

THE
EDGE





**Hello esteemed readers, and welcome
to the first Edge issue of 2013!**

**We would like to thank you all for
your submissions, as usual they were
of a wonderfully high standard and
we had a very difficult time choosing
our poets, authors, and writers! We
would also like to show our grati-
tude to our university, Northumbria,
for its continued support from stu-
dents and staff members, our read-
ers, everyone who supports us, and
everyone who helps us to take this
from a few emailed Word documents to
a real magazine.**

Thank you all so much!

Lots of love,

~~The Edge Team~~



THE EDGE

The Scarlet Notebook - Poppy Haws

Two Angels - Daniel Dotchin

Painted in the Asylum - Sarah Patmore

The Night - Sarah Patmore

Newton's Third Law of Motion - John Baker

09 - Saschk Drakos

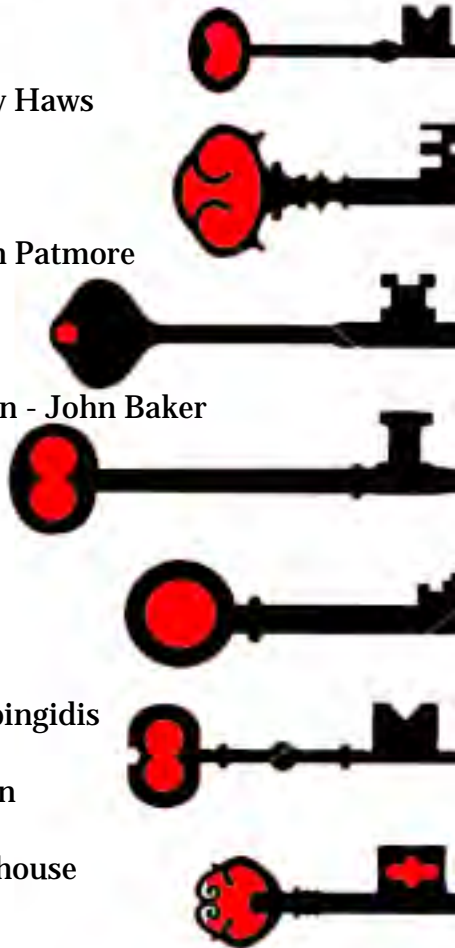
Family Ties - Peter Hunter

Gone - Abby Blackburn

Midnight Reverie - Chris Salpingidis

In My Room - Daniel Bowman

Argo Review - Georgia Woodhouse



Poppy Haws

THE SCARLET NOTEBOOK



'Wednesday, June 11th, 2011

14 x 6cm. 8 sq. Divided - 2 p.m. r2 = 486 p.d.', read the latest entry.

'What the hell is that supposed to mean?'

Lila Turner gave a deep sigh, and pulled gently at her blonde hair, greying with the years. She had tried all the other options, and the little scarlet notebook was her very last hope. But here she was, searching for a meaning in the dated scribbles. Whatever this was, it was meticulous. Every single day from 'Jan 1st' to 'June 11th' (that very day) was filled. A little wooden ruler sat by the diary's side. The minuscule black numbers seemed to slide out of their neat imprints and lay themselves out on the page for scrutiny. But why? To Lila, there was nothing but numbers. Numbers multiplied by numbers, squared, divided, and remaindered into yet more bloody numbers.

'Looks like bloody maths homework to me.'

It was a miracle she had been able to get her hands on the book at all. The nineteen year-old kept it on her at all times, but her boyfriend Oli (bless him!) had turned up unexpectedly and swept her away, leaving the notebook and its companion alone in Claude's tidy bedroom.

Lila eyed the ruler as if it were a malevolent beast about to strike, and thought hard, her eyebrows furrowing.

Numbers. Measurements. But what?

The numbers were so tiny, so invaluable, and so insignificant. What the hell was fourteen by six centimetres, anyway? Obviously Claude was measuring tiny... somethings. Somethings that were important to her and her world.

Lila looked around the room, which was tidy to a point of neurosis as usual, searching for... well she really didn't know, anything would be good at this point.

Lila peered into the drawers and found nothing but school notebooks and stationery, placed without any edges overlapping, like a perfect jigsaw puzzle. The next drawer held only knickers and bras, organised by colour and ranging from simple, standard black and white sports bras to highly ornamental ones, embellished with flowers and lace.

She looked into the wardrobe, which was also organised, this time by type of garment (formal/informal), then colour (dark to light), and wondered.


OCD? Far too obvious. Claude's evident obsessive-compulsive disorder was much lauded by her teachers at school anyway.

Her notes were always perfectly filed, always wonderfully kept, and everything was always in its place; to them, she was just the model student, the subject of much praise at parents' evenings and prize-givings.

Lila thought about things you could measure, as if she was playing 'Family Fortunes', with a slightly more important goal than winning a car, or a television. She groaned; you could measure literally anything in the entire world. Well, not anything. Maybe not an alligator; it might bite. But in general, measuring things was pretty simple.

God, was it drugs? It had to be. Perhaps cocaine, fourteen by six centimetres of it.

Didn't it come in grams? She couldn't be sure. She imagined Claude with the ruler as scalpel, dividing it into neatly chopped lines, like a sick, demented surgeon, but then... why? Was dear, darling Claude a dealer, handing out lines like sweets?



'p,' Lila reasoned, meant 'per'.

Somehow Claude was measuring cocaine (or some other kind of drug, Lila wasn't quite clear on them all) into eight ('8 sq.', though the 'sq.' baffled Lila)... somethings. 486? She gasped. Was Claude earning £486 per day ('p.d.') for her cuts of cocaine? She didn't know its street value; silently she berated herself for not keeping 'up to date' with teen... was trends the right word? Trends. She couldn't Google it; that was far too suspicious, it would show up on her browsing history, and Lila barely knew how to use the laptop at the best of times. No, it would have to do, as a theory. As the doorbell rang, Lila was filled with an odd sense of satisfaction; she had cracked the code.

'Mum, I forgot my keys!' Claude's apologetic voice rang out. Lila dropped the book as if it had shocked her, and rushed to sit down, trying to look casual. For all she knew, earning £486 a day from cocaine, Claude could have the thing dusted for fingerprints, 'CSI'-style.

'Silly girl. Come on, I'll put the kettle on.' She opened the door, and smiled. 'Did you have a nice time with Oli?' Lila said, trying to keep her tone nonchalant and her hands from shaking as she led her daughter into the kitchen.

'Yeah, fine...' Claude faltered, and put a hand on the bench to steady herself.

'You all right, love?'

'Fine...' she repeated, and sat down abruptly, running her fingers through her long hair.

As she sat down, a chocolate bar wrapper drifted out of her coat pocket. Lila caught it, and saw the number '486.'

She studied it, thought about weight, balance, measurement, and teenage girls. Damn.

Fourteen by six centimetres, she guessed. Eight squares. 'p.d.' did stand for 'per day'.

Of course, thought Lila.

TWO ANGELS

Daniel Dotchin

As quietly as heaven spreads across the sky,
I watch two angels float along the beach.
They watch the sea roar, and hear the wind sigh,
each hear the other and their silent speech.

I want them to walk with peace in their heart,
without the woes of the world on their mind.
But when one day ends the other must start,
and dawn brings trouble for us all to find.

Inside I wonder what these angels think
as their feet touch sand and their heads feel rain.
My two friends who have been to the brink,
walking alone amongst chaos and pain.

My dear two angels, who walk in the night,
fear not now the dark - for dawn brings his light.

PAINTED IN THE ASYLUM

Sarah Patmore

Seventy eight of these pale blue pills
surround me like a noose,
while sanity watches from paranoid cameras
hidden in barren trees, promising euphoria.
I laugh when the voices scream for Mona Lisa.

I collect pennies in the snow.
the copper shines and it seems so beautiful.
The world discards things without value.
I stare at the pavement for my treasures,
while people turn from my strange gaze.

Insanity feels like death
so I hoard my pills on my bed.
I imagine swallowing them,
they go down warm and I float.
Heaven is full of pennies.

I'm clogged with bruises
that I trace all over my body,
shades of watercolours
painted in the asylum,
under the beat of shuffling steps.

My roommate is up all night
dragging Jesus by his hair through
the sands of Jerusalem.
I sit and count my pennies,
wondering how much I am worth.

THE NIGHT

Sarah Patmore

All of my demons have your face.
And when the shadow creeps, it's yours
watching me from the darkness.
The footsteps on the stairs, yours too.

And when I hear the top stair creak
I know that you're approaching.
A parasitic shadow reaching out
pursuing my soul like a phantom.

When I hear the window close
I know you have slipped through.
Like a plasma of darkness,
wet, hot, salty blood.

The door of my bedroom clicks
and I know my time has come.
Your hands scuttle like insects' feet
stealing my joy and innocence.

When I look into your demon face
all features are distorted.
Your eyes hollow sockets,
your mouth a bloody slit.


