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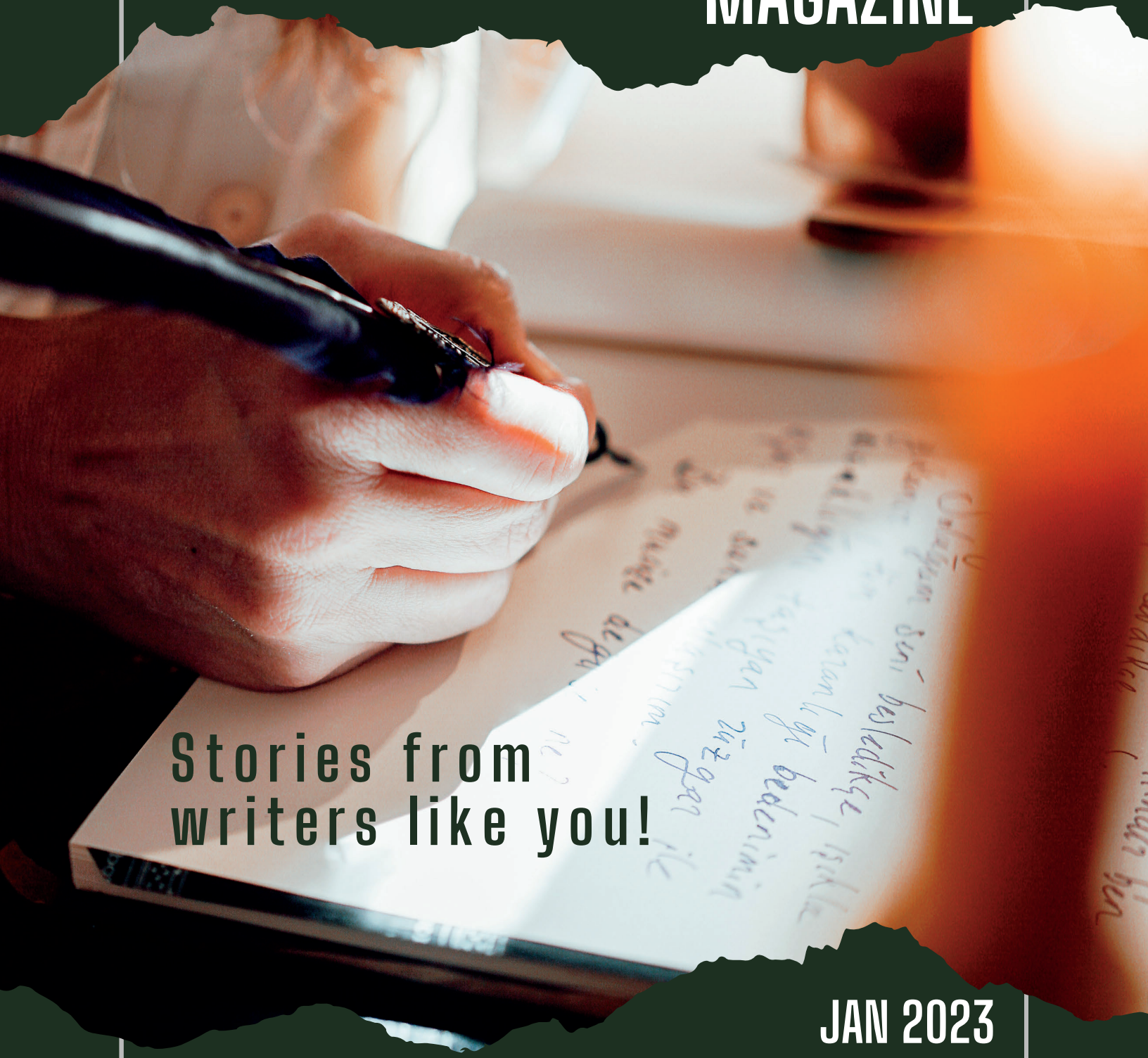
NANOWRIMO SHORT STORY MAGAZINE



Stories from writers like you!

JAN 2023

BATTERED *by* BATTERIES

by Nell

So, on Sunday my furnace ran out of heating oil. It needed some emergency diesel fuel and a ‘bleed to the line?’ I’m told. I have the Young Son come up from Toronto to do the work. Thirty-five litres of diesel go into the tank. I Google the instructions for bleeding the line, the Youngest does the ‘bleeding’ successfully and set the thermoset to 70 deg F/21deg C. The furnace roars to life. The Youngest leaves after a supper of lasagna and garlic bread. I wish he’d stayed. It’s still chilly in here, so I go check the thermostat —–57F/13.9C.

The low battery warning is flashing. What! Frig! I mutter under my breath. I have lots of AA batteries, no problem, so I change the batteries.

New batteries installed, I struggle with setting the thermostat, go to bed and wake up frozen. The temperature in bedroom 45F/7.2C…

What! In the Hell of Frozen Hockey Sticks!

