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ICE



Byron College

THE BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



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THOUGHTS FROM THE

Mr Rory Gallagher (Headteacher)



I am proud to present to you the 8th issue of Byron Voice. Our students are impressive journalists and writers, and I hope that you enjoy reading through this edition as much as I have. A huge thank you to everyone who has contributed, and especially to Ms Stef Vekinis for editing and producing this and every edition.

ONE of the key skills we try to work on with our students is finding a **balance in life**. As educators we aim to allow our students to flourish as individuals whilst succeeding academically and achieving excellence in what they do. This balance is the key to a **holistic education**, and if we get the balance right throughout a child's education, then the success and areas of excellence will emerge as a child grows and develops. As our older students prepare for their summer exams, there is always a danger that the balance tips too far towards academic preparation and revision. So, as well as the revision sessions at school, the hours of work at home, and the inevitable worries about exams, we must remember that a **good night's sleep**, a **healthy meal**, a **day outside in the sunshine and fresh air** are just as important to future success.

At Byron College we believe in developing the values, skills and competencies that our students will need for future success, and our excellent exam results are as much a testament to the teachers who prepared the students for the exams, as they are to the Primary teachers who helped students develop the mindset and skills they need to succeed. "It takes a village to raise a child", and the wider school community, including family and friends, is the village each child needs to flourish. At Byron we could also turn the saying around, and say that it takes a child to raise a village! **We aim for each of our students to be change-makers and to have a positive impact on the world.** Academic success is only one small part of education, and whilst we will do all we can to ensure that this happens, we are also constantly trying to keep the balance, to see the big picture, and develop the **whole child**. We hope you will agree that this edition of the Byron Voice showcases what we are trying to achieve!

STUDENT COUNCIL UPDATE

TERM 2



At the Student Arts and Crafts Sale at the Christmas Market we raised funds for Smile of the Child by selling upcycled stationery, greeting cards with students' linoprint creations, candle jars, and pressed-flower bookmarks - a very successful stall!



We held a second appeal for humanitarian aid for Ukraine. We successfully raised more than €750 which enabled us to buy 30 hand crank chargers, for families to have light, radio communication, and charging power during powercuts. These were delivered together with warm clothing and blanket donations to the Ukraine Aid Centre.



In response to the tragic earthquakes in Syria and Turkey in February, we have encouraged our school community to support the people of the devastated areas. In total we have raised over €2500 for Doctors Without Borders to help towards medical aid in Syria and donated necessities to Turkey; we will continue to aid the people who lost their homes as this is an ongoing emergency.



Part of our efforts involved holding a Middle Eastern Food Sale in March in order to support the earthquake appeal; we sold various wonderful foods originating from Syria and Turkey. It was a great collaborative effort: not only did it involve a lot of hard work for those who kindly donated food, but also for everyone who coordinated the sale.



We are focusing on becoming an environmentally friendly school in order to achieve internationally recognised Eco Status. We have set up and begun to add more recycling bins in order to reduce waste. We encourage our school to become more green to achieve a healthier and more positive environment.



We are currently creating proposals for raising money for charity to achieve our fundraising budget for the Teacher's Challenges! This will run throughout the school year and when we accomplish our goals, our teachers will participate in various challenges which we are certainly looking forward to.



Byron's very own Community Committee has successfully promoted the Byron House Sports Competitions! Posters have been placed throughout the school, advertising the support and participation of any students willing to take part and make their House stronger.

VALENTINA KILIORIDES, MELICE DAYEKH + ASHTYN GULLEY
(STUDENT AMBASSADORS, YEAR 10)

RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES



HOW TO REST DURING THE BREAK



Make a realistic plan in terms of study allocations. Make sure that enough rest is planned between study sessions. Don't forget to do something which will disengage your mind and prep you to go at it again. Don't forget to reach out for help from your teachers when you need it. We are here to help!

MS SCARLATOU, YEAR 10B FORM TUTOR

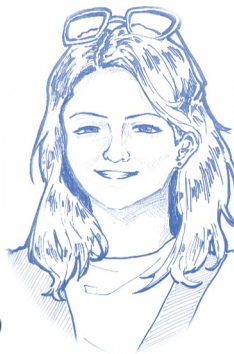


The first thing on my mind when holidays begin is to enjoy a few mornings in bed without a looming alarm clock. After that, my priority is seeing friends and family I don't get to in term-time. I always tell myself I will do my work at the beginning of the break so I can relax guilt-free, and I always fail and leave it until the day before returning to school - not recommended!

DR PAPAVALLOU, HEAD OF KEY STAGE 4 & YEAR 10A FORM TUTOR

The holiday break is an opportunity to do something completely non-routine which can help you to reset your body and mind. The first couple of days, your brain will still be in work mode; do some work so that you can enjoy the rest of it as much as you can. Then you can reconnect with friends and family that you haven't seen in a long time as it can be difficult while during term-time - and enjoy the amazing spring sunshine!

MS APERGI, KEY STAGE 4 FORM LINK



Things to do over the Easter break to relax your body and mind...

- » Read favourite books
- » Travel
- » Spent time with family and friends
- » Play sports
- » Get some sleep

MS ZETTA, YEAR 11B FORM TUTOR

Have a plan: Make a schedule with ample time to focus on work, which is specific in terms of what content will be covered, when, and with downtime to watch series, socialise, or game.

Keep a schedule: Don't fall into the trap of waking up at whatever hour you fancy. Set alarms (at reasonable hours) so you don't end up breaking your sleep pattern.

Pick up a hobby: Use the time to learn something new or develop skills in something. Cooking is a good start, even just breakfast.

