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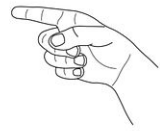
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*The Castle*

Winter 2020 Edition



Wartburg College

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**Featured Authors**

**In order of first appearance**

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Sydney Salton.....6  
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**Cover Art by Emma Williams**

## Poems by Cameren Castillo

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### Fear

Why?

Why not?

Why here nor there?

Why now?

And why are you scared?

Scared of the future? Scared of the past? Your ghosts don't come out until you've passed,

Scared of time? Scared of father's hand reaching down? Etching our bodies until we die.

Please?

Please won't you let me see,

Time is running quickly so I refuse to let it be,

If you never take that wall down, you'll never get enough

Your fear guides and takes you down paths that you barely trust

Venturing on a foot ahead, step by step as you lean backwards with intent.

Well,

If you decide differently, have a change of heart or mind, and maybe even open from inside

I won't be here in time

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## **Your name**

As subtle as it may be it leaves my lips with a smiling grace

The constant grin when it crosses my mind may be a childish mistake

Nevertheless, I whisper it to myself when the space gets tense

A verbal beacon of solitude, as if the letters had arms unfolding to grab me

Your name is something that has me

---

## **Bottled Up**

If I took the time,

And uncorked all the glass that held tears

I'd finally understand what it means to drown myself in love

---

## **The Burning Scientist**

she was setting it ablaze, her creation that she had worked so long for

burning, melting, and bubbling away.

months of research and time that she devoted to perfecting her situation

the kerosene dripped to the floor.

the cries did not keep her awake, but the burn was subtle, almost kind

as the warmth kept the room alive.

why throw it all away? why dive into the abyss of not knowing what comes next?

the fire starts to flicker and kick.

a creation of love, frustration, sexuality, and many different flaws

room getting brighter and brighter.

a lost personality, no resuscitation, no trying it, not again

the flames climb higher and higher.

the burning mess loved her as she loved him, blindly and whole

the ceiling is blackened, burnt completely.

time and time again he knew the truth in what he was

warmth turned into a painful blaze.

his behavior, his hair, responses, and even the length of his nails

warping and shrinking, a room began to crumble.

each individual detail changed so he would be within a standard range

she had left the room long ago.

he let it all happen and now bears the burn marks of what he has become,

damned the creature who flames what he knows.

damned is the man who abandons oneself.

## Clouds by Sydney Salton

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Consuming a gulp of beer, the man keeps his eyes open and fixated as he taps his glass, signaling the barkeep for another round. The man behind the counter replaces the orange after topping off the mug to its brim and swipes the money off the counter—keeping the change. The customer does not flinch. His gaze rests on the cane across the bar. Leaned up against the counter but strapped around her hand.

Twenty-two, he guesses, based on her slight familiarity with her drink order, her style of clothing, and the features of her face. He drinks this beer slowly, he doesn't want his vision to blur, at least not his vision of her. She sips a martini, giggling at what her server comments to her—presumably about her beauty.

Taking the last sip of this beer, he decides to approach the woman. Her head swings in his direction as he still has a couple—three more strides to go. Her smile glows even brighter up close. Dimples, the kind that make you wish you could grab her cheek and kiss her lips, outline the edges of her face. She reaches her hand out, jealous he could take in her beauty, but she can't his. He takes the chair next to her, before he melts and utters, “Wow”, as the woman's hand grasps his cheek, feeling the way his face lights up when he smiles and speaks to her.

Conversation flows with ease, as the hours of the night draw on. The man, Morris, is a great guesser of age, as the woman, Ernie, has just three days until she is twenty-three. These chairs are a new experience for both of them, as Ernie has never set foot in the walls of this warped, musty saloon, while Morris usually remains seated across the bar in the torn, leather-bound seat he just left.

His twenty-six-year-old self has never had enough confidence to talk to women in the bar before, but this woman's demeanor has caught his attention. They were both intrigued by the arts, he more directly as he drew anatomically accurate visuals for the famous biology books, and she developed replicas of flavors for Jelly Bean. He had careless parents and she an overprotective father. Ernie is organized out of necessity, while Morris appreciates when everything has a place and is in one. He has dreams to go back to school someday, and she has dreams to start her own floral shop. They discuss ideal futures and their hardship pasts. Finally, she casually asks if he would walk her home.

Without hesitation he leads her outside and embraces the sticky air. Morris takes a glance upward and gasps. "It's beautiful, Ernie."

"Tell me everything," she says laying her head on his shoulder as they meander down the street hand in hand.

"Up and to the left proudly stands Orion, his three-star belt standing out so brightly. The moon isn't quite full, but it shines bright enough to light the path we're walking." He continues to describe the constellations, making up a few, as they walk toward the apartment Morris lives in. She knows he has no idea where she lives and hoped he'd bring her back with him.

