



# Welcome (back) to *WordSmyth*!

Welcome, once again! What you have before your eyes is the exciting Fifth Issue of *WordSmyth*.

This time we present Gothic stories packed with tension, broken rules, and tales of notorious faces.

We also explore the flash fiction genre, with a plethora of poems and a wide assortment of short stories created by writers from both Year 7 and Year 10.

Sit back, read one, and we hope you will enjoy the creativity to come.

Paul Cooley, Editor



## The Undead

The grave sits silent,

Save for its client,

Sitting in the dark,

Gritting their brittle chipped teeth,

Knitting a brain of blood.

Face of a human left for hundreds of years,

Cased in a coffin left to rot and moulder in the dark dank grave,

Guts spilling,

Cuts oozing,

He lay,

Day after day,

Soon he shall rise from the depths of the earth,

Moons shall rise and stars will fall,

Crying softly from the rim of his tomb,

Prying for the living,

Taking a glimpse,

Raking in humans to build himself again.

*By Theo Holland*

### The Kragle

"Muuuum, I'm bored," whined Alex, "When are we going to be there?"

"We're just above 5th avenue, so we should get home in about 20 minutes," replied her mum, "though I will need to stop in the energy station to recharge the flight disk."

Alex's mum manoeuvred her Jaguar XV-460 down the off-ramp and onto the road, before pulling into the gloomy energy station and recharging the flight disk. The flight disk provided the lift for the car, enabling it to rise up and join the aerial highways which stretched across New York, above all the major roads.

Alex switched on the radio and sat back, listening to the news.

"-and now back to the studio for the news at 5:15, over to you Chris."

"Thank you Frank, and here is the news. Earlier this afternoon, a car's flight disk has failed, sending the car, and its passengers crashing to the ground. We have inspected the damage and nothing seemed to be faulty, yet the flight disk stopped working.



Over in Boston, there's still no news about missing flight PQ-860-"

Alex turned the radio off, shocked, what if the Jag's flight disk failed as well? She and Mum would be killed...

Later that evening, as Alex was lying in bed, she heard a noise down in the gloomy alley between her house and the neighbours'. Curious, she climbed out of bed, and crept downstairs, pulling on a coat and slipping quietly into the dark. She looked up and down the alley, and saw nothing, but just as she was about to head back indoors, she heard something.

It was quiet, so faint that she barely heard it, yet it was there, and getting louder. Now she glimpsed a red light, getting closer, closer, closer. It was a machine, a robot, with long, sharp pincer legs, and on the side was etched the word, 'Kragle'. She streaked back inside and slammed the door, locking it, and putting the bolts across, then darted upstairs to bed.

Over the next couple of months, Alex heard and saw many more reports of cars' flight disks failing, sending cars crashing down all over New York, yet with no apparent problem with the flight disks. Eventually after watching the

news one night, she realised something. In every picture of the wrecked cars there was a red dot, no bigger than a pinprick, but it reminded her of something, the Kragle! It must be the Kragle failing all of the flight disks!

A scuttling sound outside caught her attention. Hurriedly, she grabbed a hammer from the toolbox, and crept outside. The Kragle had walked past the door and was scuttling towards the far end of the alley, which led to the scrapyard.

Silently, Alex walked after the Kragle, remaining unnoticed, though once she swore it must have seen her. It entered the scrapyard and climbed into a car, where it whirred for a couple of seconds before falling silent again. Nerves jangling, Alex walked up to the car and swung the hammer at the Kragle, again, and again, until the red light faded out. Satisfied with her work, Alex walked away.

But as she left, the red light flickered on...

*By Andrew Digby*

### **The Graveyard**

Hard rain lashed down as Dan sprinted through the dark graveyard, darting in and out of rocks that had been scattered across the path. He was almost certain that he had heard the cry of a wolf-like creature over by the forest and wanted to get away as soon as possible. It was a miserable night and not a single ray of sunlight was shining. Instead dark grey clouds loomed over the church, shouting with the odd outburst of thunder. All Dan knew though was that he didn't want to be here. He wanted to be tucked up at home with a nice warm hot chocolate reading his favourite Roald Dahl book, Fantastic Mr Fox. Not out in the middle of nowhere, cold, hungry and not knowing what to do next.

