

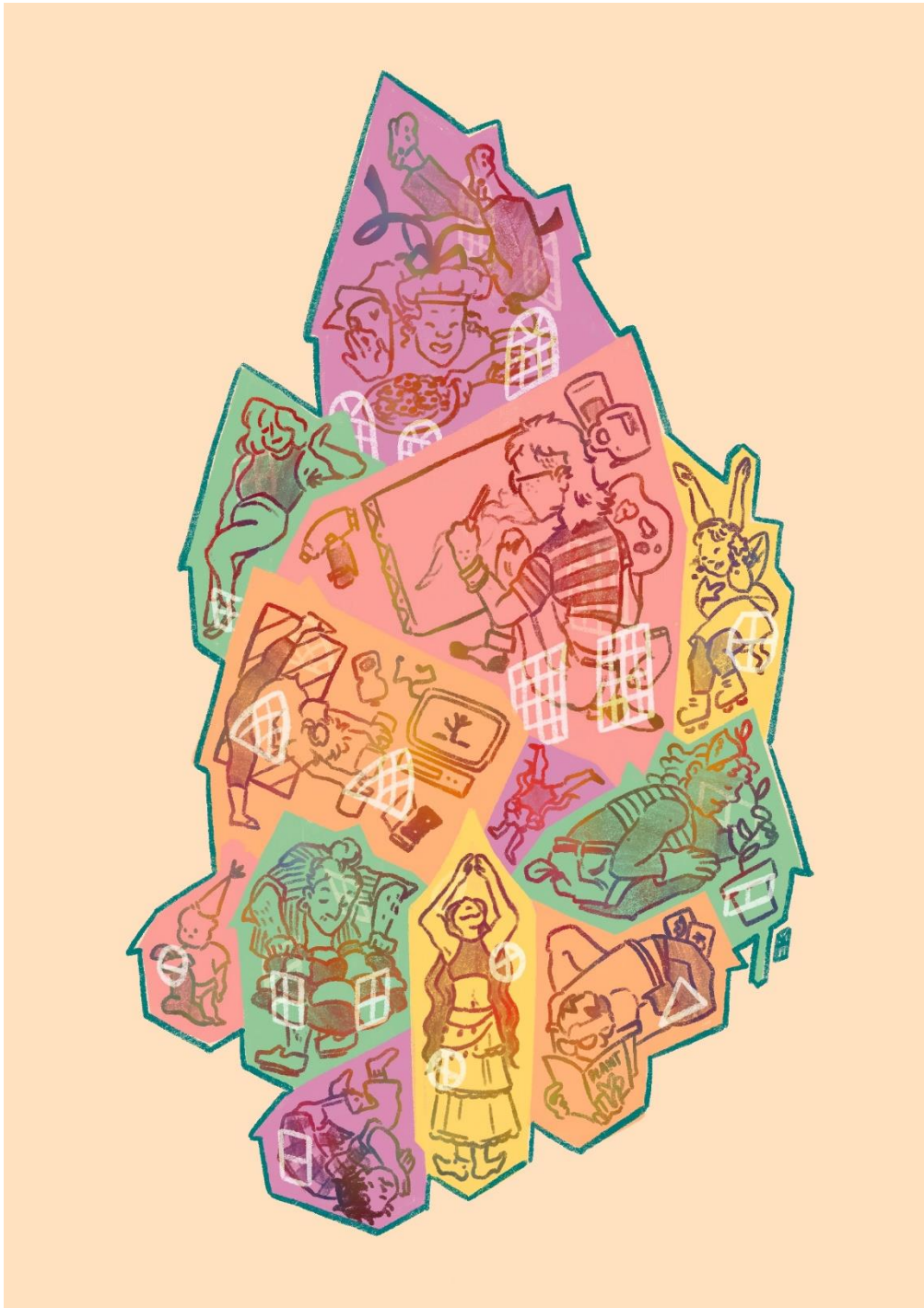
**Fresher**  
The Publishing House for New Voices

# FOUND FAMILY



**RE: FRESHER  
LITERARY MAGAZINE**

**ISSUE 11**



**Building A House Into A Home**

*Leylah Morley*



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This online publication first published in June 2024.

*Design and Curation:*

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Deputy Editor: Jay Caitlin Hildreth

RE: Fresher is an imprint of Fresher Publishing of Bournemouth University in Bournemouth, England.

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# CHOSEN

*Edana Graham*

I thought lost was adrift  
alone in the ocean, but  
lost, I think  
is seeing everyone as no one.  
When faces are blurred into  
an unrehearsed, absurd  
collection of motion—and  
blood is not worth  
so much  
when it's stolen.

Now  
water—reflects  
and I, out in the open  
see a hand reach up and I look  
but it's frozen. Then I go to touch  
this particular no one, with  
a heart I swear beats  
a song I've woven—holding  
to words I've not yet spoken.

And now a face, a name  
a home  
starts growing.

