

Briar Rose

Rose Salvadore stood at the edge of the lake peering out into the misty blue. Tears pricked her eyes as memories flooded through her brain. Painful memories that one would not wish to remember. Memories and dreams, of the past and the future to come. Countless dreams all vibrant with colour just gone in an instant. He snapped his fingers and they were all gone. The life she'd had, the person she once was, gone.

She was not the same girl he'd left to die that fateful winters night. She's changed, evolved. The pretty, innocent, doe eyed lamb, has been replaced with a vengeful, soulless dragon. She has been reborn a demon from an angel, lost forever to the pits of eternal hate. For years she had waited lost in the cold. Just waiting for this day for this moment to come. The moment where she could finally end it, end it all. The Rose has returned a Briar, Angry and ready for revenge. It was Briars time. Time to kill her husband.

Briar wiped away the tears, and pushed away the memories. Anger once again took place of the tremendous sadness she once felt. It took over, controlling her every thought her every move. She made her way to the palace hellbent on destroying the man who took away everything she once loved, everyone she'd held dear. She waltzed through the grand double doors of her childhood home and entered the impressive entrance.

"Honey I'm Home," She called in a singsong voice.

"May I help you?" A stern old man dressed in servant garments asked as he made his way to the girl.

"I'd like to see the king," She said folding her hands behind her back.

"The king is not taking any visitors," The man said and shooed her away.

" You seriously don't remember me?" She asked. "No, you don't look very memorable.

" The old man shook his head at her disheveled state.

"That's what happens when you spend 7 years frozen in a damn lake!" She snapped.

"The king is not taking any visitors, you should leave." The servant motioned for the door.

" How Unfortunate," Briar mumbled, and with one swift move she pulled her hands away from her and plunged a newly appeared dagger through the man's heart. Blood spurted from his wound as he fell, staining the floor with a crimson circle. Briar plucked the dagger from his chest and the silver object vanished from her hand.

"The king will be having a visitor," she said and went to find her husband.

Lily Brown Pequera, Gr.11 Westsyde Secondary

* * *

'Knock, knock,'

Briar stood outside of her old bedroom waiting for the king.

"Enter," A deep voice called. Briar stepped inside and smiled wickedly when she saw the surprised expression of her former husband.

"Did you miss me darling?" she asked placing her hands on her hips. The man stood alarmed, his jaw fell open and his eyes were wide with fear.

"How are you- - I killed you." he said pointing a shaky finger towards her.

"Yes, Leo you did and would you look at that here I am, somehow undead." She smiled wickedly and twirled a lock of hair between her fingers.

"This is impossible. Why are you here Rose?" Leo asked his surprise turning to anger.

"Why am I here? Why are you here!? Sitting on my throne, sleeping in my bed! You think you can have my crown? Oh and its Briar now." Her voice resounded through the room.

"I already have your crown," Leo said angrily.

"I killed your parents, I killed your Brother and now I'll kill you...again." He picked up a sword and lunged at Briar. She dodged his attack and darted across the room.

"You! Why couldn't you just stay dead!?" Leo yelled thrashing his sword wildly. She moved with grace and dashed across the room again. She now stood by the large window.

"Come get me," She taunted. Leo ran towards her destroying everything in his path. As he neared, Briar opened the window and crouched on the sill. She grabbed his sword with one hand and flung it across the room, she grabbed his neck with the other. Briar leaned back and fell through the opening taking Leo with her.

"No, wait! you'll kill us both!" he screamed over the whirling wind.

"Good." Briar stated. "N-no stop, Please!" He screamed again, "What- what about your daughter?" He said fearfully. Daughter? That sparked something in Briar. She paused and suddenly sprouted wings. They shot into the sky, Leo being dragged by his throat.

"What daughter?" She yelled.

"Our daughter," He choked.

"Explain yourself!" She screamed her grip tightening .

"The baby, she was born a few days before your death." False tears welled in his cold eyes.

Briar's wings flapped suspending them in the air.

"Where is she!?" She cried.

