



QUINTE WEST
PUBLIC LIBRARY

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booktalk

THE QUINTE WEST PUBLIC LIBRARY WRITER'S MAGAZINE

EMERGING
WRITERS



CEO's Note

A large part of what we do here at the Quinte West Public Library is about inspiring our community. Inspiring you to read, to learn, to create and to connect. And to write. We are proud to present this first digital magazine of writing contributions from the Quinte West community. We hope that you are inspired to read and maybe even to write!

Thank you to all who are contributed.

SUZANNE HUMPHREYS



Young Writer

A boy and his dog

written by Bennett Drabiuk)

“Just give it back!” Luke cried. Sam just sneered and held it higher above his head. “I need it for the science fair so I can have a chance to win \$1000.”

“What makes you think you can win?” Sam said. Then suddenly, Luke’s dog Pepper came out of nowhere and bit Sam. Sam was so surprised that he dropped the project. Luke dove and caught it. When he looked up, Sam was gone. All he saw was his faithful dog wagging his tail. He got up and walked over to him. “Good boy,” he said, “you are the best dog ever. Come on Pepper, let’s go.” So they set off.

Luke was nine years old and incredibly smart. He was so smart that his teacher said he could go to college. Luke lived in the very small town of Caninville. His town was so small that it couldn’t afford a college so the town’s mayor generously opened up his home to be used for that purpose. Despite this uncharacteristic act of kindness, this mayor, named William Andrew Edward Napoleon III, was not very kind at all. His son Samuel Phillip Napoleon followed in his father’s footsteps. Samuel Phillip Napoleon (also called Sam the Bully) had a favourite pass time, bullying Luke.

That afternoon, after the science fair, Luke was picking up his first place prize when his teacher came up to him and said, “You’re too advanced for my class. You really should go to college.” So Luke took a college application form from his teacher and he and Pepper went home to celebrate.

Later that night he was filling in his form when he noticed a terrifying line at the bottom that said, “NO DOGS ALLOWED BECAUSE OF THE MAYOR’S ALLERGIES.” He wouldn’t want to imagine what it would be like not to bring Pepper to college. He knew his parents were too poor to send him to a different college (even with his \$1000 prize money). What was he going to do?

On the way to school the next day, Luke heard a cry from the river. He dashed over to the bridge and saw Sam the Bully fighting for his life. Pepper sprung into action, jumped into the water, grabbed Sam’s shirt with his teeth, and pulled him out of the current.

Standing beside Sam’s hospital bed, the Mayor turned to Luke and said, “Thank you so much for saving my son. I heard that you really want to go to college and I want to give you tuition money to go to whatever college you want.” The next fall as the brightly coloured leaves rustled in the wind, Luke hurried to his first college class with Pepper by his side. The boy and his dog were inseparable.



The Chicken Who Could Sing

written by Avery Drabiuk



One day as the farmer woke up, he heard a beautiful sound. He usually woke to the sound of his rooster, but not today. Jumping out of bed, he practically threw his clothes on, raced outside and saw his rooster lying on the ground dead as a doornail. On top of him sat a hen looking very pleased with herself. Again, he heard that beautiful sound, and the farmer saw that the noise was coming from the chicken! He grabbed her and stuffed her in his pickup truck and drove into town. The entire drive the chicken was thinking, "I am going to the butcher's shop to be killed", but she turned out to be very wrong. The farmer had other intentions for her. He set her on the ground and started to call, "COME ONE, COME ALL TO SEE THE SINGING CHICKEN!" He called again and again, but the people just laughed and said, "A singing chicken? How funny." By that time, the chicken was beginning to feel sorry for her master, so she decided to sing. And sing she did, loud and clear.

People started stopping. Soon a large crowd formed. The farmer threw down his cap and people started to throw coins into it. Soon the farmer almost started crying. It started to get dark, so the farmer gathered up his earnings and the chicken and started back home.

