Mr....'

'Adams,' he said. 'Call me Adams.'

He and Daniels shook hands as they left the room with Kelly following suit.

Daniels and Adams walked around as they toured the base, with Kelly following from behind.

‘That’s the building where we keep the explosives,’ he explained thoroughly. ‘That’s the building where the cafeteria is. And that’s the building where we keep the donkeys.’

Daniels and Adams turned left and went into the Tank building.

‘And this... this is where we build all the tanks. This is our tank powerer: Michael Caruso Robinson. Hey, Mike!’

‘Yeah?’ he replied.

‘Come down here! We have someone for you to meet!’

Mike climbed down the tank and met with Mr. Adams.

‘Pleasure to meet you sir.’

‘Pleasure to meet you too!’ Adams greeted.

‘Now, Mike here. He has the 2nd most important job in the entire base. He powers the tanks using this.’

Joe grabbed a small, white bottle that looked like a tiny Gatorade.

‘This is Tank Powerer. One drop into the gas tank, it will automatically power it up.’

‘Why not just use gas?’

‘Trust me,’ he said as he put his hand on Mr. Adams’ shoulder. ‘Gas was so November 17th, 1970, on a Tuesday at 7:40PM.’

Daniels smiled at him.

‘Okay.. I’m gonna’ leave now.’

‘Wait up!’

Kelly followed them as Mike sighed and continued pouring a drop into the tank.

‘Well, Joe, I must say,’ he began to say, ‘after further inspection, I say that this is the damn finest place in Vietnam.’

‘Well, sir,’ Daniels began to brag, ‘I keep the place as efficient as--’

BANG!!!!

A loud explosion was heard.

‘What the hell was that?!?!?’ Adams yelled.

‘The Soviets!!!’ Daniels screamed. ‘THEY’RE ATTACKING!!! Kelly, microphone!!!’

‘Yes, sir!’

While Kelly ran off towards the enemy, who were in a large, green tank with large bombs inside of it, Daniels got a microphone that was right beside him.

‘MEN... TO YOUR BATTLE STATIONS!!! GET THE TANKS, GET THE TRUCKS, GET THE CLOWN CARS WITH SOLDIERS!!!’

People ran around with massive golden shells in their arms and legs and one man ran around with a black bomb on his head. He fell over and crashed into the ice cream truck.

CRASH!!!

Daniels saw a bomb from the tank dash towards him.

‘Holy ****!!!’

He ran out of the building and the bomb... well... blew it up!

BOOM!!!

‘Load the cannon!!!’ Kelly ordered.

‘Yes, sir!’ the clowns said as they put the cannonball dressed as a clown into the cannon.

‘Ready... **FIRE!!!**’

They shot the cannonball right out the cannon and it hit the tank right on, blowing it up.

‘**STRIKE!!!! LET’S GO!!!**’

Daniels walked over towards Mr. Adams.

‘Wasn’t that great, Mr.--’

Unfortunately, Daniels left Adams in the building that was shot down by the tank, and now he was under the rubble.

‘Uh oh.’

‘Please, sir!’ Daniels pleaded. ‘I can explain! It was an accident! A response! I didn’t have time to--’

‘Shut up! Shut up!’ Adams stopped. ‘You left me to die during an attack, number 1! Number 2, the cafeteria is highly unhygienic and the food that they serve there is crap, and number 3, people here have a high risk of dying because they have freaking bombs on their heads!!!’

‘Your point being?’

‘**THIS PLACE IS ABSOLUTE CRAP!!!! I’M GOING TO TELL THE UNITED NATIONS TO CUT YOU OFF!!! GOOD DAY, SIR!!!!!!**’

Adams slammed the door of his car (which broke all the glass) and left for the airport. Daniels was devastated and he had had enough.

Later that day, he called everyone to the meeting room.

‘Just a few hours ago,’ he began to explain, ‘we were attacked by those b**t**ds on the other side. We lost some precious money-- I mean, people. So my plan is to counter-attack them! On the eve of tomorrow night, we invade the border and blow it up with explosives! Then, we invade the communist bases and kill everyone there! And finally, we shoot the president of the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev and North Korean Supreme Leader, Kim Il-Sung and win the war! NOW WHO’S WITH ME???’

Everyone shouted out, ‘YEAH!!!!!’

‘Start training tomorrow!!!’

At 2:59 AM, Mike was put on tank duty, to power the tanks at night to be ready for tomorrow, and, of course, he was not happy about it. However, when he was about to pour a drop of Tank Powerer into the gas tank, he heard a loud noise and the entire small mini bottle got stuck in the gas tank...upside-down. The entire bottle liquid went into the gas tank and it absorbed into the tank. Mike was panicking and freaking the flip out.

‘Oh, crap. Oh, crap. Oh, crap. Oh, crap. Oh, crap. Oh, crap!!!’

He closed the lid of the gas tank anyway and noticed that it was 3:00 AM.

Might as well go to bed, he thought. Knowing he might get caught by Kelly, he slept in a chair beside the tank and shut the door. He would not be able to predict that what would happen tomorrow would be the craziest day of his life.

At 6:00 AM in the morning, Mike woke up, only to see the tank's main gun pointed right at his face.

'DAAAHHH!!' he yelled. He got up and ran towards the door, only to realize that it might've been an epic prank pulled by his friends.

'Ha Ha,' he laughed sarcastically. 'Very goddamn funny, guys.'

The tank's main gun went down to his nose.

'Uhhh, g-guys?'

The tank's main gun went under his... uhhh, scooped him up and dropped him into the room where the tanks are driven. When he entered, he saw a black screen with red letters, saying: 'HELLO.'

'What the hell is this?!

'WELL, I'M SORRY FOR BEING POLITE, TIGHT-***!!!'

'Wait, do you have a voice?'

'NO. AS FAR AS I'M AWARE, I DON'T HAVE A VOICE, WHICH IS BULLCRAP.'

As the tank continued blabbering, Mike noticed a switch that read, 'voice'. He went down and turned it on.

FLICK!

'--AND THAT IS WHY-- WAIT. I CAN HEAR MYSELF TALK. I HAVE A DAMN VOICE! HELL, YEAH!!! BEAT THAT, CHAD!!!'

'Question,' Mike asked. 'Are you a male, or a female?'

'THAT DEPENDS,' the tank replied. 'CHECK UNDER THE SEAT AND INTO MY MACHINERY.'

Mike looked under, but then realized something.

‘Ew, gross! That’s disgusting!!!’

‘YOU ASKED IT.’

‘Does your gun still work?’

‘LET’S FIND OUT!’

The tank automatically pressed a button and...
KA-BOOM!!!!!!

A large, dusty, grey puff of smoke submerged,
but no one noticed.

‘We should probably leave.’

‘UNDERSTOOD.’

The tank then proceeded to crash out the front
door of the garage.

‘YOU BROKE THE GODDAMN DOOR!!!’

‘I JUST WOKE UP! I’M NOT GONNA’ BE PERFECT!!!’

‘Alright, just go backwards.’

‘OK.’

The tank then flew backwards, went back into the
garage... and then crashed through the back wall.

CRASH!!!

‘REALLY?!?!?’

‘YOU WANT ME TO GO FAST?!?!? **FINE!!!!**’

The tank drifted sideways and then crashed
through the front gate of the military base. It was
now driving backwards.

‘TURN AROUND!!! **TURN AROUND!!!!**’

The tank did just that and he went around, now
driving towards the Vietnamese DMZ (Demilitarized
Zone).

‘SO...,’

‘Michael. Michael Robinson.’

‘SO, MIKE,’ Tank asked. ‘WHERE ARE YOU FROM?’
‘I was born in Italy,’ he replied, ‘but I’ve lived in America for most of my life.’

‘WHAT’S... AMERICA?’

‘It’s this wonderful place with bright lights, amazing and stunning landscapes, tanks and machine guns. It’s great.’