# Pieces

*Tom Moolenaar*

He took the chess board between his hands and snapped it over his knee. Splinters tumbled and dust drifted. The two halves clattered noisily against the schoolyard's concrete, and then silence fell on the cool September morning.

From behind him, I noticed a set of five muddy faces smiling through their gum shields. Their studded boots clacked against the changing room floor as they peered out onto the scene outside. The big lad remained uninfluenced by their snickering. Most bullies preferred an audience, but his square jaw was set with a large frown.

'Play a man's game,' he told me.

I distanced myself from the laughing. Numbly, I went over to the broken board and collected it in my skeletal hands— clean and white save for the brown scuff left by a fumbled rugby ball.

The others were jeering at me now, flicking mud at me from the soles of their boots. They wanted to read my misery, and so I scrunched my feelings into a ball and hid them. I looked at my big brother's chessboard, the greatest and last present he'd ever given me before university had separated him from me. My expression was as blank as the chequered squares themselves, and a deep crack split me open.

'Tape?' The headmaster frowned. 'What the devil for?'

I presented him with the board, and he pointed me to a chest of wooden drawers in the corner of the staff room. I navigated my way over to it and fished out a roll. The ripping

of tape and the crisp slicing of scissors cut through the heavy musk of the faculty staff room. The headmaster and I sat opposite one another at a table, the hastily repaired board between us.

‘It seems that today will decide our best of five, Granger,’ he reminded me. ‘Beat me and it might give you something to brag about to the other boys. Perhaps they might ask you to teach them a thing or two, eh?’

I decided to throw the game. The bell for fifth period rang, and I departed for my Latin class. The headmaster and I agreed to a best of seven on our way out.

A week passed, and the time to decide our best of eleven came. The headmaster arrived late through the door.

‘This is Granger,’ he introduced me as he ushered the new boy in. ‘Granger, this is Thompson. Or are you already acquainted?’

The boy clicked across the room on a set of crutches and sat down opposite me. His square jaw clenched as he stared at the tape covering his handiwork.

‘No sir,’ we lied in unison.

‘I see. Well then, get to it now,’ the headmaster prompted.

The boy’s first words to me last week seemed somewhat ironic now. He moved pieces the wrong way and never went for my king. I decided against correcting him, though – there wasn’t enough tape left to stick me back together. For twenty minutes, we played in silent awkwardness. We took each other’s pieces at our leisure.

‘Checkmate,’ he finally declared.

I looked to find that he had moved one of his pawns to my end of the board, between a rook and a bishop.

I stammered at him 'good game'.

I shook his hand when he offered me it. With the game decided, I shuffled in my seat, nervously picking splintered skin from around my fingernails. Never in my life had I wanted to go to a Latin class so badly.

The headmaster came over to inspect the board. He peered over his thickly rimmed glasses and folded his hands behind his black cloak. He looked up at us when he noticed both kings were still in play.

'What the devil?'

We were to repeat the game. I was to teach Thompson how to play, which made about as much sense to me as teaching a grizzly bear how to knit. By the time I had explained which pieces were which, the bell had rung, and we were off to our respective classes.

As term went on, my perspective on Thompson shifted. Before his injury, he had undoubtedly been at the top of our P.E. class. Whatever the technique, whatever the sport, he was always the first to master it. Unfortunately for me, that talent did not extend to chess.

I shivered in the winter chill of the staff room, my breath floating in front of my face. We were excused from morning PE - more to my benefit than Thompson's. He set down his piece on the tape, which had since had squares scribbled on it with a charcoal pen (Grandfather, I was so sorry).



He smirked at me in the way that he always did when he thought he had done something clever.

‘Um... you can’t move knights like that,’ I corrected.

He frowned at the table, and then scowled up at me.

‘I thought they were horses.’

Suddenly, rugby didn’t seem as painful.

Thompson’s feet were the only quick thing about him. By December, he had finally stopped mixing up kings and queens.

‘Why’d they make the woman stronger than the man?’ He asked as he shovelled roast turkey into his mouth. I winced as gravy dripped down his chin.

‘If I had babies to breast-feed and dinner to make, you damn well wouldn’t find me on the battlefield.’

To me, Thompson seemed just as illogical. As requested, I brought strategy guides to his dorm room, which, if his bunkmates were to be believed, he would grind through all night. Even then, it took him several weeks to implement that knowledge properly in a game. He never made any last-minute comebacks; and he never took the initiative in games. Still, I made sure to reward him for his progress.

‘Checkmate.’

‘Good game,’ I shook his hand.

‘Say, Granger,’ he sprayed potato at me, ‘you always use the same openings.’

Apparently, his bunkmates *were* to be believed.

‘You’re not holding back on me, right?’ He cocked an eyebrow.

‘It’s, um... just a build-up really,’ I packaged the words as smoothly I could. ‘It’d be hard to learn if I just crushed you all the time.’

‘Well, thanks for being so sensitive.’

I picked at my fingernails, waiting for the bell to ring. My stomach growled.

