UNDEFINED, VOLUME 1

Our mission is to provide a platform to recognize and celebrate the creative work of teens and young adults ages 12-20 in Central Oregon.

We are dedicated to representing the young adult experience; Undefined reflects the ideas and emotions of our target age group with as little censure as possible. Pieces may be edited for grammatical clarity but no editorial changes are made without consent of the contributor.

Undefined is a project of the Downtown Bend Public Library's teen library council. Many thanks to Alana, India, Grace, and Liv for their idea and help in bringing Volume 1 to life.


April Witteveen
Undefined Managing Editor
Community Librarian
aprilw@deschuteslibrary.org
Mary loved birds. Doves, especially. She loved their soft coos in the afternoon, the sound somehow breaking through the loud chirps of the evening crickets. Sometimes, she would coo back at them, as if to say hello. It always made me smile. I sigh and look away, not wanting to see it anymore.

My eyes flick upwards, and I notice that the sky has gone dark. It sends a tingle of worry down my spine, knowing I'm going to be out here in the dark with that thing. I shiver and turn around again, willing myself onwards. It's going to be a long night.

In the morning light, I could see the changes in myself that my time in the forest had made to me. My skin was paler now from the lack of sunlight filtering through the densely packed trees. I felt taller now, too. More confident. I knew it was going to happen today. I knew I was going to kill it. I could feel it in my bones.

I stand up, and begin walking forwards. I don't know where I'm going, but I can feel something guiding me. I can feel my anger building the more I walk, like a bonfire being built up slowly in my mind. It's taking over me. Guiding me.

I walk through a break in the trees, and stop in my tracks. There it is. A house. A small, idyllic cabin, right in the middle of the forest. There's a man in the cabin, too, and he looks vaguely familiar. I can't figure out why.

All I know is I'm angry, and I want to kill.
The Thing in the Woods
By Juniper Taylor with co-writers Sutter Libby and Riann Sheldon

There's something in the forest outside my house.

I've been seeing it all day, darting through the trees outside so fast that I wonder if I even saw it at all, if maybe I'm hallucinating it. At night, though, I know it's not a hallucination. At night, I can see its eyes, glowing harshly through the deep blackness. It's looking at me. I know it is. From the glimpses I get of it, it looks pale. Tall. A lot like the birch trees that surround it. It's starting to get on my nerves. I can feel its anger, and I'm beginning to wonder what the hell I did to offend it. "John, what is it?" I can hear the concern in Mary's voice. I know she can't see it, and that scares me. Maybe I am going insane.

I turn away from the window. "Nothing, hun. Just looking outside." I give one last furtive glance out to the forest, and then turn back. I can't see it anymore, but I know it's there. I can still feel the anger. "Tea?" My wife asks, and I nod. I could use the distraction. She puts her hand on my shoulder for a moment, and then turns towards the kitchen and begins boiling the water.

After a minute, I could hear the telltale whistle of steam forcing its way out of the pot. I followed my wife into the kitchen, and we sat down silently at the table, teacups in hands. I leaned into my cup, breathing in the hot steam and letting it wash over my face.

"John, I'm worried about you." Mary says after a moment. I sighed. "How so?" I asked, although I knew why. I had no idea how to explain my obsession with the thing in the woods. She narrowed her eyes at me, knowing I was avoiding the subject. I sighed and looked away from her. "I'm fine, Mary. I'm just tired." She pinched her lips together. "Fine John. If you're not going to talk, I'm going to bed."

I watched silently as she stood up and walked up the stairs, her footsteps echoing in the silence. I felt my jaw tighten in anger. That damn monster. My wife and I had been happily married for five years, and now the bastard was tearing us apart. (I almost could feel it's breath, cold and uncomfortable, burrow down my neck, just waiting for me to make the first move.) That settled it. Tonight, I would grab my rifle and hunt the thing down. Tonight, when my wife was asleep and the moon was full in the sky, I would kill it. It had to die.

The leaves crunch beneath my feet, sending jolts of adrenaline through me every time. I know it can hear me. I can feel the strap from my shotgun digging into my shoulder, but I ignore it. I'm willing to endure a little bit of pain if it means the monster is dead.