I feel as if I'm looking into Hell
but there is nobody to save me.
With the first light, you slither away
but night will come again, all too soon.





NEWTON'S THIRD LAW OF MOTION


JOHN BAKER



For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

It was quarter to five by the time I got finished at work, and about five-ish when I got onto my metro home. I knew it was going to take eighteen minutes to travel the seven stops to Howdon from Monument, and about ten minutes to walk from there to my mum's, so I was looking at about half five by the time I got there. We'd arranged to have a bit of a family meal – a Mexican feast: fajitas, quesadillas, nachos, the works. I told them I'd be there not long after four, but we'd been ripped apart by health and safety at work, so Joyce, the gaffer, made us all stay behind to deep clean the kitchen.

I took a seat next to someone and opposite another two. It's always a bit of a squeeze at that time of day, but I was glad to get off my feet. Rather than trying to awkwardly avoid looking directly into a stranger's eyes, I checked Facebook and Twitter on my phone. The news broadcasters were tweeting stories about a bailout package for Greece, and a local sports journalist posted a link to 'NUFC v Villa: full match report'. The bloke sitting in front of me got off at Chillingham Road, so I had a scan of the carriage whilst I had the chance. That was the first time I noticed him - the Eldon Square tramp. He had the same coat on that he was wearing about fifteen years earlier when my brother, who was about six at the time, walked face first into him outside Boots.



My dad went scatty with Michael that day, I remember him saying 'Watch where you're going man! You don't want to be walking into people like that, you don't know what you might catch!' I'm sure the tramp's name is Jimmy. He's a bit of a cult hero around town, everyone seems to know of him; he's not really the type of person you can miss though. He's a big, old unit of a man, a few inches over six foot I reckon. Bald on top, long on the back and sides, shoulder length maybe, but I think everyone knows him for his beard. It's dark, like his hair, full but wiry and matted in places. If you can imagine Santa Claus drained of all his colour and cheer, and sketched using charcoal, that's kind of what Jimmy looked like. He sat a couple of seats down the carriage from where I was, with a spare seat next to him and two spare in front. I watched him coughing into his hands; a hacking cough, chesty, barking almost.

At Walkergate two girls and a boy got on, the girls were around twelve years old; the boy might have been a year or two younger. The girls wore matching Nike Air Max trainers and grey jogging bottoms, the lad had what looked to be school uniform pants on. The three of them sat in the seats next to Jimmy, and it didn't take long until they began to smirk at each other. The girls zipped their jackets to the top and pulled them right up over their noses.

The boy blatantly laughed, and then one of the girls jumped up and scarpered further down the carriage to let out her laughter, the other two followed and did the same. Jimmy knew what was going on. They were taking the piss – loads of people on that carriage did, but we all pretended to be oblivious. The two Nike Air Max girls and the lad got off at Wallsend, and as the metro pulled away from the station, they looked through the window and pointed and laughed as Jimmy went past.

'You fuckin' tramp!' one of the girls shouted. I told myself that he'd be used to it and have a thick skin, but I knew he was human. As I tried to gauge the other commuters' reactions to the little shits who'd got off, I noticed four black lads - barely school leaving age; two hoods and two caps, leaning in towards each other, speaking in hushed voices and glancing towards Jimmy. One of them nudged another and nodded his head in Jimmy's direction. I really didn't want to put up with another round of torment or bullying, but I wanted somebody else to kick up a fuss first. One of the group got up from his seat and headed towards Jimmy. He just sat there coughing. The lad stopped next to Jimmy, but didn't catch his eye.

'Excuse me.'

Jimmy looked up at him. The lad held out a clenched fist.

'This is for you.'

Jimmy raised his palm, and the lad dropped a handful of change into it.





09

SASCHK DRAKOS

:09

It's a dream.

You know it's a dream.

Knowing doesn't dilute the realness of it one little bit.

You feel the damp soaking through your hoody and the shards of glass stinging open flesh. You see the lights looping across the sky in whitebluered and the rain nearly horizontal (or maybe that's just you). There are voices and questions and explanations winding in and out of the concrete barriers and then there is you. Quiet and alone with the world spinning slower and slower in front of you.

A hand touches your shoulder and someone says, there you are, love. it's going to be all right. you're safe now. But you can tell by the way she says it that it's not going to be all right at all, and safe is the furthest thing from where you are.

You know it's a dream, but it's not.

You know it isn't real, but it is.



08

Stop.

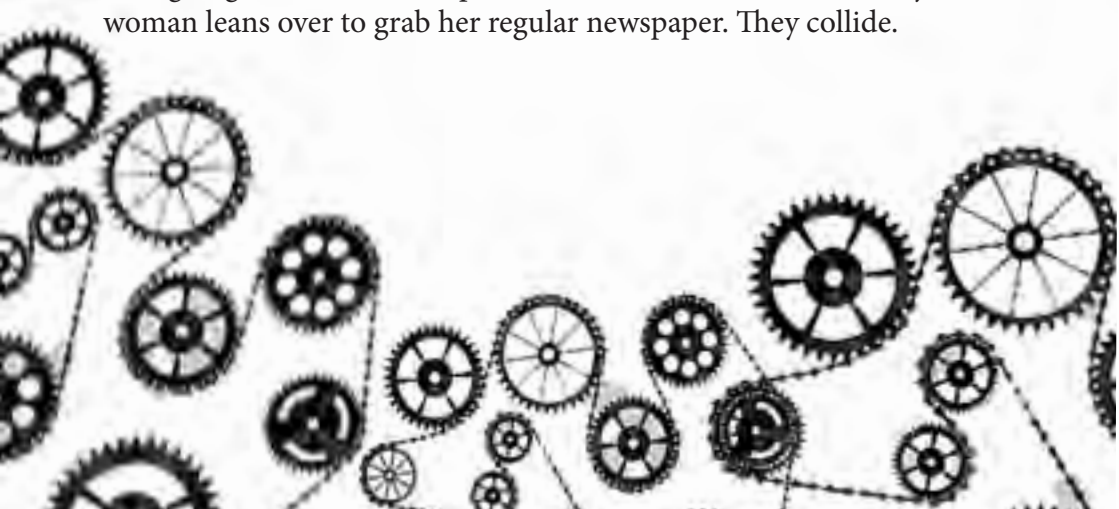
The city breathes itself into dream, and dreams itself into being. In a moment between moments, it is a network of roads and bridges ready to carry its lifeblood to the husks of high rises and sprawling shops. Between moments, the city lies frozen and empty, devoid of any soul but its own.

The moment ends.

Horns pulse their beat against the respiration of voices and engines harmonizing a biological soundtrack as the streets populate and the buildings shudder to pump in and out, to keep the city moving.

Somewhere in that clusterfuck of body and mind and mass-market souls are connections waiting to happen. Hook ups, arguments, lessons, true love, half love, unrequited everything. It's all just a series of possibilities lining up to be picked off one by one, and you see all of them.

A man walks into a newsstand because he's just realized he forgot his lighter (his roommate actually borrowed it the night before after going out and fell asleep on the couch with it still in hand) just as a woman leans over to grab her regular newspaper. They collide.





Now:

A. They apologize in the perfunctory way people do without actually seeing the people they're apologizing to, and go on with their lives never giving each other another thought.

B. He apologizes, she says something clever and forgiving. There's a **m**oment in the air, and coffee leads to dinner leads to cohabitation and she breaks his heart in three months' time because he just isn't the person she thought he was and she can't be the person he wants her to be.

C. She apologizes, he says something snide and condescending, she writes him off as an unsalvageable jerk. A month later, her best friend and his get engaged and decide to do their single best mates a favour and play matchmaker. Despite the rocky start, they live happily ever after.

D. Well, you get the picture.

It's all variations on variations. Slight nuances that can change the course of everything. Most people live their lives as a victim of fate because they choose not to see, or are incapable of seeing, all these chance cards that just fall into their laps. If an individual could, and channelled that ability, he could not only see those variables in front of him, but actively work to change them.

Thing is, though, Fate gets really pissy when you mess with her plan.





:07

Another late night.

Your hands are unreliable from too much coffee and too many cigarettes and your mind is entering that state of being where everything seems a little less real than the second before.

