Misfit Lit

A home for all the misfits in the world.
Dear Readers,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the misfits who have joined our artistic community. This includes our readers and our contributors for the outstanding work: writing, art, and photography. It’s been a pleasure to view your contributions and allow the world to both see and hear your voice.

What started out as a simple biographical exercise in a University class has blossomed into the beginning of a community, a civilization, found in the pages of Misfit Lit. Our goal is to turn this online magazine into a place where all your misfit voices can be heard. In the future, as our general public and residence grows, we would like to share your work in print, as well as online.

Thank you, misfits, for the success we have received thus far.

Sincerely,
Editors of Misfit Lit

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Ode to a Dictionary

O magnificent tome, my lexical love
My cerebral medicine – speak!
How shall I read you, my lyrical dove?
“In a jillion ways – you’re a geek”
My constant companion, a version of you
has sat on my bookshelf for years
When I caress you, finger you gently
thumb you and stroke you, your linguistic virtu
drenches your soft inner sheets
Your concordance comes all over me

Furtively flting my eyes at your gospel,
my succour would sit on my knee
Sometimes I’d start with your middle,
at others, flick backwards from Z
Our textual intercourse nourished my mind,
quenching thirst of this autodidact.
As a girl I would stare at your patterns in awe,
ponder the morphemes, study the signs;
got soused on your potent syntactics
Spawned the bastard child of Saussure

When you were a tiny Gem
with compact language units
I’d take you on the bus to town
and keep you in my pocket
We took our love to bigger things
when I learned how to steal
You became an Oxford don
and I became a thief.
And now I’ve turned irregular
let me just say this
The first words that I found in you
were tit and tuck and piss.
Plainly Claustrophobic

Slivers of untreated wood. Restricted and obscured.
Church bells fade to a silent sorrow. Faded skies draped over cold, sunken skin.

Sun radiates among blue sapphires. Exquisitely displayed for all to see.

Glass windows inside the stone structure. Cracked with age, absorb the natural beauty of its surroundings.

Rays of lighting focus on a skeleton living in tender memories.

In these hands. Skin stretched rigidly over a metacarpus of ice. Fire collides with frost in a gesture of melancholy.

In a murderous battle of life; the reaper lurking at every corner.

Stalking his victim like a shadow pursues a being. Watching every movement with a veracious eye.

What to do About the Jews?

Outcasts for two thousand years. Accused of the murder of Jesus. Blasphemous. An unbreakable curse made true by the Führer. New government needed total power; a surrender. The noble act that cloaked the loathsome scheme. Scapegoats, please apply here! They were the target to be excluded and refused. They were the rats. A pack that need to be trapped. Before they destroyed the German populace. The Aryans couldn’t handle anymore fleas. They were the cockroaches. Smashed onto the ground by the sole of an army boot. A query came before the people: who was full, half, or quarter Jew? You? Her? Me? Play along, be amenable—learn to endure what happens. Welcome to the new world: The commonwealth of subhumans.
Misunderstanding

Well, officer, if you really want to know, my day went something like this:
I woke up, grabbed a cup of coffee, had about three sips of it when the police came charging through my door and I got sentenced to one thousand years in cryogenic suspension. What's more, they had the most insane reason why.

What? Oh, no, not at all! I am in no way suggesting your laws are unfair. You've had a millennium to iron out the kinks. I've made sure to do one of those - what do you call - "downloads" to make sure I got a complete copy of your legal texts. Which reminds me, before you came into the room I spent the last three hours muttering to myself about the process of claiming land on extraterrestrial planets. Not the most interesting topic, mind you.

No, the reason I was sentenced to such an extreme punishment was something of a misunderstanding. You see, back in my time the government was experimenting with new methods of law enforcement. As with any new technology, there were pros and cons to its use. When the first car came out, I'm sure no one thought twice about wanting everyone to have one - then came the first fender benders, the first fatalities, and now you have... well, you have flying machines that can take a person from Earth to Jupiter and back on a single tank. But you get what I'm getting at.