The clouds were thick that night, but she didn't need to know. And it was in-fact the streetlights that lit the sidewalks from the bar to the run-down apartments up the hill.

The sun rose early the next morning, and Morris stretches as the rays usually awake him easily. He jolts a bit when he realizes she is still there. Naked. Beautiful. He grins, knowing it won't last. Inspiration jostled through his veins today, and he made a mental note to apply to the University for medical school for the fall semester.



The kitchen is next door, and soon after he finishes making the omelets, she joins him at the table. Conversation is limited, but after a while he ponders their situation.

“I was planning to head to the studio in an hour, would you like to shower and let me drive you home?”

“That’d be perfect,” she manages to spit out.

The drive goes by silently. Morris attempts to fill the void by cranking up the volume when POWERS’s “Man on the Moon” comes through the speakers. Soon thereafter, her small, cottage-like home came into view, atop a hill surrounded by others similar in structure and size. It fits her personality, especially since she still lives with her father. Grabbing up her purse, she departs with the arm of Morris to assist her from the vehicle. She kisses his cheek as she lets go of his embrace and disappears through the carved wooden front door. He thinks about her the rest of the day, and maybe even weeks thereafter.

She thought about him, too, after a while, for different reasons than he thought of her. She was nauseous often, making her relive their night, but after several months the thinking dwindled, and she began to preoccupy herself with work. And after the birth, she became overwhelmingly busy with Emmie. Soon after, her father fell ill, and because there was no diagnosis, there was no treatment, leading Ernie to completely compress any thoughts of Morris from her mind. Occasionally, a memory would return, mainly when POWERS came into bigger news, playing new songs, and renditions of their original pieces, especially “Man on the Moon”. That became Emmie’s favorite.

## Poems by Sydney Salton

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### Perfectly Imperfect

If I could pick  
The things that appeal to me, My list would be minimal.  
You clash.  
You're misshapen.  
But your name  
Does wonders  
To my imagination

---

### The mess

A house is never clean. Never truly clean.  
Either that or  
it's not a lived-in house. It is a stage.  
But  
even stages aren't clean.  
They have tape that lines the uneven wood floors. That have been painted a million different colors.  
On purpose  
and on accident.  
The floor is also full of crap.  
Not props, crap,  
but crap, crap.  
It is full of things that make you always want to wear shoes.

Anyway.

The mess that is the stage of life

is enormous.

There are shoulder blades

on your door step.

There are ceramics

on your floor.

There is an abundance of coffee cups,

even though you can only ever drink from one at a time.

And there are

Too

Many

Blankets

Too many.

It will never be clean,

But

Honestly,

Who wants it to be?

Who wants just enough?

Who wants everything to live forever?

Who wants their babies to stay babies and their pets to never grey and slow down?

Who wants a perfect world?

## **The spiked hole**

Whenever you want to catch a man, you set up the perfect trap. The trap you use has depth and death written all over it. So first you take a shovel. The perfect size will do. Then you use the shovel to do the things you'll do. And after the hole is big enough for the thing you have in mind, you'll use the sharpened sticks that you'll have done by this time. They will be propped in the ground in a way that will surprise the man who will fall in and hit him in the sides. If one pierces his heart, I'm sorry to say you did it wrong. But like the Salem witch trials, there is only one outcome.

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## **Change is the only constant**

All life is relevant; all that exists.

Things often morph into one another,

That's not to say that penguin's your brother.

Rather we change, say evolutionists.

It is suggested by all of the lists,

We all came from water, not one mother.

Lungs developed first, followed by other, Other aspects like legs, voices, lisps.

When you step on that mighty tiny ant,

You could be stepping on a great species

That may one day outlive the human race.

People say we can survive, or we can't.

Who's to say we won't try all strategies

And pull it off? or go without a trace.

---

## **Content:**

Do you ever

just breathe in a certain

way?

The air seems

sweeter,

and the clouds are

less dreary; Time weighs less,

and people are valued

more.

Appreciation is suddenly

relevant.

There are so many things

I should worry about.

Subjects

I would normally

scram to get toward.

But the deadlines

seem less dooming,

While the workload is more enjoyable.

Nothing is actually different.

The rain

still rolls down the windows

and plans

get interrupted.

Even the air

in-between the raindrops

is still somehow superior.

I appreciate this superiority,

too,

and I remain content.

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## **Breaking Point** **By Emma Bermond**

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*You run and run and run but you can't outrun your past. You can only keep running to meet your future.*

*You keep running because it's the only thing you've ever known.*

“Are you really going to let everything you’ve worked for go down the drain?” he asked.

The storm inside resembled the one on the outside—dark and ready to implode.

“What are you afraid of?” he asked. You’re afraid that you don’t belong. You’re afraid that you’re not good enough to make the Elite.

“I’m not afraid.” You lied. But he looked at you and called you out on your bullshit. He knows you. He knows you more than you know yourself and sometimes that was scary. Lightning cracked across the sky and the clap followed a minute later.