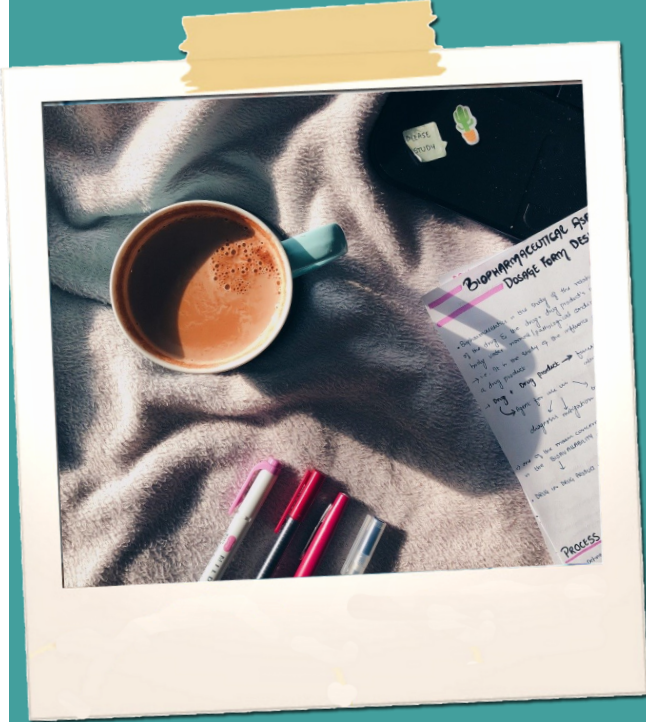
MR SCOTT, YEAR 11A FORM TUTOR



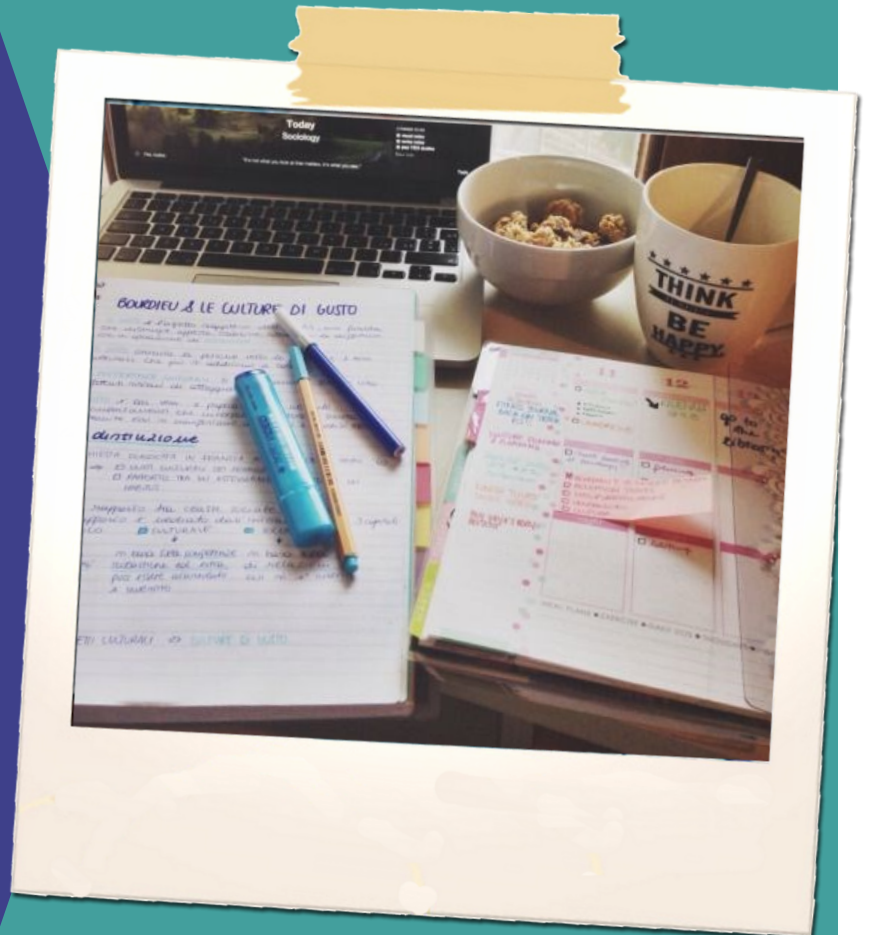
THE STUDENT HEAD TEAM:
BARAN MOHAMMADI, FADI MOAMAR, SUFIA
MOSTOFA, DEMETRIOS ECONOMOU (YEAR 13)

A VIEW FROM THE

SIXTH



FORM



YEAR 12: A USER'S GUIDE

HELLO YEAR 11S! AS YOU PREPARE FOR SIXTH FORM, IT'S ESSENTIAL TO KEEP IN MIND SOME TIPS THAT CAN HELP YOU HAVE A SUCCESSFUL START.

Firstly, managing your time is key. The last thing you want is Mr Dedousis chasing you for a draft of your personal statement while you still owe Ms Efstathiou some homework. Make sure you set realistic goals, create a schedule that works for you, and stick to it. This way, you can balance your academic workload with some downtime to prevent burnout. Additionally, it's almost essential to participate in extracurricular activities that interest you. This could be a club, sports team, or volunteering. These activities can help you develop new skills, make new friends, and help with university applications. Making sure you can enjoy the free time you have is the first step towards balancing your personal and academic life.

Secondly, the transition from IGCSEs to the Sixth Form can be difficult, so don't be hesitant to ask for help. Your subjects will get harder and the workload will increase, but it is all manageable. Despite some teachers looking intimidating *cough* Mr Kavieris *cough*, during Sixth Form you develop a closer relationship with your teachers than at any other stage of school. If you need help with coursework or just need some guidance in adapting to the new environment, your teachers will always be there.

Finally, keep striving and be ambitious. Year 12 and 13 are your last years in school and it's essential to realise this before it is too late. Making sure you graduate with no regrets should be essential to you. Always aim for the top universities or the best grades because you will not get another chance at these two years, so try your best! Sixth Form gives you the chance to learn more about topics that interest you, carry out independent research projects, and obtain useful experience. Through dedication and hard effort, you may attain any goal you set your mind to.

Remember, Sixth Form is a period of growth and transition, and it's natural to face some difficulties along the way. By remaining optimistic, adaptable, and eager to learn, you can conquer these obstacles and make the most of this exciting phase of your education. So seize the opportunities provided by these final two years of your schooling and prepare to elevate your education to new heights!



ARTICLES

ChatGPT, a technology based on the autoregressive language human model GPT-3 has been built by an Artificial Intelligence Company called OpenAI. It has been created using more than 100 billion real human sentences. As a result, ChatGPT can 'speak' in an incredibly natural manner, resembling the language of a human.

