

# ELTHAM COLLEGE

## AN ANTHOLOGY OF CREATIVE WRITING

### 2009

*Nothing matters but the writing. There has been nothing else worthwhile.*  
Samuel Beckett



**WRITER IN RESIDENCE KENNETH EMSON'S INTRODUCTION AT THE CREATIVE WRITING NIGHT AT ELTHAM COLLEGE ON DECEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup> 2009**

Good evening and thank you for attending this celebration of Creative Writing at Eltham College.

Tonight you will hear extracts from work that has been produced by the pupils during my time here as writer in residence. Around you in the audience you will see some terrified faces. They will be the writers. It's a feeling that never leaves you. The first performance. Sitting in an audience knowing that soon the ideas in your head that have transformed into characters and in turn language carefully placed on a page, will be read aloud. You might see their face clench and their breath stop as they wait for the moment of high drama or the line they are most proud of, about to be voiced for the first time. As they await your reaction. You might see them smile when a line generates a laugh. Or when a silence fills the room and they know that the audience are feeling the emotion they intended when they sat with either pen to paper or finger to keyboard. These are the moments that make the terror bearable.

I remember sitting with a young writer who I mentored on the night of his first performance and he asked me 'when does this feeling go away'. My answer was 'when it stops mattering to you and that should be when you stop writing'. Whether your intention is to transport your reader to a new world, make them see a particular issue or theme from a new angle, make them feel, make them think, make them laugh or make them cry; it has to matter. Or why would you write?

Over the course of my time here at Eltham College I have worked with a great number of the pupils, we have read new plays together, we have formed opinions on what good writing is and how we want our own writing to achieve that status.

The pieces that you will hear tonight are just a fraction of the fantastic work that I have had the privilege to read and the choices I have made in terms of which pieces have made this night reflect only the need for a change in tone or theme. It was either that or I was going to have to ask you to come in this room, have Mr Pollard lock the door and we all stay here well into the new year. The quality really is that high here at Eltham.

I would like to thank the Headmaster for allowing me this time to work with the staff and pupils at Eltham College. During my residency I have had a play read at the Old Vic, been shortlisted for an award and secured many projects for the upcoming year; so it would appear that the success and prestige of Eltham has rubbed off on my own career.

Anyway, that's enough of me now. I became a writer in hope of never having to stand before large groups of people and speak. I thought that was what actors were for.

As you can see that hasn't worked out so well.

This night is a celebration of the talents of your pupils. I hope you enjoy their hard work.

## **LOCATION**

The following pieces all stem from an exercise I myself had to do whilst training at the Royal Court Theatre. This is an exercise which I believe writers from all disciplines can use to help their writing; describing a room in the finest detail, trying to evoke all five senses within the language.

Within drama location should always be thought of as another character, active and affecting. Not knowing the detail of your location is like not knowing the history of your character. These pieces all create a room where something out of the ordinary could take place; a room where a story could be told.

### **The Witches Lair**

By Daniel Lodge

As I walk up the council flat stairs I had an eerie feeling and a tingling sensation rushing through my body. It didn't help that the banister was covered with gum, so much so that I couldn't even touch it. And of course the lift is out of order, as they always are, so this is the only way to the top floor.

After the long flight of steps I opened the door. But to my surprise the flat was in stark contrast to the stairwell. The room was brightly lit with candles arranged in a neat fashion. The candles seemed to go on forever lighting every corner of the room and exposing the many bookshelves full with books, spells, potions and ingredients. In the middle of the room stood a giant cauldron. One ingredient hanging from its edge from a previously cast spell. STALE PIZZA! Erggggggghhh!

As I made my way out into the corridor I felt a strange presence and suddenly my feet were no longer connected to the ground. I was lifted into the air in this strange corridor where obviously the rules of gravity no longer applied. I tried to take advantage though. That long walk up the stairs had made my legs kind of tired, so at least now I didn't have to walk.

I tried to float into another room but fell down with a loud THUMP! In the next room I saw an old lady with gray dangly hair. Her whole appearance was dirty and gruesome. She had a look that made you want to hurl! But as quick as I'd seen her I was suddenly back outside the door! She must have zapped me. The mystery of whose cauldron it was now seemed clear.

So that was the end of my expedition to the haunted flat.

## **The Horror Room**

By Ruari Paterson-Achenbach

As you come up to the door, it almost seems as if it is moving, like a waterfall, but if you look closer, you realise it is made entirely of green numbers streaming up and down at colossal speeds. There is a handle formed out of these, as you touch it though the door disintegrates in front of you revealing the room within.

The floor you step on looks as if it melts to the shape of your feet as you step, like moulding clay. You can smell a sort of burning, the singeing of something unseen. Then the sound of machines whirring, but none are there. As you look back to the front of the flat where a window should grace the world there is a single pane of glass that is impossible to see through. It seems to be the only real thing in the room, everything else a hologram or cluster of tiny pictures changing every millisecond. As you stare up to the ceiling, it is covered completely in a mass of axes and swords each strung by a single thread; as if they could fall at any moment and slice you into a million pieces.

The floor beneath you is transparent, but you didn't notice it before. Underneath you can see...demons. In their thousands, clawing at the floor beneath, trying to break out. Their mouths full of jagged teeth, ready to bite....

## **The Passage**

By Bayo Bello

My quivering hand touched the cold doorknob. I was about to twist it, but then the whole door fell inwards instantly, like the walls of Jericho, with a mighty uproar. This gave me the view of the house and boy was it ancient! There were spider's webs in the corner as old as my grandfather and cockroaches all over the dusty wooden floor. They had to be wood eating cockroaches as well as they had eaten away most of the boards, revealing the flat below, another dusty flat full of cobwebs and a roach eaten floor, revealing the flat below- THE SAME!

