

Centauri Virtual Creative Writing Salon
2023



A GLIMPSE OF STARS

An Anthology

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LIGHT

I've always in basked darkness
that's the way I liked it
but just for those few moments
I basked in the light of apollo's sun taking in his warmth,
his brightness.

Light, the embodiment of brightness,
and the seeker of the dark.

Light, a symbol for hope and more hopeless things.

People who light up your life in so many different ways.
People who bring you indescribable joy and happiness.

It shines, an ever present reminder of hope and clarity.

In the realm where darkness bows its head,
Where shadows yield to glowing thread,

Light is the infection

Maybe it once flourished,
maybe it once thrived,
but now all that remains is the cruel harsh rays of a star.

Light always represents the way forward,
Like that saying, "A light in the dark."

DARKNESS

Being trapped in a prison of your own design,
alone and afraid after shutting yourself away.
And when the footsteps gain closer,
the monsters reach out of the closet.

Just turn off the lights, and watch them all disappear.

There was nothing to hear, nothing to watch,
all was consumed by the inky darkness that was night.

Darkness is the hero, the knight

What do you see if what you are trying to look at is too dark to see?
Nothing.

No stars to guide,
no moon to glow,
Lost in the depths where fears may grow
Darkness is not always evil as some people may tell you
Yes things can hide in darkness
but not all things that are hidden are bad

A quiet calm, or perhaps a threat.

It could also be, simply, the absence of light-
But to some, that would mean uncertainty and terror,
and to others, it means they get a glimpse of the stars.

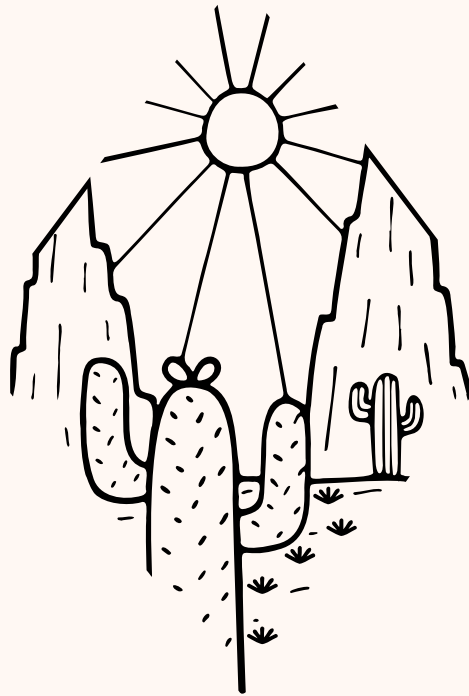
Bright, illuminating the whole room. It scours an unbeknown path as it searches for more space to cover. It eats up the dark shade, and the deadly silent cracks of the area. Chairs are left blinded by the object, its too powerful and it can't run away from it. Light, the embodiment of brightness, and the seeker of the dark. It consumes what we can't see if it is close enough, and it adds to the brightness of an area already there. Its electromagnetic radiation perceived by the human eye; not imperfect, all the cracks are filled in. The wavelengths, the shiny gold shimmers before our eyes, and it was all because of light. The gold is just what we know is there, but the light is what makes it rich. The light of illumination. The light of vision.

The whole world, the moon but as if it didn't have its sun to accompany it. What do you see if what you are trying to look at is too dark to see? Nothing. You walk aimlessly, nothing to guide you to work, nothing to let you see people, nothing. The light is gone, the illumination isn't present. You can stumble and get injured, but how do you get out of your sense to see is to feel and to smell? How do you know someone is out to kill you if all you can do is hear them after you, and then feel death lay right next to you? Darkness, it is consumed by the weak light, but after it grows larger, the weak light is taken out, and overpowered by nothing. Your first sense is depleted; you only know what is real by conjoining your other senses. Your memories; your brain can only picture light in memories, unless... there's darkness there too.

