

ISSUE 21  
THE TOWN HERALD

# PHOBIAS AND FEARS

FEATURING COVER ARTIST  
BLACK BIRD KATE  
KATE STAINES

[WWW.ELFTOWN.COM](http://WWW.ELFTOWN.COM)



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**Captain Rachel Black** - Reviews

#### **GUEST CONTRIBUTORS:**

**BlackBirdKate** - Cover Artist, Featured Artist

**LaraJade** - Featured Photographer

**Yuriona** - StockPack contributor

Thankyou also to Jitter, shadow69 & Judith1107 for contributing to our Art and Poetry Corners



#### FEATURES

#### ARTICLES & COLUMNS

#### FICTION

\*\*WARNING - CONTENT ADVISORY, MAY CONTAIN LANGUAGE OR DESCRIPTIONS SOME MAY FIND OFFENSIVE\*\*

#### REVIEWS

#### FUN & GAMES

#### FREEBIES

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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Welcome to another issue of The Town Herald! This time we bring you 'Phobias and Fears', with cover art by [BlackbirdKate].

This time I'd like to ask you if you would like to contribute. Well, would you? I don't know if you know but we have these wonderful pages named Herald Guest Submissions, for those of you who do not want to bind yourself to the Herald, and Herald Hopefuls, for those of you who want a position as one of the Heralders. We would very much like these pages to regain consciousness so please, take a look.

We have added a new page to our labyrinth of wikipages - don't think I didn't hear that groan - but this time it is a page for you. Herald: Suggestions is here so that we can put what you want to see in the Herald... in it. So you see, all the more reason to go and have a look. Insert a bribe here. Go on, you know you want to.

Anyway, I shall let you get reading. Look out for the next issue, which will be published on October 1st and have the theme 'Cards' - so, get your pens ready and give us some guest submissions!

We would like to thank all those who contributed to the Art Corner and Poetry Corner and hope you'll continue to contribute.

'Til next time, ciao. :)

***Chimes***



# FEATURED ARTIST

COVER ARTIST *BLACKBIRDKATE*  
INTERVIEW BY KAIMEE

# FEATURED ARTIST

COVER ARTIST *BLACKBIRDKATE*, INTERVIEW BY *KAIMEE*

**NAME:** Kate Staines

**AGE:** 20

**RESIDENCE:** Brisbane, Australia

**MARITAL STATUS:** Single and flying free.

**CHILDREN:** Oh hell no.

**HOBBIES:**

Drawing for the most part, horse riding and bush walking are great. Fine Dining and Cafe Crawls are always fun with a good group of friends... we can turn that into a hobby can't we.

**STARTED CREATING ART IN:**

2000 I think, grade 8/9?

Artist most inspired by: Everything, honestly! Empty cup of coffee turns into inspiration. So sad really.

**MEDIA YOU WORK IN:**

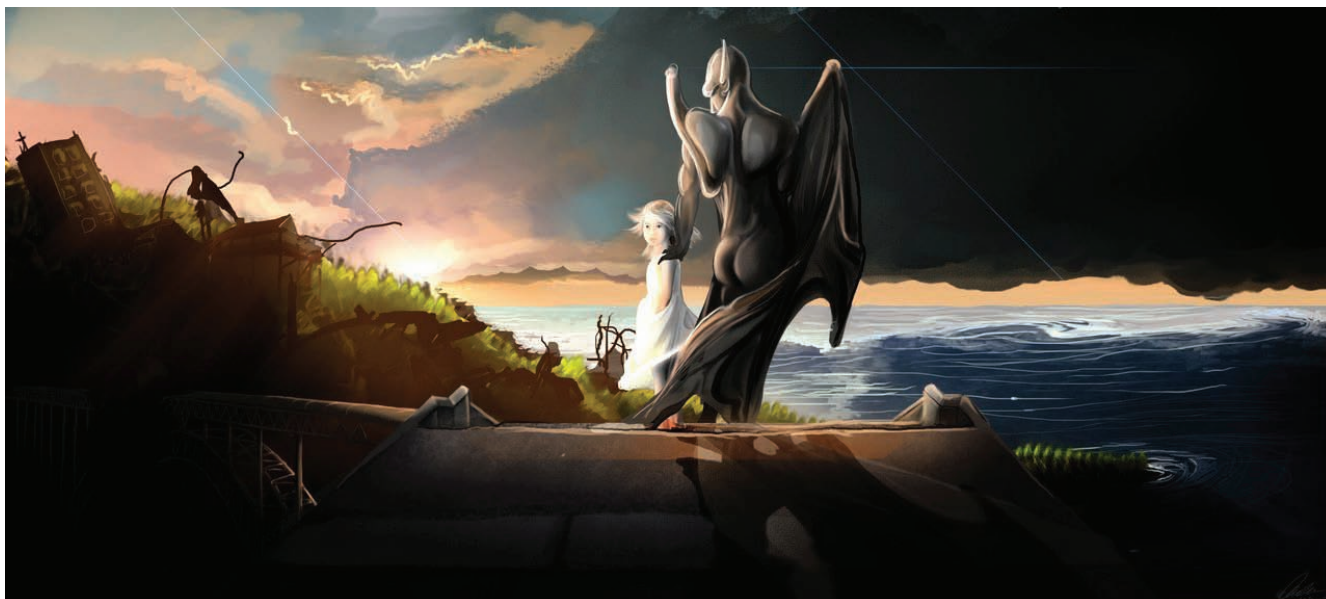
Pencil and Digital are the main favorites.

Where you work has been published or displayed: Only online as of yet, and no official publishing, but looking to change that.

**WHERE SOMEONE CAN BUY YOUR ART, OR CONTACT YOU PROFESSIONALLY:**

Art can be bought through prints on deviantART I suppose, but if you would like to contact me professionally please feel free to send me an email at [blackbirdssong@hotmail.com](mailto:blackbirdssong@hotmail.com)

Website: <http://blackbirdkat.deviantart.com>







**Q: HOW DID YOU COME TO BE AN ARTIST?**

A: It honestly started out as scribbling, especially during math class, and it just grew into a hobby that grew out of control. Now studying it officially for the first time at University.

One of the most noticeable factors of Kate Staines' work is the playfulness of the themes and imagery. Largely featuring animals, her pieces are fun, quirky and sometimes just a little bit creepy, but always exceptionally well rendered in which medium she chooses. Also keep a look out for her signature pied currawong birds appearing throughout her work. These birds are native to Australia, Staines' home, and are a beautiful but unusual addition to her artwork.

**Q: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR WORK?**

A: Describe my work? Ah... that is an interesting question. I'd describe it as scribbles and half formed ideas so I supposed stylised and slightly surreal might be a good term for it.





simply drooling over the published works of the artists I admire. Others great artworks are wonderful motivation.

**Q: WHAT TRENDS ARE YOU SEEING IN THE SCI-FI/FANTASY GENRE?**

A: While the Fantasy genre will always going strong, poor Sci-Fi seems to be left in the dust when it comes to art. Even with the new Star Trek movie (Which is awesome by the way) it didn't seem to revive the genre. Terrible really because there is so much you can do with that genre.

**Q: WHERE DO YOU FIND YOUR INSPIRATION?**

A: Inspiration comes from everywhere, though you can find great things while people watching and reading, animals are also a great source. The more weird and wonderful the better.

**Q: WHAT INSPIRED THIS PIECE (OUR COVER ART)?**

A: Blast from a past this one is, I had just watched Alien VS Predator for the first time, and then went on to watch the Predator movies on their own. Throughout the whole movie, all I could think of was how cute the Predator was and it sort of just evolved into that. It was really just for laughs between a friend and myself.

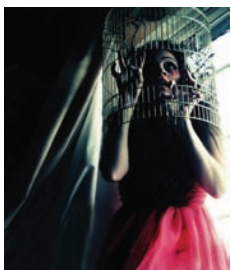
**Q: WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR INFLUENCE?**

A: There are a lot of amazingly spectacular artists out there, and I look up to each and every one of them. I spend hours in Folio books

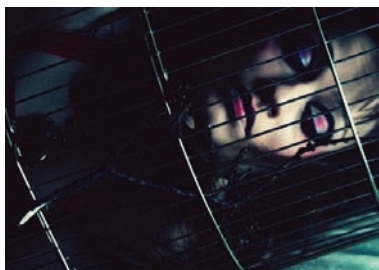


# FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER

LARAJADE, BY CHIMES



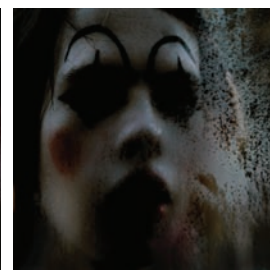
ORNITHOPHOBIA



ORNITHOPHOBIA TRAPPED



COULROPHOBIA



COULROPHOBIA

A lot of artists and photographers do projects involving phobias and fears but sadly we can't feature all of them. So instead, I have chosen one of my favourites. I have long been watching **LaraJade** over at DeviantART, as well as on her website and, to be honest, I think she's fantastic

Lara Jade is a talented British photographer, starting photography at thirteen and having her own company, Lara Jade Photography, at the young age of seventeen. She does both commercial photography and personal photography - her phobias series coming into the latter.

When looking through the set for the first time, I found my own phobia depicted in photo form - I screamed. This is why I have chosen to show you, with permission, some of the photographs from this project. The ones that made me scream are on here, much to my own discomfort, I wouldn't recommend looking if you don't like clowns.

Later there will hopefully be an interview but currently we have to make do without as Lara is, expectedly, a busy person.

Please take the time to look at these images - they really are chilling. You can find the full set and the rest of her work by going to <http://larajade.co.uk>. If you are a member of **DeviantART** and want to add her to your watch list her gallery is here <http://larafairie.deviantart.com/>. She can also be found on Flickr.



# INTERVIEW

WITH *MRS. CULLEN*, BY *KEYSER*

**Q: FIRST OFF, THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS INTERVIEW. AS YOU ARE AWARE OUR THEME FOR THE NEW HERALD ISSUE IS 'PHOBIAS AND FEARS'. AS SHOWN ON YOUR ELFTOWN HOUSE YOU APPEAR TO HAVE QUITE A FEW PHOBIAS. I WONDERED IF, FOR THE RECORD, YOU COULD DETAIL EXACTLY WHAT THESE PHOBIAS ARE?**

A: Suuuure!!

