

Spring 2021

ABSINTHE

Trent's Alternative Press



CONTENTS

- 04 // Incandescence
Remi Akers
- 05 // Detriment
Remi Akers
- 06 // Displacement.
Julien Nakamoto
- 07 // Trojan Horse
Diya Shah
- 08 // Dare
Kelsey Guindon
- 09 // My Words
Kether Diaz
- 12 // My Song
Kether Diaz
- 13 // What Makes A Family?
Paige Emms
- 15 // The One
Kelsey Guindon
- 16 // Trapped In A Cage
Julie Musclow
- 17 // A Personal Desiderata At 23
Mel Dudley
- 18 // The Invention Of Music
Mel Dudley
- 19 // Our Team

INCANDESCENCE

Remi Akers

My world flickers, firelight,
Burgeoning until the whole thing erupts.
The flames dance til' their death in a nightmare so bright
And dwindling; embers fade into the darkness that interrupts
The entropy of the day.

A flash of lightning thrusts my world back into morning
And for the shortest burst of a moment, static prickles
In my chest. I could die peacefully under this stare so adoring.
Then thunder roars outside my window, and shatters the fickle
Delight I felt under the moon.



DETRIMENT

Remi Akers

Frights coalesce
Friends collide
In our colossal freight-train-catastrophe world

Calamity festers in the wreckage
When we're hung,
Suspended in a freefall
Surrounded by a colorless expanse
—a collectively contrived hellscape

Forced to concede with the frailties
Of chalky corpses in business suits
Yet we're urged not to fret
Over things we cannot control.
We must forsake the futile
To cope with this increasing morbidity.

If we fiends speak colloquially, we're fated
To be dismissed as collateral
 Damage
 Death
 Murder
 Blood on your hands
But we are frigid if we express concerns with conformity.

Although we did not create this dumpster fire,
We're tasked with fending off the flames
As the walls collapse, caging us inside.
Yet the cacophony we raise whilst being buried alive
Is not enough to convince anyone to set us free.

They'd rather collude with their collective greed
Than consider the cataclysm of a system that has served them well
At the cost of countless others.
In condescending tones, they advise us to remain calm
While we are crushed under the weight of their riches.



DISPLACEMENT.

Julien Nakamoto

i am a temple forged from sun
an army of iron shimmers from its
golden rays off a white cross
lodged into the beating heart of an empire

i am a dying kingdom, or
the bleeding sun's old toy
in its bloated bodies and rotten pride
is a shadow cast by the rising red stars of liberty
a mushroom cloud travels by plane

i am of oceans apart
a dead culture, a dead language
a history which endures is
he who earns the most coin

i am empty water bottles
squeezed of worth and tossed aside
white plastic creases
curled over and aching

i am neglected mountains of laundry
a vibrant crash of wrinkling waves
like the folds of my skin
in need of being ironed

i am dust in rays of the sun
forever going and gone
yearning a time of no questions
kissing the relics of childhood



THE TROJAN HORSE

Diya Shah

WANNA WALK OUT OF MY LIFE, THERE'S THE DOOR.

I don't think about stories anymore. I used to conjure up these stories in my head, stemming of off something I had probably read days ago. Whether it was the middle of the day or the middle of the night, those thoughts would overpower me. They felt like they would come true at any instant. And in that hope, I would keep reading to let the stories cook up in my head, and watch them like a movie, oohing and aahing at the right moments. But I don't see the stories anymore. It's like there was a movie theatre in my head. Once, it was in the prime of its life, the most happening spot on the street. But now it's just a rundown old theatre that no one visits, its remnants scattered across the corner of the street that was once full of life.

BUT IN THE END, THAT'S WHAT CONTROLS ME.

I don't think I had a choice. Some days it feels like an invasion, like my mind was not mine and someone came in fully armed and laid siege to everything that made me, me. It was the ultimate Trojan Horse. It came in under the pretense of opportunities, possibilities, the time of my life. I let it in, unaware of its true nature. And now it occupies my mind like a parasite just sucking away until all there is left is the fleshless versions of what used to be.

YOU'RE RIPPED AT EVERY EDGE.

Now I am grasping at straws because my mind is on the edge of a dark valley and it is hanging by a thread. What's down there? Maybe the bodies of all of those stories that used to live up there but eventually died because there was no life left in my mind to fuel them. Maybe parts of my imagination, that were forgotten and never revived. Maybe the peace of my mind. Should I drop down through the nothingness and live among the dead? Or should I crawl back onto the edge to live among the barely living?

