



King's High School

The Junior & Senior
Creative Writing Clubs'
Collaborative Spring Anthology:

Mythology

When the Fairy Strikes

by Gunjan

In twilight's gentle gleam, they play, Fairies flutter, light and bright,
With wings that shimmer, pure and bright, Guardians of the stary night.

They sprinkle magic all around, Laughter in the softest sound,
Crafting joy in secret places, Bringing smiles to hidden faces.

But as the sky grows dark and deep, a secret side begins to creep,
Fairy grins turn sharp and sly, Glimmers of mischief in their eye.

Silver wings that once were kind, Now leave hints that are hard to find,
Fairies shift from light to dark, In moonlit woods, they leave their mark.



The Snowman

by Gunjan



Legend has it that once a brave and mighty warrior, called The Penguin, had locked up the evil mastermind THE SNOWMAN... or otherwise known as Steve Smith.

It has been told that the Snowman had been hidden at (52,459). Though many have gone to find it they never came back... It's rumoured that if it broke out, chaos awaits.

Sienna threw her new ball around that she won at the arcade the other day. She was only five, happily playing without a care in the world, until...

The ball slipped from her fingers, bouncing once, twice, and then rolling straight toward the basement door. She ran after it, but before she could stop it, the ball slipped through the crack of the basement door. She froze, watching as it tumbled down the stairs, each bounce making a sound like 'thud, thud, thud' before it disappeared into the shadows.

Sienna stood at the top of the staircase, gripping the railing tightly. The basement was dark. Too dark.

She wanted her ball back. But she didn't want to go down there alone.

There was nothing but silence that filled the room. Then

A cold red glow from below.

Sienna clawed the railing, her breath fogging up in the icy air. The basement was never this cold before. Something was wrong. Really wrong. She ran down as fast as she can, her eyes scanning the shadows for her beloved ball. That's when she saw it. Not the ball but... Sitting in the middle of the dusty floor, surrounded by the forgotten boxes and old furniture, was a snow globe.

But not just any snow globe- it had a note saying 'DO NOT TOUCH'

Inside, trapped beneath swirling flurries of snow, was a figure. A tall, menacing shape with jagged ice for fingers, a scarf frozen stiff around its neck, and glowing blue eyes that seemed to stare right at her. Sienna's stomach churned.

THE SNOWMAN.

She had always thought it was just a silly old story, something the bigger kids whispered about to scare her. But as she stood there, frozen in place, she knew this wasn't just a story. The Snowman was looking at her.

His icy gaze burned into her tiny hands, and before she could even think—before she could run—her fingers were curling around the snow globe, lifting it from the floor.

She hadn't meant to.

She didn't want to.

But she had no choice.

The glass was cold, spine chillingly cold, against her little warm fingers. A cold shiver went down her back but she ignored it. Maybe Mum had bought it ages ago and forgotten about it? She'd just take it upstairs, clean it off, and then—Her foot caught on the rug. She yelped as she stumbled forward, the snow globe sliding from her hands. Time seemed to slow as it span through the air.

CRACK

The glass shattered against the wooden floor, shards scattering in every direction. For a second, nothing happened. Then, a thick, icy mist whirled from the broken globe, snaking across the floor like living smoke. The temperature in the room dropped instantly—so cold it burned. Sienna gasped, her breath visible in front of her. A deep, rumbling chuckle filled the air. From the centre of the broken glass, rising up like a shadow, was him.

THE SNOWMAN

His jagged grin stretched wide, his glowing blue eyes locking onto Sienna.

"Well, well," he grumbled, brushing frost from his broad shoulders. "I was beginning to think no one would ever let me out of that prison cell."

Sienna scrambled backward, on her hands and knees, her heart hammering in her tiny little chest. She had made a terrible mistake.

And now the world will pay the price.

OR WILL IT...

Beyond the Moon

by Saachi

The moon is here
The moon is precious
The moon has value
The moon speaks to us

Beyond the moon
Beyond the stars
Beyond our galaxies
Beyond the universe

Lies the unknown
Lies the mythical
A single tear births a thousand myths
Myths speak in riddles, their tongues lost in time

The moon is our only friend for now
The moon holds the mythical
The moon shares the mythical
The moon embraces the mythical



The Mythical

by Saachi

Do you ever wonder how far your imagination can take you? Lumina, a young teenage girl, had a sharp mind of gold. She always spent her free time looking beyond her village into a mystical never-ending forest. The people of her village warned her not to explore, they say it's 'cursed'. Lumina's mother also feared the forest. Lumina however had studied and even ventured the forest and soon changed the word from cursed to enchanting. She kept her visits to the forest a secret, but she never expected what she would discover. One day, while she was doing her daily walks in the gorgeously glistening forest, she heard a mysterious voice. Normally, people would be terrified of hearing voices in a deserted forest. But Lumina was different. She decided to investigate. She followed the graceful and calm (female?) voice which soon turned into a beautiful hum, and then into a stunning and melodic song. She pushed past the soft bushes, catching sight of a girl. The girl immediately stopped in her tracks and turned to face Lumina.

"Who are you?" she said, softly.

"Lumina... I thought the forest was deserted."

"Me too... I tend to come here to calm my mind and get away from all the stress in my life."

"Same with me. I want to see what's beyond the forest."

Lumina wasn't sure she could trust this stranger, but she decided to go with her heart and gave her a warm smile. The girl smiled back, probably thinking the same thing.

"So, what's your name?"

"Etha. Well, Ethana actually, but no one calls me that."

Lumina and Etha decide to stick together and continue to walk. They explored the forest in places that Lumina had already visited. She was

getting quite bored. Suddenly, a question popped in her head.

"Etha, how do you know about the forest? There's only one entrance and that's from my village, and your certainly not from there."

"I'll show you," she said eagerly, as if she was waiting for me to ask.