1)Coulrophobia- Fear of clowns. I am totally afraid of them. Evil things...

2)Verminophobia- Fear of germs. Like... really. Do you KNOW what kind of germs there are on a floor? Blah... ewie...

3)Brontophobia- Fear of thunder and lightning. Gak!

4)Anemophobia- Fear of wind. Especially beating against something.

5)Arachnophobia- Fear of spiders. No need to explain....

6)Scelerophobia- Harmed by wicked persons; bad men or burglars (or men in general)

7)Claustrophobia- Small, confined, tight spaces.

**Q: WOW, SO YOU SUFFER QUITE A BIT THEN. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT CAUSED THESE FEARS? MAYBE AN INSTIGATOR IN YOUR CHILDHOOD, OR MAYBE THEY WERE PASSED ON VIA S.L.T BY YOUR PARENTS?**

A: Well, yeah. Most of them are from childhood. I didn't have the best one in the world, so some of the things that happened to me have now turned to in fears. Accursed things...

**Q: WOULD YOU MIND BEING SPECIFIC ABOUT A FEW, IF YOU DON'T MIND? A FEW EXAMPLES?**

A: Nope, I don't mind at all!

Coulrophobia. Aah, my wonderful clown fear. I watched a movie when I was younger once, about a clown running around a town slaughtering people into bits. Blah.... It was a gross movie. And now every time I see one, I am scared it is going to try and kill me. O\_O

Brontophobia. Thunder and lightning... Well... Another one from my childhood. We had a bad storm when I was 9 and my dad and sisters kept teasing me that the house was going to blow away and I would never come back. Yeah, sappy, but I believe it.

Claustrophobia. My sister once wrapped me up in a blanket so tight that I couldn't move. Then she put me into a closet and left me there for over two hours. I screamed my way out! Haha!

Arachnophobia. Spiders...I absolutely hate spiders. Ever since I was younger. I don't now HOW I got it, exactly. Most likely from my sisters dangling them in front of my... threaten to put them in my bed.

**Q: HAVE YOU EVER TAKEN PART IN ANY FEAR THERAPY TO TRY AND HELP YOU DEAL WITH YOUR PHOBIAS? IF NOT WHAT DO YOU DO TO TRY AND CALM YOURSELF WHEN THE FEAR AFFECTS YOU?**

A: No, I have never done therapy to help any of them. I guess I just deal. I'm not sure how I calm myself down. Usually I run and get a book to calm myself. I mostly try and get away from whatever it is that is affecting me. Even if some things are unavoidable.

**Q: DO YOUR PHOBIAS AFFECT YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE?**

A: Certain ones do. But not all.

**Q: OUT OF ALL YOUR PHOBIAS, WHICH DO YOU SEE AS THE WORST AND MOST INTRUSIVE ON YOUR LIFE? IF YOU COULD GET RID OF ONE, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE?**

A: Hmm... I think the worst one would be my fear of men. Every time I see some guy old enough to be my dad, I freak out... and if I could get rid of one, it would be that. I WISH I wouldn't be scared of them.

**Q: OKAY. ON TO A FINAL QUESTION. IF YOU COULD SAY ANYTHING TO OTHER PEOPLE LIKE YOU WHO SUFFER AT THE HAND OF PHOBIAS WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

A: That don't let them hold you down from doing what you want to do. Yes, there are scary things, but with an effort, you can get over them. And if not totally over, not be as scared of them as you once were. There is help out there for when it is really bad. Maybe not always professional, but friends and family who can help just as much.

# INTERVIEW

WITH *HEDDA*, BY AKANE; *IL SANGUE BEVITORE*

*Interviewed on May 23, 2009*

**Q: SO HEDDA, AS THE MAYOR OF OUR LOVELY COMMUNITY OF ELFTOWN WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THESE FREQUENT PROBLEMS THAT ELFTOWN HAS BEEN HAVING?**

A: Blårgh! It's actually 2 problems. One was the crash due to power failure and worn out UPS that made Elftown go down 11:40 to 15:48 on Friday 2009-05-22. That's a fixable problem by buying a new UPS. The constant network problems is however for an unknown reason and therefore not fixable. I've now eventually minimized the problem with a script that restarts Elftown's network in 30-90 seconds after there are no accesses to Elftown, but I still don't know why there is a problem. I suspect that it's the combination of stupid equipment at the ISP, the network code on [Elftron] and temporarily high traffic.

**Q: MOST PEOPLE NOWADAYS SEEM AFRAID THAT IT WILL GO UNDER AND NEVER COME BACK UP. IS THIS FEAR JUSTIFIED?**

A: Not for this reason. The real risk is that Elftown doesn't grow, and then there is a big risk that the quality of Elftown will go down over time as mine and others' interest in it goes down. I'll not suddenly shut Elftown down though. I'm not that kind of person and I'm still having the pretty much dead sites up, just so that people's bookmarks and old stuff still can be accessed. It doesn't cost me much. But if Elftown grows up to about 100 000 active members, I can make it much less dependent on me as a person, which would be good for everyone.

**Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS WHAT IS CAUSING THESE PROBLEMS SUCH AS INABILITY TO LOG ON, PROBLEMS UPLOADING IMAGES, ETC?**

A: See above.

**Q: DO YOU THINK THE PROBLEMS WILL BE FIXED BY THE TIME THIS INTERVIEW IS POSTED IN JULY?**

A: They got sort of fixed yesterday (this night, Saturday-Sunday 2009-05-23), but unless the ISP fixes the network or I find something I can do, I have no idea of how to make it 100%. Now it is 99% OK.

**Q: DO YOU EVER GET FRUSTRATED WITH YOUR DUTIES AS MAYOR? LIKE THESE TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES?**

A: I'm used to it. They are a pain, of course, but I don't bang my head against the keyboard or cry about it.

**Q: SINCE THE THEME THIS MONTH IS 'PHOBIAS AND FEARS', DO YOU HAVE ANY FEARS OR PHOBIAS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?**

A: Except for another power failure, a fire in this house or a burglar in Elftown's computer hall would be a real disaster. I'll work on off-site backups, but due to Elftown's limited resources it's hard. And I don't want to spread Elftown's data to insecure places.

**Q: WE ALL KNOW THAT LILO IS THE TRUE LEADER OF ELFTOWN AND THAT YOU JUST DO HER BIDDING, so does Lilo have any fears? Like giant rats or something?**

A: Lilo is careful about most things actually. Everything noisy, unknown and big.

**Q: WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT TO YOUR FANS AND ENEMIES ALIKE?**

A: Well... If you have suggestions, tell me! Very specific and simple stuff like extra help-texts, a button moved/changed or something like that is very likely to be implemented. If you make a really stupid suggestion, I'll think it's a very stupid suggestion, but I'll not think that you're stupid, so don't worry about that!

**Q: WHAT MADE YOU THINK OF CREATING ELFTOWN AND ITS AFFILIATES TO BEGIN WITH?**

A: I got inspiration from a similar Swedish site. That one hasn't improved though and is still like Elftown were 6 years ago. The wiki idea come from another direction of course, and the merging of wiki and profiles is unique to Elftown. The equally much hated and much loved forums draws inspiration from LysKOM, which is a non-web conference system that never got any big spread outside of Linköping University or even here, but I'm still using it to read news, babble and discuss.

**Q: WILL YOU AGREE TO DO MORE INTERVIEWS FOR THE HERALD IN THE FUTURE?**

A: Of course, I will.

*I would like to thank Hedda for his cooperation in this interview and apologize for the seemingly random questions.*

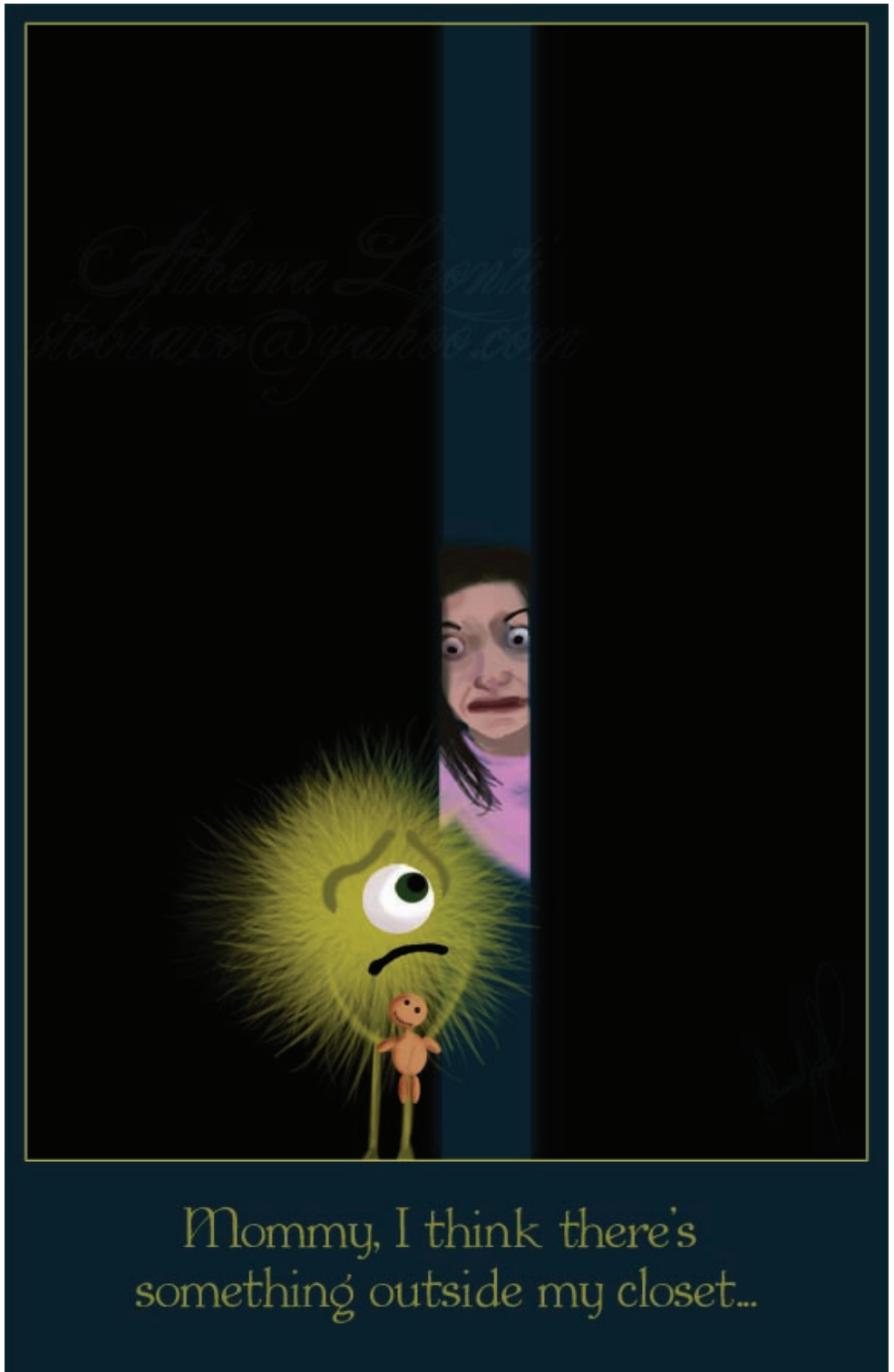
**AKANE; IL SANGUE BEVITORE**



# THE ART CORNER

ELFTOWNER'S ART FOR  
THE THEME PHOBIAS &  
FEARS

This issue we have one  
piece of art contributed by  
Elftowner *Jitter*.