I AM STUCK.



DARE

Kelsey Guindon

When my thoughts can't contain me,
I catch myself daydreaming,
Of far-off places and pretty faces and traces
Of whom I could be
Who I might very well be—
If I were not afraid

If I were not afraid
Would these daydreams, instead, be plans?
Of foreign sunsets and passionate romance
Pursuing life and taking chances

I sometimes envision
Falling out of the sky
From a plane
And falling into myself.

Can you envision—
The air brushing back your hair.
Your heartbeat:
First fast,
Becomes steady, and you know—
That you're there—
Exactly where you're meant to be.
Because I can.

I've gotten into the habit.
Of saying yes
When sometimes It would be easier to
Accept mediocrity.
I force my cant's into cans—
And my daydreams into plans.
So someday,
I will sit in the sun, breathing in fresh air
And I will not need to wonder *what if.*
I will not be afraid.
I dare for more.
Do you dare?

MY WORDS

Kether Diaz

I

I look around as the ideas drift away.
It's hard to move my pen
as I try to capture all the thoughts
that keep vanishing and escaping
from the webs of ink I have woven.
I watch the black tendrils vanish
around me as my cocoon shatters.
The noises surround me
while my eyes adjust to the light
and the figures in the room.
The shadows come into focus
and I stare at the page in front of me,
begging to be embraced again.
But the words are out of my grasp,
in a place where I cannot reach them.

II

I take a sip of tea
from the cup that says "coffee" on it,
and glance at the top of the stairs
as the doors open, revealing a face.
The guy and I make eye contact
before looking away instantly
and I, staring at the ink tendrils,
wish he hadn't noticed.
I close my eyes and breathe,
inhaling the sweet aroma
that fills the aisles of the glass library.
My body moves and I follow it
through the maze of perfumes and
scents,
getting lost in the surrounding worlds.
My hand touches the spines of the
books,
and I feel them pulsing,
vibrating to be let free, screaming
from their concealed bodies.

III

I stop in front of one book
bound in brown soft leather,
and I caress the untitled surface
before pulling it out of its prison.
I prefer the demons with no name,
that are covered in mystery
as if guarding a well kept secret.
There's no telling the age of this volume,
not without breaking the seal
that keeps the words tamed and silent,
but its pages whisper to me
the stories of ancient times that lie
hidden
between the embrace of its brown
prison.
I pause for a moment
before reaching for the door,
and when I find it unlocked I smile
as a memory rises from the depths of
my heart.
Books are the portals
that are never to be closed,
because no one can ever tame them.