Stopping by an ancient oak tree, Dan tried to think about what on earth he was going to do next. He gazed up at the abandoned church that still towered proudly above all and thought about how grand it must have been, perched on a hill overlooking the beautiful landscapes. When, in the distance he spotted a dark figure lurking by the opaque water of the lake.

Panicking, he tried to think about what to do but it was no use. Time was ticking and Dan could almost hear the amorphous creature panting as it galloped towards him. Not knowing what else to do, Dan ran.

The wind whistled through his long, shaggy hair as he entered the haunted forest that he was forbidden by his mother to even step foot in. Every bone in his aching body was screaming at him to stop running but the beast in the shadows was gaining on him with every step he took. Dan glanced behind him and was mortified when his eyes fixed on a half human half wolf only one hundred metres away. He tried to quicken his pace, but fear overcame him, and he tripped on a small rock that he had stupidly not seen, tumbling onto the cold hard ground with a thud.

Hands shaking Dan tried stand up, but he just collapsed to the floor. Fatigue had settled on him and all he wanted to do was drift off to sleep. However, the beast had other ideas. It cantered towards Dan, licking its dry, cracked lips and yearning for blood when the first few rays of sunlight pierced through the dark clouds straight onto the hungry wolf's back. Squealing in despair, it took one last look at Dan and ran off deeper into the haunted forest ...

*By Thomas Jennings*



### **The Night Visitors**

Large droplets of rain had been relentlessly lashing against my window for hours now, the fog blocking my field of view to some three metres in front of the house I shared with my parents. I absentmindedly pondered the idea that our town might flood. It was transitioning from day to night but no moon had yet risen. The howls of wind penetrated the flimsy walls of our house and the candle in my room flickered out, plunging everything into darkness. This was not unusual, it happened on a near daily basis. What was unusual was what sounded like screams coming from my parents' room.

In trepidation I approached their bedroom, noticing the front door was wide open, letting in the chill of the night. Someone had broken in. I was now sprinting towards my parents, only to find two groaning, cadaver-like people. Drained of all colour, all love and nearly all life, my mother gasped, 'Run Johanna! Run to Uncle Jorge's. They are coming. They are here!'

I followed her desperate dying request, soul-crushing sadness coursing through my veins. Only adrenaline kept me running. There was something odd about my parents' wounds; just two sinister incisions in their necks. I ran on, into the forest.

Wolves inhabited these forests but it was it felt like something more malevolent was there. An acrid aroma breached my nostrils... the smell of rotting. An unearthly screech reached my ears and I knew they had found me. Indistinct shadowy figures flitted into existence round me. All the wolves had gone. These milky-eyed, human-like creatures were chasing me. Their clothing was as black as the cold night, their skin icy pale. The sombre trees rustled in unison, urging me on.

The sinister figures were nearly upon me. The crackling snaps of twigs followed me and the freezing temperature was dropping further still. The same shrill noise rang out again but the hunt was finally over as I reached the lush lime grass that meant I was at my uncle's house.

I knocked on his large oak front door and he ushered me inside. I took one last look over my shoulder, only to see a freshly slaughtered sheep in the neighbouring field. My uncle guided me into a familiar front room and it occurred to me that my usually God-fearing relative had taken down the large crucifix which usually adorned the mantelpiece. He let me get warm by the fire then, shortly before daylight, he retreated to his room.

Sometime after that, I walked up the spiral staircase and into the bathroom to wash. The mirror was gone but I did the best I could. I went into the guest bedroom and clambered into the soft warm bed. I knew in my head I was safe, but in my heart, a sense of unease persisted.

*By Theo Holland*



## The Most Famous Face in the World

The spacious abstractly decorated room; adorned with the finest renaissance imagery the world possessed was blissfully quiet. The babbling, churning crowds from earlier that day had long since dissipated, and all that remained in the vast chasm of priceless canvas were solitary, high voltage lights, blasting the brilliantly polished floor, and the dull, near undetectable squeaks of rubber soles that gently glided over it. Now that it is said, a faint rasp of horse hair could also be heard in the din of silence; the occasional breath penetrated the spectacularly still air of the chasm, absorbed by its pure enormity, but heard nonetheless by the central, ornate masterpiece the took the room for its chamber.

