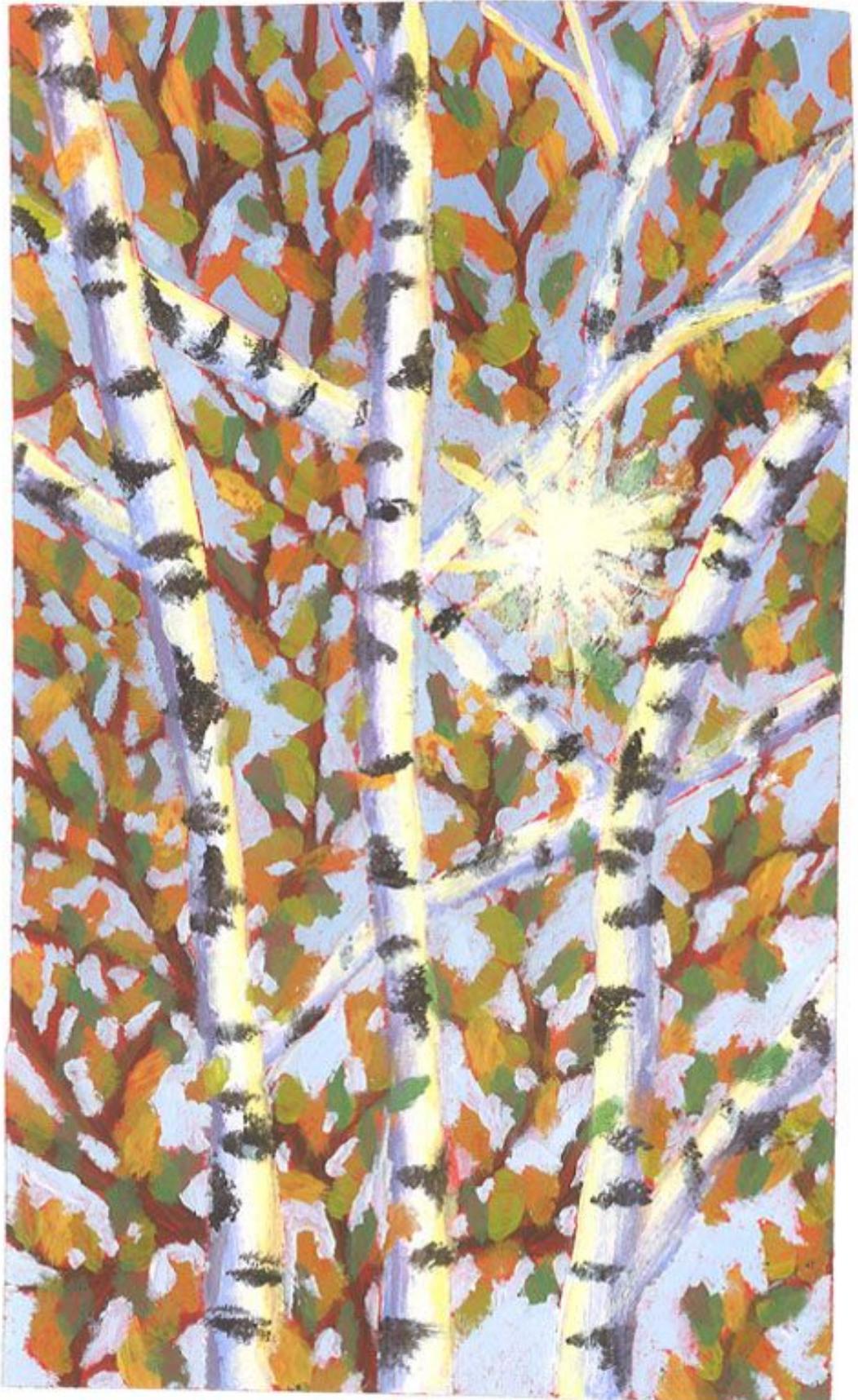


The ICC Literary Magazine



The ICC Literary Magazine

November 2018 edition

Editor: Mikayla Weaver

Cover Art by: Adam Lambert

Table of Contents

Short Stories

- “Kenny’s House” *By Starbuck* Page 2-4
“Will the Sun Still Rise?” *By Fiona White* Page 4-10

