


# The HFC: A Journal of Art & Literature



Issue 2

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Our featured writer in this issue is

Riham Adly also known as Rose among friends is a mother of two, dentist and an aspiring writer from Egypt , with several articles and short stories published in local magazines and websites. Here's a link to her most recent article about Ancient Egypt.  
<http://www.mcsimonwrites.com/amulets-scarabs-and-crystals/>

Her story "The Darker Side Of The Moon" won the MAKAN Award on 2013 and was published in an anthology by the same name.

<http://www.thealexanderian.com/the-darker-side-of-the-moon/> . She's passionate about poetry, metaphysics, crystals, chakra healing, classical music and baking but her deepest passion is reserved for the aesthetic side of history and everything antique or vintage.



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# Poetry

“This Poem [The Fall] is a tribute to the memory of my best friend Marwa Mahfouz who passed away in December after losing her battle with Cancer. May God rest her Soul.” – Riham Adly

## The Fall

-Riham Adly

I sit by myself and sigh while listening,  
To the jingle of a memory passing by,

There was once the sound of a chuckle,  
A melody hard to resist, kindness' silky touch, a caress?

A dewdrop,  
A tremulous breath, a soothing northern gust.

Roses are red and violets are blue,  
But that was never you.

Lavender in the mist, floating, adrift.  
a captivating hue,

Chasing bumblebees, a happy bite of an apple,  
Licking ice-cream cones.

But then came the vulture, that monster,  
a boomerang, aiming to snatch and flee.

My eyes were lulled to a halt,  
in the wake of a wait that took forever for me

Stalactite tears, thick and dripping,  
like little cold knives

The serpentine poison drains the body,  
But not the soul, not the mind.

I as cold as the arctic,  
Yearn for that flickering glow.

That once blooming heart,  
That smile that over-shadowed all.

If only love could cushion the fall.  
If only it could conquer all.

A listless gaze to the sky,  
seeing the unseen?

One cannot defy,  
What's written in the stars.

Irreplaceable,  
In my heart you shall forever reside.

Yes in my heart,

you will forever reside.

May the vulture, THAT UGLY MONSTER, plummet to its own fall,  
and never rise

May the makings of the spring come back,  
and heal us all

Amen

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## The Violin is my Twin

-Riham Adly

When I listen to the brooding melodies of the violin,  
I feel it yearning to reveal and unveil the chagrin within.

Sadness flows in its soulful tunes pulling me in like magnet,  
like a spell, like a woman blinded by a glowing gem.

I get pulled in to its enchanted world,  
like the sleeper's invisible melody in the dreamers abode.

And like a match's sudden spark, and demons in the dark,  
Its voice enthralls before it dims.

It dims.

It dims.

My heart flutters like a bird's flapping wings,  
When I hear the wailing sound of the wind in its strings.

The wind that wanders into the hollow barks of trees abandoned.  
The winds of fate, the wind so feared, the wind within.

And again when the shy violin sings, when its melody strengthen after it begins,  
I listen with my heart and see with my ears the chagrin within the violin

For it is my mirror  
It is my twin.

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### Plums, Gum and Guns

-Riham Adly

Amputated memories. An empty head.  
Who am I? Where do I tread?

Today is a holiday, they said.  
Today they bake and eat bread, and today we burry our dead.

Who's Dead. I said.  
Mysteries lie heavy like lead.

Can you tell me a story before I sleep?  
But please, not one of those that make me weep.

Can you tell me the story about the plums?  
The ones that tasted like gum, or was it the gum that tasted like plums?

Have you gone mad? Stricken dumb?

Who? I ask. The story's heroine?

No, my dear. I meant you.

You're the one.

You're the one who followed a whim.

Who thought she could swim, but failed to win.

But what about the plums and the gum?

You mean the guns.

What guns?

The guns that put an end to your story.

The guns that took your life and butchered your limbs.

The very life you had to pay for other's sins.

Ah, those kinda of guns.

Now I remember how it begun.

The wind picks up,

But my cheeks feel nothing, maybe I'm numb.

The veil falls.

Memories rush in.

Here I stand on top of an unmarked grave.

The one that harbors my body, that broken torso and its severed limbs.

Over there, the holidays begin.

Over there, they eat their bread over our graves.

Over there, they sing their songs.

Songs about plums, gum, and guns.

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## Metamorphosis

-Riham Adly

The wind blows and sweet laughter echoes,

The music of time was the sound of you.

