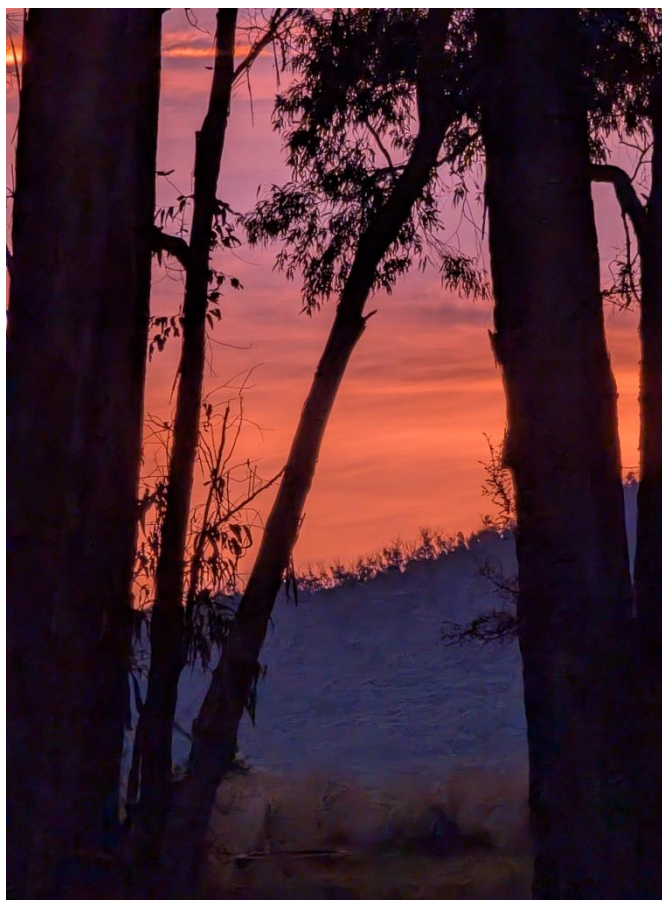


100 WORDS



A Collection of tiny stories created by the
Braidwood community in July 2025

AUTHORS

Abigail Saunders

Alison Ford

Alison Sexton-Green

Averill Corcoran

Catherine Vandermark

Christine Ellis

Christine Payne

Geoff Davies

Emma Adams

Evelyn Kandris

Jane Foulcher

John Foulcher

Kerrin Glover

Liz Jakimow

Louise McKendry

Mark Cully

Mark McClelland

Mary Langdon

Michael Gill

MNM

Penelope Hanley

Peter Graham

Rae-anne Mcann

Rob Lang

Stephen Balme

Stephen Graham

Stephen Owen

Tony Steven Williams

Vera Sapov

William Verdon

Sweet Celandine

Abigail Saunders

Celandine lay with an ethereal aura in the morning light.

‘You are too beautiful for this world, Celly,’ whispered Dimitri, stroking his newlywed’s cheek. She smiled back, gazing into his glacial blue eyes. ‘I’m going to keep you,’ he continued, ‘Like a butterfly in a box.’

His eyes darkened, glacier melting.

‘You shall live in the attic with your paints.’

Crimson spilled from beneath the hidden panel. Shard of water jar in her lifeless wrist. The canvas still wet, delicate wings and thorax portrayed in gouache and blood.

‘My sweet Celandine, incarnadine!’ Dimitri proclaimed, hanging the painting above his bed.

GENRE: Horror

WORD: Ethereal

ACTION: Paint

The Eye Of The Storm

Abigail Saunders

“Weather’s on the turn, Sir, and the sea she’s a’ squalling.” Trelawney shouted from the optics.
“She’s a mercurial and tempestuous mistress indeed Trelawney!” replied Jennings.
The storm passed, replaced by suffocating fog and loneliness.
Morse code unreciprocated, the men from Trinity house embarked upon the rocky island.
The lighthouse keepers, nowhere to be found.
Yellow Sou’westers still dripping from hooks.
The leather-bound notebook read:
March 24th
Gale Force Winds. S to SW.
March 25th
No wind. Dense Fog. We are being watched...

The writing trailed off, becoming inky scribbles.
Hundreds of eyes feverously drawn stared up from the pages.

GENRE: Historical Fiction

WORD: Notebook

ACTION: Draw

Bathing. A Dreamscape

Alison Ford

The vehicle drew close, wheels spinning in its
passing,

covering her in a film of dust.

Incensed, she turned,

stepping into the alley towards a pearlescent
spotlight. And through the gate beyond.