“What are you afraid of?” He wasn’t going to give up until you spoke the truth aloud. You sighed and stayed quiet for a moment. You needed to breathe, to calm the raging storm inside before you spoke. The tears were on the brink of falling but you held them back.

“I’m not good enough for the Elite.” Another streak, another clap. The clouds were getting ready to break. You still stood tall outside of the building.

“You’re better than half those people in there,” he said. His words were pretty but hard to swallow. You wanted to believe them but in the back of your mind there was a voice that said you would never be good enough. You weren’t sure what to believe.

“No, I’m not.” You couldn’t meet his eyes. The concrete sidewalk suddenly seemed extremely interesting. He tilted your chin up with the tip of his finger. His gray eyes seemed to reach your soul.

“You have to believe in yourself. You have to stop running away and start running towards something.”

“I’m not running away!” But you were and you both knew it. You pushed him away and looked anywhere but at him, your best friend.

“Yes, you are.” His words were gentle, soothing. You finally allowed yourself to make eye contact with him. The tears were close to spilling over. He pulled you into an embrace and held you tight.

*The clouds finally break and so do you. You slowly pick yourself back up piece by piece. Then you finally start running towards something: your future.*

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**The Biggest Splash**  
**By Moriah Morter**  
Based off of a painting by David Hockney

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“Do you want to go outside?”

I didn't. It was hotter than it'd ever been. Like ghost peppers raised from the dead. I closed my eyes as sweat dripped like rain down my forehead.

“No, Ozo, you know it's burning out there.” It was an understatement. Ozo sighed in relent. For a moment the sound of his breath and the screaming fan intertwined and became their own bewailing melody. He placed his head on the glass windows, only shortly, before jumping back in pain from where the sun had seared his skin.

“But it's the last time,” Ozo went on anyway, desperate for anything to make his case. He rubbed his forehead where it'd been burned, the skin an irritated pink.

“Can we walk around the house?”

“Ozo.” I shook my head in exasperation, wanting the sound of nothing...not even the fan. “We've already walked through the house seven times. If you've forgotten anything else, the eighth won't be the one to make you remember.”

“But—!”

“Ozo. Stop.”

Tears began to form in his eyes. We both knew it wouldn't get far before disappearing into the atmosphere, but he took the world's pleasure and wiped it away. “I'm sorry.”

My lip lamented. “Ozo, it's not your fault.”

He looked at me, green eyes unexpectedly clear. “Lay, it is all our fault.”

Children. How can they be so old?

Ozo crossed his legs and turned to face the windows. I turned with him, looking outward. My eyes wandered to a palm tree, one of the two left in our yard. It offered no relief. It was cracked and dry—there were no leaves, they had shriveled and burned in the sun long ago.

“It’s melting.”

Ozo was pointing at the only thing left outside—a white lawn chair. The rays cast down from the sun glinted on its white sheen. I watched as plastic dripped down its legs like wax from a candle.

“That won’t happen to us, will it?”

I let Ozo’s voice radiate for a moment. My words, hot in my chest and warmer when they found my lips offered little consolation. “I don’t really know Ozo. I don’t think any of us do.”

I turned and flicked on the radio, knowing silence was too much to ask for. It hummed for a moment before a monotone voice began to control the air. “As heat climbs to higher and higher temperatures it is quickly becoming clear that time is running out.”

I turned it off again, the knob switching with a flick of my fingers. “Sorry, Ozo, I don’t think we need to hear that.”

“Please, Lay, please.”

An edge found its way into my voice. The heat and the sheer force of its weight made it hard to take anything lightly. “What, Ozo?”

“Lay.” Ozo’s voice was desperate. Begging.

“Lay, we are going to die. You know it. You don’t have to hide it from me.” Ozo’s breath caught, and he paused, his chest tugging—then he continued. “The world’s melting—just like that stupid lawn chair.”

I held out a hand. “Ozo, the world is not melting.”

“Shut up, Lay, and let me finish!”

We both sat for a second, stunned to silence. Except for the whirring of that useless fan.

“I don’t want to die sitting here, inside. Trapped.”

I winced. “Ozo, you’re only denying the truth—inside or outside, we’re trapped. Our fate is fate.”

He sighed. “But, we are going to....to die, anyways. So we might as well enjoy it.”

I looked at Ozo—straight into his eyes, and I knew it would be a sin if I waited another second. I glared at the fan and made my decision.

“I’m sick of sitting here, anyways.”

Ozo grinned, his teeth brilliant. If anything would have melted me, it would’ve been a pleasure to have best the sun by him. He paused, quiet and thinking. “What should we do?”

I laughed. “Maybe you should have thought of that before making your case.” I shove him playfully on the shoulder in hopes of earning another smile. I let my eyes trail to the white lawn chair.