The next day he did the same thing and the day after, until the chicken got sick of it and ran away. There are many more stories of the chicken who could sing. Even one about her meeting an octopus and becoming friends with him, but there are many more stories and enough time to tell them. ★



In memory

written by Cassandra Reesor

I sat in the parking lot. Eventually I would work up the nerve to get out of the car and walk over to the bridge. My daughter squirmed in her sleep from her place in the car seat. She was only four months old, and already pushing me to be better. Starting with getting out of this car.

Greyson had been a friend. I couldn't say he was my best friend, but he had been there for me ever since I had moved to this small town in high school. Greyson had been quiet. He was picked on a lot for being different, and even didn't fit in well at home. He never really discussed it, but he had been in the foster system.

Greyson was a shadow in our school. Average height with dark brown hair. He was average in classes. Mix all that with his quiet nature, and a lot of people overlooked him.

I got out of the car and unlatched my daughter's carrier. She stirred, but didn't wake. The November air was crisp, so I did up her car seat cover, preventing light and the cold from entering. We were alone in the parking lot. We would be alone on the trail.

My boots crunched in the dirt. I remembered the last time I saw Greyson Taylor. It had been our graduation. I had been so wound up with myself. Heading off to the big city with a bright future in engineering. I wasn't even sure if we had ever really talked about his plans. I had given him a hug. Posed for my family to take pictures.





I wiped at my eyes. "I'm so sorry buddy. I should have stayed in contact. I should have told you what you meant to me."

My eyes swam. I could have sworn I saw him out on the middle of the bridge. I blinked away tears and looked again. There was nothing.

"See you around buddy!"

That had been the last thing I had said to him. So frivolous.

I arrived at a clearing. Ahead was a bridge. It was long and the expense it crossed was a sudden drop. Far below was fast moving water in the middle, with the tops of evergreens visible from both shores. It was a suspension bridge, and it moved a little in the wind.

I stayed on the path leading up to the bridge. I was scared of the memories trapped in this place. The place where Greyson had fallen while out on a bike ride the fall of my first year of university. He had been drinking.

I wiped at my eyes. "I'm so sorry buddy. I should have stayed in contact. I should have told you what you meant to me."

My eyes swam. I could have sworn I saw him out on the middle of the bridge. I blinked away tears and looked again. There was nothing. My mouth twisted into a smile.

"I'm sorry it took me so long to come here. But I wanted to introduce you to my daughter. This is Taylor. We named her after you. We hope to give her the love you should have gotten."

There he was again in the middle of the bridge. Greyson smiled.

"Thank you."





Spirit Keepers

written by Wendy Russell-Sheppard

My ancestors have a lot to answer for.

I roll my carry-on bag into the Toronto International Airport. Among other necessities, it contains a zip lock bag bulging with the ashen remains of my family's white husky—and my mother.

After a flight to Edmonton, there is a second to Churchill, Manitoba on the shore of Hudson Bay.

Like the travellers who came before me— Dorset, Thule, Dene, Inuit, Chipewyan and Cree—I have a compelling reason to venture out onto the barrens.

Twenty-five years ago, my mom and I rode the rails through Ontario to Winnipeg, then flew to Churchill, the Polar Bear Capital of the World. We saw it all: northern lights, sled dogs, polar bears on the tundra.

But there was a sombre side to the trip. Our tour of the local area included the dump, where filth-covered polar bears scavenged for food. Their hunting grounds on sea ice were disappearing. This was not the most heart-wrenching experience we had.

One night, we were invited into a traditional teepee by two ancient Cree aunties, their faces creased with wisdom.

They explained the nomadic lifestyle of their ancestors, how their culture of self-sufficiency was snuffed out when our federal government withheld rations to bribe starving elders to sign misunderstood treaties. These migratory peoples were forced onto remote reserves where the cost of living would remain a burden forever.