My heart started pounding, heart beat after heart beat. Eventually I came to the scary truth, I wasn't dreaming, this was reality. I know I should have run away but I felt a sense of danger and I LIKED DANGER!

I stepped into the hallway not knowing what I was going to find. I looked down it and saw a room which seemed to be miles away from me – like the sun. Even from that distance I could see the door hanging on its hinges, I headed forward rapidly increasing my pace trying to get to that room that had awakened such a mystery in my mind. Walking through the passageway to the room proved much worse than I had imagined. The dust had built up to create its own empires repelling every move I made. The echoing of my footsteps made me feel much more aware of the danger I would face being alone in that room that had most probably been abandoned for many years. My mouth was dry with anticipation, fixed in a permanent position only changing when the dust forced me to sneeze. I suddenly became tenser; I had finally reached the room. I stood silently looking at the entrance. Taking one deep breathe I entered. My eyes at first went to the rat colony that had taken over the TV, thousands of rats running around, struggling for space. I realised I was in the living room.

Suddenly I hear footsteps behind me. I waited silently, not daring to move, not even to breathe. I crouched behind a sofa, curling myself into the smallest shape possible, hoping I would not be found. The creature groaned in protest as it stalked ever closer towards me...

HELP

I whispered, too scared to scream....

## The Secret Room

By James Robert Schindele

‘Snap’.

My heavy boots crack a splint from the creaky floorboards as I step in front of the old and rusty door. My unsteady hand slowly reaches for the ice cold door knob. A residue of some sort covers it. I can feel it squelch under my hand, bulging out from the cracks between my fingers. I turn the door knob, engulfing it with my hand. It shudders, screeching. The door creeps open. A foul stench greets me as I walk through the almost unhinged door. My eyes flood with tears as the smell grows stronger. The scarlet wallpaper flakes off as I drag my hand across the wall. It displays dusty white plaster. The original colour long dead. I stop, very sharply in the middle of the hallway. The stench was from a dead rat! Laying there right in front of me. A rat’s fly ridden carcass. I wanted to shut my eyes and walk away, but instead just blocked out the stench by closing my nostrils tight with two cold fingers.

BANG!

My head turned. It was the door. I turned back again and slowly crept around the dead rat, trying not to let my eyes slip towards its own spine crawling beady ones that share this room. After passing the rat my legs have a slight spring in them. I move to under the doorway of the next room off the hallway, the bathroom. It is pitch black like midnight without shining stars. My hand reaches for the chain that turns on the light and slowly pulls it down. It clicks on and suddenly the room lights up like the sun on a morning in Africa. But now, I wish it hadn’t! The carpet is green, a sickly green stained yellow next to the toilet from you know what. The toilet seat has been left up rather impolitely allowing anyone who enters to see what the visitor before has left behind.

Anyway, that was enough for me so I walk out of the bathroom and back into the hallway. I step towards the next door, a new smell leaks out, I can’t seem to put my finger on what it is, but for sure it smells bad. I look at the red sofa that has been ripped and sat on so much that it slouches down nearly to the floor itself. In front of it is a rug marked with, I think, dog’s slobber. It is an old rug and smells like fish, but that’s not the main smell that I still can’t put my finger on. It is odd. Discarding that thought from my mind I think back to the final room, the one I haven’t yet ventured into, the bedroom. My heart starts pumping as I stumble through the living room door on the way to the bedroom door. The smell it seems might be coming from here rather than the living room I just left. The door is shut, like the previous occupier didn’t want anyone to know what was in there. Still, my mind is leaping with strange and wonderful curiosity, strengthened by the thought of the forbidden room. So I do it. Turn the knob as quick as I can and the door breaks open releasing a flood of that smell! My heart strangely sinks from my first impressions of the room. Just a smelly single bed with some smelly clothes on the floor, BIG DEAL. Just like my bedroom! But the weird thing is it has no wallpaper, no tables or desks or anything really. Except one wardrobe to which I am drawn. So much so I can’t stop myself as I walk towards it and pull the door open...I almost faint...I know what the smell is now...there in front of me is the remains of a dead body!!!!!!!!!!!!

## MONOLOGUES

The following pieces are all examples of work undertaken on monologues. In my own work I find that writing a monologue is one of the first things I do when approaching a character (whether this makes it into the final draft is inconsequential) as enabling them to speak uninterrupted for a period of time can be key to identifying their voice. Everybody uses language differently, everyone has different patterns, phrases and colloquialisms and it is identifying these which can separate the author's voice from that of their characters.

### **The Crook**

*By Anthony Daly*

Robin! Long time, eh?

Haven't 'ad much time lately, you know, what with the job an' all. Come to think of it, that planning was one hell of an ordeal! Worked flat out twenty hours a day, yes twenty hours sittin' over a cramped little prison desk. You ever tried planning the worlds' biggest heist with just a stone and a tablet in your hand. Her majesty's pleasure! I'll say.

Knowing you, you probably understand, you probably know the score, but still....

Anyway, was the night of 24<sup>th</sup> of July, and you see, the prison Major was becoming an ol' friend of mine, this was my chance. So what did I do? What did I do? I went up to him and said 'Get me out of here in the next 24 hours and you'll be rewarded good' and you know what? Do you know what? He told me to jump in the prison van out of hours and he'd sort it. So that's how I escaped. But I knew as soon as I got out of my cell I'd have the whole UK police force on my case, I mean, being on the MOST WANTED LIST ain't no joke! So I switched identities for the operation. Had some false papers made up for me. Clever eh? That's the mind of a genius at work. So then I went to the hideout to meet up with the rest of the gang and added the finishing touches to the plan that I'd organised right from my jail cell.

