

Mackenzie Alain

Grade 12

Clearwater Secondary

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What We Make Ourselves Believe

The rain spattered against the window leaving rivulets on the pane of glass separating Lily's room from the seemingly impenetrable darkness of this stormy night. Thunder boomed far off in the distance and the rain seemed to come down in an even greater deluge. She was certain there would be a flood. Lily hated the rain. She hated how it erased the drawings she made in chalk on the sidewalk. She hated how it made the garden all muddy so that when she went to smell the flowers that she was named after, her rubber boots would be so dirty she would have to leave them outside, but more than anything else she hated the noise. The incessant tapping on the roof and windows keeping her up to ungodly hours of the night. Her father always said the sound of rain helped put him to sleep, but he also liked black licorice and coffee, so as far as Lily was concerned he was crazy anyway. Her mom also said that she liked the rain because it watered the garden for her, but Lily liked watering the garden so really the rain wasn't helping, it was being selfish. Even her dog Duke liked the rain. He would happily let it soak his pristine white coat, then roll in whatever mud he could find. Lightning flashed outside illuminating Lily's room for a moment, creating twisted silhouettes of her favourite toys left on the floor. She pulled her blanket up to her chin and tried to think about anything but the shadows. At least Duke didn't

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like thunder or lightning, so she wasn't alone. This thought comforted her in the second before the thunder rolled through the house with such force Lily swore she heard the dishes rattling downstairs. She forced her head under her pillow trying to block out the sound of the rain, the shadows, the thunder. Lily just wanted all of it to be gone so she could sleep. When she finally thought she might drift off she felt a tugging at her blanket. Lily's heart jumped into her throat, was this the monster under the bed? What sort of awful fate would await her when she peeked out from underneath her pillow? She could imagine the gnashing teeth in the creature's horrible mouth, it came during the storm so the sound of thunder and rain would drown out her screams. Then it made a noise a pitiful whine. There was no way this creature was what she thought it was. Lily slowly peeled back the covers from her eyes to reveal a furry white mass at the foot of her bed. It was her dog, Duke, the poor pup must've been just as scared of the thunder as she was. Lily gently called for the lab to jump up into bed with her, thinking it was to comfort him when really it was quite mutual. Duke curled up in a ball next to Lily's legs.

When morning came Lily could no longer hear the sound of rain outside, in her mind this was a small prize when compared to the torture she had to endure the night before.

Breakfast that day was eggs, done sunny side up, and toast, Lily's favourite. When her parents asked Lily about her sleep last night she whined and complained. That day Lily went to school with a frown on her face and a rainbow above her head.

Let Her Eat Cake

4 years old

Mirror Mirror

Staring at the image

Reflection adolescent

Big, bright, inquisitive eyes

Mismatching socks

One striped one dotted

And a party hat

Atop disheveled braids

Wearing a smile

With wiggly, loose teeth

Frolicking onward

To the festivities

Squealing of joy

Loved ones herald

So does the cake

Voices chime and blend

Singing familiar song

Happy birthday

Happy birthday

Happy birthday

Gulping a breath in

Releasing the wind

Extinguishing the fire

Fingers scooping

The homemade icing

Familiar voices rise,

"Let her eat cake"

10 years old

Mirror Mirror

Staring at the mirage

Reflection perfection

Sharp, green, acquisitive eyes

Dress and sneakers

Both pink and spotted

And a tiara

Aloft nestled curls

Wearing lip gloss

With glitter, rose tint

Sauntering forward

To the merriment

Laughing with joy

Best friends carol

So does the cake

Voices trill and fuse

Singing embarrassing song

Happy birthday

Happy birthday

Happy birthday

Sighing a breath out

Smothering the flame

Knife dissecting

The elaborate pastry

Familiar voices sigh,

"Let her eat cake"

16 years old

Mirror Mirror

Staring at the facade

Reflection refracting

Tired, red, discriminative eyes

Nude to the bone

Carved scars and bruises

And a raincloud

Upon a self-conscious mind

Wearing a frown

That tastes of tears

Heaving downward

To the ordeal

Shrieking with sorrow

Demons gossip

So does the cake

Voices chant and mock

Singing terrorizing song

Happy birthday

Happy birthday

Happy birthday

Inhaling heavy breaths

Unleashing mortality

Vision blurring

The reality of truth

Unfriendly voices pry,

"Let her eat cake"

Jessica Greene
Clearwater Secondary School
Grade 12

Addictions Affect Me Too

I sit in a room of people,
Each with emotions and lives.
I watch them smile ,
I watch them laugh,
And I begin to feel trapped.