‘WHY DON’T WE GO THERE?’

‘We can’t. The only shipments come from North Vietnam, which sends army men and tanks to attack them.’

‘THEN LET’S GO TO NORTH VIETNAM!’
‘We can’t do that either. The border is heavily guarded and-- wait we’re not GOING through the border, are we?’

They stopped right at the border.

‘I AM A TANK, RIGHT?’

‘Yes?’

‘SOOOOOO.....’

The tank aimed his main gun at the border wall/fence/hell and...

BANG!!!!

Bricks flew everywhere and they sped through, not looking back.

‘Holy ****! That was amazing!’

‘IT’S NOT OVER YET, ROBINSON. WE’RE GOING TO AMERICA!!!’

The two sped down the road, as they were about to embark on the journey of a lifetime.

Meanwhile, back at the base, the soldiers were very confused, but Governor Daniels was furious.

‘WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED HERE?!?’ he screamed, his veins visible from anger.

Kelly came running towards him.

‘Sir!’ he said. ‘According to the security footage, Michael drove a tank out of the base at 6 in the morning!’

‘Oh yes, that explosion. I thought it was someone blowing up a bath bomb down the hall.’

‘I thought you farted!’

Daniels got incredibly p***ed off.

‘Alright, men! I believe from the footage, I think he’s going to America!’

‘Not just a he, sir. A THEY. The tank is alive!’

‘I’ll see it when I believe it. Now men, WE’VE GOT A CRIMINAL TO CATCH!!!’

The men cheered, got into their tanks, trucks and clown cars and headed off for the port!

Meanwhile, Mike and the Tank finally arrived at the San Francisco Bay Area Port, where the box that they were in, opened and they dashed out, racing across the highways of San Francisco.

‘Tank,’ Mike began to say, ‘this is San Francisco!’
‘WOW!!!’

‘But the real place you might wanna’ go... is New York City!’

‘OOOH! THAT SOUNDS NICE! LET’S GO THERE!’

‘Seriously? That’s like a 10 day drive!’

‘WE’RE. GOING. TO NEW YORK. OR ELSE. I WILL. BLAST YOUR ASS TO IT.’

‘OK! OK! Jeez!’

So they left San Francisco and headed for New York, at the same time that Daniels and the US Military arrived at San Francisco.

After 10 long continuous hours of driving, the two arrived at a payphone.

‘WHY THE HELL ARE WE STOPPING?’ Tank asked.

‘I need to call Daniels,’ Mike replied. ‘To see if he’s mad.’

Tank, then, heard some noises from the distance.

‘Ah, ****. I don’t have any money.’

‘WE CAN GET SOME MONEY FROM OVER THERE.’

Tank pointed at a Tank Fighting Competition. Prize: \$1,000.

‘I don’t know about this, Tank. You might die.’

‘DUDE. I’M A TANK. I THINK I CAN SURVIVE IT.’

So Tank tried to grab a pen, but Mike picked it up and wrote his name. The receptionist lady took the paper, looked at it and talked to Tank and Mike.

‘OK,’ she began to say. ‘You are going up against the Shredder. The meanest, roughest, most ruthless tank driver in the world.’

‘When is it?’ Mike asked.

‘5 minutes.’

‘WHAT?!?!? We don’t even get time to train?!?!?’

‘...no.’

So, the two rushed towards the playing field, which looked similar to the layout of the map from the 1974 Atari game, Tank! So they got themselves

prepared and stopped right down in the south middle of the map, when suddenly...

SKIP! BANG! CRASH! BOOM! POW!

A large, ten-ton tank came out of the shadows. His name? THE SHREDDER!!!

'Let's see who will win this epic game of tank and tank!' yelled the announcer. 'On the north is the heavyweight tank champion of the world, THE SHREDDER!'

People cheered and clapped.

'And on the south side is... a newcomer. His name is-- wait.'

The announcer looked at the script and then said his name.

'MICHAEL ROBINSON!!!!'

People didn't do anything. They didn't clap or cheer. They just sat there, in silence.

'Well, that's rude. OK, Tank. I need you to listen to me.'

'OK.'

'I need to control you.'

'AAAAND I'M DONE LISTENING.'

'Listen to me! All we have to do is try and shoot down Shredder's tank and-- are you even listening?!?!?'

'I WOULD IF I CARED.'

'Just let me control you!!!'

'ROBINSON!!!'

He banged his head on the tank hatch.

'Ow, ****! Yes?'

'We're starting.'

‘OK.’

He went back down and continued talking to Tank.

‘Do you want to see New York or not? This may be our only shot at getting it, so follow my lead and you’ll be able to see it, okay?’

‘...OK.’

‘Good. Now let’s go kick some metal ***!’

A loud gun sound was heard and the battle had begun.

The two tanks sneaked around the playing field, stalking each other, waiting to take the first shot. The Shredder saw Tank and shot it.

BOOM!!!

‘And it looks like Shredder shot at Mike but missed!’

‘Damn!’ Shredder said. The two tanks continued chasing before Mike shot towards Shredder, but suddenly he launched a bullet out of the tank and it hit Tank right in the nose! **BAM!!!!**

‘OW!!!’ Tank yelled. ‘MY NOSE!!! YOU SON OF A B***H!!!’

‘Tank,’ Mike said. ‘Calm down. Relax.’
‘DON’T FREAKING TELL ME TO RELAX!!!! I’M COMIN’ FOR YOU, SHREDDER!!!!!’

The audience was looking confused. Were there two people in that tank? While the audience was thinking, Tank pointed his gun at the Shredder and blasted the gun away, hitting Shredder’s tank’s left wheel, not destroying it, but a piece of it flying away.

‘OH WHAT IS THIS?!! The Shredder has been hit for the first time in his career!’

Mike and Tank cheered, but their victory wouldn’t last long, as the Shredder had one final trick up his oil pressure. I mean, sleeves.

KA-BLOOEY!!!!

Tanks’ left wheels had flown everywhere. Sparks had risen from the destroyed left wheel. People were gasping from surprise.

‘OH MY GOD!!! The Shredder has just knocked out one of Mike’s wheels--’

‘WE GET IT, SHERLOCK!!! WE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED!!!’ Tank screamed.

‘Tank, calm down! Let’s just give up.’

‘NO!!!! WE STARTED THIS AND NOW I’M GONNA’ FINISH IT!!!’

‘Wait, what?’

Tank launched Mike out of the seat and into the sky, before he landed on the judges table with a massive CRASH!!!!

‘HOLY HELL!!! The Tank has a mind of its own!!!’

Tank aimed his gun towards the announcer and shot him, making him and his tall building collapse onto the ground. After he did that, Tank sped after towards Shredder, crashing into him, which made pieces fly everywhere. When Mike woke up, he saw Tank rampaging after Shredder, shooting at him, crashing into him, before he made the final touch and rammed him through the playing walls, before tipping him and his tank over a large 30ft (914.4cm) hill, tumbling down before he crashed onto the

ground, Shredder barely escaping before his tank blew up all over the place.

‘BOO-YAH!!!’ Tank screamed, before he turned around and saw a large group of people swarm towards him.

‘UH-OH.’

‘Is that thing... alive?’ the announcer asked.

‘NO. I’M NOT ALIVE. DAMMIT!!!’

Everyone gasped. Michael ran towards him.

‘Sir, you need to get rid of that thing!’

‘He’s my tank and I can do what I want with him! So do I win?’

‘No.’

‘Oh. COME ON TANK! GET TO THE MONEY!!!’

‘HEY!!! GET BACK HERE, ROBINSON!!!’

The two ran towards the money, scooped all of it up and continued running, before reaching the place that they were supposed to.

‘Quick, Tank, give me some money!’

‘NO ARMS?’

‘Oh. Right. Sorry.’

So Michael got the money, went to the payphone, put the money in the payphone and FINALLY called Daniels.