The scent of musk, my inner sorrows.

The beat of a heart so chaotic, so blue.

The metamorphosis of love,

From magic to cruelty's game.

A deck of cards falling from above

With my tears pelting like the rain

A change of heart is what they say has happened,

like the switching patterns of nights and days,

like the melting ice, like a rocket.

A game of roulette, he plays.

Peculiar Fate, I ask you:

Why give me now what tomorrow you'll take?

Why rob the innocence inside me?



Why kill the good heart, after you made it break?

Come listen to Apollo's lyre,  
to the dire music that burns  
the strings of my heart like fire  
until I'm numb, until one learns.

Come witness my metamorphosis.  
The maiden is now a siren that demands  
your precious soul in exchange for a kiss.  
For love is an outlaw, and from my heart it is banned.

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## Bliss

-Riham Adly

Celestial diamonds in hush black velvet  
Bright shining ghosts are all I see.  
Crystal white shards once pulsing rainbows,  
A mirror swallowing all that's me.  
A fatigued heart in an ivory chest,  
beats in failing rhythms, suffering.  
There is music in silence,  
and yes, the mute is she who best sings.  
The indelible ocean of tiresome wavers.  
Desperate is the river that waters my viens.  
Will a chalice blood-rimmed resurrect my desert?  
or will it all be in vain.  
The edges of darkness are smooth and pillow-soft.

Sweet blindness fulfills and sustains.

He said, she said, they said.

But shrouded in dark bliss is where I'll remain.

\*Audio of Riham Adly reading her poems can be found on our website.

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Matthew Imerhion was born and brought up in Nigeria in 1978. His late father was a playwright and an actor while his mother was a teacher. He was brought up on classic movies, jazz, rock and reggae.

He has a Bachelor's degree in Economics & Statistics but has always loved creative art. He has recorded a couple of songs, worked as a copywriter in a few advertising agencies but is now a freelance writer. He loves writing motivational and inspiring pieces whether they are poems, articles, short stories or songs.



## The Wind & the Trees.

-Matthew Imerhion

The wind and the trees sang a symphony for me.

A symphony for me. A symphony for me.

The wind and the trees sang a symphony for me and it all made sense to me.

The wind and the leaves danced in harmony for me.

In harmony for me. Yes, in harmony for me.

There was a swooshing and a swaying all in harmony for me and it was all clear to see.

That the swooshing and the howling: life's twisting turns and storming could be music in my ears if I'm a tree.

Steady shush-ing and swaying; planted firm in Love's garden makes it all work for good and for me.

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## ALL SAINTS DAY

-Darren Smith

Her curiosity piqued seeing a world of golden red  
Splashing through a stream of leaves summers end has shed  
Hair is grey and his life as strong as late autumn sun  
Her laughter echoing as she begins to run

Carrying home her precious treasure a smile upon her face  
Arranging her colourful bouquet inside a grey clay vase  
Sculpting gathered acorns small animals on display  
She creates her art from life's seasonal decay

Reaching their favourite memories bygone falls to share  
The suffering of adult life to him only she will bare  
Revealing to each other all the secrets they can think of  
Her escape complete to the only man she will ever love

Standing bedside outside wind and bonfires rage  
Emptying trees a manifestation of winter at his age  
Always sleeping now at his shallow breath she feels scared  
Moments of lucidity a time for love to be declared

Carried along the woodland path he no longer hears her cry  
Finding his resting place under a slate November sky  
A breeze sprays the final burst of colour from a cherry tree  
She will take over his pain now that he is free

An annual return to walk along their favourite place  
Wrapped up from the cold Autumnal footsteps to retrace  
Thinking as a young girl and of words he once would say  
Weeping at his graveside alone on all saints day

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# Photography

“Starting a long time ago with a turquoise Polaroid camera, I have always chased light and shadow.

A camera in hand and traveling the U.S., I like to find the untraditional beauty of where i currently call home.” – Holly Burk

Holly Burk is this issues featured photographer and her dragonfly photo graces the cover. We are humbled to have her.







# Fiction

## Surrender

-Riham Adly

The snow, stung and burned. The world was white-washed and foggy. My lungs clawed for air, but every breath hacked at my ribs. I moved on, dragging my swollen feet with what little strength I had left in me. I could not see well, but at times the hovering darkness pushed and pulled against the menacing white of the world. All I wanted was to go to sleep and surrender, but her voice called out and I had to follow it.