# THE POETRY CORNER

ELFTOWNER'S POETRY FOR  
THE THEME PHOBIAS & FEARS:

## TELEPHONOPHOBIA

Dial.  
Press the damn button.  
Press it.  
Walk from one end of the room  
to the other.  
Shove words out - it's not that hard.  
Honestly.  
Over before you know it.  
Cut the connection,  
breathe out. In. Out.  
You lie: Next time will be easier.  
Sit down.  
Breathe.  
Quiet.

WRITTEN BY *LINDEREL*

## VERTIGO

Like a ropedancer  
  
afraid of heights  
  
standing frozen in darkness  
  
shivering  
  
simply waiting to lose  
  
the frail balance  
  
and through the spotlight  
  
fall  
down  
  
finally shatter.

WRITTEN BY *LINDEREL*

## FINAL CUT

Through the doorway though  
A bit hazy now thy silhouette does not escape me,  
So I evoke thee to come forth and enjoy the show.  
Thou know it to be quite funny as well as me,  
As thou stand there I can even on deaf ears hear  
The whispers of thy happiness and fears that thou try to  
hide  
By shutting thy eyes so that I may not get a peek inside.  
These little rituals are finally getting the best of me.  
Like when I call thee just to hear thy voice,  
Then thou hang up once more capturing the best of me.  
I just want thou to know that I love thee  
And I really did not mind the lip gloss.  
These days are cold and stale now that thou art gone.  
The cold wind hits my face changing the paths  
Of my ground destined tears,  
And my only solace is at the bottom of the ocean,  
The ocean of gaffer and disgruntle disparity.  
So come forth not wishing to dethrone me from my  
Coffin where I lay eyes open weeping as death looms  
Ominously closer for it is too late,  
My vision slowly fades consoling my agony  
With freedom from the misery  
That thou have caused me,  
Freedom From the suffering that has entombed me,  
But rather come forth as the labyrinth figment of my  
imagination  
That I have always known thee to be,  
Bearing the final razor that will be inserted into my heart.  
Let thy excitement not exceed my apprehension my dear,  
For I am doing the cutting this time.  
Do thou swear thy love for me?  
Then where is thy will to thrive within my heart  
Where my guilt resides?  
Very well then my love,  
No beseech shall be laid upon thee,  
But canst thou do what hath besought of thee?  
Where is thy love now?  
Or the razor I have besought thee to bring?  
Forgotten like thy love for my bleeding heart.  
A love that I once possessed like I now possess death,  
Like hate on my heat,  
And for thee...

WRITTEN BY *SHADOW69*

**WICKED GAMES**

I stood in a world where nobody could see,  
Just how miserable I was, no one cared about me,  
I approached people with eager conversation,  
Then everywhere, people dying of starvation.

The world I knew went up in flames,  
But everyone kept playing their wicked games.  
The world was breaking a part,  
But no one gave but even the slightest start.

Then, with a start I sat up in my bed,  
The dreadful images still running through my head.  
And I realised with a sigh that nothing's ever what it may seem,  
The destruction of the world; it had just been a dream

WRITTEN BY *JUDITH1107*

**GRIP OF TERROR**

Ripped down my defences  
Completely

I can't even see you  
Trespassing  
On the land of my dreams  
Without trembling

In fear  
Do many years after

WRITTEN BY *LINDEREL*

**THE FEAR**

Some people fear the deep,  
And some fear the dark.  
Some fear family fights,  
While others fear their hearts.

Some people fear themselves,  
Why, they do not know.  
Whether it be their ego,  
It may never show.

I may fear myself,  
From time to time.  
But maybe the main reason,  
Is that I am running out of signs.

People tend to ask me,  
"What is your greatest fear?"  
I look at them with sadness,  
As into my mind I begin to peer.

I do not need to search for long,  
As I already have the clues.  
My answer will not be wrong,  
As it is the only one I can choose.

My largest fear of all,  
The one that cannot be topped,  
The one that cannot fall,  
My largest fear.. is me.

WRITTEN BY *ATAYEMI*

# WHAT'S NEW IN ELFWOOD

RECENT CHANGES AND UPDATES, WRITTEN BY *SIR. ROBERT* AND *KAIMEE*

*Elfwood.com* - Science Fiction, Fantasy and FanArt Pictures & Fiction

Many people around Elftown will of course recognise Elfwood as our sister site, home to art and writing galleries for science-fiction and fantasy themed pieces, and the place from which many of the original Elftown members came. Of course these days, Elftown is made up of people from all over the internet, and only a fraction joined through Elfwood, so we thought we'd put together some basic information about Elfwood; detailing what it is, and the new improvements that have been made on the site, making it much more user-friendly.

Elfwood has always been a very rule-driven site, allowing only sci-fi and fantasy genre pieces to be submitted, with very strict rules within that category regarding quality and theme. Elfwood also operated in two parts, the primary site with galleries, and the Elfwood Extranet, where artists and writers maintained their galleries, uploaded new pieces, and edited their details. All changes made through the extranet remained unpublished until the member submitted a ticket, that then had to be approved by a moderator before being published to Elfwood. As dedicated moderators always seem to be in short supply, some changes took a very long time to be published, and many artists and writers became impatient and fled to the less demanding realms of sites like Deviantart.com, where the general quality is certainly lower, but changes are instantaneous.



If you haven't visited Elfwood in a while the first thing you may notice is its new look. Elfwood's old graphics and grey textured backgrounds have been replaced with a woodsy theme showcasing earth tone backgrounds. New drop-down navigation tabs at the top of each page, slideshows of the newest mod's choice, and community picks which are showcased on the start page, all help to make navigation around the site more pleasurable for both first time and returning users. One of the other great changes that has been made is a relaxation in the joining process, allowing people to create a user account simply to browse, and add favourites, rather than to submit art or writing.

These newer changes promote more of a community aspect to Elfwood, while still showcasing art, and make it easier to keep up to date with your favourite members and friends, and other active members.

The fresh skin is only the tip of the iceberg of all the changes Elfwood has gone through in recent months. Much of the code underlying Elfwood's foundation has been replaced with new a new modern database driven code. This new code makes the site easier to maintain and allows for many new features to be added in the future.



**CONSIDERING JOINING?**

Elfwood is 100% free and another place where you can post your art, comment on other artist's work, and make new friends!

**MODERATORS WANTED**

And for older members: Elfwood is always seeking new Moderators so if you're interested and you **meet the following requirements**, apply!

- You must be at least 18 years old.
- You must have a published account that have been published for at least 4 months.
- You must have a good record, meaning no major rejections in the past year, for example for copying or repeated rejections.
- You must be willing to give at least 1-2 hours a week to moderating.
- You must have a good understanding of the rules.

The uploading system was simplified during this update eliminating the old extranet system, allowing a wider range of image formats, automatically scaling images which are too large, and generally making the uploading process more intuitive. To upload images now, you simply have to log in to your account at Elfwood, rather than go to the separate extranet site.

Another huge step Elfwood took in the updating process was to tackle the outdated rules. The most drastic of the changes is the addition of an "Other Works" tab allowing for non-genre work to be submitted regardless of theme as long as the images were not stolen, porn, or depict extreme violence. This allows artists to submit other works they have done which may not fit Elfwood's science-fiction and fantasy theme, and should encourage a broader range of material posted on the site. This also tackles one of the primary problems that has been driving members to other sites, as they can now upload all their pieces to Elfwood, rather than having to use those separate sites to publish non-genre work.

Not only were the rules simplified, but the infamous ticket system has been replaced along with the extranet. The ticket system was the way for artists to see where their art sat in the queue for it to be inspected and by the moderators prior to being published on Elfwood. The new system works in the background, and takes into account: time from your last upload, how active you are on the Elfwood site, and if you are a patron. Uploaded art which has not been reviewed by the moderators can be viewed by the owner and is tagged as "unpublished".

# AROUND THE WORLD

NEWS FOR APRIL, MAY & JUNE '09 BY *IMPERATOR*

## **MICHAEL JACKSON**

The “King of Pop” Michael Jackson died on June 25 after suffering cardiac arrest in Los Angeles. After being transported to the hospital, attempts to revive him failed. An autopsy has proved inconclusive as to the cause of death.

## **GOVERNMENT TAKEOVER OF GENERAL MOTORS**

American car manufacturer General Motors filed for bankruptcy after receiving around \$60 billion in government loans over the last several months to prop up the company as its profits go into the red. The federal government is expected to purchase 60% of GM's stock with taxpayer money causing heavy criticism from Republican congress members who view the deal as wasteful and unnecessary spending. President Barack Obama maintains that the deal is needed to keep GM afloat and help it restructure to become profitable again.

## **NORTH KOREA TENSIONS**

Tensions between North Korea and the United States have increased rapidly in recent months due to many provocative actions being taken by the North Korean government. Pyongyang carried out a second test of a nuclear bomb underground on May 25 and it was reported to be as powerful as the one that was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan during World War II. North Korean authorities also arrested two American journalists and have refused to release them on charges that they are spies. In addition, U.S. officials believe the North is planning a long-range missile test aimed at Hawaii raising fears that American territory could potentially be threatened. Adding to the tensions, the U.S. Navy is tracking a North Korean vessel suspected of carrying contraband weapons bound to Myanmar which is ruled by a military dictatorship. If the ship is indeed carrying weapons it would be in violation of recently implemented U.N. sanctions cutting of North Korean arms exports.