Lumina followed Etha to a curtain of hanging lavender. She was amazed, Etha lifted the curtain, revealing a tremendously stunning and jaw dropping treehouse. It was magnificent. It looked like it was made from pure crystal and rock and was built by a skilled constructor. There was a small window at the top with little pieces of lavender hanging from it, matching the curtain. It was about three times Lumina's height. Etha watched Lumina gaze at the piece of art.

"Wow! It's incredible! Do you live here?"

"Yes. I built it and everything, although, I wish I paid more attention to detail. The walls are all crooked."

"I've got no idea what you're talking about! This is the best thing I've ever seen!"

Etha blushed, touched, by these words of kindness.

"I'm flattered."

Lumina was about to ask Etha to give her the grand tour, but a loud buzz stopped her. She looked around to figure out where it came from. She heard it again. Then she realised that the strange noise was coming from her pocket. It was an alarm, coming from her phone.

"Oh, sorry about that. I set an alarm so I would be on time for dinner otherwise my mum would be worried sick."

She popped her phone out and quickly turned it off. She checked the time. 6:30p.m. Etha watched in amazement. Lumina was confused with her facial expression, but then suddenly realised that

there was no Wi-Fi in the forest so there was no reason for Etha to own a phone. She probably didn't even know what a phone was. But she didn't have time to ask or even talk. She quickly waved her goodbye and skipped off towards her village. By the time she got there, it was already 6:45p.m. It took her longer than she thought. She opened the front door to her house, to find her mother waiting in the doorway for her.

"And where have you been?"

"I... just met up with Alex, from school," she replied, hesitantly.

"I believe you, but next time you need to be home by 6:30."

"Will do, what's for dinner?"

"Spaghetti, your favourite!"

Lumina smiled and ran to the kitchen instantly smelling the scent of the tomato sauce. She noticed her mum wasn't sitting down, but instead ready to leave the room.

"I've already eaten, but you take your time," she said.

"Well in that case, can I eat in my room?"

"Sure. But DO NOT make a mess, okay?"

Lumina nodded and sprinted up the stairs with a big bowl of spaghetti. She immediately turned on her PC and was eager to find out more about the forest. Now that she knew there were more places there that she hadn't explored, she was even more curious. She took a big mouthful of spaghetti and did some research.

After some thorough research she discovered a new passage. She figured out how to get there and was now more excited than ever to go explore. She ate her spaghetti as quickly as she could and rushed downstairs back into the kitchen to go wash up. Her mum was already in bed. She looked outside and it was pitch black. She glanced over at the clock and saw that it was already 9:30p.m. As always, Lumina made sure her dish was sparkling clean without a speck of dirt. When she was sure, she made her way upstairs to her bedroom, now exhausted. She decided she would go to bed and wake up with a fresh start, ready to explore.

The next morning, she hopped out of bed, excited to endeavour. She slid on her slip-on shoes and headed out, setting an alarm for 1 p.m. She ran into the forest, which greeted her with a warm and welcoming breeze. She heard a familiar hum and knew instantly that it was her new friend Etha. Excited to tell Etha about her new discovery, she

followed her voice, finding Etha in the same spot she was before, behind some soft lush bushes.

"Etha! I need to tell you something, really important!" Lumina yelled.

"Hello Lumina. What is it?"

"I did some research and found out that there's a hidden passage somewhere in this forest!"

"Oh my goodness! Really!"

"Yes! Follow me!"

Etha nodded and followed, looking eager to see what Lumina had discovered. Following the directions of what she remembered, Lumina led them to a path of gold.

"Wow! Just like in the wizard of oz!"

"What?"

"Never mind," Lumina said.

Lumina and Etha both avidly walked on, surrounded by large, scenic trees and millions and millions of daisies. When they finally reached the end, they stopped and looked around.

"Where did it lead us to?" Etha asked confused and a little disappointed that there was nothing too amazing.

Suddenly they heard a small noise to their left.

"What was that?" Lumina asked.

"I'm not sure, let's have a look."

The girls pushed past a bush to reveal something worth searching for.

Lumina's jaw dropped to the ground, staring in awe, without blinking. She couldn't believe what she was seeing. She rubbed her eyes to make sure she wasn't imagining it. There, in front of them, stood a beautiful, mythical, ethereal... UNICORN! Lumina went closer and stroked it gently. Etha followed doing the same.

"This is AMAZING!" Lumina cheered joyfully.

"Absolutely incredible!"

"I can't wait to tell mum!"

"You need to do something else first," Etha said.

Lumina stared at her confused.

"What's that box thing in your pocket that makes strange noises?"

"You mean... my phone?"

Lumina laughed and Etha joined her. The sun shone brighter than ever and the girls couldn't wait to see what would happen next.

The Tale of Princess Kaguya

by Zilpha

One golden summer morning, as the rays of the rising sun shone through his window, a bamboo cutter named Sanuki was waking up. Stretching and yawning, Sanuki was eager to see what fortunes his day may bring.

Sanuki lived a humble existence, dwelling in a simple wooden hut together with his wife. Daily life was peaceful with the soft drone of bees humming and the gentle deer grazing the verdant green meadows of Kyoto, Japan. The fields swelled with colour, and the flowers bloomed gracefully. Sanuki and his wife worked hard daily, slicing the tall green stalks of bamboo until daylight. One hazy afternoon, as trailing wispy clouds masked the bright Kyoto sun, Sanuki was working tirelessly without a single complaint, that was until something caught his eye. Was that bamboo stalk glowing? Surely not? Sanuki walked closer and as his eyes started to focus on the illuminate shapes, he could see that the bamboo was glistening lustrously with a bedazzling aura. Marvelling at what it could possibly be, Sanuki grabbed his rustic knife and slashed the stalk open, instantly becoming in awe at what it revealed. Dazzled by the bright shimmer, Sanuki blinked and rubbed his tired eyes in disbelief. There sat in front of him a creature, pink and soft, pondering: was it human or a gift from the gods? Gasping loudly in amazement, he carefully picked up the tiny being cradling it into his palm. Sanuki rushed back to his wife as fast as his weary legs could carry him 'Look Wife!' he opened his palm and showed her what could only be a blessing from the heavens, 'It's a little girl', she cried, 'Our own little Princess at last!'