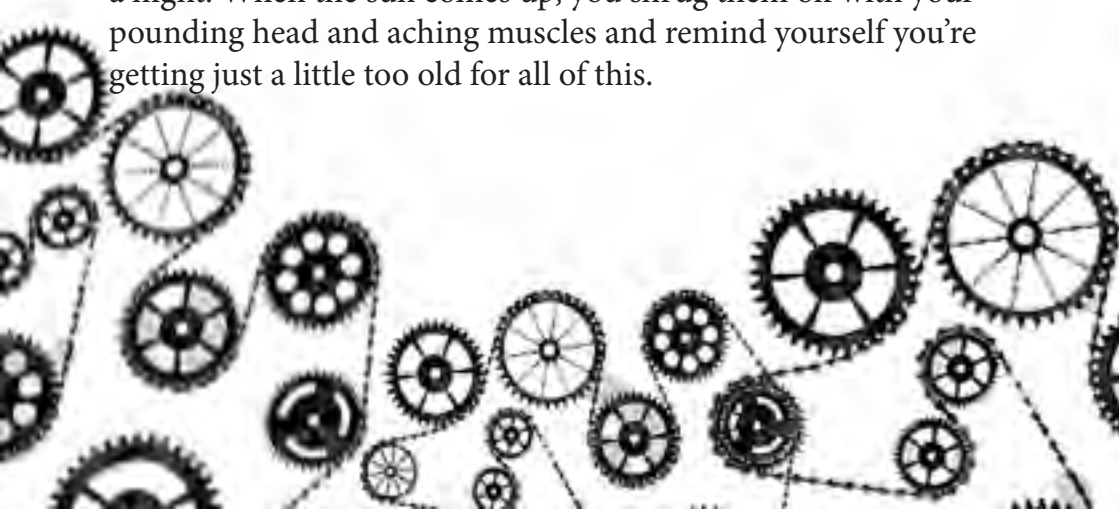
It's times like these you start to wonder if you ever existed at all.

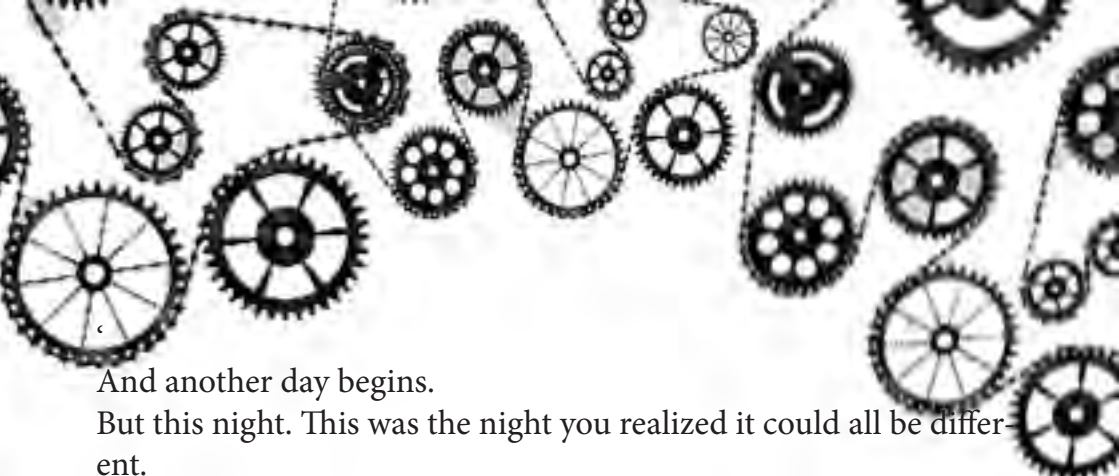
It's times like these you start grasping at straws.

So you grab your keys and you grab your smokes and you head out into the night to find whatever's out there.

You end up at a bar. It doesn't matter which one. After a while, they all look the same to you. Someone starts talking to you, and you start talking back, not because you're interested, but because it makes you feel a little less transparent.

You never tell them the truth, these people you find when you're ghosting through the night. You make up names and careers and lives that you know you'll never actually live. Most of them you have no desire to live, but there's something about trying them on for size that you find comforting. So you're an accountant for ten minutes, an insurance salesman for an hour, a carpenter for a night. When the sun comes up, you shrug them off with your pounding head and aching muscles and remind yourself you're getting just a little too old for all of this.





And another day begins.

But this night. This was the night you realized it could all be different.

Another bar.

Another faceless name.

Another offer to keep someone else warm at night.

It was all so much the same, and yet there was a moment when time stopped and I saw exactly how it would all play out.

She's a strange girl, a little shy, but give her a few drinks and she really lets go. Her hands sculpt her words in the air and her mouth gives them life in a way no one has before. She's not just saying the words, she's tasting them, savouring them. Rolling them around like wine on her tongue. The ideas sparking in her eyes are pure magic and instead of softening your transparency, next to her you feel like it's not just you that isn't real. Next to her, you feel like she's the only truly corporeal entity in existence. The desperation creeping beneath her skin is intoxicating and addictive. Not for anything as banal as sex or love; it's desperation for meaning. She's looking for a lifeline, and if you go home with her tonight, you'll become that lifeline. Not because you want to, and not because she wants you to, but because you're two halves of the same thing and you won't have a choice.

You can read the damage in her eyes and the broken trust in the way her lips quiver between words.

All you can think is your life is too complicated to welcome in the mess of the century. She'll suck you dry, and you'll let her. She'll try to fix you, and you won't. It's destruction waiting to happen. Not that you've ever been one to shy away from destruction.



But this time you see the choice.

This time you hold it in your hand and the sheer power of knowing you can stop an entire lifetime from playing out is too much temptation to resist.

You make an excuse, or you don't. You're not even paying attention to what's coming out of your mouth, just so long as you walk away.

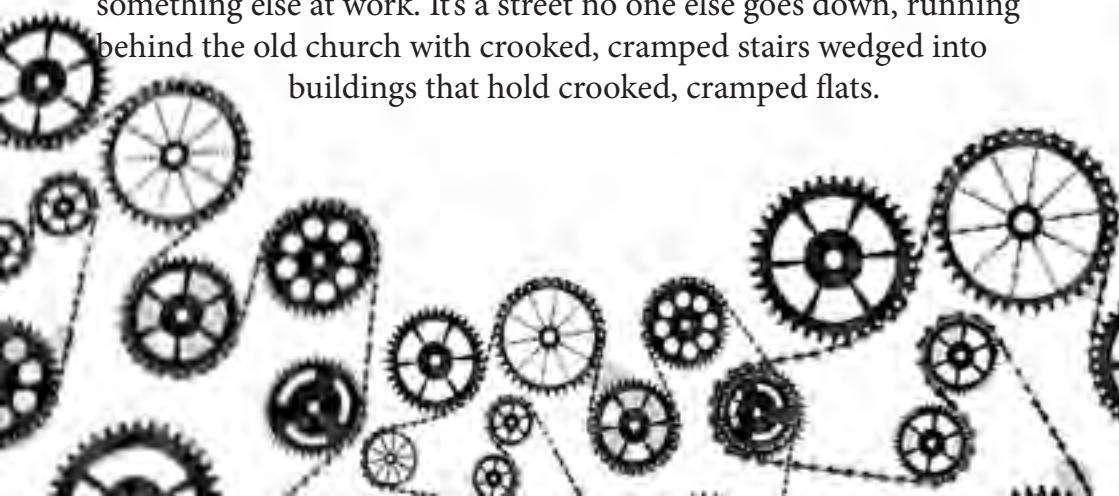
:06

There's just something about Tuesdays.

Storm clouds crest in the sky but refuse to release the rain. You walk the city to feel the crush of bodies close at hand but keep them at a distance with your artificial soundtrack piped through headphones with the volume loud enough to drown out every other sound. Someone could stand in front of you and scream in your face and you wouldn't hear a word.

You like these moments best, walking down the high street in the centre of your own personal movie. This is how you let go. This is how you become.

It's a narrow alley you've walked by a hundred times before, but never gone down, and maybe that's why you pick it. Maybe it's something else at work. It's a street no one else goes down, running behind the old church with crooked, cramped stairs wedged into buildings that hold crooked, cramped flats.





There she is, sitting on the stone steps.

From here, all you can see is the scuffed toe of a pink Converse sneaker, but you know it's her all the same. There aren't any explanations in the universe for how you know; you just do.

Now:

A. You turn around and go back, avoiding her altogether.


B. You keep walking and stay locked tight in your private soundscape and pretend like you don't even see her.

C. You say hello. She smiles. She hasn't been crying, but her eyes look like they want to. You ask why she's sitting on the steps. She says she's watching fairies dance. She'll show you how if you want. You've got nothing better to do, and there's something about her...

So you sit beside her. Somehow by the end of it, she has your phone number. It starts with long, late night conversations. She sleeps as little as you do, and you both find relief in being able to share your war stories from living in a world where you just don't fit. For a while, you get to exist as part of a matched set, and for a while, the synchronicity leaves you both in awe.

But you're a transitory sort of guy, C. and you know, six months from now, this won't be home. You know that whatever promises are made, distance erodes the things the heart holds dear because all those things they tell you about love and soul mates and people just meant to be together just aren't true at all.





She leans forward and her eyes find you without hesitation. Those strange sort of eyes she has where even at a distance you can't be sure if she's looking at you, or into you, or through you. Your options are running out. You turn around and walk the other way.