Lesson: Don't overthink the instructions, and don't keep pressing reset! On Monday it's -18C as I get into my prewarmed, toasty car to run some errands. I
go to the library and then to the bank, parking behind the Shoppers Drug Mart. When I come the car won't start, "argh, argh, then click, click" is the sound made as I turn the key. The low battery light is on. Ah shucks! (*#&%)
I call CAA; The wait is 3 hours, maybe sooner. Their text messages flash on my phone, every 10 minutes, whose battery now reads less than 25%: 30 minutes, will be there in 10 minutes.
The person who comes is a— lady? It's difficult to determine under the toque and bulky parka, eh? After jumping the battery, he/she says in a gruff voice, "you need a new battery." Oh, great. Teeth chattering from frozen lips I manage "Yes, sir…reee! Thank you."
I get home, and it's still freezing inside, don another sweater, make a cup of warming tea, wrap myself in a blanket and decide to watch some tv. You guessed it. The remote changer flashes low battery. I rummage through all the drawers to try and find some AAA batteries, and find 3, whereas I need 4 of the suckers. I refuse to be beaten. I replace 3 and use 1 old. No messages berate me for using an old battery.

Tuesday morning after another cold night; the fuel is delivered.
("We only deliver to your area on Tuesdays")
Eye roll. I set the thermostat to 75F/23.9C. I watch the thermostat climb. Blessed heat.

This afternoon, I'll restock my battery supply. Bring it on!

MEALS *on the* RUN

by Liana

Laying by the pool side she sunbathes with one eye open waiting for lunch to arrive. The winds
are silent other then the whispering of tires at a distance. Only need one fast wind or loud honk to get her meal to arrive sooner.
The aroma of Italian pasta sauce drifts from her neighbour's kitchen window. The moment they moved in last year, Gloria liked them and each day she grows even fonder of Mamma Lucia.

Gloria often sits by the pool or by Mamma Lucia's kitchen window. I know I often smell spices like basil, mixed grasses, herbs and meats. I know my aromas being raised by Mamma Lucia. I swear sometimes I even smell the salad. All delights in the air are pleasant. Gloria is the one enticing to me though. I sit by Mamma Lucia's kitchen door observing Gloria's peaceful breathing at rest.
The sound of soft purr-fection.

Mamma Lucia wonders through the yard picking through the tall grasses, herbs and fresh tomatoes from the garden. She appears quite occupied today. Every so often her son Claudio and his family visit. Perhaps they will today. Hopefully the boys don't pester Gloria this time. "Nonna, Nonna!" Madonna mia, the boys arrive. Gloria perks up ready to go into her own home just as her meal
runs past fast. She jumps up and chases after her lunch, the Chipmunks. She catches at least one a day. "Hey papa look! That fat cat has a tail swinging from her mouth." The boy points as he yells to his father. That kid misses nothing and neither do I.
Oh that is such a turn on for me. I sit swishing my own tail side to side drooling over hopefully some left overs. Gloria usually leaves me some tail.
"MEOW..!" Gloria screeches. Damn Gino the young brat tugs at her tail. Gloria takes off running into her house, up the stair case that leads to the top bedroom in the attic. She hides in the back corner behind the table with the tall crystal lamp on it. I like shiny things. Following her perks me up. I join Gloria and she lets me cuddle up a bit closer than yesterday.
Perhaps that kid, Gino, is not so bad.

LOVE *by the* FULL MOON

by April

He was hiding in the forest once more as his stomach ached.

The full moon was always a time of celebration as the other villagers sang and gave offerings to the Moon Goddess. But here he was in the shadows of a giant oak; praying no one would come and find him.

“Faolan are you hiding? Come out my love and dance with me. Your new bride wants a kiss.

Don’t be afraid. I am shy too, but now we can finally be happy and free. Thank goodness my father finally said we could elope. Please come out.” The fair maiden’s sweet voice was so tempting he had to cling to the tree and pray for the strength not to gather her in his arms. He also prayed he wouldn’t devour her in his passionate hunger. There he stayed with his eyes tight holding the tree from his obscure spot beside the deep ravine.

But the moon was watching and the silver dust was upon him now. It was too late.

“You have to leave me right now Diana. Please go. You have to let me be...It’s starting. Run my Darling...RUN.” Faolan’s voice turned into a deadly scream.

He could hear his beloved running through the thicket; even stumbling in fear, away from his anguish. But it wasn't far enough.
His agony bellowed into the night and transformed into a long deep howl. He could hear the villager's screams in hearing the wolf of their nightmares coming for them. They had been an uncompassionate folk and they prepared for the fight that would end them all.
The smell of the abandoned roasted-pig in the tavern hung thick in the forest air, making his saliva drip from his fangs. He couldn't wait to get revenge on the villagers. When they hunted the beast; he would hunt them. He was going to enjoy eating brains tonight.
Suddenly he heard her heart beating near him. She hadn't been running from him, she was coming closer. He didn't know if he could resist such a dessert as Diana. She was a warrior but also the prettiest maiden, in the village.
He had bribed her dad with three goats to even get her hand in marriage. And yet now he was faced with eating his love; from pure necessity and from pure hatred. Diana smelt like all the other villagers who had come with pitchforks and axes; severing him multiple times.