“Well, Ozo, whatever we do, we won’t have long.”

I glanced outside, watching as the pale white plastic from the chair’s legs pooled—collecting and running into small rivers—all the way to the edge of the pool.

I blinked—knowing what to do. “Ozo, go put on your swimsuit. And hurry, it’s not getting any cooler.”

Ozo laughed, and I knew I’d made the right choice. We ran to the bathroom, shoving each other into the walls and sliding across the slick floors, wet with their own kind of sweat. We threw off our clothes and pulled on our swim trunks, bright with happy floral patterns.

I threw a pair of flip-flops at Ozo. “Okay, grab a towel.” We carried our clothes to the sliding doors. I fingered the cloth, knowing I’d probably never see them again. Sighing, I let them fall to the floor. I took a breath. “Alright Ozo, when I fling open the door—we run. Our flip-flops are going to start melting right when we hit the cement. If we let our feet touch the ground...” We both looked at the lawn chair. “Well, let’s just not do that.”

Grabbing Ozo’s towel, I lifted it over his head and shoulders. “Don’t let the sun hit your skin until you’re ready, okay?”

Ozo nodded, green eyes wide. I pulled my towel over my head and around my shoulders. “Ozone Er, I hereby challenge you to a Cannonball Competition—you have one chance, and one chance only, to demonstrate your skill. Do you accept this challenge?”

Ozo stared through the sliding door earnestly, face set in frightened determination. “I accept.”

I nodded, and threw open the door with what I hoped was a flourish. “Then let the Challenge begin!”

Towels wrapped around our heads and shoulders, we sprinted out the door, around the melting lawn chair, leaving it behind us, and to the front of the pool. We stood for a minute, a minute only. Watching stream wafting over the serene water. I knew just by looking at it, it was

going to burn. I decided not to think about it anymore. Sweat poured down our bodies, I could feel my flip-flops melting into the ground.

“Are you sure you want to do this, Ozo?”

He nodded. “I have to prove I’m better at Cannonballs.”

I tried to smile. “Well, brother, show me what you’ve got.”

Ozo dropped his towel and gasped, boils instantly beginning to appear on his skin. I began counting. “3...2...1!”

Ozo jumped. Skin sunburnt red, hair flying, smile shining brighter than any sun. He smacked the water, streams flying into the air in bubbling ribbons. Enveloping Ozo in its splash. I didn’t wait for him to come up

My body smacked the water and I felt it burn. I wondered, for a second, as Ozo’s hand found mine and gripped it hard with sticky fingers, if this is what it felt like to be boiled alive.

I smiled as we surfaced. We were probably the last people on Earth to Cannonball. To make a splash. I broke the water and looked at Ozo through blurry eyes—for all anyone ever knew, we’d made the biggest Cannonballs in the world, made the biggest splash of them all.

“Ozo! Ozo...we did it. We made the biggest splash.”

I think he understood

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*Painting by David Hockney*

## Twins

By Lindsey Jacobs

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“Yashika,” Asahi whispers. My brother peels my bedroom door open a crack. His black, sloping eyes—the same as mine—blink through the darkness. “Mother isn’t happy.”

I frown. Blood rushes to the tip of my nose as I arch over the side of my mattress, officially dead to the world. Limp. I feel light headed. “Mother’s never happy.”

“I mean that she’s not happy *with you*.” He crouches inside the room, creased pants and combed hair disappearing in my lightless domain. “She knows you didn’t go to school this week.”

My brother is tall, clean, and handsome, which is everything my Mother wishes for me. She is left disappointed. If only she could see me now, hair loose and unbrushed, skin oily. I am feral.

“I’m sick.”

“She thinks you don’t plan on going back.”

I bite my lip, bite back the urge to scream and yell and hit, because it is not my twin that I am angry with.

“I don’t. I’m sick *of school*.”

“That’s not a real illness.”

Instead of arguing I engage my core, raising up to sit. My hair sticks to my arms and crumpled pajamas. My cheeks are flushed and my thoughts swim as a wave of dizziness hits me.

“I’m depressed. That’s a real sickness.”

Much to his credit, Asahi says, “But that’s not how Mother sees it.”

I chew on this. My twin speaks the truth. Mother will not be sympathetic. She will smack me with the back of her open hand and call me names, call me weak. Because I am a young woman and women don’t survive if they’re not strong.

I take too long to retort and Asahi fidgets. “You’re not really depressed, are you?”

I flop onto my back and roll under my blanket, cocooned. “I think I am.”

“Is it because—”

“What do you think?” I mumble into my pillow.

A weight shifts the bed and I turn to stare at my brother. His gaze is tender, his palms sweaty. He is not this vulnerable—not *Asahi*.

“I know you’re scared about telling Mother,” he starts. “But you have to sometime—”

“No,” I say. “I don’t.” And despite myself—by some law of nature, or force of gravity, or spiritual inclination, or instinct—I place my hand on my belly.