Raised and adored by Sanuki and his wife, this tiny Princess was given the name Hime (hime-ay). They knew she was special but could not believe that within a matter of days Hime had grown from the tiny baby found in a Bamboo stalk into a boisterous curious toddler, chasing frogs and frolicking through the lush green meadows. During these days Hime soon left her doting parents to play with the local village children who fondly gave her the nickname 'little bamboo'.

Years passed, the cherry blossoms were pinker than ever, and the tall peaks of mountains from the distance reminded Hime of freshly whipped cream. This day the Kyoto sun was shining once again, tiny rays of light beaming through the tall stalks into the bamboo forest. Sanuki was hard at work chopping and hacking. Precisely then, something gleaming caught his eye, another glowing bamboo stalk stood before him. Excitement filled his head, 'What could it be this time?' Inquisitively picking up his blade, the bamboo cutter sharply sliced the green tower. It was just like how he had found the tiny princess but this time piles of golden coins entwined with the most vibrant luxurious fabric spilled out surrounding him. This new-found wealth must be a gift from the gods- he thought. The bamboo cutter hustled to his wife once again, declaring the news, 'We are moving to the capital, my princess deserves more than a life on a farm, with this abundant amount of wealth we could buy any mansion!'

Not so long after, Hime heard the announcement. She was disheartened, sombre and terribly upset, she adored dallying and frolicking with the village

children until dusk, but there was no convincing her father otherwise. The time had arrived, goodbyes had been heard and in the carriage the daughter sat in sorrow. Her childhood friends faded into the distance and the world became grey. Cherry blossoms seemed to have deepened in colour, and the mountains were barely noticeable anymore. 'Will I be happier in this different life?' she pondered to herself.

The carriage ride was sober and long, Hime barely noticed they had arrived at their destination, peering out of the carriage she couldn't believe her eyes. A sight to behold, the most luxurious and elegant mansion she had ever seen, decked with beautiful, lush green bushes and hanging violet wisteria. She had never seen something so extraordinary, truly a dream. As Hime stepped out of the carriage at her feet a handful of servants stood. They took her hand and lowered her down to the ground. Hime's father called her name, and she was approached by a governess, 'Princess this will be your governess, she will help you to become a proper lady.' The governess held her hand out, Hime was hesitant, she did not have little to any passion about etiquette, but she still politely shook it.

The governess was no kind lady. She always had a stern look on her face, scowling at anything that looked out of place. Even a single hair that was misaligned, or a finger that was not lifted correctly could send her into a raging madness. Hime was not fond of the governess along with her lessons, and the dull stagnant atmosphere was not productive or helpful. Days were ever

so slow, minutes felt like hours; hours felt like decades, she wished she could go back to where the grass was rich and flowing, and the trees swayed delicately within the wind, her friends calling out 'Little Bamboo' come and play, however there was no time to daydream anymore.

Hime was nobly named by Inbe no Akita when she had come of age. She was given the name Princess Kaguya, a beautiful title to fit her enchanting beauty. Celebrations had commenced with big feasts amongst the people of the capital, there were exquisite cakes decorated with the finest of berries, and juicy golden roast chickens ready to be devoured. A toast had been said, and the clinking of glasses filled the room. The moon shone down brightly, as Hime sat outside gazing at the sky, thoughts swirling around her head, although Hime still had an emptiness in her heart for all those years ago, perhaps she could entertain this lavish lifestyle, only time would tell.

Days later, five suitors were sent down to the mansion, in hopes for the Princess Kaguya's approval for marriage. Hime -as you can imagine- was quite upset. All five suitors were ugly, grim, and old, and their carriages were parked in rows outside. They walked into a room with walls embellished with flowers and a mat lying on the floor. Each took their place as they attempted to court Hime, all bickering at some points, but Hime took an instant dislike despising all of them. The princess was listening behind the thin paper Shoji doors, thinking about what she should do, all the windows seemed

closed: it was one dead end after another. Hime instigated a plan, she set all suitors seemingly impossible tasks, even if that meant climbing the tallest of mountains, or fighting the fiercest of beasts. Whoever fulfilled her request first, got her approval, though, none of the five were able to complete their given tasks, and the only thing that Hime received was a flower, just how she had intended.

All suitors had been rejected but the news of Princess Kaguya's extraordinary beauty had spread incredibly fast, and the ultimate proposal of marriage had arrived from the Emperor of Japan. Once again, the Princess refused, bringing shame and embarrassment to her family. The only comfort Hime could find was staring into the inky black abyss of the night sky, bathing in the comforting luminous glow of the full moon.

With the pressure mounting on Hime day after day she realised her own desires and happiness would have to come last if she would succumb to the pressure of making her loving parents happy by marrying well and living a royal life of duty and untold wealth. Closing her eyes and trying to find all the answers Hime experienced a strong memory from her past. Her heart sank and she remembered what brought her to earth in the first place. When Hime had been placed in the bamboo all those years ago, it was her desire to experience mortal life on Earth. But in this dark moment of time Hime realised she could not carry on this desire and soon she must be reclaimed on the next full moon.

The next full moon was hours away, too distressed to tell her loved ones Hime wrote letters for them, leaving her parents her own robe as a memento to remember her by and for the Emperor, an Elixir of Immortality.

On receiving his letter, the Emperor was

overcome with sadness, and asked his servants to find the tallest mountain in Japan which is closest to the heavens, then to burn both the letter and elixir. 'I do not wish to live for eternity without my Princess Kaguya' he cried. From this day the highest mountain was forever known as the mountain of immortality, Mount Fuji.