"Come." She just said, her voice distant, like something from a dream, or was it a dream?

I couldn't see her eyes, those very eyes I used to stare at dumbly whenever we were together. I couldn't even see that smile that always made her look more beautiful. I could only hear her voice.

"You're one step closer. Come." How I yearned to touch her again, hold her and smell her, and feel the warmth of her against my chest.

I labored and forced my body to move across the treacherous mountain trek. The steep hill threatened, and the air got thinner and thinner. I struggled to breathe and every limb, every organ, every cell screamed STOP! LET Go! The voice in my head begged and entreated, but I ignored it. I can only follow her.

"One more step darling, just one more."

I tripped and fell over, cracking a rib or two. I couldn't move any more. I couldn't feel the pain. I wanted to, but the vicious numbness crawled and slithered round me, on me, in me, rendering each limb obsolete. My will was held hostage. I was trapped, even the tears I wanted to shed refused to form.

I could see her now, but I could hear the clamor of human voices.

"Hurry up Paul! I think this one's alive."

"Well, carrying him is not an option."

"Then quick, the oxygen canister! What are you waiting for!"

I felt the weight of the oxygen mask on my skin, but I didn't want to breath. I didn't want to be saved.

"Baby fight, please." Pleading, she held out a hand, her fingers almost touching my frostbitten face. Why did she want me to stay? Wasn't it time I crossed over to her? I lost her when nature spewed that avalanche that separated us, sending her down the steep hill . I could not save her then but I could be with her now.

" Mark, I'm afraid it's too late."

Her smile disappeared. She withdrew her arm, a look of defeat marring her beautiful face. She stepped back, and the tears I could not shed rolled down her cheeks.

Mr. Green boots came from behind to stand next to her, and next to him stood Sergei and Francys Arsentier. George Mallory poked his head out. Andrew Irvine pushed him before David Sharp came to stand between them. Jon Krakauer was next in line followed by others. The dead mountaineers were lining up to meet me, perhaps welcoming me into their world, but they all gave way to the reaper in black. My savior.

By the power given to him, the reaper bestowed the gift of death on me. I was freed from my temporary confinement in that frostbitten and broken body. Let it be another landmark for those courageous spirits who dared to climb.

I looked up to her, she was whole and undamaged, and me a healed man now.

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## I Wish

-Riham Adly

Everything changed the moment Evette watched the awaited shooting star flash through the sky, and said the magical words.

"I wish."

The commencement of a catastrophe overruled as the still Earth beneath her quivered and contorted violently. A throbbing angry echo pierced the air like a fervent slashing thunder. A hail of coldness dripped imperiously, standing witness to the desolate sky as it collapsed like a twirling thread on a spindle. She watched the roaring upheaval of matter as it swallowed her into a moment of intended cataclysm. And that's when all the noise and colors of civilization sank into an all obliterating blackness.

Evette felt herself float in a hollow bubble of nothingness. Drenched in silence, she adjusted her glasses as her eyes watched the unrolling ribbons of darkness. She felt a surprising, interior shock that was almost like a new recognition.

"So that's what it's like for the world to end. Does it have to be so dark? What's wrong with the world ending in light? I wish I could see the light."

Thin fingers of white light began to pursue the insolent darkness, spreading feverishly until it was all too bright.

"Wow, that's better. I just wish I had a cup of water. I'm so thirsty."

A curtain of disbelief fell over her as she watched with, wide frozen eyes, a cup of cool water materialize in the palm of her hand. It was difficult to disinter the makings of this new formed reality, or was it her imagination playing tricks on her? She quenched her thirst with the magnificent, cool liquid, and then looked about at the dazzling whiteness surrounding her. A thought formulated in her head, and she decided to put it to test.

"I wish I could have a ... hamburger. I want it big and juicy with pickles and horseradish mustard." Evette watched again in bewilderment as the big sandwich she requested sprang to existence. She took a nibble, just to make sure it had pickles and horseradish mustard.

"It's just delicious and perfect." A devious smile crossed her thin lips. The possibilities were infinite. She could create her own, new world, and bring to existence everything she craved, everything she wanted, and everything she needed.

"I could be a sorceress, no a queen, or maybe a goddess, wishing everything I want !" Excitement spiraled in high tides through her chubby physique, as she felt expectation and anxiety running neck and neck. "I'm hungry, now let's see .... I wish I could live in a land of food, and not just any food, I want everything I'm banned from because of my illness!"