"Faolan, I know it's you my love. I have always known. If you use your keen senses; you can smell the rope off my blade that I cut the traps you were cast in. I have been protecting you all these years. Instead of being alone my love; let me join you and hunt those wicked villagers together." The maiden said while reaching for his gnarly paw. He smiled and bit her gentle hand. "Okay my Darling. Together we shall rule the night forever."

NOT ALONE by Krystal

It isn't right for anyone to be alone during the holidays.

But old, grumpy Mr. Watson was. Again.

A widower with no children of his own, he didn't put up lights or a tree. He spent the holidays alone in his home, grumbling to himself about this and that, watching shows about history and the good ol' days.

He ate frozen dinners and kept his curtains closed so as not to be exposed to the joy of others.

This night was no different. With only days until Christmas, Mr. Watson was eating his microwaved meal in his worn, brown recliner when he heard a scratching at his back door. He tried to ignore it for a time but the noise persisted.

"Whoever that is will be sorry." He grumped as he eased his fragile body up out of the comfort of his chair and made his way to his back door. He opened it up, ready for a fight, but no one was there.

"Darn kids." He turned around to go back to his tv show when he heard a small sound. He glanced to his left and looking up at him with bright green eyes was a dirty, scruffy little cat.

"Mangy little thing." He reached down to shoo it away, but as his hand lowered down, the cat rubbed his head against Mr. Watson's legs. A soft purr was heard, followed by a 'mew'.

"It's pretty cold out here. Why don't you go home?" But it was clear that the cat had no home. His grey fur was matted and filthy and he looked as if he hadn't had a decent meal for days.

As Mr. Watson stood looking down at the unexpected visitor, he couldn't help but feel sorry for it. He was a grump, but he wasn't heartless. Perhaps, he could share his dinner and then the little guy would be on his way.

He went back inside, leaving the door open a crack and when he returned, the cat had nudged the door open and was sniffing into the warm, strange space. He hesitated, taking one slow step after another before looking up and meowing at Mr. Watson.

For the first time in weeks, a smile spread across the old man's face. He opened the cupboard and took out a small plate, putting some of his chicken down for the fuzzy fella.

The cat ravenously ate the food before catching the eye of his saviour and licking his chops.

"More?" asked Mr. Watson as he poured some milk onto the plate.

Three days later, on the morning of the 25 th of December, Mr. Watson opened his eyes.

"Another Christmas." He said to himself, but at the sound of his voice, a now clean grey cat stirred awake on the bed beside him and stretched. Mr. Watson smiled and reached out to pet his new friend.

"But this year, I won't be alone."

SNOWED *in for* RESEARCH

by Jacqueline

Ruth loved her bike, but miserable, wet, days like today absolutely *sucked* for riding in. And if her paper wasn't *this close* to being due, she would be nice and cozy, not doing this. But procrastinating as she had, she wasn't even on to the final editing check of this stupid research paper, and it was worth too much of her grade to skip out on. Damn man, why had she decided this year was the perfect time for college? She could have just done another year of work, maybe saved up enough that she wouldn't have had to work at the same time. Who feels like working on school work after you've had to haul yourself home from dealing with customers all day?

At least this topic should be interesting, and the library would be warm. Thank God for professors who weren't insistent on you sticking to a list of pre-set topics. Any topic idea went, as long as you could successfully link it around to the topic at hand and prove your point on it. If she got lucky on this, she would find the books she needed easily and be able to get back home in time to help the others with baking. She absolutely needed to be back before the expected heavy snow kicked in. A library may be nice for studying on rainy days, but snow was a whole different beast.

The parking lot was empty, minus a couple cars right up next to the entrance. Probably people in the same situation she was, papers due right before holiday break. Staff parked around back, in their nice little sheltered area.

Focus. Ruth ducked inside and pulled out her list of books that should have what she needed, and started looking. The slush dripping from the trees hit the roof and echoed throughout the halls, adding to the almost eerie silence of the library. As she settled in with her books and supplies, Ruth barely noticed as the dripping slowed and the wind in the trees picked up as the predicted snow storm shifted over. If she took too long, she might just have to stay and try to wait the snow out instead. Motorbikes aren't really great for snow or ice, and she wasn't risking an accident this close to the holidays. Hopefully it was quick at least. Sure, Ruth may have had a lot of papers she should be getting done, and being stuck in the library would force her to finish them, but she didn't want to miss baking and getting to decorate with the others. Right. Project. She'd been staring out the window too long and zoned off. Ruth propped open the first book, a biography of Idris' social work years, against the stack and started jotting down a chapters index for her notes. It had been close to an hour when she looked up, only to realise the wind had heavily picked up, piling snow against the doors and covering the parking lot.

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