## **IRANIAN ELECTION PROTESTS**

Mass demonstrations in the streets of the Iranian capital, Tehran, erupted following the mid-June presidential election in which the incumbent, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was declared victorious over challenger Mir Hossein Mousavi. Supporters of Mousavi called the election “rigged” and took to the streets in mass protests against the Islamic Republic's government which has been in place since the 1979 revolution. The protests quickly spread across the country and became increasingly vocal with hundreds of thousands turning out. In an effort to stifle the widespread disenfranchisement with the government, the supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei threatened the opposition with force if they did not end their demonstrations and unleashed the police and government militia units to stamp out the opposition with brute force. Many were undeterred and continued protesting while chanted slogans such as “Death to the dictator.” Dozens of people have died with hundreds of injuries and arrests in clashes between police and protestors.

In an attempt by Khamenei to suppress the demonstrations, all reporters and journalists have been banned from reporting in Iran and cell phone and internet service is being targeted to stop the dissemination of information by the opposition. Due to the media black out, most information being aired by foreign media sources is amateur video from the streets frequently taken by Iranians on their cell phones. Due to the brutal suppression of the opposition, protests are becoming less frequent yet more are called for by opposition web sites.

# SPORTS SUPERSTITIONS

BY THUNDER CID

Sports are a very competitive business, and athletes always face a great deal of pressure to be at their best. For them practice is not enough, players also need to have a sort of mental edge, which often manifests in some strange and nonsensical behaviors and beliefs. Athletes often perform certain rituals that really have no significance, but not adhering to them will certainly make them worse, if only in their own mind.

One of the most common athletic rituals can be seen in both baseball or hockey. Both have highly unique roles on their teams and are thus very isolated. In fact, isolation serves them well: If a pitcher is throwing a no-hitter or a goalie is working on a shut out, the unwritten rule book says that you do not talk about it, don't even think about it, and never go anywhere near the player working on perfection. Just stay out of his way and be ready to hoist him in the air if all goes well.

Every time a pitcher throws a no-hitter or perfect game, you can be sure to see his teammates falling over one another trying to steer clear of him in the dugout.

One of the oldest rituals began in ancient Rome. Gladiators were careful to always step into the arena with their dominant foot forward. Since then, athletes in all sports have been tap dancing their way in and around their respective playing surfaces. Whether it's a rodeo cowboy saddling up with his right foot first or tennis players avoiding stepping on court lines while changing sides. The world's top athletes have failed to outgrow their obsession with not stepping on sidewalk cracks.

In the days before video games, there was the Sports Illustrated cover jinx. Athletes and teams that graced the magazine's cover were doomed to fail immediately thereafter. However times have changed, and now that curse has been replaced by the EA Sports video game franchise. According to legend, the player on the cover of a Madden NFL game is doomed to suffer a significant injury or perform horribly that very season. Ever since 1999, every Madden NFL cover athlete has been hurt or performed poorly the season of his appearance.

Athletes also perform a cornucopia of bizarre rituals during a play. You can always see baseball players spit into their hand before picking up the bat or having a wad of gum stuck to their hat thinking it brings good luck. Players also believe that lending their bat to another player is a major jinx as well as having a dog walk across the diamond before the first pitch. Basketball players will wipe the soles of your sneakers and bounce the ball before taking a foul shot for good luck.

Even the most relaxing sports have their rituals and beliefs. In fishing you should always spit on your bait before casting your rod to make fish bite. You should always throw back your first catch for good luck. Fishermen believe that the fish may not bite if a barefoot woman passes you on the way to the dock and that it's bad luck to change rods while fishing. But the golden rule in fishing is never tell anyone how many fish you've caught until you're done or you won't catch another.

# SCI FI AND FANTASY IN FILM

BY PIXISH

It's good to see that Science Fiction and High Fantasy are making a comeback to the international film industry. For many people, good films about dragons and elves are usually few and far between, not to mention - of poor quality. Now, it seems as though the times are changing! The film industry has been inspired, and so after some digging, here are some films in development that will hopefully be coming to a cinema near you!

## **ALICE IN WONDERLAND - RUMOURED FOR RELEASE 2010**

Tim Burton is recreating Alice's Adventures in Wonderland for audiences all over the world. His usual cohorts, Johnny Depp and Helena Bonham Carter will be appearing as The Mad Hatter and The Red Queen, amongst other big names like Alan Rickman (The Caterpillar) and Anne Hathaway (The White Queen). There are more faces that audiences will recognise, and one hopes it won't detract from the pure fantasy of the story, and the macabre edge that Tim Burton usually brings to his projects.

See more information here: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1014759/>  
<http://www.dreadcentral.com/news/31840/first-look-tim-burtons-alice>

Interesting Fact: A movie remake of the game, "American McGee's Alice" is also under development, though little information is known at present. The 'Game to Movie' genre does well at the Box Office usually, but tends to rely on special effects and action rather than story line. Let's hope this adaptation will not get the same treatment!

## **PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME - RUMOURED FOR RELEASE 2010**

We are quite easily disappointed in the movie versions of our favourite games. Disney seems to be in charge of bringing this adaptation to the big screen though, so there may be some hope (though they are known to edit original material to suit them quite a bit) Jake Gyllenhaal and Ben Kingsley are two familiar faces and with Walt Disney looking after production, it should at the very least be an entertaining watch - even if it doesn't resemble the game at all in the end.

See more information here: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0473075/>

## **HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON - RUMOURED FOR RELEASE 2010**

Dreamworks will be creating an animated adaptation of the book by Cressida Cowell which kids and adults should both be happy with! (I'll definitely be watching it) Good dragon movies are hard to find, and animation allows fantasy to completely take over without limitations.

See more information here: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0892769/>

Do you know of any good dragon movies? Nominate them by messaging [pixish] and we will make a poll for the next issue.

## **A LITTLE BIRDY SAYS THESE MAY BE COMING TO A CINEMA NEAR YOU TOO!**

Iron Man 2, Robin Hood (Russell Crowe), The Green Hornet (Seth Rogen), The Last Airbender, The Sorcerer's Apprentice (Nicolas Cage) and The Smurfs.

Information from <http://www.themovieinsider.com/movie-releases/-/2010/>



# OVERCOMING PHOBIAS

BY *FLISK\_GIRL*

A phobia. An irrational fear, sometimes triggered by a logical worry that is driven out of control. Then, while avoiding the trigger, the fear grows to include something similar but unrelated. Overcoming this paralyzing fear is difficult for most everybody who has a phobia. However, it is not impossible. A popular method of ridding someone of a phobia is called progressive exposure.

The point of progressive exposure is to gradually introduce anxiety causing situations until the fear is manageable. By introducing items that only mildly provoke anxiety and working up to bigger items, the person can learn to handle the fear.

## **CASE #1: THE HYDROPHOBE**

A girl who was a severe hydrophobe, scared of bodies of water, wanted to travel to a place that was unreachable except by boat. Starting in a small, three foot deep pool, she taught herself to swim. Once that was completed and she was no longer afraid of that body of water, she moved onto a bigger, four foot pool. Here, she did laps until she would no longer panic at the sight of the water. While large bodies of water such as lakes still made her nervous, she could be near them without suffering from extreme fear. Still a hydrophobe, she now enjoys the occasional boat cruise without the paralyzing fear.

## **CASE #2: THE AGORAPHOBIC**

A woman found herself locked in her home because she suffered from agoraphobia, a fear of open spaces. However, in order to do some things, she had to leave her house. With help from some friends, and a blindfold, she would travel to places that were gradually more open, such as large gyms, grocery stores, until they finally worked her up to a stadium. She got more used to it until she could finally travel to places such as the doctor's office and the store when she could not before. While still petrified of large, open areas, she could travel without much problem.

## **CASE #3: THE NYCTOPHOBIC**

Every child's nightmare, a dark, empty room where they are stuck until morning. Nyctophobics are born from children who never overcome this fear. A young man was heading off to college and needed to learn to overcome this fear. Every night he would gradually lessen the amount of light he had in his room, going from the lamp he usually had lit, to a small plug in nightlight in the span of a month. By the time he made it to college, he could sleep in a dark room with just the small light plugged in on his wall. This eased the fear he still held while not being so bright as to keep his roommate awake.

With all of these cases, a simple matter of gradual introduction to fear inducing triggers helped them to overcome the more debilitating affects of the phobia. By removing the natural avoidance most phobics have to any triggers, they are less afraid and more adept at handling the fear.

# PETER PAN SYNDROME

BY LINDEREL

We all know, more or less, the story of Peter Pan; how a young child escaped from this world to the magical one of Never Never Land, there embarking on great adventures, fighting pirates, and never growing older than a pre-adolescent boy. What does this, then, have to do with the topic of phobias and fears, you ask? Everything.

Peter Pan syndrome is, essentially, the fear of growing up, of adulthood. The societies in each stage of a person's life - childhood, adolescence, adulthood and all the sub-categories thereof - have their own sets of rules, and the closer to that third stage one gets, the more complicated these rules seem to become. A child can witness a parent or another close adult dealing with so much grief that he or she will begin to wonder... Why would I ever want to grow up? The responsibilities, the complex relationships, everything will seem impossible and frightening. The child may express a desire to never become an adult, and this wish may manifest itself as a refusal to eat or an excessive need to be held. The problem here, I suppose, is that this behaviour might not even be anything out of the ordinary. If there is a way to tell whether the child truly does suffer a case of the 'syndrome' that will haunt them through the years, I do not know of it. The continued influence of their environment will undoubtedly affect the outcome, whatever that may be. Sometimes - dare I even say, more often than not - the 'syndrome' can peter\* out into nothing as the child grows older.

There's the other problem, then. In some cases, this fear, this aversion, never completely fades. It can get easier at times, but will still be lurking in the background, some deep recess of your mind, simply waiting to pounce and once again sink its sharp little teeth into your skin, refusing to be dislodged. And you will think, I was right. Again, the syndrome can manifest itself in a number of ways, all of which can be accounted to something else - depression, eating disorders, rebellion, you name it. No, ladies and gentlemen, I am sad to say that sometimes, you really cannot get rid of our dear friend Peter, and that life is just as stormy as it looked to be through a child's eyes. Some of us, in the end, cannot deal, having had it too hard from the very beginning. But we all try, and survive, and live, in the hope that one day everything will stop being so difficult.