"Where she's always been, the cemetery." Leo uttered. Briar stopped for a moment stunned her ice heart shattered. Leo caught her off guard and he knew it, he took this moment to snake his way out of her grip. He slammed his body into hers and she let him go. He laughed in triumph until he realized he just sealed his own fate. Leo fell down, straight into the misty lake where he had drowned his wife, heir to the throne of Valore, those many years ago.

* * *

Briar stared coldly at the small tombstone sitting in the palaces garden. Vida Salvadore was written at the top, along with beloved daughter of Leo Salvadore and Rose Gomez. Her fingers ran over her daughters name over and over. She hated that she didn't remember her. That she never got to see her grow up. She felt pain and anger towards Leo for taking away her

baby and her family. Even after death Briar could feel everything, she wished she didn't but the throbbing pain from the loss of her old life was still and would always be present inside her. As much as she missed it, it was time to move on. The kingdom needed a ruler. So there she sat on her icy throne, the queen of Valore, a crown of thorns atop her head.

The Sun and the Moon
Isabelle Christensen
Grade 11
Clearwater Secondary School

I can tell you a story, a tale of why the sun rises and falls. Pull up a seat, sit down, listen close. The Sun and the Moon have a story to be told.

Long ago, before life on Earth, days would last forever. Night would never cast darkness over the land, and stars never sparkled. There was only a single being sitting in the sky, the Sun.

The Sun shone bright, he stood out as light against the darkness of space. He was beautiful and proud, but he longed for someone other than himself. Someone to talk to, someone to care about, someone to love. He hated being alone all the time so he made a wish. A wish that someone would come, and someone did.

The first eclipse was the first time he saw her: the Moon. The Moon was so opposite of him, yet so perfect. Her cool, pale skin shimmered, and her blue eyes caught him in a daze. The Sun stared at her, for it had only ever been him, standing alone in the sky, but he fell in love the moment he saw her. He took her hand and gave a bow, asking her to dance. Her voice was like silk as she replied, and her eyes shone brighter than anything he had seen before.

They danced across the sky, sharing a single, wonderful day together, until she had to go. The Sun begged her not to leave him alone again but the Moon gave him a kiss and promised that they would meet again someday.

The Sun and the Moon
Isabelle Christensen
Grade 11
Clearwater Secondary School

pale blue dress swirl in the wind, watching the smile on her face grow, watching how happy this made her and when the day was over, he left. The Sun knew that it hurt her, having to watch him die again and again to see her, but he couldn't help it. All he could do was hope that she understood why he had to do this. He hoped that she knew his love for her would never end.

So now you know the story behind the Sun and Moon. Next time someone asks you why the Sun sets every night you can tell them: the Sun dies because his love for the Moon never will. He dies to see her shine, and together they wait for another chance to sit side by side in the sky, and another chance to dance a day away.

Glass Smiles

July 12, 1998

It’s been four days since I realized my mom has been replaced.

Something’s been off with her for a while. She still talks and acts the same, but whenever I’m around her, things seem...different. Her eyes, once full of life and vigor, are now black, soulless pits. Her hands are cold and pale. Who this stranger pretending to be my mother is, I don’t know.

I seem to be the only one who has noticed. My dad and brother don’t seem to suspect a thing. I haven’t spoken to them yet, but if they’ve noticed anything, they aren’t showing it.

Something’s wrong, and I need to let my family know. I’ll document my findings and any clues in this journal. I must find out who this person pretending to be my mom is and what they did with her!

July 13, 1998

I spoke to my brother, Joseph, about Mom today. He didn’t believe a word I said. He thinks I’m just delusional.

July 14, 1998

Joseph, “Mom”, and I took Danny for a walk around noon. We always take Danny to the dog park on bright, clear Sundays like today. Joseph was enjoying himself, still unaware of the stranger pretending to be our mother.

When we reached the park, Joseph played in the grass with Danny, while “Mom” and I sat in the shade. The park seemed strangely empty for a Sunday. I tried to avoid eye contact with the stranger, so I studied the surrounding grass. Anyone who saw us relaxing in the shade on that hot summer day may have thought it a peaceful scene, but believe me when I say it was anything but. Even with my back turned, I could feel her eyes drilling little black holes in the back of my neck.