I'm delivering you back to Mother Earth, with your Spirit Animal, the polar bear. Our husky will be your eternal companion. May your Spirit ascend—unfettered and with joy, and your ashes be one with nature.

There was tearful truth-telling about residential schools, the trauma and cultural destruction that will haunt every remaining generation until authentic, meaningful reconciliation is achieved.

An invitation was extended: seek out spirit keepers, the animals created to guide good-hearted humans who want to please the Creator by being as kind and wise as their animal brothers. We didn't hesitate to accept.

Huddled inside my hooded parka—a white woman in body, but not in spirit—I hunch my shoulders against the stinging wind buffeting the open deck of the Tundra Buggy. Clutching the zip lock bag to my heart, I close my eyes.

Mom, there was honour in your life and now in your death. It's time for your Spirit to ascend into the next realm and join our ancestors. I'm delivering you back to Mother Earth, with your Spirit Animal, the polar bear. Our husky will be your eternal companion. May your Spirit ascend—unfettered and with joy, and your ashes be one with nature.

Smiling through my tears, I open the bag to tip the contents into the wind.





Ms Suspenders

written by Liana Di Marco

December 1989. Looking through the papers for a friend or date or whatever at that point. I missed the Northern Hollywood crowd of Vancouver and being back in Toronto proved to be isolating. Moving home, not such a great idea but who could afford Toronto rent? Looking for activities and things to do, maybe gig somewhere or shoot a game of billiards where was I going to feel safe and not part of the wall paper? And away from mom...

Now magazine listed many events, mystery dinners and, night clubs but, I was way too shy to actually get out the door. Toronto made me feel fat. Ironical given the beautiful women of Vancouver wanted to dance with me. Toronto, not so much.

When I saw the ad, "Last mystery dinner for women" located on Parliament/Wellesley Women's Club I panicked thinking it was the only chance I had to meet and befriend anyone outside of the dance club pressures. I dressed up, men's black suit jacket, dark blue slacks, white shirt with leather tie, slick back hair....went for that hot sexy look. Would have worked great in Vancouver. Not so much in Toronto. I ran late mostly on purpose. Not because I wanted to make a grand entrance and more so because I was hoping the club would be too full and not let me in. Did I mention I was shy?

I arrived and sure as heck the place was packed. "Sorry hun, the mystery dates - dinner tables are all taken." Not sure if I was broken-hearted and soul wrenched for setting myself up for failure or I don't know. ..

"She can sit with us," two cute women at the back corner called me over. Me in a panic didn't exactly want to be the third wheel. Then again, I thought, three of us, hmmm.

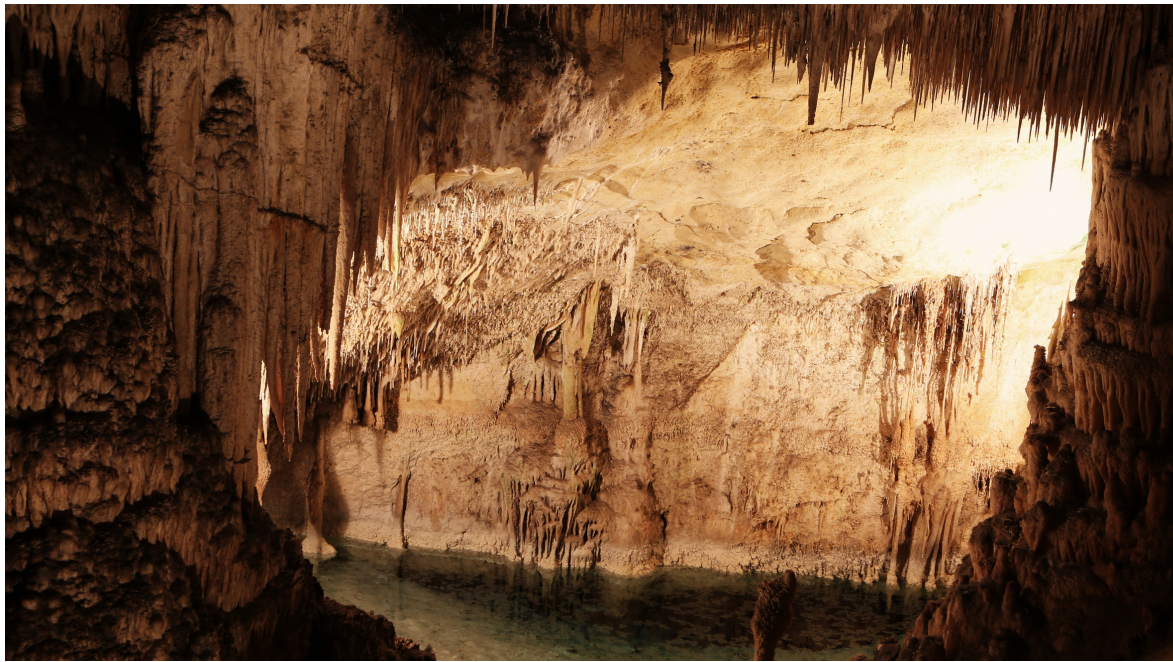
The one wore cute tailored pants with suspenders and white shirt, leather shoes. The other was in a flowery dress and her first words were, "I'm vegetarian so no meat at this table."