:05

Vessels constrict in a frantic push to drive more oxygen from heart to cell, flooding tissue with excess while lungs desperate in their shallow pumps to just obtain some. Tendons contract and tense, twisting ligament and bone into a rigid curl. Fingers claw at blankets pulling kneading clinging through the shockwaves attacking nerves on high alert. The darkness is a presence in itself, worming its greasy tendrils in whatever opening it can find: nose, mouth, ears, eyes. Slithering down the oesophagus and infecting every system. Your mouth presses shut and you bury your face in the pillow damp with sweat trying to keep it out but it's too late. It has you. You feel it mutating every molecule in your body until you become part of it. You'd cry out but it's already claimed your voice. You'd run but it's already captured your legs. It will devour you inside out until you are intangible invisible a ghost lost in shadow.

You will disappear and no one will ever know you were here.

No one will ever know that you're gone.





You listened as your classmates plotted out colleges and degrees and future careers. Five year plans and long term goals. You went along because you were expected to go along. No one understood that you didn't see the point. When you tried to explain, they said you just weren't motivated. You just weren't living up to your potential.

You watched your friends get married and have children. Mortgages, car payments, 401ks and insurance options. You let them set you up with someone's friend of a friend because it made them feel better to think they'd tried. No one understood that you just weren't interested. When you tried to explain, they said you just hadn't met the right person yet.

You stopped trying to explain because they can't know what you know.

It's always been there. That moment that your entire life has always been moving toward. The purpose that your entire life revolves around.

You're waiting for it.

And you're killing time.

:03

You go to your job.

You go to the corner shop.





You cook your single serving dinner on the hob in your mini kitchen and watch the people migrating from work from school to evenings out and evenings in through your sixth floor window. You feel it gnawing at your skin like some prehistoric creature clawing to be birthed into the world. You feel it drawing you out of your mediocre life, your comfort zone, your safety net. Your bookshelf of first edition nineteenth century works. The duvet that matches the bathroom towels that matches the four place dinner set that matches the table lamp on the nightstand. Your Converse sneakers in eight different colours lined up on the wardrobe floor.

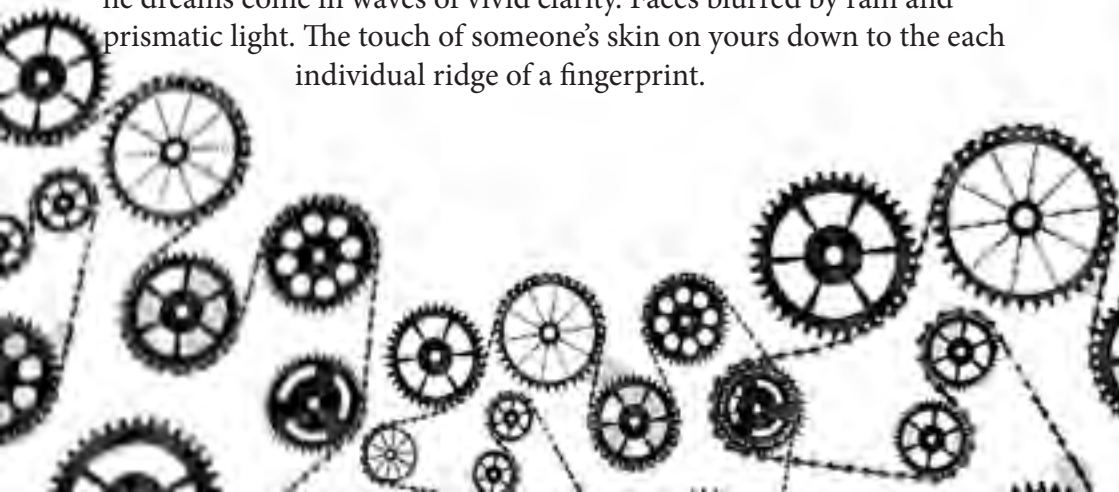
You know these things are meaningless, but you want them. You know they're replaceable objects, but you've made them part of who you are.

You know if you listen to the thing stirring in your molecules, you'll lose it all.

You know it's only a matter of time before you won't have a choice.

:02

he dreams come in waves of vivid clarity. Faces blurred by rain and prismatic light. The touch of someone's skin on yours down to the each individual ridge of a fingerprint.





You wake up and the room you know day in day out seems a little less substantial than the day before. A little less substantial than the subconscious detritus roiling in your brain. You see the girl reflected in your window your mirror the door of your microwave. She pleads with you. She screams at you. She cries. She watches you. She's seeped into your skin and you don't know how.

She's integral to your breathing and you don't even know her name. Rain pecks against your sixth floor window and makes you think of summer nights under the aluminium roof of the patio with the last of the day's sun still kissing your skin between twilight's goosebumps.

You know you have to go. You have to move. You have to walk. You have to feel the greasy, sticky pavement beneath the millimetre soles of your Chucks. You have to feel the water tapping through the cotton of your hoody. You have to let the stench of piss and vomit and takeaway dumpsters ingrain themselves in your nostrils. You have to feel the city become part of you so you can become part of something more.

So you can exist.

Your feet follow the lights and the lights take you to the bridge. The city shimmers in the rain like a cascade of costume jewellery from a little girl's treasure box.





The pavement is slick with water and motor oil and your millimetre thin soles skid a little more with every step. The river curves with the bridge curves with the horizon and you're standing at the top of the world with the great and mighty Styx roaring flooded beneath your daisy yellow Converse with the barely there soles and the arc of cement and girder hovering impossibly in the air. Stop.

The city breathes itself into dream, and dreams itself into being. In a moment between moments, it is a network of roads and bridges ready to carry its lifeblood to the husks of high rises and sprawling shops. Between moments, the city lies frozen and empty, devoid of any soul but its own.

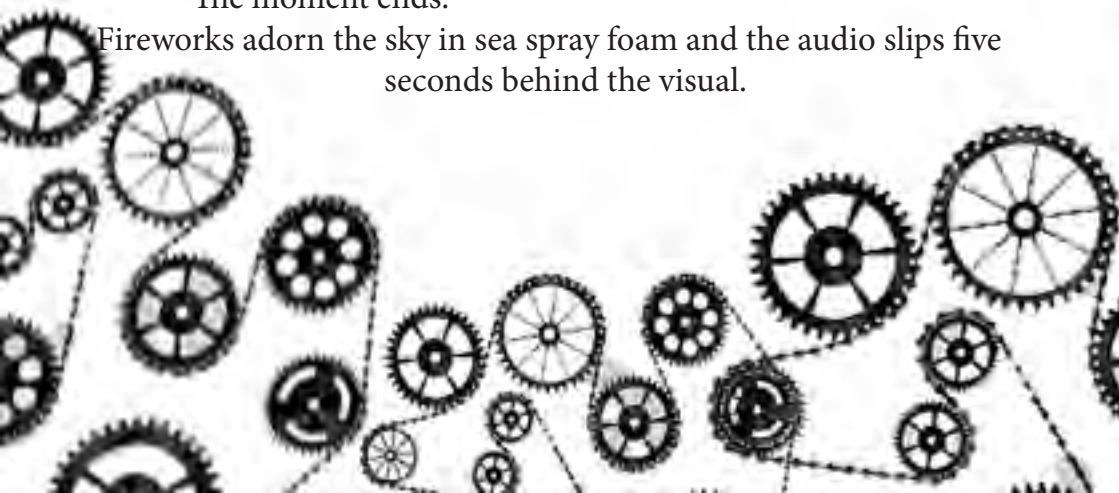
You turn and look across the bridge and see a girl.

The girl.

You feel the desperation crawling beneath her skin. You see the ideas sparking like magic in her eyes. You breathe the realness of her being across slick-damp pavement and the greasy, sticky sidewalk. You're two halves of the same thing and you don't have a choice.

The moment ends.

Fireworks adorn the sky in sea spray foam and the audio slips five seconds behind the visual.





Globs of light blind you right before you hear the squeal of tires. You feel the impact shudder through bone and muscle and only then do you hear the whumpf of displaced air. You think it's all so much quieter than you thought it would be. It's all so much slower.

You think about your bookshelf of first edition works. You think of your matching dinner set and duvet and bath towels. You think of your mini-kitchen and your sixth floor window. You think of your quietly mediocre life. On the pavement slippery with blood and motor oil with the lights' prismatic fireworks above you, in one of those moments between moments, you mourn a life that mattered only to you and no one else.

:01

Her fingers drift down the puckered seam of her chest afraid to touch while her eyes avoid the reflection in the window the mirror the metallic bars encasing her in bed. She feels the flutter against her ribs, tentative and unsure.

You're mine now.

Are you?

'What do you think he was like?' she asks.

Her name is Lilah.

She's twenty-two.





Her mother tsks in that disapproving way she has when her daughter asks questions she doesn't approve of and continues to fold the newly bought underwear just taken from the package. 'Don't be morbid.'