‘I never see you eat,’ Thompson commented.

Admittedly I was something of a beanpole, but that wasn’t quite all there was to it.

‘Other boys push me in the cafeteria. It’s easier to come straight here.’

He nodded thoughtfully.

‘But what would you eat if they didn’t?’

By spring, he was coming in with two meals. He set down a plate of bangers and mash, and I tucked in as we played. Thompson was easy to read. Unlike me, he didn’t scrunch himself up – he was an open sheet, although the only words on show were ‘rugby’ and ‘food’.

Maybe that was why he was so bad at chess.

‘Regionals next weekend, boys,’ the headmaster reminded. ‘Let’s see you both in the finals.’

‘Yes sir!’ Thompson exclaimed.

‘If you make it that far, I might as well let you win. You’ve earned it.’

He smirked. ‘That’s awfully confident of you, Paul. You might not have a choice.’

A corner unfolded from the scrunch.

‘Well then, I’ll look forward to that.’ I smirked back.

My eyes fell back down to the board, and the smile faded. The bell rang, and Thompson, to my surprise, took the board into his bag and left with a grin.

The next time we played was indeed at the finals. By then I was used to the coldness of the gymnasium, the ticking of the clock and the scrutiny of the observers. A man sat in the row of chairs to my right. He had a familiar jaw.

‘Is that your father, Bryce?’

Thompson nodded. ‘He’s come to watch me bring home my first trophy.’

‘Seems like quite an occasion.’

‘It’s practically a rite of passage for my family,’ he whispered. ‘He hasn’t come to see me since I did my leg in, actually.’

I looked down at our board. It didn’t seem right playing Bryce without the tape. It suddenly seemed essential. There needed to be a crack. Why had I forgotten about the crack?

I felt myself scrunch up again.

Bryce’s father was gone when I collected my golden trophy. His son was too.

I had finally won.

I returned to the staff room the next day. Its windows were propped open allowing the fresh breeze to relieve the place of its stuffiness. I stared at the table. To my shock, I found my brother’s board. The wood had been glued, pressed and supplemented with new pulp.

The crack had been repaired.

Bryce sat opposite it, smiling vengefully at me over his handiwork. He crossed one leg over the other. The caste was missing, and his crutches were nowhere to be seen.

I felt myself starting to unfold again. Sitting down to play, I prepared to crush him again, knowing that someday, Bryce Thompson would find a way to flatten me for good.

# May Day to Forever

*Rebecca Mills*

*For Bodil and Ace, my found family*

There's a heat haze upon East Oxford—new-cut  
grass, a whiff of weed, a fainter whiff of river,  
roses drawing drowsy bees.

In the tempting cool of the pond,  
even the fish are lazy in their circles  
so why should a small cat not stretch