Please,

The pale grasshopper gestured,

Coconut water with vanilla, lychee and ice?

Sit.

Suspended in a puff of semi-translucent mist,
drifting languorously,

she sipped and glanced around.

The sky was clear,

of an indeterminate colour. Without end

or beginning.

Fragile-looking paper kites delicately wheeled
around her

Whrrzz-whrrzz-whrrzz

Then rain fell as tiny glittering crystals.

A visible arpeggio of sound.

Cleaned and refreshed,
she exited under the materialising rainbow.

GENRE: Fantasy

WORD: kite

ACTION: clean

Be careful what you wish for...

Alison Sexton-Green

Centuries ago, we left our corporeal bodies for the Matrix. Our minds were transferred into little black boxes, leaving us free to create our hearts desire. I was the benign Queen, planting seeds of care and compassion. For many, endless peace was not enough, they wanted power over others, creating our own special hell all over again. I wanted out. Without real connections, there was no meaning and no way back either. Ironically, the only to escape the nightmare of living in this matrix was to dream of dying - to face the fear that first bought us here.

GENRE: Science Fiction

WORD: Queen

ACTION: Plant

Just listen

Averill

My guitar sat untouched in the corner for years.
No one in my family played, not dad, not Mum.
Just me, briefly before life got loud and I started
to travel.

They both passed, just eight weeks apart.
On the first night without them both, a single note
rang out. Low. Clear. A strum.

I crept closer, my heart pounding. No one was
there.

Just my guitar, sitting proudly in the corner.

I listened.

Another note. A melody I didn't know, yet
somehow,
remembered Mum's hum. Dad's whistle.

A tune that was never written.
I pressed my ear to the wood.

**"We're still here with you. You'll HEAR us
everyday". Just listen.**

GENRE: Mystery WORD: Guitar ACTION: Listen

Frankie

Catherine Vandermark

The blood-rush of weightlessness as you loosen the
straps of your pack
and it drops to the ground
The reassurance of tree as you yield your back to
the breadth of the
trunk

The giddiness of river stones gossiping in the creek
below

The ineffable joy of a butcher bird singing Frankie
Goes to Hollywood

Relax, don't do it
(beat)

Relax, don't do it
(beat)

Relax, don't do it
(beat)

Relax, don't do it
(beat)

Relax, don't
do it

GENRE: Adventure

WORD: Ineffable

ACTION: Relax

Loveday

Catherine Vandermark

Slammed by the heat, dragging on her asthma-
puffer, she searched for
the old internment camp. Those standing stones—
Japanese water-features?
Grave markers?
German POWs got stipends and played golf all
day—but the Italians
sweated for coin in the poppy fields and market
gardens. Waved their
arms and argued politics—till the anarchist Fantin
was bashed with a
rock, and they separated the fascists.
Didn't stop Loverboy stirring them with subversive
tunes on his
handmade mandolin.
No wonder nanna Hester, firebrand in her short
red cloak, fell for him.
They said he went back up north... She didn't buy
it.

GENRE: Mystery

WORD: Mandolin

ACTION: Grow

“You were once wild here.
Don’t let them tame you...”

Catherine Vandermark

Russian Roulette, she thinks, as the cogs of the
Embodiment Machine
lock in—

Year	1927
Place	French Riviera
Sensation	Euphoria

And she is free falling, no parachute, lost in the
refracting light of a
thousand chandeliers, the syncopated chaos of the
dance-band, the
chittering crowd.

She slips under the folds of a flapper-dress and into a
warm skin (heart racing, flushed cheeks)

They stride into the night (briny air, prickling skin)—to
the blood red,
open topped, Amilcar GCGS.

Pedal to metal, off like an arrow, her long, painted silk
scarf surfing the

G-force, tassels groping for—

Spokes.

Hypoxic euphoria.

GENRE: Science fiction

WORD: Euphoria

ACTION: Drive

(Title quotation from *Isadora Speaks - Uncollected writings and Speeches of Isadora
Duncan*, edited by Franklin Rosemont)

Lost in the Rain

Christine Ellis

Driving home after work - Friday night - Just one
more email before I set off - I said. Big mistake.
Canberra to Coast traffic - sigh.

There's a bit of welcome rain in the air - it's been
so dry. That smell - the petrichor - so transports
me. Where will it take me. Where will I end up?

'Diamonds' heading towards me - the glare is a
killer!

I get to the house - more diamonds - these ones
red and blue - flashing. My husband crying - can't
he see me?