Annoyed I actually remembered her. That was the same intro she gave me a few months earlier when she tried to pick me up at the club. "No problem," I said. "I'll eat a few seats away cause I'm a meatatarian."

It was a long evening. After several hours of her flirting and trying to pick up suspender hotty, I said goodnight. As I left, suspender hotty offered me a ride west. Veggie burger was going east. Phew, I thought.

It's been thirty years of friendship with Ms Suspenders. No looking back.





Food for the Soul

written by April Secord

**“What good is a life without warmth?
What good is living an eternity alone?”**

The vampire hung upside down in the cave dreaming of fields of gold and lavender as the sun shined on him. In his dream, he picked wild roses and smelt the fragrance deeply as he held hands with his love in the meadow beside his home, in Mount Pelion.

His bat-like ears twitched in hearing the footsteps going through the brush into the cave entrance. He knew it was his rival. It was Cecilia coming to kill him in his sleep. He glanced down at her red dress she wore to entice his appetite, and noticed the stake she held behind her back. But something had changed in his soul for her; each time she had unsuccessfully tried to kill him. They were both alone in the world, and she had become the fire in his icy heart.

This is it; the final act of love or death. Charles thought. The long awaited climax of the bond they felt together; her being a vampire slayer and him being the King of the Vampires. After living for centuries in the dark, she was the closest thing he had come to even having a best friend and she ignited his tar-filled heart, as the fireworks went off every time she was around.

“You are looking quite beautiful Cecilia. Let me change into something more pleasant and then we can visit.” The great vampire flew behind her and startled her into dropping the wooden stake. Picking up the stake as he transformed in front of her, from the monster to the man he used to be. His features handsome and alluring even without his charismatic powers.





“Charles we need to end this. The sun is breaking above the tree line. I have found your lair and know all your secrets. There is nowhere for you to hide. I will always hunt you down.” Cecilia said as she held her head proud, standing brave in front of him. She knew she didn’t have a backup plan, as her heart beat widely.

Charles handed over the wooden stake to Cecilia, and walked as a man at peace towards the sun coming up. He leaned on the cave entrance and watched the pink and purples of the dawn.

“What good is a life without warmth? What good is living an eternity alone? I am 6000 years old Cecilia, and the last of my Kingdom. You recognize me as the killer I am capable of being, and not the truth. I haven’t killed a human in over 5000 years.” Charles said, as he still had his back to her.

“You are nothing but a monster.” Cecilia said while holding the stake high to his shirtless back and stopped suddenly from plunging; as Charles turned around. Looking into his light blue eyes, she saw the fearless love in his undead heart for her. In Charles’ surrender, she then acknowledged her love for him and threw away the stake.





