

HAWICK HIGH REVIEW

The Creative Writing Magazine
of Hawick High School

Volume 1: Summer 2018



Foreword

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Having spent six years as a pupil, six years as an English teacher and the past two years as the Principal Teacher of the Languages faculty at Hawick High School I don't need anyone to tell me how fantastic and talented the pupils are at Hawick High School. Having said that, much of our community are completely unaware of the talent and promise we have hiding here! I was delighted when Mr McEwan suggested, then put together, this fantastic magazine filled with snapshots of the kind of work our young people are producing on a daily basis. This magazine provides us with an opportunity to show you what we see every day within Hawick High School. It is important to us that we are recognising the positive work within the school and sharing it with you. We want you to be part of our school and to see the potential and talent of the young people we have here in the Hawick and Newcastleton community.

Cover design by Ronald Yule

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Be Proud of the Curls

Molly Marshall

August 17th 2013. My first day of High School. I thought that I would feel different going to this temple of learning. I thought that I would feel like an adult; yet, actually, I had never felt so young and clueless in my entire life. Everybody was so much taller, older and so superior to us newcomers. So, there I was; a terrified curly-haired girl who didn't know what was going on around her. I did the only thing I could. I followed my trusted S6 buddies to my first class. It was then I heard that phrase for the first time. A boy yelled in his loudest voice "Look at that wee afro kid, ahahahahaha!"

Now, remember what I said before about my hair being curly? Well, I can tell you it isn't just a tiny wave in my hair; the curls are pretty huge and there is absolutely nothing I can do about it. However, I had never really given my hair much thought until that precise moment. That was then I began to feel self-conscious about the way I looked; it ate me up from the inside to the outer layer. For the first time I thought that something I had lived with for all my life was to be ashamed of and that I must hide it from others. I wasn't annoyed at the boy who had said it. In fact, I congratulated him for pointing out to me what I should have noticed before. I was a freak.

As a result I became jealous of others with normal hair who didn't provoke comment. I looked around to see other girls with long flowing locks and not hair out of place, whereas; my hair, was untameable, preferring to do its own thing rather than listen to any comb or hair product I might tend its way. My hair generally did its own thing. I was no longer the same as the rest of society: I didn't fit in. It was strange. From that boy's stupid comment - which really didn't mean anything- I instantly became insecure about my looks as a whole. I felt as if everyone was talking about me, sniggering behind my back.

Suddenly, my appearance had become a big issue.

Yet, is there perfect look? We are either too fat, too skinny, too tall or too short. How can we, as human beings, change everything about ourselves to fit the image that society has created for us? Furthermore, if we are so concerned, all we are doing is living to please others. If others are unhappy with the way we look, we adapt. We derive into the shape and

form that is 'hip' and 'cool'. This makes it really difficult, especially for teenagers to deal with the strict rules on image, as dictated by those who surround us. Teenagers are just getting to the stage when they are figuring out who they are or who they want to become.

They don't need the added stress of buying new outfits because their own are not in the latest trendy magazine or getting the same hair cut as everyone else simply because they don't want to stand out. Surely there must be more to life than image?



Jane Eyre maintains "I am not an angel... and I will not be one till the day I die; I will be myself." Mr Rochester didn't care that she was, plain and simple. It was her good heart that attracted him to her. She shows a real strength and depth of character by maintaining an ability not to adapt to others desires. She will only be herself, nothing more and she will never change for him. No matter how much we want to, or how much we try to be just another sheep in the flock we will not be the same. Everyone is different.

And is that not a gift? The world would not be half as exciting if everyone looked exactly the same: clones of perfection. Individuality shouldn't be judged or made fun of, it must be embraced. It defines who we are as people. We mustn't be afraid to have our look in fear of people making fun. Remember, they are most likely insecure with their own appearance. People, who only copy others looks, don't have their own voice and most likely don't have their own personality either. In a changing room, we try on all types of the latest fashion only to realise that on the model it looks classy but on us it looks like a sack. It's annoying I know, but it is just the way it is; people have different body shapes and facial features. However, I wouldn't fret, I bet there will be something that you can pull off so well that people will gasp as you walk past; even if it is a cheap top from Sainsbury's. Sometimes we just have to accept that we can't make everyone happy. It is time we just thought about our own individual needs, and I know that sounds rather selfish, but it's never a crime to "think" about yourself above others.

Nowadays, I am proud of my individuality. I love my hair (maybe not all the time because curls create a lot of work) but it makes me who I am. I have to remind myself that people will not judge me on my appearance but that is because they are insecure about their own. Though I can't lie I do care about my looks, I am human after all and we generally all want to look good. But it is our choice. We decide if we want to wear family hand me downs or buy a whole new wardrobe from Primark. We know what suits us better than anyone else.

I only wish that I could go back to that S1 girl and tell her to not be scared to be herself. Her curly hair made her unique and that uniqueness is the one thing on earth that cannot be taken away from her.

Chief

Taylor Cumming

We sat patiently. We could hear it approaching, I signalled to Banoo perched in the trees to be ready. The herd of Parasaurolophus emerged from the thick brush. They were traveling to the water hole. We couldn't strike too early, as it was extremely risky. We had to wait for the right opportunity.