This is life, my friends, and it is painfully real. The syndrome is real. It was never merely a children's story, and never will be. Are you haunted by Peter Pan's shadow, too?

*\*pun entirely intended*

# ON THE NATURE OF FEAR

BY *LINDEREL*

Fear is a strange thing. One word, one emotion, that ranges from mild discomfort to debilitating, paralysing terror, and sometimes without any reasonable explanation to be given. All animals experience fear, and go into a 'fight or flight' response. Depending on the threat, some choose to fight where others feel forced to flee. Fear of fire, for instance, is something which many, if not most, species have in common. It is also usual to be frightened of predators - beings larger, stronger, or otherwise clearly more dangerous than oneself. This is pure survival instinct, and perhaps, in the end, that is all everything comes down to. What triggers this survival instinct, however, can differ quite a bit between individuals. And sometimes, for whatever reason, this instinct fails us - not by not sending warning bells off in our brain, but by making them so strong that we are traumatised. Phobia, by definition, is illogical.

What are you afraid of? Spiders, heights, foreigners, depths? Open spaces, crowds, confined spaces? Clowns? Snakes? Furthermore, how strong is that fear, where does it come from, and, most importantly, can you get rid of it? Naturally, it is only wise to be wary of certain things like, say, animals that are poisonous or otherwise dangerous, and it is also prudent to watch your step lest you topple off a cliff or something equally detrimental to your health. But when you face the things which you fear, are you able to function?

My own fears, as I imagine is the case with most people, mainly cause me (slight) discomfort. Some of these fears come from some childhood experience, but some are learned from others, ingrained into my own behaviour from my environment; for instance, I never thought much of wasps, bees or anything else that buzzed, but years of watching my older brother respond negatively have caused me to become jumpy as well. While he cannot say the same, I have never been stung.

Other fears of mine are not so easy to deal with. I do, however, occasionally make the effort to heighten my tolerance. I'm quite certain that I will never become fond of crowds or loud noises, and that it will be a while yet before I actually learn to swim, but I will get there. It will require a hell of a lot of patience, but I am nothing if not stubborn when I decide so.

Just some food for thought.

# DARKEST HOUR

BY LINDEREL

The author invites you to write your own twist of this story, place it on an Elftown wiki-page, and link it [here](#). The only rule is that the story must begin with the same sentence:  
'She had never been afraid of the dark before.'

She had never been afraid of the dark before. Always a happy, care-free child, she had gone through life with a friendly smile on her face and a skip in her step.

Until tonight.

Her whole life had been turned upside-down in the space of a mere three hours, and if she had ever been frightened of anything, it could not compare to this. Breathing shallowly, shivering only in part from the cold that seemed to have taken over the house and was even now penetrating the fickle protection of her night-gown, she clutched her pet bunny tightly to her chest and tried to remain as quiet as possible.

She shouldn't, couldn't make a peep. Hidden, sitting curled up into a ball under the staircase, she knew she wasn't far from the very thing she was trying to escape. Deep shadows flickered over the wooden floor, making her hold her breath in horrified anticipation. Why did it have to be so very dark? She couldn't see anything, and the terrible wailing outside, the rattling and the creaking and the steady, violent drum against the windows convinced her that whatever she did, she should not move, not even an inch.

There was a loud crackle, and she couldn't help it; she screamed, a single, high-pitched sound that echoed in the house, and squeezed so tight that the bunny in her arms began a frantic struggle to get away. Her grasp slipped, just enough for the small animal to scramble and leap, making its way further until it disappeared into the shadows. She let out a soft yelp, a sound so filled with distress that she would not have recognised the voice as her own, and stared after her pet. Tears began pouring down her face. She had not thought it would be possible to be even more afraid, but she was, she was, and she wanted nothing more than to get away from this house and the shadows and the ugly, ugly things she had seen only moments before. But there was nowhere she could go. Only the dark, the deep, deep shadows of the house and the terrible wailing outside.

She curled up tighter, put her head down on her knees and squeezed her eyes shut, as tight as they would go. Maybe everything would go away if she could block it. Maybe, maybe... she wished it would. Sobs were wracking her body now, and while she muffled the sound as best she could, she knew they would hear it, because they were listening very carefully, listening very carefully indeed and sniffing her out. There was nowhere to go.

She cried. There was yet another loud crackle, though it sounded more like an explosion now, and she cried harder, shaking uncontrollably now.

A floorboard creaked. The shadows swayed and flickered and lengthened. She whimpered, and did not look up.



# SILENT'S HORROR CORNER

VANION'S STORY PART V BY VANNIE D

## CHAPTER FOUR

*Read the Previous Chapter [here](#).*

The morning sun peaked itself over the horizon as Gabrielle slowly woke, stretching slowly the sleepy girl took a moment to orientate herself before slowly sitting up, reaching over in the bed she was disappointed to feel that Vanion was not there. Sighing softly to herself, Gabrielle swung her legs over the side of the bed and sat there for a moment, remembering where things were, and most importantly, where she was located in the room. Gabrielle let out a long slow yawn and remembered the night before, cuddling up to Vanion, her arms around his chest as they sat there, soft music coming through the speakers, and His arms around her. She was slightly disappointed that he had still not let her touch his face. The door to her left opened and she inclined her head in that direction.

Vanion walked into the room slowly "Ah your up, how did you sleep?" he asked in a gentle tone.

Gabrielle smiled softly "I slept okay, what's the time? I have to go to work today." She said stretching and feeling around with her feet for her shoes.

Vanion picked them up for her. Knowing what she was looking for he handed her the simple shoes "It's about 8 O'clock." He said as she put them on.

Gabrielle froze slightly "8 O'clock?" She asked before she swore softly "I've got to go Vanion, I'm sorry, I had a lot of fun but I've got to go." She rose and found her way to the door, noting that Vanion did nothing to stop her.

Vanion frowned, following her "Why Gabrielle? Why can't you just leave the shop closed for today, You don't have to go...." He said in protest. "Gab's please? Stay....?"

Gabrielle turned to him "Vanion I've got to go, if you like you can walk with me." She said grabbing her cane from where she placed it the night before.

Vanion frowned "I can't. Gabrielle why don't you just stay?" He asked, still pleading with her.

Gabrielle frowned and turned away "Not all of us kill for a living Vanion." She said bitterly before opening the door and closing it harder than she should have. She had left a stunned Vanion in her wake.

Vanion's ears lowered, he couldn't go after her, not in the light anyway, it was dangerous, too dangerous. Vanion slunk back to the couch and sat down heavily. Sitting there quietly for a few minutes until he could no longer stand the bitter sound of silence, Vanion switched on the television.

Flicking through the channels he perused over them silently, Mickey Mouse... A morning show.... A Cooking show..... Tom and Jerry..... The news..... Sport... Vanion stopped, blinking he flicked back to the news.

“Police are still on the hunt for the killer of what has now been counted up to over 30 murders. The unknown fiend ‘The Reaper’ has stocked up another kill, a young woman was found dead in her apartment with an arrow wound to her chest, and her throat slit. Found at the scene was a note signed ‘The Reaper’ and the initials ‘V.D.’ The police are searching through all known records for names of people with these initials. Also in another related case, multi millionaire ‘Seamus Roe’ was found dead in his mansion along with sixteen other bodies, some were considered business partners of Roe. His company ‘Roe and Isaac’ is now said to be folding with all of the senior board members murdered at the scene. An image was taken of the killer who is thought to be ‘The Reaper’” An blown up image was then put onto the screen, it was of Vanion in mid flight over the nine foot wall, it showed his clothing but was exceedingly blurry and only showed part of his face, his left eye in fact.

Vanion lent back in his chair, watching the news he wasn't worried about the name trace, or the photo, they hadn't seen many of his details, and if they did get a clear picture, they would think he was wearing a mask. His mind flashed back to the little girl he had given the necklace too. He froze slightly, would she tell her parents? He could imagine it now,

“Mummy! That's the man I saw outside my window! He isn't wearing a mask, he's a cat man and he gave me this!”

Vanion shook his head quickly, she wouldn't tell her parents, they were arguing when he left, they probably only stopped fighting when they were apart, the little girl wouldn't have a close parental figure.... he hoped.

Vanion moved around the house for a while, cleaning from the previous night and worrying about Gabrielle. His mind raced as he replayed the scene of her leaving over and over in his mind. He was suddenly interrupted by his door, three knocks in quick succession, followed by a single knock. Vanion stood up and looked at the door, he knew what the knocks meant, and sure enough after a few moments an envelope was slipped under his door.

Vanion stood in the kitchen entryway, his tail slowly flicking back and forth behind him, his eyes were watching the letter intently as if he was afraid it would stand up and walk away. Slowly his eyes moved away from the letter and he lent against the door frame and sighed, so much for patching things up with Gabrielle...

Vanion stared into space for some time before the sound of yelling upstairs interrupted his train of thought, Vanion's gaze shifted slowly to the roof as the yelling increased. Vanion did his best to ignore it and walked over to the envelope, crouching down to pick it up. On the front was elegant writing which read ‘Vanion D'ask’. He walked over to the couch and sat down, putting his feet up on the coffee table in front of him Vanion opened the letter and began to read, just as he got past the first sentence, the yelling upstairs had increased even more, now there was the sound of smashing china.

Vanion rubbed his face and continued to stare at the roof, an angry man's voice wafted down through the ceiling. “Stop fucking me around Francine!” The man roared, then a woman screamed out in equal anger, ‘Damn it Bob why do you fuck ME around? Your sleeping with every fucking woman in your office!’ this was followed by the sound of more smashing china, then the man, who was obviously ‘Bob’ roared out in an animal like rage. Vanion frowned when suddenly the yelling stopped.

A few minutes later the sound of a person angrily stomping out of the room then a door slam. A few more minutes passed before Vanion's keen ears picked up sobbing. The woman ‘Francine’ was obviously crying upstairs. Vanion sighed “Christ sake girl.... Leave him already.” he muttered to himself before looking back to the letter.