Artwork

- British in Old Québec *By Cheyenne Reed* Page 11

Poetry

- “Lost and Found” *By Anonymous* Page 12
“Disillusionment” *By Mary Alice* Page 13
“You Decide” *By Victor Ayala* Page 14
“Garden of Recompense” *By Mikayla Weaver* Page 15

Short Stories

“Kenny’s House”

By Starbuck

Kenny Winkler and his family lived on Edge Hill Road, right next to the winding, shady road that leads to Penbryn Park. It was a two-story house, cluttered with the belongings of a family of six. The garage was equally crowded with stuff that Kenny’s dad bought and sold for a living, flea-market, garage-sale type stuff like old furniture, kitchen appliances and toys.

I remember riding in Mr. Winkler’s VW bus when I was about eleven. The combination of the big, boxy shape, the loud rear-mounted engine, and Mr. Winkler’s frequent shifting with the big black lever made him seem like a bomber pilot to me. Joe Jackson was on the radio, and we kids were happy to be going on a very typical adult task: getting groceries. Now I know how closely Mr. Winkler looked at the price of everything we brought back in that van.

I liked going to Kenny’s house because it was so different than mine. Instead of classical music, the rock station was on, and everyone there sang when the DJ played a song by the Kinks. Cigarette smoke was constant, that bitterness seeping into everything. Mrs. Winkler drank coffee while she smoked. Kenny’s older sister, Carol, smoked while she did everything. We’d run around in the yard playing a mutated, simplified, lawless variant of football that we called “kill the guy.”

We’d camp out in the upstairs bedroom after watching TV or riding our bikes on the crude trails kids had made in the woods across the street. Once we even slept in the conversion van parked in the dirt across from the garage. We didn’t really sleep much; instead, we stayed up, taking turns at the wheel as we pretended we were on some epic journey out on the open road.

Eleven is the age when those things seem the purest, yet when they are least possible. It’s easiest, of course, to write that last sentence after any time has passed. The simple fantasies of very early adolescence hold power due to what they lack: the demands, conflicts, worries and

dreams of adulthood. Childhood is the universe receding away from us, red-shifting as it goes, and we see it for what it is only afterward. That Joe Jackson song carries a bit of that sweetness with it still, even if my record scratches when I play it.

I remember liking the Winklers' bathroom, since it was so colorful. The floor was covered in carpet samples--I realize now that this was for economic, not esthetic reasons. Then, I didn't judge rich or poor. Different was good. The insides of friends' houses were all the same in that regard. I know now that the Hutchins had more money--or at least more credit--than most. That also explained the sailboat, which I later figured was Mr. Hutchins's escape from a rocky marriage. Mr. Murphy's apartment was cool because it was next to the train tracks, and because he had a great stereo. That's where I first heard the Police (the English band, not the cops).

The randomness of last names starting with "W" brought Kenny and me together in grade school, but we grew apart after junior high school. New homerooms, new friends. A kid with the last name Wharton played guitar and sat right behind me in ninth grade. That was another turning point entirely.

Mr. Winkler got arrested for fencing, and Mom had to explain to me that that meant he knowingly sold stolen goods. The emotions came so quickly and were so mixed: shock, surprise, pity, and disappointment that Mr. Winkler's life and situation were so desperate. I felt betrayed, too, that my fragile idea of their happy family had been shattered like a cheap toy on concrete. Now those squares of carpets in the bathroom made sense to me, as did Kenny's requests to come to my house for lunch because he "forgot" his. His family was poor. Yet I still remember as clear as yesterday some very good times with them. I never went hungry when I was their guest. Their house had a raucousness that made a shy kid feel at ease.

They moved out of the house while I was away in college. I passed by it less frequently as I outgrew Penbryn Park and my bike rides took me farther away. I don't know what happened to the family, but I do know that I think of them whenever Joe Jackson or the Kinks are playing, and whenever I see--not too often now--an old 1970s VW bus.

“Will the Sun Still Rise?”

By Fiona White, Grade 9

I'm pouring tea as the bomb hits. It only startles me for a moment. I have prepared for this exact scenario. I exit the room swiftly. I must alert The Count. As I walk down the quartz hallways, my footsteps make no noise. They never do. I have been silent for too long.