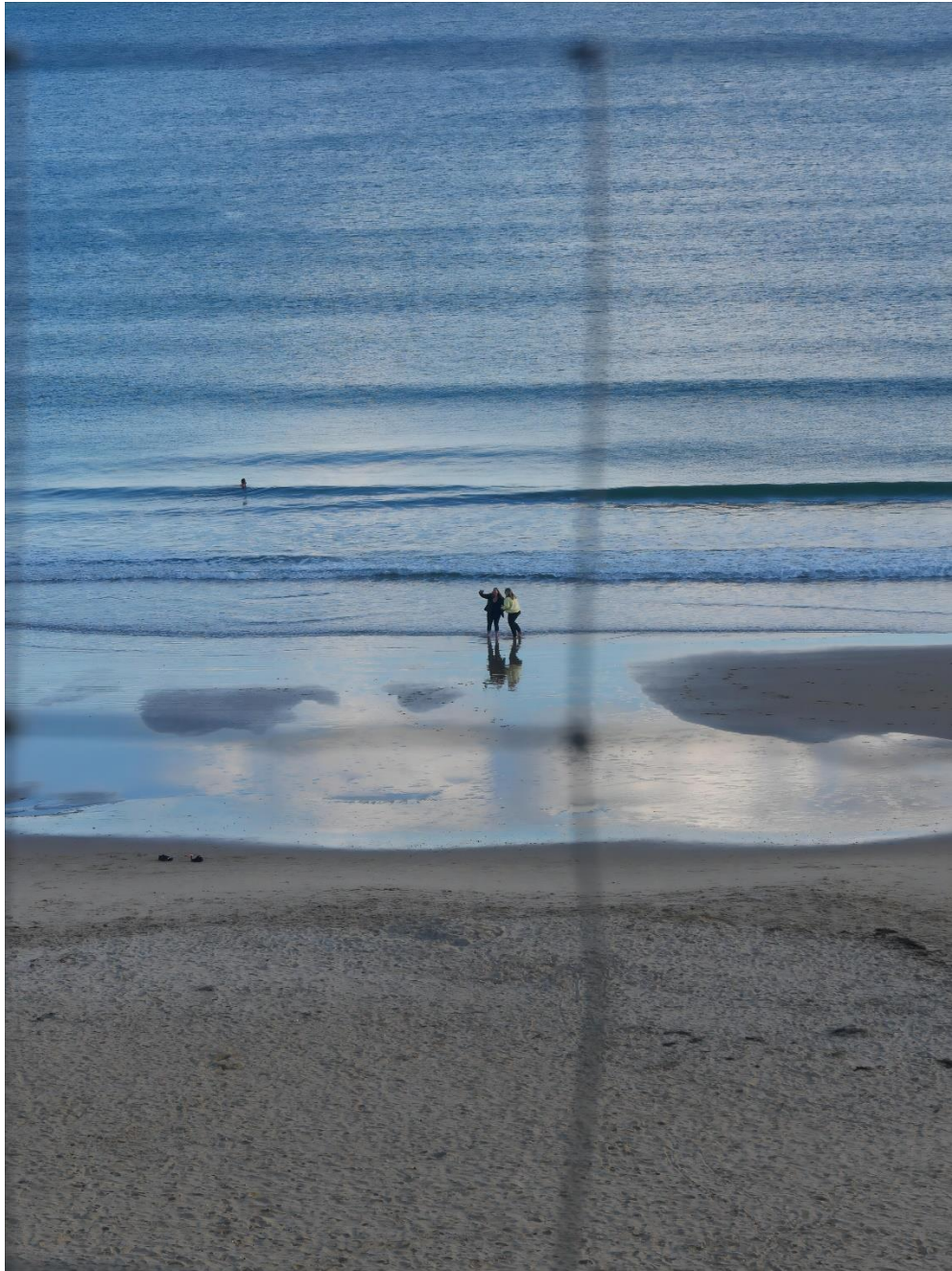
paused

under the redcurrant bush  
in a small glade of dappled light  
deep-breathing roses and grass

frogsplash breaks the  
breezeless silence,  
her worn jodhpurs and his patchwork hoodie  
dangle on the clothesline, still

# Found Family: Two Souls, One Shore

*Shreshta Ramesh Veergandham*



# Brown Boots

*Abbey Woolgar*

Too young to understand why they,  
no longer called me Daddy's girl.  
Men came.  
Wrong ones, weird ones.  
None stayed,  
not one good enough to call Dad.

The time to start my life arrived,  
no longer known by my father's name.  
Left mum alone.  
The one she had,  
was no good,  
too much a mummy's boy.

Mum went birding with a giggly smile,  
she could no longer be single.  
Neat laces on brown leather boots,  
appeared on the doormat.  
With Mum's laugh,  
filling every room.

A wedding on faraway white sand,  
a one-parent family no longer.  
Now, thirty years on,  
I write the card that reads,  
*From the stepdaughter,*  
*you never knew you needed.*

# Lost Until You're Something

*Annabel Lee*

You know when you're not sad, you're not mad, you're nothing,  
Nothing in a way that doesn't hold resentment or fear.

A way where, all you feel is the need and want of something,  
Something someone else can hear.

Can you really feel nothing?

This question rang in my head until the early hours of the morning,  
Lost in the nonsense of not understanding something.

Then, I found her,

She who could hear me, my pain, my mind.

With every sentence she spoke, I felt my emotions unblur.

How could she be so kind?

Nothing was a feeling I felt for some time,

She took that feeling and threw it into the sky.

This person chose me, I can call her mine,

With her by my side, I feel like I can fly.

Is this what they mean by blood only runs so deep?

For without her, my body would be in a heap.

Chosen family and the one I selectively love,

For to her, I am someone she would never put anybody else above.



# SOMEWHERE

*Fabian Naumer*

Footprints in the snow. Fresh snow and old snow, her footprints and someone else's.

Behind her, hers. Someone else's. In front of her, *only* someone else's. Which was good. Maybe. Probably. Maya would've preferred no footprints at all, neither hers nor someone else's. Footprints meant someone else - or *something* else - could stalk you.

They meant someone else was out there, somewhere.

*Well, at least I know there's someone else out there.* She'd been following them for a while, unsure of what she was hoping for.

A meal? A bed? Somewhere to stay?

She didn't know *them*, she didn't know what *they* thought about little girls who wandered through the snow, alone.

*Little girl.*

*He* said she was little, and since everyone back at the Hall agreed with *him*, it must be true. They agreed with *him* a lot.

She also agreed with them. Maybe. Probably. Lucy wasn't sure. It didn't feel nice when they said it, but never in the same way. They were all very clever.

Maya had to be clever, too.

Lucy? Maya. Maya.

She stopped. She blinked, only gradually realising why. There'd been a sound ahead of her. Loud, if you compared it to the eerie silence the forest breathed like sweet miasma. Loud, if you compared it to her shallow breathing.

It didn't sound far away.

Maya wanted it to be far away. Maya wanted it to be close. Maya wanted to be close. Just once, in a way that didn't feel unnatural. That felt natural.

*You're not natural.*

Nothing new, moving on.