*Vanion,  
We need you for another job, get your ass down to the bar as soon as you  
can, you're going to be here for a while.*

As usual the letter was unsigned. Vanion got up silently and ripped the letter into small pieces and tossed it in the trash. The sobbing was still interrupting his roof and he looked up at the roof again and groaned to himself. Rubbing his forehead he walked over to the window and opened it slightly before leaning out and looking upstairs at his neighbors window, when he saw it was open too he moved back inside and called out "Francine, come to the window..."

The sniffing grew louder as the girl did as he asked "Who's that?" She called out in a meek voice that was full of fear.

Vanion lent against the windowsill on the inside "its just your downstairs neighbor. I was wondering.... Why do you stay with him?" He asked without pause.

It was obvious to him that this direct question had surprised her somewhat. "I... uhh... you... you heard us fighting?" She asked after a while.

Vanion gave a half chuckle "Francine everyone in the entire neighborhood heard you fighting. So.. why do you stay with him? I mean.... its obvious your not happy."


Her voice came back wavering but still forceful "That's none of your business! Just.... leave me alone!" She yelled out the last bit and slammed her window shut. Vanion growled to himself and shut his own window, angry words stirring in his own mind at the woman upstairs who had now fallen silent.

Vanion's patience was not long, it was one of his faults, he did not have great patience for people, things he could wait for, but not people. Gazing around his home for a bit, Vanion finally moved through to the bedroom and collapsed on his bed. He decided dozing would be good until it was time to leave.

Slowly raising his head Vanion looked at himself in the mirror, another horrible nightmare, another dream where that girl who claimed she was his sister died. Vanion frowned at himself in the mirror, imagining it in the dream, the sneer, the growling, the blood that splashed the walls, the blood pooling on the floor as they reached out for each other, Vanion closed his eyes tightly and when he opened his eyes again... he snapped, Vanion swung his fist hard and slammed it into his reflection, he let out a deep growl as the mirror cracked, he swung again, the crack grew, spreading across the frame, giving Vanion hundreds upon hundreds of images of himself. In his mind they all laughed at him, taunting him. Slowly Vanion lent against the sink, breathing hard, the blood from his knuckles slowly trickling down the side of the white porcelain and into the drain. He must have stared at it for at least ten minutes time before he moved, going straight to his room he began to dress. Today, it was all about the job, he had to focus. The job was all that mattered.

Sliding open his window once more Vanion checked the dark alley below for any movement, when he was satisfied there was none, he leapt from his level and flipped once before landing on his feet at the bottom, the blood from his knuckles already staining the thick black leather glove on his hand. After a quick look both ways to check once more for others, Vanion swept down the alley, becoming lost in the darkness of the night.

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A few hours later the black panther arrived at the bar where he was to meet with his superiors. As he moved past the large man at the door and headed downstairs into the basement, he heard grunting, and cries of pain. Vanion's eyes narrowed as he entered the room unasked. As soon as he did, he wished he hadn't.

Vanion's boss turned away from the being in the center and grinned at Vanion "So.. your here" He said in a slick tone. But Vanion was not watching him, nor paying attention. He walked forwards, loosing all sense with the outside world as he stared at the woman in the center. It was not an ordinary woman.

Large furry ears stood straight up from her head where her thick hair fell down around her face, covering her muzzle and other features. Her large ears were pitch black. She was dangling off the ground by a good inch or so, and her arms were chained over her head. Vanion walked up to her, staring in awe as he saw the furry arms, and paws at the top with the claws half extended. A long feline tail was out behind her, hanging low but still it was there. Vanion was stunned to say the least. Slowly he walked around her, taking in everything he could, her figure, her legs, her exposed midsection. Everything. "Where did you find her?" Vanion asked in a stunned whisper.

Vanion's superior was obviously pleased with himself "That's none of your business D'ask. But... I see she has your attention.. I want you to get her to talk." He said and watched Vanion.

The woman growled "You'll get nothing from me.. you scummy pieces of shit." She hissed at them, her face still low, covering her features.

Slowly, Vanion walked and stood directly in front of her "Make her talk...?" he asked softly, still stunned by the sight of another being like him.

The man at the side nodded "But of course.. she knows where your next target is... Make her tell you." He said with a strange light in his eyes. It was animalistic, predatory.

Vanion blinked slightly and looked away from the girl and to the man at the side "I'll need.. time alone." He said and turned back to the girl, she still hadn't lifted his head, Vanion wanted to reach out and lift it so badly.. he urged to touch her, to talk to her, to find out who she was!

The superior man nodded and smiled "Have fun D'ask.." He said in a dangerous tone before walking out of the room and into another, shutting the door behind him.

# LAND OF THE LIVING

WRITTEN BY NICCI FRENCH, REVIEW BY *KAIMEE*

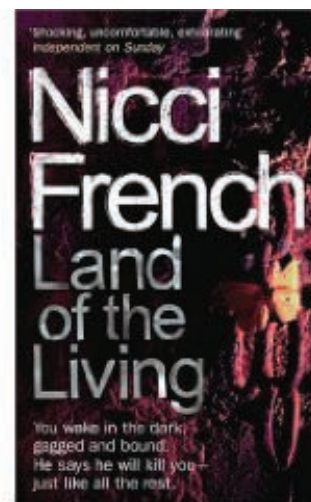
Nicci French is a master of psychological thrillers, creating plots so twisted and terrifying that - in my case at least - the book is often thrown across the room before swiftly being retrieved and voraciously finished. It's no wonder these stories seem to tear you apart; They are written by the two minds of married writing duo Nicci Gerrard and Sean French. These two authors have written together and achieved great acclaim under the pseudonym Nicci French since 1995.

The Land of The Living is the story of a young and stubborn Londoner, Abbie Deveraux, who awakens alone and bound in darkness, unable to remember how she came to be there. Her only clues are the cruel taunts of her kidnapper, who is simply a voice who chants the names of his previous victims to mock her, as he keeps her locked away in the dark. But Abbie has spirit and bloody-mindedness on her side, and as she comes to learn about the other girls she comes to know them, and know their mistakes. She does not despair, instead she counts the moments until she can return to her normal life - the Land of the Living. Through chance Abbie manages to escape, and stumbling and disoriented; she manages to reach a nearby house for help.

Waking in hospital, Abbie desperately tells her story, but since her memory of her capture and escape are so foggy she has no concrete evidence. The police can find no crime scene, and the glowing life she had painted is all lies, she is without a job, a home, a car, and has left her boyfriend. The experts believe that it's a fantasy, a cry for help, and everyone, including her family and her old friends begin to treat her as a paranoid hysteric. The police drop her, and Abbie, shocked at the disbelief and determined to prove her sanity and rebuild her life, begins the painstaking journey of retracing her steps from the last day of her old life. Abbie knows her time is running out, because while she's tracking herself, so is the killer.

Scrambling to discover more of her life over the past few weeks, Abbie is shocked to find out about new acquaintances, new friends, and a new room mate -- who's missing. Not knowing who to trust, and being stalked by the kidnapper who knows more about herself than she does, Abbie faces a world where everyone is the enemy. This is a story of fear, paranoia, and fierce determination. The thriller carries us to a place we didn't expect, a land where instead of investigating the crime, the detectives refuse to. The horror is not that of the dyed-in-the-wool psychopath, but the excruciating tale of a bureaucratic society where the victim is painted as the perpetrator. This is an absolutely enthralling thriller about the strength of will and character demanded to extricate the heroine from her own problem, and to rebuild her life and catch the killer in the process.

<http://www.niccifrench.co.uk>



# CORALINE

WRITTEN BY NEIL GAIMAN, REVIEW BY *CHIMES*

Coraline can be compared to Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, and has been on many occasions, as both contain the story of a girl who is (for lack of a better word) bored. Life gets less boring with a fantastical trip to another world, in this case another version of her world. But whether it is intended to have been real or just the dreamings of a very bored little girl is for us to speculate.

When I first looked at Coraline, I was under the impression that it was a children's story. It is intended for young readers (having won awards for being so...) but it doesn't seem like it is. I suppose when you're smaller you don't read too much into things, it's only when you're older that you see through the innocence and on to the creepy truth.

Yes, Coraline is creepy. But in an intriguing way. I want to read it again, not just because I am a Gaiman fanatic - as I have written in a previous review, I may be really biased. I want to see if I missed anything, or maybe even put my literary analysis hat on...

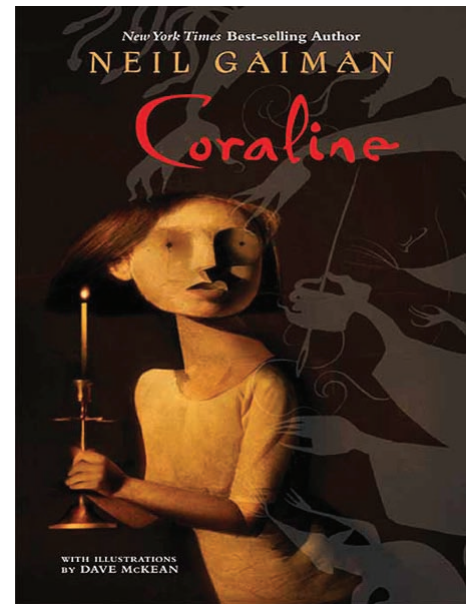
In way of characters, this story is fantastic. If I lived in a creepy old house, I would want Coraline's neighbours. It would be fascinating. Sure, it might not be realistic but in this case it doesn't have to be. If eccentric neighbours increase the desired atmosphere, which I feel they do in Coraline, use them. It's called playing on your strengths. (I really wanted to put a smiley face there but, to me, that seems patronising.)

Plotwise, it intrigues me. There are parts of the plot that could be a little more interesting and a little less cliché but the rest of it makes up for that. The 'Other Mother' in particular. She definitely made me shudder in fear a little bit. Maybe not because I was scared of her but more that she's unnerving. I know she's a character but she also seems to me like a major plot point in herself. Probably because she is...

I'm evidently not the only one enjoying the delights of Coraline as it has been made into a graphic novel, musical and a stop-animation film. I have only seen the latter of the three. I enjoyed it, even though they did create an entirely new character but he works with the story in this instance - this does not mean I would have liked to have seen him in the book - and the plot is altered to make the film longer, I presume. They changed the setting from the UK to the USA... I wasn't too keen on that but it didn't bother me too much. I lived through it.

Coraline does not look as she is described in the book, for example she goes from long brown hair to having short blue hair. Why? I don't know. But it does look cool, I'll give them that. This makes me seem like I don't like it, I do, I'm just very biased towards the book, it is definitely the version I prefer.