Suddenly, I catch a glimpse of something through the trees. A flash of white, disappearing deeper into the forest, and I'm chasing after it before I even have time to think. I burst through the trees, my feet skidding wildly and my eyes already darting around, looking for it. My shotgun is raised, swinging about as I search for it. My gun is trained on it before I even register what it is. My finger tightens on the trigger, and the killing shot is fired.

Instead of the huge beast I expect, though, a small object falls out of the sky. I make my way towards it hesitantly. And then I see it. A small dove, laying on the ground, one wing broken from the fall. Blood gushes from a hole in its chest, where I can almost see the feeble quiver of the breath leaving its lungs.

A somber silence surrounds me. I realize that I'm still holding my breath, and I exhale slowly, my breath turning to mist in the cold air.
“Crouton! I have the picnic ready. Yum, these little hand pies are delicious!” Aria was a wonderful cook for a twelve year old girl. Most of the time when she wasn’t riding Crouton, she was baking something wonderful in the kitchen. Today, the picnic contained of shepherd’s hand pies, an arugula salad with a cinnamon apple dressing and pumpkin spice cupcakes with cream cheese frosting.

Aria put a large serving of the salad on Crouton’s plate and pushed the plate towards her. Crouton was typically quite picky about eating “civilized food,” but she was quite fond of the apple cinnamon dressing. The two of them ate their salads in silence, each occupied by her private thoughts. Aria wasn’t the type of girl that blabbered on and on to her horse. School had started a month ago, and was going wonderfully, but there wasn’t much to tell.

Aria reached into the picnic hamper for a cupcake and then started gathering up the blanket. She shoved everything into the hamper and finished her cupcake. “Ready to go, Crouton?” Crouton had been ready to leave the brook. It was about half a mile from Aria’s home, a short walk for the deep-lunged mare. Aria clipped on Crouton’s reins and swung into her saddle.

Crouton started a slow lope to the house, and gosh, she was depressed as she did so. Suddenly Crouton knew she had to go back. She knew that she had to find her herd and go back to them. There wasn’t another way she could be happy. Crouton slid to a stop and slammed her right side into a tree, crushing both the picnic hamper and Aria’s leg. She then shook the girl the rest of the way from the saddle and took off at a gallop.

Crouton heard her name several times and saw Aria running after her, slow and limping. Crouton only looked back once and kept on running back through the vast meadow. She came to the brook, and in one swift movement, Crouton jumped over it, stone wall and all. She crashed down on her front legs as she landed and fell over in agony. Crouton wasn’t used to jumping much, so the impact on her front legs was enough to fracture the bone.

She got up again. Crouton continued walking through the trees, putting minimal weight on her front left leg, which hurt terribly. She walked and walked and walked until she got to a small log cabin, surrounded by a fence that contained a lean-to shed. As she was very tired, Crouton laid down near the house and fell asleep.

When she awoke, it was quite dark out except for a lantern, bobbing towards her curiously. “Hey, there. You look like a little mustang.” An old male voice behind the lantern said, “you look a little injured, too. Let me help.”

To be continued...

Illustrations: Horses
By Shealyn Dollar
Medium: Colored Pencil
Mustangs Never Tame
By Sophia Boone

Prologue

Aria kicked Crouton harder with her heels, sending the horse into a full gallop towards the brook at the borderline of the vast meadow. The heavy picnic hamper swayed dangerously in the saddle bags, but Aria couldn’t be happier. She let go of Crouton’s creamy mane and threw her hands in the air, screaming, “I did it! I trained a wild mustang!”

Mustangs never tame

Crouton despised the brook. It wasn’t anything like the stream she played in as a filly, wild and free. The brook was contained by a low brick wall that stood three feet from the water’s edge, giving it a civilized feel. The brook was narrow and slow moving, so slow moving that you couldn’t hear the water until you were about 12 feet from it. Four years ago, a special chemical had been dumped in the water that killed off all the fish and tadpoles. To Crouton, the brook was only a mock of the real thing, only pretend.

Crouton also despised Aria’s laziness. Aria wasn’t a weak rider, she could gallop Crouton with ease, but she just didn’t have much empathy. She only put the picnic hamper in one saddle bag and didn’t even the weight in the other, so Crouton had an extra fifteen pounds on her right.