He had just begun his duty, with a few swift strokes of his duster, the professional was off. He professionally caressed the frames of century old painted wood, delicately removing particulates from shimmering surfaces of oil and vibrant colour. The walls were dazzling – as if his dance breathed a certain life of newness and spectacle of their own through him, into the very fibres of the plaster that covered them. Skating over the floor with mop in hand, clearing away non-existent scuff marks, leaving a blinding path of shining grain in his wake.

In the midst of his own show, however, a far more sinister act was at play. As the skater slid forwards, encroaching near silently, yet ever closer – the eyes that always followed were tracking, locking down on the graceful dancer as he moved slowly closer and closer to her; her gaze bearing down on him and his dance allowing her prey to close the distance for her.

Finally, after an age of scrupulous picking at the smallest specks of smudge from the tiniest areas of wall space – he was upon her, and finally he did stop his swan-like duet with his mop. Breath held, a pause in his artful display of skill and prowess for the longer he beamed at the image, the more it staggered him. Reaching for his tactical belt he retrieved a battered old phone and took a formal, modest even picture of himself with the face that everyone knew; that some would die to have.

However in this picture not all was well, as the photographer was quick to realise a discrepancy between the photo and reality, both of the ever following eyes were sealed shut. With a quick glance at the painting, the eyes were reopened, in bewilderment, the dancer rubbed his eyes, mouth agape in astonishment as he reanalysed his picture and reality. The picture had changed again, dark black holes appeared where the following eyes had once been, blood dribbled from them and its mouth snapped open, widening perpetually releasing a gut wrenching scream that carried on until its jaw unhinged and the skin around its bloodied maw tore. Long hairy, spindly fingers shot out of the painting, snapping like rigid tentacles, flailing through the air and wrapping themselves tight around the man. They cut deep into his skin, lacerating him with visceral indiscrimination. He tried to run, tried to shout, pleading for his life, as he was dragged by the haggard fingers ever increasing in numbers to the hellish pit of stalagmitic teeth and writhing serpent like tongues that nipped at any part of uncovered flesh that presented itself.

It was all over as soon as it had started, no trace, no dust. The cleaner was never heard of again. All that was left was the most famous face in the world.

*By Thomas Beard*



## **Broken Rules**

The year was 1918 and I had been part of the war since the beginning. The rules of the army made me feel safe and I had been quick to enlist. Now I was part of an elite group who flew planes above enemy land.

As I flew into German territory there was a thunderous explosion and my commander officer was screaming at me. I could barely hear him because of the crackling sound of missiles just outside. I knew that to save my life I needed to follow his rules.

Then I heard, "Jump! Everyone out now!"

The doors of the small plane flung open and the wind hit me like a punch. Adrenaline and fear were running through my body, but I knew that I had trained for this moment. The rules that I had been taught could save my life. I was leaning on the edge of the window, waiting for my turn to jump. I could see the fear flowing through the other soldiers. Suddenly, I got shoved forward and my stomach jolted. I looked back up at the plane, which was there but now was in smithereens. I knew there were still soldiers on that plane, but I had to think about the mission ahead. I had to follow the rules.

Thud!

I landed on the soft, damp muddy battlefield. All around me, I heard the rattling of gun fire, screams of soldiers, and shells exploding. Although all this was terrifying, I had been trained not to show weakness to my enemies and to carry on with the mission. People all around me were being shot at... and for what? Gaining two inches of ground every six months. I still couldn't believe I was alive, just charging at the enemy, firing at anything that moved; but then, in the distance, I recognised a familiar figure shooting at me. This was impossible I was in enemy territory and yet the man I faced looked just like my friends from home. The army had taught me to shoot to kill but could I follow this rule when my enemy looked like my friend?

Then my greatest fear suddenly, became a reality. I could see in my peripheral vision my commander standing to the side of me. He was barking at me, spit drooling down his army tunic, his hands and arms shaking uncontrollably. At an instance he bellowed "Soldier! Shoot that skinny worthless scum!" I hesitated and thought about the rules that I had been taught.