The best part of the film adaptation was definitely the soundtrack - this may or may not be because I have an obsession with soundtracks. It has a music box type feel to it, which I love. It also has a lot of small choral sections. It may, in fact, make me drool. I definitely intend to buy it but for now I have found it on youtube. Hooray, for the internet! I would highly recommend listening to the soundtrack even if you don't want to see the film. All in all, I give the novella a 5 out of 5 and the film... 4, I would say. Go watch or read! Or maybe even listen.





# BATTLE ROYALE

DIRECTED BY KINJI FUKASAKU , REVIEW BY *ATAYEMI*

Okay, so one of the greatest fears which most people have is losing their friends or family. However, when looking at the film Battle Royale, we see that the young characters aged from sixteen to eighteen, who are simple school students, must fight for survival. Alas, doing this concludes to the point where the students are indeed, losing their friends and family in the process due to their own past foolish acts.

Battle Royale is a Japanese film directed by the wonderful Kinji Fukasaku. This novel turned film bases around one class of children who have been chosen for a programme because they have boycotted school, physically abused teachers, and have just generally been an extremely rebellious class. This programme results in the students having to kill each other off until one is left standing, and so he or she is titled the winner. Each student is given a bag which contains a map, a small amount of food and water, toiletries (how kind!) and one random weapon. The weapon in each bag can vary from a pair of binoculars, a bin lid, a dagger, or a gun. It's all about luck.

The film contains stunning cinematography, glorious settings, and as much as some have doubted younger actors and actresses, the acting within Battle Royale is certainly believable. Battle Royale is a film about death and at the same time, learning who you are as you learn to believe who you should trust, and who you should not. It is a film about progressing through life from being a child to an adult, and Battle Royale indeed gives off that sense of well being.

However, it is not a film for the fainthearted. Expect lots of blood, screams, and dark, eerie scenes. It is fearful, but at the same time exciting. Many children are killed within this film, although some may find it humorous.

As for my own personal rating, I give this a ten. Simply because it is my favourite film of all time, and it has made me feel that I should not take school or my friends for granted, because as much as this is not real, anything could really happen. But then again, the Japanese are bonkers, aren't they? So who knows?

[www.battleroyalefilm.net/](http://www.battleroyalefilm.net/)



# AWAY FROM HER

DIRECTED BY SARAH POLLEY,  
REVIEW BY *CAPTAIN RACHEL BLACK*

Reality is fragile. So many things can disrupt the normal pattern of our lives or behavior, turning daily routine into chaos and our very personality into something completely unrecognizable. For thousands of people the catalyst in this destruction is Alzheimer's. A disease, like so many, that has no cure, and leaves the victim and their families with a total loss of hope. *Away From Her* is a tragically beautiful film that revolves around the descent of an older woman into the grey fog of mental disease and her husband's desperate attempts to save her from herself.

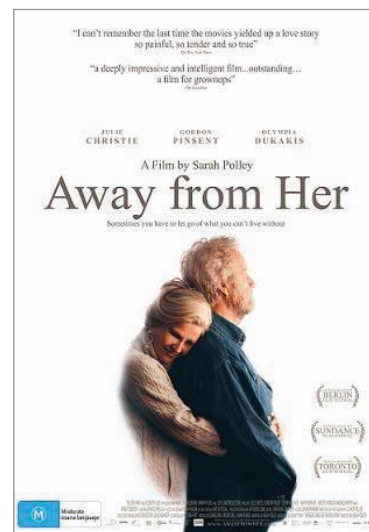
Meet Fiona Anderson (Julie Christie). She is as beautiful now in her age as she was in her younger years. Her wrinkles and fading hair are just a delicate flaw, a reminder of what used to be there so many years ago. It is almost sad that we missed those years, for the movie gives us no chance to observe Fiona unaffected by Alzheimer's. Within even the first scene she benignly places a cast iron pan in the freezer. Her husband, Grant Anderson (Gordon Pinset), says nothing as she does this, only placing the pan in its rightful place after Fiona has left the room.

As things worsen, Fiona fights it every step of the way, labeling everything with sticky notes in a final attempt to avoid the inevitable. Finally Fiona makes the decision that she cannot bear to have Grant, a man she's loved for so long, watch her slip into an unrecognizable vegetable. She has too much pride in herself and too much love for Grant to subject him to the role that so many spouses step into when a loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer's. That of the caretaker. With this decision made Grant and Fiona pay a visit to a care center that specializes in Alzheimer's patients. Fiona, who has not lost any of the fire or will of her youth, forces Grant to admit her. A task he does not enjoy as the care center has a policy that the family may not see the patient for thirty days after admission. The care center says this policy is to insure the patient is comfortable and isn't influenced by the wills or desires of family members. However, a nurse that Grant befriends (Kirsten Thompson) tells him she believes the policy is only there to make it easier for the workers.

The thirty days pass and Grant anxiously arrives at the Care Center. What he finds when he arrives, breaks not only his heart, but ours. Fiona has fallen in love with another man at the center. Not only has she completely forgotten who he is, but she is slightly frightened by his persistence and apparent passion for her.

The remainder of the film is an emotional roller coaster of memories and relationships. It is almost poetically tragic how Grant never gives up in his quest to force the memory of their life together back into Fiona's atrophying brain. But we, as an audience, need to him to keep fighting. That is the drive behind the story, and the force that kept their marriage together.

*Away From Her* is poignant in its observations of loss and hope. It does not stray from its desire to paint a face and story onto the disease of Alzheimer's by delving into religion or lack thereof. There is a time and place for those movies, but *Away From Her* is not one of those films. It is a story that speaks plainly in its interpretations of relationships and the fragility of our self awareness.



<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0491747/>

# THE STRANGERS

DIRECTED BY BRYAN BERTINO,  
REVIEW BY *AKANE; IL SANGUE BEVITORE*

To follow the theme of fear and phobias, I must review a film I just recently viewed on pay-per-view. I thought it might be a sickening thrill ride following in the footsteps of movies like 'Disturbia' and to some extent 'When a stranger calls, the original version' but I was soon sadly disappointed. The entire first hour or so of the movie was spent highlighting the lives of a man who had just proposed to the woman of his dreams, who then in turn denied his proposal. The scenes moved slowly as the movie moved forward and I thought about one hour and thirty minutes in I had rented the wrong movie because there wasn't even a slight hint of the horror I was hoping for.

And then it happened! The woman was standing in her kitchen when you are first introduced to the strangers, a group of people seeming to be a man and two women wearing masks. You find yourself thinking 'oh, this will be good!' But it isn't. The strangers seem to have open access to the home considering the man and woman keep locking the doors and windows and they keep getting back in. The struggle between the two 'lovers' and these strangers is embarrassingly unrealistic. Did anyone think of calling the police? I guess not. They just grab a shotgun and hunker down, accidentally shooting someone they shouldn't have, abandoning the shotgun which could have saved them, and being captured. There was plenty of gore and violence but you would be better off watching a supernatural horror movie instead. At least those have some realistic points to make. In the end the strangers ride off into the sunset and you are left to wonder why you rented the movie in the first place. Had you just wasted an entire two hours on maybe ten minutes of really good bloodshed?

The movie and its lack of creativity were only the beginning. Watching it on a 72" flat screen with the volume all the way up STILL did nothing for the fact that the actors and actresses mumbled the entire time. No enunciation or anything. And there was little more story line than 'we are strangers and for no apparent reason, we are going to kill this struggling couple.'

That movie wasn't a thrill ride, rather than a grotesque gore fest with a minute of cool violence. The Strangers will receive little more than a 2 out of 5 from me.

<http://www.thestrangers.net/>



# TWILIGHT

DIRECTED BY CATHERINE HARDWICKE,  
REVIEW BY *AKANE; IL SANGUE BEVITORE*

Are you afraid of vampires, or maybe just poor cinematography? Well, with the new Twilight movie, you get a healthy dose of both!

For the sake of my review I am going to pretend that I never read the books and am a completely nonpartisan observer of this film. Also, in the film's defense, it was created by an independent film company with a very low budget and with an almost unknown direction holding the reins.

The film itself consists of vampires, a twisted tale of love, and even some shockingly gruesome violence towards the end. As a short synopsis, it is about a girl named Bella Swan who meets a vampire named Edward who seems to hate her at first, but eventually admits that although he craves her blood as well, he loves her too. Eventually, the bad vampires James and Victoria enter the scene and stir up a whole lot of trouble. In the end, the bad guys are 'vanquished' (as you would expect) and Bella and Edward go to the prom. So cute.