A curious juvenile strayed from the herd, it was our chance, Banoo leapt from the trees onto the back of the creature. He threw his arms around its neck. The rest of us ran out from where we were hiding and formed a circle around Banoo, protecting him and the parasaurolophus while he wrestled it to the ground. Once he had pinned it to the ground the worst part was yet to come. I had to kill it. Being the son of the chief of the tribe you were automatically in charge of the hunters and in situations like this, the leader had to kill it. It was supposed to be an honour but I hated it. I knelt down next to it. The beast stared up at me with its large piercing eyes; I could feel its innocence. I unsheathed the dagger and brought it above my head. It squealed and in one swift movement I drove the blade into the hard flesh of the dinosaur. I got up and stumbled backwards, Banoo came across to comfort me. He had been my best friend since I was young and was the only person who knew of my hatred of killing.

"It's ok, if you hadn't killed the beast, we would have nothin' to eat and you wouldn't want that, would ya? C'mon or we're gonna be late for the feast." He walked away and under my breath I muttered

"It's no beast."

Later that night, before the feast, my father had to make a speech. He rose from his seat and in his deep gruff voice preached

"We are all thankful for what we have before us and what the gods have given us, but most of all we are thankful for who we have around us. So let us enjoy this air that we breathe, as we might not have much longer to breathe it. Now, let the feast begin!"

The feast was a triumphant success, but what followed was a catastrophe. After the feast, when we were all gathered around the fire singing and dancing, I went over to speak to

Malia. She was one of the only white females in the tribe. She was the same age as me. We grew up together and to be honest, I quite liked her, but nothing was ever going to come of it. It was frowned upon for the black and white people to have a relationship.

“How did you like the food?” I asked.

“It was ok.”

“Oh well, I did say that we should have caught the other

Parasaurolophus, it looked tastier.” She giggled “You really don’t know how to speak to women, do you Dawantae?” At this point my father’s eyes met mine, and he headed in our direction.

“Ahhh, my son Dawantae, you better not be falling in love with someone like her.”

“N-n-no father” I stammered. (That was a lie).

“You know the rules.”

“Yes sir, but even so, why does it matter who I love, I should love whoever I like and besides you loved my mother.” My mother was also white; they fell in love and made a lot of sacrifices to be with each other. Many people disapproved and said they should be banished from the tribe, but my father was chief. Not long after I was born, whilst the tribe were traveling north for the winter, my mother fell ill and instead of helping her, my father said she couldn’t continue and he left her to die.

“Don’t speak of your mother!”

“Why not, it’s your fault she’s dead.” He grabbed me by the throat and threw me to the ground, I landed with a thud. Everyone was watching. With fire in his eyes he bellowed

“You are just like her, soft and weak. No son of mine will disobey the rules!” I got up and walked away as quickly as I could. The tribe burst into a cry of laughter, before continuing



with their party. I retreated to my hammock; it was time for me to rest. I lay staring at the star filled night sky, tears rolling down my cheek.

The stars were still in the sky when I woke, the noise of the party continued, I turned on my side. Slowly, my senses came back. It wasn't the noise of the party I was hearing, it was the sound of people screaming and shouting. We were under attack! I rolled out the hammock, picked up my bow, along with my arrows and dagger and ran outside.

My eyes were still blurry and I was struggling to stand. Once my vision returned, I tried to make out what was attacking us, but I could only see people running for their lives, their faces filled with fear.

"Women and children head to the forest, men grab your weapons" I yelled, but no one heard me. I sprinted around the village hut to the campfire, where I saw a velociraptor standing before me, blood dripping from its mouth, I froze. It was my duty to protect these people, I had to fight it. I would prove my father wrong, show him I wasn't weak. Before I could do anything, my father yelled,

"Dawantae, RUN!"

I turned to see him throw a spear at the raptor; it hit its leg, drawing some blood, but not enough to kill it. The velociraptor pounced on my father, knocking him to the ground before grabbing his neck in its mouth. With his last breath, my father whispered

"I – I love y-y-ou."

A sudden surge of energy came over me, I screamed as I picked up the spear and penetrated the side of the velociraptor driving it to the floor. It shrieked in pain, before I pressed its mouth shut with one hand and with the other I pierced the side of its head with my dagger. I looked at my father as he lay there helplessly. I was about to cry, but noticed Banoo looking at me. I wiped my eyes as Banoo uttered

"There are still more, what are we going to do...Chief?"

from The Last Game

Alexandra Hounam

“Georgie was a funny, caring, beautiful, talented girl. She was the best big sister and friend anyone could ask for. My heart has shattered into a million pieces. I wish you could be back here G! Not getting to say goodbye is one of the worst feelings ever, please never forget us Georgie! Rest in peace my beautiful angel”

My car flew up into the air. It was like being on one of those rides that twisted and turned in the air and made you scream till your insides nearly came out, but as much as you hated it you always went back on. It was like being on a neverending roller coaster. But it finally ended. The car landed on the ground and my head was thrown forward and smacked the steering wheel.

