

A Hop in Time and Blood

Koto wished he didn't decide to do this. The old, desolate tunnel he was walking down earlier had been littered with graffiti, broken abandoned chairs and rubbish everywhere that his second-hand flashlight flickered over and illuminated; now he was in a small tunnel, with sand on the floor and confined space.

And it seemed to be going down.

His tattered grey hoodie wasn't doing a particularly good job against the chilly air now. After a few minutes of shuffling through, Koto suddenly found himself in an open space. He could stand up finally, and he could also see six other holes, presumably tunnels, that led to other various places around San Francisco.

However, there was a cement wall, and on it a strange symbol. Perhaps drawn by another explorer? Koto didn't know, but then he was walking towards it.

Unwillingly.

It was when he was five steps away, he saw the bodies: seven of them.

He was staring in horror, panicking in his own mind like a newly born hatchling, but his body didn't stop.

There was something about those, now slightly glowing, lines on the wall that was drawing him nearer – making him stand in a pool of blood.

Then, his hand touched the lines.

And he dropped.

All around him, there was a blur of vibrant colours: pinks, blues, purples, reds, yellows. Through them, Koto felt ghost hands trying to grasp onto him in the spectrum.

Koto could only feel sick as he fell, the blur around him messing with his eyes. Never mind the class he skipped, or the bodies so mutilated he couldn't make out proper faces.

Where was he?

Thump!

The colours were gone.

Now he was on his back, on antique wooden floorboards. He was in a house of sorts. In the background, vintage jazz music was carefully playing. There was an old-fashioned fireplace in front of him, along with some lit candles and a dusty rocking chair.

The roof above him, and it must have been a one floor cabin instead, had intricate yet faded swirls and curls of design on it, all tinted red.

Koto looked to his left, the doorway was wide open to a giant mushroom, and the biggest trees he had ever seen. Giant pines and firs bigger than a skyscraper.

Outside he could see an orange sky.

Was it evening?

Drip.

Drip.

Something warm and sticky landed on his forehead. He rubbed it off and looked at his finger.

Blood.

Koto looked to his right to find a barely lit hallway, with dark floorboards and panelled walls that went on until he couldn't even see the end from where he was sitting. There was a figure in the hall, and through the dim light, he could see an axe.

Koto bolted out the front door in a panic.

Outside there were mysterious floating lanterns illuminating a dirt path running past huge trees and rocks.

Koto could only focus on the quickening footsteps behind him.

TO BE CONTINUED...

by Isabella Hughes-Rowland

Daubeny

I bolted into an upright position, my vision blurry and unaware of where I was or how I got here. Coughing like a hag, I felt a searing pain in my chest as I went to cover my mouth from the now considerable amount of blood coming out of my mouth. It was at that moment I noticed something; my hand was covered in blood-soaked bandages; my vision began to clear, and my frantic coughing slowed. A woman was sat at the end of my bed, she had amethyst purple eyes that stared through me, black hair like the night sky and a calm expression on her face.

"That was quite the fight you had there," she stated, her voice was soft and comforting. I went to reply but found I couldn't and instead a pain embedded groan came out. Upon further inspection, I realised she was a doctor, and I was in a hospital.

"What happened?" my struggling voice asked.

"Stab wound," she answered, now a solemn expression on her face, "A wound from Daubeny of The Mason Order. It's a painful death, his corrupted blade is, it won't be nice, no not at all." she explained, "You saved Agartha today you know."

She gave me a pill, to 'help me remember' so I took it and swallowed it reluctantly.

"When do the effects star-"

I was thrown into a vortex of colours and sounds; as quickly as it had started, it had ended. As I looked around, I realised that I was on a battlefield. Giant stone elementals were hurling rocks and there was the clashing of blades. "You!"

A voice bellowed; the whole battlefield fell silent. Daubeny emerged from a pile of bodies, coated in blood. Shocked whispers came from everywhere, full of fear.

"It's Daubeny..." one voice said.

He dashed at me and swung with his blade. I parried it and performed a riposte. He parried it and his blade came crashing down on me, then from the side and I felt it slash me. I didn't feel much thanks to pure adrenaline. I counter-attacked, overhead, from the side, feinted into a stab, all of which being parried with the elegancy of a swan. I felt his hand on my shoulder.

"You fought well but now you rest." he proclaimed. As I fell to my knees, his sword pierced through my chest. I woke once again in the hospital; I was in unbearable pain. I felt my hand crumbling away and I rushed to the bathroom then instantaneously threw up.

Blood.

I looked in the mirror: the whole right side of my body was crumbling to dust. Once again, I threw up at the sight of it. My hand was now just bone but had stopped crumbling. Now I could see clearly what the sword had done to my body.

I looked back at the mirror and saw I was but half a human.

TO BE CONTINUED...

By Brandon Best

Sylvan

Lyra slowly shifted herself across the wooden floor, edging closer to the bookshelf. It was usually locked up, but sneakily she had memorized the code, after hiding in a small cupboard in the corner of the room, until after her parents had left the room. Climbing the thick, oak ladder, which looked to be incredibly old, she reached across, brushing herself against the dust ridden shelf, and barely managing to reach the book. She climbed down, the book weighing her down due to its immense weight, and she laid it on the floor. Carefully and slowly lifting the heavy, fragile page, she flipped the book open, creating a loud THUMP that radiated around the cottage.

Then it all suddenly happened.

"What do you think you are doing?" shouted Lyra's mom, the anger oozing out of her like a melting ice cream.