That's not what I'm saying. I'm sure a lot of the other people in this place were suspended for good reason. Yes, of course I'm not one of them! Did you want to hear my side of the story or not? If not, then unhook me from this stupid lie-scanner thing!

Fine, thank you. As I was saying, I got about three sips into my coffee when the cops started pounding down my door – hm? Police officers. We called them "cops" back then - it's not important! What is important is that I was arrested and taken down to the station for processing. I don't remember much of that because, well... Do you use stunners nowadays? Yes? Okay, well, I got hit by, like, five or six of those. I thought the driver of the squad car was a unicorn.

It's this mythical horse with a horn on its - is that really important?

Moving on. When I was lucid enough to understand English again, I was in a room much like this. Yeah, twice in one day from my perspective. Really glad I had that coffee. Oh, no - that was sarcasm.
See? The little light went green there. Sarcasm, have you... never mind.

I got the usual lines. “You have been detained”... blah, blah, blah... “This new technology never lies”... yadda, yadda, yadda... “And you are hereby convicted of attempted self-murder!” Oh, yes. That's the crime I was put away for. Attempted self-murder. Suicide. Which, by the way, is so against my personal beliefs. See? Little green light.

So, how did they come to this conclusion, you ask? Yes, I know, no... Well, you were about to ask. What? Mind-crawler? I don't even know what that is! Ha, see? Anyways...

The new technology the government had used – the same you've ironed all the kinks out of, well, most of them, since I still have issue with paragraph 3 lines 4 through 27 – involved controlled clones. The government had this huge new computer, much like your personal i-Drives. It was this semi-digital genetic computer, and within it was the DNA code for every registered citizen on the planet. Commit a crime? Not likely. The second investigators pull a sample of you off the scene, they've got you. Just plug it into their computer and boom – you've got an exact duplicate of the perp.

What? Oh, come on. You probably know better than I would how they duplicated memories and motivations. The tech is still used today! Downloaded, remember?

So that's what they'd do. They'd clone the suspect, interrogate the hell out of the clone and figure out the perp's next move. The clone would lead them straight to the original, and... that would be pretty much it. Clones weren't considered people, so, well... extreme – shall we say – methods were used to ensure that the evidence extracted was overwhelming. That way when they caught the criminal there'd be no need for a trial or any of that – just pop 'em straight in jail.

Or, for more serious crimes like murder... self... thing... straight in jail.

The bottom line was, we were experimenting. That's what you do with new technology, right? You experiment to make sure it works properly.
April Pruijs

April Pruijs

Yes, I protested! But that wouldn't do any good, would it? Like I said, the new system was considered to be flawless. Kinks, I say! But if the clone could or would do it, so would the original. Therefore I was already tried, convicted, and sentenced before his body hit the floor. There was no way I was going to avoid being suspended for a thousand years the moment his finger hit that button.

So yes, that was my day. I woke up three times: once at home in my nice, warm bed, and twice in places and times I didn't recognize. I had enough coffee to maybe assure my taste buds that I'd be enjoying a full cup at some point in the, ha, near future, and was convicted of a crime I'd never possibly even consider committing... all because someone I'd never met was born a thousand years before he had any basic rights as a human being, and made a small mistake.

Yes. Like I said, it was a misunderstanding, officer. See? Green light.

No, officer, I wouldn't. It's against my beliefs. No, not even now that I'm stuck out of time and in a strange world I don't recognize. That was the point of the punishment, wasn't it? To get the real killers displaced in a world where they wouldn't be a threat anymore. Well, I never was and I promise I never will be. Yes, I'm imperfect - but I'm not evil. Evil men make others suffer. Good men endure suffering for those they love... and I love being alive.

Those I knew and cared for may be gone... but so long as I'm here, so are they. I owe them that much. If anything, I need to keep living because of that fact.

There's no obstacle so great, that the only way around it is death. Yes. Thank you, officer.