My windscreen exploded. The inside of my car was covered with thousands of small slivers of glass. The body of the car was crushed. My legs were held in place by the steering wheel and I was unable to move. My body was cut, bruised and in unimaginable pain. My sight was blurred. I felt around for the door handle but as hard as I tried to open it, it was not moving. I lay for a while trying to shout for help but no words could come out. I was in shock.



Everything was silent.

I could hear voices. A young lady came to the car, she reached in the smashed window and delicately touched my neck. She turned around and calmly shouted

"She's breathing, get her out the car quickly."

She went away from the car for a while and then returned, she placed a head rest around my head, then reassured me that I was going to be alright and they were going take me to

hospital. They cut the car up and slipped me out of it. It was a never ending journey in the back of a squeaky ambulance. I just wanted everything to be over.

The ambulance stopped. People transferred me from the vehicle to a white room. I was taken for scans and x-rays, my cuts were cleaned and stitched and then I was left alone. I thought about what the room looked like, green walls with sunflowers in a vase by an ugly looking hospital bed.

I was left lying in this empty hospital room on my own. A nurse would come in every so often and check on me, I liked having company. She spoke to me, she had a sweet voice, she told me stories, I laughed in my head. I wished I was able to talk to her, and thank her but I couldn't. I thought about my little sister Amy and if she was going to come. I was all she had left, and she was all I had. Our mum passed away when we were little, I was 6 and she was just 5. Our dad died three years ago from cancer. I wished, prayed and hoped to myself that Amy would come.

Amy was tall and thin with very long dark hair and well-tanned skin. When we were younger we always had the same dream, to play hockey for team GB. When she was 18, she had a bad fall during a game playing for Scotland's under 21 team. She tore her right ankle ligament and after her recovery all she could do was play club hockey, her dreams of being an international player were over. I heard someone say my name. It was Amy! Her voice gave me hope. She hugged me and then sat down and held my hand. A young man's voice spoke.

"Amy, I am so sorry, I don't have good news. Georgie scan results have told us that she has a traumatic brain injury. It is very unlikely that she will pull through, prepare for the worst but please, we have to remain positive and hopeful." Amy let go of my hand and I could hear her crying. "The police have further investigations to make but they think that a van or larger vehicle came in from the side and hit her. There were no other vehicles at the scene and no traces of where the vehicle went. I know this is a lot to take in at the moment. We can arrange for you to talk to an officer when you are ready to." There was no reply. "if you need anything just shout" The man left.

Amy started singing through her tears, I could hear that her voice was upset. It was a song our dad used to sing to us before bed when we were young.

"Stars are shining, day is done,

Close your eyes 'til morning sun

Then you'll awaken from slumber deep

But 'til the morning, go to sleep"

I wanted to wake up and tell her how much I loved her, how much I wanted to see her beautiful face, and her mad, dark hair, but there was a piece of me that wouldn't. I wanted to wake up, but I couldn't. I started to fade away, into a deep, deep sleep.

from Skönhet

Michael McFadden

The great explorer stood on the edge of the mighty valley in awe. He watched silently as the tides of mist receded from the rising sun and its golden rays banished them to the deep recesses at the feet of the tall-standing mountains. A rush of nostalgia flooded the mind of the explorer, much like the crisp morning air that filled his lungs and stung his cheeks as he descended the treacherous cliff face. The descent was long and demanding, but still, it was much quicker than going around the cliffs.

With one final leg-buckling leap from a few feet up the rocks, the explorer thought himself triumphant for a moment before the pure scale of the landscape was realised. This was it – the legendary, awe-inspiring land of Skönhet. Its wonder and mystery reached far back through the oldest of folklore and most ancient history, often depicted as the realm of the Gods. There they were said to reside – in their great kingdom on the highest of its mountains – under the rule of a great god of the same name. The explorer always had high expectations of the land, yet still every outrageous-seeming tale of its far-stretching hills, golden skies and impressively altitudinous mountains fell far short of the true magnitude of Skönhet. Before him the peaceful greenery splashed out onto the land like paint upon a canvas; the tall-standing trees, miniscule and void of individuality from afar, rolled out as forests far over the extensive hills and across horizons unseen; and the grand, illustrious mountains themselves rose from the white, picturesque clouds as if from a deep slumber, dwarfing everything else in sight.

The border between the plains and the forests was different to the rest of the valley – the landscape up until this point was a slow transition between various rocks and grasses, but the forest border was a sharp point of great change. The journey from there onward was much tougher; the land was less predictable, the bearings were unclear, and the explorer's vision constantly swapped between dark and light in a disorienting fashion as the sun tried to break through the gaps between the trees. The land beneath the explorer's feet was now sloppy and moist – the now much rarer blades of grass clung to it, as if trying not to sink. His stained boots easily slid through the mud when he walked, taking much of it

with them. The squelching of the apparel was an unpleasant sound, to say the least, but it was fortunately drowned out by the incessant rushing of a stream or waterfall in the explorer's ears. On occasion, he would pass through these streams and his boots would be unwillingly cleaned and drenched from the inside out. The explorer, however, was unfazed by this and continued onwards and upwards to the greatest challenge Skönhhet had to offer him.