The night of the full moon had arrived; up above a silver chariot floated down filled with a band of luminous figures. Everyone from the mansion rushed out to see the spectacle emerging from the clouds, and what looked like the leader daintily floating from the chariot. The mysterious man pointed at Sanuki and his wife, "The time has come for the princess to return to the moon from whence she came. We had been observing you on that golden morning in Kyoto and knew you would take diligent care of her, the gold in the bamboo was compensation for your work and commitment to caring for our Princess". Hime stepped towards the leader and looked back at the pity and sorrow of the old man Sanuki, her eyes filled with tears. "When you look at the moon, think of me," the princess whispered to her loving grieving father.

As The chariot descended into the heavens, they all gazed with tearful eyes at the princess departing forever into the silvery light of Tsuki no Miyako 'the Capital of the Moon', they knew she was returning to her rightful home where her soul could live completely and with meaning.

The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter is a monogatari (fictional prose narrative) containing elements of Japanese folklore. Written by an unknown author in the late 9th or early 10th century during the Heian period, it is considered the oldest surviving work in the monogatari form.

To the Stars

by Lola

Once upon a time there was a girl, Molly, who was seven years old, who loved her pet bunnies, Captain Comet and Mister Moon. She wanted to be an astronaut when she grew up. For her birthday, she received an astronaut suit and a rocket playhouse from her parents, which unsurprisingly became her new residence. As twilight started to spread across the horizon, she got ready for bed and changed into her pyjamas (space themed ones of course) and her mother tucked her in. She said, 'Night night darling, dream big dreams'...

'So, are we ready for launch in 5,4,3,2 ... and 1. Launched.' Travelling higher and higher and even higher; just, up! Captain Comet was taking control of the rocket, as all Captains do whilst Molly was gazing out through the window seeing Earth become smaller and smaller. And of course Mister Moon was already engulfing a block of cheese, 'the moon is made out of cheese- yum!' he always says.

To keep themselves entertained, they play lots of games such as: who am I?, charades, rock paper cheese and all the other fun ones. Molly and Captain Comet were winning because Mister Moon kept choosing cheese! After Mister Moon had very clearly lost, they looked out the rocket window spotting all the fascinating creatures. They saw three Starborn Phoenixes, a phoenix who if you manage to spot, is said to make you gain eternal wisdom, seven Cloud Whales who are said to sing soft songs sweetly, two Dream Sprites, who are said to keep dreams and a Moon Blossom which is a type of flower said to open when a kind soul is near.

As the rocket headed further and further into the milky way, Molly and her bunnies spot the Jupiter and Saturn before they decide it's bedtime. Molly, Mister Moon and Captain Comet were so exhausted from the thrilling day they had embarked on; they fell asleep almost immediately and lay together like peas in a pod dreaming of the fun yet to come.

'Knock, knock', Mum bangs on the door. 'Molly wake up, you'll be late for school.'

The Kappa

by Bethany

Many years ago, nestled in the heart of Japan, there lay a beautiful village. Surrounded by glorious mountains, majestic, serene trees and birds that soft song brought a warm feeling to anyone that heard. But it wasn't just the features that had lived throughout time: no. The people of this ancient village were of a different kind. For centuries, stories had been passed around campfires on hazy summer evenings; whispered from farmer to farmer on sweltering days out on the rice paddies; told by a grandmother to an eager child as a bedtime story; and uttered to passers-by in times of great illness and despair. And all of these myths had something in common; all of them were about a mysterious creature. And this terrifying tale had been passed from generation to generation until everyone in this small village had heard of it. Nobody was certain of what it really was: all people knew was that this terrible creature lived in the river. Now, for any other place in the world, this may not come across as such a big deal: but for this village, it certainly was. You see, this river was no ordinary river. Its silky waters, meandering from mountain to mountain were the people's pride and joy; at least it is now. You see, a long time ago at the time this disgusting beast had been discovered, the people had cowered at the thought and had blocked off the river. This had been a dreadful time for the people as not only were the children scared, and hundreds of families left the small town, but there was a huge shortage of water. People just couldn't survive, and the ones that did were

weak and deprived. So many people died, the injury count was huge: it truly was a terrible time.

But, over time, the legend had been disregarded, the people had moved on, and the rivers unblocked. People now continued to roam freely, and the myth soon dissipated from the corners of their minds. Until one day.

Shuichi was a young girl, who lived in a small house with her mother by the riverside. She had never experienced the busy metropolis of the main town before, and instead spent her days out on the farm, picking plums and growing yuzus. Every day, she would make her 1-mile-long trek down to the vast river, and using a rickety, generations old bucket passed down by her grandmother, she would carefully scoop up the fresh water until the bucket was full.

On this particular day, Shuichi had just about reached the river and had started to fill up the bucket when WHOOSH. A gigantic, slithering snake-like creature had viciously leapt from the river, splashing water everywhere and making terrified Shuichi fall back in shock. But then gone. And almost as quick as the monster had come about, a fist clenching stench of rotting fish intoxicated the fresh, mountain air, making all of the nearby creatures cower in disgust. And, before you had time to scream, Shuichi was

gone, sprinting through the woods, not caring if anything was in her way. And all that was left, was the empty bucket left all alone on the ground.

The Whispering Wind

by Rachel

The wind hums secrets no one can see,
Carrying whispers from mountain to ground.
Faces emerge and songs drift in the breeze,
To create a hidden message, unnoticed by all.

Some say if you listen at midnight,
The trees call out, reaching for you.
They speak in a language that's a mix from all,
A story is told that echoes through the land.

The ancient trees whisper to each other,
Turning all they see into a murmured conversation.
Soft winds carry their words like a song,
Only 5 souls hear the unknown

In a village called Eldermere lives a man called Zythrion,
He tells the tales of the wind,
Sharing the stories of the past,
Of forgotten worlds that time couldn't erase.

Zythrion knows the old magic, the kind that roams in the earth,
The kind that calls those to listen with an open heart.
The whispers of the wind walk through stones and rocks,
Carrying the forgotten voices of those who once roamed the earth.