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## **When Will the Violence End?**

**By J. R. Nichols**

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She walked home from work every night at 11:42 on the dot. She was a waitress full time at a restaurant 15 minutes from home. Not once in her 20 years of living had she felt so scared for her life as she did this night. She had seen hell and met the devil but this, this scared her. It was as if he knew her, but she definitely didn't know him. He had memorized her walk home. He knew exactly where she would be and when. And without fail, he would be there. He would drive up on to the curb and call out to her, asking if she had a ride home. It was June. There was no reason not to walk but hers was that she didn't have a car—and anyways, who really needed a car in the cities when you can take the transit. Except by this time of night her route wouldn't be in service.

She was tired of trying to justify herself to others. So, she would settle with the excuse of good weather. She never minded walking until this night. She left work at the usual time and sang to herself as she walked—without a care in the world. He moved from lane to lane, going out of his way to drive up on the curve and cat call her. She ignored the call as normal and kept walking. Her body was aching for rest after her usual 10-hour shift. She was so worn out that as soon as she sat down, she knew there was no getting back up. Her socks were soaked with sweat but the cool summer breeze felt good on her face. Now no longer restricted by a hat, she could let her long

brown hair flow back across her shoulders and down her back—a feeling of near weightlessness. She was annoyed at this man for interrupting her alone time, but she forgot about it just as quickly as it had happened. 5 minutes from home.

There he was again. Black car with glaring headlights, so bright it was almost like they were interrogating whoever stood in their path. At first, she thought it was just another car. Just another cat call. But then, he pulled on to the same street that she lived on. He stopped. The window rolled down. He says something, but she can't make out what he said over the sound of her fear. The walk from the end of the block to her home was less than five minutes but to her it felt like forever. She tried not to cry. Tried not to think of the worst as he slowly crept behind her down the street. She called her mother, panicked and unsure of what to do. She kept walking, pretending like he wasn't there. Her mother ran out onto the street, begging her to walk in the light more. She could hear her younger brothers' confusion—they would never have to feel this kind of fear. Her mother called for her oldest brother. He was sleeping. She was now walking faster, still on the phone with her mom. Her dad wasn't home. He would have run down the street by now. Her brother yelled as he made his way to their mother complaining of having to work early in the morning. He would never understand the fear that his little sister felt. He would never live through that night in her shoes. She was shaking. She tried so hard not to let the man see her fear. She was afraid that if he saw that she was scared that she would make an easier target. All of the self-doubt she ever had was balled up

into this one moment. Did she deserve whatever harm this man would bring to her? Why did he want to hurt her? Did he even want to hurt her? What had she ever done? She was too weak and timid to fight him off so if he caught her any fighting efforts would be a lost cause.

“Why me?”

She whispers to the man, too quiet for him to hear. She says it more for herself. She was tired of justifying herself to others, but in this moment, she couldn't come up with one excuse for why she shouldn't be targeted by this man. What was he going to do to her if he got her? Would he rape her? Stab her, or choke her, and tie her up, and sell her off to grimy men who pay a pretty penny to get off? Would he kill her? Would he? WELL, WOULD HE??

She never did know what that man wanted. It may have just been to ask for directions. It could have been a completely different person than the first. There are so many things that it could have been, and she will never know. She will be left second-guessing, worried that she misjudged his intentions, praying that it was just a coincidence, hoping and hoping and hoping that she never sees him—whoever he was—again. And she would have been considered one of the lucky ones. One of the women who didn't get raped, killed, then dumped in a ditch. One of the women who didn't get sex trafficked. But if she was one of the lucky ones, then why didn't she feel so lucky? No one ever just wakes up and says “you know what? I would like to be stalked and almost murdered

today”—no one says that. Nobody in their right mind would compete for a chance to be sex trafficked—living in a continuous cycle of being raped.

Now every time she has to walk home from work in the dark, she will relive that fearful summer night. The pain that it brings her to not feel safe in the community that she grew up in. This is her home, she has a right to feel safe in her home. Doesn't she? How is it that men think they can decide one woman's fate? That's right, they don't think. They don't think about how their actions will affect women. Their aggressive “flirting,” the misogynistic attempt to give a compliment, deliberately trying to scare a woman away from hard work because it's “a man's job”. Oh, how it hurts just to tell her story. Just to read it and re-read it over and over again. Does it hurt you too? It hurts an awful lot, doesn't it? Now just imagine how she felt actually experiencing it. Your sympathetic pain is nothing compared to the life-long scar on her memory. Her conscious. Her sanity. Her freedom! So, I must ask, when will the violence end? Because I'm not sure how much more of this she can take.

