

5-1-2014

Untitled

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Recommended Citation

Morton, Rachel (2014) "Untitled," *Hieroglyphics: the NSU University School Literary Magazine*: Vol. 20 , Article 24.
Available at: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/uschool_litmag/vol20/iss1/24

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He opened his eyes to a strange forest. He saw small warm lights above him. It was warm, and sweetly smelled of pine. He rose to his feet. The trees were maroon and lit on every tip of the branches was a cheerful flame. He wandered cautiously, trying to navigate the thick forestry. Through some branches a cold, blue glow beckoned him. He stumbled toward it and emerged into to a small clearing. The sphere in the sky illuminated the clearing, making the burgundy trees a royal purple.

As the boy squinted at the bright sphere in the sky, crevices, wrinkled eyes, and a thin mouth faintly appeared. Soon a placid face appeared on the strange moon. A lit cigar hung between it's lips, from which swirls of smoke rose. The swirls resembled clouds as they settled in the clear alien sky. The sleepy moon opened its bizarre eyes and addressed the child.

"Who are you?" The animate moon paused to puff out some smoke. Whirling up, it joined a smooth cloud. The boy, bewildered, returned his gaze back to the talking moon.

"Who are you?" The moon repeated, with a raspy yet assertive voice.

"I am..." He faltered for a moment, befuddled as to how his own name eluded him. His thoughts were interrupted by a sputtering cough from above; "You must wonder where you are, boy. Well, in actuality, you are nowhere. You are neither here nor there. There are occasional children as unfortunate as you are that come here, but there aren't many who return from where they came."

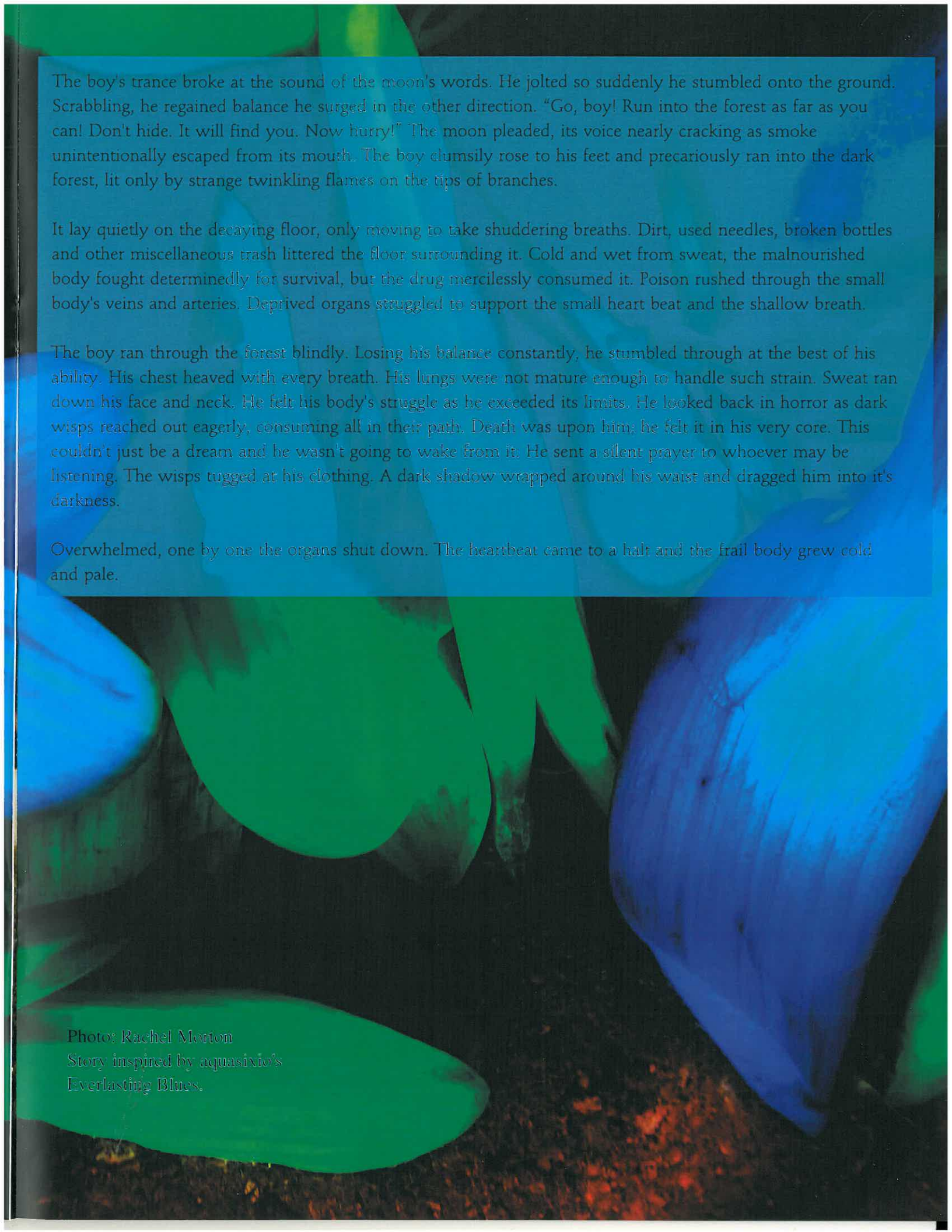
The frail boy thought back to where he came from. He remembered the humanoids at home with empty, glazed over eyes, and the packs of cruel youths who all wore the same ridiculing expressions. Solemnly the child asked, "What's going to happen to me, sir?"