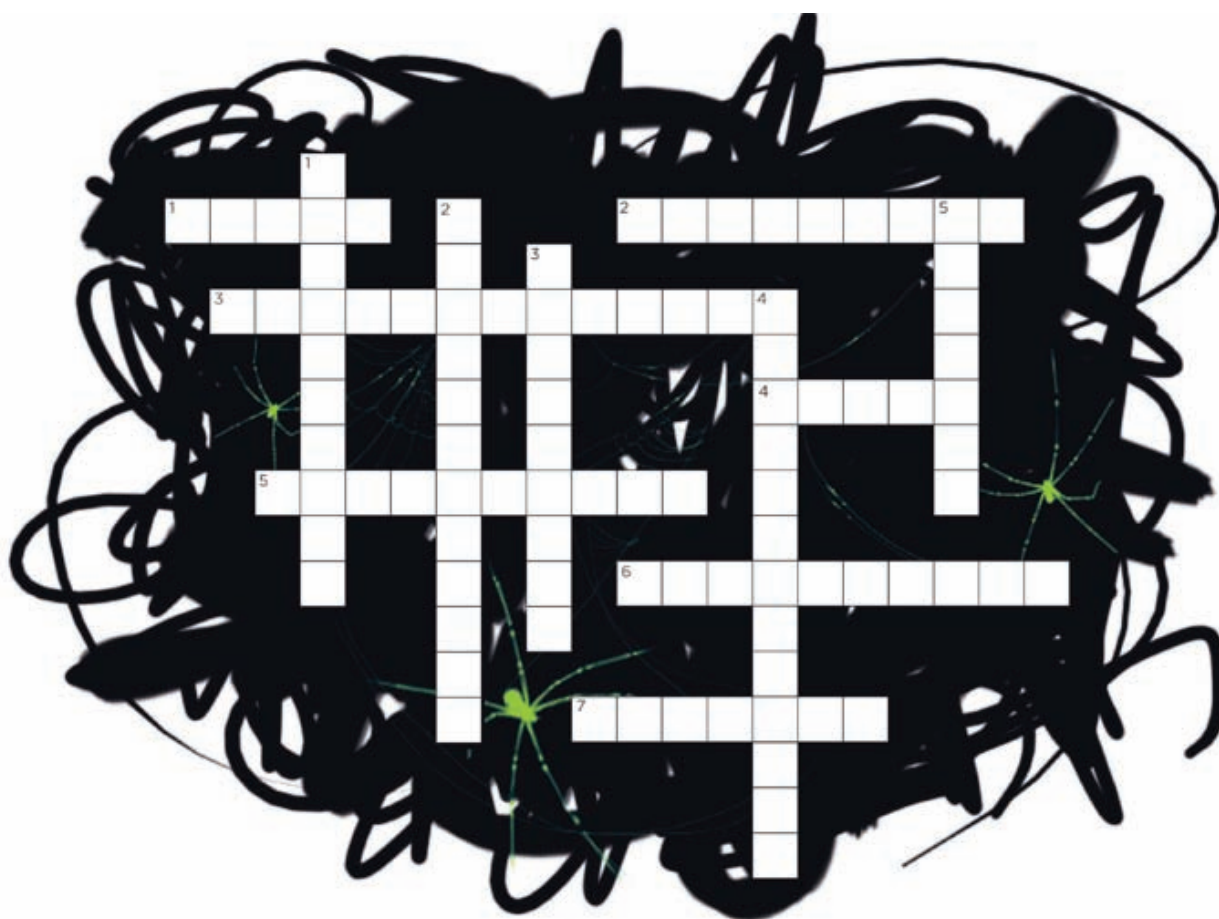
However, the scenes are all scrambled. Speaking as someone who did in fact read and enjoy the book now it seemed almost as if the director placed every chapter title in a hat, pulled them out and lined them up in that new sequence. Because of this blatant lack of development they make Edward look like some kind of stalker and make Bella look like a masochistic, love crazed girl who is easily swayed by a man with piercing golden eyes and auburn hair. They skipped over some important scenes needed for the next few books (like the blood typing chapter), while the scene in the meadow was awkward and seemed almost forced.

The chemistry between the main characters was undeniable but Kirsten Stewert had a tendency to get a little too into her role and stutter and stumble over her lines, and make a bigger scene out of some things than she should have. They did a very good job setting up for the second movie during the final scene and the battle scene was nice and gory, wrought with very good acting on Kirsten's part even though she mucked it up by freaking out later in the hospital.

I will, of course, watch New Moon when it releases, but the 2009 rendition of Stephanie Meyers Twilight will only receive a three out of five stars from me-- and I am most certainly not afraid of vampires.

[www.twilightthemovie.com](http://www.twilightthemovie.com)





## DOWN

- 1 A PERSON WHO FEARS THE NUMBER 4  
 2 FEAR OF MAKING DECISIONS  
 3 FEAR OF BEES  
 4 DISLIKE OF SPIDERS  
 5 WHAT DOES A GEPHYROPHOBE FEAR?

ANSWERS AVAILABLE NEXT ISSUE

## ACROSS

- 1 HYDROPHOBIA IS THE FEAR OF WHAT?  
 2 A PERSON WHO FEARS FIRE  
 3 FEAR OF GROWING OLD  
 4 A GERONTOPHOBE FEARS WHAT?  
 5 FEAR OF BEING WITHOUT A MOBILE PHONE  
 6 ANOTHER TERM FOR OLFACTOPHOBIA  
 7 WHAT DO SPECTROPHOBICS FEAR?





Match The Phobia  
With The Picture



- Coulrophobia
- Androphobia
- Atomosphobia
- Chronomentrophobia
- Arachnophobia
- Gynephobia



ANSWERS FROM LAST ISSUE

ALL WORDS EXCEPT CLOCK CAN HAVE THE WORD PASS IN FRONT OF THEM TO CREATE A NEW WORD:

\*PASSBOOK\*PASSTIME\*PASSAGE\*PASSABLE\*

- BOOK
- TIME
- AGE
- CLOCK
- ABLE

*\*Pastime spelled with two S's to fit nuzzle (spelling mistake)*

PHOBIAS & FEARS



ISSUE 21

K	H	A	G	E	G	E	R	M	S	N	A	M	Y	E	G	O	O	B	I
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R	Y	N	P	H	E	O	Z	D	O	G	S	Y	X	K	A	D	N	R	S
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INTERNET  
PAIN  
INTENSE  
FEAR  
ANXIETY  
ILLNESS  
PANIC  
MONSTERS  
EVIL  
DARK  
NAUSEA  
DROWNING  
GERMS  
BUGS

HYDROPHOBIA  
HELIOPHOBIA  
DANGER  
PERSPERATION  
PARANOIA  
CAUTION  
SPIDER  
CHIPMUNK  
HORRIBLE  
BOOGEYMAN  
PHOBIA  
TERROR  
DEATH  
GHOSTS

TERRORISM  
FRIGHTEN  
SCARED  
AFRAID  
GOOSEBUMPS  
HORROR  
INJURY  
SECRET  
MICHAEL  
JACKSON  
HEIGHTS  
POTION  
SNAKES  
BURIED  
ALIVE  
GUNS



# HOROSCOPES

BROUGHT TO YOU BY *SILVERFIRE* &  
KEPLER'S THIRD LAW OF PLANETARY MOTION.

## **ARIES (21ST MARCH - 20TH APRIL)**

A short, squat, fair-haired person shall come into your life and attempt to engage you in some sort of romantic involvement. It may be your cousin. Forewarned is forearmed, so now may be the time to invest in a new house alarm, change your locks, telephone number, and find a recording of lots of big dogs barking loudly to play any time someone knocks on your door. Your friends may think you've flipped your lid, but at least you won't end up raising inbred, retarded babies for the rest of your life.

## **TAURUS (21ST APRIL - 20TH MAY)**

In the middle of the month you will face a moral dilemma of mind-boggling and heart-breaking proportions, about which if you were forewarned in sufficient detail you could avoid and then she wouldn't have to die.

## **GEMINI (21ST MAY - 20TH JUNE)**

His wife is about to find out about the affair. You should probably leave the country.

## **CANCER (21ST JUNE - 21ST JULY)**

This month there will be plenty of opportunities for you to show off your leadership skills, take control of something and really make an impression on those around you. Cancer is strong this month, and coupled with your brilliant charisma you're sure of success. So when the opportunity arises you should really run for it. If you reach Poland you've gone too far.

## **LEO (22ND JULY - 22ND AUGUST)**

The zombie invasion will begin in the middle of the month. Only you will notice the first subtle signs of their infiltration, and no one will believe you when you tell them. In fact, you probably shouldn't try and tell anyone as they may be a spy for the commanders of the zombie army. Instead you should drive out to the woods to where you've secretly been stockpiling weapons for years and dig them out. You are the only one who can save the world. But it may already be too late to save Australia. Just nuke them.

## **VIRGO (22ND AUGUST - 21ST SEPTEMBER)**

This month cosmic energies reflecting off Jupiter are being magnified by the crystalline elements in the dust of its rings before hitting Venus, which is sailing right through your constellation this month. This means that for July, the resultant quantity or strength of any decision you make is inversely proportional to the square of the distance of Venus from your specific location at the time of making that decision. Unless of course, we're talking about matters of love - in which case sexual tension generated between you and your partner by any move you make is directly proportional to the cube of the semi-major axis of Venus' orbit.

## **LIBRA (20TH SEPTEMBER - 21ST OCTOBER)**

You are going to die.

## **SCORPIO (22ND OCTOBER - 21ST NOVEMBER)**

This month you will stumble across a simple yet entrancing flash game as you browse the web in your boredom, to which you will become addicted. You will spend all your spare time feverishly attempting to beat each

new highscore you set. One day when you have finally retired to your bed at some small hour of the morning to try and catch a few hours of sleep you will awake to find that your pet cat has inadvertently beaten your score simply by standing on the keyboard. In the disillusionment that follows your screen and your keyboard will likely come in to short, sharp contact with each other. This may be the time to sit down and think about whether you'd be better off with a dog.

#### **SAGITTARIUS (21ST NOVEMBER - 21ST DECEMBER)**

You may find yourself feeling lonely this month - either because you're so miserable and horrible that you haven't managed to find anyone desperate enough to stay with you, or because the partner you do have is woefully inept at everything. But since you've been doing pretty well with money this month, remember that you can always resort to alcohol and prostitutes as a solution to your problem. It may be the solution you were looking for, but I assure you it's the best and easiest way for someone like you.

#### **CAPRICORN (21ST DECEMBER - 20TH JANUARY)**

This month everything is going to go right for you - except for the things that don't. You've handled your finances well (except when you haven't), so you may, or may not have some spare cash, which you can use to spend on that mildly expensive, non-essential gadget or accessory you may have been eying up. Unless you'd rather save your money instead. Your relationship is going great, except for the times when it's not. Remember that since Mars is in alignment with your constellation; when you argue with your partner the correct response is not to talk it through rationally or attempt to reach a compromise, but rather to grab the kitchen knife and back them cowering into a corner until they agree to all your demands.

#### **AQUARIUS (21ST JANUARY - 19TH FEBRUARY)**

You are not going to die. Yet.

#### **PISCES (19TH FEBRUARY - 20TH MARCH)**

On the 1st of July your alarm clock is going to break - set an extra alarm so that you're not late. At lunch time the spare change you were going to use to pay for lunch with is going to spill all over the floor - go somewhere that accepts cards instead. For tea you're going to have chicken and broccoli pasta bake, but the phone will ring just as you're about to take it out of the oven, and by the time you get back to the kitchen your tea will be slightly burnt - but don't worry, it'll still taste fine. After changing the battery in the alarm clock you will head to bed at 11:26. For the rest of the month your monotonous life will continue as usual without interruption or deviance.

*Disclaimer: if you feel that our descriptions of the various zodiac signs in no way match your personality, or fortune this month it is more reasonable to doubt that your parents were truthful in telling you when you were born than it is to doubt the authenticity and accuracy of our horoscopes.*



PHOBIAS & FEARS STOCKPACK  
*Click the image to download the entire pack*