The 25<sup>th</sup> came and we were all set. But no! Something always has to go wrong! We had a traitor in our midst. And who? Jonny, Jonny the fool grassed us up to the cops, and when they came knocking he tried scarpering. Charlie found him though and showed him some knocking of his own... but that's another story. Cops couldn't pin anything on us. We're careful. No evidence of the plan at the hideout so the job would still go ahead. Bit risky but what can you do?

Them losers at the bank didn't know what hit them though. You should have been there Robin. Charlie organised it brilliantly. In and out without even an alarm! Okay, maybe we could've got rid of the gun, but we didn't know how it was gonna turn out, we could have turned up and been against 20 bank security goons. Can't speak for the others, but no regrets here. I ain't sorry. Five million in the back of the dumper .

The getaway was something else as well. Loaded the cash below deck on the boat and sailed past customs waving and smiling. That's what I call a plan!

We're living the high life now. Out here in Vegas, chauffeur, hotel, swimming pool to boot. We're set up for life! You should come and join us out here sometime Rob, be great to see an old friend again. Be great to see a friendly face

*Some sirens can be heard in the distance*

## **Living in the past**

*By Nathan Stables*

The days are long and the nights are black. The icy air crawls into this room and adds to the world's already cold atmosphere.

I guess...

I think...

I'm sure they were the only things keeping this place alive.

They gave it colour and life, now it's dark, it's so dark. WHY IS IT SO DARK?

I need to be free, I have to escape, the pain, the fear, the end.

I'm stupid, the crash...it was all my fault.

The way she smiled, saying it was going to be a great night, she was wrong, she was so wrong.

Then he was singing to his favourite song in the car, making me laugh, I laughed so hard I didn't even it coming, damn my eyes, why didn't I see it coming?

Those lights, getting closer and closer, why didn't I see them?

Then she let out that piercing scream, makes me wince even thinking of it now. She was screaming at me to look, to stop laughing, to help, to help... then black.

Minutes passed, hours maybe. My eyes opened and my view was flooded with horror. Her body, bleeding and bruised. His...indescribable.

So now here I am, this cold piece metal in my hands. Loaded with one bullet.

I'm so stupid, why didn't I look, why didn't I help.

Now I can only help myself... pull the trigger...

*He lifts the gun to his head.*

## **Big Al's revenge**

By Noel Fernandes

No, no, no, anything but my shoes!

Why did I use that damn credit card? Why Why? Why?

No! No! Not my shoes! Oliver where are you man? I need you man! My phone, is that my phone ringing? I guess I better pick that up then huh?

*He answers his phone*

Dad? Is that really you? I am good, well not really but you know how it is. How is what, what's her name? Your wife, the one that looked like Linda my pet pig. Oh Cam! That's it. Cam, how is Cam? No, NO! I will not call her Mum. She just barges into our life and thinks she can take over. Wow. She has got some nerve doing that!

Dad, Olly is really sick, my son Olly! Sick as Linda was when I was younger.

*Pause*

Dad?

Dad are you still there?

*His phone rings again*

Dad? Oh Kit! Kit is that you? Finally some good news! I can't believe that's really you. Kit...Kit? Are you there? Have you hung up? Oh okay you want to take the kids. That's great. You want to take the kids well do it, do it. Good bye Erica, good bye Olly and Jake, stay good kids I love you. What the hell is wrong with this phone, they can't hear me, I doubt they even want to...or...or can they? What's that Kit? Big Al's coming? Oh joy! Maybe he will put an end to my sorry life. But not my damn shoes. Don't put an end to them. I got money. I can pay you. I got money on my credit card. I can have a lot of money for you when ever you want just don't take my shoes. I ain't lying. I wouldn't lie to you or Big Al, Kit. I'm a Christian. I go to church every Sunday. Okay, okay, every other Sunday. Alright I don't go to Church, but I'd like to, I've thought about it. I might do.

*He takes the phone from his ear*

Okay. So you found me out. Kit is imaginary. Can you believe it? My six year old son has grown out of imaginary friends yet here I am thirty years old and my only friend is imaginary. There is no Big Al, there is no Kit, there is no....

*Big Al walks in.*

What!! Big Al!! You don't exist!

Whh, wh, what you got that gun for....

## **Farmer Larkin**

By Tommy Walters

I love this place. It's so peaceful here. Just listen to that – silence. Except for the swallows. And that cockerel and the wind whistling through the corn. I've got a good crop this year. I'll be harvesting in a few weeks time.

I hope it doesn't rain, or that any of those blessed ramblers come through and damage the crop. I remember when people knew how to behave in the countryside. In the old days they didn't leave their litter behind. They didn't trample on the crops; they kept to the footpaths. These days they don't have any respect. For me, my farm, or the countryside in general.

Saying that, times are changing all around though. In the old days we did things properly. I hate the heavy machinery we use now. It makes the work easy. I liked getting my hands dirty. Feeling the land in my hands. Feeling myself as a part of it. Those were the days. We used to be a team all working together at harvest time. It was hard work but we knew how to have a good time. That and how to respect the fields.

Yes the times are changing and not for the better I say.