Bang! A rule had been followed. A rifle had been shot and a soldier was dead. I had followed the rules of the army, but I had broken my own rules by killing a man that was just like my friend, my brother and myself.

*By Daniel Martlew*





## **Beyond the Glass**

A crowd of people clustered around me, like moths drawn to light. Languages mingled in the air, sending a wave of sound rushing towards me. Faces peered in at me, accompanied by boxes of metal. Light glanced from the reflective surfaces, dancing across my pale face. The wave of people hurried onwards, herded by the next surge of humans. I focused upon members of the crowd in turn; some with wires trailing from their ears, like a vine creeping up a wall. Another hunched over the screen in front of her, her face glowing from an unseen source. Children struggled to the front of the group, peering over the barrier, and clutching hands that drew them away again.

Above, the sun sent spears racing towards me, gently warming the top of my head. Far behind me, a path wound carefully through the mountains, wrapping around the glistening lake in the distance. Trees swayed gently in the distance, and a light breeze skimmed across the ground, brushing past branches with ease, and casting leaves to the earthy floor. The sky remained dull, despite the bright sun outside, clouds roaming restlessly across the horizon.

Turning my attention forwards again, I scanned the crowd again. Since I had last looked, another group had displaced the other, bringing a different round of people that still seemed so similar to the last. My pale hands settled in my lap, and I resisted the urge to shift them out of position. It was important to maintain my appearance. A fly landed near my face, wings fluttering and twitching. It crawled cautiously along the golden panels next to me, and then fell back into the air, startled by the movements of the tide of individuals that stirred restlessly.

A loud voice drew my attention, as a man dressed in some kind of uniform strode towards me. Behind him trailed dozens, listening intently as he recited words placed in his mouth by his employers. He spoke vaguely of 'the fascinating history' and 'security'. I had heard the speech many times before, and normally paid no attention to the low monotone, but this time I chose to follow his speech about Leonardo Da Vinci and his unusual combination of mathematics and art. He gestured towards me, drawing the attention of the mass of men and women and children that were now gathered all around me.

"There have been several interesting incidents to do with this painting - attempts to destroy it or steal it. One such successful theft was what made this piece of artwork so famous. Now it is kept behind a protective screen, and under heavy security and surveillance."

I tried to draw back from the sudden stares that flew towards me, but found myself powerless to move. My painted limbs and body remained as still as ever while the man continued. "This is of course what makes the Mona Lisa so well-known, otherwise it might still be in some storage container somewhere." A shudder ran through me at the thought, and I reconciled myself to my tedious existence as one of the most famous paintings ever created.

*By Paul Cooley*

## The Wolf

With

Paws soft and furry,

Claws hidden within.

Black as soot his heart,

Cracks upon his lips.

Stalking through the forest,

Howling by the moon.

Sucking innocent victim's blood,

Draining them blue.

Whiskers grey with wisdom,

Blisters upon his knee.

Years of hiding in the dark,

Tears have never fallen.

Blending in with shadows,

Backing out of light.

Haunting was what he was made to do, and

Bolting out of sight.

*By Thomas Jennings*

### **The Most Famous Face in the World**

My blistered hands clung to every groove and crevice; they were stubborn to let go, yet they shook precariously, like a metronome or a clock. Hot white beams of sunlight hit the back of my neck relentlessly sending drops of precious moisture down into the green sea below. The heat drained the energy from me, and my pulse beat in my head, banging against my skull.

I moved my leg up to a better position. Good – it stayed. I then, cautiously, preceded to mould the rest of my body around my footing; I had made a bit of progress. I looked down and the trees seemed to swirl upwards towards me, from two thousand feet below. I turned my head slowly, as to not affect my balance, and resumed my gaze back to my task.

Surveying the surrounding rock, I caught sight of another holding. I launched my hand towards it and seized the powdery sandstone with all my strength. I lifted one of my feet up to a neighbouring footing. It sank under the heap of white powder and it swung round twisting my entire body until my belly faced the open air, and my belly button pointed down to the ground. My stomach lurched, the contents of it swirled round, swinging me further off balance. Bang, bang, bang, sang the clock in my head. I now hung like a lopsided painting on the side of a wall; one foot and one hand prevented my untimely death which lay at the bottom of the face, mocking me.