The moon's brows furrowed. Creases appeared on its face. A lugubrious expression formed as it exhaled, releasing an opaque cloud into the air that swiftly drifted away with the tender breeze. "Depends if it finds you." It reluctantly responded. "There are dark things in this world. Things that devour without mercy. Things that obliterate without hope of renewal. They hide in every person everywhere waiting for the right moment to consume. They cannot be destroyed or made, they are simply negative energy. They cause death and chaos. They are death and chaos. There is no escaping them. Not in the real world, nor here."

The boy, not quite comprehending, broke his gaze from the sky and peered beyond the clearing. He saw alien grass and maroon trees with twinkling flames instead of leaves. He saw colored swirls in the sky, and the faint trail of the moon's cigar smoke as it united with the previously made placid clouds. Far to the West was a speck of darkness. Angrily it swirled as it moved, like a stormy shadow ominously creeping closer to the clearing.

The boy, alarmed, looked up expectantly at the glowing moon. "It's coming" The moon rasped, furrowing its brows further and deeply inhaling its cigar. "Run away, boy! Now go! Hurry!"

The boy gawked at the swirly dark smoke, frozen. Wisps extended out as if reaching for him, urging him into its fury. The boy stood paralyzed. The swirling smoke quickly approached. The moon's voice thundered as it urged, "Go now, boy! Get away from here before it gets you. Hurry!"



The boy's trance broke at the sound of the moon's words. He jolted so suddenly he stumbled onto the ground. Scrabbling, he regained balance he surged in the other direction. "Go, boy! Run into the forest as far as you can! Don't hide. It will find you. Now hurry!" The moon pleaded, its voice nearly cracking as smoke unintentionally escaped from its mouth. The boy clumsily rose to his feet and precariously ran into the dark forest, lit only by strange twinkling flames on the tips of branches.

It lay quietly on the decaying floor, only moving to take shuddering breaths. Dirt, used needles, broken bottles and other miscellaneous trash littered the floor surrounding it. Cold and wet from sweat, the malnourished body fought determinedly for survival, but the drug mercilessly consumed it. Poison rushed through the small body's veins and arteries. Deprived organs struggled to support the small heart beat and the shallow breath.

The boy ran through the forest blindly. Losing his balance constantly, he stumbled through at the best of his ability. His chest heaved with every breath. His lungs were not mature enough to handle such strain. Sweat ran down his face and neck. He felt his body's struggle as he exceeded its limits. He looked back in horror as dark wisps reached out eagerly, consuming all in their path. Death was upon him; he felt it in his very core. This couldn't just be a dream and he wasn't going to wake from it. He sent a silent prayer to whoever may be listening. The wisps tugged at his clothing. A dark shadow wrapped around his waist and dragged him into it's darkness.

Overwhelmed, one by one the organs shut down. The heartbeat came to a halt and the frail body grew cold and pale.

Photo: Rachel Morton
Story inspired by aquasivio's
Everlasting Blues.