‘Hello?’ he said.

‘Hello, sir. Commander Robinson here. So you’re not mad at me, are you?’

‘Oh, of course not! Why would I be mad at you? You’re too nice to be mad at!’

‘Really,

‘Really? Thank you, sir!’

‘No problem!’

He hung up... right behind a bush with hundreds of tanks.

‘OK,’ he began to tell Kelly, ‘I’ve told him that we’re not gonna’ kill him, except that we’re gonna’ kill him. Ready?’

‘Ready, sir,’ Kelly replied.

‘Good. BLOW THE WHISTLE!!!’

Kelly blew the whistle and hundreds of soldiers came pouring out of the bushes, pointing their guns, tanks & balloons at Mike and the Tank.

‘So, I’ve heard that that tank has a mind of its own?’

‘No!’ Mike protested with his hands up and a gun pointed at his back. ‘That’s crazy talk!’

‘Wanna’ bet?’

Daniels held up a picture of the tank moving by itself. Mike gulped.

‘That tank is defective. It has to be destroyed.’

‘NO!!!!’ Tank yelled as he shot one of the bombs, blowing it up as Mike got into Tank and they escaped. A large puff of smoke blurred their vision. When the smoke disappeared, Daniels saw Mike and Tank driving into the Nevada desert.

‘GET THEM!!!!!’ Daniels ordered as he and the military got in their tanks and clown cars and chased after Mike and Tank.

After days of continuous shooting and chasing across the continental US, Mike, the Tank & the US Military arrived in New York City.

‘We’re here!!!’ Mike said to Tank.

‘WOW!’ he said in amazement. ‘IT’S BETTER THAN I COULD EVER IMAGINED!!!’

‘TANK!!! TANK!!! YOU’RE DRIVING OFF THE DAMN ROAD!!!’

‘WOAH!!!’

The two got across the Brooklyn Bridge and finally made it to Manhattan. Mike got out, loaded the small machine gun at the top and began shooting at the US Military.

‘MIKE!!! LOOK OUT!!!’

Mike turned around and saw that they were about to drive into a few stores. At this point, the police and SWATs were now chasing after them, as well as the tank fighters, pedestrians and FBI agents. CRASH! BOOM! POW! After escaping the stores, they flew into an intersection, crashed into a helicopter that was taking off, which blew up and said helicopter CRASHED into a police car, which started a chain reaction of car crashes, which one of the parts of the car flew into the building that the tank had crashed through which crashed through a window and BLEW UP THE BUILDING. Mike and the Tank cheered, before looking over and crashing into the doors of a cinema. They continued driving through it before they crashed through a wall and into the seats of a cinema room playing Summer of 42’ (1971). The NYPD, the SWATs, the US Military, the Tank Fighters, the FBI AND CIA Agents arrived at the scene, pointing their guns at Mike and the Tank.

‘Mike,’ Daniels began to say. ‘We’re taking that tank from you and there’s nothing you can do about it. Also, you’re being sent to North Korea for your wrongdoings.’

‘You can’t kill it!’ Michael protested. ‘It’s the first ever automatic tank! You can’t kill him!’

‘Him?’ asked a moviegoer. ‘Prove it.’

Mike got out of the tank and walked away.

‘Hey, you dumb tank!’ He winked. ‘Listen to me you stupid piece of crap! If you’re alive, then shoot me!’

Tank’s main gun pointed at him and blew him to smithereens, which caused the entire cinema to collapse. Mike crawled into the tank, which went through the floor and took everyone with it. People ran out of the cinema as it crumbled down to nothing. Mike opened the tank hatchet door, and saw the destruction that Tank had caused. The moviegoer (now a skeleton) said: ‘Well, he’s alive.’

Daniels rose from the rubble and walked toward Mike. He was furious.

‘YOU MORON!!!! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOU HAVE CAUSED US?!?!? THE FATE OF THE VIETNAM WAR IS SEALED, YOU GREEDY, STUPID MOTHER*****!!!! US COMMUNISTS WILL WIN WAR!!! YOU STUPID AMERICAN!!!’

As he continued talking, Michael noticed something. ‘Oh my god! JOE DANIELS WORKS FOR THE COMMUNISTS!!!!!’

Everyone gasped.

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'Yes! It is true! I fooled you bumholes for us communists to win war!!! USSR is the greatest country in the world!!!'

The guards surrounded him and took him away.

'Okay, buddy, You're goin' back to North Vietnam!'

'Hey, kid.' the Inspector said. 'You did good.'

'AHEM!!!'

'Oh yeah. Tank too.'

He walked away as Mike and the Tank left the cinema, to go explore New York.

THE END!

Wake Up

Filip Jasinski

Wake up,' the doctor says, 'you've been in a coma for 192 years and we've kept you alive for all this time.'

The patient says, 'Why did you wake me up now and not earlier, what year is it?'

'It's the year 2391 where there are flying cars, robots, and humans have invented effective space travel', he explains. 'There are many things that were invented to help humans with their daily lives while you were asleep, could you please clench your fist and imagine the blood rushing through your veins for me please?'

The patient clenches his fist and feels a rush of adrenaline and strength. 'I feel like I'm back in my bodybuilding days.' The patient says.

The doctor is excited. 'My experiments are finally proving to be useful.' The doctor runs around the intensive care unit. The patient is smiling because he is finally awake, and he is happy that the doctor is happy. 'You can get up now after I unplug you from all of the machines and then we can do some paperwork and you can go off to your family.' The doctor explains. 'don't be shocked if they are

surprised to see you, they haven't seen you in about 200 years and they are your great grandchildren'

The patient begins to worry, 'what if they won't recognize me, what if they won't like me, how do I even find them?' The doctor thinks for a second. He looks at his arm and taps it in an extremely specific order and a little screen with a keyboard pops up. 'I can bring you to the nearest teleportation zone if you want and then I can put in the address from there' he says. The patient starts freaking out. He has never teleported before. The patient starts shivering and questioning the risks of teleportation; however, the doctor reassures him that everything will be ok. The patient is fine again and is very hyper.

The doctor explains that the reason that the patient was chosen for this experiment is that he met the specific criteria needed for this experiment to work. 'This hasn't crossed my mind up until now' The patient states. 'I feel in a lot less danger entering the outside world now that you are saying that I was chosen due to my great health. I was immensely strict on my diet, and I did not smoke or drink. In my opinion, I was I perfect shape!' The doctor sat there with a smile on his face, happy. He was now certain that he had made the right decision, testing, and working his whole life for this moment. The patient was ready to meet his family, even if they were not his kids directly. He was excited and filled out all the paperwork and told the

doctor he was ready to go and use a teleportation chamber for the first time.

They went to the teleportation station. 'This looks like a modernized train station with a few minor tweaks!' the patient exclaimed. The doctor was extremely excited to see the patient for one last time before they parted ways. He put in the address, backed away from the pod, and waved goodbye.

The patient was then instantly transported to his family's house. Or was he? He felt the air around him and the noise of flying cars far away and then he opened his eyes. 'What is this place? there's just a pile of dirt here!? Where am I?' The only thing the patient was looking at was a little pile of dirt next to a cardboard box on the sidewalk. He was shocked, scared and confused. Did his family all die and did the doctor lie to him? 'Did he just want to get rid of me?' he asked himself. The patient looks closer at the writing on the box. 'The dig out a diamond game!' it read. The patient realized that it was real diamonds that they were talking about. He turned around and saw a mansion over 3 times larger than the white house. The patient was in total shock. He looked down and saw he had a little card in the front pocket of his shirt. It was a futuristic ID that had many functions, some of which were credit card, Identification, drivers' license, pilot license, automatic updates and many more.