'Part of him is inside me for the rest of my life.' Behind her eyes, Lilah sees a boy with quiet eyes and shaky hands. 'I should know something about him.'

'It's anonymous for a reason.' Her mother's frown sets a level deeper. 'You don't want his family popping round to gawk at you, do you?'

He doesn't have any family. 'Maybe.' She breathes in and counts to ten. She closes her eyes and sees lights like sea spray foam in multi-coloured prisms against the dark of her eyelids. 'I know more about my flatmate's cousin.'

'You just be thankful for the miracle you've been given. Whoever he was saved your life. That's all that matters.'

She opens her palm over the seam in her chest and thinks I have his heart in the palm of my hand. She's twenty-two and owns a boy's heart for the first time in her life. The thought should make her sad, but it doesn't. She feels calmer than she ever has before. She feels whole.

Don't worry.
I'll keep you safe.



FAMILY TIES

A heavy handed fog engulfs the air, and the faint outline of a dilapidated hangar can be seen, sitting proud in the barren landscape. Droplets of condensation trickle slowly down the dirty, heavy windows as the winter sun begins to rise over the leafless trees upon the horizon. Dazzling beads of glistening dew shine in the surrounding grasslands, glistening through the murky mist of the surroundings. Set against the concrete jungle of the dark, towering hangar, nature flourishes in a beautiful isolation, preserved by the stabbing winter chill. Then comes a gentle, but melancholic drone seemingly far in the distance prolonging, like the sound of the clipping wings of a wasp, getting ever closer. The drone persists, getting louder and louder until a swarm of 4x4's hurriedly emerges from behind the hangar, pulling up in front of the gigantic, sliding metal doors. Two men emerge from one of the cars, wearing black leather jackets and dark jeans. One, a shorter, stockier balding man proceeds to unlock a rusted, heavy duty padlock and chain from the doors. As it falls to the ground with a ringing clatter the two men strenuously force the doors slowly open. The grinding of the doors causes the hanger to scream and howl like a suffocating cat crying out desperately for air. A scattering of birds follows, as a flock frantically escape to the freedom of the rafters in the hangar's heavens above. The vastness of space is magnificent despite the overgrowth of moss, rust and algae combined with the stench of bird faeces and rotting animal carcass. A gust of mustiness escapes from the hollow, causing the men to retract at the hideousness of the rotten stench of death within. As the doors slam to a halt, the entourage of vehicles moves into the vast expanse inside, turning to face the low rising sun in the distance.

Jimmy, a short, round-faced man wearing a dark blazer, black jeans and fine Italian slip-ons steps out of one of the vehicles and

observes the location around him. He's about sixty years old with sagging blue eyes and has the formation of a pot belly poking through his black t-shirt. He has a hardened expression on his face and his greying hair is slicked back. Despite his lack of height he has an intimidating presence even in the hangar's high ceilinged, greatness of desertion.

'Is the area clear?' he utters in a soft cockney accent.

'Yeah, gaffer.' Replies another man emerging from the entourage.

'Make sure.'

Two dozen men carrying machine guns emerge from the vehicles and swiftly scatter checking every nook and cranny of the hangar. Keith, a young man with short brown hair around twenty years old hangs back. He has a handsome, intelligent look about him, blue eyes and a strong jaw line and is slightly taller than Jimmy.

'Well...you heard. What are you hanging around for? Jimmy asks.

'But Jimmy, you said I could be more involved?'

'Yeah, so quit your moaning and get on it.'

'Why won't you give me a chance? Haven't I proven myself already?' Pleads Keith desperately. Jimmy slowly turns around to look at Keith and walks up to him stopping inches from his face.

'Pull yourself together son, and search the building, like everyone else.' He orders whilst slowly prodding Keith's chest with his finger. Jimmy begins to walk away.

'No wonder your wife left you. It always has to be your way!' Jimmy quickly turns and grabs Keith by the collar, pushing him up against one of the vehicles.

'Listen hotshot! You know nothing about my wife. One more word and I put a bullet in your head.'

'I don't think you understand why I'm here. I'm no lackey. I don't care about any of this shit, it's not why I'm here.'

'Oh yeah?'

Jimmy releases Keith, places his hand in his inside pocket and fires a bullet right between his eyes. An echoing hammer penetrates the building as Keith's body slumps lifeless to the ground. Jimmy stands over the body adjusting his cuffs and straightens his jacket after placing the gun back inside his pocket. He wipes a speck of blood from his head and looks in disgust at the dark stains of death on his silk handkerchief.

One of the men examining the area runs over looking panicked and examines the body.

'What happened Boss?'

'The kid was too big for his boots. Is the area clear?'

'Appears to be.'

'Good. Get the men in place; they should be here any second.'

'Right away.'

Jimmy glances at Keith's body impatiently.

'...And get that body out of my sight.'

As the body is dragged out of view, a screeching of tyres can be heard from outside and half a dozen black vehicles veer into the hangar. They come to a halt forming an opposing face-off and men begin to emerge from the vehicles. A tall, heavily built man dressed in an horrific white suit emerges from one of the vehicles and begins to make his way towards Jimmy carrying a leather briefcase. He has greasy, slicked, dark hair and a tan which could be classed as permanent. His reddened skin contrasts heavily with his spotless white suit and he walks with an arrogant swagger as he chews gum, slowly and cockily.

'Jimmy!' he calls with an arrogant smile on his face, opening his arms to greet him. They embrace and he softly holds Jimmy's face.

'Carlo, how're you?'

'Good...good. Nasty business this, I think you'll agree. Have you got it?'

Have you got my money?’

‘All in good time Jimmy...so talk to me.’

‘About what?’ Jimmy asks looking suspicious.

Carlo smiles cockily before shrugging his shoulders.

‘I don’t know, how about we talk about your wife for instance?’

Jimmy becomes incensed and throws himself at Carlo bringing him to ground and they fall to the floor like crashing giants. Carlo puts up no fight, but only laughs madly and hysterically whilst Jimmy throttles his neck.

‘You sick bastard.’ Jimmy yells in his face, spraying saliva over his increasingly reddening face. As Carlo struggles to breathe he begins to cough, yet his wicked grin never falters. Jimmy punches him in the face making an earth shattering crack before rolling off, holding his head in anguish.

‘Oh, Jimmy. Still as raw as ever.’ Carlo taunts whilst getting up, slyly rubbing blood from his chin. Jimmy lies on his hands and knees and with great effort, looks up at Carlo.

‘Look at you. A dethroned lion, lying on the floor, not even fit enough to clean my shoes. How the great have fallen, eh? Now give me what I want before I start shooting people.’ Jimmy clicks his fingers and one of his men runs over carrying a black duffel bag, seemingly heavy, and hands it to Carlo.

‘My money?’ asks Jimmy, out of breath on the ground.

‘Here you go...dog.’ Carlo drops the leather briefcase in front of Jimmy’s face.

‘That wasn’t so hard was it?’ says Carlo stroking Jimmy’s head provocatively, ‘...now don’t let it happen again.’ He turns around and gets back into one of the vehicles followed by the rest of his men and they drive out of the hangar in a black, snaking trail.

Jimmy lets out a sigh of relief and struggles to his feet. ‘Let’s clear out of here. Search the body and dump it in the marsh.’ The men begin to pack up and get back into the vehicles. Just as Jimmy is getting back into his vehicle one of the men dumping the body says,

‘Gaffer, you better take a look at this.’

‘What the fuck is it now, eh? Do I look like I give a shit right now?’

‘You’re going to want to see this. We found this on him.’ Jimmy looks down to see a photograph of a beautiful, dark haired woman holding a newborn child. He seems to recognise the woman and his expression softens.

‘Rose?’

Jimmy turns the photo over to see the words ‘Mum, 1982’ written on the back. He kneels down to look at the body, noticing Keith’s lifelessly cold, blue eyes. Sadly, he utters,

‘Bring the body home.’