And a blessed day go with you, too.
Outcasts

Claire Matthews

You grew up, found new friends in Biology,
behind the gymnasium during lunch hour.
Went to parties with older crowds, never asked why
they wanted to hang with the young ones,
said that they “got you”
as if you were a game to be played.
I grew up too, knew you weren’t for me
and found a better you.
The breaks between classes, I didn’t long to see your face,
but you were too drunk to care, enraged
that you could be replaced with a girl
who barely knew me, but understood I needed
someone to let me win tic-tac-toe.

At the school assembly, on the farthest bleacher,
my hair on your bare shoulder,
whispered about the butch chick at the front,
how ridiculous these presentations.
Tic-tac-toe on knees, your finger
cut x over & over,
I drew o around moles, we ran out of room,
found space in the corner
of elbow, folded jeans – skin on skin the only whisper,
my hand beside your hand, no words
for the dyed red hair or black clothes,
night walks through Victory Cemetery,
too much vanilla vodka & classes missed.
I wrote elaborate stories, didn’t care how racy.
Your chin on my shoulder,
This is what you look like blonde,
I wanted you to notice me, even if it was wrong
to pretend black eyeliner & Mars Volta
were cool. I wanted you to long
for what I had to say, but you were gone.

“Outcasts,” Elizabeth Bachinsky.
Jennica Harper is a Vancouver poet. Her books of poetry are What It Feels Like for a Girl (Anvil Press, 2008) and The Octopus and Other Poems (Signature Editions, 2006). In 2013, What It Feels Like for a Girl was released as an e-book for Kindle and Kobo, and was adapted into a critically acclaimed interactive theatre experience by the Electric Company as part of the Vancouver International Writers Festival. Jennica’s long poem “Liner Notes” received the Silver National Magazine Award, and her poems have twice been featured on buses as part of Vancouver’s Poetry in Transit program.

Jennica is also a screenwriter, and currently writes for the hit YTV comedy Mr. Young.

She likes The Misfits; their songs are better.

Selected poems from

REALBOYS
Poems by, and for, Pinocchio

REALBOYS & THE CRICKET

Father told me realboys have something inside them that tells them what is right and wrong, clever or foolish. This Mindcricket is completely silent, heard only by the realboy inside his skullbone. It can spring up at any time, warning of poor decisions about to be made, such as burying goldpieces and waiting for them to bloom. I’m no longer sure I want to be a realboy. I can squish my Cricket with a broom.

MS. BLUE

ON GROWING

Sweet child wants so badly to be a man. How hard it was to tell him he’ll always be a sapling. Puppets don’t grow. I tried to explain: being a man is more than height, shoulders, voice deepening to baritone. We talked about courage, confidence, grace. He wept and, blinded by his tears, the poor dear reached out and touched my breast.

TRANSFORMATION

I was almost a donkey. It would be easier. I could pull carts full of wares and be useful, and not think about not being a donkey. I would sleep, and I bet I would not dream, and if I dreamed, it would be a donkey’s dreams. But knowing me, I would ruin it. Dream of nothing but having my shabby coat brushed by a girl.
WHERE IT GOES

Gepetto dies.
But it is taking some time.

All year he has grown smaller. Skin hanging where it once was fuller of himself.
I do not know where he disappears to.

The thing that is real: is it in his blood, travelling through him still? The parts that are gone now: were they not real?

Father goes from bed to toilet, toilet to sink.
He won’t look me in the eye.

I have done this to him. He tried to make me more, and has made himself less. Given up parts of himself. Parts he needs.

I would give him mine—

WORK

i.

I have a job! I have something to fill my days and keep me from an idlemind. As Father begins his day in his workshop, I put on my uniform and go. I’m good at my work. Better than the others. I pretend to watch the screen, with its flat shapes and bright lines, looking for odd clusters of wires. Actually I watch the people. How they dump change from their pockets, take off their shoes. All the clues I need. I can tell from a slump or blink or liplick, who is trying to hide from me. No one has my nose, but a lie still shows. I guess it takes one to know one.

ii.