As they neared the brook, Crouton slowed down to a right lead canter and then to a jog. Aria swung off and flipped the reins over Crouton’s head. “Alright now girl,” Aria said smartly. “I’ll just unhook your reins and then you can wander around these trees whilst I set up the picnic.”

Crouton snuffled around the trees as Aria pulled out the picnic blanket. As she was walking and grazing, Crouton came across a weed. She ate the weed, and as she did, the memories came rushing back to her. She was a filly again, running, frolicking with the other colts and fillies. Crouton lifted her head up and let the wind surround her, combing her mane with its fingers.

The longing overwhelmed the young mare. She remembered the other colts and fillies, there had been three more. A filly born two months after her, small, bay, and lazy. A colt just hardily older, buckskin, wild and her best friend. There had been a yearling filly too, but Crouton hadn’t known her well. She wondered where they were now, if they missed her.

Suddenly she didn’t know why she was wearing a saddle. She didn’t know why she was broken. She knew at least that Aria hadn’t trimmed her mane, she was glad about that. Crouton’s mane was about 18 inches long, and often whipped around in the wind when she had her head raised high. It made her seem wild, even if she had been a lesson pony.

The Sword Dance of Black and White
By Booker Paulus White

Life and death,
Sun and snow.

A sword dance of black and white.

Life and death,
The hands of the clock that ticks down the time until the end of eternity,
The building blocks of reality.
Here we chain the trees to the ground,
The better to yank down the sky.
Here we tie ourselves to the earth,
In order to stay grounded.
Here we let our dreams escape,
If only to hope they are answered.

In this town,
In this dear old world,
Where the sky is blue,
And the grass is green,
We accept our lives,
And we rest.

Girl Catching Butterfly
By Emily Bush

Medium: Pencil
As I spoke I imagined that I was driving away the darkness and paving a path to longer days. "Thank you Brother Buffalo and Soren, now for Sister Eagle," dad said. My sister Kaia stepped forward and began her call.

"As this day like all days, begins with the rising sun,
I ask, Spirit Keeper of the East, Sister Eagle,
Be with us for this gathering of family as we bring the light.
Fly high as you carry our blessings.
May we have eyes as sharp as yours,
so we are able to see truth and hope on the path we choose."

After Kaia, my mom called on the Wolf of the South and Dad called on the Bear of the North. We all stared at the fire absorbed in the silence broken only by the crackling of coals. My dad began a beat on the djembe and a chant, "Down with darkness up with light, bring forth fire through the night." We joined in, and as we sang I thought of how Valdur was dancing around in my place, battling the darkness to bring in light.
Solstice Dream
By Soren Chopra

"Ned med mærke opp med lys, ned med mærke opp med lys." The chanting grew louder, and louder until his vision blurred and the chanting shamans converged into the Great Buffalo of the West. Its horns glowed red as the chanting subsided like a dying fire, and looking down on Valdur it spoke, "Rise, son of the west and receive the weapons to bring the light."

Valdur awoke thrashing, his body roaring for food, he stumbled to the fire, ripped off a leg from the elk, bit it and paused. His red hair clung to the meat. Red hair- his hair had changed from stone gray to the color of embers. "I've been chosen!" he cried, waking up his comrades who gathered around inspecting his hair. Everyone paused as High Shaman Storiv entered and approached Valdur. "Are you ready for the solstice tonight?" he said in a thunderous whisper. "It is up to the chosen to drive away the darkness. Ned med mærke opp med lys, down with darkness up with light," chanted the shaman as he left. The rest of the clan dispersed down the stone halls and out into the dark surface world, leaving Valdur and the three other chosen together.

Edra joined Valdur by the fire. She had been chosen a fortnight ago and now had feathers in her hair and eyes like her spirit, the Eagle of the East. She said, "Tonight we must work together to battle the darkness. Are you ready brother Buffalo?" "Not yet. Let us practice" he replied. "Come Brother Wolf and Sister Bear, let us practice our parts," Endra said as she stoked the fire into a large blaze. Mardone and Nekia came over and joined their circle around the fire.

Nekia then began the tale of the ancestors, which tells the stories of the original chosen who were bestowed with power from the four spirit to banish the cold and darkness from the world. After the battle, they were elevated to godlike status and are remembered to this day as Nalealish the Clever, Runar the Strong, Marath the Wise, and Klani the Swift.