Her fingertips growing little flames, she bent her already curved back, tensing up, tense like prey, yet creeping ever closer, ever, ever, closer. Making noise. Impossible not to. Maya hid behind a tree.

It was quite black, as if someone had tried to burn it. It looked pretty. She'd been somewhere else. It was a very skinny tree. Not her fault.

No good for hiding, either.

Fortunately, the stranger was paying very little attention to what happened behind his back. Looked like a man. Very broad, very tall. Lots of hair, most of it black, some of it red - a bit like fire.

Maya liked that. Fire had never tried to hurt her.

Everyone did, eventually.

Some managed, some didn't. Everyone left a scar somewhere - Maya just hadn't found them all yet.

She blinked, forcing her mind and her eyes back to him. No-one else could have made that sound. She couldn't remember the sound. The footprints stopped where he had. Heavens damn her if she knew why -

Nothing happened.

*Well, worth a try.* Maya smirked despite herself, and despite the horror that emotion unleashed in her. That smirk. Too close to a smile. A grin. Too close to laughter. Laughter was bad.

She started to laugh, loudly and hysterically. Just like the kind of little girl *no-one* wanted to meet out here. A little girl selling matches. Lucifers. You wouldn't be so *cruel* as to refuse her trade, would you?!

'You should,' she whispered under her breath, still laughing, still—no, the flames had disappeared. So, she at least had some control left over herself. That was good. She could count on herself.

*Don't sell the hide before the kill.*

They had turned, faster than she would have expected someone of his size to do so. It was a man. Probably. Shapeshifters did exist, after all. She'd seen one, once. The encounter had left her with both fond memories of the disturbing shapes it'd taken in the futile attempt to extinguish the flames and the horror at nearly having fallen for its lies. She had wanted it to be true.

*You are safe, here.*

She had been safe in the Hall, and only in the Hall. *Not happy.* Not that she was happy now.

Curious? Yes, she was curious. And scared. The man seemed to mirror her feelings, his posture slightly crooked so as to suddenly dash forward—or away. His beard looked funny. His eyes glimmered.

*When did I stop laughing?*

'Are you cold?' he asked. He didn't ask *who are you*, or *why are you here*, or *do you need a bed*—in that creepy voice some men, and once her wetnurse, sometimes used. No, he asked if she was cold.

And he asked it as though were genuinely concerned, as though he couldn't fathom how anyone wouldn't immediately want to offer help to someone in need. He looked like someone you could hug.

Maya part ran, part ploughed, part fell towards him, into his arms, into his embrace. She felt both his big hands hold her, gently, caress her back, gently. The axe was lying in the dirt, surrounded by pristine snow. Like a virgin!

Next to him.

Next to her, too.

*I could grab it*, she thought. *Or call the flames and burn through his clothes and his skin and his flesh*. He'd be dead before he could do something about it. Though not before the pain came.

She wasn't that quick, yet.

She didn't want to be quick. She wanted it to stop, all of it. All of it, just stop. Not the fire, not the flames, those warmed her heart, had saved her from death so many times. Had brought her death so many times.

So long, walking, but never freezing. Never had snow or ice reached her heart so Maya wouldn't have had to feel the pain that made her have others feel pain. It was only right. Only just.

*What if this time, it works? What if he lives somewhere safe? Somewhere nice? Pretty, with flowers?* Some smelled nice if you burned them. Wood too, if it came from somewhere special. Never from here.

Wherever that was.

She wanted - so, this time, Maya squeezed back, didn't will flames into existence, didn't do what had brought her loneliness so many times. *Safety. Freedom.* Underneath her mantle, her precious necklace clinked like so many rings. Maybe she could lose it this time? *I choose you*, she thought, looking up at the man.

He was still smiling... if he had ever *started*. It was hard to tell, since back in the Hall, there'd only been smiles.

She shivered.

'Are you cold?' he repeated his question from Heavens knew how long ago.

Maya didn't care. She knew that other people often did, however, and that she often got impatient, herself, so she... nodded, yes, nodded, that would be what he expected, what everyone expected - it was winter, after all.

It was cold in summer, too.

'I was about to fell this tree,' he said, indicating a specimen somewhere behind her or maybe above her. Maya's vantage point wasn't great, still in a hug as she was. Not that it mattered. What mattered was that he felled trees for a living, that he had worked quite a bit already on this fine and surprising day - she didn't understand that one - and that the spirits would surely understand if he spared this tree somewhere behind her or maybe above her for tomorrow.

‘Or another fine day,’ he chuckled. She envied him: for him, any day seemed fine. “You could accompany me to my house if you want to. I live there with my second wife and our children and Uncle Norrin.”

She blinked.

Without her noticing, they had disengaged and started walking, retracing their steps to return to his house. Maya wasn’t concerned with where they were going, or why, as she *wanted* to accompany him and meet his strange family. Uncle Norrin? He sounded like someone you could have a laugh with.