The mansion was HUGE! He was overjoyed knowing that he was just an idiot and that he did not have to live in a cardboard box. He looks at the

gate and sees a little card slot in one of the pillars on each side of the gate. He walks up to it and puts his card in and instantly gets teleported into his room. His family is RICH! He is happy. He walks down the long corridor and sees many relatives and tells them all about his life and how he got woken up out of his coma. Everyone was so excited to hear the news and learn about the advancements in technology. Everyone told him about how society works compared to how it used to work and he had many questions. They all spent hours talking about the changes in the world. They all partied and talked for hours until it was late at night.

Everyone went to their room and went to sleep. He woke up the next day and went outside and talked to many people asking them questions about the huge futuristic buildings that were built fifty years ago making him look crazy. He took a flying taxi to a coffee shop in the city. He was still so shocked every time he went around a corner because of everything looking fresh and brand new. He started to feel his front shirt pocket vibrating. He grabbed his ID out of it in panic as fast as he could. He dropped it by accident and had to pick it back up before he realized he was getting a phone call. He picked up and heard a happy familiar voice. It was the doctor, he was asking if the patient needed help adjusting to the world and to the environment but the patient said everything was fine and he just needed to experience more to learn more. A few months have passed living a care free

lifestyle while working at home. He did not have an actual job, so he just made projects for the house and built them as if he were a builder and architect at the same time. He was incredibly happy with the way he was living and his lifestyle. He had a consistent friendship with the doctor just to make sure nothing was going wrong.

The doctor had not told him one specific thing though. The doctor lied about being a doctor just to sound more professional and trustworthy. He is a scientist that completed many tests over the years on animals and humans but it finally worked on this patient. The scientist loves anatomy and learning about why humans and animals behave in the ways that they do. He is deeply passionate about learning and testing. He told the patient all of this after a year of them talking just so the patient could fully readjust to the world before being bombarded with this load of information a week after he was woken up because there was considerable risk of him going back into a coma after hearing the large chunk of information about how the world has changed. The doctor told the patient all about how he was dreaming of success for once in his life.

'I always wished that I would be successful in my experiments, just like how my parents wanted me to.' Said the doctor. The doctor still could not believe his accomplishment after all this time. Everything felt surreal to him. The doctor was making jokes with the patient that he is in a coma dreaming about all of this. The patient always found

a way to have a fun time in his new life, even if it was different from before. The world was not how it used to be at all. The rates of natural disasters plummeted. Tornadoes did not really do much damage because of the advances in building fortification. Low magnitude earthquakes did not do anything, they just made the ground shake. The high magnitude earthquakes could still do a large amount of damage in some areas. This is because of the advances in technology helping prevent the buildings from shaking. This reassured the patient of dying from any natural disasters because he lived inland and nowhere near a volcano. He was not scared of anything, and his life was all good. Nothing could really affect him because while he was in a coma, the doctor secured him by making him immune to every virus. The patient could live out the rest of his life perfectly fine, or so he thought.

The patient started to feel light headed constantly. Every treatment that should have worked did not. The patient was also very dizzy some days. The doctor tried to reassure him by saying these are long term side effects of being taken out from a coma. The patient started to feel very unwell. He started to consider dying because it would be less painful than what he is going through right now. The doctor tried to convince him not to do it saying it will be okay after a couple more weeks. The patient listened to the doctor but he had enough of it. He did not want to live like that,

constantly dizzy and lightheaded. He would rather die than live like that. The doctor kept trying to help the patient and cure whatever has happened to him but the patient had enough. The patient decided to kill himself. The patient said that he wanted to visit the doctor to have a chat. The doctor let him in and they talked for a while before the patient said he had to go use the bathroom. The patient injected his blood stream with the strongest poison. He died there in the bathroom. The doctor started to get worried when the patient had not been back for a while. He started with knocking on the door. After a while he tried to get any type of response by shouting and knocking. The doctor was afraid of what he was going to see behind the door. He broke down the door and saw the lifeless patient and died of shock. The doctor began to hear voices. And could hear a large group of people around him hurrying in panic. He could hear a lady crying of happiness while holding his hand and a young boy cheering 'he woke up.' He heard a heart monitor beeping and he finally realized what had happened.

A Tale of Vengeance and Freedom

Thomas Fegan

It had been several years since Anora's kingdom had been conquered. Several years since she had forced to listen to the cries of her people as she and the few members of the knighthood, who hadn't been slaughtered, fled. Several years since her father's betrayal by his most trusted knight, Lord Eric, known back then as Sir Eric. Ever since that night, she had been training and helping the other rebels get equipment by sneaking into the town every few weeks to steal armour, weapons, and horses.

Anora chuckled to herself as she hid in the bushes ten feet or so away from the gates of the town. Soon, the kingdom would be hers once again and Lord Eric would suffer the wrath of her vengeance.

'Something funny?' asked Avery, a friend and fellow knight.

'I'm just imagining the look on Eric's face as I drive my sword through his heart in a few minutes,' she replied.

'Let's get it over with, shall we?' he said with a grin.

'I'll race you the throne room,' she grinned back.

They ran out of the bushes and struck down the guards at the gates before they could comprehend what had happened to them. Unlocking the gates with the keys she had taken from one of the guards, Anora and Avery snuck through the town, occasionally taking down guards and knights who were in their path. Soon, Anora and Avery stood at the entrance to the throne room. Avery was to fire a flaming arrow into the sky to alert the rebels outside the town, while Anora confronted Lord Eric. But just as she was about pull open the doors to the throne room, Anora was hit in the back by a shield.

Looking up, Anora saw the face of the man she hated more than anyone she had ever met, Lord Eric.

‘You didn’t seriously think you could take back your kingdom from someone as formidable as I, did you?’ He said it with a serious and daunting voice, but Anora sensed scorn and disdain as well.

Avery stood with his bow drawn, standing uncertainly in front of them. He looked Anora in the eyes, who smiled encouragingly and pointed towards the doors leading outside. He nodded back and ran outside.

Anora swung the sword at Lord Eric’s feet, giving her the chance the spring back on her feet as he jumped to avoid losing a leg. Lord Eric forcefully struck Anora’s shield, attempting to knock her back on the ground. She slammed her shield against his chest, knocking the air out of him. She used his winded state to take a swing with her sword, but the knight turned conqueror was faster than she had

anticipated. He blocked the swing with his own sword. What was meant to have been a short brawl transformed into a deadly dance, as the two fought more and more viciously with each strike of their swords for what felt like a century.

Just as Anora was beginning to get tired, she heard the shouting of men and the clanging of steel against each other. Her fierce dedication changed to confidence. The rebels had arrived! Even if Lord Eric killed her, an army of vengeful soldiers would have his head before the night was finished. She fought even more ferociously than before, striking his sword so forcefully with her own that it broke.

Anora and Lord Eric stared at each other, Eric with a gaping mouth and fearful eyes, Anora with a smirk and vengeful, confident eyes. She kicked the broken sword out of his hand and swung furiously at him until he was backed against a large stained glass window, one of many in the hall. He had been driven to exhaustion. Anora looked at the window and Lord Eric, who knew from the lack of eye contact they had maintained for the entire fight, looked at it too. He looked back at Anora, who, just as realization of what was about to happen flooded his mind, kicked him out the window and to his death.

Anora dropped her sword and shield and sat on the ground. She grinned victoriously to herself. She had avenged her father. She had won back her kingdom and freed her people.

The End

Run

Rafe O'Midheach

As I ran as fast as I could through the woods behind the prison, I could feel my feet begin to bruise from the pain of the soles of my feet pounding into the ground over and over. The noise of the branches snapping beneath my feet. I was running so fast I only stopped when I realized I was halfway up my knee in water, and I had met a lake. I ran out of the water and realized how large the lake was in the pitch-black night sky with mist on top of it. I decided it would be best to stay near the lake as it is a source of water and food if necessary. I also felt quite fortunate when I saw what looked like an old, abandoned shack. Presumably where rowing boats used to be stored and I thought this could be a perfect place to sleep. As I was walking towards the shack, I had a stomach-dropping feeling when I realized this would be my life now. That I will never live the somewhat normal life I lived before prison. I momentarily regretted leaving prison and thought maybe if I did my time, I could live normally after even if I would not be released until after a life sentence.