People first started using it as it was novel and sounded incredible. After all, how can any AI software have a normal and natural conversation with a human - it must be a marketing gimmick, right? However, its abilities have proved us wrong: Chat GPT is unbelievably knowledgeable and it can produce sentences according to context, which means it can remember previous prompts in the same conversation. This is unprecedented, therefore shocking. Consequently, celebrities and online influencers started to use ChatGPT for their videos and articles, helping to increase their popularity exponentially.

On the one hand, ChatGPT can be a great tool to help us in our daily life and human development. It is extremely efficient as you can get the information at the time you need it, near-instantaneously. Instead of doing research online for two hours, the AI app will answer your questions; it takes you as little as three minutes to get access to accurate and correct data.

On the other hand, the more we rely on ChatGPT, the more brain-dead we might become, since it does away with the need for us to rack our brains, come up with ideas, solve problems, and be creative in our lives. And what about erroneous answers? Dependence is a trap that we must be very wary of.

Overall, ChatGPT is a major breakthrough made by humans. Only time will tell, however, if it is a blessing in disguise. •

**AI IN OUR
LIVES:
SCIENCE
FICTION OR
THE NEW
REALITY?**

**JUSTIN HE
(YEAR 11A)**

NIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY: FINDING LIGHT IN THE DARKEST PLACES

Greetings – my name is Alastair, and I am a professional photographer. I am here to talk to you about something that I am very passionate about: night-time photography.

Firstly, it is important to understand why night-time photography can be better than daytime photography. At night the world is quieter, and you are able to experience the raw beauty of your surroundings without being disturbed by lights, noises and people. Additionally, there are many things that can only be seen at night-time – for instance, the full moon. If you travel to the countryside you can photograph the Harvest Moon, which only comes up once a year, eliminating the darkness completely. Now you may ask, why go to the countryside? Well, away from the town, the street lights don't ruin your view and don't affect the purity of the darkness.

Now I believe I must explain how you should go about photography at night. The truth is that it is best to have a simple, straightforward plan. The easier it is, the more likely you are to do it. For instance, when I was going to photograph the Harvest Moon, all I knew was that I was going to follow the railway line out of town till I reached a nice place to settle. The only thing I had with me, and I suggest you have as well, was my camera, my tripod, and a thick jacket for the penetrating cold.

Finally, after you have done all that, just enjoy. You are going to find yourself in a scenery that seems to have been extracted straight out of a fantasy novel. You will feel like you have teleported into a new world. It will take some time to adjust to the pitch blackness, but once you do, I can guarantee you that the spectacle you will witness will be unique and simply jaw-dropping.

Night-time photography can be an amazing experience – so long as you are well prepared, full of energy – and willing to open your eyes to the beauty of the night. •

NIKOS DOUKAS
(YEAR 11A)



EXPEDITION MBEMBE

We challenged ourselves to hunt down the mythical monster of Lake Tele. Over the past several generations, there have been numerous sightings of this bizarre, mysterious and inexplicable creature. As a cryptozoologist duo, we are determined to confirm or deny the existence of the great Mokele-mbembe.

After our arrival in Congo, we immediately headed towards the lake. As we descended the path down to the waters, we encountered the Bangombe people, who stopped us in our tracks. They sternly warned us, 'Do not go, very dangerous!'

Despite their concern, we decided to proceed on our mission having conducted extensive research and completed months of preparation.

As we approached Lake Tele, we met the infamous Marcellin Agnagna, who is known for witnessing the cryptid first hand and speaking up about this experience. After greeting each other, he explained in depth why he unfortunately couldn't capture a photo or video of this mystical sighting. 'When I saw this large, strange creature, my heart stopped and my body froze. It was like the Earth stopped moving. Within the next second, it vanished from my vision, leaving no time to regain my senses and capture this moment.'

Immediately after he had uttered this last sentence, we heard a sudden influx of water from the nearby lake. As we turned our heads to detect the source of the sound, a rustling noise came towards us from the same direction. A surreal atmosphere fell upon us and we were star-struck as we saw a smooth brown hump emerge from the water. We rushed towards the unknown entity, confused whether we were witnessing the real Mokele-mbembe in the flesh or it was purely a coincidence.

In mere seconds, our hopes plummeted as it became clear that branches were attached to the supposed cryptid. It was a tree. Examining it closer, its rough texture became more apparent and its frame appeared static. Another wave carried it along the surface of the water, further propagating the illusion of a living creature moving.

Overall, our grand pursuit of witnessing this fascinating beast was unsuccessful. We strongly advise others to refrain from such missions without the proper training or research. However, this 'failure' has inspired new ideas and projects, along with teaching us important lessons for future missions. •

Arnavaz Boyce (Year 11A)

CREATIVE



中信出版集团

EXPRESSION

Crossing the Pyrenees



I actually saw a few people. At first, I saw an old woman shouting. She appeared a bit uneasy but nothing out of the ordinary during a civil war. On the other hand, the brothers that accompanied me on the ride looked suspicious sometimes, like when they smiled softly or pointed their guns at me as a joke. There was an atmosphere of levity that I did not really enjoy, and except for the brothers acting like guards, the driver had been a bit too eager to start our journey, but never did it cross my mind they were taking me as prisoner.

The main idea making circles in my mind was the cold. I was freezing and the harder I tried to forget about it, the more I felt my limbs as the numbing stopped and made way for pain; since the journey was a bit rough due to the terrain, it was no pleasant ride for me. Another thought that crossed my mind was the possibility of being ambushed by the enemy or encountering wild animals. I was alert throughout the journey but being taken as a prisoner would have never crossed my mind as a real possibility.

Well, like I said, the cold really affected me physically, but once they handcuffed me my chest sank. I wasn't scared of dying, I've never been, but I thought of the torture I would have to endure to reveal the information I knew. I also immediately started to assimilate any information or past experiences that could have assisted me in escaping. I knew I was not going to fight my way out of there with a knife, up against machine guns and rifles mounted with bayonets. I succeeded in keeping calm and not revealing my emotions or anything that would compromise my position even further. After all, during times of war, you never know what can happen to you: it's survival of the fittest.



