

Rugby High School

Creative writing magazine

# ILLUMINATE

Inspire. Imagine. Illuminate.

Spring Term 2018

Editor's introduction

Welcome to the first edition of Illuminate for 2018. The work you will read here has been inspired by the theme of “water”. As you will see, this has prompted poignant memories of childhood holidays, beautifully captured in a range of forms, alongside works of pure imagination, as well as pieces that take readers to somewhere far away.

Many thanks to all those students who have contributed

**Becky Deane/ Ellie Shawcross/Natalie  
Evans/Hannah Spurr/Maryam Fatima/Mary  
Waterman/Ella Roberts/Theresa Zhang/Ruby  
Murphy/Charlotte Townsend/Rachel Coates/Daisy  
Bradley/Annie Fan**

Olga Dermott-Bond, January, 2018

## Foreshore

by *Becky Deane*

I swam in the sea every year. That sharp shock  
Of the returning tide, every year. Don't swallow  
The water. *In the 70's it made your father sick.*  
Years passed and I returned each time

To scoop sand into mounds and trawl the pools  
Refilled each dawn. How old is that life? How old  
The collective shrieks of excitement from across  
The years; the snapshots of lives lived out

On this curve of land,  
How strange –  
That they should now be bones,  
Yellower than the shifting sand.

## Star-crossed

*by Ellie Shawcross*

This had always been our spot

The lake was our secluded oasis, hidden away within the secret depths of woodland. Soldier pines stretched tall into the air, dark and regimented shadows against the backdrop of frost-bitten nights. The earth was, more often than not, peaty and slick, but it melted into soft green foliage as you neared the water's edge: tall fingers of grass tugged at your skirts, and hidden amongst the reeds were delicately jewelled flowers fit for a wedding ring. Springy moss gathered underfoot and cloaked the trunks of the trees around us, spun from emerald thread. Hanging from the branches were thousands of dew-dropped cobwebs, glowing ethereally in the moonlight like embellished lace veils.

We found it on an autumn night, just the two of us. We had been walking for hours, hand in hand; we were silent, the world was not. The wind whistled through gaps in the pine needles, and the first frosts of winter crunched beneath our boots. The forest was a thousand colours, celebrating the changing of the seasons: the leaf litter was golden brown, the crimson fronds of the oaks fringed with mahogany red. We would not have seen it if not for the pines – evergreen and ever-growing. They stood well above the main canopy, reaching for the sky as they are now. We thought the grove to be a stain upon the beauty of the woods, spun from amber and spiced with winter's charm, until we saw a lake through the trees.

Our Lake of Stars, we called it, a place of dreams and promises, where the sky had fallen from its heavens and puddled upon the earth. The body of water provided a light relief from the density of the woodlands, nestled in an open clearing. It was beautiful during the daytime, we were sure, but at night-time it came into its own: mirrored on its glassy surface, you could see the stars and galaxies, swirling spirals of purple and blue and green. It was as though we were staring off the edge of our world, and into a better one, if only we had the guts to jump. Together we would kneel where the water met the dirt, and stare into the sky at our feet. The depths of time and space, and everything that has ever been or will be, simply reflected onto the waters.

Every evening you would reach out with shaking, freckled fingers, and dip your hand in, letting the cool night wash over you. You would skim the surface with the pad of your index finger, and watch as ripples of stars would ricochet across the lake, planets bubbling in their wake. You would stare into the celestial waters, star-struck at their beauty, and I would do the same at you. Your golden eyes were molten, focus and awe burning in them like the Sun as thought visibly churned within their depths. I could see embers swirling through strains of colour, weaving across your gaze like veins through marble. Desire brought out a fire in you. Your dreams were to travel, for a better life or more money; all I wanted was you. I wanted to touch you, longed for it – nothing complicated, just an intimate brush of noses, or a dozing head in my lap, fingers coursing through tight black curls.