The wind carries voices from a time long past,
Whispering secrets that forever last.
Zythrion listens, his soul attuned to the sound
Where ancient stories in the breeze are found.

Extract from Encounter at the Pier

by Sana

We were on the stretch of road along the cliff, not far from the motorway. The stretch where the trees on the left seem to reach out for your car as it passes, and only the cheap weathered railing is separating you from the plummet into the ocean on your right. The drive had been an hour long, what with the traffic and windstorm and everything, and so far we'd spent it in silence. That's unusual for us, you should know. Maybe not so much for me, but especially for Mairead—she's the kind that never runs out of things to say. See, Mairead's what folks round here might call 'abnormal'. She's got these big wet-looking eyes, dark hair and an appetite fit for a sea monster. Once upon a time you'd never see her without her coat—a heavy thing, quality sealskin too, she'd used to carry it around even in summer. Got a fear of water, she'd say, yet you'd more likely find her at the pier than her own cluttered apartment. Just likes to watch, she would tell me.

In the car we usually talk about our day. She talks about her classes, about what point in history they studied today with a fluctuation of analytical disregard and reactions from the heart. She talks like social history was a TV show, a new and fictional concept, like humanity were in a petri dish and she had the microscope. And yet she's bonded with each organism, attached to each character, mourning figures long gone as if they'd died yesterday.

Then she asks me about mine, and I struggle to make marine science sound as vivid as her recount of the American Civil Rights Movement.

Before she'd pretend to know nothing at all, which I noticed quite quickly. I'd always assumed it was just to get me to talk more, which I didn't mind. Though I guess it was still half true. That day, though, we drove in silence. Unusual for us, sure, but understandable. It was one of those days. Busy schedules, late nights. See, the night before, we'd just started trying to figure everything out. At that point we'd been roommates for around two years, but more than roommates? Mere months. And it wasn't long after we dived into the choppy waters of romance that we realised; there's a lot that we don't know.

There's a lot I don't know about you, I remember thinking in the car. The glare of a bright and colourless day caught in her hair, spilt across the dashboard. It must have been spring—freak weather aside, the wildflowers dotted along the edge of the road were blooming, and the trees were regaining their foliage. Now, before I continue there's some other context you need to know. I did say Mairead would be at the pier more often than her own place and, well, you can't blame her. The pier is quite popular, sitting on the beach right by our apartment complex. It's sturdy and narrow, stretching into the endless blue, the perfect spot to watch the morning sun's reflection bleed through the waves like watercolour, like how the gleam of the lamppost danced across the furs of her coat when we first kissed on Bonfire Night. It's a popular spot, though no one uses it nearly as much as Mairead. I certainly don't. But I do spend the

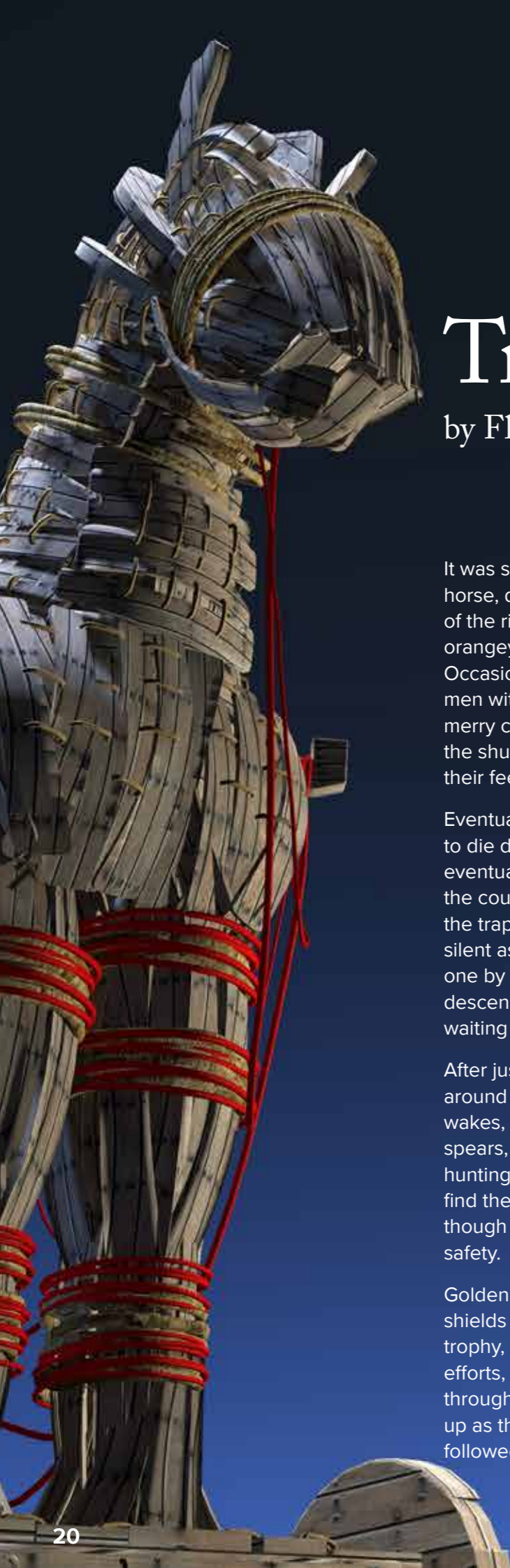
occasional evening there, when the weather's kinder and sleep seems to avoid me. It's a quiet place when you know when to go. On one of those evenings my parents called. Made one last attempt to convince me why I shouldn't waste my life on the sea, how I'm better off grounded studying law—they meant well, beneath it all, but that conversation was one I had come to dread. It followed a routine as well; they'd call bimonthly to criticize my life choices for 15 minutes through a wearing veil of concern, while I'd pretend their patronization didn't bother me then spend the remainder of my evening being bothered by it. It was getting harder and harder to pretend, I was bound to snap whether I wanted to or not. And on that night, I did—and it got ugly from there. The call lasted half as long. We wouldn't speak for the rest of the winter.