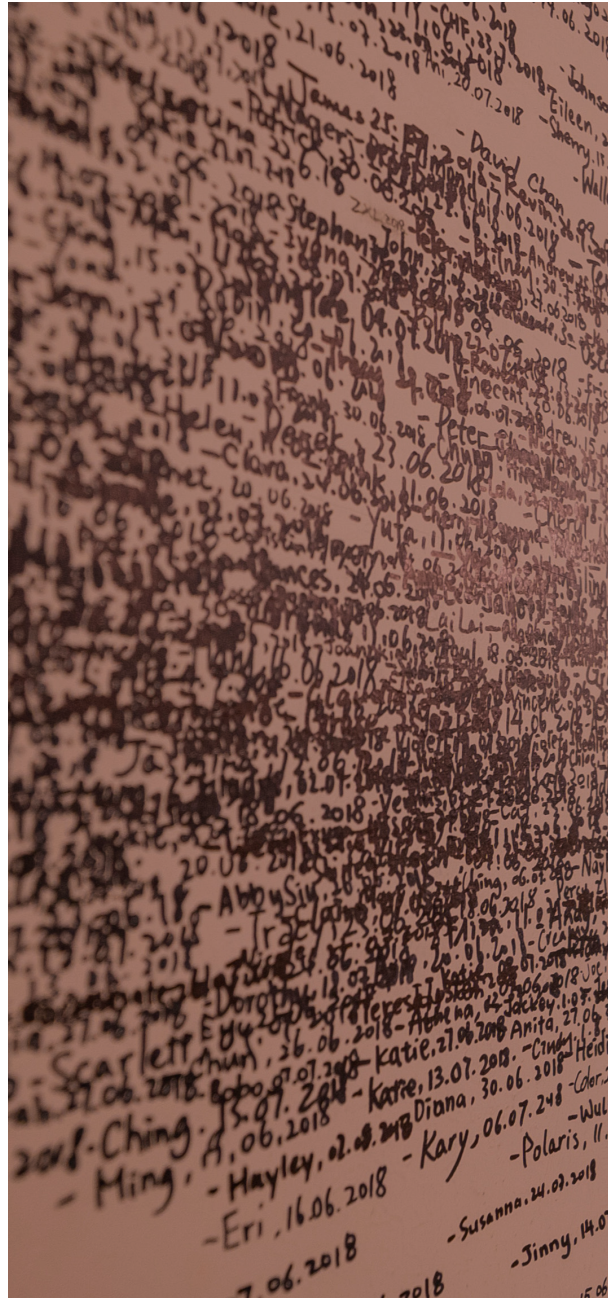
IV

The smell of ashes envelops me
as I open the world
that is resting in my hands.
A typhoon of dark symbols and letters
surges from the yellowish surface
and I see the landscapes of a place
that is painted by words.
My blood runs the same way
the ink fills these pages,
nurturing its rivers with life.
In the distance I see a sword
sealed in stone, waiting, asleep.

My Words

I hear the soothing voice of
a hideous bird with the face of a woman,
calling for me, pulling me
towards the black water where
a silent creature of myth awaits.
A clock ticks in the distance
and I see a shadow
being followed by a flying child.
I dodge the axe aimed to my throat
while a woman with a crimson heart
screams at the girl and the rabbit.
I watch as the precious ring
melts in the core of a fire mountain,
along with the creature
that once was more,
before the darkness took it all.
The kid with the thunder on his
forehead
greets me as I mount the horses
that only the witness of Death can see.
And the snake with the coat of feathers
whispers the legends
of a civilization long gone.
But then I feel the gaze
and rise from the ocean of ink.
I close the door, leaving the demons
inside as I return the book to its prison,
next to the other worlds.

V
The guy looks at me
from the other side of the shelves,
before turning to mist
the moment I try to reach for him.
I lower my hand
as the whispers call me again
and the book I just left
shakes against its siblings,
begging me to take hold of it again.
But as I release its chains once more
and soak in the world inside,
a single thought makes me stop.
These are not my words.
The thread used to knit such webs
feels like a trap, for the string



does not belong to me.
I close the door and put it away
as my heart bangs against my chest
with despair, with fear.
Where are my words?
Where is my ink?
I return to the place I left
and look for the tool that I'm missing.

My Words

But my pen is gone.

VI

The shadow is faster than me
and I stumble as I try to catch
the boy made smoke.
But he eludes my every move,
and I can almost hear his laugh
as he sees me run
through the aisles of the glass library.
I collide with the shelves
and an avalanche of worlds falls over me.
A thousand doors suffocate me
and their voices scream for freedom
while I cover my ears
and the windows in my face blur.
And then there's silence.
I open my eyes, touching the books.
I let the tendrils of these alien webs
embrace me with their warmth
as I inhale their tales and myths.
They lull me in their hands
with the rustle of the pages
as the wind blows against my face
in the landscapes of other gods and
goddesses.

VII

The guy sits before me
as I read through the yellow
pieces of realms that lie around me.
He looks at me
and I don't look away.
I tell him the stories that I know,
of women that turn into spiders
and beautiful beings that never lie.
I bring him to the cold lands
where a queen of mirrors and ice
requires Eternity to break her spell.
We visit the pond that conceals an
ocean,
and follow the golden path
that leads to the reign
where everything is green.

And as we climb the mountain
that holds immortal creatures,
he smiles for the first time, fading away.

VIII

I sigh while closing the doors
of the lands beyond time and space.
The webs hold on to me like a cloak
as the tornadoes, hurricanes, and
typhoons
are concealed inside their cells.
One by one, the dreams and nightmares
return to their homes of ink.
The last book looks at me
as I lift it up with a heavy heart.
Its soft brown bounds shiver as I push
the demon without a name on the shelf.
It knows that I will come back
in the same way that I know it too.
I smile at the landscapes,
and the creatures, and the monsters.
Now I remember all the nights,
when she, after screaming at me
because of my failures,
went to sleep without guilt in herself.
And as I laid awake,
shattered and defeated
with a single tear falling in the
emptiness
I heard the whispers from my shelves
and grabbed the worlds
and walked among its territories
in places where she could not follow me.
Another thought rises and silences her.
I try, and that's what matters.