As she sang, the others began chanting "down with darkness up with light," the battle cry of the chosen. The fire flickered in rhythm with the chant and as the group called on their powers, it burst forward with intensity. Feeling the Buffalo surge through him, Valdur let forth a long bellow. Soon the others joined in with the roar of a bear, the howl of a wolf, and the screech of an eagle. There was a hiss as the darkness crept into the corners and the cave became slightly brighter.

"Down with darkness up with light, bring forth fire through the night," chanted the clan as Valdur emerged with the other chosen. The clan had constructed a titanic bonfire and it was licking the sky with its flames.

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My day dream was interrupted as dad said, "and that is how the old tribes and Vikings celebrated solstice. So Soren, what spirit would you like to call on tonight?" Thinking back to my dream I replied, "The Buffalo of the West." "Okay," said dad as he handed me a scroll with what to say. "You can begin whenever you want."

Waiting a moment I took a deep breath then began...

"Spirit Keeper of West, White Buffalo,
Be with us.
Help us listen to the quiet, and find serenity and comfort
in the silences as they become longer.
Give us wisdom so we can make wise choices."

---

Oh No
By Ray Barram

I didn't like you at first.  
But that didn't last too long.

I tolerated you next.  
I didn't trust you.  
How could you smile so much?

Somehow, you grew on me.  
I don't know exactly how.  
Someday I'll figure it out.

I wasn't... meaning to do it.  
I had no intentions of letting you in  
But then one day, you just were.

You started saying hey  
Every time you saw me.  
You complimented me so casually and suddenly  
I would never have a good response.  
You went out of your way for me  
And every time my heart stuttered.  
You were kinder than you had to be,  
And I thank you for that.

Let me remind you I didn't mean for it to happen.  
It was 100% accidental.

But it still happened.
Amelia
By Brody Staats-Johnson

I once had a cat, who was sweet and dear, she was the best cat you could ever ask for. But then she got old and had to go to a greater place filled with peace and beauty. She will be forever missed in my heart and others.

Fish
By Owen Cogen

Swimming through the waters of life an endless void never with a true end. Time is just a thing to make that void feel like it has an end when truly it does not. Swimming never truly starting, never truly stopping. Swimming in the endless abyss, falling, falling. At the bottom it may feel like an end when truly it is not. And at the bottom you will continue swimming, and falling, until you don't realize it anymore. Just another fish in the endless sea.

Seasonal
By Milna McCown

Medium: Digital Illustration
with Autodesk Sketchbook Pro
Black and Blue
By Ava Svetland

Medium: Acrylic

Drip
By Ray Barram

I'm sorry
Drip drip drip drip
I lost control
Drip drip drip drip
I didn't mean to, I promise
Drip drip drip drip drip
It was an accident
Drip drip drip drip
I'm sorry
Drip drip drip drip
You kept pushing
Drip drip drip drip
I told you to stop
Drip drip drip drip drip
Look at the mess
Drip drip drip drip
It's going to take days to get that blood out.
Drip drip drip drip drip drip drip
I'm sorry
Eternal Sleep
By Gabriela Mitchell

Screaming inside screaming at me
Diss head taunting me
Eyes threatening to burst with tears
Feels like death or deep despair

Eternal sleep would bring me peace
Eyes never wake only dream
Life’s the nightmare when you’re awake
Dreaming is a sweet blissful peace

If only we could live in dreams
It’d be a sweet happy peace
But the world’s a dark being
Forcing horrible hate on me
Solitude
By Juniper Taylor

The ocean sparkled silver in the moonlight, lapping up onto the sandy shore and then rushing back. Solitude. That was his first thought. He was finally alone. He could make out the faint reflection of the flames behind him in the water. He turned around, admiring his handiwork.

Every house burnt to mere ashes and charcoal. Everyone was surely dead. Nobody could survive an inferno like that. It was his best fire yet, better than the mere campfires of his childhood. All that was left now was a piece of paper, blowing feebly in the wind. The town, like everything he had ever known, was gone. Only a few small fires crackled still, trying desperately to find sustenance in the charred wood.

Pieces of ash fell down like snow, and he knew it was only a matter of time before the smoke surrounded him, suffocating him, killing him. He sat down on the rock beside him, simply waiting. He was ready now. Ready to die.