DATE

Petros Bourkoulas (Year 11B)

The Afflictions of '37

When pondering on the thought that I was only recently welcomed into this baffling family, I vividly conjure up an image of skepticism. The day they approached me and showed me to their spartan home, they must not have thought much of me; despite the fact that I was a frail, helpless interloper, they did not hesitate to warm my body. Remarkably, they did not demand anything in compensation for their kindness, which was convenient for me considering I was in possession of no goods besides my bag containing my diary and a perpetually protruding violin bow.

The next morning, I was greeted by a refreshing breeze. The two brothers startled me by commanding me onto the roadway as the rest of the family stared intently. A scruffy-looking tumbril with a shady-looking man sat on the front was parked in the byroad. Every now and then, he would murmur under his breath, 'Vamanos, vamanos,' looking at me with obvious dislike.

I was introduced to the horse and cart by one of the siblings, who said that I needed to be saved, considering my legs must be worn out from all the hitchhiking. As both were carrying their own firearms, which they would occasionally point at me - a clear assertion of their dominance and that I was only there on sufferance - I decided not to respond.

Everyone became tense as we at last arrived at our destination. The only things visible were a skinny-looking cat and a hunched woman seeking out firewood. The boys and the driver were all of a sudden sitting stiff as pillars, refusing to speak. Two militiamen unexpectedly approached us. My thoughts were in excruciating pain as I realised we had arrived at a gathering of soldiers. The two brothers who insisted they had brought me, the 'spy', dragged me down from the tumbril. When the militiamen tied my wrists, I suddenly felt utter horror.



Vasco Lago da Silva Sourtaggias (Year 11B)

THE GRIFTLING

I saw a thin ray of light shining through a crack in the cave, as if it were a signal; a sign guiding me through the vast darkness of what had been my home for the past year. The Earth itself was telling me that it was time to depart and leave my old life behind in hopes of finding a new one; a more meaningful one. One where I could flourish, and reach my true potential, with no obstacles or barriers obstructing me. No predominant being paving the path in front of me, and puppeteering my every action. One where I could find peace with myself and humanity, and one where I wouldn't go unseen.

Thus, I commenced my preparation for this imminent, arduous journey. I gathered sticks of different shapes and sizes; some were as sharp as bayonets and others smooth as ice. These pieces of soaked, snowy, slender fibre would dictate my survival on this inhospitable mountain, its megalithic self towering above its inferior surroundings. Fire and warmth would be the salient key to my journey, enticing me not to despair and give in to mother nature, an essence far superior, yet something I was striving to overcome. I crammed the wood into my now ripped and ravaged rucksack, struggling to remain intact.

Food was limited, and rare to find. The only thing maintaining my physical sanity were the bland nuts I foraged and the elk meat I hunted for with a serrated stone and my bare hands. However, I knew this wouldn't last, and that I'd have to unearth more nourishment or otherwise face my inevitable fate. Hence, I searched. Through picturesque, fairy-tale like pine trees and under crystalline stalactites, between rocky edges and throughout extensive and capacious valleys, but nothing. No sign of hope, no sign of life. My yearning for salvation seemed more impossible than ever before.

I wore my thick leather coat, anticipating the warmth and comfort it would bring me. Freeing me from all the burden and complications of life, and somehow, for some seconds, allowing me to forget all about my vile and hopeless situation. Though soon enough, I'd snap back to reality and face my mystifying problems once again. This was a test. Not only of my endurance and physical prowess, but of my mental ability and wellbeing too. And I was determined to pass it. It didn't matter anymore; nothing did. If only I could have back the things I once took for granted: a safe home and a loving family, unblemished by the desolation of our world. I would sacrifice anything and everything, because the truth is, I had nothing to lose.

IN THE DESERT

ANTHONY KATSAITIS

(YEAR 11A)

Nick Stamatelopoulos
(Year 11B)

The Return

Journey

I could feel the adrenaline flowing through my veins already. Today was the day when I would finally be reunited with my family. Time was short, so preparations had to commence.

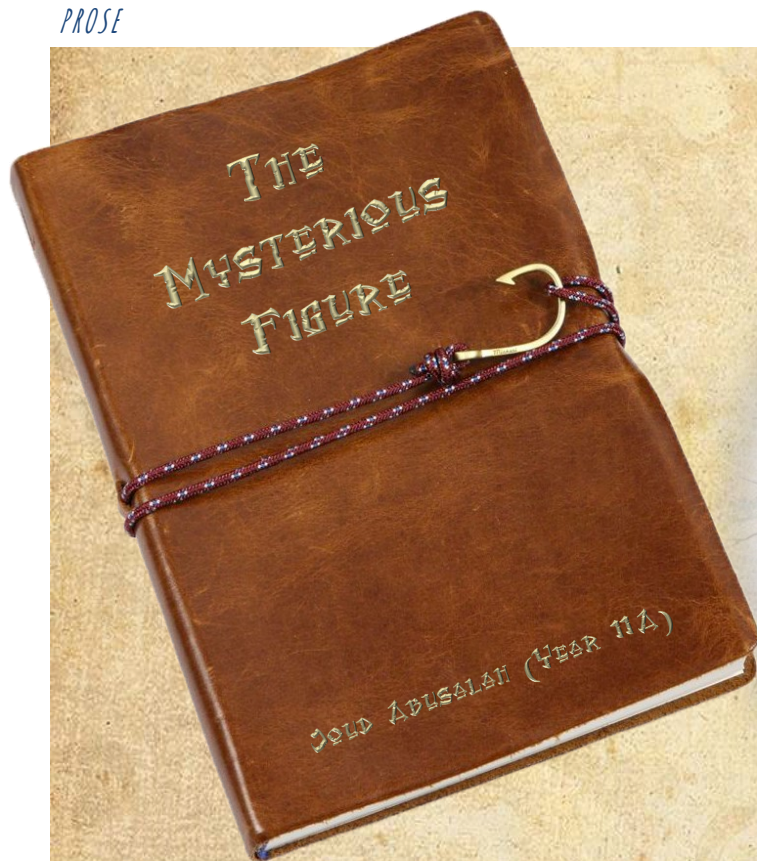
First things first, I had to pack my kids' presents. For my son, I bought a mini statue of an elephant. It was miniscule and weighed no more than a kilogram. While admiring it, I detected the fascinating attention to detail; a magenta flower pattern designed around its knee linking to a turquoise ring in its torso to signify some type of decoration. Its tail, carved to perfection, was long and painted black on the tip, followed by the typical monochromatic grey paint which resembled its skin. It felt smooth in my grip, despite the wooden texture. Truly, the pinnacle of handcraft.