After sitting there for a while, I heard the imposter cough, like she was choking on something. I turned to see what was the matter, and I found her hunched over and facing the tree. When her breathing returned to normal, she looked at me and said: “I’m fine, just something in my throat.” She smiled a hollow, glass smile my way as I turned back around. When I knew she wasn’t looking, I slowly turned my head to take another look at her. Once again, faced away from me, her coughing fit resumed, this time more intense than before. She really did seem to be

choking on something. That’s when it happened. As her fit reached its climax, she appeared to throw something up. My gaze fixed, I saw her retch the item up into her hands, whereupon she quickly pocketed it. I couldn’t get a good look at it, but it almost looked to be some kind of worm.

July 17, 1998

Dad’s gone. I realized just this morning. I noticed when he woke me up. What I saw looking down at me weren’t the warm, hazel eyes of my father. They were lifeless and dark. His movements seemed like those of a puppet on a string. Like “Mother”, he smiled a glass smile. Whatever had replaced my mother seemed to have gotten to Father, too.

How could I have let this happen? I had neglected to tell dad about my suspicions. If I had told him, would none of this have happened? Would he have investigated and found out where this stranger had taken Mom?

I can’t think like that now. I have to convince Joseph of this so we can find out who these people....no, these things are!

July 18, 1998

When my “parents” left to run a few errands, I once again tried to convince Joseph about our parents’ disappearance, to no avail. He seemed really upset about my suspicions. “How can you even say that?” he cried. “They’re acting no different than before. You’re just mental.”

This isn't good. I need to convince him before they get him too.

July 20, 1998

Not five minutes ago, I heard one of my “parents” walk down the hall to Joseph’s room. They’re going to get him. I should have done something, but what? Whatever these things pretending to be my parents are, they are much stronger than me. They might have even killed me if I intervened. But to do nothing...

July 21, 1998

My suspicions were correct. Joseph’s gone. In his place is a creature pretending to be him.

What should I do? Should I go to the police? No, they wouldn’t believe a kid like me. Besides, I can’t drive, and my “family” could monitor any phone call through the landline, so that option’s out. I’d go to a teacher, but it’s the middle of summer break. School won’t be in for another month. I just need to survive until then.

July 22, 1998

I awoke to a yelp. Just a moment ago, my “father” got Danny, and I witnessed it all. He dragged him outside, just below my window. When he was in a spot he thought was free from view, that’s when it happened. He unhinged his jaw, and from it writhed a long, wormlike bug. I looked away before I saw what happened next.

I’m all that’s left.

July 23, 1998

They’re coming. I know they are. I can hear their hands against the wood of my door. I feel their eyes on me, like they can see right through the walls. They’re going to get me, make me like them.

I can’t let that happen.

I need to escape.

But how?

The window. I’ll run to a friend’s house or the police. I’ll bring this journal as proof of what I have seen.

If I make it, I’ll continue writing. I’ll write down the evidence until they’re found out. If I don’t, all I can hope for is for this journal to make its way into someone else’s hands so they can know to be aware of those with the soulless eyes and the glass smiles.

Nathan Flores

Grade 11

St. Ann's Academy

The Monkfish

The doorbell rang. The holy man, Fulgentius, opened the door, awoken from his light sleep. He carried a basket into his house, from which a baby cried. A woman ran away from behind some pine trees, sobbing inconsolably. The child grows up, and his name is Credan.

Fulgentius has been in a foul mood, again. Why, I just like to hide things and paint the carved statues in funny colours, that's all. They can be whitewashed and painted again. Fulgentius has not told me about what "important cathedrals" or "the Dauphin of France" or "meet the deadline or no payment" means. So I will continue to do as I please. After all, life must be much more than carving statues, or assisting at Masses every Sunday! In truth, I might go fishing with my three friends for a week. The old drag can do his own thing in peace.