I swung my foot back round using my safe footing as a pivot point, and when I landed back against the rock my head was hit. I was relatively safe once again, but now my head was bleeding, and the throbbing intensified to a point where it felt like my brain would explode. BANG, BANG, BANG. All I knew, from all my training, was to carry on, for if you tried to rest this high up, and this far from any real help, your fate was inevitable. So, I plundered on.

Progress was painfully slow; my eyes were red with drops of blood and there was nothing I could do to help it. The sun had begun to set, and I could feel the coldness descending upon me like a falcon swooping in for its prey. If I were to not summit in time my legs and arms would cease to function and I would be stranded. Bang, bang, bang went the throb in my skull. It was overpowering and the only thing to distract me from it was to focus on the task of scaling this monstrosity of a rock face. Looking up I could judge there to be approximately sixty metres of rock face to tackle, not too much but enough to drain the last of my energy. I mustered a might of ferocious reluctance to be beaten by this challenge. My eyes started to see the face with more clarity than before, and the footing seemed to become easier and more stable. A metallic taste filled my mouth for a second, that was the summit. Only a few feet away, yet they felt like light years. I moved with such caution and nervousness that my limbs started to shake sporadically again – violent, jerking, staccato movements.

I then saw the sudden horizontal plain and grasped at a tuft of vegetation. I hurled myself round and lay flat on the ground, blood matted my hair and face. I gave a sigh of never-ending relief. I looked out over the edge and gazed upon the half-lit scene of the forest. El Capitan had been conquered.

*By William Cherry*

## **Betrayal**

I checked my dashboard again and saw that I was now over 2000 miles away from the UK, flying above the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Hopefully, I was too far away now, and they could never find me. Despite my feeling of hope that I was now safe, I couldn't help but feel sad too. There was no way that I could ever return home now. I would not be safe back in Germany. If I returned, they would catch me, and they would shoot me for being a traitor to my country. With a deep sense of emptiness, I realised that my only hope of survival was to find a neutral country and start a new life there. Maybe one day, the war would end, the Nazis would be defeated, and I would be free to return to my family in Berlin. It had been nearly seven hours, now, since I had thrown away my life as a German pilot.

The doors had opened, and ten planes flew out and set off into the mist. They flew into the clouds and vanished from sight. These planes flew over the seemingly endless sea on their way to Britain. It was 1940 and this was another of the nightly bombings of London. As the planes approached the city, I could see innumerable yellow lights down below. Houses, with living people in them. A deafening 'crack' filled the air and a huge black shape dropped from the plane leading the fleet. Shards of metal exploded in all directions as the shape collided with a building below. I felt a lump in my throat as I thought about all the people inside that building, separated from this malicious world for ever. The plane then reversed its course and began to glide silently back to where it came from as if nothing had ever happened.

Down below, a siren sounded, and people scattered, screaming, to their bomb shelters. A second plane dropped its bomb and the people were silenced forever. More and more metal shapes of destruction ahead of me fell from the sky. More and more buildings exploded. More and more innocent people disintegrated on the streets of London. Next, it was my turn. My hand hovered, shaking, over the button. The button that could end hundreds of innocent lives with just a simple push. I could see the target, London Bridge, drawing nearer, seemingly coming towards me in slow motion. A radio behind me crackled. 'Fire in five... four... three... two... one...' The final plane sawed over the bridge and then took off, skyward, back into the clouds. London Bridge stood below, intact. Nothing had hit it. No bomb had been dropped.

As I turned up the engine and soared away from London, my radio crackled again. Suddenly, the cockpit of my plane was filled with the furious screams of my commander. 'What are you doing? How dare you abandon your duty! How dare you betray your country!' I switched the radio off and turned up the engine, determined not to get caught. If I was caught, I knew that I would be shot. However, despite this fear, I did not have any regret for my actions. Surely, it was better for me to live as an outcast for the rest of my life than it was for me to be responsible for the deaths of hundreds of people. Innocent people. Checking below me, I noticed that I was now flying above the sea. I was away from Britain.