IX

The cup that says "coffee" on it waits.
I stare at the tendrils of ink as I tuck
myself
in the cloak that covers my shoulders.
My pen is waiting for me.
I have found my words.

MY SONG




Kether Diaz



I wake up early.
The bed is comfortable.
The sun welcomes me.
I feel warm.
I get out of bed.
Breakfast is tasty.
I put my earphones on.
The song is melancholic.
I brush my teeth.
I stare at the mirror.
The mirror stares back.
I look away.
My scar hurts a little.
I change my clothes.
People are waiting for the bus.
The library is almost empty.
The air tastes like my song.
Someone looks at me.
I ignore the stare.
The teacher is talking.
I don't get the point.
I don't want to.
A single tear falls.
I head to the washroom.

I run my hand over the scar.
People are stupid.
I am just like them.
My song keeps playing.
I have the urge to dance.
I turn off the lights.
My body moves on its own.
I fall to the ground.
Tears won't come,
I made sure of that long ago.
Words don't make sense.
I am a little frustrated.
My pen breaks.
I bleed ink.
I take a step back.
And then another.
And another.
I'm sorry.
Mom.
Brother.
I'm sorry.
I touch my scar.
My song starts again.



WHAT MAKES A FAMILY?

Paige Emms



Although I was only moving two hours away for university, I had a small going-away party before my official first-year move-in date. I invited a few friends and family friends to the party, but many of the people I invited had commitments of their own. Seeing as most of my friends were about to move away from home, or at least start a huge new chapter in their lives, I wasn't surprised. When the actual date of the party came, the gathering consisted of my immediate family and our closest group of family friends.

Three couples, plus my parents and all of the kids from each family, make up our group of friends. Most of the parents have known each other since they were teenagers, working together at a McDonald's in my hometown with a couple of 'newcomers' who had become spouses to the original group. When these couples met in the eighties, there was no telling that they would still be friends thirty some years later!

As a kid, I spent many days and nights at the couples' houses and had many sleepover parties with the girls in one of the families. Many of my best childhood memories were made with the kids that came from friendships that our parents made when they were just kids themselves.

Throughout my life, I have heard many stories of the shenanigans that went on, particularly between three of the men, when they were young. From pranks, to injuring each other accidentally, some of the stories are almost unbelievable. These stories are tales that I will never forget and have become something close to mythological stories in my life. Watching my parents with these people, hearing their stories and seeing them now in comparison to the crazy teens they once were, is something that I don't think a lot of people get to experience.

Many nights have been spent watching all of these adults bursting out with laughter because they are reminded of "that one time" when one of them did something insane or so dangerous that you marvel at how these men are still alive to tell the

What Makes A Family?

story.

Every one of these adults that we call our parents came from different homes, different upbringings; they were so different in many ways but they found each other, and some of them even married each other. I mean, my mom and dad have been together since they were fifteen years old and I have never known two people who are more in love. My parents and their friends formed a little second family outside of each of their actual families.

It was so interesting to watch their interactions and see them be there for each other, like I thought a family did. When I was younger, I thought that my real family was big. I thought the group of nine, that I spent birthdays and holidays with, was a pretty big group. I mean, when I looked at the long tables we used to take up at restaurants, we felt like a lot of people. The family I saw regularly for holidays consisted of my parents, me, my two younger brothers, my uncle, whichever girlfriend he was with at the time and his son.

As I got a little older, I started to realize that the family I described was actually pretty tiny in comparison to the families that my friends saw for holidays. I never imagined fitting dozens of people into one house to celebrate Christmas or a birthday until I was in elementary school or middle school. When classmates asked me who I celebrated with on Easter or any other special occasion, I often got laughed at when I rattled off the eight people who I spent the day with. It was hard sometimes for me to hear descriptions of other people's huge families. Sometimes I wished I had a family with so many people in it that we all had to squish together just to fit everyone inside the house.

At the going-away party the kids all swam and hung out. We talked about absolutely everything and nothing all at the same time. We watched our parents laugh and talk and we talked about them and some of their more recent mischief, while they talked and ate and laughed on the upstairs deck. We all had cake, I opened some presents from my parents and a couple from our friends and we just all took in each other's company. It had been quite a long time since all of the families were together like that. We are a lot more spread out nowadays than when I was growing up. One family in Kingston, another in Paris another in Shelbourne, and my family still lives in Brampton, my hometown, therefore it takes a lot more planning for everyone to get together.