The vague "all-over whiteness" transformed slowly in front of her eyes into a marvelous, mouth watering plateau of unusual proportions.

Evette found herself standing in the middle of a golden beach made of crispy, honey tinged, and "sugar sprinkled cereal." Dried fruits of all sorts were scattered along her path. She walked a little bit ahead to find a frothy sea of milk that glistened invitingly. A boat of french toast stood waiting for her. She decided to hop in and sail through this appetizing spectacle. Whiffs of vanilla wind accelerated the boat's sail, allowing her to inspect the wonderful sight coming into view. Towering pancake mountains topped with dripping honey and maple syrup almost touched white meringue clouds.

She looked heavenward and watched a lofty honey bun light the sky. The glorious sail ended as the boat found shore. Evette stepped out, and stood still for a moment taking in full view what lay ahead. Luring chocolate chip cookies loomed sideways along her yet untrodden trail. Scrumptious pastries stood tall like trees, and little glazed cupcakes coupled with cinnamon rolls littered her way. Evette sat on a large banana bread and started to ponder in thought, and just when she decided what to eat for breakfast, she noticed the little chocolate shrub that harbored luscious strawberries. A pond of whipped cream stood not very far from where she sat.

After having breakfast Evette dusted the little crumbs off her clothes, and realized in surprise that she was still hungry. "I'd love some french fries and pasta, something spicy too."

A strange looking flower appeared out of nowhere. Evette inspected it to find out it was made of crispy "petal like" fries with a mound of ketchup in its center. A large puddle of spaghetti Bolognese materialized as well and close by there was another puddle, only this time filled with curry chicken and steaming rice.

Evette ate until she could eat no more; she felt tired and decided to call it a day and go to sleep. So that was day one in this spectacular new world. She called it FEAST DAY.

Day two started with an itch in her nostrils. She opened her sleepy eyes and yawned slightly. The lovely delicious world of food was waiting for her, but today she didn't feel like eating much. She closed her eyes and decided to make a new wish.

"I wish I could wake up in a beautiful garden with fragrant flowers everywhere." She opened her eyes to a canvas of a complex painting of aromas. A smile was brought to her face as whiffs of blooming daphne seeped into her nose. Fleeting perfumes danced and infused the air, enticing her dormant sense of smell. The aroma of ripe apples and pumpkins reminded her of the holidays. There was also the potent and musky smell of roses and hybrid oleanders together with the unusual spicy floral scent of pink carnations and trumpet lilies. Evette also traced the sugary smell of pomegranates and vanilla beans.

"Beautiful! Well, a cup of candy smelling caramel cappuccino will do for this morning." Immediately a steamy, frothy cappuccino with sugary whiffs materialized in front of her. And so the day passed with her taking in all the sweet and exotic smells that surrounded her. She called this SCENT DAY.

The next four days unfurled with all her desires and wishes. Day three was dedicated for touching the most expensive -in Earth standards- fabrics of silk, velvet, taffeta, and organza and weaving them through simply wishing into extravagant furniture and intricate dresses. She also enjoyed wearing gold and splendid gems like, emerald and ruby. So she called it LAVISH DAY.

MELODY Day came with her dancing and singing with her favorite songs and music.



VANITY DAY was for beautifying herself. She transformed her overweight shapeless body, to one fit for a model with a tiny waist. Her droopy eyes became wide and a bit slanted to convey an exotic sort of charm. Her frizzy red hair became long cascading curls of flaming gold. She summoned a mirror and looked approvingly at her new makeover.

On the sixth day Evette woke up feeling perfect. She was a royal, elegant queen, with the world's riches and treasures at her feet. "I think it's time for a charming prince."

A magnificent swarthy young man came in view. His arms bulged with muscles radiating his strength. His dark eyes promised love and his tall athletic figure promised sexual fulfillment. This was SEX DAY.

So six days had passed in this intriguing new world, where she wished everything she wanted into creation. Yet the troublesome edge that haunted her in her past life snuck through a back door in her mind. She had everything a woman needs; she had food, scents, lavish goods, melody, music and a strong man.

"Why is it that I'm not happy?" She asked herself desperately. Was it was simply human nature, with its insatiable need for imperfection. Perhaps this very freedom kept her in prison, bounding her and gagging her with its ease and perfection. Or perhaps, this world represented the promise of unique happiness which she was not well enough equipped to grasp.