Ragged breath fogged from your lips as icy clouds, billowing into the air like a pale, ominous smoke. The winter chill had flushed your face and heightened the colours there, cheeks soft and pink as fresh rose petals. In that moment, your hair a messy halo above your heavenly face, I felt my heart melt all over again. Not for love, but for anger. The deadly sparks of your spirit had blown through the fractures of my skin with the morning breeze, chipping away until I came crumbling down. You pried me open with easy smiles, fluttering eyelashes and bloody hands, your fingers clawing at my insides as though I were hiding something you might want amongst my flesh. I received nothing in return but a half-hearted laugh now and again, maybe a chaste kiss on the cheek. Yet I adored you still: you were my addiction, a carcinogen that I knew was tainting me but did nothing to stop.

It was after that when whispered confessions of love turned to resentful grumbles and sullen silences.

Most nights you would scoop some of that sacred, liquid stardust into your palms, letting it bead on your skin as droplets rolled down your wrists. You'd simply watch as it trickled through the cracks and plunged back into the water, innocent enough, and yet all I could see was my heart, my life, slipping through your fingers. I would pour my heart out to you, but you would simply watch it cascade through open fingers and pool at your feet, if you could; if my soul was not as sticky as syrup, embittered and retentive as you tried to be rid of it but could never quite manage, not entirely.

I should have known how things would go, when you looked at me with vague interest in your eyes. That used to fuel my fires, that small spark, but now I realise that a faint curiosity is no substitute for love. You can't burn the world through spite alone, just like you can't love for eternity somebody who feels no more than a slight fondness for you.

I should have known how it would end, when you wrapped your yellow, tear-stained blindfold around my eyes the moment I first saw you. I would have been right, too. Here I am, as shocked at the change in seasons as I am at my abandonment – but then it still surprises me when the snows begin to drift through the air and the leaves fall to the ground. It is winter now: the colours melted away when the cold arrived, taking you with them. Our lake has frozen over, the stars no more than a dull sheen on an icy black surface; an indication that our timeline has vaporised into nothing, crossed-stars untangled.

It had always been our spot, but now it's a corpse of what it once was, its crater an unmarked grave. The Lake of Stars has dried up with my dreams, and so it seems have you.

## Out of the Ashes

by Natalie Evans

You glower at  
my stony, disbelieving eyes.  
You are the flame that  
ignites all of my lies.  
You say I'm insane but  
how can you be so sure

When my walls are stacked  
so high. How can you think  
that when your eyes –  
deep as oceans, coaxing me to drink,  
are founded in the same treachery?  
Sip. Your lips coil around your coffee

cup, writhing at its bitterness.  
I can taste the silence. Its  
colour is evergreen. Ironic.  
Valentine. Sunrise Candlelit.  
Now satisfaction is hard to come  
by and yet you sit

and excuse your cunning:  
*it was only a matter of time.*  
*You lack the fever. The infatuation.*  
*The delirium. There were signs*  
*from the beginning. You're an*  
*evaporated lake. What is the point*

*of you?* I stare and I stare. Never  
have you seemed so foreign.  
Unattainable monster. You may have  
the fire but all that you touch is baron.  
All you contain is scorching pain.  
And I'm the only one that can absorb it.

Do not forget you are mine.  
She will not last long. You cannot  
fight fire with fire. She will not  
please you as I do. I spot  
the icy slither of silver on your finger.  
Beneath my skin, I boil.

I'm solitary. The only one that  
can be with you and the only

one that can destroy you.  
It hurts how you coldly  
shrug off the power I have.  
Can you deny

my captivating whirlpools?  
Go on, try and touch.  
Ash and death consumes you.

Do not forget you are mine.  
I will engulf you.

## The Bear Inn

*by Hannah Spurr*

Heading eastward, a pipeline runs under cobble-stone streets –  
Unappreciated by the cheaply suited faces of law, the clambering  
Mothers in red heels, and their idiot children  
who chase after stained reflections in the path below.