Finally, the boy Credan has returned from his fishing expedition. Normally, I would have been alright with this leave, but I am quite put out that he did not give me even a peep to me. There is a war going on, and us French have had a woman fighting and winning for us! But this inconsiderate boy had left for a week, and for all the world he could have joined the army! To lose him would be a great loss, for him and for myself. His carving talent is far better than mine, and I want him to be successful. Being a hermit, I have consecrated myself to the Lord alone, but I hope that he will pass on the trade. I

pray that the Lord will have mercy on him and bring him back to his senses, or else give me a new successor who takes his work seriously.

Goodness, Fulgentius has been painful. Though he cannot match a full choir of monks with his voice, he is as grave as a plague pit! When will he stop? I think that I will let him come fishing with us, where I will leave him in the wilderness by himself. Then I will have some peace. But I do not want to do it soon. I have heard some rumours that the English have been raiding parts of France, mostly by the sea, where I have had the most success in fishing. But no matter, I will only be by the sea for a short time.

The boy Credan has brought me to the coast for a fishing expedition. As much as I have been enjoying the respite from carving, I am still slightly worried about the English stumbling upon us. Still, we are in a remote place, away from the fighting. And we have had much fish and crabs, which is perfect for the Lenten season upon us. I have found a new way of roasting a fish: take it straight from the sea and skewer it alive over a fire. It is more tender and tasty that way.

While Fulgentius is out cooking, I walk into a clearing and stumble upon English soldiers cooking some fish. Before I can run, I am taken by my arms into a tent and bound. To my amazement and horror, Fulgentius has been bound in the same tent where I am. I start to sweat and feel sick. It is amazing how much fear can influence your body. I hear Fulgentius' voice call to me, then start to trail off. The tent starts to become grey and dance around me. Now all I feel is the hard ground. It feels cold on a warm spring day.

Good Lord, I have been abducted, bound, and now I am being taken to England on a ship. My dear boy Credan is still with me, though he is still in a faint. We are both

still alive, but only because we are distinguished sculptors. Some distinguished men heard about our work in the camp that captured us, and we were spared because of them. But I am worried that Credan may not survive, and that he may never wake up.

My face feels wet, and I can see bright light behind my eyelids. It is the Sun shining on me. Too weak to open my eyes, I can only twitch my hand. Fulgentius exclaims in amazement, while other voices help me sit up. Water sprays on me, I open my eyes, and then I realize that I am on a boat in the middle of nowhere. Fulgentius and some soldiers are with me. I think that things cannot go well at this point. We both are far from any place we had ever known.

It is nighttime, and we have stopped on a small island for the night. Fulgentius, as always, had gone into a lonely place to pray. This time, he has gone into the small pine grove in the island. Only he has not come back yet and I am starting to get worried. He usually does not take this long.

Walking into a clearing in the forest, I see Fulgentius falling over a plateau into the sea, screaming all the way down. I run to the edge, intending to stop at the end. Instead, I fall over the edge, feeling the air rush past me. Splashing into the water, I see Fulgentius sinking down to the seabed, surrounded by five fish swimming around his body. His brown habit clings close to his lifeless body, gradually forming itself into a fishlike shape. His brown hood look starts to look more like a gaping mouth, terrifying to look at. I cannot bear to look at him, even though he raised me since birth.

The boy opens his eyes and looks around. It is grey around his bed, but he can hear his parents talking indistinctly out in the living room. Sunlight streams through the curtains. He closes his eyes again, trying to continue the dream.

Maggie Jones
Grade 11 South Kamloops Secondary School
i ache for green (the bone deep weary) / damocles' sword
1

i ache for green (the bone deep weary)

birds chatter, flowers dance, the wind sweeps through
a sunny spot of greenery, ne'er seen
by human eyes, but valued, as we do
though beyond our grasp, we ache for green

i ache for green though it comes to me only
in fleeting moments,
flashes of quiet and repose before
that ever-present hum drones back into my ears,
louder than a mosquito and twice as hard to kill

the bone-deep weary haunts me every day, now
yesterday i stay slumped like all those ancient statues over my work until i find the *denouement*
that comes far too late
today i stumble through the motions, eyelids heavy and mind stuffed with cotton fuzz
tomorrow i forget the ache until the seconds that tick by rise up above my throat and higher

our days are litanies of checklists,
a steady pulse of task to task
until the electricity that threads through me
can be quantified, but not qualified,
the monotony of repetition removing the need
for anything less than check marks and percentages