I push open the heavy door and enter the spotless room. Count Augustus is leaning over a map of The United Empire Of America. He's talking to himself again.

“Count Augustus,” I say, my voice firm and monotone, “Bombs have hit the city.”

“Probably my arrogant little sister and her rebel friends. What do they call themselves again? Ah, yes, I remember, The State Fighters.”, says a voice to my right. I turn slowly, perched on top of a velvet couch, is Dean Aacker, Count Augustus's husband. I find the boy annoying, he has had everything in life handed to him on a platinum platter.

Dean brushes white hair out of his black eyes with a pale hand. He sneers at me. I turn back to the Count. Dean Aacker is not worth another moment of my time.

“Count Augustus, should I tell the guards to prepare for battle?”

Augustus gives a cold, bone-chilling laugh at my question.

“Dolly, you speak as though pitiful Renée is going to win. Let's face it, if the girl was enough of an imbecile to come to Albany , then she's bound to lose.”

“The only reason she's here is because she thinks you've kidnapped me, Darling.” Dean comments from his corner of the room. I do not dare to look at him.

Count Augustus turns to face both me and his spouse. I wouldn't say The Count looks entirely insane, but he does a long scraggly beard and the eyes of a lunatic.

The Count reaches out a dark brown hand to his husband. Dean takes his hand in his and gets up. They look into each other's eyes. I can't help remembering their wedding day. It was a great day for the empire and for me (I got to meet the king).

My thoughts of happier times are interrupted by another bomb. God, these rebels have no respect for true love.

"Go," Count Augustus pushes his husband out the door with tears in his eyes, "Hide."

"I love you," says Dean.

"I love you too."

Dean leaves and I take my place against the wall. I must look like a statue silently guarding a garden. Or perhaps an angel watching over the world of mankind. Wouldn't that be ironic.

I have to admit, I am not the good guy. But is anyone? The old world was weak, filled with voices that didn't need to be heard. Or so I'm told. I wonder what it was like to live in that world. In that America. All those voices must have been the most beautiful song in the universe.

I grew up in Newark with my mother and father. We were happy. We were complete. I barely remember that life. But they are indeed my fondest memories. Rebels burned my family alive in their mad pursuit of Democracy. So I was taken in by the United Front Guards and trained to serve. Sometimes, I miss my childhood, I miss my mother. I can't even remember her face.

Finally after several minutes, *She* arrives.

Renée Aacker kicks down the door in full body armor. Her shock white hair wildly unkempt. I notice there's a certain wildness in her dark gaze. She looks so heroic. In pre-empire America there were stories of heroes and villains. In them, the villain always had no regrets, they took pleasure in their antagonistic pursuits. But that's not true. There is nothing I don't regret. There is not a single moment of my life that not spent yearning to be the hero. The heroes have it easy. They get to abide by their moral codes and become legends. I was forced into the role of the villain, so I will play it.

“Hey, Auggie,” Renée says. She always tries to get the upper hand through sarcasm, I find it rather amusing.

Count Augustus’s dark face turns into one of fury. He always has disliked nicknames. Then he laughs a cold laugh in an attempt to mask his anger.

“Oh, Renée, is that any way to talk to your brother-in-law?”

“Yes, I saw the broadcast,” Renée says bitterly, “How you forced my brother into marrying you. But that’s why I’m here, to save him!”

“And what if I don’t need saving?” A voice says quietly from the door frame. What little color Renée had in her faced drained.

“B-But, he’s supposed to lock you up.” She turns and I suddenly feel a burst of pity for the young revolutionary.

“Oh darling sister, I came of my own free will. I stayed of my own free will.”

“But he’s the bad guy...” Renée whimpers and I ignore the urge to look away.

Dean strolls into the room with the calmness of a father returning home after a long day’s work.

“Good, evil,” he says, “What’s the difference? They’re just two sides of the same coin. Both want to improve the world, they just have different ways of doing so.”

Renée’s face sharpens as though she just now realized that her brother is the enemy. She clenches her fists and narrows her charcoal eyes.

“Then, big brother, I am afraid that I have lost you. I will no longer try to save you.”

Guards appear behind her and grab her. She doesn’t even attempt to struggle. Dean walks up to his sister and puts a hand to her cheek as she begins to cry silently heartbreaking tears. He lets his hand catch a few before stating, “I never wanted to be saved in the first place.”