-Grayson W

The sun beats down on a dry barren wasteland. Nothing is alive, not anymore. This whole world has been abandoned and left to be destroyed. Maybe it once flourished, maybe it once thrived, but now all the remains are the cruel harsh rays of a star. Animals that were as tall as skyscrapers now lay half-buried in the ground, in heaps of distorted bones. Water is all dried up, safety is no more. The heat is unbearable, with no clouds to protect from the overwhelming temperatures. There is no fire, as there is nothing left to burn. What once was bright and full of life is now cracked and broken. There are other planets in this galaxy, but what will happen to them? Will they also succumb to the light of the star?

-K



BEGIN



WITH A BANG

Alicia dug helplessly through countless shelves of clothing, trying not to make a scene - which was pretty hard, since the store was packed with people in her way. A headache surfaced and squeezed her temple with an iron-fisted grip. She grit her teeth and moved out of the store, emerging in the gigantic central area of the mall. The loud colours and conflicting scents of the food court assaulted her senses, and she immediately wanted to turn around and run straight out of the mall and into the fresh air. The outdoors had always agreed with her head a lot more than this neon, noisy building did. But she had to keep moving, so she hurried away from the food court towards her next stop.

To others, she was an impatient teenager looking for clothes. In reality, she was really a member of the Order of the Outlaws, a group of shadowy people of all ages whose main task was saving the country. This wasn't the first time Alicia had been assigned a job like this, but it was definitely her first time doing it in a pretzel-scented, people-filled mall. A tangle of loud music and heavy perfume rose from the next store. The giant, arched windows nearby teased her, displaying the clear blue sky and a view of the landscape below. She inwardly groaned, but she didn't have much time left. The bomb she had been sent to find and defuse had already started its time. If she didn't find it soon, a giant explosion was going to wipe out everyone in this mall, and the large surrounding area.

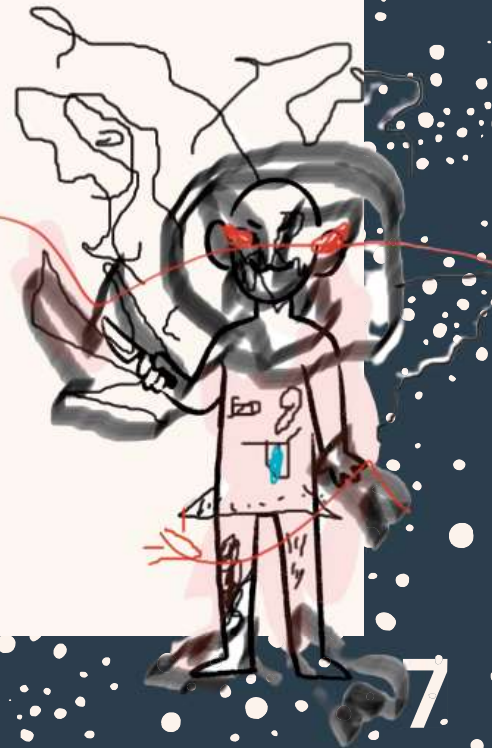
-Keira Painter

A police officer named Peterson Shardon is called to the Killen TX Museum, as a terrorist had been suspected to be lurking within the walls. Moments pass, and the police officers had all began chasing the suspect down, all but Peterson. "Tick, tock, tick, tock..."

A clock, for something. A terrorist. A bomb. And civilians. Explosion upon time's ticking. Peterson had to save many lives in only a moment, and that moment was now. Footsteps of all the officers created reverberation in the tall, expansive Museum, as artifacts were standing high all over. With a flash, and lightning speed, the timer stopped. Dead silence. Sweat dripped in the slightest off Peterson and then, **BOOM!** All of the ground uprooted and all the glass, pillars, artifacts, bones and varieties of foods erupted from within the main floor and scoured throughout the building and out of the main doors. And in a moment of pure distress, flames encircled the building, and everybody within the building was in paradox.