I love work but wish they would not give me money. There are too many places to spend it on the way home. Open doors, with stairs that lead up. They know my name. Pull my strings. Father, can you understand? In carving me, you made me rigid with the need to be made over and over. Whittled down to nothing, then, with gentle hands, oil in the grain, reshaped into the me I show to you.
In arithmetic, each number exists.
In algebra, numbers are letters.
A letter stands in for a number.
It seems it could be any number...
but it is a particular one.
Particular, but only in agreement
with other particular numbers.
It is all or nothing.
But why can you not add A to B?

I always said “father.” Only now
does Father say “son.” I do not cry.

I say:
I would stand in for you, Father.

Even before I feel the familiar throb,
I know it is a lie.

But I have no blood to offer. No cells,
no jellyseeds racing through
veins I do not have.

I have no organmeat to spare you, Father.

This is the impossible impetus.
The impasse.

Father whispers. Tells me
this is all as it should be. This is real.
What we both wanted.

His whisper paper.

I know he is trying to tell me something
I do not understand. He says a son
and his father are always wishing to trade.
If you asked me not so long ago what I thought of hope I would have told you that it was a dirty four letter word fragile misleading misleading lost in the shuffle of our day-to-day decay but now I imagine it is a tiny sparrow covered in dust and debris pushing past the rubble of our dreams upward through the wreckage of rusted ideas hopping across scheme shrapnel climbing despite our constant bombardment of self doubt and limitless excuses booze and blues freedom shackled by escapism because it wants to feel the sun again because it wants to sing because it still has hope for us
Peter Hammarberg

Mouth Like Bukowski

The sun crept up behind the tree line
we rose like zombies
from the grave

cotton-mouthed
and disappointed

just another day
of errant madness
slaving to make filthy men
rich
instead of rich men
filthy

I kissed you
with a mouth
like Bukowski
we grappled
like MMA fighters
in a cage

sex and violence
is differentiated only
by the nature
of the hard on

I ran my crooked fingers
through your hair
and thought
this could
almost be enough

we are the nowhere people

governed by
a shallow sense
of duty
dictated by

a brutal sense
of fear
tormented by
'the past
tortured by the present
threatened by the future
trying desperately
to see beauty
at the gallows

I found empathy
from the bottle
five cent deposits
on my soul

too many false starts
and premature finishes
standing still
in a rushing river

not waving
drowning

useful as
a rubber crutch
in a polio ward

nothing says potential
like a stark white page
or closure
like a viking ship
ablaze

I said all we have
is tomorrow
you replied there isn't
such a thing

just the ever-present
now

then baby
all we've got
is us
Waiting for a Revolution

Two years ago this September, I joined Weight Watchers. My goal was to reach a point where I could take my wedding rings off for a polish. In the two years between my 2008 wedding and my 2010 de-bulking, I had gained forty pounds and six sizes. The weight came on slow, in bits too immeasurable to notice by looking in the mirror every morning. The red flags were the dresses that no longer zipped up the back, the pants refusing to crest over my ass. For a while I could excuse the signs away: cheap crap shrinks in the wash or I think I might be bloated—my period is three weeks away. On the popular weight program I lost the forty I’d gained, plus ten that had been hanging around all of my adult life. At 5'8" I am now a size 12, depending on the designer.

People said to me all the pleasant, encouraging words as the pounds vanished—“You look fantastic!” and “All your hard work is paying off!” But then there were the murky, backhanded compliments, the put-downs in cordial disguise. The queen of these was a co-worker named Candice, a middle-aged accountant who had barbed at my body before I began losing. The most memorable dig was at our company picnic, where she adamantly pointed out how I should be the anchor in tug-of-war: “Biggest to smallest! That means you in the back, Tabitha!”