A piece of ash floated down and landed on his arm, a snowflake from the flames. He remembered his childhood days, playing outside when the snow fell like a frozen blanket from the sky. That was all gone, now. He would never see the snow again.

A chuckle forced its way out of his throat. And then another. Soon he was laughing, big, hearty guffaws like he had, years ago. “Never again!” He shouted into the smoke and ashes, into the wind and flames. Into the silver ocean lapping up onto the shore.

Never again.
You ask me how I am
If I'm doing alright
But, my dear, I must say
'T'm afraid not.'

It's nothing to do with you,
I just feel like I'm worn out,
Falling apart at the seams.

Other times, though,
I feel wound up,
Coiled far too tightly.

Sometimes, I feel like I'm being pulled
In a game of tug-of-war
From both sides.

But every now and then
I don't have to answer
That dreaded question with
'T'm afraid not.'

I can say that I feel like
A tapestry that's been freshly woven
A bow that's just been strung
A mobile swinging in the breeze

I love those days
When asked if I'm well
I don't have to say
'T'm afraid not.'

Because I feel like I'm high up on a ship,
Tangled in the Fore Topsail,
And I can feel in me how fast the ship is cutting through the waves,
My hair tying and untieing itself in the stiff ocean wind.

But those days are too few
And more often than not,
When asked how I am,
I seem to answer,
'T'm a frayed knot.'

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The Room
By Anonymous

Don't think that you haven't met all those kids
Who've locked themselves in a room with no key
Who's sense of self lies only in their ids
And through their own eyes, some may never see

Those kids in the room that's always open
Never leave due to the outstanding fee
They would rather be sad and be moping
Than they would respectfully disagree

Some kids in the room now aren't what they were
They've forgotten their key and their old truth
Ask how they are, to the room they'll refer
The room's taken it all even their youth

With rooms everywhere you could stumble in
And you could get stuck, believing a sin

----

I'm a Frayed Knot
By Ray Barram

Media: Poetry and Digital Photography
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Childhood Memories
By Gabriela Mitchell

Media: Acrylic and Sharpie

Worm Friends
By Caitlin Neff

Medium: Digital Illustration with ProCreate
Drip
By Ray Barram

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Fly high as you carry our blessings.
May we have eyes as sharp as yours,
so we are able to see truth and hope on the path we choose.”

After Kaia, my mom called on the Wolf of the South and Dad called on the Bear of the North. We all stared at the fire absorbed in the silence broken only by the crackling of coals. My dad began a beat on the djembe and a chant, “Down with darkness up with light, bring forth fire through the night.” We joined in, and as we sang I thought of how Valdur was dancing around in my place, battling the darkness to bring in light.
Mustangs Never Tame
By Sophia Boone

Prologue

Aria kicked Crouton harder with her heels, sending the horse into a full gallop towards the brook at the borderline of the vast meadow. The heavy picnic hamper swayed dangerously in the saddle bags, but Aria couldn’t be happier. She let go of Crouton’s creamy mane and threw her hands in the air, screaming, “I did it! I trained a wild mustang!”

Mustangs never tame

Crouton despised the brook. It wasn’t anything like the stream she played in as a filly, wild and free. The brook was contained by a low brick wall that stood three feet from the water’s edge, giving it a civilized feel. The brook was narrow and slow moving, so slow moving that you couldn’t hear the water until you were about 12 feet from it. Four years ago, a special chemical had been dumped in the water that killed off all the fish and tadpoles. To Crouton, the brook was only a mock of the real thing, only pretend.

Crouton also despised Aria’s laziness. Aria wasn’t a weak rider, she could gallop Crouton with ease, but she just didn’t have much empathy. She only put the picnic hamper in one saddle bag and didn’t even the weight in the other, so Crouton had an extra fifteen pounds on her right.

As they neared the brook, Crouton slowed down to a right lead canter and then to a jog. Aria swung off and flipped the reins over Crouton’s head. “Alright now girl,” Aria said smartly. “I’ll just unhook your reins and then you can wander around these trees whilst I set up the picnic.”

Crouton snuffled around the trees as Aria pulled out the picnic blanket. As she was walking and grazing, Crouton came across a weed. She ate the weed, and as she did, the memories came rushing back to her. She was a filly again, running, frolicking with the other colts and fillies. Crouton lifted her head up and let the wind surround her, combing her mane with its fingers.