///

I swear this place is greatly under staffed. It's like no one can do anything without me holding their hands. So of course when the count wanted some poor fool to deliver food to Renee, it was immediately decided that I would be that poor fool.

The platter is made of silver, much like the privilege Renée has received for most of her life. There is a lid covering the food, but I know what's inside. Chicken, bread and wine. *Wine*. The Count treats his prisoners better than he treats his own staff.

I finally make it to the door that leads to the basement. I walk down the beautifully made stairs to the prison. I call it the prison but it's really just a luxury hotel with bars around it. There's a slot in the bars and I place the food through it. I don't care that it drops to the floor, filling the silent room with the clatter.

Renée appears from the corner of the cell and makes her way to the front of the bars, but she does not reach for the food. Instead she locks those fiery black eyes onto me.

"Why do you help him?" She asks me. But I am not surprised. Very little surprises me.

When I do not respond, she speaks again, "He is the bad guy! The villain! You hear me?! How many deaths is he responsible for! How many will have to die! And for what?! He's the villain!"

I pause before daring to open my mouth. "And what of you? Do you not see that you are just like him. I bet in the old world, you had everything, but people like him took it away from you. So I ask you this, are you and the count really so different? War is just a fight between two privileged parties. Those with privilege will always fight and those without privilege will have to choose a side. We don't want to, but we must. We choose the side we think will win. And from where I stand, it looks like your State Fighters won't last the winter."

Renée's mouth is open in shock. What, did she expect a tragic backstory about how the count kidnapped me?

I leave the young revolutionary to her own accord. When I make it to my tiny room, I let out a sigh I must've been holding in for years.

///

I dislike sleep. I am powerless when I am not awake. Anyone could do anything to me and I wouldn't even know it. It has always been difficult to shut my eyes since my parents passed. When I do I see the everlasting fire and hear the screams of men long dead. Why should I have the bear this burden? I am not responsible for their deaths.

I hear a clang outside my room, which somehow surprises me for the first time in years. I jump out of my tiny bed and race over to my chest of drawers. There among my clothes, I find my gun. I take it quickly and push open the door, silently. Whoever is out there hasn't had my level of training in the art of masking noise.

I take a couple of steps before coming upon Renée attempting to pick up a candlestick. The girl couldn't even wait a day before trying to escape. I look down at the big silver candlesticks and grimace, I always knew these things would lead to someone getting hurt.

I cough quite loudly as Renée is unable to tell I have arrived. She jumps and looks at me. I am reminded of a child caught stealing from the cookie jar. She starts to run and I roll eyes before aiming my pistol at her leg. These rebels really aren't too bright.

I pull the trigger.

Renée's scream floods through the mansion. I wouldn't be surprised if this was her first major injury.

She starts to sob and as footsteps get louder, most likely coming in our direction.

The count looks disoriented but smiles when he sees Renée on the ground bleeding and screaming. He turns to me and his terrifying smile grows even more.

"Well Dolly, it seems you have saved the day. Isn't that splendid?"

I bow before stating, "I was just doing my job."

"Nonsense" a voice all too familiar says from behind me. Does Dean Aacker have a problem with addressing people normally or must he attempt to sneak up on them every time?

"Dean, you know what I just noticed? Dolly has the face of an angel."

Dean's footsteps get closer and he puts his face close to mine, examining me.

“I suppose she does.”

“You know what glorious idea just came to me?”

“What?”

“Well, you know how the crown prince is looking for a bride...?”

I stiffen, shock coursing through my body. It seems tonight is full of surprises.

“Is that the one who keeps on insisting he wants to end the war?”

“Well, there’s only one crown prince, darling. And yes, the moron keeps saying that. I was thinking that it would be wonderful if we had someone controlling his strings like a puppet master. Someone we could trust.”

“That would be wonderful.” Dean smiles a wicked smile at me and it finally hits me why I hate him so much. Dean Aacker left his sister to rot. He betrayed her. I look down at Renée on the ground covered in her own blood. Why would anyone betray their sister? I look back at Dean who is still smiling. If he betrayed his own blood, who wouldn’t he betray?