I knew I deserved the time I was doing, I knew that, but it did not mean I had to do it. I walked into

the shack and soon realized it was very damp and was completely built out of wood with small holes all over presumably made by insects. it was certainly no place to live but for a night or two it would do. Now that I had temporary shelter the next thing, I needed was food and I was no hunter or gatherer, I decided I would worry about that first thing in the morning after what I hoped would be a good night's sleep, how was I supposed to know me damp wood and wet leaves does not make an ideal bed and mattress. reminded of my thoughts from the night before I knew I needed to find food and not just that but a source of food that could be used again. I could hear the beep of a car in the far distance every few minutes, so I thought it best I try follow it in hopes of finding a shop, this was a significant risk at the time as I did not know whether my escape had been public and if I would be recognized by the public or not. I was still in my prison uniform, which was not helpful, I stupidly decided to start walking in the direction of where I could hear the far away beeping while in my prison uniform which led to a chain of events most unfortunate. I began my descent into the woods basing my direction solely off where I could hear the beeping from with what felt like a genuine good feeling about it which I was surprised by at time. I saw a reddish creature in the distance I decided I would get closer to it out of curiosity and soon enough realized it was a fox that for whatever reason did not run away from me but more walked slowly as if to be leading me

somewhere so I followed it for quite long with no thoughts of it leading me anywhere and soon enough I realized that the fox had led me onto a walking path it then ran off. To this day I think the fox was fate. Once the fox left my mind was back on the idea of food, I realized I could hear the beeping a lot closer now and then heard footsteps, not an animal, it was human. I have never felt fear like I did at that moment. The moment that I heard a young woman say to her friend, 'Who is that'.

I knew that running away from them would only raise more suspicions. So, for whatever reason I believed the best thing for me to do was reveal myself from being semi covered by a tree and try explaining my situation but as soon as I revealed myself and they saw the uniform they were in hysterics screaming things like 'HELP PLEASE ANYONE' or 'THERES A KILLER '. From my understanding they did not recognize my face which meant a prisoner escaping had not hit the news yet. I tried the best I could to reason with them and tell them I was not going to hurt anyone and that I just wanted food, I was not worried about their screams as there was nobody nearby that I knew of. I was as calm as you can be in that situation until one of the women took out a phone and I then started to shake with fear and anxiety and became very panicked and charged at her and pushed the woman to the ground in a rush of anger. The other woman was completely frozen in place having watched what just happened she stared at me then

back at her friend who was on the floor. The woman started to cry without making any noise while staring at her friend, I then looked down at her friend and realized her head was bleeding now and she was not moving. I knew I messed up now. I always had the skill of being able to convince people of things that are not quite true which came in handy now. I told the woman that if she were to get help for her friend that they would believe that she had hurt her friend who was on the floor and that she would go to prison if she was to get help. I told her if she gave me money and her jacket that I would go to the nearest shop and buy some first aid stuff and help her. I told her where my shack was and that she could trust me, this was to humanize myself to her I took her phone off her as it was in the jacket pocket. Not that she even noticed at that moment.

I started to walk towards the beeping again until I could see the outline of a petrol station. I was quite confident I would not be caught now because I was wearing a coat over my uniform, even if it were a woman's coat it covered me enough to not be recognized for my uniform alone. I took out the purse out of her pocket which had crumpled up notes of money in it. I knew I would have to buy some form of first aid for the woman in order to make myself seem human in the women's eyes. Not hugely but enough so they would even consider reasoning with me. I walked into the shop and felt very over stimulated. I had not seen real people in

an exceedingly long time or this many brands or bright colours, not to say prisoners are not real people but people who live normal lives. As soon as I walked into the shop I almost immediately walked back out and started breathing very heavily and felt as if my breathing was completely out of my control.

After about 10 minutes of trying to build myself back up to be able to go into the shop I walked in picked up bread, water, and lighter fluid and a lighter so that I would be able to start a fire if I were cold, I looked up at the tv behind the counter and saw a prisoner on the tv with the news reporter saying 'this just in, man escaped during prison riot ...' I am sure the reporter had a lot more to say but I was not going to hear it I ran out the door without paying and ran as fast as I could towards the woods and tried to get back to those women and make sure the woman was okay.

Before I knew it, I was back in the woods racing in the direction of the women. When I saw them in the distance my speed only increased. When I got there the unharmed woman immediately asked if I had gotten the first aid stuff to help the woman, I immediately panicked and told her that I had forgot but not intentionally and that I was sorry and I would go back, the woman was having none of it and attempted get away but grabbed her arm and I tried to explain how apologetic and guilty I felt but it was as if she could not hear me she stared at me then back at her arm which I was grabbing and with the other hand punched my nose which knocked me

back slightly and the pain blurred my vision temporarily and to stop her I picked up a branch on the ground and threw it at her. I did not expect what happened next to happen next. The branch connected with her head, she went straight to the floor and was not moving. I went over to her body and turned her so that her face was facing the sky. Silent tears were rolling down the side of her face. I knew I could not leave either of the women there as they would be found which would soon leave to me being found. The woman who was hit by the branches tears soon stopped as did her breath. The other woman was also dead now, the second woman must not have realized or wanted to realize what had happened to her friend. I placed flowers around them, said a prayer, and covered them in dry wood. I then got the lighter fluid and I imagine you can assume what happened next. I walked away as soon as the flame began to smoke, I knew what I had done was wrong, but I was sure I had gotten away with it. When I got back to the shack and opened the door to the shack, I realized a very tall man in a police uniform was sitting there waiting for me.

‘Leave this room, there's five snipers pointed at that door ready to fire’ he said to me.

‘Okay, okay what do you want from me? ‘I said trying to seem as calm as possible but only sounding more panicked.

‘I want you to tell me why you were smart enough to be able to break out of prison then stupid enough

to kill people directly after.’ This was said with a bit more anger in it as if he was disappointed.

I explained the course of events that led to where I was now and how I never wanted to harm anyone. He was unimpressed and then I decided I would ask how they found out which was a hard question to ask.

‘How did you, erm, find out about all this?’

‘Well long story short the woman whom u killed second took her friends phone unlocked it with her friend's thumbprint, called the police and told us where you were staying, and that you had her phone and to trace your location through that which we did, and that catches you up to now. Bet you that you had that woman fooled, huh? Now I am going to walk out this door and you will go behind me and I will then take you to the back of a police van where you will be taken into custody and put away for a long time. ‘

We walked out and everything he said would happen happened until when I was getting into the van, I saw a reddish creature near the shack which I realized was a fox and I swear to this day it smirked at me before I got in the van where I was taken for an exceptionally long time, and I am still in jail now all these years later.

To this day I think the fox was fate.

Pollos

John Murray

I will do everything in my power to stop these abhorrent criminals from poisoning our communities by selling and distributing and selling these dangerous and illegal substanc-

Flint zapped off the TV. *If only he could be shut up that easily in real life*, he thought to himself. The din of the conveyer belt lingered in the background of the basement. Flint found it unbearable when he first started down here, still he was glad to not be one of the 'deplorables' on simple jobs whose fate would be depicted on a DEA mission report. The boss said he had 'initiative' and 'that was something you either had or didn't'. Flint was chuffed, especially because he couldn't get any further education. He vividly recalled the banker guffawing hysterically at his student loan application. Looks like that six-figure snake wouldn't bode well at the try not to laugh challenge. The latest fad conjured up by his ilk of the same age, not that he caught up to date with whatever was the 'thing' among that demographic. The majority of which's biggest worries were what their Starbucks order for today was going to be. Before getting into their eighteenth birthday present and driving off to 'UC__ insert

random single or double letter combination'. Flint couldn't afford a lot of things, they were okay with that. It had always been that way for them. Before Flint got HIGH up.