The longing overwhelmed the young mare. She remembered the other colts and fillies, there had been three more. A filly born two months after her, small, bay, and lazy. A colt just hardly older, buckskin, wild and her best friend. There had been a yearling filly too, but Crouton hadn’t known her well. She wondered where they were now, if they missed her.

Suddenly she didn’t know why she was wearing a saddle. She didn’t know why she was broken. She knew at least that Aria hadn’t trimmed her mane, she was glad about that. Crouton’s mane was about 18 inches long, and often whipped around in the wind when she had her head raised high. It made her seem wild, even if she had been a lesson pony.

The Sword Dance of Black and White
By Booker Paulus White

Life and death,
Sun and snow.
A sword dance of black and white.
Life and death,
The hands of the clock that ticks down the time until the end of eternity,
The building blocks of reality.
Here we chain the trees to the ground,
The better to yank down the sky.
Here we tie ourselves to the earth,
In order to stay grounded.
Here we let our dreams escape,
If only to hope they are answered.
In this town,
In this dear old world,
Where the sky is blue,
And the grass is green,
We accept our lives,
And we rest.

Girl Catching Butterfly
By Emily Bush

Medium: Pencil
“Crouton! I have the picnic ready. Yum, these little hand pies are delicious!” Aria was a wonderful cook for a twelve year old girl. Most of the time when she wasn’t riding Crouton, she was baking something wonderful in the kitchen. Today, the picnic contained of shepherd’s hand pies, an arugula salad with a cinnamon apple dressing and pumpkin spice cupcakes with cream cheese frosting.

Aria put a large serving of the salad on Crouton’s plate and pushed the plate towards her. Crouton was typically quite picky about eating “civilized food,” but she was quite fond of the apple cinnamon dressing.

The two of them ate their salads in silence, each occupied by her private thoughts. Aria wasn’t the type of girl that blabbered on and on to her horse. School had started a month ago, and was going wonderfully, but there wasn’t much to tell.

Aria reached into the picnic hamper for a cupcake and then started gathering up the blanket. She shoved everything into the hamper and finished her cupcake. “Ready to go, Crouton?” Crouton had been ready to leave the brook. It was about half a mile from Aria’s home, a short walk for the deep-lunged mare. Aria clipped on Crouton’s reins and swung into her saddle.

Crouton started a slow lope to the house, and gosh, she was depressed as she did so. Suddenly Crouton knew she had to go back. She knew that she had to find her herd and go back to them. There wasn’t another way she could be happy. Crouton slid to a stop and slammed her right side into a tree, crushing both the picnic hamper and Aria’s leg. She then shook the girl the rest of the way from the saddle and took off at a gallop.

Crouton heard her name several times and saw Aria running after her, slow and limping. Crouton only looked back once and kept on running back through the vast meadow. She came to the brook, and in one swift movement, Crouton jumped over it, stone wall and all. She crashed down on her front legs as she landed and fell over in agony. Crouton wasn’t used to jumping much, so the impact on her front legs was enough to fracture the bone.

She got up again. Crouton continued walking through the trees, putting minimal weight on her front left leg, which hurt terribly. She walked and walked and walked until she got to a small log cabin, surrounded by a fence that contained a lean-to shed. As she was very tired, Crouton laid down near the house and fell asleep.

When she awoke, it was quite dark and except for a lantern, bobbing towards her curiously. “Hey, there. You look like a little mustang.” An old male voice behind the lantern said, “you look a little injured, too. Let me help.”

To be continued...

Illustrations: Horses
By Shealyn Dollar
Medium: Colored Pencil
The Thing in the Woods
By Juniper Taylor with co-writers Sutter Libby and Riann Sheldon

There’s something in the forest outside my house.

I’ve been seeing it all day, darting through the trees outside so fast that I wonder if I even saw it at all, if maybe I’m hallucinating it. At night, though, I know it’s not a hallucination. At night, I can see its eyes, glowing harshly through the deep blackness. It’s looking at me. I know it is. From the glimpses I get of it, it looks pale. Tall. A lot like the birch trees that surround it. It’s starting to get on my nerves. I can feel its anger, and I’m beginning to wonder what the hell I did to offend it. “John, what is it?” I can hear the concern in Mary’s voice. I know she can’t see it, and that scares me. Maybe I am going insane.