Maya was concerned that she hadn’t noticed. *But then, this is an eerie forest. It’d be concerning if there hadn’t been something concerning.* Which made sense, she supposed... To pry attentive eyes away from the ugly inside of her mind, she asked a question. It was a good question.

It was an honest question. She genuinely wanted to know. “Whom is Norrin the uncle of?” she asked, painfully aware that she could and should have chosen any number of ways to phrase her question but this one. This stilted, fancy one.

He didn’t pick up on it, once again providing her with an unsatisfied fear. Someday, somewhere, *she knew*, this would turn into something very bad, for her and someone else. Someone else, she could live with.

Maybe.

He chuckled, and she did as well, his attitude catching like a bonfire on a windy night. *That was fun.*

‘It’s *Uncle Norrin*. Always. Either that, or you don’t mention his name at all - he’s like that, don’t ask me why.’ He didn’t seem concerned, so for the meantime, Maya decided,

she didn't want to be, either. 'To answer your question: no-one knows. Everyone who passes through, which admittedly isn't a lot of people, what with the main road leading round the other side of the forest, quite sensibly if you...'

He stopped, staring blankly at her.

She stared back. It was funny.

'Excuse me, but I seem to have lost track,' he said - quick to clarify that no, he of course still knew how to get home, how could he forget, but admitting that he couldn't remember what he'd started that other bloody long sentence with. 'You know? It's a pain in the arse, I tell you. Mind like a poorly woven basket. Things just falling through between the sprays.'

He looked expectantly at her. She didn't want to think of it as *down*, although it obviously was, since there was no malice in his eyes. What was his *name*? He was too friendly to remain nameless. Too nice and gentle to disappoint.

He was patient. He waited.

Maya was forced to disappoint him. 'I'm sorry,' she mumbled, 'but I'm not familiar with weaving sprays or twigs into baskets - or into anything, really. It's not something I've come into contact with before.' Maybe poor Houses had them. 'I'm sorry.'

Somehow, his eyes nevertheless lit up. 'Don't you worry! Our daughter weaves the very best of baskets - she learned from my first wife, you see. Oh, she was an angel.'

Dream misted his eyes, and Maya felt herself growing sad and fond too.

'She felled trees like nobody's business... She would love to see you enjoying our hospitality. She always said it was the duty of every house to offer travellers and people in need food and shelter and a place to stay. A family.'

She noticed how he said *people* and - she blinked. Anyway.

'Was she an orphan?'

Maya felt very inconsiderate asking that. Timid. She hated herself. *He's nice; be nice too!* How was one *nice*?

'She became an orphan at five years old, then lived on the street in a big town very far from here. The Heavens conspired to lead her to me and me to her, fifteen years later, and I say my thanks every day. I know she smiles on us and is happy that I have found someone new. Don't be afraid to ask, it's not rude. Promise!' Those last sentences were as though in direct response to her mind.

It felt nice and scary at the same time. Was this how families felt? That there was no need for words? That you could trust one another?

There was no need for words after that, no need for a very long time. Until Maya itched with words and the big man's face was red with effort as they climbed a snowy hill together - he, carrying his axe and heavy cut timber he'd left along the way to where Maya had encountered him.

She hadn't noticed.

'We're nearly there,' he wheezed. Somehow, his spirits still sounded high. He was *happy*. Happy. Maya found that very strange.

She wanted to try it, though.

She bit her lip and hugged herself because she was supposed to look freezing and because she - no, it wasn't fear. There was nothing to fear from this nice, bearded man. A simple lumberjack. Unfamiliar with the real world and with magic.



*Those are the worst, Maya. Remember, remember, never forget: somewhere, out there, folk believes witches should be drowned.* They didn't understand what a great gift her abilities were.

How lucky he'd found her!

How lucky she'd found him! A different *him*, that was. Maya meant the lumberjack, her erstwhile scepticism almost forgotten. Almost. It lurked in the back of her mind, waiting, waiting.

Waiting quite patiently.

Every flower blossomed eventually. The trick was guessing which one would smell nice. And then leave it be. It didn't do to harm beauty. Everyone who listened to wetnurses knew -

'Does she have a *name*, Frank?'

'Bell—'

'No, Frank, I won't stand for it. Ask the poor girl what her name is. It's only right, after she's trusted you blindly.' A short pause, in which Maya became aware of her... surroundings. Walls. Mostly wood.

Some stone. Windows, shut. A door, shut. Bolted, too. Both. Not that it was brighter outside: the white glow emanating from the snow was a lie, reflected moonlight or something else. Eerie. Not from this world.

A visiting priest had once lied to her that somewhere, far away, there were empires where the sun rose and sank every day. Maya'd been allowed to kill him for that insolence.

And then, she had cried. She couldn't quite remember.

Nor could she recall how the house she was now in looked from outside, or how any of her hosts were called - how much time had passed since she'd first met them? Months -

Maya looked out the window.