The one thing that I wanted at the party was a photo of me and all of the original members of the friend group. When I looked at the photo, I realized that what I wished for as a kid had been right in front of me the whole time. In the photo, I was surrounded by my parents and my aunts and uncles. I had the big family that I wished for, the aunts and uncles and cousins were all right there. My parents' best friends played a huge part in making me who I am today. They have been there for me through my entire life and for my parents before me. They are not our friends or our family friends, they are our family, not by blood or by marriage, but by simply being there for one another and just embodying what it really means to be a family.

THE ONE

Kelsey Guindon

Sometimes I catch myself thinking of you.
When I see something that would have made you laugh,
When I think of how you would call me
Just to hear my voice.
Hours later we would still be lost in each other's words—
Your voice was my favourite music.

Now, I cannot tell: are these my dreams, or nightmares?
Regardless, I don't want them to end.
I am yours, when I sleep,
but I wake and you are gone.
You are worth the pain of remembering.
Don't let me forget.

I tell myself that heartbreak
Is the truest friend I have.
Come, in disguise,
So I am no longer
Pouring myself into someone
I thought was the ocean
But was, instead, a shallow pool
With a *leak*.

But if I asked you to stay, would you have?
I think of intertwining my fingers with yours and how
I miss your voice and the what ifs and the plans and
I think of how, to this day, I see your smile
And I think of how *you are the one that got away.*
How you got me in a way I did not think was possible.
How I fell for you faster than my heart could keep up with.

I swore never to chase after someone who does not want me,
And perhaps, you have forgotten about me.
Now you are a ghost,
And I am haunted by what could have been.



TRAPPED IN A CAGE

Julie Musclow

What happens when the animals we cage become the carcasses in the catacombs beneath each hollow step. What am I when we first lock eyes? Am I just blind, to not see the differences, the similarities? How come you look away? How come I still stare? If I stand taller, then why do I stand here? Capable of greater thought, and yet you captivate them all. Trapped in a cage and yet always on the go, on the other side of the fence, never letting go. I fall to the ground, we are free. You grab my body and take me home.



A PERSONAL DESIDERATA AT 23

Mel Dudley

Lately I have been so overwhelmed with emotion and nostalgia, and so drained of mental energy, that I find it hard to focus or even express myself properly with words. I do things I used to hate, and at a leisurely pace I used to hate. I have fallen in love with the sound of rain falling while old music plays in another room. I like going on midday walks and taking photos of old buildings and frozen rivers and muddy streets. I like watching old animated movies and making art and learning about animation and Elon Musk's thoughts about the future. I worry about America along with the rest of the world, because it is like watching a friend descend into darkness. I appreciate my family and friends more than I ever have. The hole in my heart grows larger but I become more patient each day. I am less attracted to a woman's physical beauty and more interested in who they are. I wish I was smarter and more knowledgeable just for the sake of being so. I have a lot of questions but I do not know what they are yet. I have little attention or computing power anymore and my brain operates like Shrek sludging through a chin-high swamp. I wish I could go back to 2012 so that I could jump off a roof, bounce off the ground, and get up with nothing but a smile and grass stains on my knees. Even a stranger's hug is cherished now. I get the urge to take candid photos of my family and save them. I think little kids are cute but babies are still a stretch. I like sliding on ice and splashing in puddles like I am little. I think about Desiderata and it actually brings me comfort. I grow melancholy thinking about a day where my mother and father no longer exist. I worry that I will be alone but I hope not. I sleep much better on my mother's couch than in my own bed at home. I do not care about maintaining abs anymore. They never helped anything in the first place. I still care about cardio and fear that one day I will joke that I am winded by jogging up a flight of stairs, and it will be true. Price tags do not bother me as long as I have the money. I do not check grocery receipts. I like cloudy days and misty days and foggy days, and if I do not have to be outside for long, I like rainy days. My younger brother inspires me. I feel like a car on the freeway--I want to slow down and admire the scenery but I cannot because I will be late to wherever I am going and somebody will be pissed.

Comfortable silence with other people is peace.