On another street in the corner of a gloomy bar they drink.  
Dry as a kite on nothing but beer and light conversation  
Ignoring the guilt mates see shadowed in orange across their faces  
as they slip their wedding ring into their pockets, forgotten.

They do not take notice of bartenders  
carefully cleaning their glasses with each polished sigh,  
Sink water left stagnant amongst a clattering of cutlery  
As they rush to fill the next pint.

None of these men lift their heads to the sirens outside  
As the children look up to see the cause of the changing  
blue pavements that excite them more than school.  
The men, of course, know.  
Just another boy born into his watery grave.



falling

*by Maryam Fatima*

the smell of dirt had gone

by the morning

when the rain

filled the air

with the tippity tapping of the water as

it mingled with the parched earth.

a living, beating wave flew overhead,

flocks gliding in with the early sun from the

east. waking me from my

sleep. and still the clouds above

wept- or at least that's

how it seemed

it reminded me of

us. Dipping and diving and falling

and flying in the technicolour sky

and falling, faster and faster

and faster, when I hit the

ground

# Tears

*by Mary Waterman*

When you were born, I wiped the tears from your eyes  
I wiped the dribble from your chin  
And smiled at your naivety  
Braced myself for our long journey together  
And to watch you grow

After your first day of school, I wiped the tears from your eyes  
I rubbed the marks off your face  
And smiled at your curiosity  
Braced myself for more silly mistakes

When you left for university, I wiped the tears from your eyes  
I flattened your hair  
And smiled at your newly found responsibility

After we got the news, I wiped the tears from your eyes  
I held your hand tight to show I was there

When you had to stay overnight, I wiped the tears from your eyes

After it was all too little too late, I wiped the tears from my eyes  
I wiped the dribble from your chin  
And smiled at your naivety  
Braced myself for my long journey alone  
And to miss you grow

## Salt

*by Ella Roberts*

Ours is a mock-up of a universe,  
The sea of eternal twilight harbouring lopsided wonders  
Dust curling dust as we scavenge flesh from bone,  
Vertebrae standing like stepping stones on the ocean floor.

Fresh-cast iron scales stand to attention,  
Constantly wandering north  
As brine-wrinkled noses  
Seek solace in a lace tomorrow.

Now come the whistling giants, jaws swinging shut in unison,  
Their carcasses hanging ragged, ribboned,  
Petalled ghosts studded with light and death  
Patrolling their bombed-out metropolis.

This soil remains forever untouched.

## Walnut sailing

*by Theresa Zhang*

Moonlight caressed the low banks,  
glimmering with sweat from the cool night,  
creaking with acidic indigestion.

We pushed away  
not saying farewell.  
Moss hugging tight,  
at our oars churning  
in unison.

You divided,  
the glass of the lake  
                                slicing,  
the frosted whispers of mist  
                                lifting,  
the heavy veil ,  
                                revealing  
our silver dotted trail.

You and I,  
in a nutshell  
bobbing amongst the shimmering gills,  
dreaming across the soft-blue gelatin sheets.

Ribbons of rain  
fall from the sky and miss us,  
slipping through our lacing fingers.

Confetti of ice

spitting from the bitter winds  
part, over our touching heads.

Forever we sail ,  
until the seas cry  
to the last drop.  
Until life dries  
to the last grain .  
Promise me  
sail we forever.

# Sink

*by Ruby Murphy*

Curled up in our kitchen sinks,  
    we adopt them as the womb we shared.  
Clutching the chain of each plug, our umbilical cords.  
    Suckle on supple skin against wrinkly water.

Saturated, sacred, with the glistening amniotic sac  
    of Johnson's Baby Oil.  
Sticky sweet bliss and diluted giggles,  
    dilating pupils flickering, bouncing in refracting light.

Bless me in this font of our youth.  
    Baptise me in our mothers name.  
Bathe our itsy-bitsy bodies.  
    Lustrate our little-ickle limbs.

And this cleansing, caring, love for us is shared, not severed,  
    untainted by the scent of a second hand nativity.  
All of us praying, pleading for a prolonging  
    of this postnatal paradise.