Maggie Jones

Grade 11 South Kamloops Secondary School

i ache for green (the bone deep weary) / damocles' sword

2

this static roves in me always,
twined throughout tendons and ligaments
that hold this shuddering shape of mine together.
there is always something else to do and
there is never enough time to do it in
so i feel unsteady,
lost on my feet,
a single person adrift on a sea without name.

the bone deep weary haunts me every day, now.
yesterday i rend my soul from skin and dissect the pain
today i fall into the arms of people in my life who are there for me always
tomorrow i burn as a guttering candle; not strong but not gone, either

but there is no rest for those who need it,
so i pick myself up again
through the dawns and the dusks,
through the silence of the owl
who is lit by the moon
through the deafening of the sun cresting our mountains
i rise again

but not because i want to,
because mount paul has shifted
onto my chest, and with
every passing task i have yet to complete
it grows heavier and heavier.

Maggie Jones

Grade 11 South Kamloops Secondary School

i ache for green (the bone deep weary) / damocles' sword

3

the bone deep weary haunts me every day, now

yesterday my feet move without me telling them to, a slow pace towards exhaustion that never
ends

today i bend my bones into the shape of wings for the thought of flight, a feat i know i will never
manage but cannot help but reach for

tomorrow my atoms shiver themselves apart from one another, cohesion slipping beyond their
grasp

and through all i ache for green,

that ever elusive drawn-to-thing

sometimes i fancy my fingers brush by,

nearly take hold,

but always they slip off it,

come back to me heavy, and aching.

at least i know it is out there,

even if it is beyond my grasp

even while,

the bone deep weary haunts me every day, now

the bone deep weary haunts me every day

Maggie Jones

Grade 11 South Kamloops Secondary School

i ache for green (the bone deep weary) / damocles' sword

4

damocles' sword

damocles' sword hovers above his head, and
a second trembles over into sound, and
bird song feathers and takes flight, and
the arbutus and the black-eyed susans push through the ground, and
golden light tumbles through my lungs, and
this cord may never break.

Alia Sandeman-Allen
Grade 11 South Kamloops Secondary
Pyre
1

Pyre

Dark water settles,
Wood floating along,
Folding away white ripples.

The fire crackles
Unpredictably,
Like bursts of sorrow.

The woods are silent,
Like empty lungs
Begging uncaring ears.

Shaking arms,
Shaking chest,
Shaking hands-

Wind rocks the
Cradle of emotions,
Tears slipping out with each swing.

The sun sinks
As the flames roar higher
And hearts settle.
Cold stings eyes,
Like the pain that was brought.
Nothing feels better.

Alia Sandeman-Allen
Grade 11 South Kamloops Secondary
Pyre
2

You lay on a wooden bed
Below a blazing blanket
Of curses and rage.

The fire scorches your
Flesh, charring sinew and muscle
As your eyes stare blank into the stars-

The ones you'll never join.
Fear will ease from minds,
Belts around necks will loosen,
And this is why-

This is why I let you burn.

Alia Sandeman-Allen
Grade 11 South Kamloops Secondary
Pyre
3

the devil won't let me sleep

throbbing head
drudging blood
i open my eyes again

pain shoots through
with every breath
with every breath

sun setting on
moonless skies
i rise to my feet again

exhaustion bone deep
stars sight deep
i fall to my knees again

palms sting
asphalt stares into blank eyes
ground so soft

head throbs
sight sways
i close my eyes again

lying still
face down
consciousness remains

Alia Sandeman-Allen
Grade 11 South Kamloops Secondary
Pyre
4

tears burn eyes

sobs shake bone

i open my eyes again

Hidden in the Fake Image
Dayna Soroke
Grade 11
Clearwater Secondary School

I scream into my pillow after slamming my bedroom door. I gasp for air, yet hold my face pressed into the pillow to stifle the sound. I am done. I am finished wasting my time here!

I can't believe my sister hates me! The closest thing I have feels farther away than our parents, who are on the other side of the world. All I said was what I'd been holding inside for so long. Why did she laugh? Why did she yell?