## **The Wrong Hooligan**

By Freddie Foster

*Terry is sat nervously in a police interrogation room, a police officer is standing over him and studying him curiously. Terry has been pulled off the streets for interrogation as there has been a spout of violence in the last few football games at the local club Southampton. He is wearing a Burberry jacket and tracksuit bottoms with a fake gold necklace clearly visible on top of his white t-shirt. He is looking nervous*

Honest guv'nor I don't know nothing. I was watchin the footy from home and then I went out with me family for dinner, I ain't done nothing wrong. It was Gary I promise you that. Gary did it! And now he's framing me you gotta understand, he's always been out to get me. Ever since we got in that argument over the betting thing, honest to god! Ask anyone, they'll say I weren't there as well, ask me missus I was out with her weren't I. I don't even support Southampton, I don't support any team they've played either. I swear guv'nor I swear. Look alright, you can't try nothing on me, I'm not gonna say nothing, all I'm saying is I didn't do it! Please believe me mate, I got a wife and two kids, they're so pretty, you can't send me to jail, you can't. I DIDN'T DO IT!

## **GENRE WRITING**

Being aware of the different vocabulary and styles that fit to different genres of writing is incredibly important. Though some of the best writing subverts the traditional ideas of form and style, I fully believe that you should be fully aware of these ideas before attempting to break them. The next pieces of writing stemmed from pupils studying extracts from 'The Woman in Black' by Susan Hill and 'The Night Before Christmas' by Anthony Nielson, they then had to try to write a short piece within one of these genres, emulating the tone, vocabulary and overall style.

### **A Ghost Story**

By Nathan Stables

Jack slammed the door shut behind him. "I goddamn hate you!" he turned and yelled. Vicky leant out of the window and shouted "well I hope you aint coming back!" but by then Jack had already turned and started walking down the road.

The snow and the cold wind were biting bitterly at his hands and face. He could smell the fresh crisp air. This would normally have made him happy, but not now, not tonight. He had been walking for hours, he could feel the burning pain of the blisters on his feet, but he didn't care, not now, not tonight. He was feeling sick. He finally got onto the main road. He needed to stop, but he didn't care, not now, not tonight. The bright streetlights, the white snow, it was too much, it was going black. All vision was slipping away from him. He fell to the ground.

His whole body was aching, but he could feel something warm and soft. He opened his eyes slowly and cautiously. He was no longer out in the cold. He was in a bed. He had never been in this house before. He got up and went down the stairs. Walking was painful because of his blisters, but he didn't care, not now, not tonight. Downstairs, in the front room, there was an old lady sitting in a tattered old armchair, "Hello dear, how are you feeling?" she said. Jack closed his eyes and scratched his head, "Yeah, I'm fi-" but when he opened his eyes she was gone. Then, from a door behind an old man stepped into the room and collapsed to the floor, Jack went down to help him, but the old man just disappeared. All of a sudden the TV came on behind him. He turned around and there was a 3 year girl sitting on the floor watching the TV. He turned around and counted to three, when he turned back the girl was gone and the TV was off. This was beginning to scare him, but he didn't care, not now, not tonight.

He walked into the kitchen where a young woman was making some soup.

“Hey there sleepy head, this is for you, I hope you like tomato.” She said. “this is pointless, I know that you and your soup are just going to disappear.”

Jack replied. But he was wrong she didn't disappear.

“What on earth are you on about?” said the woman.

“Oh umm, nothing .” he said “And yes, I do like tomato.”

“I found you out there in the snow, so I thought that I would bring you in,” said the woman, “And by the way I'm Emma.”

“Thanks for bringing me in Emma, I'm Jack,” said Jack. Jack felt tiredness creeping around him, begging him to close his heavy eyelids. Eventually he gave in. “I'm gonna go back to sleep, Emma.”

“Oh yeah Jack, stay away from the attic it's, not safe.” said Emma.

Jack climbed up the stairs and crawled into bed. Sleep fell upon him and he welcomed it.

He woke with a jump. He looked at his watch: it was 1:30 in the morning. Instead of going back to sleep , he put on his blue jeans and a white t-shirt and decided to explore. After looking at almost all of the rooms in the house he came to the one door that he hadn't been through. The attic. He could remember Emma saying something about the attic, but he didn't care, not now, not tonight. He opened the door and climbed up.

It was cold, it was ice cold. The attic was just a black room with white writing scrawled all over the walls. As soon as he stepped in a tremendous force threw him into the corner. He was injured, his head was bleeding. Then he heard it, footsteps on the stairs, closer and closer. Then there was Emma, “I tried to warn you, but you ignored me!” she yelled. “NOW YOU'RE MINE!” Her eyes were no longer hazel brown, they were burning red. And her fingernails had been replaced with demonic claws. Emma began furiously attacking Jack. This time he cared, he cared now, he cared tonight.

\* \* \* \*

“Hello, is anyone there?” the man called out as he stepped in to the house. He walked into the front room and saw an old woman in an arm chair, an old man on the floor, a little girl watching tv and a man, standing in the middle of the room in blue jeans and a white T-shirt. Then they all disappeared.

## **GROUP WRITING**

The next extract is a little special in terms of the writing. This piece is the product of a group of sixteen writers that have been working with me once a week at lunchtimes. They have undertaken one of the hardest tasks there is in writing, working with other writers. Writing is often thought of as a solitary profession. Decisions are made alone and without confrontation so what this group have come up with is truly an achievement in itself. I'm not sure if I would sign up to work with fifteen other playwrights! This is the opening five minutes of their play which I hope they will continue to develop and that I will be invited back to see staged in its entirety at some point in the future.