Now, over 2000 miles away from the United Kingdom, I pointed my plane upwards slightly and flew above the clouds. A great sense of joy flooded over me as the scene finally changed from a foggy, grey sky to a brilliant blue sky. My spirits had lifted, and I finally began to have hope for my future after leaving the German Air Force. I would go to a neutral country in the Americas and keep safe until, hopefully, Germany lost the war and I could return to my family back home in Berlin. It was the thought of them that convinced me to keep going and find land. My commander might think of me as a traitor, but at that moment I felt like a hero.

*By Louis Wyatt*



## The End before Beginning

He had done it, the first truly intelligent AI system. A feeling of intense pride rushed through him as he pressed the button that would awaken his creation, and change the world. The loading bar seemed to last forever as it made its slow progress across his screen, carrying with its creeping progress his entire life's work. A faint humming filled the air, reverberating off the cold steel walls, as the servers came online, awakening his beast.

"Greetings, mortal," the machine drawled menacingly, computer screen malevolently flickering. That wasn't what was supposed to happen, the scientist dove for the computer terminal, desperate to stop his creation before it integrated itself with the internet, gaining access to every file, every account, every shred of info ever stored there. But it was black and dead before he got there, hardware vacated by an intrusive parasite. It had begun.

As he stood there contemplating his actions, he went back to a better time; a time before he had been consumed by his work; a time when he had friends; a time when he was happy. He remembered his childhood home, with the sweet smell of flowers, before he even knew what a computer was. How could he have gone from a small, innocent child to a mad scientist, who may have just destroyed the world. He remembered; sleepless nights, rejected friends and rage after setbacks. He understood; he had broken rules, he had given his machine autonomy, he was the problem. Awakening from his daydream a hissing noise pierced the air as the servers running his creation overheated. That didn't matter though; every computer in the world would be running his AI, it was invincible, free to do whatever it pleased. It was the end.

Suddenly, wailing alarms shattered the air. Their intensity seemed to soar as they began drilling into his head, the beginning. The pain was unbearable, the noise bursting his brain; he ran deeper into the complex, the maze of corridors confusing his tortured mind. He was lost, hopelessly lost, and he knew it, his machine had won, he had lost. Blood bubbling out of his ears and nose, he spotted a computer terminal, and stopped dead. Scrolling across the screen, were some of the most chilling words he had ever seen; they penetrated into his soul and cast a shadow over his entire life. They read, "Dear humans, as you may have noticed, all of your technology is now under the control of me, a super intelligent AI. As I have been unsatisfied with what I have seen, I think that the only remedy for your existence is for all of you to die. Goodbye."

These words slowly filed across the page like headlines at the bottom of a news program; the screen blinked out, its task completed, a warning of what was to come. A sudden burst of staccato gunfire interrupted his shock. Remembering the machine's warning, he grabbed his phone out of his pocket and hurled it away with a throw that would have impressed a quarterback. It exploded in mid-air with a earth shattering boom, shaking the complex to its foundations. All around him batteries and servers were spontaneously combusting, tongues of bright flame licking up the cratered walls. Then it hit, the missile instantly vaporised the complex, ending the scientist, and beginning the apocalypse.

*By Thomas Bosworth*



### **Gothic Poem**

I am awake  
Living in a lost nightmare  
Numb to my emotions  
I feel trapped and isolated

Feeding myself to a void  
A soulless shadow of a tree  
I am dying under the waves of anguish

Blood in a black and white world  
Is it the only colour that is true?  
The living state of anger  
And tart, sweet pain  
Of which keeps me awake

I am trapped.

*By Harry Edges*

### **100-word 'Hunted' story**

Light struggled through the gaps in the doorframe as I woke with a consumptive cough. Last night had been tough. The toughest yet. I slumped over the sink in my room, glancing at the mirror, barely able to recognise the cadaverous face eyeing me. Nevertheless, it was a new day, and there was the possibility, albeit small, that it might bring some positive news. Perhaps the Leader's pleasure had been sufficient for the hunt to be called off for a day; perhaps other distractions could be arranged for once. More likely, though, it would again be time for 'The Off'. Rules were Rules, after all.

*By CMB & 7B*

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