"I want to feel truly beautiful and I want to be loved for real. I don't want things to happen just because I willed them to happen, but because they were meant to happen. I want to deserve everything, and I want to be loved for who I am, even if I were fat and ugly." Soft indecision hovered over her as she pondered furthermore in thought.

"I could create more people. Nice people who could admire my beauty and try to get closer to me. I could be the center of attention, and recreate my entire school. I could bring all those mean jerks that made fun of me, and listen to their praise, instead of their insults. Or perhaps I could put some more effort to improve my life. Exercise more, take my medication on time, and stop feeling sorry for myself ! "

She finally made her decision.

"I want to go back to my old life. Anything I create here isn't real."

Another cataclysmal moment of weakness and strength transferred her from the world of perfection into the deep dismal abyss of darkness. Again Evette found herself floating in the all reigning dark, wondering if wishing her way into the light would work this time. She stayed in the dark for what seemed like forever until she finally lost hope.

"Evette honey, stay with me. Please you have to wake up from this." The familiar voice seared Evette into consciousness. Her eyes fluttered slightly as the slippery surface of reality came in full view.

"What happened, where am I?"

"You went into a diabetic coma. Thank God I came in and discovered you. You were out cold for seven minutes!"

Those seven minutes were the most perfect and most beautiful elapsed time in Evette's life, yet she chose to come back to her weary, depressing life. How perfect it makes us to be imperfect, and how satisfied we are when yearning and longing for the unattainable.

"Evette honey, it's going to be all right."

"I know mother, I know."

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"I'm Jo and I'm a writer and a gamer. I write young adult fantasy stories (because I refuse to grow up and live in the real world), microfiction and other general nonsense. I've been writing for as long as I can remember and hope to continue to write for a long time. I wrote my first book when I was thirteen. It was about vampires. Lots of blood, but not much story. Now, I'm working on all kinds of fantastical characters, creatures and creations."

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## Vesper

-Jo Oram

No one went outside at night. No one but Vesper. Spectres roamed the streets after sunset, deadly to all who came into contact with them. Vesper liked the night and the ghosts had ruined it for him. Since they had risen from the river, there was nothing to do; no bars opened and people dared not open their doors past dusk.

Vesper stalked the apparitions from the rooftops, following their purposeless tracks around the city. Their outlines were humanoid, but they seemed incapable of communication. Twice, they had followed him up staircases, but ladders were beyond them and when he had leapt from the roof of one building to the next, they had fallen, leaving a shimmering, fibrous mass on the pavement.

By sunrise, most returned to the river, melting into its depths. Some oozed into the storm drains. Vesper set traps, blocking their exits from alleyways and watching them burst into tendrils of smoke when the sunlight sliced through them. It had given him the idea for the Sunblade, a device more impressive by name than by appearance, simply a metal bar with two strips of ultra-violet light running down its length. However, its efficiency as a deterrent to the spectres couldn't be disputed; one touch from the Sunblade and they were smoke.

He jumped onto the moss-covered roof of a warehouse which dominated the docks, abandoned since the spectres arose, but a good place to hunt them. A group of the creatures caught his attention, drifting in and out of the building through a crack in the door, their forms merging and dividing. The roof below Vesper's feet gave an unearthly creak, sending them into a frenzy, their smoky outlines obscuring the walls as they searched for a way to reach him. He stepped away from the edge, the creak turning into a crack. A vibration beneath his feet made him jump but too late as the panel he was standing on shattered, sending him crashing into the trusses below.

The Sunblade fell from his hand as a hard beam struck him in the stomach. His fingers gripped the edge for support as he watched the blade tumble in a kaleidoscope of flashing lights. He looked down as smoke began to rise, the spidery silk forming across the floor where the blade had struck another group of spectres. That was when he heard the scream.

The voice was muffled and Vesper had to heave himself onto the beam to see its source. Down below, on the warehouse floor, there was a young woman, her hands fixed behind her back and a red scarf tied around her face, stifling her panicked cries. The Sunblade lay at her bare feet, the only thing keeping the spectres from touching her.

“Hold on. I’m coming!”

The young woman flailed, reaching for the Sunblade with her feet as Vesper stepped between the trusses, searching for some way to climb down. The drop was too far to survive uninjured and the roof too high to reach. His only sensible option was a tall stack of wooden crates at the far side of the open space. Each bent seemed further away than the last, the drop below worsening in his mind.