///

The prince is handsome. He has dark skin and green eyes. His face is one of symmetry. I do not feel anything even close to romantic feelings to him. I do not think he will like me. I come from no money. Plus I have been called robotic and incapable of feeling any emotion. Which is not true. I do know love. I love Wayne.

Wayne winks at me from the prince’s side. He is beautiful, with his bright blue eyes and auburn hair. We first met in servant training all those years ago. He loves me and I love him. I believe people of the old world would call it true love. The prince looks around and locks eyes with me. I give him best smile though I know it must look awful. His gaze moves past me, satisfied.

After what must be hours of him rambling on about his likes and dislikes, he decided it’s time to roam around and “get to know” every one. Count Augustus was right, he is a complete moron.

I notice Wayne’s coming toward me. He stand next to me with his perfect posture.

“Did it all go according to plan?” He asks. Even his voice is perfect.

“If course. Did you forget who I am?”

He smiles, “Not even for a moment. I take it Renée Aacker is no longer a problem?”

“She’s waiting for her execution right as we speak.”

“Wonderful.”

“What do we do know?”

“This is the easy part, honey, we just have his royal majesty fall head over heels for you. It’ll be the perfect wedding. Blah blah blah. Then a month after his wedding, he dies mysteriously and leaves you, his grieving wife, as the sole ruler of the kingdom.”

I lean my head against his arm. “I ever tell you how much I love you.”

He looks down at me with a look of pride. “You are chaos. My beautiful elegant chaos.”

I grin up at him.

The thing about those with privilege is that they forget people like me exist. That’s what makes it so easy to manipulate them. I told you was forced into the role of the villain. So I will play it and get it an encore in the process. I will take everything they have. Because I am done with them having everything. Those who proclaim themselves gods are always the first to fall.

Artwork

British in Old Québec

By Cheyenne Reed



Poems

“Lost and Found”

By Anonymous

I am the footsteps
minutes as they pass
I am each blade of trampled grass

I am the footsteps
Lost and found
I am the earth
I am the ground

I am the sky
Grey and alone
I am the wanderer without a home

Lost and found
Traveling on hallowed ground
I am the cars passing by
Time alone seems to fly

I am the footsteps
Lost and found
I am the clock not yet wound

“Disillusionment”

By Mary Alice

Take off your rose colored glasses and what do you see?
A world where people are tormented because they act differently.
Suddenly you realize that words can be cruel,
That not every person feels welcome at school.
Your clothing, religion, and color of your skin
Are attacked by people who don't even begin,
To understand the way you act and feel.
That words cut so deep, it's hard to heal.
That some jokes aren't funny, and it's not fair.
Kids go home crying because they are scared.
They feel trapped and alone, hide who they are
These kids go home, and wish upon a star;
Not for candy or toys or presents,
These children wish simply for acceptance.
For other people to understand,
That just because they are different doesn't mean they should be banned
From expressing their thoughts.
So, open your mind.
Show them that someone is open and kind.
Someone will love and support their dream.
These ignorant people make me want to scream.
Why?! What gives you the right?
We don't *want* to fight
But how come at night
These children silently sob to sleep
They weep
Because you can't keep
Your mouth closed?
You don't think before you speak
And because of that, you made someone feel weak.
It's your job to make that first change
Rearrange
And Be Brave.

“You Decide”

By Victor Ayala

My father was the first
to come to the U.S.
From Puerto Rico
low paying jobs
Forced him from
The beautiful beaches
And nice weather
The money he made
In Puerto Rico
was not enough
so
my father was the first.
He came with
Me,
My mother
And saved every
penny he made
To bring my grandmother
His mother
Carmen
Here

to the U.S.
From the beautiful beaches
And nice weather.
He saved every
Penny to bring
Alicia
Every penny to bring
Magda and my uncle
Every penny to bring Luiz
Here
To
A better life
A new life
with peace
And good education
My father was the first
To realize his dream.
You are the one
who makes your life
You are the one who
decides.

“Garden of Recompense”

By: Mikayla Weaver, Grade 12

Descend into the garden
Wilderness of neglect
Dead music plays accordingly
A farewell recompense

A solitary chamber
A dusty writing desk
A ruinous portal
In an old mansion house

Descend into the garden
Pleasant tints and gleams of light
Rose bushes and golden dandelions
A farewell recompense