The machine clanged with a thud, Flint raised his head up and glanced at it, his head yawed around the room in a perfunctory manner and he zeroed in on the water machine, the pure, lucid, water that Flint so desperately wished he had in another time. He revisited the memory of finding his parents in the kitchen on the floor, his dad's glass smashed everywhere, his mom's corpse in a rigor mortis position of holding a glass and the putrid, insipid, murky, yellow water all over the floor, bathing their remains 'a terrible tragedy'. 'a problem with the purifier', 'a healthcare providers responsibility'. All that it led to be was a bit of news heat and an 'Investigation into the local water supply'. Flint felt that pain of his throat, from generating the screams that reverberated around him that day, having to tell Mikhaila. He'd revisited that day more times than the amount in dollars the boss was about to make from this drop, Flint sauntered over to the machine, clicked a few buttons, then saw a fly land on the tv antenna though is peripherals, he thought about the news, the world, their views on 'junkies'. If only they knew the truth, that the people who ran these joints were the people who had the biggest lawns, with panoplies of sprinkler systems influencing everything around them, growing it. The average low life had the lifespan of a cockroach in

this line of work, their job was to die holding briefcases thinking they were big stuff, listening to hip-hop that the pig who found them would have to turn off on the radio.

An hour passed, Flint had boxed up the drop quite nicely if he did say so himself, the boss would be pretty pleased, hopefully his little sister's college fun would grow quite a bit. He had finished up fifteen minutes early. But never left early in this joint, you didn't do that in this line of work Flint swept up the lab and tidied the workplace up. He didn't care about doing that type of work, it was work after all, He had two lives on his hands, and he could worry about one of those people's pride being damaged later. After finishing up what his 'gentlemen C's' colleagues would consider deigning, Flint yawned. An idea struck him like a match that would hopefully light up some of the supply. He plodded up the step ladder assiduously and got on top of the jeep-sized cargo. Lying flat on his back in this place, that made all this grass, he thought how did he get here? The moment of solace was nice, he'd deserved it.

Flint wiped his nose with his sleeve as he progressed through the corridor, his footsteps reverberating through the long- ass cuboid, He passed the liquid lab. He needed to be careful not to end up there, it was a good promotion, don't get him wrong, but he didn't know if he could dilute the job of diluting water into 'verdant ambrosia' as boss called it. Without reminding himself of the urine like

poison that took his feeble parents away from him and Mikhaila. He didn't need memories by the minute, by the hour was tough enough, He walked by the offices and heard the sound of moaning. *Head down no questions* he told himself once more, flint had quite the array of maxims at this point. He didn't have time for the ying of his yang, anytime he could spare by dabbling in that like his co-workers loved to, well loved to rent, he could spend assuring Mikhaila's future and safety. Girls are always considered but always never at the same time. Flint recalled once in school when his English teacher asked his class of dudes how many people's protagonists were female, if he asked how many were currently interested in one. The show of hands would have been a very different story, excluding the one in every twenty-five of course, thank god he didn't have that on the storyboard of his childhood. Flint approached the elevator, he heard the groans and screams of some prisoner of war lurking behind one of the nearby mystery doors, less blood to mop and a quicker disposal time he figured. *A word of advice, the mind will give up a lot quicker than the body. Yes. I promise I take that bit of medicine I prescribe unlike the other types.* Flint stepped into the elevator. He thought of the inconspicuous bonus he would give to Señora Mercedes for taking such good care of Mikhaila. Flint was lucky, there were a lot of freaks out there...The elevator doors closed drowning out the screams that reverberated around him.

Nuclear Family

Isaac Kelly

I hate you', were Jamie's last words he said to his mam before slamming his front door shut and setting off with the intentions of not coming back.

Jamie was your typical teenage boy who loved sport and had a good amount of friends. His relationship with his family was good, he adored his little sister Maya more than anything and would have done anything for her.

When Jamie was twelve-years-old he noticed his parents weren't sleeping in the same bed anymore but he didn't think much of it, as they still seemed to be getting along around him. It was the Summer of Jamie's sixth class before he started secondary school that he was very anxious about starting as none of his friends were going to that school.

The week before Jamie was meant to start his new school his parents had a fight causing his dad to move into his nanny's. Jamie heard the whole fight and was disgusted by some of the stuff he heard being said on both behalf. His relationship with both his mother and his father deteriorated very quickly, and it didn't help that he couldn't see his father as much.

As Jamie ran out the door, he realized his phone was nearly dead which he wasn't happy about, but he knew he wasn't going back into his house again so he set off. As Jamie was quickly putting on his coat when he was leaving his house, he had seen that he had a crumpled up twenty euro note with a few copper coins in his left pocket. Jamie had mixed emotions, he was happy he had money but knew it wouldn't last him as long as he would want. Meanwhile at home Jamie's mam wasn't too worried as Jamie had left the house in a rage quite a few times, little did she know this time he was set on not coming back. Maya, Jamie's little sister was very upset seeing Jamie do this as she had never seen him that angry. Maya had seen and heard the very loud and intense argument Jamie and his mam were in that caused him to leave, and she was also very upset about that.

It was a cold miserable night out and it had been dark for several hours which Maya and Jamie's mam had been worried about. Jamie, on the other hand, had wondered around so much he had gotten lost in some country roads and being in the pitch black with no streetlights and a dead phone really started to get him worried. He hadn't spent his money he had found in his pocket, and he was weak with the hunger.

Meanwhile back at home Jamie's mam had tucked Maya into bed was getting into her car to go out and look for Jamie. She was weak with the nerves of the thoughts on where her son who she loved very much

was. She hadn't told Jamie's dad about him running away and was thinking on ringing him and telling him, but she decided not to as she hadn't spoken to him in over a week.

Jamie on the other hand thought he started to recognize where he was. If he was where he thought he was he knew there would be a twenty-four-hour garage about a five minute walk from him. He started to gain hope as he knew he could get food there and he wouldn't be too far from home. He started thinking about what he was going to buy in the garage. 'When will I go home' Jamie said to himself as his face dropped. All this time being lost and wondering around made him forget why he was there in the first place, 'I'm not going home' he says to himself as he remembered what had happened earlier.

By the time Jamie reached the garage, his mam had drove around the whole area looking for him. She was distraught. Jamie reached the garage and went straight over to the readymade sandwiches in the fridge. He knew exactly what he was going to buy as soon as he remembered about the garage. He went up to the till to pay and as he was just steps away from the till he looked up to the person behind the till and froze. To his surprise, his dad who looked physically and mentally exhausted was standing behind the till. Jamie's dad froze as well and rubbed his eyes as he couldn't believe what he was seeing. 'Jamie?' says his dad. Jamie dropped his sandwich, turned around and sprinted for the door.

Jamie's dad ran after him and as Jamie ran out the door he looked to right and saw beaming white lights just a few feet away from him. Jamie's dad let out a yell "JAMIE". He had been struck by a car which had tried its hardest to stop but couldn't stop in time. Jamie's body flew through the air almost like a ragdoll. Jamie's dad sprinted over to him in as tears were running down his face. He looked at the car and a woman was running out of the car towards him and Jamie, the car looked familiar, and he was trying to wipe his tears away and make out who the woman was but the cars beaming white head lights were too bright. "JAMIE" the woman screamed. She fell to her knees and her body started shaking. Jamie's dad ran over to the woman and instantly recognized the smell of her perfume, he fell to his knees and started hugging her.

Jamie woke up in a bright white room with a ringing noise in his ears. Jamie looked to his right and to his surprise he saw his parent's holding hands and when they realised he had woken up their faces lit up with joy. Jamie felt relieved to see his parents together again, his parents both hugged him immediately and told him that they will try to do and be better for him and realized they have not been treating him fairly.