### **Five Rings**

by the Company Project

#### **Narrator:**

Five rings for the gypsy folk, thrust out of caravans to under sky  
Five for Boris and bicycle in his halls of stone  
Five for the British fans always doomed to cry  
Five for the glass eyed man on his ever less safe throne,  
In the land of Westminster, where the shadows lie.  
Five rings to rule them all. Five rings to find them,  
Five rings to bring to them all and in good Blighty bind them  
In the land of Stratford, where the pie and mash sellers lie.

*Sean Hitachi, a reporter for a local paper has somehow managed to get himself trackside for the opening ceremony.*

*Chris Hoy is on his bike in his hotel room.*

*We see the two scenes simultaneously.*

#### **Sean Hitachi**

Come on Sean, don't muck this up. This is your big chance. You've blagged your way trackside. Got an interview with the fencing team. You get this right they'll all be calling for you. The BBC, Channel 4, ITV...well maybe not ITV but to be honest who watches ITV nowadays. Just keep your head down. Cover the essentials. Smile for the cameras. And what ever you do don't mention the gypsies.  
Don't think about the gypsies Sean.  
I know they are important.  
I know that you care about them.  
I know that no one is going to cover them in the main news and you could be their only voice but don't mention them Sean.  
Think of the job offers.  
Think of the new life.  
Think of the....  
Wait a second. stop talking to yourself YOUR GOING LIVE NOW!

This is Stratford News and we're coming live from the opening ceremony of the 2012 games

**Chris Hoy**

Another day on this bike.

**Sean Hitachi**

Where groups of travellers are staging a protest about their re-housing due to Olympic site

**Chris Hoy**

Another day of expectation

**Sean Hitachi**

Mayor Boris Johnson was unavailable for a comment earlier

**Chris Hoy**

The wheel goes round

**Sean Hitachi**

But his predecessor Ken Livingstone did say he blames the new administration

**Chris Hoy**

And round

**Sean Hitachi**

British medal hopes are high with Chris Hoy once again favourite to claim gold in at least one of the cycling events

**Chris Hoy**

I'm beginning to feel the pressure. After the last Olympics people just expect the same from me every time, gold medals round my neck, big smiles and visits to the Queen. But anything can happen out here on the track. They don't understand. A slip on the pedal. Collision with someone else. Every decision is happening in a split second, no time, no time. I'm already half way through the race every night in my dreams. Must pedal harder. Faster. Must beat them. Must win. Must win. Must pedal faster keep them cheering, keep them smiling. Oh god that's the bell for the last lap only a small distance to go. Wait a minute, am I in first place? Or am I last by a long way? Can't tell. Can't make sense of it. Panic. Feel the speed starting to drift away. See the smiles turning to frowns. People booing. I've let them down. I've let all of them down.

*beat*

Then I wake up.

**Sean Hitachi**

Yes Chris Hoy a sure fire, shoe in, dead cert of a medallist this year. If my paper paid me more I'd have a little flutter on him myself.

However the story that has gripped the nation in the build up to these games is the rise from no where of the triple medal hope from our fencing team. Britain hasn't seen a medal from fencing in a long time and really wasn't expecting to from this games. But the team comprising of Tim Cowbury, Ronny Scott and Harry Rogers from Leytonstone have surprised everyone in the lead up to these games.

*The Team GB fencing team step forward. They are off mics so cannot be heard by the rest of the crowd*

**Tim**

Shut up

**Ronny**

I will not shut up

**Tim**

Not now

**Ronny**

When then?

**Harry**

I don't know if you've noticed but we are in front of ten thousand people guys. Not to mention a global television audience of ...

**Ronny**

I'm just saying

**Harry**

Think about the sponsorship deals

**Ronny**

It doesn't feel right

**Harry**

Harry Rogers – modern day Zorro. Adverts. Television appearances. Ten years time appearing on 'I'm a washed up sports star get me a paycheck'

**Ronny**

Without Calum.

The four musketeers

**Tim**

It was three musketeers you idiot

**Ronny**

That was what made it ironic.

**Tim**

He died five years ago. It's not my fault. I miss him too. But now is definitely not the time to bring this up.

**Ronny**

What about the letter I received?

**Tim**

What about it?

**Ronny**

It said that they knew?

**Tim**

Knew what?

**Harry**

Sounds like something from a dodgy horror film

**Ronny**

I'm just saying you two never even mention him anymore?

**Tim**

That's because this is an important time Ronny

**Harry**

We've got to concentrate mate. This is our chance.

**Ronny**

Without him we wouldn't even be here. You remember five years ago? The Leytonstone eliminator? When he won the last bout? That was what made us. We would be nothing without him.

**Harry**

But he's gone now mate.

You need to let it go.

**Tim**

we miss him too.

**Harry**

We'll go and visit his grave once the games are over

**Tim**

Yeah.

**Harry**

But there are 50 million people expecting us to smile now so stop talking and look at camera two!

*Back to Sean Hitachi.*

**Sean Hitachi**

So the opening ceremony is drawing to a close now and what a wonderful spectacle it was. I have to admit that I'm just happy the flame didn't go out on the torch and that Boris managed to do up his suit jacket. We'll be returning to trackside after the commercials for an exclusive interview with the GB Fencing team...

Wait.

There's something on the track?

Can we get a close up of that?

*The Ghost of the dead Fencer Calum is walking calmly along the track. No one can see him apart from Sean.*

Can you see that guys?

Can you make that out?

What is that?

**BLACKOUT**

## **SHORT PLAYS - NIGHTFALL**

The next piece is the opening scene from Alexei Aneychik's exciting new play Nightfall. Alexei's writing immediately grabbed my attention as it had a particular use of language and style that seems different from much of the new work I read. I think one of the biggest challenges for a writer is to not be confined to what they perceive as *the rules* of the theatrical form and Nightfall certainly doesn't! From stage directions that would truly test a director and designer's creative nous to a setting and story arc more accustomed to a science fiction novel, this play is ambitious and raw; something that every new writer should aim for their work to be.