I Took a Train

written by Chuck Lane

In 1944, a naïve young man, I enlisted to help defend my country. I never saw much of the War. The War ended by the time our training was over. Clean-up was the only excitement I saw; until.

The War now over. I was on my way home. My only thoughts were of an uncertain future and the farm.

In my daydream mind, Mom was about to serve dinner. I was about to devour her apple pie; when I looked up at the most beautiful girl I had ever seen.

Not that I knew much other than farming, I was green about most things. I would say as green as freshly grown apples, but we all know about the apple's bad biblical reputation. So instead, I'll say green as sweet peas.

I was daydreaming about Mom's cooking when....

"Hi, my name is Julie. Julie Chambers."

"I'm on my way to Heaven."

"Heaven, I stammered."

"Am I dead?"

"Gosh no, silly, was her sweet response."

"Heaven Ontario, Heaven is near Port Hope and next to Salem."

"My parents own a General store and Grail Mill."

As I rose to my feet, my legs collapsed under me. As I fell backwards, Julie giggled.

Finally, I blurted out my name.

We talked for hours as if we had known each other for years. Then the Conductors yelled, "Heaven, next stop, Heaven."

We shook hands with the hope for future meetings and a promise to correspond.





As she stepped down on the wooden platform, I noticed a bright glow around her; it was just the sun setting behind her.

Once home, I couldn't get Julie out of my mind.

One Sunday, while walking to Church, Dad noticed that Erin's Falls' only Hotel, the Majestic, was for sale. So dad decided to take the farm money and purchase the Majestic.

With some minor renovations, we made the Majestic the most elegant Hotel in southern Ontario. Then he handed me a crumpled-up piece of paper that said, when are you going to bring your Angel home?"

The very next day, I was on the train heading for Heaven.

That was over fifty years ago now, and since then, we have been the proud owners of the most successful Hotel in Erin Falls' history. For more than fifty years, with two children and six grandchildren, we've been happily married.

I lost Julie recently. During her last remaining months, she made me promise that if I got too lonely, I would take a train to Heaven. So at seven A.M this morning, I found myself sitting on a padded seat heading east.

The rocking motion of the train quickly lulled me off to sleep. Pleasantly my whole life flashed before my eyes. Suddenly I was snapped back to reality by the announcement, "Heaven, next stop, Heaven."

As I stepped off the train and onto the shiny wooden platform, I heard that familiar sweet voice of my lovely wife, "Darling, what took you so long?"



AND THIS IS HOW IT IS
we go home
and we shut our doors
we don't sleep with them open
for fear the world sees in
really sees us
sees our pain
sees our mess
sees the things we can't brush into place
the art we create we're too afraid to show the world
see our broken hearts
we don't open our doors wide
turn the spotlight on
and say, "I haven't done laundry in a week. My girlfriend
left me. I'm not sleeping."
we just shut the white door
with a blue handle
in bed
the ceiling all night.





The One Who Got Away

written by Krystal Hennessy

You know, it's so kind of you to help an old man clean out this dusty attic. I don't know how I ever let it get this bad. The longer you stay in one place, the more junk you gather, I guess.

Oh, I haven't seen that photograph in a long time. It breaks my heart to see it torn, but you see that girl in the red dress? She's the one who got away.

I didn't let her get away, though. She was taken from me.

She was my friend's sister and I watched her grow up for years. She became this beautiful angel and I was in love with her. She never knew though and I regret that.

One day, I got up the nerve to ask her out. I couldn't believe my lucky stars when she said yes. It was a group outing to the fair and there were 8 of us, but I swear, she was the only one in my view. This picture was taken after I won her a prize at a carnival game. See that stuffed rabbit in her hands? That's a gift from yours truly. Keenest eye in the west.