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## Poems by Saffa Bockarie

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### **THE TWENTIES (Jan 2nd 2020)**

Dear 2020s,

It might be too late to ask for the fame

And like a travelling flash

Please bring in the class, the swag, and the cash

Either way, I am on my way A guy in the twenties

---

### **KNOW YOU BETTER (Jan 23rd 2020)**

She left my room on a cold night in winter

Reaching home, she sent thanks for the sweater

I asked, did you read my letter

She replied, talk to you later

I said, I wanna know you better

Her return, I have a busy semester

---

### **COME AND GO (Feb 20th 2020)**

The say people come, people go

And in between the days

Are the moments

To laugh, and to pose

Friends may come and go

And those who stay

Are the experiments

To let us grow

---

Excerpt from **Underworld Private Investigations**  
**Graphic comic by Lindsey Jacobs**

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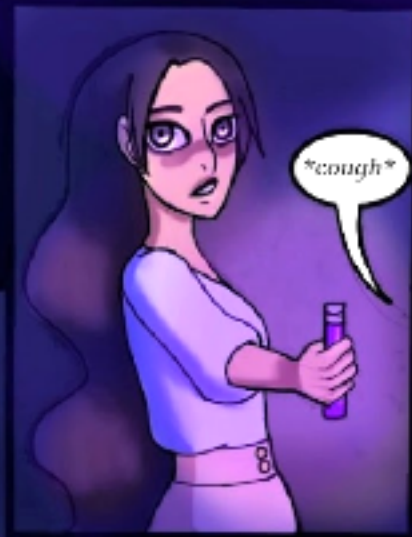
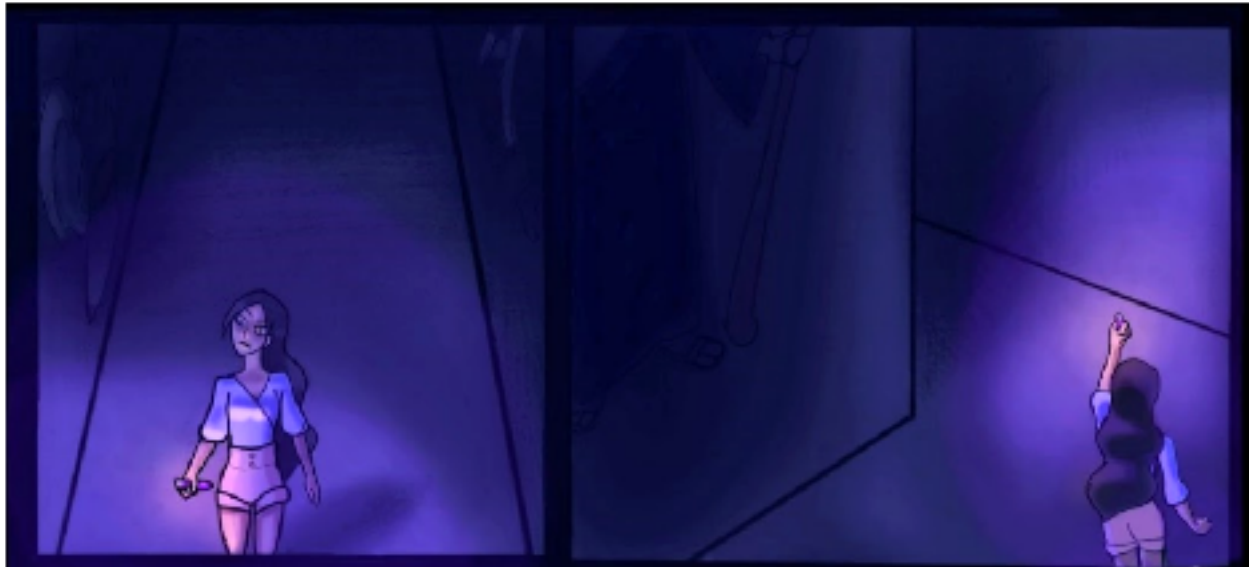
Synopsis:

In the City Nyx, the majority of the population is *Blessed*, meaning they are graced with abilities ranging from a heightened sense of smell to conducting electricity through their bodies. Unblessed, Jericho Sinclair struggled to find a place to belong—until she became a probationary detective at the ragtag Underworld Private Investigations, which takes on the cases that no one else will touch. Finally, Jericho believes she found a home.

But then Jericho's cases lead her to treacherous secrets about the powers that be. Secrets which could upset the social order as she knows it. Pitted against the City's religious and military leader, a man lovingly called the Ordained, she finds herself in possession of his tincture. And he will stop at nothing to get it back. Now on the run from his loyal Apostles, Jericho risks losing more than just her new home and friends.








Blackburn!?




A woman?  
Do I know you?

Registered Bless: "Precision"  
Can determine the precise recipe of any mixture at a glance




Your granddaughter has been searching for you!


My name is Jericho Sinclair—I'm with *Underworld Private Investigations*. She hired us to find you!



Hehehe—Good little Helena.



But I wonder what the Apostles want with an old felon?