That night they went home together like a happy family. The look of joy on little Mayas face when she was looking out her bedroom window and saw her family all together smiling again. Jamie ran upstairs

to hug Maya and he had never felt happier in his life.
All was good.

What if..... The Nazis had won WW2

Jack Porter

This is set in a world where instead of Hitler and the Nazi's being defeated by the Allies, the Nazi's won and had managed to take control and they soon shared their beliefs and has a global control of the world even America, England and all other countries that were a part of the allies. However, there is a small organisation who are against the Nazi control.

It was a windy and wet day in Berlin the Nazi reign was as prevalent as ever, Children were out in the streets cheering Nazi songs and wearing the Swastika proudly on their chests. There was small group of soldiers who wanted to bring down the Nazi's and reclaim America and they were all gathered underground to discuss a big plan to get out of Berlin and get back to America. Their leader Michael Davids was an American soldier who was a Captain in WW2 and had managed to escape the Nazis when they had captured him and his fellow men. There was a total of 13 other soldiers there who were all either a part of the English and French armies who also had managed to get away from the Nazis. Michael had announced that he had a plan where they would make their way to a nearby

airfield where they would meet up with a mole that Michael had sent into the Germany Army, and he would have an ammunition plain ready for them where they could fly back to America. After the meeting everyone went to sleep in their sleeping bags on the damp floor. The next morning the Sun was shining through the clouds and all the Allie soldiers had awoken to gun shots. A little down the street there was a public execution of 3 English soldiers with many hundred people gathered at even little children. This was a perfect time for the Allies to get up and leave as everyone was distracted so they gathered everything they could and made their way to their plain. Their leader, Michael leads them as they made their way through streets covered in Nazi propaganda flyers and debris from bombed building that the Germans were yet to rebuild. They had reached the airfield after about 2 hours of walking and saw the plain they had to get on. They snuck their way across the airfield and got onto the plain. They were all cramped into corners and behind boxes as they watched German soldiers fill up the plain with guns and ammo to send to the German soldiers set up in America to help them fight off the remaining of the Allies. 20 minutes later the plain started to move, it was going to be a short flight from Germany to England where they would refuel the plain and then it would be a very long flight from England to America. They kept themselves entertained by telling each other about their past lives in their different countries, John

Smith was a 29 year-old English man who told about his life with his wife and 2 kids and how he had to sign up for the army as his family needed the money so desperately, Antoine Dubois was an 18 year-old French man who had signed up for the army with all his friends from school and they were all killed by a surprise attack by the Germans. Everyone else on the plain had similar stories where they either joined for the money or they were required to sign up to the army by their government. Eventually after many days in the air they had reached American. They flew down to Washington DC where American Soldiers were set up in the Whitehouse protecting it from many Germans. It was not looking good for the Americans as they were indifferently outnumbered, and they were low on food, ammo, and supplies. The plain Michael and his men were on was the last supplies the Germans would need to claim the Whitehouse. The Allies on the plain got ready to shoot as soon as the plain was opened to get the supplies by the Germans and were waiting patiently. After a few minutes of waiting there was a loud creak, and the plain began to open. The allies were ready and then the Germans started to come onto the plain to take the supplies. The allies then began to shoot and shot down 6 German soldiers with ease. This alerted the attention of other Germans, and they came running over and started shooting the allies. They managed to kill 3 of the allies and they had hit Michael in the shoulder leaving his left arm useless, however the allies still managed to gun

down another 15 German soldiers. After this the allies took their time to restock their bags with ammo and guns so that they could bring it to the Soldiers protecting the Whitehouse. They got off the plain and looked around seeing the Whitehouse was surrounded by Germans and even some Italian soldiers. It wasn't looking good for Michael and his 9 other men but then a massive explosion happened on the other side of Whitehouse allowing Michael and his men to go around the back as all of the Axis soldiers were distracted by the blast. Michael and his men managed to get inside the Whitehouse with most of the supplies from the plain with them but then, the Germans had got into the Whitehouse as a result of a bomb blowing up the Allies defences and the German soldiers were starting to get through the barricades set up and some of the men who has been defending the Whitehouse before Michael had got there, took some grenades and blew themselves up as they didn't want to die at the hands of the Germans. The Germans then managed to get to Whitehouse, and they were starting to blow up bombs all over the building destroying it and killing hundreds of Allie soldiers. Michael had demanded his men to fight till the end and they took stations and were waiting for the Germans to come to them, and they would then try their very best to stop them however it wasn't enough. The Germans had them cornered and they were all either injured or too tired to function properly. The Germans made a huge push sending in all their men. Michael and his

small platoon of men were hopeless and were soon shot down and killed. The Germans soon took control of the Whitehouse after killing every Allie soldier in it. They took down the torn and dirty American flag and burned it and swapped it for a Swastika flag ultimately showing the Nazi's had won the war.

The Undead Basement

Thomas Fegan

Wake up! Cathy, wake up! We're here!

Cathy opened her eyes to see Aunt Sharon squeezing her shoulder and smiling at her enthusiastically. They had arrived at their new home. She opened her car door and stepped out of the car, looking first at the old mansion, then at the rest of the neighborhood. None of them looked like something someone of Cathy's age would be living in.

'Maybe this place is just old-fashioned,' she thought hopefully.

'I forgot to mention,' Sharon said as they were getting their stuff out of the boot of the car, 'I'm friends with some of the people here and thought it would be nice if their kids got to know you a little. So, I've invited them to our house.'

'Did your aunt leave any beer here?' asked Kiki, one of the teens Aunt Sharon had invited over.

It had been at least six hours since Cathy's aunt had left to start her shift at the local diner. She and the teens Sharon invited over hadn't done much, just watched horror movies and chatted about the

usual topics that arose at late night teenage sleepovers.

‘Yeah, I could use some booze, too,’ added Jake.

‘I think I saw my aunt take some bottles out of the car while we were unpacking.’ Cathy had never particularly liked drinking, but she was starting to get bored and needed something to keep her going, so she went to the fridge and pulled out three beer bottles.

‘Nice!’ Jake grabbed his bottle out of Cathy’s hand and started drinking.

They spent the next five minutes drinking and watching the slasher on the television, laughing at the absurd violence.

And then there was a loud thumping noise from the basement. All eyes turned to the door leading downstairs.

‘Everyone heard that, right?’ Cathy asked suspiciously.

‘Oh, yeah,’ Kiki responded. ‘I say we check it out.’

‘Agreed,’ Jake and Cathy said simultaneously.

Jake nervously opened the door to the basement, with Cathy and Kiki following behind him as he walked down the stairs like a scared kitten, the flashlight he’d grabbed from a cupboard in the kitchen shaking in his hand.

What they found when they got to the bottom of the basement was more horrifying than anything they could ever have imagined. What appeared to be a rotting corpse was kneeling with its back to them, munching away on the guts of an old man who

looked like he'd been dead for at least five days, probably the same person who owned the house before Cathy and Aunt Sharon.

'Is that a... a zombie?!' Stuttered Kiki. Almost as soon as the words came out of her mouth the zombie who'd been feasting on the old man stood up, turned around and latched on to her with the speed of a ninja. It sank its teeth deep into her neck, spraying blood everywhere and exposing her flesh and bone and nerves, ignoring her screams of agony.

'Let's get out of here!' Cathy yelled at Jake.

They frantically ran up the stairs, slamming the door shut behind them. Jake turned to Cathy, a look of panic on his face.

'What are we going to do?' He asked.

'Just follow my lead,' Cathy responded. 'My Aunt likes to hunt as a hobby. She keeps a shotgun under her bed in her room. She probably put it there after we finished unpacking. She doesn't like people seeing her with it or something.'

So they hurried upstairs to Aunt Sharon's room to get the shotgun.

'What now?' Jake asked Cathy.