The first sign that the mountains had arrived for the explorer was one solitary snowflake which drifted down from the heavens and gracefully landed on his cheek. Then there was a notable decrease in temperature – it was steady and eventual, but nonetheless noticeable. The explorer tightly wrapped the balaclava back around his face, knowing from experience to prepare for the worst. He still was unprepared for what awaited. The previously unnoticed winds picked up to a howling gale within just a few minutes. What began as a single snowflake was soon becoming a storm, and to make things worse, the explorer had just passed the final tree of shelter. The wind was cruel and unforgiving – it pulled back at his coat in an effort to drag him back down the snowy, white slopes. As the explorer tried to crawl up the mountain, his situation was steeply descending into natural chaos. The snow now came at him as solid sheets of white, slammed into him by the wind with its clear objective to send him

back. But to the explorer, there was no going back – he would find the great kingdom, the promised land; he would meet the gods and see Skönhhet herself in all her glory. He endured everything he was challenged with, slowing almost to a halt as he did so.



Eventually there came a point to the explorer's relief when no longer did the land slope up. He stood on the edge of the pointed summit of the tallest mountain in Skonhet, crumbled to his knees and prayed for salvation as he broke down, physically and mentally, and gradually lost his grip on the rocks. The man was too fatigued to be frightened, and so he collapsed and plummeted without dismay. The last sound the mighty explorer ever heard was the cracking of his bones on the

sharp, piercing rocks before his corpse cascaded down the face of the mountain to the 'promised land', forcing the air from his broken chest and condemning him to an eternity of blackness.

There was no kingdom. There were no gods. There was no Skönhet.

The Battle for Caledonia

Callum Knaggs

The icy wind hammered against my face. Pellets of snow descended from the sky where the Gods looked down on us. The snow covered our world in a blanket of white. The cold had spread all over my body, shivers of ice seeping into my bones. Rolling over, I lay shaking. The snow stormed through the flap in the tent. Turning around, I noticed something strange.

I was alone.

Confused, I climbed to my feet, rising from the hard, cold, damp earth on which I lay. Grasping my gladius, I staggered out of the tent edging to my right. My legs were numb, as I tried to make sense of it all. Darkness covered my world. My eyes flickered as I stared blankly at a distant light, deep inside the heart of the woods. The shouting of men flooded into my ice-cold ears. I stood frozen, my face as red as the rivers of blood my gladius had previously caused. Building up my courage, I cautiously advanced towards the beaming light. My heart pounded with every step I took. As I approached the bright light, my feelings contrasted in my head. The noise stopped as I stepped closer to the light. Laughter circled around me. Looking up, I spotted Julius as I felt his voice ricochet in my ears.

“I thought you were out for the night, dreaming of the girl in the tavern again.” Lowering myself to the ground, I placed my arms close to the roaring fire and the cold slowly fled. Resting my gladius on the ground’s frozen surface, I recaptured my breath.

“They don’t tell you about these conditions when signing up” I lay back, my heartbeat slowing. Lifting his head, Julius looked up.

“The snow takes some getting use to, there is nothing like it back in Rome.” Turning his

body, he looked over his shoulder “The strange land of Caledonia is nothing like my home in the Aventine, my friend.” Julius looked around the fire. Holding out his hand, he revealed



two dice. "Six gold for the winner?", his words projected clearly around the blazing fire. Positioning his body, his eyes circled around the group, the others nodding in agreement. He focussed on me but I continued to stare into the heart of the fiery beast sitting in front of me. "Marcus, is that okay? One gold each?" He examined my face, unblinking. "Is something wrong Marcus?" He had always been able to tell when I wasn't myself. Recalling my gaze from the blazing fire, I cast my eyes towards him.

"It's nothing".

Julius passed the ivory dice around the fire. Resting my head back onto the hard earth, I listened to the various people in my group. My eye lids gradually retracted until shut. The sound of the tent party speaking and nervous laughter slowly faded. Tiredness rushed through my body until I fell asleep beside the roaring fire as silence filled the dark woods around me.

Suddenly, a wave of blue warriors swept through our front line. Their blades dug into our men, who were left helpless and struggling to escape. Panic rushed through our column. The cries of dying men flooded into the air. The continuing blood shed seemed to encourage them.

Cato's voice echoed in my ears.

"Century on me now! Form the lines! Present your shields!" The scrambling of men distracted me as I rushed to get into position. Pointing our shields forward, we stood in a line. The blue warriors charged into our human blockade, their abnormally large bodies towering over us but we would not be broken. We advanced forward, trampling over the dead bodies from the row in front. Another set of the blue beasts ran towards us, smashing into the line, taking the lives of those around me. Pushing inwards, we tried to stay compact as our line got narrower by the second. Rivers of blood ran across the ground. A naked blue warrior ran towards me, charging forward like an animal. Sweat ran down my face at an intense speed. Changing his direction, he slammed into the man on my right. My life currently in his hands. The warrior breached a hole in our formation. With one large swing, he sliced his blade through my comrade's head. He turned his body to face mine. Full of

rage, I thrust towards him, repeatedly punching my gladius into his flesh, twisting, finding bone and the organ beneath, before he crumpled lifelessly in front of me.