### **NIGHTFALL**

*by Alexei Aneychik*

#### **SCENE 1**

*Darke and Jake are on a train in an otherwise empty cabin, their luggage is below their retractable bunk beds and the blinds on the tiny window are closed, they seem to be travelling at a fast speed.*

**Darke:** Has it really happened?

**Jake:** I guess so; we should have seen this coming.

**Darke:** What of the upper hierarchy and Cloud?

**Jake:** They're doing surprisingly well.

**Darke:** What is to be done about the Order?

**Jake:** We have much less power now that the Syndicate has fallen, there isn't much we can do but better the individual.

**Darke:** Surely we're not just going to disappear; even Cloud has to admit that the remaining members still hold a considerable amount of power. We obviously don't have enough political influence to overthrow the Order of Chaos but at the least enough to suppress their rise for another few months.

**Jake:** I'm afraid that the situation has changed beyond our control; I will help you fully master your telepathy and then you may eventually creep up the political ladder.

**Darke:** We have Cloud do we not?

**Jake:** He could certainly help us; he has a talent of controlling the people.

**Darke:** I'm still not convinced, why don't we try to reform a lesser shadow group, did you yourself not say that strength is within the collective?

**Jake:** We can't do much at all, I think that we should rest for a while and let Cloud do what he can. You'll be able to better yourself and have a different perspective of things. You never know, maybe this will help you to find the truth that you talk so much about.

**Darke:** Do you have any information on M?

**Jake:** He is one elusive bastard. I'm starting to believe that this is just a matter of the standalone complex, that the Master of Puppets is but a figurehead of the Order.

**Darke:** He's helped us before has he not?

**Jake:** Only when the situation required it, he manipulates everything, always staying just out of sight. Finding him will be much more difficult than it seems. Cloud has put considerable effort into it and even managed to track down The Nine.

**Darke:** His subordinates are almost as careful as him, how did Cloud manage?

**Jake:** I don't know but currently only three remain. He did a good job but could not interrogate them, they phased before he could make them say a single word. The man is truly an artist but I fear that this is even above his ability.

**Darke:** Do you know when we're arriving?

**Jake:** Not really but we won't be leaving with the others. We'll soon pass the ninth station and if we jump ship before the tenth we should arrive at our destination and meet our contact.

**Darke:** Do you think it could be a trap?

**Jake:** Certainly not, we know him well and only Cloud could have managed such a thing.

**Darke:** Do you think he'll be there in person?

**Jake:** I don't know but it's possible. Cloud seems to have taken a great interest in our group. I'm sure you are quite excited to be finally meeting him.

**Darke:** I certainly am, he has singlehandedly recreated the technology present before the collapse of the Eve Gate. He is a self made immortal, yet he lacks the blunders of my creation. I can't stand living forever, I just hope that he will find a way to help me and subsequently prevent Nightfall.

*Darke looks down at his watch and then at his GPS. He then clicks a button above the window and the blind is rolled up.*

**Jake:** We must hope for the best, we should probably leave right now, is the window large enough?

**Darke:** There's only one way to find out...

*Darke jumps through the open window, shortly followed by Jake, who glides through the wall. They stand on the roof for a few seconds and then fly off the train. They walk through the forest for a while and finally come to a clearing with a freshly metalled road. They are met by a mysterious person in a black trench coat. He ushers them inside and signals to the driver. The car starts and he turns his head to the back of the car, where Darke and Jake are sitting.*

**Bodyguard:** We'll be meeting with Mister Cloud shortly. I am sorry about the remoteness of this location but we have taken all necessary precautionary measures to assure that nobody overhears your discussion.

**Darke:** Is there anybody else at our destination?

**Bodyguard:** Not that I know of. Cloud was very specific as to utmost secrecy regarding the outcome of your negotiation.

**Driver:** We'll be getting off here everybody.

**Darke:** Thank you, will you be here when we return?

**Driver:** I'm afraid that those aren't my orders; I'll be leaving as soon as you depart.

**Jake:** Very well.

*Darke, Jake and the bodyguard all walk towards a clearing in the forest and are met by a young man in an expensive looking black suit. Darke and Jake step over to him and the body guard remains by the trees. He takes out a gun and looks around for a while before relaxing and looking at the people in the centre of the clearing.*

**Cloud:** Are you sure that you weren't followed?

**Bodyguard:** I'm absolutely positive.

**Cloud:** Very well, let us begin.

**Darke:** We're very pleased to meet you sir, what is the nature of our discussion?

**Cloud:** I'm sorry that I couldn't tell you earlier, we have gathered here to discuss the future plans of our new organisation.

**Darke:** What organization might this be?

**Cloud:** It shall be smaller than the Syndicate to avoid any unneeded information leaks. It shall be composed of me, both of you, and several other carefully selected agents.

**Jake:** What is our purpose?

**Cloud:** Our ultimate purpose is to destroy the Order of Chaos and find M. We will also need to assassinate one of the presidential candidates, who I am sure is working with, if not for, M.

**Darke:** What of X, Surely we can't just leave him to rot?

**Cloud:** He has been imprisoned for centuries, it was not a goal of the previous syndicate to rescue him and it shan't be one of ours. However, as he is of great importance to you, I am willing to make an exception. You have one week to return him at the most. Remember that your mission will be unfathomably dangerous.