This was the beginning of November, just before Mairead and I grew close. She spent that weekend with her own folks—she visits them often, I guess I envied her a bit. It was getting late; the sun had set, leaving the sky and sea in indigo hues, and so the beach was empty. Just me, my textbook, and the emotions boiling over inside my gut. Head in my hands, hunched in on myself, thinking, why? Why won't they accept me? Why can't they understand? (Note: There's a phrase in our town, reserved for histrionics looking for sympathy; "Maidens who weep alone at the shore". It's derived from one of the various stories about selkies, where a lonely woman cries at the sea and her tears summon a beautiful grey seal—who sheds his skin and changes into a man, just for her.)

The glow under water was what caught my eye first. Little, glowing spots along the fins. Grey fins, a slighter and agile body dragging a hefty tail behind it. A head peeking out of the surface. Two big, wet-looking eyes.

I hadn't realised I was crying until I saw myself in them. It cocked its head to the side while looking at me. Looking at me. I stared back for an indefinite moment, taken hostage by stupor. It lowered itself into the water—and I swear it was going to swim closer, when a shout rang out from behind the pier. It startled the seal, which span round and dived back into the water, vanishing. Just like that. With only a receding glimmer amidst the ripples to suggest it had even been there before. The shout had been the lifeguard. He came to warn me not to be alone at the shore this late, with no one to watch. He asked me about my friend, and I numbly said she was with family. He asked me if I had been crying and I just shrugged.

I didn't sleep much that night.



Trojan

by Flick

It was still and quiet inside the vast wooden belly of the trojan horse, despite the hundreds of men that lay in silent anticipation of the right moment, barely visible in the meagre shafts of orangey light that managed to push through the wooden planks. Occasionally, a clink of two golden pieces of armour clashes as the men within shift a little. The warm buzz of drunken laughter and merry chatter fills the air as traditional music floats through the air, the shuffle of footsteps as the people outside light-heartedly tap their feet, swaying with the music.

Eventually, as night creeps into early morning, the noise begins to die down, going from raucous partying, to content chatter, eventually to the soft sounds of the slumber that had settled over the courtyard. This was it, their moment to strike. Creeping toward the trapdoor in the centre of the Trojan horse, the soldiers were silent as a morgue, slinking like snakes fixated on prey as they one by one lowered themselves down via ladder to the floor. They descend around the courtyard, positioning themselves around it, waiting for the cue that could change everything.

After just moments of lying in wait, a powerful battle holler echoes around the courtyard. Before the slumbering courtyard even wakes, the men are upon them like tigers, some wielding fang-like spears, while others rapidly fired arrows with the precision of a hunting hawk. The opposition roared in fury as they scrambled to find the weapons they'd discarded in the drunken haze of earlier, though many had been trampled in the panicked haste to get to safety.

Golden swords clashed with force against the heavy, decorated shields that the soldiers held up to their chests like a coveted trophy, rather than their only means of protection. Despite their efforts, they began to slow down. Eventually cries of defeat cut through the din of battle, and weapons fell to the floor, dust flying up as they hit the ground and clacked against the loose cobble, followed by silence. It was over.

The Mythmaker

by Alice

How do myths become...well a myth? We've heard of all the myths, Achilles, Hercules, Odysseus and Atlanta. But how do they become the legends we treasure? Well, the answer to that young questioner, they go to her. She is the maker of legends, heroes and triumphs. She can make you as well destroy you. Your fate is not yours to choose. Those who do not cut it well..... Perish in anguish.

You see before the world was today, the people wanted to admire, treasure, appreciate heroes. Someone to rise to the occasion. She was no different to the rest of humankind. Gullible. But heroes can be twisted into what they sought to fight. But the brainless she thought she could be...a hero. She stood up from the crowd and said." Praise me and I shall be the hero you desire!"

Oh, how hard the crowd laughed! The credulous sobbed hard that cold, callous night. Hope was strayed deep into the stars. "Here child." She looked up. No sound in any corner. But the window panels were thrown upon, bellowing to the milky night sky. But lying amongst the sky was the moon. That is who spoke. "You speak?" Spoke the girl. "Mortals never expect the commodities outside their reach to be able to communicate." The moon shone a luminous, gentle beam of a smile.

"What do you want of me, dear moon?" The girl mumbled.

"Dear child, though you can not see me when the sun has ascended, I have witnessed your longing to be humanity's saviour..." The girl sucked in her breath for she felt failure dawning on her shoulder. "I have a proposition for you as my soul sunk with despondency for a benevolent and courageous youth as yourself." The moon sympathised for the child.

"Pray tell me this proposition!" The girl pushed.

The moon raised itself to face its children of the stars and the parent of the cosmos, deep in wonderous thought.

"You shall be a legend of heroes but unknown against humanity's simpleminded skulls." The lunar proclaimed all those nights ago....

And now she is unknown of man but the ones heroes tremble in her presence. The strongest, most valiant, talented legends shake in their boots. Well dear reader I guess that's concludes our story of the mythmaker. But one final question.

Did she claim what she desired?

Well that is the only thing that she cannot choose for you....

The Queen of the Fairies

by Alice

Run, run, run little lamb. And that is what she did. Ran. But legs cannot run forever. Endlessly in a spiral round and round. Even for just a second legs will have to stop and rest. Tia's did. Collapsing against the hard colossal tree looking over the other weaker trees. Tia's mind was spurring as fast as her legs were. Faster even. When did the Romans cruelty end? Killing innocent impotent children just because they did not believe in stupid idiotic gods of their nature. Her throat squeezed. I could have been that child ringed like a bell. Everything was good no everything was phenomenal before...them. Wallowing in her sorrow, the girl did not look up from her pity. A boy. Floating, resting in the night sky above her very head. Resembling the moons child itself with powers above man. Yet, cheek lied in this boy along with burning curiosity. He stared at the weeping girl and made his decision in the milky night.