I sit on the bus.
Everyone talks about their day.
I hear them joke,
I hear them talk,
And I begin to feel alone.

I sit at home,
In an empty dark room.
I can smell the beer,
I can smell the high,
And I begin to feel lost.

Every day it replays!
Every day the words stay the same!
"Things will get better."
"Everything is about to change."
"Today I will get a job."
Every day it's just the same!

Because nothing is new.
And nothing will change.
I am still alone, trapped, lost,
Like a small child.
Unable to stand my ground,
So I guess it is here I will drown.

Jessica Greene
Clearwater Secondary School
Grade 12

Tick-Tock

Tick- tock, one, two, three.
I am here, and so is she.
Tick-tock one, two, three.
One body, two minds, how can this be.
Tick-tock, one, two, three.
Screaming in my head just let me free.
Tick-tock, one, two, three.
People judging us, I mean me.
Tick-tock, one, two, three.
Pills in bottles, I can't see .
Tick-tock, one, two, three.
Everyone is tricking me.
Tick-tock, it's a broken clock.
Just like me so leave us be.
Tick tock, it's a broken clock.
We can not handle being mocked.
Tick-tock, broken clock.
I am free, I mean we.

Flipping through the last few pages of my novel, I began to feel cold. Setting my book on the table, I get up to turn up the thermostat but the flickering of my lamp stops me. Slowly, I look around the room and think to myself, 'Not this again.'

Ever since I moved into this house, weird things have been happening. Cold spots, lights flickering, things moving on their own, and I'm sure I've spotted someone in the hallway but it always disappears.

I pull my phone out of my pocket, determined to get the figure in a picture.

"BAM!" I turn around and see my novel on the floor. I cautiously pick it up and place it back down on the table.

When I look back up, the figure was in front of me, only, it wasn't a figure, it was a man. He stood tall, towering down on me. He wore tan coveralls and a blue plaid jacket. His hair was dark and messy. His face is what frightens me the most. It's blurry and I can't make out facial features besides knowing that he has two eyes, a nose, and a mouth.

The lights started flickering violently, "Mine," he said, reaching out to grab me. Just before he does, he disappears.

I jump back and scream. A new man is revealed, panting and holding an iron fire poker.

He rushes to my side, "Are you okay?"

I try to speak but nothing comes out so I just nod.

"Good, now stay here," he starts pouring salt on my floor, "Keep inside the circle until one of us comes and gets you, got it?"

I nod again stepping inside the circle of salt.

"SAMMY!" I hear a voice yell from upstairs.

"Damian?!" The salt guy yells back, and races away.

Breaking out of my shock state, I yell after him, "Wait! Who are you? What was that?!" No use. He's already left the room.

I look down at my phone in my hand, turning on the video. I swivel around, recording the whole room.

"BANG!" The sound of a gunshot travelled throughout the house.

"What the -" Before I can finish my sentence, the blurry faced man appears in front of me. I let out a scream.

He looks down at the salt circle and looks back at me angrily, "Bad girl."

"H-help! He's back!"

The salt guy and another ran into the room. The other man was holding a shotgun. He takes a shot at Blurry Face and it just disappears and reappears behind the man with the gun.

"Dame!" Salt Man calls, swinging his fire poker at him. The gun man ducks and again, the blurry faced man disappears.

"What's going on? What is that?" I plead.

They both continuously look around the room.

The gun man answers, "That is a ghost and it's going to try to kill you."

"Kill me? Why? What did I do?"

Salt Man replies, "You fit the description of his last victim, the one who lived here before you. It seems he has a quarrel with someone looking like you."