'Do close it again quickly, will you, Maya, dear?' the rounded woman with the strong arms called over from the kitchen. His wife, if she - yes, his wife. She was very nice and loved to bake and was very strong.

She hadn't noticed yet that Maya stoked the flames in the oven whenever she'd put something in it. Maya liked hearing her say that she was a benign spirit and that that was the reason her bread loafs suddenly tasted much better.

She also never ordered her to do something. They all asked first. It'd been a damp rag to light, but eventually Maya had gotten the hang of not demanding someone to do something.

Victoria had been particularly helpful.

'Maya?'

Like the devils themselves, Vic appeared next to her, right next to her. 'It's getting cold in here. Could you...?' A strange ray of sunlight found its way through the frame into the now cold air of the house, where it bounced off Vic's blond hair like - Maya blinked.

*Like gold, but they've probably never seen any.*

She blinked again, nodded, closing the shutters and then the heavy curtains again. Shutting out the false light, shutting out the winter that was still winter and still the same winter, too, as the one she'd met them all in for the first time.

Vic. She remembered that name.

Peter. She remembered that name, too.

'Let her!' he said, from somewhere else. Maya couldn't see him. She never quite could. 'She's probably a witch, and everyone knows witches need that.'

'Petra! Take that back!' Vic's mother's voice. 'Petra!'

Maya blinked. Not Peter?

'I'm *not*—'

'Yes, you are, I can tell. I'm your mum, so don't you try being smart with me, today. Apologise to Maya. She's probably quite hurt by your mean words.'

Vic had disappeared. Maya smiled fondly when she noticed.

She smiled less fondly when dinner was called and she at a loss to explain how the hours had passed away. Why Frank's wife - Frank! - was eyeing her. Why Vic wasn't sitting next to her but still smiling that pretty, pretty, eerie smile.

Why she smelled smoke.

*Smoke.*

Maya surreptitiously glanced round the table. *Smoke.* Surely, no-one had noticed the tiny wisps of fire dancing on her fingertips?

They couldn't have. They mustn't have.

Nobody had said anything all those months. So long, for so long. Maya *needed* fire. It made her happy. It made her feel safe.

Oh, she had noticed how the men in the house, it was a very big house for a very big family, were looking at her. And Vic. How Vic was looking at her. No-one looked at Vic, even though she was a lot prettier than Maya, who didn't consider herself in those categories.

They'd never mattered to *him*, in the Hall. *What matters is what you do, not whether you look pretty doing it.*

And she agreed.

They were trying to figure out what was *wrong with her*. Clara - his second wife, she suspected - still trusted her, but she, too... She, too, was asking her less and less to do tasks outside.

Or somewhere else than in the main room.

'I'm tired,' Maya mumbled, feeling sick, 'may I excuse myself to my room, please?'  
Sick.

'Now, now, Maya, dear, there's no need to use that kind of language,' Clara said, something like pity entering her voice. "Just ask nicely, like any normal person. This is not a noble House!"

Everyone laughed, but not in a mean way.

Maya went to bed.

Cheeks so red they might as well have been on fire.

She tried to fall asleep, and when she finally did, she dreamed that everyone was assembling outside her door - she'd never locked it before this night, apart from the very first night - whispering. Touching the tips of their knives with the tips of their fingers to see if they would suffice.

A sound! A creaking! Nothing, no breathing.

She tried to fall asleep again, but it just wouldn't happen. She couldn't go on like this. She got out of bed, dressed quietly, crept out her door onto the staircase - which creaked. Maya held her breath.

Then, she screamed.

A figure, in the darkness. Large, big!! Someone else screamed, too. Louder and louder while Maya saw everything turn brighter, like fire.

Outside. Snow. Embers. Her heart beating peacefully.

She had somewhere to go. No, no, no, *no*: she had to go somewhere.

# The Marching Band

*Dina Hussein*

I'm in a marching band,  
I look up and I see sand,  
Bright lights  
Still figures  
Speed of everything quicker  
I take your hand  
It's all very clear  
There's an epic door,  
We hope to never fear,  
Guiding me through I smile,  
Never knew we needed those miles.  
Come together or apart,  
There's no space in my untortured heart,  
I remember it like it was yesterday,  
You and I a family  
But not bound by blood  
But by a marching band in the night.

# Biographies

## Leylah Morley

Leylah Morley is an illustrator based in Bournemouth, having studied BA Illustration at AUB, now exploring her craft through a wide range of mediums anywhere from uncanny comics to intricate 3D models.'

My piece reflects more of a queer presentation of the found family, building up a new family unit through a community that each other can rely on and bounce off of. It's a woven together amalgamation of people from all sorts of backgrounds and specialities, creating a space - which may not necessarily be physical - where everyone fits into a space comfortably.

## Edana Graham

Edana Graham is a creative from Manchester. She is inspired by art in all of its forms; she tries to capture this and translate it into her work, most often poetry. The poem *CHOSEN* was inspired by the ties we do and don't have with those around us.