Tia lay still waiting though she knew didn't what for. But in the death of the day a bird flew looping.... Wait.... No bird. A boy! With such grace yet clumsiness. Coming towards...her! But her limbs rebuked her decision to run. The boy landed. Very clumsily but what did she know about flying. 'Are you an angel?' Tia blurted. The boy sighed as if she was the foolish one. 'I don't know what an...angel is but what I am, what I think I am, is a sprite.'

'No, you are the nonsense of stories that haunt me.' She grumbled.

'Fine' The boy said with a mocking childish tone. 'You can forget ever leaving these dastardly woods.' Tia stared at him. He pouted a face like a thunderclap.

'What do you want from me?' Tia whispered. The boy came near avoiding her very glance.

'I want a friend but more importantly a queen to rule the forest so order can finally come.' I already have a boy, Oberon, around your age and stance to rule along with your being.' The boy pronounced with the confidence of a proud drunkard. Tia stared above though the trees stared down with callous features. There was nothing left for her. Everything was obliterated. Everything..... except her faith.

'Yes....' Tia declared. The boys face lit up with triumph. He sore on twirling, spiralling before herself. He flew astonishing swirling round and round before a leap before the moon as if her jester.

'All hail.... The boy enounced before giving her one last glance. A name was all he required.

'Tia!' She shouted a dozen miles above.

'Maybe something grander.... The boy sat on a treetop in contemplation. 'I know! What about..... Titania!'

'Titania it is!' Tia chanted up.

All hail queen Titania!' The Boy proclaimed and the forest was silent.

And whats yours?' the newly proclaimed queen questioned.

'Puck!' The boy said.

Phantom

by Riya

On a dark and gloomy night, a girl was taking a walk around the park and heard a mysterious noise. She ignored it and carried on walking, but then something suddenly swished past her leaving her quite confused. There was no wind. What could it be? She was starting to get curious and scared. Nothing like this had ever happened to her before. Rustling noises came from the trees and what had looked like faint clouds didn't longer as they started to move around freely. A cold shiver ran down her spine and she got the feeling she was being watched. She walked home even more scared as she was before. Owls were hooting, it didn't feel right...

The girl wanted to investigate the area as she knew something odd was going on. She felt the urge to go home but she knew that she should look around.

She approached a creepy old house which looked twice the size of her house! She took 1 step and the grass suddenly swished by the breeze and something felt wrong...

The girl rushed towards the door and quickly knocked. It opened by itself. Was it the wind? Or was someone truly haunting the house? She felt a shiver go down her spine again. As soon as she took a step the floorboard creaked, and the door shut completely. Who could have done that? Was there someone else with her? Underneath her feet she felt something moving. She let out a silent scream. The chandelier

above her was rattling. She was as scared as if she had seen a tiger up close. Someone was with her. Her whole body had frozen. A grey figure swished past her and kept circling her. It went through her, and she touched her stomach, she felt uneasy. She felt a small tap on her right shoulder. She was TERRIFIED! She was strangled and the figure behind her started to ask personal questions.

'Where do you live?' shouted the figure.

'I can't tell you!' she screamed whilst crying.

'Tell me or I will haunt you like I have done like the past 2 years' he said with a serious tone.

That's why I have been hearing noises from downstairs when I'm sleeping she thought in her head whilst shaking.

She gave up knowing that her wrists were in his firm grip. She was crying until she was exhausted, after a while she slept. Later, she woke up knowing the creepy figure had gone away. She decided to go home... Whilst she was walking, she kept having a feeling the figure wasn't completely gone, she knew it was somewhere near her.

Exmoor Beast

by Rhiannon

The wind blows against my short black fur. I look around, checking for humans. It's safe. I prowl out of the bush and stand on a footpath on the outskirts of a British forest. Glancing over the road, I spot my target. My prey. I know I can't be seen. That would spark conversation in the human world, and it would be a danger to me. I lower my body to the ground and have another search for any possibilities of nearby humans. My ears swivel and I inhale through my nose. Nothing. I slowly stand up—shortly hearing a stick crack behind me before hand—and speed across the road through the whispery winds. I look back to check I'm alright, but something catches my eye.

There's not anything on me so I'm assuming I haven't been wounded. Wounded by the bipedal human staring towards me in awe. I hide and watch. They look down at their addictive rectangular glowing thing for a while and continue their walk along the footpath which luckily doesn't come too close to where I'm currently perched. My stomach growls in annoyance as our hunt is now more dangerous. I am not a native species. I am a jaguar; a black jaguar. A melanistic mutation gives me my colouring.

I return my thoughts to my current aim. Food! I prowl through the bush and reach a field. A field full of pigs. I crouch low to the mud. My tail slowly swishes from side to side until suddenly stopping. I'm more camouflaged here than I would be in a sheep field. I prowl closer and closer to a specific pig. Then with one strike of my large paw, the pig is down. I can't risk eating right here — in case of the farmer — so I drag my food to the bush at the side of the field and hide.

I begin to eat the meat. This will keep me going for a while! Within minutes, the pig is nearly completely demolished. I peer upwards and find an ordinary person with a large straw hat and huge green wellies. His face is a tomato looking mouldy from the snow-white beard. The farmer! I spring upwards like a cuckoo clock at the time to chime and run across the corner of the field and hide in some different shrubbery. The pig farmer chases after me in rage. I speed off to find somewhere to escape to. I glance back when I get the chance, to see if he's still following. He lifts up his addictive rectangular glowing thing and I know what might come tomorrow. I leap into a forest on the edge of his land, and I slowly vanish into the darkness.

I approach a small hollow under a tree root in the ground and I crawl under for some shelter. The trees begin to bend as the air more viciously dances around them. I wrap my tail close as big drops of water start to fall from the sky. The water gradually soaks my more exposed side, but it refreshes me at the same time. The glowing circle in the sky also lowers, bringing bright colours as it goes and darkness shortly after.