I thought one nice by-product of getting smaller would be a reprieve from her vomit stream of commentary. But instead, Candice repackaged my triumphs to make me feel worse. “What are you going to do with all of your giant big-girl pants now?” she asked me in the lobby one afternoon, in front of all the company’s administrative staff. My work slacks had been 16s – now they were 12s and 10s. Looking at the garments side-by-side, the difference wasn’t spectacular. I couldn’t hold the old ones up like Jared the Subway guy, sideshow style, as if they could swallow the “new me.” They were just pants. “Consignment stores love to get big girl pants.”

She took the pile of invoices from the counter, turned, and left.

A few weeks later, when she started drilling me on whether my husband found me more attractive nowadays, I considered going to HR. Her comments were so unwelcome, so hostile, they had to be harassment—right? But I wasn’t sure. She wasn’t fondling my tits or hurling racial slurs at me, those training video definitions of workplace harassment. Formally registering a complaint against her seemed like whining. In the same way that being indignant about the media’s obsession over Lady Gaga putting on 25 pounds seems petty. After all, what does it matter? It’s just a magazine. It’s just one news story.

No, these snarky articles and ignorant slights against the 97% of women who do not fit the pop star/A-list actress/runway model ideal aren’t that major. Not one at a time they’re not. But when you look at the massive swell of these blurbs, blurry photos, and sound bites that constantly build over days and weeks and months, you don’t have a few mean whispers. You have one collective, hollering mandate against real bodies. Bodies that fluctuate, age, shrink, and swell as naturally as any other ebbing and flowing life form. You can chalk one incident or conversation up to ignorance. But the onslaught is systematic. It makes our culture look insipid—Jessica Simpson “unveiling” her new body is edging out a Libyan nuclear crisis headline? The obsession on the minutiae of gains and losses overshadows women’s other accomplishments, even if the accomplishment is losing 50 pounds. There has to be a constant reminder of who you “used to be,” as if there is some drug-addled, ruinous other self lurks in the closet, a few slices of Godiva cheesecake away from rising again.
“Is it okay if I bring a birthday cake to your party?” a well-meaning friend may ask me. “I know you’ve worked so hard this year; you may not want it around.” As if, like a crack habit or drinking problem, merely allowing the stuff around might trigger a relapse.

I am not a different person now that I’ve lost 50 pounds. I still laugh at the same jokes and cry at the same books. I love the same man. I drive the same crappy car. I am still insecure and self-deprecating. I can now shop in the Misses department, which is pretty damn awesome, but it feels like it should be less of a chapter and more like a footnote in the story of who I am.

This is why the Lady Gaga coverage sparks a particular strand of rage. The woman is the female equivalent of Dos Equis’ Most Interesting Man in the World. Even though she is still active and healthy, working a nonstop touring and dance rehearsal schedule, the fact that she hasn’t said no to spaghetti and meatballs in recent weeks is capturing massive media space. And the kicker is: she looks freaking fantastic. I love seeing her fill out a corset and boy-shorts. Such garments were made for boobs and a butt. She looks sensual and irreverent and hey, a bit like me. Is that the worst fate that can befall a superstar?

If you’re one of the millions reading *Life & Style*, or *US Weekly*, or *E! News*, then the answer is obvious.

Many people use the argument that since celebrities like Gaga use their bodies as a commodity to retain fame, said figures are open to scrutiny. If you’ve been onstage in a neon sparkle bikini, it’s open season to pick apart your figure. If this is the case, then why is my body, and the bodies of every woman I know, subject to the same level of scrutiny in our own intimate, small-scale lives? My body is certainly not helping me get ahead in my writing career. It’s because this mindset is bigger than any of us, famous and not. And it will take more than a few of us bickering about a few scattered stories to change the tide.
Contributors

Laura Taylor

Award-winning poet Laura Taylor is a regular festival and open-mic night guest performer throughout the North West of England, UK. She has been writing and performing for two years, and has been widely published.