## Tom Moolenaar

Tom Moolenaar recently graduated from his creative writing course and likes to write during his lunch breaks. His favourite colour is orange, and his favourite dinosaur is the stegosaurus.

His Dad was sent to boarding school when he was young, and this story is inspired by his experience in trying to find a replacement family.

## Rebecca Mills

Dr Rebecca Mills is Senior Lecturer in English and Communication at Bournemouth University. Recent publications include "Far From the Madding Crowd: Modernity, Community, and the Rural Imagination in *Schitt's Creek*" for an edited collection, and an article on the relationship between Golden Age detective fiction and Continental Europe. Poetry is an old love with whom she occasionally toys. She likes cats.

## **Shreshtha Ramesh Veergandham**

As an avid photographer, I have always been drawn to capturing the essence of relationships and connections, particularly those that extend beyond blood ties. The concept of found family resonates deeply with me, as it celebrates the bonds we form with individuals who may not be related to us by birth, but who become an integral part of our lives through shared experiences, mutual support, and unconditional love.

## **Abbey Woolgar**

Abbey Woolgar has four books on Amazon, including two Chapter books, *Abi, Squirrel and the Whole Heap of Trouble* and *The Spin Cycle Squad*; one picture book, *Jasper the Super Wasp*; and her biggest-selling book, *Just Another Mum*, a resource to support parents who have recently received an autism diagnosis for their child.

Abbey brings a sense of fun and humour to her writing to let readers know it is okay to be different and that it is okay to be you. She is a mum to twins on the autistic spectrum and lives in Milton Keynes with her husband and two playful dogs.

## **Annabel Lee**

Annabel was born in Glasgow and has lived across the country ever since. Due to her military father she went to an abundance of schools but has remained consistently interested by one thing. Writing. Through her childhood years she dabbled with musical theatre but found her true passion in comedy writing. Since then, she has somehow staggered her way through her undergraduate degree at Bournemouth University and managed to only receive one piece of feedback containing question marks.

## **Fabian Naumer**

Fantasy and Fantasies: lyrical prose, dark thoughts, pretty words. Lyrics, short stories, novels, and more in German and English. Recently, Fabian has adopted a minuscule pet spider. His name is Ethan. Find him (not Ethan) at <https://phantyre.wixsite.com/phantyre>, please. I like Florence + The Machine.



## **Dina Hussein**

Dina Hussein is a Cypriot/ Lebanese creative professional with a passion for storytelling. Dina wrote, directed, and produced a play called 'The God's Phone.' Right now, she's studying Creative Writing and Publishing at Bournemouth University. She also hosts a show "The Majestic Unicorn" on Nerve Radio, where she interviews authors, gives book recommendations and hosts giveaways.

# Letters from the RE: Fresher Team

*From our Deputy Editor*

Dear readers,

Thank you for taking the time to read all of the incredible pieces in our second issue of *RE: Fresher*, FOUND FAMILY. This was my first issues as Deputy Editor, and I was honoured to work alongside Noe selecting the submissions and putting the magazine together.

Thank you to the amazing writers for allowing us to publish your work, your creativity and ideas for FOUND FAMILY were a joy to read.

This magazine is truly a labour of love, and I am proud to be a part of it.

Sincerely,

Jay Caitlin Hildreth

*Deputy Editor*

*RE: Fresher*

## *From our Editor-in-Chief*

Dear readers,

I have a lot to be grateful for, but I will start with thanking you for reading Issue II: FOUND FAMILY.

We've received incredible pieces, and it was a privilege to give these creators a space to house their work. Our collection is always dedicated to the voices within it.

Found family is the trope of finding companionship and choosing who your family becomes. This is not always (or usually) determined by blood relation, but rather those we spend our time with over our lives. It is the warmth in being 'found' by people who grow to love you, until you are indistinguishable from the term 'family'. Choosing this theme after RELUCTANT HERO's atmosphere seemed like a perfect contrast and explanation of how *RE: Fresher* has grown and been embraced within our communities. I also chose this theme because I believe that in our world around us, seeking unity and compassion is more important than ever.

Alongside our contributors and readers, I'd like to thank Jay, our Deputy Editor at *RE: Fresher* and Dr Tom Masters, our Editorial Director at *Fresher*. Without them, this issue would not exist. Their dedication to this little magazine has allowed it to thrive.

It's been amazing to see this little magazine grow in Bournemouth. I hope you've enjoyed this issue and look forward to the next.

As always, thank you for spending time with us.

Sincerely,

Noe

*Editor-in-Chief*

*RE: Fresher*

**THANK YOU!**

**ISSUE II WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE  
WITHOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS:**

**LEYLAH MORLEY**

**EDANA GRAHAM**

**TOM MOOLENAAR**

**REBECCA MILLS**

**SHRESHTA RAMESH  
VEERGANDHAM**

**ABBAY WOOLGAR**

**ANNABEL LEE**

**FABIAN NAUMER**

**DINA HUSSEINI**

**Fresher**  
The Publishing House for New Voices