For my sweet angel, Zoe, I got my hands on a pearl necklace. The flawlessly spherical beads were so lustrous to the point that they seemingly glowed. Connected by an intricately designed thin metal chain, the whole structure seemed pristine. After cautiously tucking them into the front pocket of the suitcase for easy and immediate access, I moved on to the rest.

I began with my Nike trainers which I looked forward to using in my morning jogs. Smudges and dirt were scattered all around the sole while some of the white checkmark had been worn off as a result of their intensive use. Meanwhile, the shoes were very stretched and partially torn. Replacement was inevitable. Next up were all the shirts and pants. I had numerous choices from my arsenal, but I ended up going the simple route. Grey sweatpants with black stripes around the waist, a pair of navy-blue jeans with holes on the kneecaps accompanied by a brown leather belt with a gold buckle and a regular pair of my casual rugged pants were the go-to. From the shirts, I decided to take my favorite, the Guns N' Roses-themed one. Something in particular about their logo engendered a pleasant aesthetic, whether it was that vibrant element of romance or the terror in the instruments of death. I didn't need much more since most of my stuff was back home. I hastily grabbed a random shirt from my closet which, from its looks, hadn't been ironed in a good month or so.

All that was left were the insignificants; socks, underwear and so on. To top it all off, I went for approximately a dozen pairs of fully black socks which didn't appeal to the eye but do just enough to get me through my daily hustle. Realising that the clock was ticking, I dumped everything else carelessly in the mountain of clothes, broke a sweat trying to close the suitcase and began my journey.





In the darkness, I stood there absorbing the unknown presence that I sensed. A mixture of feelings invaded my mind; fear, confusion and worry. There were sounds of leaves rustling aggressively, as our feet came in contact with the ground. Abnormal noises were present, running through my ear as my senses sharpened. I could hear the echo of hoofs getting nearer.

I tracked the sounds and realised the inconsistency of the hoofs, as they kept stopping at random moments. I was silently hiding, dedicated to revealing what the source of the hoofs was, and I warned Pippin to not let us go too far. The hoofs got louder and louder, closer and closer. The anonymous person was hiding in the shadows of the trees and the fog that blurred my vision.

However, my sharp senses were of no use. *They* were trying to use their senses by sniffing and trailing us. From all the given information I was able to collect from my instincts, I concluded that there was a chance this unrevealed figure was a Black Rider. I wasn't able to see much as the only source of light was the illuminating stars. We were trapped in a humid territory of intimidating trees, yet my curiosity did not allow me to retreat. The clouds were thick, creating a blanket over this already suffocating and tense environment.

Looking down at the lane, I saw what seemed to be horseshoe steps engraved into the mud. The lane was covered in mud, leaves and an unnatural pattern of steps.

Suddenly, something flashed before my eyes. My vision was hazy and I couldn't comprehend what was happening at that exact moment. The tree I thought was defending my friends had failed, leaving them with chills running through their spines. In the corner of my eye I remember seeing a dark shadow pass in between the two trees that were guarding my poor companions. The shadow took the shape of a horse – yet the mystery of the figure was still uncovered.

SAY HER NAME

Do you remember those distant days when she stood up, breaking her chains with all her might, her bruised body sensing the first gusts of fresh air from the free world?

Her flowing golden hair fluttered in the wind, woven carefully from the thinnest strands of turgid fulfilling wheat; her voice trembled with the power of thousands of songs written in sorrow in the most melodic of all tongues; her eyes carried colour of the cleanest sky of peaceful times; her rich skin bore within itself the fertility of mothering earth, birthing her children and engulfing them readily after their demise, the shallow grave cribs carrying them to a better thereafter.

Standing on the horizon, bathing in the rising sun, the mother of a folk made the first steps into freedom, her unaccustomed legs aching, burnt with the power of thousands of hellfires yet her soul happy – relishing and wallowing in the newfound freedom, every moment of liberty pulchritudinous as ever.

Rebirthing herself, basking in her own blood and pus, she rose yet fell back to the ground, unhelped by the silent observers, their interactions swallowing their attention fully, not grasping the self-induced suffering of a newfound disorder. She would lay herself on the ground then, staying in place, listening silently to the deepest corners of the earth that birthed her, counting her free breaths – in, out, in, out.

Undisturbed, unnoticed came the first bullet, tearing through the skin, exerting a force only possible in the early, untamed days of wilderness and discord, continuing its journey through the flesh, evoking surges of newly experienced fear, overshadowing every pain in its unexpected rotten glare. The one letting it out would only expect complete submission from the bleeding body, any newly found sensations only able to evoke fear – yet not the violent fighting back of an entity springing back to her legs, stance firm and confident beyond belief of any observer.

Here she stands, her fight lengthy, her determination unwavering, her strength limited yet supported by those who would scathe her, every surge against an enemy so purportedly stronger yet pushed back despite the clamour, exerting a force over and over. Fighting back despite the taints and backflow, broken up yet self-repairing, self-reliant despite the help – for she still remembers the cold bondage of the chains, restricting every self-directed movement, with only the specifically prescribed ones allowed despite the violent mental uprising.

I know her name, I speak her tongue, I bleed her blood and look into her eyes.

Do you?

SASHA LUBNINA (YEAR 10B)

Tulips

I close my eyes, wishing you were still here, and yet when I open them, I turn around, expecting to see you behind me, smiling at me, waiting for me. Nothing has changed. No one is here. You are not here. Nothing I do will get me out of here; my mind feels like an abyss. You were my beacon, and now you're gone, all that's left is the darkness consuming me. I looked into your intense brown eyes, imploring me to stop, but you didn't realize that I was an artist. You were my canvas, and your vivid blood was the paint; by the time I realized what I was doing, it was already too late; death had snatched you away. I wanted to stop, I could have stopped, but a blind wrath washed over me, my hatred was a fire I couldn't put out, seeing you defenceless, pleading for your life was the oil that fuelled it.