PETER HUNTER



GONE

ABBY BLACKBURN

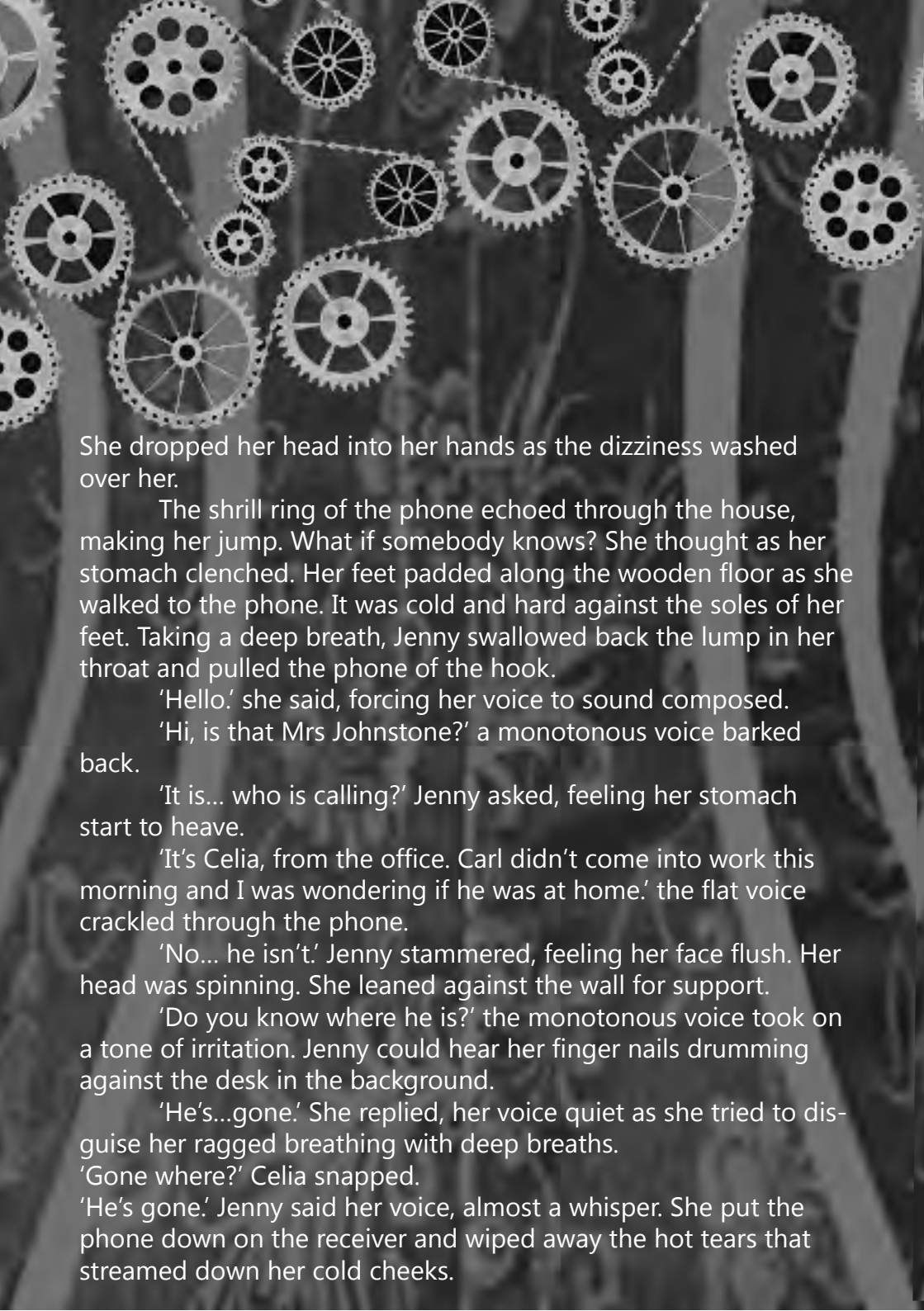
Jenny stirred the spoon in the steaming mug of coffee. Once. Twice. Three times. She watched as the froth swirled round in the milky brown liquid. Dropping the spoon in the sink with a clatter, she took a sip and inhaled some of the coffee fumes in the process. The caffeine kick travelled straight to her brain, clearing the muddled thoughts from her mind.

She had to get things sorted out, now she was on her own. Now he wasn't there to pick up the pieces when she needed him to. Or to make sure the bills got paid. Where do I start? She hadn't expected this. Jenny placed her fingertips on the sides of her head and massaged her temples. She tried to get rid of the dull ache that occupied itself there with the circular motion. She felt numb. The iciness of her fingers penetrated the nerve fibres in her skin. The shock sent a shiver up her spine, making the hairs on her forearms stand up on end. Her skin felt hot and prickly from the nerve activity.

You have got to stay strong. He's not here anymore. Jenny told herself. A tear broke free from its tear duct and ran down her cheek.

She wiped it away with the calloused palm of her hand. What have I done? A loud sob escaped from somewhere deep inside of her as she began to shake.





She dropped her head into her hands as the dizziness washed over her.

The shrill ring of the phone echoed through the house, making her jump. What if somebody knows? She thought as her stomach clenched. Her feet padded along the wooden floor as she walked to the phone. It was cold and hard against the soles of her feet. Taking a deep breath, Jenny swallowed back the lump in her throat and pulled the phone off the hook.

'Hello.' she said, forcing her voice to sound composed.

'Hi, is that Mrs Johnstone?' a monotonous voice barked back.

'It is... who is calling?' Jenny asked, feeling her stomach start to heave.

'It's Celia, from the office. Carl didn't come into work this morning and I was wondering if he was at home.' the flat voice crackled through the phone.

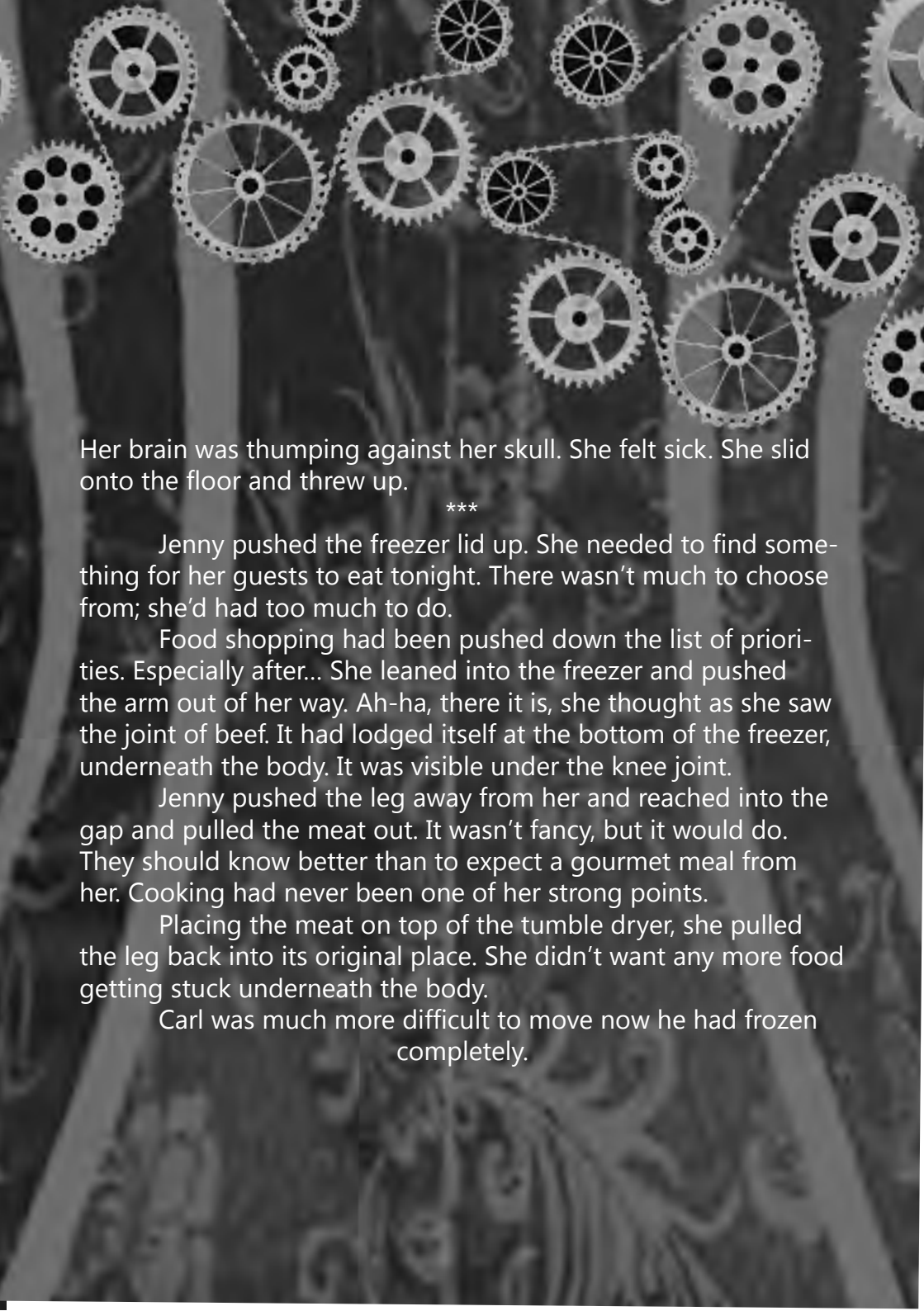
'No... he isn't.' Jenny stammered, feeling her face flush. Her head was spinning. She leaned against the wall for support.

'Do you know where he is?' the monotonous voice took on a tone of irritation. Jenny could hear her finger nails drumming against the desk in the background.

'He's...gone.' She replied, her voice quiet as she tried to disguise her ragged breathing with deep breaths.