'The kitchen,' said Cathy.

'What the hell is in the kitchen?' Jake asked, but Cathy ignored him.

Cathy confidently walked down the stairs, shooting the zombie they found in the basement as she saw him coming out of the door. When they finally got to the kitchen, Cathy reached the oven

and turned on the cooker knobs, letting gas fill the room. Then she turned on all the lights in the kitchen. She grabbed Jake by the arm, dragging him into the hall to find a zombified Kiki snarling hungrily at them. She raised the shotgun and aimed it at Kiki's head. She pulled the trigger but realized there was no ammo in the gun. She whacked Kiki in the head with the gun, causing her to fall and trip up Jake. He screamed in anguish as Kiki bit into his neck. Cathy turned away and kept running but tripped over something. She sat up and saw the old man the zombie was eating when they had found in the basement drooling at her with hunger in his eyes.

'You too?!' Cathy yelled in exasperation.

She sprung to her feet and kicked him in the face, then grabbed from the ground and ran towards the undead Kiki eating Jake's remains. It looked like she'd worked her way to his skull and broke it open to get to his brain. There was no way he was coming back.

'Sorry about this, Kiki,' Cathy said to her and swung the shotgun at her head, knocking her to the ground. She then bashed Kiki's head in until she heard her skull break.

She knelt down beside Jake, searching his pockets for a match and lighter. When she found what she was looking for, she headed to the kitchen and threw the shotgun through a window, smashing it. Cathy climbed through the window into the back garden, then casually walked a few feet away from

the house. She rummaged around the rockery, looking for a decently sized rock. Once she found a rock that satisfied her, she ripped off a part of her shirt and wrapped the rock in it, lit the torn part of her shirt then threw it through the window. The gas from the stove should have spread through most of the house by now. Within seconds, the entire house was ablaze, and the zombies had hopefully burned to death.

Cathy sighed in relief and lay on the ground, watching the house burn.

‘Aunt Sharon’s gonna kill me,’ she giggled.

THE END

Part II

Journalism

A Year in the Life
Of
Everton F.C.

21st Sptember 2021

Demari Gray Is Back



Figure 1 Demari Gray

Lewis Bishop

Demari has returned to the Premier League for his second spell in the league he previously played for Leicester City for 6 years where he won a Premier League, FA Cup and a Community Shield . He was a part of the famous Leicester side that defied 5000/1 odds and won the Premier League. In that season he only played 12 games and scored 0 goals and only got 2 assists.

He has returned to the Premier League with Rafa Benitez's Everton. They were in a bad situation this summer, needing squad depth and only having limited funds due to FFP (Financial Fair Play) so they

had to buy players for cheap. Demari Gray was one of them.

Demari Gray had spent one year in the Bundesliga with Bayern Leverkusen where he only played 10 games and scored 1 goal. Peter Bosz and Hannes Wolf, who both managed Gray during his time in Germany, have said it was his attitude that has let him down when it comes to playing and performing on the pitch because he has all the ability to reach the top. He even said himself about how a young player will let the hype overwhelm them he mentions in an exclusive interview with Everton FC, 'Every young player will enjoy the hype - you start to recognise your potential and how people see you. But the minute there is a dip, the player starts questioning themselves.'

Gray has had a very impressive start under Rafa Benitez at Everton this season. He has played in all of the first 4 games. He has already scored 3 goals and this is already the most goals he's scored in a single season since the 2018-19 season, where he scored only 4 goals. But his career high for goals is 6, which came in the 2014-15 season for Birmingham, in the championship.

18th January 2022

Rafa Benitez Sacked!



Figure 2 Everton fans make their feelings clear

Lewis Bishop

Rafa Benitez has been sacked as Everton manager following a 2-1 defeat at the hands of a struggling Norwich side.

The Spanish Coach has spent less than 7 months at Everton where he won a total of 7 games as coach where his most notable win came against Arsenal, in which Demari Gray scored a ninety second minute winner from outside the box.

Rafa's summer signings have been impressive on the field, but they couldn't save him from getting the sack. He brought in two more players in January, Nathan Patterson from Rangers and Vitaliy Mykolenko from Dynamo Kyiv. But he also fell out

with and led to the sale of arguably one of Everton's best players, Lucas Digne, to Premier League competition Aston Villa.



Figure 3: A beleaguered Benitez

The pressure that was on Rafa Benitez even before his first game was immense due to his connections with the other side of Merseyside, winning a Champions League with Liverpool, and it always added to him not being liked by the fans.

I think it was never the right decision for Everton to appoint Rafa Benitez and it has really shown as they search for a new manager with Duncan Ferguson being the front runner, on an interim basis, with Leighton Baines as assistant manager

2nd February 2022

Frank Lampard Is Back



Figure 4 Frank Lampard

Lewis Bishop

Frank Lampard is back in the Premier League with a struggling Everton side who are currently sitting 16th in the league after the reign of Rafa Benitez, which left Everton in the worst state possible this season. It has been a complete nightmare for everyone involved.

The club is in a relegation dog fight with clubs like Norwich, Watford, and Burnley all around them. With the quality this quad has surely they can't go down. But with teams around them being in the situation before they have the experience of having to pick up vital points in scrappy games.

Lampard has already drawn in big names like a former wonderkid Dele Alli and a highly rated

Donny Van De Beek from Manchester United. These two players alone will not keep them up and will have to come together as a collective to have the best chances of surviving.



Figure 5 Everton players will need to dig in

Lampard has a set plan with the club and how he wants to play but it may have to be put on hold with how this season is turning out.

8th March 2022

Toffees To Go Down

Lewis Bishop

It has been a very tough start to life on Merseyside with Everton for Frank Lampard, with only 3 wins - 2 of them in FA Cup games - in 8 games. But the Toffees sit 17th in the table, level on points with Watford. It is worrying times for the club.

Being an Everton fan myself I am deeply worried that we will not be in the Premier League much longer.



6 Players just not trying

The players do not seem one bit interested to play for the club and that affects us fans the most, seeing someone not giving their all for the club we love.

Everton still have a good chance at beating the likes of Watford and Brentford in upcoming fixtures, but it is well and truly a long road to safety for Everton.

This season could go from bad to worse with not only them looking likely to go down but Liverpool are well and truly chasing city down to win the title and well and truly hurt Everton fans to the core.

This could really be the end of Everton in the Premier League.

Part III

Poetry

Poem inspired by *The Outsiders*

Michael Salsi

There was a gang called greasers,
They killed a guy called Bob, and for some gang
members,
They really liked to sob.

They went down to a small town,
Then they start to cry,
The church was burned, and the kids,
So Johnny had to die.

Then there was a rumble,
There, the blood was spilled,
Dally got depressed,
So Dally then got killed.

On All-Ireland Final Day

Patrick O'Shea

On a September day,
When the All-Ireland final is going to be played,
The young and the old,
The brave and the bold,
Come to fight for the glory of the game,
And while we know we could experience pain,
It will not put us off on this day,
We have come too watch the titans play,
Whether it be Limerick, Clare, Cork, Tipperary,
Kilkenny or any county,
We come with a great curiosity wondering what
we are about to see,
Will we see TJ Reid frees or points from all angles
from Tony Kelly,
When the ball gets thrown in,
With both sides trying to win,
The clash of the ash,
And the bang and the smash of the hurls,
With the shouts ,
And the bouts,
Then at the end of the game we see the winning
team,
Lift the Liam McCarthy,
This year I wonder who it will be!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE ANTHOLOGY 2021 is a project that has been enabled by the setting up of the Clonkeen College Press, a Transition Year student initiative. The Clonkeen College Press 2021/22 have been:

Lewis Bishop
Sean Cortes
Rian Daly
Thomas Fegan
Filip Jasinski
Dev Joshi
Isaac Kelly
Evan Mulligan
Jack Porter
Rafe O'Midheach