My love for you was nothing compared to the ferocious tempest that my hatred had become. Why did you say those words to me? I thought you loved me; I told you my innermost secrets and ambitions. I'd never felt such a connection with anyone before, and I thought the feeling was mutual, yet you still abandoned me. You left me for her. You adored her long, thick golden hair, her piercing green eyes that would glisten in the sun, and you laughed at all her jokes. My natural hair was a pure black, and my eyes were a light brown that became caramel in the sun, but you never noticed them. When I dyed my black hair blonde to mirror hers, you claimed it didn't suit me, and of course it didn't. How could it possibly compare?



There was a time when we were one, when you'd laugh at my jokes and I'd laugh at yours, when we'd agree on almost everything; but as soon as you saw her though, I knew it was over. I attempted to compete, knowing it was a foolish battle; for you, she had already won, and I became just another memory. I became a girl from your past rather than the woman of your future. I should have known. I learned from your friends that you had been hanging out and that you had taken her to our favourite restaurant. I suppose it was never our favourite; it was only yours. I waited for a text from you, and when it never reached me, I confronted you. You claimed to be busy, which was why we weren't communicating as much, but it was she, who'd been keeping you occupied. I was naive to believe you didn't like her; I told myself you were her best friend, yet as time passed, our love dwindled. Nothing I could ever do could persuade you differently; you stopped feeling at peace with me, talking with me



8 Roses

became a burden, and our inside jokes became just words to you. I wish I had understood it sooner, because while I began to fall in love with you, you fell in love with her. I felt my life shatter like ice on a river upon seeing the initial signs of spring. You were the ice, she ripped you away from me, and you instantly accepted her force. For the longest time, I ached to be as delicate as spring, but my mind has grown into an indignant blaze that wishes to consume you from within.



I was driving towards you, when I saw her. A sudden scarlet stained her cheeks; she resembled a rose blooming and then I realised, you were staring at her. I gently tilted my head and saw you. You were smiling down at her from the balcony – our balcony. I caught a glimpse of us in that moment, as if I were replaying our memory; but I wasn't there, you had replaced me with her. I felt like throwing up. I broke down in my car: it felt like a dagger had just gone through my humble heart, splitting it into a million fragments. In that instant all my love froze and, in its place, grew contempt. I went up to your apartment and frantically banged on your door, which you opened with a bewildered expression on your pale complexion. I began yelling; I knew I was beginning a war that would be futile to win, but that didn't stop me.

'Hey, Isa, what are you doing –' you said, glancing directly into my teary eyes.

'We're done; I'll give you whatever garbage I have from you tomorrow.' I said, interrupting your childish attempts.

'I can explain –' you murmured softly. I observed you constantly twirl your auburn hair and we both knew you were lying.

'Jacob, explain what? Your explanations are as hollow to me as this relationship. I saw everything with my own eyes. I should have known better than to give you a chance,' I screamed, secretly wishing that my words would pierce your skin like a frigid wind.

'Just listen to me, Isa; we can figure this out,' you said, your voice as calm as the sea. It was blatant to me that the only person you were persuading was yourself; did you honestly believe I'd stay with a duplicitous two-timer?

'How could you do this to me—' I screamed as silver tears glistened in the corner of my eye, dampening my white shirt.



'Please, Isa, don't do this,' you spoke louder this time, almost aggressively.
 'You brought this upon yourself – we are over – bye Jacob,' I shouted as I boiled with anger, walking towards the door.

All my thoughts ran into tears as sunshine into rain, and before I knew it, your cheeks collided with my firm palms. My rage had erupted into a pool of crimson, surging like oceans waves, and I was dedicated to winning this game. I didn't want to be your pawn any longer, and when I saw the kitchen knife on the countertop, I longed to plunge it into your impudent soul, for you to cry out in anguish as a thick blood river effortlessly flowed across your chest. Yet, this time I restrained myself; I couldn't kill the only person I had ever loved. I could have been a cyclone, I could have torn your skies apart, but I didn't. I was once an artist, and I recognised that it is sometimes best to set the brushes aside, let the remainder of the paint settle, and gradually watch it leave and embellish a different painting.



In another life, our love would have been as glorious as the lavender blush of dawn; we would have grown old together, and the wrinkles of our recollections would emerge. In a different lifetime, I may have forgiven you. In this one though, my jealousy is a scorching flame that your apologies will never be able to extinguish; your treachery has engraved her initials into my skin. I will never forget the decision you made. Our romance resembled a tulip meadow, overflowing with luscious foliage and blossoms. I thought we would flourish and grow together. Then one day, I discovered that a section of the meadow was withering, that thorns were smothering our stems, and that shrubs were sprouting everywhere; like vitriolic vipers they were paralysing our tulips. I tried everything: I gave the plants water to bring them back to life, I changed their soil to offer them a better environment to thrive in. Yet, I realised it wasn't the meadow that was decaying; it was your love for me that did. You decided that you preferred roses and their dazzling, vivid hues. You were charmed by their fragile petals, their stems strong and vigorous like soldiers preserving their splendour, yet somehow you got through, your thorns became their protective shield, together you maintained their tenderness. With me, you never cherished our tulip's delicacy. I was nothing like a rose, and you, unlike the person I met, loved roses.

I know I'll make it through this blizzard. My oceans will calm and the wind will strenuously strike my sails once more; I never needed you, and neither did my tulips. Flowers heal from being trampled on, and my tulips have done the same without you.

Elisa Prudentino (Year 10A)





AN ABSURD RECITAL

by Valentīna Kiliorides (Year 10H)

Dramatis Personae: THE PIANIST, REASON, TIME, LUCK, DEATH

People treading in the crowd of a calloused city, as if unseeing hands drag and pull them one way and another, pulling a veil upon their eyes, obscuring their vision. They must respond in predictable ways, slipping subconsciously into an auto-pilot mode. A poignant melody, begetting life, resonates under the graphite night; the monochrome moonlight illuminating the coarse footprints that are seared upon the tarmac road, a road wrinkled with repentance. The Pianist speaks only through notes, sitting on the far end of the street, tackling the keys with a nonchalant ease; the moonlight mirrors her pale face, bouncing upon the black and white piano. The music is throughout; ever so often it swiftly changes yet contains a steady rhythm, providing a suitable melody upon which the conflict on stage unravels. And for a split of a second, the cacophony of voices dissipates, and the people fade into the shadows, reversing roles with some abstract ideologies, Reason, Time, Luck and DEATH Reason is impulsive with a more or less staccato voice, pervading her character with bitterness; Time speaks in lingering syllables, floating in and out of the shadows; Luck stumbles through uncertainty; whilst Death has a sardonic grimace, idly making the situation light-hearted. And almost faintly, a metronome can be heard ticking like a throbbing pulse, perhaps the only thing that brings us back to 'right now'.]