Death would ensue. A splash of red, followed by an endless orange and yellow mix of Hell and back. And all were frightened of death, as all thought everything would come to a dark end. Or would it? Then as the terrorist stared coldly into the eyes of an injured officer named Peterson Shardon, the terrorist spoke with a danger to his voice, "You can't know where the bomb can be, because it has gone off. If only you'd known that throughout all this time, I was innocent, charged with nothing because in spite of me being the perpetrator, you made it go off. Because the bomb was activated by a sound wave, and your part of no malicious intent put you at the top of the bounty board, and me in the glorious hands of the press."

-Grayson W



THE WORST TUESDAY EVER

Searching for a bomb in a graveyard is not how I thought I'd be spending my tuesday. Then again, I also didn't expect a crazed, fanatical, demon-worshipping cult to murder the mayor in order to gather the town in the graveyard for his funeral to sacrifice us all in order to summon the grand prince of hell to the mortal realm. I'm trying frantically to find the bomb, but there are so many people here. It's not like I could just tell them, they'd think I was insane, or trying to mess with them. So, instead of being able to alert the police like a normal person, I'm scrambling through flower arrangements, and peering into mausoleums, trying to find the bomb before it kills us all, and summons a giant demon to enslave humanity.

There's dirt under my nails, and my fingers bleeding from searching through roses. The smell of petrichor invades my senses, something once so calming now feels like a threat. This could be our grave, doomed to be ashes, washed away by the rain. The sound of birdsong, a constant in the graveyard grows distant. The birds are fleeing. They know what's coming. The wind rustles my hair, almost as though it's telling me to hurry.

The iron gates of the cemetery clang shut. No one notices but me. We can't escape now, I have to find the bomb or we're all doomed. This is the worst Tuesday ever.

-Siobhan Brady

Screaming children waged war on each other as they ran past him. His heart raced as he spun to the sound of a crying child, but only saw a bruised knee. The feel of the wind on his face, and the blowing of grass managed to squeeze the scene in place. The padded tarmac under the playground, the chained fence surrounding the area, the momentary shade of clouds over them. A sweet smell of barbecue filled the air. He started with the trees, searching each branch moving on to the hot metal of the benches and felt his fingers under each one. The swings and slides seemed to be clear. The tired parents who'd nearly lost their voices called out for their kids as they complained for five more minutes. At Least one of them would've noticed someone placing a bomb there. He crouched low, so as to see the interior of the grounds. Nothing seemed out of place here, except the half eaten lollipop stuck to the pavement beside him. It nauseated him more than it should've, the screams and shouts got to his head, until everything was blurred. He could taste the heat on the tip of his tongue. He used the chain of the swing to hoist himself back up. It may have been the music to bring him back. The familiar jingle of the ice cream truck. Now kids dragged his parents toward it, he felt himself being pulled there as well. Until the glow of red shone from under the merry go round. It almost taunted him, when clear as day the digits 1:00 changed to 00:59 before his eyes.