## The bread and the ducks

*By Charlotte Townsend*

The path was scattered with tawny coloured stones,  
That crunched and snagged against each other  
underneath the ridges of my pink, sparkly Disney wellies,  
And the pink puffer coat that drowned me.

My mum rustled around in her black, leather bag of tricks,  
She fished out the crumpled bag filled  
with yummy brown bread sprinkled with  
Sunflower seeds, but the nice kind of seeds.

I saw the charming, feathered gentlemen,  
Drifting across the glassy, polished surface.  
I dropped in a lump of bread, shattering the mirror  
And they crowded around the 'plop', which rippled the water for miles.

A small piece of the torn brown loaf had  
Been dropped, and sat in something I couldn't see.

The now distant gentlemen, in their white tuxedos  
Continued to gracefully swan around,  
But faded in the background,  
As I reached down to get the bread.

Little did I know the bread  
Was covered in a dark green, smelly duck waste,  
That I ate,  
Leaving me with stomach upset for weeks.

However, my pink sparkly Disney wellies,  
Remained bright and glittery,  
And my pink puffer coat,  
Continued to drown my tiny body.



## Lizabeth's Lover

by Rachel Coates

*\*This poem is based on Porphyria's Lover by Robert Browning\**

The drops of rain hit window glass,

Await my safe return to-night.

More rain does prey upon the grass,

Creatures ready for fight or flight,

My need for warmth doth reach new height.

When home I spy my Lizabeth,

I see her cloak, I know she's there.

I watch her hold onto her breath

And smile to me, a loving stare,

All day she waited on her chair.

She does not speak, but tilts her head.

In her eyes she keeps the sea,

The moon, the stars, Sun blazing red.

I'm sure I know her thoughts of me:

Pure love, love, as true as can be.

I pull her mouth towards my face,

And close mine eyes and kiss her lips.

Our limbs entwined in warm embrace.

I Slack my grip, her body slips,

Flat on the floor and her chair flips.

I pick her up and wipe her chin,

And strap her arms back to her chair,

I knead her mouth into a grin.

Although I know her mind is bare,  
I know she is much safer there.

## Bath time adventure

*by Daisy Bradley*

It's that time again,  
Time for the dreaded bath.  
I never like the beginnings of baths,  
But mum always says I'll love it when I'm in.

Captain Squeaky is already in there,  
Finding undiscovered kingdoms without me.  
When I tell mum that,  
She just laughs, lifts me up and plonks me in the clear glittery water.

Me and Captain Squeaky are off,  
Discovering underwater kingdoms,  
This time, we're in the River Nile,  
But wait, what's that.

Oh no, it's the sponge boat,  
And something's on it.  
It's full of soap bombs.  
But then someone calls my name.

It's just mum,  
Telling me to tip my head back.  
She scrubs my head,  
Telling me not to squirm.

And then the suds go in my eye,  
The nasty sponge boat has launched the soap bombs at me.  
I scream, but all I get in response,  
Is a towel thrust at me.

I thank Captain Squeaky for the help,  
And just as we're about to go back to discovering,  
I'm lifted up and put on the floor,  
I complain but mum just says it's time for tea.

## Desunt Nonulla

*Puerto Rico, September 2017*

*By Annie Fan*

Huddling here, shoulder to shoulder the lights  
out, every shape enough to look like an animal,  
animal-like enough to be confusing. Each light out

in this vastness of the birds, taking back pollution,  
wind, rain, the dead trees of their houses awash  
and no longer together, painted by torch,

this dark night; strip-clean-searching out late  
through the absolute water. Sometimes a star calls,  
sometimes they look. The people nest like

people, without absolute power: the fear -  
that all is gone: the greater fear; nothing  
accomplished. Who controls the lines

of photons zooming out? What is this indexed  
and rational oil-splutter, electromagnetic  
wave? Real birds in their densities of feather,

another metaphor for the island, as they  
move. Closer and closer together.