Unexpectedly, the blue monsters withdrew. Looking to my left, I gazed upon heaps of dead bodies. Turning to my right, my eyes fixed on a familiar looking figure face down in the dirt.

It was Julius.

Rushing towards him, I panicked. Flipping him over onto his back, I lay next to him, my heart stopped. His eyes were wide open as he stared blankly at me.

He was gone.

Wiping a tear from my face, I closed his eyes. Raising myself from the ground, I got back into the line of men. I clenched my fists and gritted my teeth.

Flooded with anger, I stared at the Savage Beasts who revealed themselves in mass numbers from within the shadows of the trees. Our men were startled as the animals approached us at a great pace, screaming and slicing their weapons in the sky. Gripping my gladius aggressively, I launched myself forward.

from Sounds of a Symphony

C. Anderson

No, I'm not dying; no I don't have some terminal or incurable illness that's keeping my body in its rag doll state. It's merely common case appendicitis the oddly peppy nurse told me the previous night when I woke up for the first time, even though my brain was mush as the anaesthesia was still rushing through my veins. The surgery was a success from what I heard from my mother, who wouldn't stop rambling on about it last night. Soon after I ended up back in my white cocoon and I felt myself drifting off in the haven of slumber.

Unfortunately, that didn't last long.

Waking up had been a bad idea that night for I was met with a repetitive, and somewhat annoying noise coming from the bed beside me. A man in his mid-to-late 70s, frail and looking way past his sell by date, was left to entertain me with his non-stop complaining and ranting at the poor nurses who were trying their best to help him. I just kept quiet, only once making the mistake of giving him daggers, which then resulted in him exclaiming

"What are you looking at, huh? Can't I get some privacy when I'm sick?"

Well, he wasn't the only sick one in the room, but I kept my eyes aimed at any direction other than his after that. After all, I had already been in surgery once that night, I wasn't planning on going, in once again, so they could sew my head back onto my neck.

The hours dragged on and on after that. Eventually I did fall back asleep, but that old guy didn't seem to sleep a wink which resulted in me also not getting a single minute of peace and quiet. Eventually there was a stage when the clouds parted and the sun began to shine through at around five in the morning when the old guy seemed to have finally decided to hit the hay, a soft snore coming from the other side of the room. This allowed me to also get the sleep I deserved.

It took about twenty long and boring minutes before I could hear Jack along the other side of the room start to wake up. A low grumble was coming from him as he shifted about the hospital bed. It wasn't long until his antics started all over again, calling out to the closest nurse about his 'special requirements' for him to be comfortable and demanding that they

be brought to him straight away. The nurse being seemingly very confused about the whole situation was quickly obliging to his requests.

I had had enough of this, so I opened my eyes and looked over at Jack, who wasn't facing in my direction. I took a deep breath before I plunged into the unknown.

"You know, these are qualified nurses that work here, not your personal servants." I said quite sharply, hoping he could hear me. That was confirmed when his head snapped round to face mine. His eyes were digging holes into skull, narrowing before he spoke.

"Yes, I do know that, little girl, but I'm not just going to sit here and let them let me suffer in silence," he said rather harshly.

I let out an exaggerated sigh as I sat up carefully in the bed. Looking over to my left, I saw a pile of music magazines that had been placed on the bedside table. My mother must have left them last night when she came to see me. Thank heavens for that woman as I now finally have a distraction from the elderly duffer.

Picking up the first one from the lot, on the front cover was one of my favourite bands. Completely forgetting about Jack, I flipped through the pages reading the articles, seeing the latest tour dates for other musicians and keeping to myself. I had come to about halfway through a report on one artist who had been involved in some sort of scandal when I felt someone's eyes on me. Closing the magazine, I glanced over to see Jack staring at me.



"You like music, huh?" he said bluntly.

“Yeah, it’s my biggest passion. I’d do anything to be a musician.” I replied, a little cautiously, worried that he may hate music and hate me even more.

After a long period of silence, and awkward stares, he finally spoke up.

“I was a musician back in my day. Played trumpet in an orchestra.” A moment of silence filled the room once again before he continued. “But that” he said pointing at my magazine “is not proper music. If you want to hear some real music, turn on that stereo.”

Letting out a silent sigh, I looked over at the CD player that was placed on the table between our beds. Hesitating for a moment before reaching over and pressing a button to turn it on, the music soon flooded out of the speaker and filled the room. It was an orchestral piece, a symphony to be exact and I personally couldn’t care less about it. However looking over and watching Jack, seeing him completely immersed in the music, made me realise that all he wanted was someone to enjoy the music with him. Seeing as we were the only ones in the room, it must have been lonely for him confined to this room himself before I was admitted.

“You like it?” he said over the music

“Yeah, it’s lovely” I said in response.