I stand up despite this darkness and weather. I know I shouldn't but I'm desperate. It's time to go on another hunt. I begin to walk through the woods, stopping briefly to remind myself of the risks. I continue. Slowly, I prowl back into the pig field. Pigs are clever. I lie in the bushes and watch the animals. My earlier prey hasn't yet been touched. The angry farmer is nowhere in sight or earshot and all the other pigs are on the other side of the field, harmlessly snuffling through mud. I place my paws carefully closer

to my earlier prey. I open my mouth wide and take a mouthful. I remind myself of the risks, so I quietly pick the pig up and scurry off back to the woods with it, careful not to trip myself up.

My eyes flicker open. The sun has risen, and the water has stopped falling. The forest floor is soaked with dew while birdsong fills the space between the trees. The glowing circle in the sky glows brighter today and I go for a wander away from the pig farm. A loud holler surprises me to a jump, and I leap up in shock. I dart my head towards the sound. More humans! I knew this would happen.

I jerk upwards. My mind stops. My eyes race from left to right. The clatter of humans sneaks closer and closer. I suddenly dart to the left over a large decaying branch with the moss growing wildly over the top. The trees are surrounding me as I run. They're my cover from the humans. I hear more shouting. My paws don't stop, and I keep going faster and faster and the trees wave as I run past but barely in time for me to see them. All I can hear is the echoing of the human cries in my head, over and over again. It won't stop. Nothing stops.

As I run my eyes grew tired. The sun has moved from the horizon to above the canopy. The human noises are still approaching. My paws slow with every step. An old oak tree suddenly grows in front of me. I screech to a stop. The humans are on my tail. I glance around the nearby area. I quickly scurry like a squirrel up the tree. From here I have a great view of the area. I notice a town lies just over the hill to the North of this forest. The humans call it Lynton or something like that. I'm glad I didn't

run any further. Otherwise, that town would be dangerously close. My heart slows. I hear the humans fast approaching. I push myself flat along this branch, my nose millimetres from the trunk of the tree.

The forest falls silent. Only the humans are audible. The wind brushes gently against my fur and the leaves swing on the twigs that support them. My dark coat blends in well with the tree from below. The humans finally are in sight. One stops right at the bottom of this magnificent oak. They don't even think to look up. They continued along the winding path in the direction of Lynton with a crowd of avid people following in a single file fashion. A bird begins to sing and with that the rest of the forest break out into a whole concert. I take a sigh of relief for I know I am safe. For now.



The Choker

by Cecilia

Lyra's pale, thin hands trembled as she placed the silver choker, adorned with glistening emeralds, into her jewellery box. It was an item she had only shortly discovered but it had already become an item of great significance; it had become a part of her soul. "And where did you get that from, may I ask" boomed a tall, intimidating male figure from the oak doorway. Petrified thoughts of worse case possible echoed in her head. Her dark, matte lips parted but no pleas or promises came out. The man's dark, shiny eyes narrowed in frustration and disappointment. Anxiety lingered in her otherwise gentle features as she forced a faint smile, her voice barely above a whisper, "I found it. Last week, when I went for dinner with Mattheo, I went to the bathroom, and it was lying by the sink." His jaw tightened and his expression sharpened. When he questioned if he knew, she lied, though her heart was pounding out of her chest.

He had become aware of how close Lyra was to her older brother Mattheo. It was almost impossible not to notice. He had an air of protectiveness and intensity – a desire to guard those closest to him. Many of these traits had

rubbed off onto his innocent, little sister. Yet to those who had hurt him, or those close to him, he was an intimidating, dangerous man, a mastermind, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. He gave a brief, short nod, turned and exited the room leaving his fiancée in a heavy, painful and suffocating silence. It never was a fairytale type marriage. She knew it never would be, but for some reason she expected more than this.

Daylight filtered through the ballroom windows, leaving a golden glow on Lyra's face. Her long, blonde hair framed her face, highlighting her beauty and inner strength in a captivating manner. Her mesmerizing eyes gleamed like sapphires, catching the soft light as she slowly lifted her gaze. Her older brother stood there, a silent figure of ease, a presence of quiet comfort. Their eyes met, and a soft, knowing smile played at the corners of their lips, a silent bond passing between them. In a kind, soft way his eyes - so similar Lyra's - scanned her face as if searching for any hidden emotions. "Are you okay Ly? You've been a bit distant lately." She didn't reply. Her focus shifted entirely to her choker; her fingers traced the cool, smooth surface of the

silver. "Wait what is that? Lyra let me see." The sharpness in his voice echoed around the vast, beautiful room. He took a step towards her, his presence suddenly becoming more intimidating, yet the concern and protectiveness lingered in his look. Instinctively, she backed away, she was so used to the harshness of her fiancée that the quite comfort of her sibling felt overwhelming. She clutched the silver choker tightly, as if it was her only tether to reality. Sensing her fear, he backed away. He didn't want her to be scared. She was his sister. Wasn't she?

The intensity of the scene that had just unfolded remained in Lyra's head as she prepared for bed. She couldn't shake away the mix of safety but also fear when she was in his presence. Mattheo had always been there for his little sister. And Lyra was always there for him. But tonight, something felt different, there was an unspoken tension between them. As she clambered into her bed, she tried to brush it off. It was nothing. "You always overthink, Ly." Mattheo had said to her when they were little. He was right of course; he was always right.

In the darkness of her dream, Lyra found herself standing in an intimidating, empty field under a sky heavy with dark clouds. The air was suffocating, as if the world was holding its breath. She could hear footsteps behind her, slow and deliberate. Suddenly, the ground beneath her feet began to crack, jagged lines spreading out like veins. Her body felt heavy. She tried to run, but her legs were frozen. They were made from heavy stone. The footsteps grew louder, closer, and just as she felt a cold hand grasp her shoulder, she woke up. The sound of her breath contrasted with the silent room. Her mind, previously filled with her dream, flickered to the choker. It's beauty and the confidence she felt when she wore it. It was regal but it had a strong hold on her that she couldn't quite put a finger on.



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