[The scene starts in the middle of a conversation; Reason is walking up and down with impatience]

REASON *[turning on Time]* You're saying I am to blame, then?

TIME I never said that, relax, we can argue about that another time.
[Reason is about to explode with fury yet conquers her emotions]

DEATH For how long will I be stuck with you lot? It already seems like an eternity and honestly, I must be going on my way.

TIME I just thought we could have a nice chat until dawn break.

LUCK *[listening intently to the music]* Does she never stop playing? *[Points at the pianist]*

DEATH *[carelessly]* Seems like it.

TIME *[jovially]* The music has its own unique flow.

REASON *[scornfully]* Now you are the expert on music too, I suppose.

TIME No, but you can think of me as a buzz of energy that we call 'the present' or, as I like to call it, 'right now.' And music is an invitation to listen to 'right now'. *[passionately]* Music is a movement. It's always telling us something, always going somewhere, shifting, changing, and flowing. The palette of sound is so fluent in emotion that it can paint an exquisite canvas. Listen now, you see there is this uncertainty in the piece, it starts off somewhere, yet we don't know where it's going to take us. And the questioning is the most important part, lingering above the answers, begging for another question. And the questions will be left unresolved – yet there is the beauty of it, that is what'll make you listen to it again, and yet every time you'll never fully have an explanation. People desperately try to interpret the music and the expression it's trying to convey, yet they never can, they can't understand that a word isn't enough. What music conjures is way beyond a single word, more of an image perhaps, yet even that is never right. A single note can express more than a million words ever could. *[Rushes close to Reason]* Tell me,

can you describe what you hear?

REASON *[reluctantly]* I... I don't know, I think...

TIME *[encouragingly]* Don't think, just feel it. Let yourself fall in the music.

REASON I feel... *[hesitates, glances around, searching for words]* the music is... *[takes a deep breath, looks at the Pianist. After a long pause]* It seems to me like the bedarkened sky is weeping, quivering to the unearthly melody that engulfs a cataclysm of rain, teeming down a miasma of despair. And the droplets are drumming like on old radio, long out of tune, coming back to life. *[The pianist's fingers are caressing the piano]* But it seems that amidst all the chaos, amidst this ever-changing world, you find this solace in the stillness of your mind.

TIME *[smiles]* You see, I'd never think of it that way.

[The music is scurrying manically, never stopping for a breath, obscures everything in its wake like the ceaseless tide]

REASON You know, for a long time, everything was no more than a shadow play, the outlines were always blurry; reality didn't thrust itself upon you; didn't rise in your mouth like bitterness that scarcely ebbs; you didn't feel this tight mesh on your throat. And you know, nothing made sense but I... I liked it that way, being blissfully oblivious. Now, I feel like I'm losing the ground underneath my feet. I can never cling onto something, everything changes like the foliage in the woods, until there will be nothing left to hold onto to. *[frenziedly]* I feel like I'm falling in this wavering vertigo, this abyss; yet the longer I fall, the closer I feel to the surface. And I can't shut out the rays of reality but maybe it doesn't make any difference now, it makes no difference at all because I know *[pauses breathlessly]* that there is no one to pull me up.

DEATH *[mocking her]* Aren't you supposed to be reasonable? And you tell me you want to 'shut out the rays of reality.'

REASON Don't bother to get cynical.

DEATH Anyways, in the meantime, let's kill some time. Luck, you up to a game of cards? *[Sits down on the pavement, shuffling some cards]* I mean with your luck I wouldn't see a reason to object. *[Laughs to himself]*

LUCK *[despondently]* Oh, I'm not lucky. I once I loved gambling with the pebbles of fate, but not anymore.

DEATH *[humorously]* Don't tell me you're going to get incredibly sentimental too.

[The music is spiralling into a beguiling despair]

LUCK Perhaps the luck I had dwindled away or maybe it's just a mere probability. I didn't really care about luck because I always had it but now that I'm bereft of it, I realise what huge role it plays, how much is out of our control. Life is a blind line of chance, a random stroke of luck. Or perhaps luck is an illusion to make sense of the randomness of life. There's nothing special anymore though; now I feel like a bystander, the word keeps spinning round and I just float in space with no purpose or direction. And this feeling is threatening to swallow every part of me, replacing any source of light with darkness, overshadowing each moment. It's the fuel of my nightmares, the reason I struggle to breathe. And is that all? Because I really need to know. And then I realise what's wrong.

I'm alone. Yes, that's the word. Alone. And I despise it.

REASON Isolation can place you in a dark corner.

DEATH I must say that I was always amused at you, how should I put it nicely, bickering over your miserable existences. [bitterly] Some try to evade me but trust me, it's utterly pointless. It's not a matter of if but when. Overall, I had a blast, it was fun I admit, but after a while, I just got bored, you see. I dreaded the same old routine. This melancholic monotony – oh, look what you've done to me, I'm getting poetic.

TIME Here we have lonely luck, mad reason, and foolish death *[laughs faintly]*.

LUCK *[with a gesture of revulsion]* And what about you?

DEATH You're not the present.

REASON *[sighing]* Almost no one is what they claim to be.

TIME I'm, well, I'm wise old time, *[laughs slightly, choking on words]* lost in time. I'm – *[indignantly]* maybe I'm not what I said I am but who cares, really? *[The piano builds up solemn, macabre chords]* I always feel that I'm running, and I can never stop running, never look back because if do then I'll recall the pain of bearing the onus of guilt. I want to forget, forget everything. Feel empty and that will help me numb the pain. *[The Pianist crisply hits the staccato notes throughout the crescendo, a boiling ire rising.]*

LUCK So, you just want to eradicate the past altogether?

REASON *[slowly]* No, he simply lives behind a mask, a façade of happiness to conceal the past. And you know, it's simple to keep up this pretention – I mean, isn't life after all a mere performance with us being the deferential puppets? It's far easier to pretend, pretend and wait for applause at the end.
[Their voices overlap each other.]