The woman’s screams grew louder as he moved and he looked behind to see that she was safe. Moonlight penetrated the warehouse through the broken skylight, highlighting the stream of spectres falling through the hole. Vesper swore to himself as he dropped onto the crates, his weight breaking the lid of the first and splintering wood in another further down the pile. Straw fluttered in the air around him as the lid caved.

Around the warehouse, the spectres were moving, converging on the crates. Vesper straightened and searched for a clear path. He leapt to another, shorter stack, making his way towards the woman. As he moved, the spectres followed, chasing the sounds he made. The woman fell quiet as he came closer, shaking her head.

She was pale, her fine hair almost white and her limbs too skinny. The soles of her feet were black with dirt. Her wide, grey eyes stared at Vesper as if he were a ghost himself. He reached down to untie the scarf, her hair burning his skin like acid as it brushed the back of his hand.

“Get away from me!” she shrieked as the scarf fell loose. “Let me go!”

Vesper took a step back, climbing higher onto the crates. “I’m trying to help,” he replied.

“Liar!” She reached again for the Sunblade, only this time Vesper saw she was not trying to grasp it; she was trying to push it away. Silver tears streaked her face.

“I won’t hurt you. I promise.”

Vesper moved towards her again, reaching for the ropes binding her hands. He ignored the sting of her hair, the vivid white marks appearing across his skin and the woman’s protests, focusing on loosening the knot. She pulled away from him as soon as she was able, but did not run.

“Who are you?” she demanded. “Why are you doing this?”

“My name is Vesper,” he replied. “The spectres – they would have killed you.”

“Then why haven’t you?” She looked around. “I’m trapped and you’re obviously stronger than the others. So kill me.”

Vesper frowned. “I’m trying to help you.”

“Why?”

Vesper shook his head. “Whatever.” He looked up at the broken skylight. “It’s nearly light anyway. They’ll be gone soon.”

The woman sank to the floor, squinting as she looked up at the sky. More tears streamed down her cheeks. “Please don’t do this.”

“What?”

“Don’t torture me. Please. Your weapon is just there. Make it quick.”

Vesper glanced at the Sunblade and back at the sky, his mouth agape. “You’re one of them?”

“Human?” She nodded.

“No.” Vesper shook his head. “I’m human. You’re a spectre.”

The girl laughed. “If you are human, prove it.” She held out her hand. “Touch me.”

Vesper reached out for her, his fingers burning as they made contact with hers. Her voice split his ears, his own throat raw as he too screamed. Memories flashed through his mind: stalking the spectres night after night, his mother and sister laughing, an old woman he didn’t know, pale and thin in a hospital bed, the room dark around her and an unfamiliar young boy, his skin turning to ash in the sun.

Concrete filled his vision as he pulled away, his hand still consumed by the sensation of fire. The woman lay beside him, her chest heaving and her arm outstretched, thick black veins showing through her pallid skin. As he pushed himself up, he saw his own skin was the same, only the veins were white.

“Come on.”

He began to push the boxes, building a fortress, trapping the woman inside and shutting out the light. The sky was already turning blue outside and the other spectres were disappearing. Vesper glanced at the woman curled up inside, her skin luminous in the gloom. For the first time, the shadows made him feel nauseous. Covering the entrance with another box, he turned away, scooping up the Sunblade as he crossed to the warehouse door.

Vesper squinted as he stepped into the morning sun. It had been a long time since he had ventured outside in the day. Around him, people were beginning to fill the streets. He could just about make out their limbs through the black smoke that surrounded them.



Tom Smith has written sketches/gags for several shows including 4amcabs, Friday Football Special, Newsrevue, The Treason Show and BBC Radio 4 Extra Newsjack. Many of his short stories/articles have appeared in several publications including, amongst others, Underground Magazine, Amock Magazine, Cambridge Nutter, Novel Magazine. He won the November 99fiction.com short story competition and has been long listed and short listed for 5 Stop Story Summer Competition and Global Short Story Competition, respectively. His most recent success came when he was chosen as one of twenty writers to participate in a sixteen month mentorship to develop a novel with Writers Bloc.

## War on Fat

-Tom Smith

"Looka 'ow skinnee I am." I spent 12 hours on a plane for this? The journalist wondered why his editor kept sending him on these dangerous stories. Was it professional jealousy? Was it a power trip? Or was it because he caught him sleeping with his wife?