A felon! You must know, Detective, that I am a scientist!



**HA!**

My work digs at the very foundation of our society—and it threatens those Apostles who are in power.



Well, your granddaughter told us you were working with animal urine.



Pregnant animal urine! I've been researching how life comes into creation!  
Secrets, right under our noses!



And I was so very close to unlocking the riddle!  
Of immortality!

I must resume as soon as possible!



You're a criminal



Petty theft, fraud, murder—

If I let you out, how do I know you won't just steal this tincture?



Oh, I'm worth the risk, I promise!  
Who do you think made that concoction you're holding?



You made this glorified flashlight?

Yes!  
And I can make you more!



I'm the only one who can!







Bah! Then we are both stuck in this wretched place!



There's not a way out of here?



No hope.

Not to mention this labyrinth. Only the Blessed have a chance of escape.

That's a tad dramatic.




Luck!

Venus!


Registered Bless: "Perfect Recollection"  
The ability to recall any memory with perfect clarity and accuracy.

Registered Bless: "Smile"  
The ability to conjure and control electricity.




How'd  
you find  
me?

These  
tunnels  
are  
like a  
maze.




Sparky realized we're  
in the catacombs of  
the City Nyx.


And I  
have a  
map of  
the sewer  
system  
Turns out  
they were  
built  
around  
the  
tunnels.



Ah! A  
memory  
bless—



And an  
electricity  
bless!  
What luck!