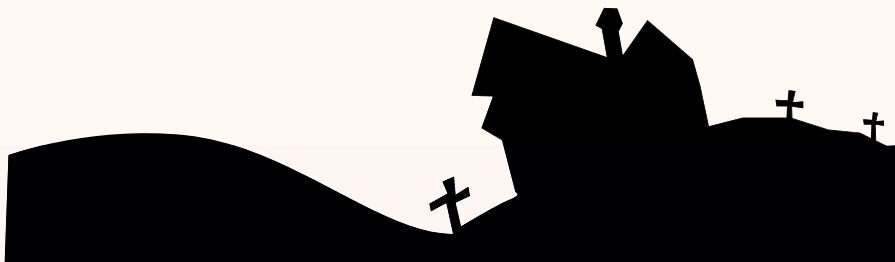
-Aleeza Aneel



THE NOIR DETECTIVE

It's a quiet sunset but it's too quiet. Sweat drips down my face. My face is covered in goosebumps all over. People ask me if I'm ill, I say I'm fine no, I'm the best I've ever been. I look into the sunset and check my watch. Oh no! Only 2 minutes I better check quickly. Curses! My trench coat got caught in a tombstone! Why are there tombstones in graveyards? I never understood why there were tombstones in graveyards. The tombstone is made of granite and a crimson red. It dawns on me that it is an explosive object! I start bashing it down! The graveyard workers obviously working for this evil mastermind pulls me off. I pushed him down. They say I must leave the premises. They are undermining my efforts! They say they called the police. I see James, my most trusted spy companion and boss. He must understand what I'm doing. He pushes me down and screams, "What are you doing!" I explain that I'm defusing the bomb and he says I'm at the wrong location. I ask him why he's here then. He says "You are immediately stripped from your spy occupation."

-Owen Cheng



A SENSE OF ADVENTURE



When Lucas Anderson got his internship at ZephyrTech Solutions he was incredibly happy and excited to go. The next monday when he first got into work, he got a nice cubicle with a desk and a computer and some storage and met his boss, Mr. Truman. He also met his coworker, ___, he was a very nice man around 35. As Lucas was sitting in his temporary cubicle and going through loads of paperwork from his boss, he went into his office as he had a question about one of the forms.

Before he knocked he heard two voices coming from inside of the office, one belonged to his boss and the other did not sound human at all. It sounded incredibly raspy and every so often there would be a slight sound of hissing. He found this odd so he opened the door to make sure his boss was okay, little did he know nothing would ever be the same when he opened that door. As the door swung open, Lucas got a view of what was in the office, it was his boss, who was not a very tall man, around 5' 6" and standing with his back to him, in front of him there was a tall women who was incredibly lithe but as Lucas looked up to see if he knew the women, he saw the head of a large cat, the pupils where slits and the iris yellow and long fangs that were crusted in dried blood looked back at him. He has terrified, he tried to run but as he did, he felt something was pulling him back, he looked back to see his boss was rubbing his thumb and middle finger together and smoky tendrils of dark red mists snaking towards and some had already grabbed onto his feet and were making its way up his legs.

A coworker of his, ___, heard all of this commotion from his cubicle and rushed in to see what was happening, he entered and took in the seen but instead of being scared, he looked from the cat lady to Kendric, and said, "oh Kendric how nice of you to bring your master into work, you know I have suspected you for a while, and while you have always been subtle about it, but I could smell the raw garlic on you everytime I walked by, I am surprised you've never realized that I too am a wizard." At that moment Lucas yelled, "WHAT THE HELL YOU'RE A WIZARD!" and then he passed out.

-William Doyle

LOSS & VICTORY



Covar watches as a new king is crowned. He had once thought it would be him, rising to power as the undisputed leader of the Underground. Months ago, he would have perceived this as a loss, but he had come to a realization : the King had much power, but little control. The King must appease the nobility, and the peasants, the King must follow foolish laws set in place by inept politicians. The King's power may be great, but it is restrained by all those around him. Covar could accomplish more hidden in the shadows than he could in the golden spotlight placed upon a King. He would achieve his aims, using stealth and cunning, not the blunt instruments of power and force available to the King. This was not a crushing loss, not even a setback. With the kingdom distracted by celebration, and his adversaries convinced he had suffered a crushing defeat, he was free to move about as he once had. The people may never know his name, but his actions would carry throughout history, his mark on the world indisputable to those who knew to look for it. Indeed, this was a victory, and it would be the first of many.

-Siobhan Brady



A PINCH
OF POETRY

14

A QUIET NEIGHBOURHOOD

The rusted brown balconies stand in contrast to the alabaster
buildings surrounding
The man wisely avoided in the foyer
A broken buzzer which is only working on the prayers of residents
The dark elevator with only the blue glow of the floor numbers
clicking away
The blinking dim light of the hallway always reminds about of a
movie that doesn't end well
The soot like color on the roof near the vent
The ghostly whoosh of the wind in the stairwell
The woman who stands rain or shine on the edge of the driveway
waiting for the schoolbus
The neighbors who never fail to say hi no matter who you are.