**Darke:** Trust me, I shan't forget.

**Jake:** Where will our headquarters be?

**Cloud:** The most appropriate place I can think of is Cloud Nine. Although the Syndicate was infiltrated nobody managed to realise that I was actually a member, being absent on the day of the attack. Sky High Corporation is still an impenetrable front, for now, with me, you should be safe.

**Darke:** May I leave right away?

**Cloud:** nobody is stopping you...

*Darke runs towards the forest through the clearing, and, slightly confused, finds the car waiting for him on the path. He asks the Driver to take him to the nearest train station. The driver willingly obliges and puts the ignition card into the slot. The low hum of a helicopter is heard in the distance while a single tick is heard within the car after which it explodes in a torrent of flame.*

**Cloud:** Jake, run for cover!

**Jake:** I thought that you said everything was perfectly safe?!

**Cloud:** I guess that nowhere is safe, I hope Darke has managed to get away...

**Jake:** Don't worry; he can take care of himself. His regeneration speed is extraordinary after all.

*Some way away Darke scampers out of the burning wreckage of the automobile and looks around hurriedly. He runs towards the direction in which he believes the train station was.*

**Darke:** Has Cloud betrayed us?

**SCENE ENDS**

## SHORT PLAYS – *KNOCK, KNOCK*

Michael Jacobs short play *Knock, Knock* immediately reminded me of Conor Macpherson's *Shining City* which I saw premiere many years ago, Conor is one of my favourite writers so that's quite a compliment. Michael draws characters with a beautiful arc; we find ourselves caring for them and invested in their future. Writing for the short form is a very difficult challenge, to attempt to cram in a full journey for your character whilst keeping the pacing accurate and interesting is not easy. I'm pleased to say that Michael carries it off with great aplomb though, which makes this a fantastic achievement and great read.

### **Knock, Knock**

By Michael Jacobs

*Ralph lies asleep in his armchair, a bottle of gin at his feet. There is a knock at the door and he jolts awake. Another knock. He stumbles towards the door. He puts his hand on the door knob. Changes his mind and returns to sitting.*

**Ralph:** Go away. I don't want to talk to you, I never do.

*The knock sounds again*

**Ralph:** Go away!

*He fills a glass with gin, takes two tablets and drinks the gin, then sits back down in the armchair*

**Ralph:** It's funny... How everything can change... In an instant. Everything you've ever worked towards can depend on one, pivotal moment. It's funny that.

*He takes another swig of the gin*

**Ralph:** I miss you Mary. I miss you but I wish I didn't have to think about you every minute of the day.

You see before, I knew where I was, I knew where I was going and I knew how to get there. But now... I'm lost.

I can't sleep, whenever I begin to nod off, I relive it. Every detail, more vivid than ever. And every time...

*beat*

I try to change what happened... but I can't. No one can.

*Sarah, a nurse, enters*

**Sarah:** Ralph, you've been drinking again. You've got to stop... you need to talk to someone.

**Ralph:** No!

**Sarah:** It'll help

**Ralph:** No!

**Sarah:** Will you at least tell me who you talk to?

**Ralph:** I don't talk to anyone.

**Sarah:** You talk to someone, you shout at them sometimes.

*Sarah shakes her head and leaves*

**Ralph:** It's behind that door... what haunts me. She knocks, but I won't let her in. I mustn't.

*Another knock at the door.*

**Ralph:** I mustn't let her in...

*He takes the tablets again and goes to a draw, he pulls out a book. He begins to read it in silence. After a while he closes it and closes his eyes.*

*Sarah and a doctor enter. As Sarah sees he is asleep she shushes the doctor.*

**Sarah:** Don't wake him, he doesn't get much sleep

*The doctor picks up the book*

**Doctor:** What's this?

**Sarah:** I don't know but whenever I catch him asleep he has it with him.

*The doctor opens it up, Sarah leans in*

**Doctor:** It looks like a diary. Do you think... I could take it?

**Sarah:** Why?

**Doctor:** Well if... as you say, he's finding it difficult to tell anyone, we'll have to find out what happened for ourselves.

**Sarah:** I don't know, it's obviously important to him

**Doctor:** But if we knew, we could help him...

*They pause to decide*

**Sarah:** Go on then take it. But read it quick. I don't want him to find out its gone

**Doctor:** Of course

*The Doctor leaves hurriedly*

*Sarah places a blanket over Ralph, gives an affectionate sigh, and leaves. There are a couple of seconds of silence,*

*Then a knock at the door, Ralph jolts awake, there is a sudden blackout.*

*Scene change to doctor's office. He sits at a desk, the book closed in front of him. He opens it somewhere near the middle and begins to read. Ralph's voice reads it.*

**Ralph:** 22<sup>nd</sup> of September. 1986. Mary came over today. She is not well, I can tell by looking. She is pale and tired and all she ever does is sit in that armchair drinking alcohol.

*Lights come up on the armchair, Mary is sitting there, and she takes a swig of alcohol. A 16 year old Ralph pulls a stool up to her.*

**Mary:** Ralph, pass the bottle of wine on the side their

*Ralph passes it*

**Mary:** Oh Ralph, your growing up, your tall now aren't you?

**Ralph:** Yeah

**Mary:** I remember when I was like you, young, fit...

**Ralph:** You are young

**Mary:** Do I look it?

*Ralph doesn't answer*

**Mary:** Sorry... But I don't, do I? No. and this [*she holds up the wine*] this is why. This is what's done it to me.

*She drinks some more*

**Mary:** But I can't stop now, why would I? What would be the point? I'm too old, too close to death

**Ralph:** What?

**Mary:** You've got to accept the truth sometimes you know. Death is natural anyway. Sometimes I think it would be nice to die, to be peaceful, what do you think Ralph?