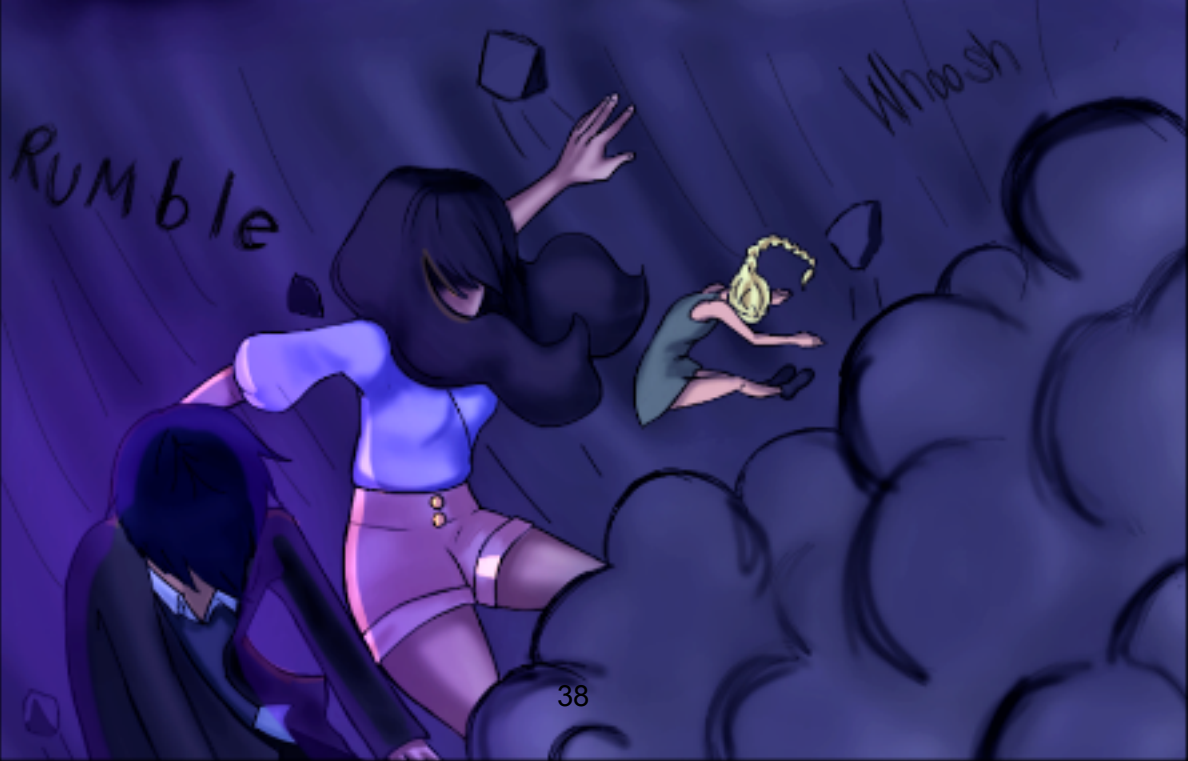


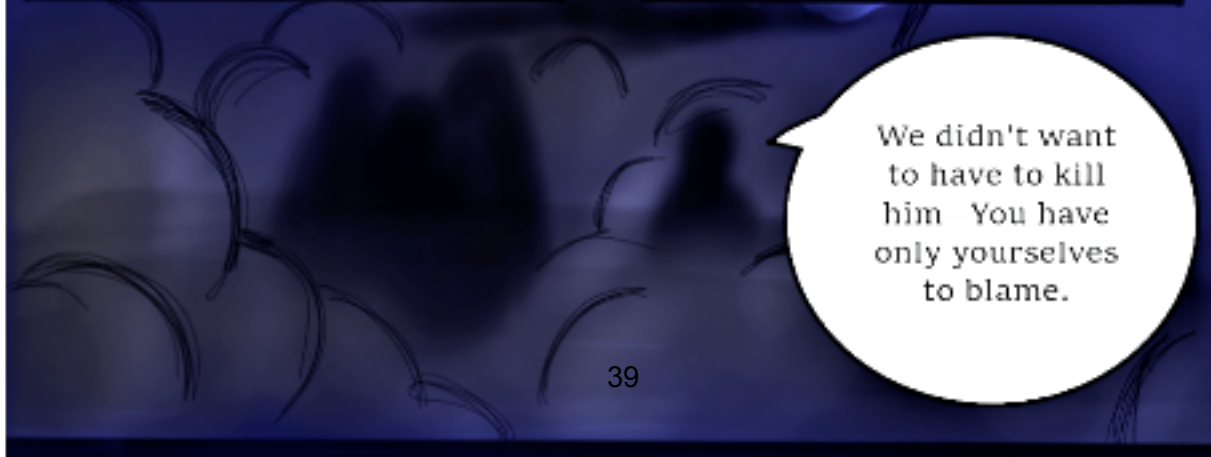
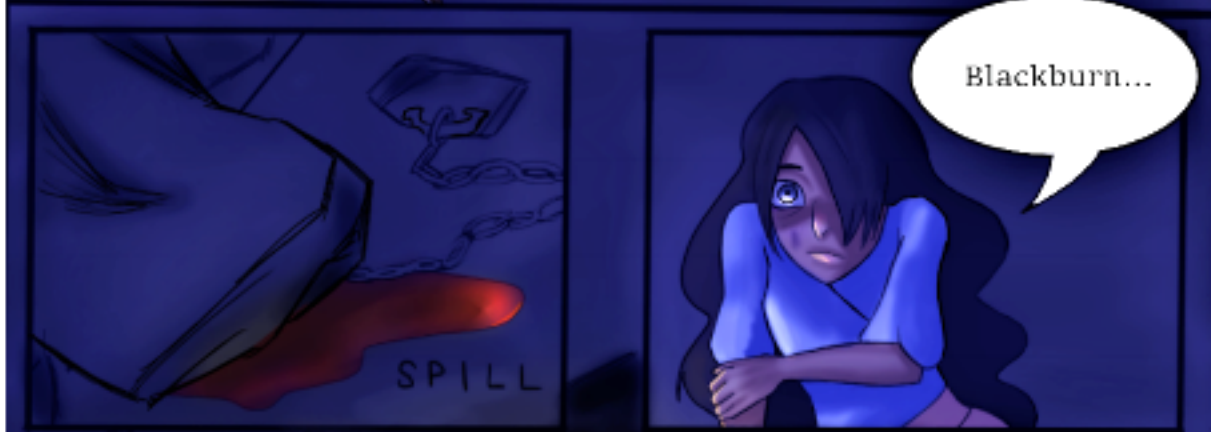
So who's the  
codger, Sinclair?



That's Blackburn.









Registered Bless: "Angel"  
Powerful wings on one's  
back.

Wonderful  
aim, Uriel.

The poor soul  
didn't realize  
what hit him.

**Apostles!**

Registered Bless:  
"Mimicry"  
Can copy any bless


Constantine.

Venus, Dear!

Haven't  
seen you in  
a while.

Not since  
you fell  
off the  
face of  
the earth.

But it seems  
you have  
something  
that belongs  
to us.



Luck, you alright?

Not really—

But I wasn't alright before today, either.

Luck, Jericho—Do exactly as I say.

It will be easier for me to go all out if I don't have to worry about you two.

Grab the tincture, and get out of the catacombs.



But Venus...

What about you?



Their goal is the tincture.



I'll keep Constantine busy.

But that means Wormwood there will be after the two of you.



Such a frightening bless.

You're an idiot. Seriously, how have you not been murdered yet?

Oi.

Kids.

I bet it's called "Birth Control".

It's a mystery not even I can solve.



These tunnels will be a disadvantage for all three of us. Stick together.



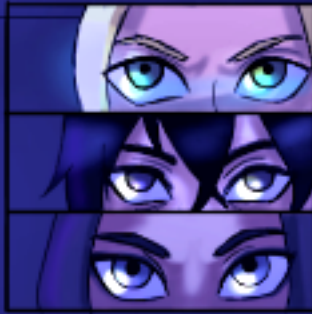
Always remember, Uriel.



Those who defy the Ordained bring this upon themselves.







On my say—  
Ready?



Go!



To be Continued  
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