His face lit up at my reaction, his face cracking into a gummy smile.

The 11th

Valentino Fränken

"You shall be accountable..."

Exodus 20:20

The car bolted through the twilight. The driver, a middle-aged man, was drunk and swaying over the steering wheel. Headlights briefly illuminated a young boy before crushing his fragile body with the full force of the speeding car. The car rolled to a halt, the man frantically trying to open the door. Sweat pealed on his forehead; he stumbled out of the door on to the ground next to the motionless form. He panicked. With jerking limbs, he attempted to move as far as possible from the boy's body. He felt his sins clawing at his back – he knew he was doing wrong. Nevertheless, he ran.

"...or suffer in time eternally!"

'Not again. Oh please, not again!'

The man spins on his heel, frantically scanning the neighbourhood for signs of a nearby hospital. His look of determination betrays the knot that just appeared in his gut.

'Where is it? It must be nearby. I can't fail this again. Not this time. Please!!' he pleaded with no one in particular, craning his neck.

He had been here before, countless times. Not in this place but in this situation, this scene. It replayed over and over. The location changed, but the ending stayed the same. And so far, it hadn't been happy. It began after he ran from the scene of a fatal accident he had caused. An accident in which he had taken the life of a young boy.

The first thing he had noticed back then was that no one saw him. People didn't just ignore him. For them, he simply wasn't there. His family carried on as normal. He knew, because he had made his way home from the scene of the accident. For a long time he had sat at the kitchen table, trying to make himself heard or seen, but he simply didn't exist. In the end, he left and walked. And that was what he had been doing ever since. The places had varied and the faces had changed but one fact remained: he hadn't been able to save the child. He understood that this, somehow, was his chance to redeem himself, to do penance, but he had failed. Again and again. He knew what he was meant to do but it seemed that someone,

somewhere meant for him to fail. His mission was as simple as this: a life for a life. Save a life for the one he had taken. But not any life, the life of a child.

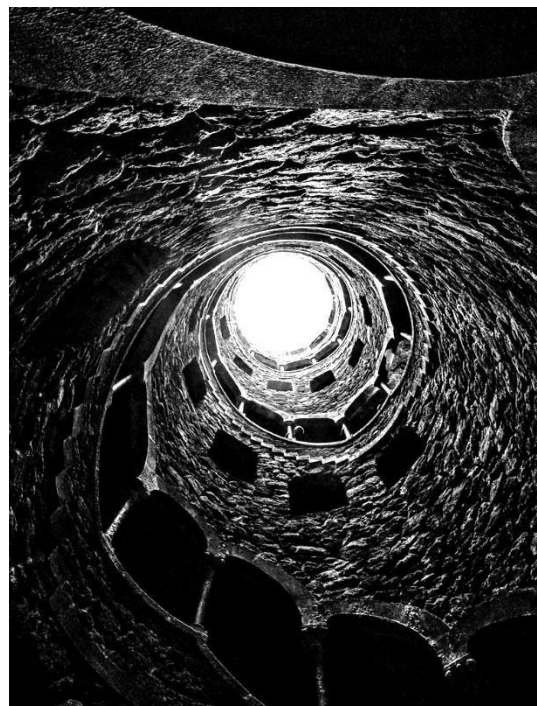
Suddenly, the air around him becomes vicious, shrapnel jitters to the screams of metal colliding. The car flips. The passengers, a woman, a man, and a little baby boy feel the full force crushing down. Just before their certain death, time stops. The afternoon crowds near the road stop swarming. Everything is still and calm. The man emerges from the frozen crowd and jogs to the car which is effortlessly suspended in the air. He brushes away the floating shrapnel, working his way to the back of the car. Stopping in front of the backdoor, he looks at a boy strapped into his baby seat. He sighs desperately. He reaches through the broken glass of the window, laying his hand on the boy's head. He pulls at something. His hand emerges holding the shimmery blue silhouette of the little boy. With two quick steps, he moves to the front window.

“Everything is going to be OK,” he whispers into the dying mother's ear and gently cradles the blue form in his arm.

Stepping away from the car, he vanishes into the crowd. As he does, time resumes and so does the crowd. The car completes its fatal journey and sets off a wave of terror.

In the beginning, he hadn't understood what he was meant to do but with time and over the many failed attempts he had started to understand. All he had to do was to take the soul of a dying child and find a new body for it, free it from its broken body. It sounded so easy but the soul was a very fragile thing, beginning to fade the moment it left its body. He couldn't recall how many times he had run out of time and it didn't matter. All he knew was that every failed attempt not only broke another piece of his heart, it also prevented him from returning to his family. And that was all he wanted. To go back to his life and do better. Be better.

Turning a corner, a sigh of relief escapes his



mouth. He glances at the shimmery form in his arm. He can see the pattern of his shirt through it – it is fading fast. Right across the street is the city's university hospital. Scanning the signs, he heads towards the maternity ward. The clock tower strikes seven o'clock. Only he sees that the clock's fingers have come to a standstill.