I wanted to have her to myself, so we drifted away from the group and went for a moonlit walk through the park. It was so quiet that night. There were crickets chirping, frogs croaking and mosquitos buzzing. We heard an owl hooting in the distance. You know, I should have known when we heard that owl that something bad was on its way.





She kissed me that night and to this day, it's the best kiss I've ever had. She told me that she looked forward to seeing me again and thanked me for a wonderful evening. She said she would never forget it. I haven't forgotten it either.

What's that? You've never heard that old wives' tale? My mother was a superstitious woman, bless her heart. She told me that an owl's hoot was a sign that a death was near. I never believed her until that night. As I walked her back to her car, she held that stuffed rabbit so tight. I still remember how she named it Wyatt, after my keen eye.

As I opened her car door, she kissed me. It wasn't common for a woman to kiss a man first back then, but she was no common woman. I'll never forget the feel of that kiss. Firm and confident, full of desire.

She kissed me that night and to this day, it's the best kiss I've ever had. She told me that she looked forward to seeing me again and thanked me for a wonderful evening. She said she would never forget it. I haven't forgotten it either.

Then she got in the car and drove off. That was the last time I ever saw her. She was in a car accident on her way home. Some shift worker fell asleep at the wheel. They say she died instantly and I hope with all my might that's the truth. She deserved no suffering.

That's why she's the one who got away. She stole my heart and took it to her grave. But I'm grateful for that one perfect night.





The Unforgiven

Written by Nell Davidson

I drop my fork on the plate as a jolt of memory flashes through my mind. Painful, bitter thoughts are awakened once more at the mere mention of that name.

Mom calls up the stairs, “Hi honey, you up? Breakfast.”

I yawn, stretch my arms wide, as I climb out of my warm bed and gaze around my childhood room. Posters of Donny Osmond and Madonna still hang on my walls. Nothing has changed after all the time I have been away.

Following the smell of bacon, eggs, and freshly brewed coffee, I make my way down to the kitchen.

Mom gives me a tentative look. “Guess who called last week...that Judy girl! She wanted to tell me her mother had passed after a long illness, and she’s decided to move back to the old neighbourhood and would like to see you.”

I drop my fork on the plate as a jolt of memory flashes through my mind. Painful, bitter thoughts are awakened once more at the mere mention of that name.

Judy. We were inseparable when we were little. Then, when she was nine, she moved out west with her newly divorced mother. Later, when she was thirteen, they moved back, and she went to the same school as I. That was when my problems began.

She had changed. Whether jealous of my close-knit family or for some other reason, Judy made my life a living hell. She made up lies, turning my friends against me, and egging them on to shun me. Disclaiming her lies about me fell on deaf ears. She had the other girls enthralled. Every time she passed, she would bump into me, and encouraged the other girls to do the same. They would whisper and laugh every time they saw me.



I grew quiet and wan. To try and make myself stand out and to show them that I could go my own way, I started to dress as a goth: rings in my freshly pierced nose and brows, dressed head to toe in black, Doc Martins on my feet. I persuaded myself that I didn't need them and threw myself into my art.

Mom noticed the change in me and was troubled by it. She kept on asking me if everything was all right. After much cajoling, at my most vulnerable, I finally sobbed my heart out and unburdened myself. Keeping my misery to myself about being bullied for two years had taken its toll on my nerves.

I had applied and was accepted to the Ecole des Arts at the Sorbonne in Paris. Mom persuaded Dad to allow me to stay with Aunt Colette in France. Over the years, my artistic flair landed me many commissions for painting and my fame as an artist grew worldwide.

Mom clears her throat to bring me back to the present. I state firmly, "No, thank you, Mom. I want to spend my precious time with you and Dad."

"I hear she divorced her husband recently. They were only married for a couple of years." She whispers, "I heard he was abusive. Can you imagine such a thing, especially for a bully like her?"

I think to myself with a smile, Karma can be a bitch.



Fill your life
with adventures,
not things.



**Carry the
world in
your
wallet!**



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