-Aleeza Aneel

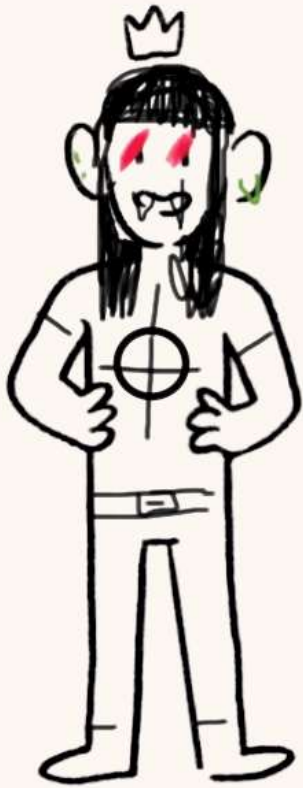


BRITISH GUY IN THE WRONG PLACE, AT THE WRONG TIME

Oh so hot, the radiant sun beams upon my face
Oh so dull, I could say, not the brightest place
Oh so yeehaw, all the cowboys and all the cowgirls
And oh so dangerous here, they all have guns!
And oh so jolly, they all have nice homes!
But oh, the crimes! The crimes I see are outrageous!
But also, the people! They aren't anywhere near as rural as me!
But for crying out loud, the concrete's melting!
And yet I still wouldn't know that they've been here for decades!
Oh what a tragedy!

-Grayson W





SILENT

COMMUNICATION

NO WORDS

She jerks him back around the corner, making the expression of panic evident on her face, throwing her arms up in the air. He gestures at the corner, indicating the men standing guard, and tosses his arms up as well. The girl glowers and points back the way they came before making a strangling gesture. The boy nods. The girl points around the corner, and shrugs exaggeratedly with a questioning expression.

The boy shrugs back. The girl presses a hand to her head, tilting back slightly. She points at her temple, then at the boy. He nods. The boy points at a fire alarm, and raises an eyebrow. The girl shakes her head, pointing at the guards, and then pressing her hands down towards the ground. At that moment one of the men came around the corner, giving a shout of alarm. The other guards rushed to his side.

"Fight?" the boy murmurs.

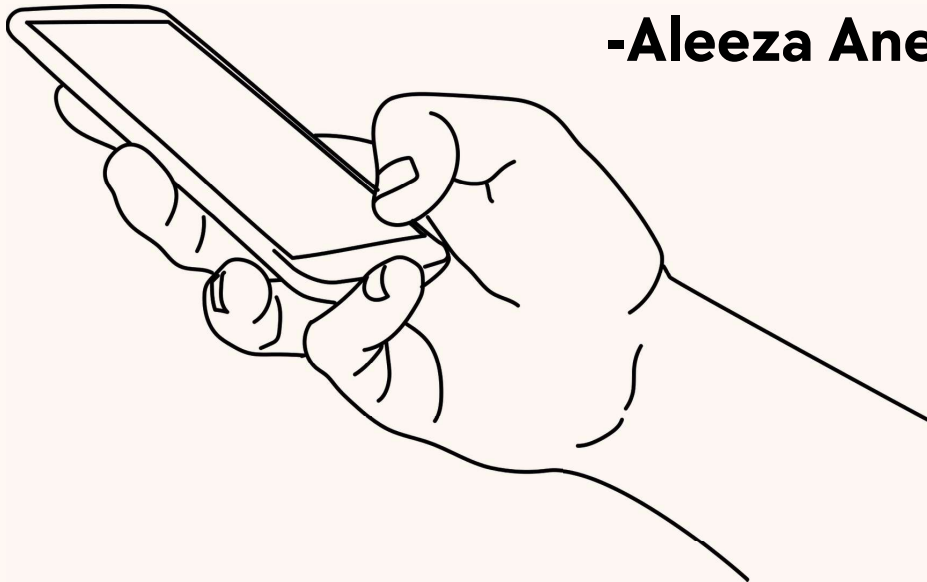
"Fight." the girl responds.