THE INVENTION OF MUSIC

Mel Dudley

hyk, my name. me strong. i am good hunt.

i keep 14 friend. we stay in cave. in day we hunt, in night we make fi-re plus sleep. we stay to-ge-ther, or die.

e-ne-my is keet. he is big like me. he is strong like me. he have kids from all wo-men. i have less: two. i want kill him.

i want stab spear in him back. i want see him blood all on ground. i use paint. i want eat meat from him head plus be more strong man. but i no kill. if i kill, i am kill too.

weak man is bard. bard is small plus young. he have no hair on face. he have no wo-men. he is dumb. i snap in two piece if I want. no threat is bard. he live. he care old man leek. he chew food leek eat. leek have no chew. he hold leek on back. leek drink river. leek weigh like ba-by. i no like weak. too many chew. no food.

mees is fat wo-man. she make good ba-by. she is good ga-ther. she is good keep fi-re. she is good mate. i mate mees one time. she is good.

one day I done hunt, come home. i hear sound like bird in cave. no bird.

all sit in round plus listen bard. bard make chew noise. all like. all hear.

i no like. he hurt ear. i tell stop. bard see me. he no hear. he look mees. mees like.

i no like.

i hit foot in him chew. blood on foot plus one chew. bard is sleep. all is no like me. leek plus more no like. he no eat to-night. i go back cave plus pre-tend sleep. i take chew out foot.

next day same day. I hunt. i come home. bard is try make noise. no work. i like.

next he make noise by round in mouth. all shock, all like. no me. i want hit foot in chew. i no hit. i stay. i hear. chew make noise like wind. mees hit rock on earth like thun-der. all shock. all like. i no like. i want kill. i want kill bard. he nice kill. i like. i wait.

bard sleep by cave chew. moon is light. no cloud. all is still.

i move like bug. slow. slow.

i move like snake. slow, slow, near bard.

he no move.

like snake i wrap round neck. bard is wake. he no make noise. eye like ri-ver. no bird he make. chew i kill. bird i kill. bard i kill.

he is still. eyes close. he sleep good. he no wake no more.

i move like snake go bed. I see leek kill too. no me. he kill self.

i sleep like bear. all noise still.

OUR TEAM

Zachary Barmania
EDITOR - IN - CHIEF

Remi Akers
WRITER

Brayden Knox
WRITER

Said Jiddawy
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Jamie Boyd-Robinson
WRITER

Julie Musclow
WRITER

Emma Johns
ILLUSTRATOR

Kavya Chandra
WRITER

Shaun Phuah
WRITER

Reka Sazbo
ILLUSTRATOR

Mel Dudley
WRITER

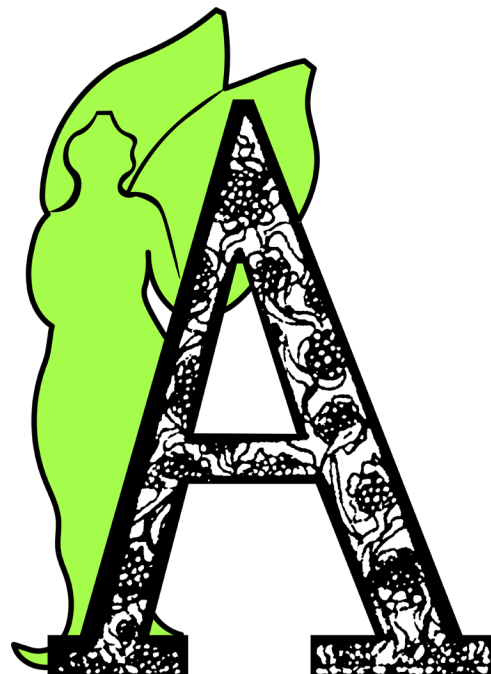
Diya Shah
WRITER

Paige Emms
WRITER

Zack Weaver
WRITER

Kelsey Guindon
WRITER

Spencer Wells
WRITER



Online

Absynthe Magazine goes beyond print by engaging readers with online content. For your daily dose of everything absynthe visit us at www.absynthe.ca

Illustrations

Cover Pages / FLESHWOUNDS & INK
[www.fleshwoundsand.ink]

4, 5, 12, 15, 16 / Said Jiddawy
[www.saidjiddawy.com]

6 / Julien Nakamoto

Photography

8, 10, 13 / www.pexels.com

Copyright © 2021.
Absynthe Magazine.
All rights reserved.