"This is stupid. I haven't done anything."

"Just stay in the salt circle and you should be okay," Gun Man directs. "What are you going to do?" I ask.

"Find his bones, then salt and burn them," he replied, reloading his shotgun.

"Uhh, salt and burn bones, ghosts? Who are you guys? The Ghostbusters or The Mystery Gang?"

"Neither, we are the Windsors. I'm Samuel, he's Damian." Salt Man introduced.

"Sam, look out!" Damian yells and takes a shot at the ghost behind Samuel.

"Woah, we have to find these bones. They have to be in this house somewhere."

"Uh try the cellar, it's pretty creepy down there. Plus there's a locked room, the keys never came with the house."

"Let's start there then," Damian says, leaving the room.

"Stay in the circle," Samuel hollers, following Damian.

I huff, and sit cross-legged on the floor.

The silence was deafening. It has only been a few minutes since the guys left and yet, it feels like it's been hours. A crashing sound, followed by gunshots ran through the house disturbing the peace.

More crashing sounds follow and someone yells out in pain. 'I can't just sit here and do nothing,'

The ghost appears in front of me and I jump to my feet. He struggles against the salt circle and starts screaming. Flames started appearing all over him and then he was gone.

"Samuel? Damian?" I call out.

The guys walk into the room, smiles plastered to their faces. They are beaten up and bleeding in some places.

"Everything's good now, you don't have to be in the circle anymore." Samuel says, his arm wrapped around his torso.

"Thank you. Come on, let me get you two cleaned up," grabbing each of their hands I bring them into the kitchen, "Now, you stay here while I get the first aid kit."

"Well we actually-" Damian starts but I cut him off.

"No, stay. It's the least I can do for what you two did for me." I leave the room and quickly search around for the kit. Just as I find it, I hear an engine rev loudly outside and I run to the window.

"I didn't even get to ask how they knew to come here," I say aloud as they drove away.

A hand touched my shoulder and I jumped. Turning around, I see a man dressed in a suit with trench coat over top.

"Who are you?" I ask.

"My name is Cartel. I am an angel of the Lord and we have so much to talk about."

Once I died when I was four.

I had died many times before that, but I couldn't remember them past glimpses of images or feelings. As time moves on, I will forget when I died in the little blue house on the corner of the street too.

It was my fault, like it so often is, though I'm sure that my mother blamed herself. She had been cooking dinner and had gone to set the table. I wanted to help but didn't my young brain didn't recognize the danger of the open flame. It was just a dancing spark of colour, it was inviting and I couldn't fathom how something so small could hurt. I tried to grab the pot to bring it to the table, but my shirt sleeve caught in the burner.

I can't remember if I screamed or not. I assume I did, but all I can remember is the flames growing as they ate up my shirt sleeve, burning brighter, changing colours. I loved bright things and was utterly fascinated by the growing flames even amidst the panic.

Then I died

The next time that I died I was older. Over double my last life had passed by when I once again faced the end.

This time, I didn't go into death's grasp alone. My family and I died in our sleep when the space heater caught the sitting rooms drapes and lit them ablaze.

I can't remember dying that time, it was peaceful.

I've explored the world, one life at a time.

Some people are afraid of the countries where the resorts and the travel agents don't reach, I've explored them ruthlessly, traveling from village to village without worry. Death was inevitable but would always come in a cloak of flames so I thought I had nothing to fear.

I was wrong. My life ended with me on fire, but not of the typical type. Instead of hungry flames, it was the fires of fever and infection that got me. I died on a straw lined bed, with the village doctor standing over me reading prayers in a language that I had never heard before.

A doctor in the developed world could have cured it, but it stole my life in the villages of that jungle.

I varied my careers, though I made sure to keep social, without the interaction and reminders, time can warp your mind.

One life I snapped. I might have thought I was a god, or view myself as an inhuman creature born of flames. Nevertheless, it led me to take others lives, at that time without regret.

I might have thought I was giving them new life, maybe it was resentment that once they burnt they didn't wake up again. What I remember of that time is warped.

I was eventually caught, charged with murder, but never made it to trial.