Could be any of those things.

The King stood proudly inside his pair of slacks that lived up to their name, holding the waistband out as far as his arm allowed. The king's advisors, guards and hangers-on contorted their faces to show how impressed they were with the king's weight loss, the journalist followed suit, scared of the king's reaction if he offered the disinterested shrug he wanted to.

"Plentee of exicise and no chippy chips," The king explained his secrets to weight loss, slapping his flat stomach.

Only one question circled the journalist's mind. "Why are you are still wearing those pants?"

\*

A wall of men, women and children ran in unison, kicking up the dry dirt, sweat that once dribbled now oozed from their foreheads.

Two trucks followed the runners, serving as a constant reminder of what would happen if they stopped running.

"I can't - I just can't." Sandra, a chubby Aid worker slowed down to a jog. John, her husband, grabbed her hand, dragging her as he ran. But it was no use; she was exhausted, she wasn't choosing to stop, her body demanded it.

\*

"I can't believe how stupid I was!" the journalist began. "It's so obvious. You wear those giant pants because you're proud of how much weight you've lost, right?"

“Correct.” the king confirmed he was right.

“Great. So now we’re on the same page can you ask your guard to take his foot off my forehead?” The king nodded his head once, signalling for his guests release. The journalist jumped to his feet, eyeballing the guard who had thrown him to the floor and used him as a footstool so easily.

“Lee’s begin the intermview,” the King demanded, feeling his boundaries had been established.

Having previewed the consequences of upsetting the king, the journalist ran through his list of questions in his mind, editing because his life depended on it. “You were once -” Don’t say fat. Don’t say fat. “-fat.” Shit. “And you did so well losing all that weight, so so well.” He over-corrected.

“An’?” the king asked, in a tone that told the journalist to make his point quickly.

The journalist indulged himself, imagining that he had no point to make. And nothing, well done you. Best of luck in your future endeavours. I’ll be going now.

If only it was that simple, but there was one question he had to ask. “Well it’s just...” he took in a deep breath, hoping it wouldn’t be his last. “Erm is that why..well could that contribute to...” He couldn’t phrase it any other way. “Is that why it’s illegal to be fat now?”

\*

“Sandra please, you can’t stop.” John begged his wife to keep running

“I have to.” She pushed John, making sure he kept running, before she stopped, her arms spread wide, accepting her fate.

Phhtt.

Such an un-intrusive sound, the sound of a bullet leaving a silenced gun.

\*

“It’s no illegal tobe fa’ it’s jus’ a exericise regeem.”

“You force entire towns to run twelve hours a day, and if they stop you have them shot.” The journalist remembered the foot on his head. “Your Majesty”

“I don’ force entear towns to run, ownly the fat ones, the skinnee ones do yoga to tone up. Why is tha’ a pro’lem?”

“It’s just, Your Majesty, in my country, Your Majesty, that rule would seem tyrannical, Your Majesty.”

"I no see what dinisoars 'ave to do wit' it, and anyway I'm helping 'em the fatties. Those disgutin' fatties, they make me sick jiggling, always jiggling."

The journalist had enough for a story; he asked the burning question and got some quotes. The finish line was in sight. "Thank you for your time, Your Majesty." The journalist turned to leave, "Oh no, please not now." He felt a strain begin in his back and spread around his stomach.

Phhtt.

Such an un-intrusive sound, the sound of a journalists girdle breaking.

The journalist's beer belly, triumphant against the restrictive girdle, made an appearance and stole the show.

"A secret jiggle," the king started. "The worst of them al'. Guards fetch 'im some running shoes."

## Art

Finally we bring you a mixed media work by an aspiring young artist, Mikayla Burke. She is 13 years old and already plans to pursue a career as a forensic anthropologist. She loves science and math and is self-taught in several art forms. She sent this entry late but we all loved it so much we had to include it. Thanks Mikayla, keep up the great work.



From the whole HFC team thank you for your support. We are only going to get better as we figure this whole thing out. Issue 3 will be published on January 1, 2016. To submit your own art, photography, poetry, short fiction or creative nonfiction email us.

[hfcpublishing@gmail.com](mailto:hfcpublishing@gmail.com)

Or go to our website.

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Thank you for your support and all of your kind words about issue 1. If you have any questions or suggestions about how we can make our journal, better please let up know by emailing the address above.