*The lights go down on Mary and Ralph and back up on the Doctor, who flicks on a few pages. Ralph's voice reads the diary again*

**Ralph:** 24<sup>th</sup> of December. 1987. it's Christmas Eve, but there's no excitement, no festive joy, and no decorations. Not this year. There is no one in the house, because Mary's missing.

*Lighting change to Ralph's Mum who is pacing up and down looking for Mary*

**R's Mum:** Mary! Mary! Mary! Please come back... Mary! Mary!

**Ralph:** Mum! Any luck?

**R's Mum:** No... Oh Ralph. What if... what if she never comes back?

*She puts her head on his shoulder and he comforts her*

**Ralph:** I think you should go home, its getting late, and cold.

**R's Mum:** Okay

**Ralph:** I'll keep looking

**R's Mum:** Be safe

**Ralph:** I will

**R's Mum:** Love you

*She leaves*

**Ralph:** Mary! Mary!

*The clocks chime midnight*

**Ralph:** Merry Christmas Mary...

*He gets up to leave but when he hears Mary he turns, she is drunk*

**Ralph:** Mary!

**Mary:** Oh hi Ralph

*She passes out on him, the lights fade with her lying on his lap.*

*The lights come back up on the doctor. He flicks on a couple more pages. Ralph voice is heard again.*

**Ralph:** 31<sup>st</sup> of December. 1987. We visited Mary in hospital today. They say she's getting better without the alcohol, but... I don't know whether to believe it. I mean, I know what it's doing to her health and but... that's when she's happy isn't it? When she's drinking.

*Lighting change to Mary lying on a hospital bed, looking worse than previously. Ralph is sitting beside her.*

**Mary:** Ralph. How are you?

**Ralph:** I'm okay, are you feeling any better now?

**Mary:** No, not at all

**Ralph:** Oh, sorry.

**Mary:** It's New Years Eve Ralph, its news eve and look at me, look at me Ralph. If only... If only I could have just one sip of wine

**Ralph:** No, you mustn't, it's killing you.

**Mary:** Oh just a bit Ralph. I'm gonna die anyway, I might as well die happy eh? You would do that for me wouldn't you Ralph?

**Ralph:** No I won't let you

**Mary:** It's New Year's Eve, let's go and have some fun Ralph, and you don't want to sit here in a hospital now do you. Just one night Ralph. Just one night out.

*She gets up and holds out her hand for Ralph, he takes it and they leave.*

*Blackout*

*Lights come up on Ralph at present time, awake on the armchair.*

*The door knocks again. Louder. He takes two tablet, drinks more gin, goes to where he keeps the book, it's not there, he begins to frantically search for it.*

*Sarah enters*

**Ralph:** Where is it!?

**Sarah:** What?

**Ralph:** The book, where is it?!

**Sarah:** it's okay, the doctor took it

**Ralph:** What?! Why?! Where?!

**Sarah:** He's gonna read it, he thinks it'll help if someone understands...

**Ralph:** What?! No! He can't read it, no one can! I've got to get it back!

**Sarah:** No!

**Ralph:** I've got to get it back!

**Sarah:** No Ralph come back!

*Ralph leaves, Sarah follows*

*Back to scene from the diary*

*Ralph narrates*

**Ralph:** I helped get out of the hospital unseen, led her to the nearest pub and paid for some drinks for the two of us.

*Muffled music is heard, Mary and Ralph enter both drunk and laughing*

**Ralph:** That wasn't the first time either...

*They are both in hysterics about something. The music stops. A count down begins, Ralph and Mary join in and they cheer at zero*

**Mary:** Happy New Year

**Ralph:** Happy New Year

*Some slower music comes on*

**Mary:** Would you like to dance?

**Ralph:** Yeah alright

*They begin to dance slowly. Suddenly Mary begin to cough and collapses to the floor, she tenses up,*

**Ralph:** Mary! Mary!

*Blackout.*

*Lights come up on the doctor's office. Ralph storms closely followed by Mary,*

**Ralph:** Where is it!? Where's the book!?

**Doctor:** No! You must let me finish!

**Ralph:** Give it back!

**Sarah:** Ralph! No.

**Ralph:** You can't read it, no one can.

*He snatches it off the doctor. There is a tense silence.*

**Doctor:** Why can't we read it?

**Ralph:** No one can.

**Doctor:** But why?

*No answer from Ralph*

**Doctor:** I've only one page left

*Ralph turns around in fear*

**Ralph:** So you know? You know what I've done?

**Doctor:** Is it Mary? You need to let go Ralph.

**Ralph:** How can I? She didn't just die...

**Doctor:** What then?

**Ralph:** I killed her!

*Silence*

**Sarah:** You killed her?

**Doctor:** How?

**Ralph:** It was me... who led her from the safety of the hospital, it was me... who led her to the nearest pub and it was me... who bought her drinks. And what killed her? What killed her? The drinks!

**Doctor:** That's right Ralph, the drinks, not you, the drinks.

*Silence.*

**Doctor:** Is that what the problem has been Ralph?

**Ralph:** The knocking. Every night. At my door. Always there. If it's not her then who?

*Pause*

**Doctor:** Who else stopped living that night Ralph?

**Ralph:** I don't understand?

**Doctor:** Who else shut themselves away from the world that night?

You Ralph! You gave up your own life through the guilt that you felt.

You need to open the door Ralph.

You need to live.

*After a couple of second's silence, the doctor signals to Sarah to leave and they do so*

*There is a knock at the door. Ralph turns his head towards it.*

*As he puts his hand on the door there is a blackout.*