'Gone where?' Celia snapped.

'He's gone.' Jenny said her voice, almost a whisper. She put the phone down on the receiver and wiped away the hot tears that streamed down her cold cheeks.



Her brain was thumping against her skull. She felt sick. She slid onto the floor and threw up.

Jenny pushed the freezer lid up. She needed to find something for her guests to eat tonight. There wasn't much to choose from; she'd had too much to do.

Food shopping had been pushed down the list of priorities. Especially after... She leaned into the freezer and pushed the arm out of her way. Ah-ha, there it is, she thought as she saw the joint of beef. It had lodged itself at the bottom of the freezer, underneath the body. It was visible under the knee joint.

Jenny pushed the leg away from her and reached into the gap and pulled the meat out. It wasn't fancy, but it would do. They should know better than to expect a gourmet meal from her. Cooking had never been one of her strong points.

Placing the meat on top of the tumble dryer, she pulled the leg back into its original place. She didn't want any more food getting stuck underneath the body.

Carl was much more difficult to move now he had frozen completely.

MIDNIGHT REVERIE

CHRIS SALPINGIDIS

Days in the dark
under grey skies,
longing for light
and waiting.

The music of the raindrops
like notes fingers play on the keys of a piano
still echoes the emptiness inside.
Echoing beats like
the slow bleeding of time,
into the abyss of nothingness
and waiting.

Be there
and I might
find the light.

I
the ghost of seasons past
dying fast,
the shadow of trees
in the moonlight breeze,
caress the leaves
and wither.

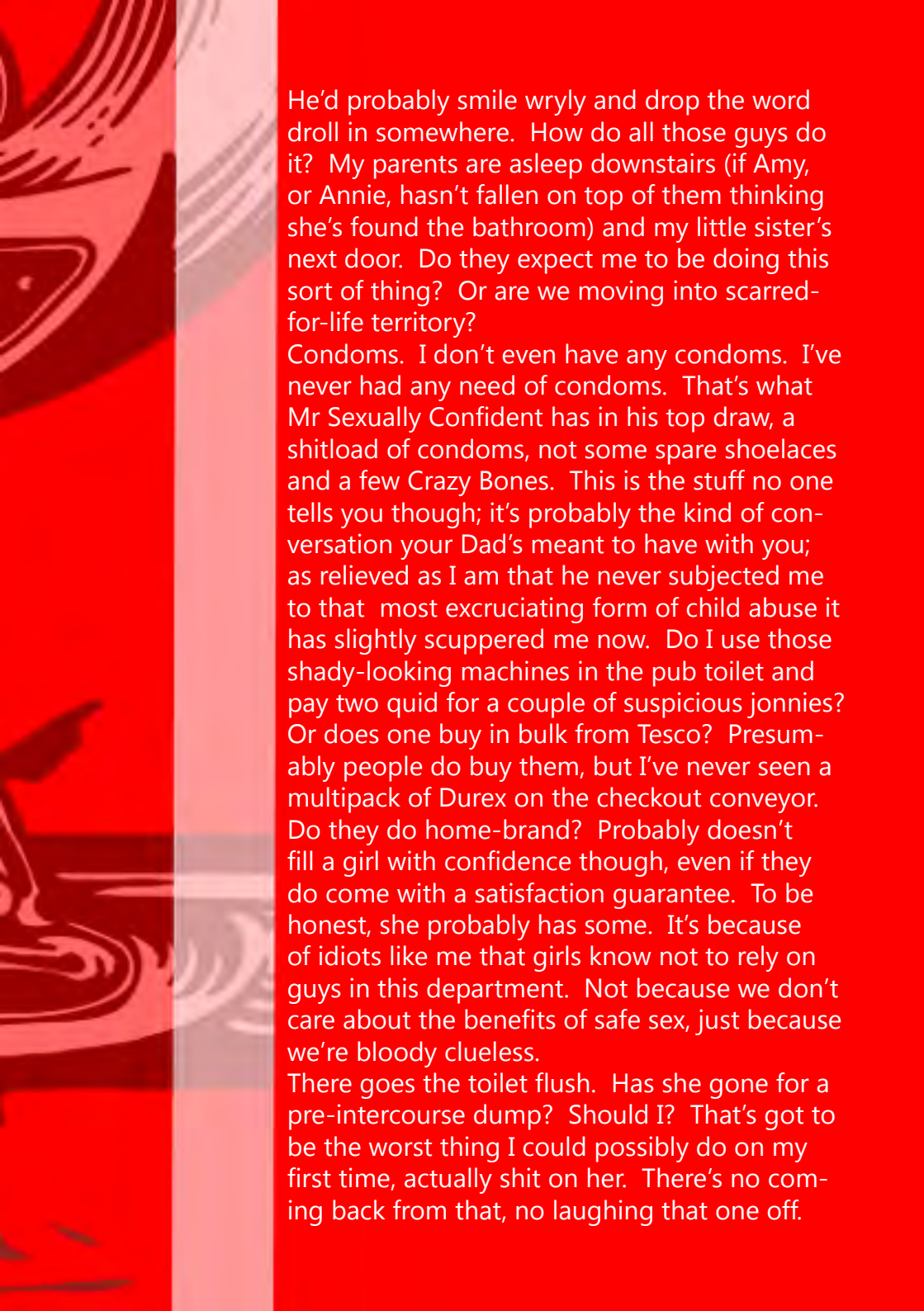
Slow heartbeats,
and waiting.



IN MY ROOM

It wasn't until I had a moment alone that I began to worry. Any minute now, Annie, or Amy, would come upstairs and join me in my room and I wasn't ready, nothing was ready. I don't know what conclusions she'd come to about me over the course of the evening, but the fact that she'd agreed to come home with me meant that she probably hadn't pictured Simpsons posters on my wall or a collection of Beanie Babies under the bed. The bed. That was going to be an issue itself. It was really quite irresponsible of my Mum to let me choose my own bed when I was twelve. A high-sleeper is a great idea when all you want to do is build dens and run up and down a little ladder, but my priorities have changed somewhat in the last eight years, and a little ladder doesn't exactly ease the transition from sofa to bed. What does a sexually accomplished twenty-year-old's bedroom look like? Probably quite bare, minimalistic, a few choice postcards from various art galleries on the walls perhaps, and some cult classic titles conveniently jutting out of the bookshelf.

Maybe a collection of old vinyl records piles carelessly in a corner. And a bed that's at ground level. Did people just give their rooms a complete overhaul when they turned eighteen? There's tat from every year of my childhood on display; stray Pokémon cards, football trophies, class photos, posters of bands I liked when I was fifteen. I don't know what Mr Sexually Accomplished Twenty-Year-Old would make of it.



He'd probably smile wryly and drop the word droll in somewhere. How do all those guys do it? My parents are asleep downstairs (if Amy, or Annie, hasn't fallen on top of them thinking she's found the bathroom) and my little sister's next door. Do they expect me to be doing this sort of thing? Or are we moving into scarred-for-life territory?

Condoms. I don't even have any condoms. I've never had any need of condoms. That's what Mr Sexually Confident has in his top draw, a shitload of condoms, not some spare shoelaces and a few Crazy Bones. This is the stuff no one tells you though; it's probably the kind of conversation your Dad's meant to have with you; as relieved as I am that he never subjected me to that most excruciating form of child abuse it has slightly scuppered me now. Do I use those shady-looking machines in the pub toilet and pay two quid for a couple of suspicious jonnies? Or does one buy in bulk from Tesco? Presumably people do buy them, but I've never seen a multipack of Durex on the checkout conveyor. Do they do home-brand? Probably doesn't fill a girl with confidence though, even if they do come with a satisfaction guarantee. To be honest, she probably has some. It's because of idiots like me that girls know not to rely on guys in this department. Not because we don't care about the benefits of safe sex, just because we're bloody clueless.

There goes the toilet flush. Has she gone for a pre-intercourse dump? Should I? That's got to be the worst thing I could possibly do on my first time, actually shit on her. There's no coming back from that, no laughing that one off.

Even if people eventually forgot, which (let's face it) isn't likely to happen, the memory of my first experience of making love would be forever tainted with the smell of my own faeces. Anyway, not exactly getting in the mood, she'll be up any minute now. How clothed am I expected to be? I don't want to seem presumptuous (heaven forbid either of us should acknowledge what we're here for) but equally I don't want to stick on my Pyjamas. In fact, I should probably hide those, Mr Sexually Confident sleeps in his boxers, or even better, just naked. Au naturel. Letting it all hang out. God he's a prick. I'll just stay clothed, that's a pretty safe bet. Might be quite fun to have her help undress me too, as long as she's careful with my shirt buttons. I'm all for surrendering to the throws of passion but I'm not made of shirts.

She's coming up the stairs now and I'm starting to sober up, not sure whether that's going to work in my favour or not.