She pushed me into the corner of the wall for being who I am. Threw water on me, to "clean" me. It wasn't our dad's special holy water that he leaves on the counter. Apparently the religion has her tied tighter than what I'd thought.

I need to get out of here. I can't sit here on my bed, hopelessly curled up in a ball. I'm not only trapped in my skin, but now I feel imprisoned by the roof over my head. It's like heavy bricks holding me back from moving. I can't breathe. Inside I can't breathe!!!

I hold my breath as I remove the pillow from my face, only to keep any screams or whimpers from escaping my mouth. I grab my black backpack and throw in what I need to escape this house. I look in my closet and I'm disgusted by the high-end brands, body slimming dresses, pink, lace, cute kittens, slam-tight skinny jeans, booty shorts, leggings, and skirts. Reminders that I've never been allowed to shop for what I want to wear, but only what my mother thought would win me and my sister a place in the popular squad at school.

Hidden in the Fake Image
Dayna Soroke
Grade 11
Clearwater Secondary School

I reach into the back of my closet and pull out my school sweater that I got for ugly sweater day. I like it. I feel comfortable in it. It makes my awkward boobs look smaller, unlike those push-up bras that make me feel like the stupidest person in the world.

I throw my backpack over my shoulder, but as I walk to my window, I pause. Not because I am having second thoughts about running away... no, because I see myself. Out of the corner of my eye, I see my reflection in the mirror.

My dark, blonde hair is so long that it almost touches the top of my butt. I gaze into those large blue eyes that catch so many people's' attention. And my face: my disgusting face covered in layers of makeup. Oh, why did my parents have to get a personal makeup... umm... thing? Lady? I don't know. I don't even know half the products she uses on me every day!

I slide over to the mirror and take out a makeup wipe, stroking my face. I scrub harshly on the spots that won't clear off. I peel off the fake lashes and I'm done. I like my face without those layers building someone else.

I give myself a weak smile and quickly pull the mirror off the wall. I throw it to the ground and watch it shatter to pieces. With a smile growing larger on my face and a single tear leaking from my eye, I back up to my door. My feet patter down the long hallway and into my parents' room.

Hidden in the Fake Image
Dayna Soroke
Grade 11
Clearwater Secondary School

I hear my sister call out my name, and I know she is in my bedroom. I silently steal money and debit cards from their rich wallets. As I swing my backpack around to add the cards and cash, I accidentally knock over a lamp.

"You stupid, pointless, expensive, lamp that no one uses. Why were you even made!?" I rage quietly. Suddenly, I hear footsteps running down the hallway. I know they belong to my sister.

I rush out through the bedroom window. Not my plan exactly, but this will have to do. The drop from the window to the ground is three stories. Luckily there is a tree that I can jump for, although it looks pretty far.

"Jasmine!" Yells my sister, charging through our parents door.

Nope! I'm jumping! I kick myself off the windowsill and go flying into the air. I grab ahold of a branch, but typical of my luck, it snaps like a toothpick. I tumble down the tree, branches punching me from side to side. Before I hit the ground, I somehow cling onto a branch, but with the adrenaline pumping through my veins, I don't stop. I jump down and land on my feet. I almost collapse, yet push myself to keep the fire burning in me.

"Jasmine!!!" I hear my sister scream as I run off. I head straight to the massive gate that leads to my freedom. I punch in the code to open the gates and when I hit "*Enter,*" the front door of the house swings open to let out a bright light behind me. My

Hidden in the Fake Image
Dayna Soroke
Grade 11
Clearwater Secondary School

sister comes running towards me as I sweat bullets waiting for the gates to open. They are so incredibly slow that I thought I was going to pee myself!

I slide through the small crack as the gate starts opening and rush to the close button on the other side. I hit "close" but nothing happens. My sister is almost at the gate! I hit it again, and again, and again. Nothing. Not even a shake; only a slow, steady, opening gate.

I have to run. I can't go back to that mansion! She would tell our parents in a heartbeat, and I'd be grounded for life!