Realising her situation, she dropped the heavy book, creating a loud THUD, shaking the entire room, and then she climbed onto the shoddy window frame, which barely held her up, and she shouted with a massive grin, "I'll be back soon!" and as her mother was about to yell a reply, Lyra darted out of the window shouting, "Love you too!".

Lyra ran into the forest aimlessly, trying to keep north, but she found that there were more diversions than expected. So, using her intuition, she looked around for a high place, and... perfect. A hill. She started walking, which turned into a skip, which turned into a run. At this point, the sun started slipping under the blanket of the horizon, and she just wanted shelter.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity of running, she reached the top of this hill. She lay on her back, the blades of grass softly pressing against her skin. Then, realising she wouldn't be able to see when it turned dark, she looked around, but she did not find her cottage, but she did find, a door? She got closer to it wondering why there was just a door of all things in the middle of nowhere. She approached the dark mahogany door with caution, but it all seemed to fade into curiosity. Why is a door here? Where did it come from? Who put it here? These thoughts circled in her head, and she realised it was nearly dark, therefore, she used the door as something to lean on until morning.

Suddenly, a crack erupted from the door; it began swinging open and Lyra began falling backwards. Looking up, it was, day? But it was dark? How? Then, without warning, something came into her vision: it was darting towards her, as if it was being chased, and Lyra got up and observed from a distance. It was a small and chubby, well... thing. She couldn't explain it, it had to be human, but it had pointed ears, and had almost too soft and shiny hair.

Soon the thoughts of realisation kicked in, "Wait, where am I?"

Lyra looked behind her. Turning around, she heard the door was creaking slightly, but as the door came into her vision, it fell before her.

Her only means of escape, the only way to get home, just crumbled right in front of her.

TO BE CONTINUED...

SQUIRREL

A deafening crash rips its way across the forest, followed shortly after by a blinding light and another crash. Delicate snowflakes plummet their way to the grass and cover the ground in a thick blanket of ice-cold snow, making our feet freeze as we hop our way through, desperate to somehow outrun the petrifying sounds of thunder.

At last, we see in the distance, our favourite tree. Its wonderful oak branches that once were home to emerald green leaves were now bare, barren, frozen from thick layers of ice and snow. Swiftly, we all began to scurry up it, a sort of mind-reading bond strengthened between us as we all seemed to know exactly where to go. The crunching noises the snow made beneath us as we ran could not be heard over the cackles of thunder and crashes of snow hurling to the ground. Huddling together, longing only for the warmth of spring, I saw my mother lay down her head and within moments she was fast asleep. I too felt my eyes feel heavy, my body felt as if I could not move even my paw for the world. I began to drift.....
away....
to sleep...

Sunlight pours in from every possible angle like waterfalls flooding the forest. Every tree, every blade of grass, every flower has a delicate highlight of bright gold. I scurry up to the very height of the tree to get a better look and see the emerald grass painted with beautiful shades of red, yellow, blue, and purple, flowers that curl open and bloom in front of my very eyes. As I reach the ground I can smell a soft scent of lavender and fresh flowers, a scent better than any perfume. Looking up, the sky is no longer a monotonous grey but a beautiful blue, filled with birds exploring the awakening of their new world. The grass has grown long and luscious, perfect for running about and playing. It feels soft under my feet, rather than hard and ice-encrusted like it was before. Instead of watching the branches of our tree snap and fall from biting winds, we get to watch them breathe new life and colour into the forest. We weren't alone in exploring our new forest though. We saw owls, peeking their heads out of trees, then gently gliding to the floor like a feather; hares and rabbits gleefully hopping their way through new flowers, bushes and even munching at the grass as if they'd never seen a single blade of grass in years. Joyful songs of new beginnings can be heard as birds alert their friends that at last... it's spring.

The Ancient Inn

I have a splitting headache.

My brain feels as though it is on fire, burning the contents of my head until there is nothing left - as empty as a flowerpot.

I don't know where I am going, I'm just running, running, running. Getting closer and closer to death.

I feel my legs break under me. I collapse to the floor; my stomach wrenches as my fingers feel deprived of skin, like the flesh beneath them is exposed. Exposed to whatever "this" is.

My eyelids feel heavy. I have no choice but to let them snap shut, like a springlock. I dare not attempt to open them, for I wish not to see the horrors of the outside world. I feel a very strong presence loom above me, and my memories fade away, along with my conscience.

It all stops.

Suddenly, I realise I am awake, but I do not know where. I am surrounded by pitch black; the "ground" beneath me feels like water. As I run, it sloshes around as something else comes to my attention. I feel completely fine but I wonder to myself: why am I here? What series of events has led me to this very moment in this very place?

I see a white light. I dare not waste any time. I sprint towards it. I am running for what feels like hours, but then it comes to my realisation that I'm not getting any closer.

Abruptly, the "ground" beneath me collapses. I am falling, falling, falling. It seems as though I had fallen asleep, because when I awake, I realise that I am in a room. I look down at myself.

In awe, I let out a gasp of shock. I have pale white skin. My fingers are long and bony. My body is scaly and rough.

The room I awoke in is well lit by candles, so I can see the roof is wooden and the walls are brick. I open the door and see many more rooms like mine; it comes to my attention that I am in some sort of inn.

I see a ladder, I climb down it and am greeted by a man who looks just like me with pale, white skin, and long bony fingers.

He smiles at me. I smile back. I am engulfed with relief as this is the first person I have seen in what feels like hours. I go outside, but what I see does not engulf me with relief but instead, trepidation...

I. Am. Scared.

TO BE CONTINUED...

By Harry Thomas, 8H1