-Siobhan Brady

A ONE SIDED CONVERSATION

"I miss you," I say
"You can say it back you know"
"Are you having fun"
"I'm free too now, so I was thinking to drop by-"
"Yea, of course, I get it"
"No I have things to keep me occupied"
"I'll see you in a week"
"I love you"
The phone clicks shut.
"You can say it back."

-Aleeza Aneel



HOMIE?

Jimmy lifts his head and gives a small nod, acknowledging the newcomer. Tango returns the nod and points to an empty spot on the bench where Jimmy is sitting. He smiles and moves over, making room for his friend. Tango lowers himself beside Jimmy. After a minute or two of stillness—on both behalves—Jimmy moves closer to the other and rests his head on his shoulder. Tango flinches slightly at the contact but doesn't move away. Instead, he shifts to make Jimmy more comfortable. They fall back into stillness, but this time with an aura of calm. The sun is starting to set when Jimmy finally stretches and gets up. Tango is startled and makes a small noise, invoking a laugh from the other. He offers a hand to him and helps Tango get up. They stand close for a moment before moving apart. It is getting dark now and Jimmy points towards a house in the distance. Tango nods and holds out a hand for his partner. Jimmy smiles and takes it, they began to walk back. Before they enter their adobe, Jimmy looks into Tango's eyes, "Home?"
"Home."

-K

THE QUEST FOR COFFEE

ACT ONE SCENE 1

UNIVERSITY STUDENT: **hunches over scattered notebooks* (muttering) This demonstrates his unique ability to... *SNORES**

Moments later

UNIVERSITY STUDENT: **Jolts and wakes up* Ugh.. I need coffee.*

SCENE 2

UNIVERSITY STUDENT: **walks down street and spots tiny coffee shop* YES! Coffee. Thank goodness. *opens door and walks in*
Door lets out loud, train-like whistle*

UNIVERSITY STUDENT: **jumps**

COFFEE SHOP OWNER: **appears behind university student* Don't mind the door! Sorry, I never got around to changing it... maybe a nice, pleasant triangle "ding"?*

UNIVERSITY STUDENT: **jumps again and spins around* Oh, thank goodness! *sounding slightly hysterical* PLEASE GIVE ME COFFEE! I'm just so tired, but I can't SLEEP because I need to keep studying for my finals and I JUST REALLY NEED COFFEE!*

COFFEE SHOP OWNER: **holds up hands* Slow down, darlin'. You've come to the right place for coffee, though. Take a seat! *motions at empty shop**

UNIVERSITY STUDENT: **appears to calm down slightly, slumps into chair and picks up rainbow clown wig* Um... why is this here?*

COFFEE SHOP OWNER: **winks** Let's just say I have interesting hobbies.

UNIVERSITY STUDENT: **pretends to lean away from coffee shop owner and then chugs coffee** Ahhh...

COFFEE SHOP OWNER: So, what seems to be the problem, girlie?

UNIVERSITY STUDENT: If I fail my final I'm going to lose my scholarship. If I lose my scholarship my parents will be mad and I'll have nowhere to live. Then I'll die. So basically, this is LIFE OR DEATH.

COFFEE SHOP OWNER: Well, at least you have coffee!

-Keira Painter

Instructor's Note

It's easy to think of writers as solitary—alone in their rooms at their desks. But stories have always brought even the most disparate people together, and in a week, words have definitely brought these 10 brilliant minds together. Whether it was laughter over a joke or the shared frustration of wrangling ideas down onto paper, the energy of this group has been one of joy and mutual support.

Thank you Aleeza, Georgia, Grayson, Kailyn, Keira, Owen, Parker, Siobhan, Sophie, and William for such an amazing week. It's cheesy to say, but I'm going to say it anyway: I have been inspired by your creativity and your love for writing. I hope one day when your first book is coming out, you remember to send me a copy!

Arrow Williams