I decide to take off down the street. I don't turn, or even look back. I am too scared she'll catch up to me in her high-heels. Maybe she took them off before she ran out here? Probably not. I did just jump out of a house from the third floor; I wouldn't have wasted my time taking off some stupid shoes.

I take a turn into a back alley, and I finally feel free. A racing heart of fear, yes, but free. The start of *actually me* has finally begun.

Gasoline

1

What is fire? It is not solid, liquid, or gas, but its own entity. Burning. It's a word that we use for so many things, without even understanding what it means to burn. Burning passion, burning lust, burning rage. Burning gives us light when we rise, and warmth on the cold nights, yet can destroy and maim like nothing else. A spreading force that we could never hope to control in its entirety. Everything burns when you get it hot enough; from the hardest stone to the lightest air. When people burn, it is a struggle to decipher if it is good or bad. It is as though our blood runs as gasoline, waiting to be caught in a single flame, to spark. We are all just vacant, fuel coursing through shallow veins, waiting for our chance, for something to be the flint that we catch on. While being far too afraid to seek in out on our own, for fear we'll end up bruised and battered on false stones, scraped on sharp edges and leaking the fuel we need to last until the end of our days. We never know if the fire will warm others' hearts, or will burn them, leaving angry red scars, textured and permanent, in their wake. We do not know if we will burn with a passion that will power us through our darkest days, and make our own light in the darkness of the world. Or, perhaps we burn with an uncontrollable anger. An anger we pretend never exists until it is lit, and we lash out, not even ourselves as we melt the flesh of those we love, taking some of their own fuel for ourselves and lighting them with the same rage. Often, when we attempt to contain these flames, they do not smother under the blanket as we hope, but watch as it catches as well, growing bigger and ending in a final explosion. We are all playing a game of chance, desperately wanting to feel the warmth within ourselves, and to warm others with it, but just as equally likely to

Gasoline

2

watch our lives go up in flames. Many of us take these risks, because there just isn't enough gasoline in the world, and the more and more people there are, the less we have to go around. We are lucky to have what we have. A lot of us never even take the risk, allowing our blood to remain flaccid through their hearts, cooling them and leaving a calmness throughout their days. There is risk with this too, however. Gasoline is toxic, its smell is putrid, and it can leave us cold and poisonous, instead of peaceful, and careful to preserve the gifts we have. We are all stars, waiting to light up the universe with our glows.

Gasoline, while it burns, can have much more useful qualities. It runs the world, from cars, to the heavy machinery that changed the world during a time of forced marriages and child labour. It runs us, like robots, with oiled joints of hope, and the stiffness of fear. We need it to function. We simply cannot get from place to place without it. A key turned in a lock, a button pushed, and away we go. What this key is, or what are buttons are, I cannot identify for another. How they are triggered is another. In today's world, our interactions are often canned, predetermined, safe. We don't wish for someone to have the key to our hearts, to know what our buttons are, because then we can be programmed to another's will. Taken advantage of, forced to mold to the image in another's eyes. We do not want to admit to ourselves that those we give our key could merely cherish it; the risk is too great. We are a self-absorbed society. We are too busy keeping ourselves contained to push for the key that they harbour as well. Instead, we put up a front, a polished metal surface to cover the gears rolling through our minds.

Gasoline

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Our glass eyes rolling around inside our skulls, analyzing, calculating, afraid. Lost within the clinking and crunching that our robotic parts have been molded together to create.

We all have gasoline pumping through us, the thing that has changed the world over and over again. Developed humanity, society, and given us everything we have. It fills our hearts, our minds, and clouds our eyes with every blink. It is destroying the world. Seeping into the air that we breathe and contaminating our lungs. Killing beautiful creatures and destroying lands, to drag more and more oils out from the earth below our feet. When we catch aflame, we shine like stars scattered across the night sky. But close up? We burn, melt, and destroy. We can never look at the sun straight on, without it blinding us. We often judge others for their choices. For their scrapes and the fuel they have left. For their frosted hearts and how hot they cook themselves from the inside out. Yet, neither is better. They all have their risks, their benefits, their foundations to build up our lives like a home. It all depends on you. So, ask yourself this question, if you never have before. Who are you?