LUCK I'd say being genuine won't hurt.

TIME *[to Reason]* I never said I was pretending.

REASON Well, you're clearly putting on a show to...
[a booming chord echoes throughout, startling all]

DEATH That's what I'm bored of! You and your piddling whining over nothing! Arguing, crying, forgiving, and then arguing again. *[They all stare at him, uneasily]* Your conflicts are so meaningless that you have forgotten what you're even fighting about. The sheer pettiness of it!
[The pianist abruptly takes her hands off the piano, stops the music in mid-sentence, absent-mindedly staring into space, yet the notes are still swirling in her heard, her mind still humming the tune and her fingers desperately searching for their lost companions. Her eyes seem to never blink, as if trying to persuade herself that what she is searching for is not gone, just out of reach. A stillness is growing deeper with every passing second, a sheer silence enclosing those around it; the wind ceases to rustle, sound is altogether absent as if breath was suddenly frozen.]

REASON This silence is driving me mad. I could endure anything, anything but this desperately haughty silence.

DEATH Why can't you stand the silence?

REASON It makes me remember.

DEATH Remember what?

REASON No, no I can't.

DEATH Well since you've gotten in the trouble of remembering, why don't you tell us about it?

REASON *[glares at him]* Memories.

DEATH Memories? *[Grins ironically]* What is a memory?

REASON A spark of emotion and colour, hovering precariously in my mind.

LUCK They remind you of an irrevocably lost past.

REASON Wait a minute – *[turns around towards the pianist, pointing directly at her]* she... she stopped playing. Why did she stop playing? *[Shouts across to the pianist, waving her hands frantically]* Play again!

TIME She can't hear you, let alone see you.

REASON *[ignores him, eagerly in hysterical sobs]* Play something, anything really!

TIME There is no point in trying, you're invisible to her. We're merely specks of dust woven into the universe. She's nothing, we're nothing. We're just a bunch of nobodies...

REASON *[her weeping dies away, softly completing his sentence]* Striving to be somebody.
[A solemn serenity stretches in the void, tumbling over the unspoken words. The Pianist, though lost in a trance, speaks, half to herself in a hushed tone with a grimace of disbelief, almost reminiscent of a finger gently brushing against a key, each and every note placed with thought and subtlety.]

THE PIANIST There is something profoundly melancholic about knowing the raw and gritty truth...
[She laughs unseemly beneath the moon, a sense of emotional versatility forming ripples in her eyes, and she plays on, her fingers cascading along the keys, weaving an enigmatic tale of inevitable woe that could never be described. The hidden figures of people emerge from the darkness, continuing their stroll like moonbeams coming with whispers of light, whilst Reason, Luck, Time and Death's silhouettes swift back into the dim-lit corners, their shadows escalating with an intolerable remorse, almost frenzy, not so much for the approaching dawn as for the mellow tunes for making this all seem no more than a flickering dream. And indeed, it could have just been a trick of the mind, or a pause in time's inexorable hourglass; I guess we'll never know but perhaps things are better left that way. The Pianist relentlessly continues playing as the moon continues shining, because as everything else in nature, it tugs on to everything else in the universe. The chords are vibrating through the clouds, tingling the moon with a certain kind of equivocation; the pianist's face is reflected in the solitary streetlamp; perhaps it's waiting for someone, for something; the melody is meandering along a winding road, echoing and soaring above the voices, beckoning to a distant star in the stillness. The Pianist, indifferent to everything but the incessant melody that never fully frees itself. And if you try ever so slightly, you can hear the swirling motif encapsulating, though briefly, all the pain and exposure, whilst the unwavering mirage takes on a ubiquitous presence, signalling that the end is always near, yet never utterly reached.]

The Unfortunate

Love is a paradox, both sweet and bitter,
A paradox that we cannot deny,
A passion we must learn to decipher,
To know its secrets and clarify its meaning.

It is like a rose, with petals soft and red,
But thorns that prick and draw blood from our flesh,
A flower that we both adore and dread,
That hides its beauty with a deadly mesh.

It is like a flame that flickers in the night,
A fire that provides warmth and comfort yet can burn us whole,
A brightness that can guide us to the tranquil light,
Or lead us to an opaque and endless hole,
A hole from which there is no escape, yet feels so safe.

It is like a game of chess, with moves unknown,
With players we cannot always trust,
A strategy that is always hidden, not always shown,
A challenge that we must learn to adjust.

It is like a storm that rages and destroys,
It tears apart what we hold close and dear,
A tempest that we cannot always avoid,
That leaves us lost and wandering in fear.

It seems so pure and soothing, like the sea on a warm summer day,
Yet beneath the layers unfold, revealing the horrific enigmas and the truth,
It becomes more suffocating and irresistible, feeling like a flower left to decay,
We deceive ourselves into shirking its terrors, but it remains to feel like abuse.

So love is sweet, but bitter to taste,
A paradox that we all must embrace,
A passion that we cannot help but chase,
A journey that we all must trace,
It is a desire that must be suffered
for it to finally win its exhausting race.

Melice Dayekh (Year 10A)

Truth
of
Love

Writing in Light

The life of a person is like writing:
some people finish in a hurry;
others write slowly, and only
write a few lines throughout their life.

From the beginning to the end,
writing and revising under the light,
just to see the entire world from the highest point.

Opened the page yesterday,
remembered the warm sun,
picked up and wrote down:
it was the gentleness of the tip of the pen,
but now it shall be the sailing of its youth.

The world still moves forward.
No matter whether in light or in dark,
full of blessings and goodness,
even failed, it can't waste its whole life.

Willing to note down youth, full of potential,
but the ink faded, ended before seeing the future.
And so head to the stars, get the bird's eye view,
maple leaves, creatures under the seas.

Meranda Zheng
(Year 11.B)



HAPPY READING!

Well done to our student contributors for this third Key Stage 4 issue!

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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Byron Little Voice draws on the energy, interests, and creativity of our dedicated Primary School Newspaper Team - keep your eyes peeled for the January issue to welcome in the new year, and the May issue at the start of the summer term!

Byron Voice and *Byron Little Voice* are written by our students for the Byron family and they are offered in a spirit of intellectual curiosity, creativity, generosity, and fun.

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