He continues into the arid halls of the white building, drifting past motionless mannequins in their doctor's attire. He stops in front of a big door bearing the patient's name: Mrs Evangeline. He quickly opens the door, revealing the gleaming white of the room and the choked movement of the nurses swarming around a woman and a man. Pushing through the crowd of medics, he finds a place at the foot of the bed. The woman's belly is bloated, her fingers curled in agony. Still, she looks rapturous, expecting the imminent birth of her first child. He is the only one who knows that the baby would have been stillborn. Smiling, he looks at Mrs Evangeline's pained face and gently puts his left hand on her belly. The silhouette of the baby boy streams like little rivers down his fingertips into her belly button.

Quietly, he turns and leaves as if he'd never been here. Once again, the world awakes and the hectic activity inside the little room resumes. He waits just long enough to hear one of the nurses announce "Congratulations, you have a beautiful, healthy baby boy!".

"I've done it! I've really done it!" And then the world goes black.

"Hi Richard, darling. How was your day at work?" Beth said, smiling at him over her shoulder. "Be warned, Sophie has a big tale to tell you." She winks and turns back to her soup. A sound like a herd of buffalo stampeding comes from the hall. Sophie, the eight year old apple of his eye bursts into the kitchen, "Dad, I'm so glad you're on time for a change. There's something I have to tell you."

They sit at the kitchen table and he pats his lap, "Come on then, tell me all about it!"

Sophie draws a deep, tragic breath, wrings her fingers and begins, "Well, today, after school", she glances at him from the side, "Um, some of the bigger girls dared me to do something to Mrs Foster's car." He nods encouragingly. "They told me to scratch the side of it with my house key and then run away." Her fingers tapped the table nervously, "So I did."

Time seems to slow down as he stares at her, a knot forming in his stomach. Her head hangs, long blonde hair covering her face and he thinks he can see her mouth quivering. He

breathes slowly and intentionally, not daring to let the images that threaten to overrun him enter his mind. Finally, his daughter looks up. Her eyes are moist,

”Dad, I'm so sorry! I know how stupid and wrong it was “, she sobs,” So I went to Mrs Foster's office and told her everything. God, she was so angry but I'm glad I owned up to it, anyway.”

As he stares at her, still mute, he can feel things falling back into place. The universe is back in order. He has never been so relieved.

You Don't Have to Be Scared

Rhea Middlemass

I take a deep breath. The cool, crisp morning air fills my lungs as I marvel at the sight before me. Hundreds of my fellow brave Scotsmen lie sleeping in the thick grass lining the forest floor like a blanket. A few remain awake as they surround the warriors, keeping a watchful eye in case the English attempt another of their shambolic attacks. They have no hope against us. A grin creeps across my face at the thought and I let my gaze drift out over the rolling hills. As dawn breaks the grey sky begins to lighten and a few of the men stir in their sleep.

Suddenly, I hear a sharp intake of breath and I turn to see my older brother lying with his head resting on a pillow of soft grass. He sucks in air through clenched teeth and flinches, his neck twisting at an awkward angle. I push my knuckles into his ribs to awaken him. These nightmares are becoming more regular.

“Gregory?” he questions, jolting upright but still looking dazed from sleep.

“Aye” (And some people think he’s the bright one?)

Finlay glances at me sheepishly from behind the long, dirty blond hair hanging like rats tails in his eyes. I raise an eyebrow but I already know that my brother does not wish to speak of his dreams about our father, so I give him a lazy, lopsided grin and ask if he wants to grab some breakfast.

We eat our bland, tasteless porridge in silence. There is no use in trying to broach the subject of our father with Finlay, I have more of a chance getting an answer from one of the trees towering above us. It’s been two years. Two years since our father was murdered in the 1296 Battle of Dunbar. I hadn’t joined the fight then, Finlay said 15 was too young to go to battle, but he was only 17 when he witnessed the brutal massacre. Finlay may have survived that day, but as the bond between him and our father was severed by an Englishman’s sword and we were left orphans, a part of Finlay died on that battlefield too.

“Oi! Everyone come round here” a deep, grizzly voice commands.

Smuggling a couple of bannocks away from the food supply, hiding them in my braies, I join the rubble of what appears to be a group of unorganised, harmless lads who are struggling to fight their own heavy eyelids, let alone an English army. I glance down at my leine that once resembled white, now matching my dark brown braies as it's been speckled with splattered English blood and I am reminded of just how deadly we can be. We have won time and time again. My lips tug at the corners as a smile spreads across my face when I think of their defeats. We have slaughtered so many English that my leine, now painted red, matches their expensively dyed tunics. It may be a violent medal, a decoration that I am sure my little sister, Freya, will fruitlessly attempt to scrub from my clothing when we return home. Nevertheless, it is proof of our victories. This is what fills me with confidence when Wallace announces that we will be marching to meet the English at Falkirk.

When the upcoming battle was announced I felt a surge of adrenaline rushing through my veins, but after hours upon hours of traipsing over the hoof-prints left behind by the cavalry, my energy seems to have dissipated. It's times like this I wish we were wealthier. With every footstep I sink into the soft, wet ground the mud soaking through my pointless, leather boots and as the dark clouds close together overhead, a downpour of rain starts assaulting us. I grit my teeth and trudge along silently though, nothing will keep me from showing those English invaders that this is our land and they don't get to put a toe over the border without our burning hatred being ignited and unleashed like a wild fire.