Instead, a family member of one of my victims snuck into the precinct where I was held, doused the cell in gasoline and lit a match.

This life is my most current.

I flinch away from fire now, this body holds an irrational fear of those brilliant flames. I see fire and dismiss it, but my body reacts violently. I cripple in on myself, I shake, my vision will sometimes go black with panic.

Occasionally I think of ending it, but the mere touch of an unlit match, sitting innocently in a small cardboard packet, makes me convulse in sheer terror no matter how many times I tell myself it's harmless. Other ways of extinguishing my life don't work either, metal is too cold and the sting of a blade does not burn, it feels wrong to take my life with something so cold.

My apartment building burns in front of me. This was my first time experiencing a fire like this, I'm always inside the flames. Standing here I feel even more helpless than I do when it's me burning.

I wonder if it weren't for me this wouldn't have happened. Was it just fate's flames following me around that caused this?

My conscience tells me that this is entirely my fault.

Phoenix
Kathleen Pilatzke, Grade 12, Barriere Secondary

I couldn't explain why I ran into the building to follow a scream. My body tells me it's dangerous, tries to convulse away from the smoke and flame, but in this moment I am stronger than that and continue my search, driven by guilt.

I find the girl in the laundry room, sitting petrified in a corner. I know I'm shaking, probably look even more terrified than her, but she reaches out to me when I draw closer, latching onto me.

I hold her the best I can, pressing her face against my chest to hopefully stop her from breathing in too much smoke.

The smoke burning my lungs and eyes feels like an old friend, but the bundle in my arms makes me continue. The coolness of the air as I emerge is foreign, the gratefulness of the girl's family is shameful. Can't they see this is my fault?

I'm too close to the building, they tell me to move away, instead I move closer. My body doesn't react to the flames, it remains steady as I draw closer, stepping back into the building, cutting off the cool air as I close the exit.

My body has finally grasped that the flames can't hurt me, they eat my body, but they can't get me.

Like a phoenix I open my wings, burst into brilliant flames, deteriorate into clouds of ash, and then once again, from the embers, I'll rise anew.

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Sometimes
life is a little too much.
I am human.
I am not above life: it affects me.
So I sit down,
I take a deep breath
and let it out.
And another deep breath.
And I stand up.
And I move on.
I am human.
I am not above life: it affects me.
but
I
will not let it control me.

Try and convince me

You could write a
thousand word essay on how

- the sun shines
- maybe soulmates are possible
maybe it's possible because you were spilt from the same matter during the big bang and
that means two objects of flesh, bone, and blood are destined to be together.

You could tell me why that's true.

You could try and convince me

- blood is actually beautiful
how it causes blushes to occur
your body to move
from a scientific perspective you could make blood indescribable
and portray it as if it
were a drug you were addicted to seeing.

but it's not.

Like poetry, blood is gritty.
Blood is dark and free moving.
Blood is not beautiful or strong.
Just because you have it means only that you are living,

nothing metaphorical.
nothing deep.

Blood isn't beautiful.

Blood is red.

Beauty

Delray Willis
Norkam Senior Secondary
Grade 12

There is an old story about a goddess who descended from the heavens to walk among mortal man after being insulted by other gods and goddesses about her looks. One day the goddess descended to walk among mortals and met a man who fell in love with her, he chased after her his whole life without even knowing who she was inside until the day he saw her ascend to the heavens. He prayed that she would return to grant him his wish of love, she had no idea of how beautiful he found her until he was given the chance to explained what he saw in her. She didn't believe him and refused to take his offering of love as serious, the man was crushed but this didn't deter him. After weeks and weeks of effort to prove how beautiful he found her, he sold his sight to make a deal for a mirror. This mirror made anyone who looked into it see what they looked like in the eyes of the man. The man struggled and fought to bring the mirror to this goddess. When the mortal brought forth the mirror he tripped and shattered it into pieces right in front of her. She picked up a shard and saw her body the way he did, saw her eyes the way he did, she fell in love with herself and could never repay the mortal. Instead she cared for him for the rest of his days as he could no longer see for himself, she was forever cemented in his mind as a memory, beauty everlasting.