Jess Holzfoester

Jess is a movie loving writer from the small town of Aldergrove. She is heavily influenced by the events that go on in her life and those around her. Jess mainly writes poetry, but sometimes she ventures into the realm of fiction and short stories. She is attempting a triple minor- History, Creative Writing, and English at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Surrey, B.C. She has been newly published in Pulp Mag at Kwantlen.

April Pruijs

My name is April Pruijs and I’m studying for an Associate Degree in Creative Writing. I have been writing since I was a wee little girl of ten and have realized it is my passion, besides my love. I hope to one day become a photojournalist or a creative writing professor. I am also an amateur photographer and have taken photographs for Absolute Underground Magazine from Vancouver as well as written articles for them. I love exploring the creative and different side of photography and lighting. In high school, I was editor in chief for my yearbook and I am currently the secretary and one of the executive directors of the MYAC in Mission. As many people would say, fitting in just wasn’t something of my interest. Squares never fit in round holes so why try conforming when I could be myself? Now, I do my best to just be who I am and do what I love, which can range from watching zombie movies all day long, to painting elaborate splatter paintings of black and red, to wearing snow boots in July. As long as I get to have a free soul, so be it.

April Pruijs's Website: www.wix.com/aprilpruijs/aphotography
Jared Vaillancourt

Jared Vaillancourt is a third-year student at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and an avid science fiction reader and writer. He is currently enrolled in the Creative Writing program (and student Guild of the same name). He has been previously self-published in chapbook form and in the Guild publication Pulp, as well as several short stories in back issues of the school newsletter The Runner. In his spare time Jared enjoys reading new things and playing co-operative video games online. His preferred genres being science fiction, he is a fan of authors such as Peter F. Hamilton and Julie Czerneda. He might also be a Cylon.

Claire Matthews

Claire Matthews is a Surrey-based writer, editor, and soap-maker. Her fiction has appeared in Joyland Magazine, and her poetry in Pij Magazine. She was short-listed for the Creative Writing Award at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, where she is Managing Editor of Pulp, Kwantlen’s fine arts and literary magazine. She attended the Humber School for Writers summer writing program in July, where she worked with Miriam Toews.

Peter Hammarberg

Writer. Poet. Outsider artist. Terrible dancer. Co-Founder of Hammer Mountain Arts. Peter Hammarberg's poems have been published in various magazines, from Bellowing Ark, Boone's Dock Press, The Smoking Poet, and many others. He doesn't always rant on the web, but when he does he prefers to do it at twitter.com/p. Hammarberg “Stay quirky, my friends.”

Tabitha Blankenbitter

Tabitha Blankenbitter is a writer and Pacific University MFA graduate living outside of Portland, Oregon. Her work has been published in Sliver of Stone, Owl Eye Review, and Brevity. She is a staff contributor at Spectrum Culture where she reviews books and writes about stuff she eats. Want to know more about what she's just cooked up? Her blog, Eats of Eden, keeps tabs on her kitchen. She is the mother of two cats and enjoys collecting Japanese miniature dessert erasers.

Marlow Gunterman

Marlow Gunterman is a Vancouver-based writer who is heavily influenced by misfits and her family’s historical presence in the Kootney town of Beaton. She is earning her Bachelor of Creative Writing at Kwantlen Polytechnic University where she has been published in The Runner and Pulp Mag. She now holds the position of web editor for Pulp Mag. In her free time she is a ballet dancer and has travelled as far as Russia for ballet workshops.

Taryn Pearcey

Taryn Pearcey is a suburban-born punkster who dedicates her writing to exploring the lives of all and every misfit she can think up, whether they be young men with mohawks or mothers with Xanax addictions. She writes fiction, poetry, and non-fiction, and has had one short story published on the online journal Maple Tree Literary Supplement. She is a Creative Writing Major at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Surrey, BC, where she is the Associate Literary Editor of Pulp Magazine and takes part in Kwantlen’s Creative Writing Guild.