Standing in a crowd of brave Scotsmen ready to die for their country's freedom, I can feel the fear floating in the air. The unspoken words that would make us cowards if ever uttered surround us, hanging above our heads like an executioner's axe. I turn to see Finlay beside me, his bushy eyebrows are knitted together and the lines on his forehead deepen as he focuses on the English army marching over the hill. Sensing my eyes on him, Finlay turns to meet my stare. His light green eyes darken but he pulls the corners of his lips up in what appears to be an attempt at a smile, although it ends up more like a grimace. He nods his head, indicating to my arm and says "We're going to be alright, you don't have to be scared." in a hushed tone so that none of the other men can hear us. The words lift a weight from my shoulders, even when I don't tell him what I'm thinking my big brother always knows. I look down at my arm, reminding myself of Freya back home. She is only 14 but as our mother died in childbirth years ago, she is all alone with us on the battlefield. Before we

left, Freya used some of our mother's old checkered material to sew a patch onto our leines, she said it was for luck, to protect us in battle. It's not very big, smaller than my hand, but the simple navy and green wool intertwined in a unique pattern reminds me of home, of my family. It gives me the courage to charge into battle with a bloodcurdling cry. I glance at Finlay and see my brother charging down the hill, fearlessly. My gaze returns to the army before me, scouring the English crowds for my first target, I have to focus. I know I will see Finlay soon enough. We will be celebrating victory by nightfall.

The English are easily outnumbering us, there must be at least two of them for every one of us. Numbers have never concerned me in a battle before, but today an uneasy feeling creeps over me, clinging to me like the cold sweat trickling down the back of my neck. The ache in the pit of my stomach continues to grow until it becomes a sharp pain, leaving me breathless as my body screams at me to run. A sea of our archers' corpses lie before us and our indestructible schiltrons begin to falter as English arrows rain down on the soldiers. The thousands of Englishmen are advancing, weapons at the ready to slice off my head. Suddenly the two armies collide and my vision blurs into a red world.



We never stood a chance. I escaped. The nearby forest of Torwood provided a home for cowards like me. But as the Scots stained the land with their bloodshed, Finlay never stood a chance. I ran away, bringing shame on the MacLachlan family with every treacherous step. Only one brother remained. Loyalty to his country was rewarded with death.

As the sun slips behind the family of trees on the edge of the field, the cool, night breeze makes the long grass sway, brushing against my legs. I sit down, letting the high green blades hide me, protecting me from the world. I breath out a exasperated sigh as I run my fingers through my tangled hair as I stare out at the land where my brother lost his life. My head is flooded with a million different thoughts and yet I can't think. The ground has been torn apart by the galloping horses, scared by the mass bloodshed and it will be forever haunted by the heroes that in years to come will be a distance memory. I feel somebody

sink into the grass beside me, breaking me out from my protective fortress that shielded me from the ghosts who suffered brutal deaths just days ago.

“Hey” my little sister whispers softly, almost as if she is worried I will shatter into a million pieces if she speaks too loudly.

My eyes stay fixed on the ground as I pull blades of grass from the field. I don’t feel like talking, that’s why I came here, how is that so hard for everyone to understand?

“I miss him too Gregory” She mutters with a shaky voice.

My throat is closing in and tears prick the back of my eyes but the fragility of Freya’s voice forces me to drag my gaze to meet her’s. My little sister is sitting next to me like no time has passed since we left to join the fight for a free Scotland. Her long white leine stands out against the red grass and her endless golden locks are tied in intricate little braids, framing her face perfectly. As her innocent, blue eyes bore into me I can’t help but think of my mother. They look so alike. Suddenly, it hits me that the only family I have left is sitting in front of me. The realisation crushes me like a tonne of stones and in an instant, I decide that I need to grow up. I am struggling to breath in a world without my brother but now it’s time for me to follow in his footsteps. When our father was killed, Finlay was heartbroken. Yet he still managed to put on a brave face and take care of both me and Freya. It’s been left for me to protect Freya now so that is what I have to focus on. As I think about having to live a life without Finlay by my side a tear falls, but I quickly wipe it away, hoping Freya won’t notice as I don’t think I’m going to get a choice in the matter. Instead I sling an arm around my little sister’s frail shoulders and pull her close.

“It’s never going to be okay that he’s gone. I mean he was the only one of us that knew what he was doing.” I laugh sadly as another tear tickles down my cheek. “But he didn’t die. for nothing. Our brother was brave and selfless and kind so I’m going to make sure his sacrifice matters. One day we will win. One day we will live in a free Scotland, living side by side with the English in peace and our brother will be remembered as one of the heroes who made it possible,” I choke out, my voice cracking with every word. As tears stream down my face I no longer attempt to hide them because I can feel Freya’s shoulders shaking beneath my arms. “But we’re going to be alright, you don’t have to be scared.”