I turn away from the window. “Nothing, hun. Just looking outside.” I give one last furtive glance out to the forest, and then turn back. I can’t see it anymore, but I know it’s there. I can still feel the anger. “Tea?” My wife asks, and I nod. I could use the distraction. She puts her hand on my shoulder for a moment, and then turns towards the kitchen and begins boiling the water.

After a minute, I could hear the telltale whistle of steam forcing its way out of the pot. I followed my wife into the kitchen, and we sat down silently at the table, teacups in hands. I leaned into my cup, breathing in the hot steam and letting it wash over my face.

“John, I’m worried about you.” Mary says after a moment. I sighed. “How so?” I asked, although I knew why. I had no idea how to explain my obsession with the thing in the woods. She narrowed her eyes at me, knowing I was avoiding the subject. I sighed and looked away from her. “I’m fine, Mary. I’m just tired.” She pinched her lips together. “Fine John. If you’re not going to talk, I’m going to bed.”

I watched silently as she stood up and walked up the stairs, her footsteps echoing in the silence. I felt my jaw tighten in anger. That damn monster. My wife and I had been happily married for five years, and now the bastard was tearing us apart. (I almost could feel it’s breath, cold and uncomfortable, burrow down my neck, just waiting for me to make the first move.) That settled it. Tonight, I would grab my rifle and hunt the thing down. Tonight, when my wife was asleep and the moon was full in the sky, I would kill it. It had to die.

The leaves crunch beneath my feet, sending jolts of adrenaline through me every time. I know it can hear me. I can feel the strap from my shotgun digging into my shoulder, but I ignore it. I’m willing to endure a little bit of pain if it means the monster is dead.

Suddenly, I catch a glimpse of something through the trees. A flash of white, disappearing deeper into the forest, and I’m chasing after it before I even have time to think. I burst through the trees, my feet skidding wildly and my eyes already darting around, looking for it. My shotgun is raised, swinging about as I search for it. My gun is trained on it before I even register what it is. My finger tightens on the trigger, and the killing shot is fired.

Instead of the huge beast I expect, though, a small object falls out of the sky. I make my way towards it hesitantly. And then I see it. A small dove, laying on the ground, one wing broken from the fall. Blood gushes from a hole in its chest, where I can almost see the feeble quiver of the breath leaving its lungs.

A somber silence surrounds me. I realize that I’m still holding my breath, and I exhale slowly, my breath turning to mist in the cold air.
Mary loved birds. Doves, especially. She loved their soft coos in the afternoon, the sound somehow breaking through the loud chirps of the evening crickets. Sometimes, she would coo back at them, as if to say hello. It always made me smile. I sigh and look away, not wanting to see it anymore.

My eyes flick upwards, and I notice that the sky has gone dark. It sends a tingle of worry down my spine, knowing I’m going to be out here in the dark with that thing. I shiver and turn around again, willing myself onwards. It’s going to be a long night.

In the morning light, I could see the changes in myself that my time in the forest had made to me. My skin was paler now from the lack of sunlight filtering through the densely packed trees. I felt taller now, too. More confident. I knew it was going to happen today. I knew I was going to kill it. I could feel it in my bones.

I stand up, and begin walking forwards. I don’t know where I’m going, but I can feel something guiding me. I can feel my anger building the more I walk, like a bonfire being built up slowly in my mind. It’s taking over me. Guiding me.

I walk through a break in the trees, and stop in my tracks. There it is. A house. A small, idyllic cabin, right in the middle of the forest. There’s a man in the cabin, too, and he looks vaguely familiar. I can’t figure out why.

All I know is I’m angry, and I want to kill.
UNDEFINED, VOLUME 1

Our mission is to provide a platform to recognize and celebrate the creative work of teens and young adults ages 12-20 in Central Oregon.

We are dedicated to representing the young adult experience; Undefined reflects the ideas and emotions of our target age group with as little censure as possible. Pieces may be edited for grammatical clarity but no editorial changes are made without consent of the contributor.

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Painted Truck
By Glenn M. Tanner
Medium: Digital Photography

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