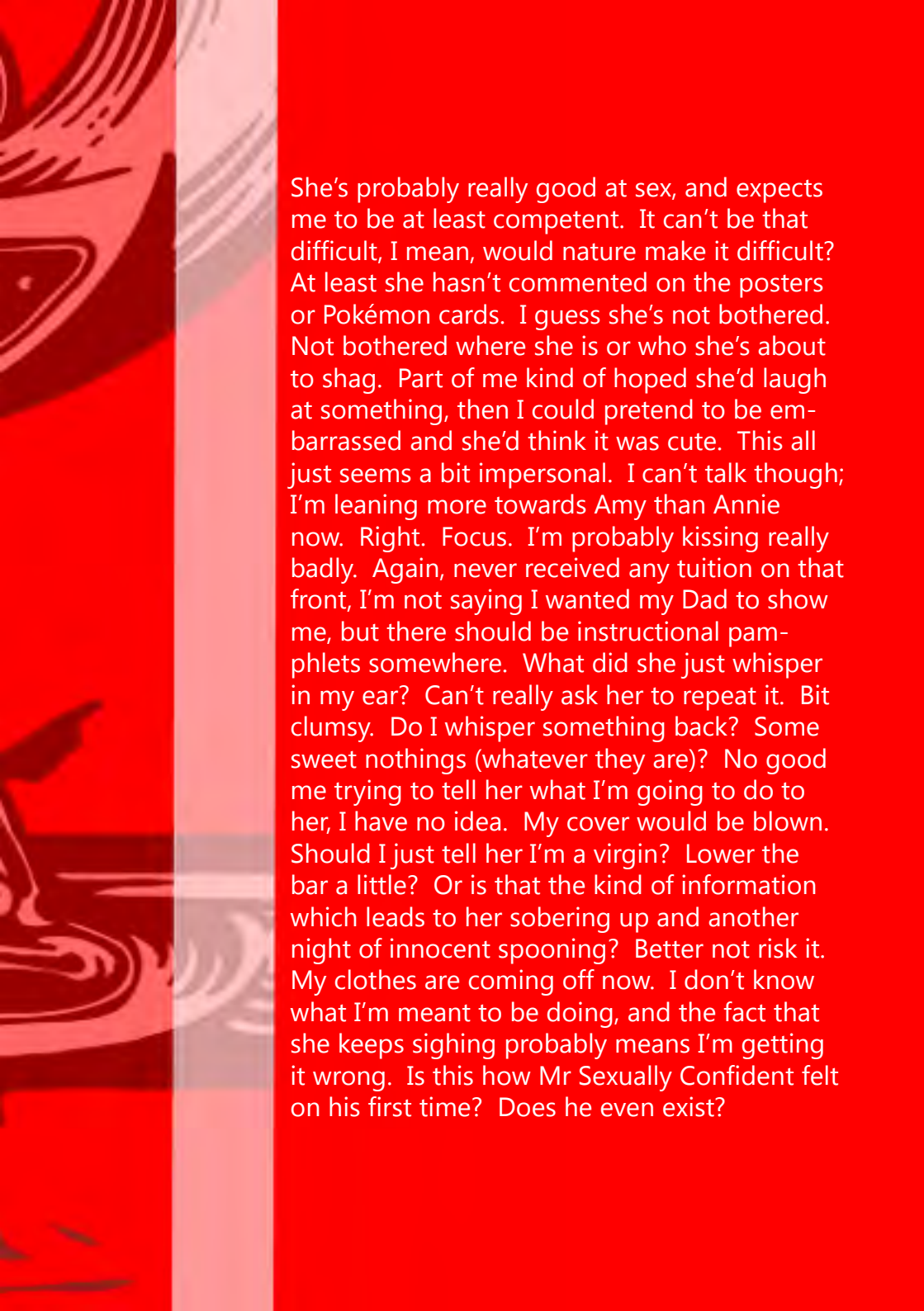
"Hey."

I've stood up to greet her and she's already unbuttoning my shirt. Carefully. This is good. I'm definitely ready to do this.

"How strong is that bed?"

Holy shit. She means business. I'm guessing by her grin that I'm meant to have prepared some sort of sexy reply, assuring her that my rickety high-sleeper has the structural integrity not to collapse under the strain of our violent intercourse. Or something. She probably got that from my childish giggle anyway. God, she is so gorgeous. She must still be drunk. Again, not sure if that's going to work for or against me.





She's probably really good at sex, and expects me to be at least competent. It can't be that difficult, I mean, would nature make it difficult? At least she hasn't commented on the posters or Pokémon cards. I guess she's not bothered. Not bothered where she is or who she's about to shag. Part of me kind of hoped she'd laugh at something, then I could pretend to be embarrassed and she'd think it was cute. This all just seems a bit impersonal. I can't talk though; I'm leaning more towards Amy than Annie now. Right. Focus. I'm probably kissing really badly. Again, never received any tuition on that front, I'm not saying I wanted my Dad to show me, but there should be instructional pamphlets somewhere. What did she just whisper in my ear? Can't really ask her to repeat it. Bit clumsy. Do I whisper something back? Some sweet nothings (whatever they are)? No good me trying to tell her what I'm going to do to her, I have no idea. My cover would be blown. Should I just tell her I'm a virgin? Lower the bar a little? Or is that the kind of information which leads to her sobering up and another night of innocent spooning? Better not risk it. My clothes are coming off now. I don't know what I'm meant to be doing, and the fact that she keeps sighing probably means I'm getting it wrong. Is this how Mr Sexually Confident felt on his first time? Does he even exist?

"Harry, hold on."

Great, she's actually putting a stop to this. I've managed to fuck this up. An incredible achievement really, given the circumstances. And yet I'm not completely devastated.

"Harry, the thing is..."

Your penis is too small? You look about twelve? I've found your pyjamas? You've shat yourself? Hit me.

"This is actually my first time. I'm sorry. I'm probably acting really weirdly. Do you still want to...I mean I do if you do...?"

I find my hand reaching up and stroking the hair out of her face, her beautiful face.

"Yes, Annie, I really do."

"It's Amy."

Fuck.

Daniel—

Bowman—



Argo

2012

Rated 15

Director:

Ben Affleck

Starring:

Ben Affleck, Bryan Cranston,
John Goodman, Alan Arkin

REVIEW:

Georgia Woodhouse



The concept of *Argo* is simple enough to follow, if a little unbelievable. The king of Iran, or Shah, who is appointed by the United States commits terrible atrocities and when the people rise up, he, while dying of cancer, is granted asylum in America. The Iranians riot, demanding that the Shah is returned and tried for his crimes against humanity, and during one particular protest they break into the American Embassy, holding the members captive. However, six members escape and seek refuge in the Canadian Ambassador's house. Enter CIA operative Tony Mendez (Affleck), an expert in exfiltration, determined to remove the Ambassadors from the country and deliver them safely home to America. This he intends to do by posing them and himself as a Canadian filmmaking crew, scouting for a location for the fake sci-fi movie, *Argo*.

On paper, it seems a little crazy. In reality, it's even crazier, as the story itself is reality. *Argo* is based on the declassified true story of Mendez and his fake movie.



Certainly aspects of the film are, no doubt, fictionalised and embellished (as one should expect from any movie 'based on true events,' because a film is not a documentary, and story is prioritised over solid fact) but that doesn't detract from the sheer sense of incredulity one feels when watching this film and knowing that it happened.

The mission took place during the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 and 1980 and was only declassified in 1997, with Mendez being named one of the CIA's top fifty officers in its first fifty years.

Argo opens with a brief history of Iran from 1959 to 1979, context necessary to understand the real politics of the film.

Argo perfectly blends the real suspense of a genuine operation of this scale in such a hostile situation and environment, with the desperately dark humour that is a product of such difficult times. The result is a movie that is thrilling and nerve-wracking, and yet is littered with (albeit dark) comic relief - particularly through Hollywood moguls John Chambers and Lester Siegel, played by John Goodman and Alan Arkin, respectively. The addition of a fine cast to this already satisfying combination only makes the film better as they each play out their roles with aplomb, indicating a real sense of emotional connection to their characters

The film has received major critical acclaim since its release, described by The Telegraph as 'breath-catching' and by Metro as 'the top thriller of 2012', on top of numerous five-star ratings from given all over, including from The Independent, The Times and The Daily Express. And this is yet another one. Frankly, Argo is a true pleasure to watch, with a cast that shine in their roles; it is entertaining in its tension and perfectly executed. Indeed, the only real criticism I can give at this time is rather a lame one, considering the fact that it is set in 1980: Ben Affleck, that beard was a bad idea.

Rating: * * * * *

A
♣

THE



EDGE

ABBY BLACKBURN

ASA J. MADDISON

PETER HUNTER

CHLOE PATRICIA BEALE

JULIA BOND

POPPY HAWS

MATT CRADDOCK

ALEX HOWARTH

KAYE KOSSICK

♣
A