No!

Where did the petrichor take me? The glare **was** a
killer.

GENRE: Horror

WORD: Petrichor

ACTION: Work

Sleepless in Reidsdale

Christine Payne

That's me. I long to drift down that sweet, mellifluous stream to dreamland.

Counting sheep? No, too many dags. An Alphabet? - (a road game we enjoy).

- A. Akubra, Apres Ski
- B. Bikini (polka-dot)
- C. Corset, Cross-Your-Heart-Bra
- D. Dungarees**
- E. Ear-flap-cap, Sherlock-style
- F. Falsies
- G. Gag (gimp-style), galoshes
- H. Hobble skirt
- I. Itchy woollen jumper
- J. Jock-strap
- K. Knickerbockers
- L. Lederhosen
- M. Muff
- N. Nakedness (birthday suit)
- O. Odour-eaters
- P. Party dress!
- Q. Queer arse-less chaps
- R. Raccoon cap
- S. Spats
- T. Tutu
- U. Uggies
- V. Vinyl jumpsuit
- W. Wimple
- X. XXXOS
- Y. Yarmulka
- Z. Zoot Suitzzzzzzzzzzzz

GENRE: Comedy WORD: Mellifluous ACTION: Sleep

The Gift

Geoff Davies

Here it is.

You go.

He said both of us. You know what he's like.

Pompous bloody prick.

Well, you helped get him there. Always going on about foreigners.

And what about all your promises? You'd say anything.

Yeah, well, we both learnt a thing or two. But we got rid of the wimps

No. You're still here.

Virile, love. I proved it.

Don't 'love' me, drunken oaf.

Frigid bitch.

...

What's this one for anyway?

Another glorious parade.

Here we are.

State your business.

Presenting the new ceremonial jacket.

Names?

Pauline.

Barnaby.

This way. Commander Dutton will see you now.

GENRE: Dystopian WORD: Jacket ACTION: Learn

A Rainy Night

Emma Adams

Rain drums on a car roof. The night road is
streaked with red light.
Through burnished window light a woman is
reading. Her face in reverie
is beauty itself.
The watcher knows, from many nights transfixed
outside, that she's the
one.
Perhaps, in her new life, he contemplates, he'll
bring her books.
It's time, at last, to meet. He steps out of the car,
as another speeds too
close.
Hearing the crash, she rushes out and kneels
beside him.
He smiles.
The knife in the gutter glints blood red and sirens
wail as the rain
intensifies.
They're together now, forever.

GENRE: Romance **ACTION:** Reading **WORD:** Car

Laying Down Roots

Evelyn Kandris

The *viminalis* you planted in the paddock is almost tall enough for us to lay under.

That first year in our first house, each failed tree fell into fault lines of old heartbreaks.

But slowly, we learnt to revel in every tender sapling, knowing it mightn't survive January's scorch, or July's unforgiving frosts.

We found play amidst the work. In the grass-stained knees of jeans; in the soil settling into our palm's heart lines, roadmaps back to each other.

In the quiet promise to replant again and again, my dear, and fall in love with the ritual of it all.

GENRE: Romance

WORD: House

ACTION: Play

Love In The Time Of Corona

Evelyn Kandris

“They won’t let her come home, will they?”

The machine reading his pulse is wailing. Each breath, dry cereal lodged in his lungs; silicosis and novel viruses don’t play well.

He was the only one who could keep her calm, her Jim, dawn amidst deepening sundowns.

She’s here now, too; same hospital, different wards. Already, she’s forgetting to ask where he is.

Their house, empty; no one will light the lamps tonight.

He cries so softly you can hear the tears against his paperbark cheeks.

We hold his hands and watch him chase her over a horizon we can’t see.

GENRE: Romance WORD: House ACTION: Play

The Leap

Jane Foulcher

Unfold. Unfold. Don't hold back, tightly closed, contracted, aware only of self, one's limited and somewhat jaded being. Umbrella hesitated, perched on the top step, looking out to the garden. There was a stiff breeze, and the tops of the poplars were bowing to the wind. The sky was azure, a vast sea bobbing with its small boats of cloud. No rain in sight. "I am not needed", said the bad weather friend. So . . . "Yes" to the lure of the breeze, the warm sun, the infinite sky. Unfold. Unfold, step out, leap, up, away. "I can fly!"

GENRE: Fantasy

WORD: Umbrella

ACTION: Discover

Making Light

John Foulcher

The sky began to grow dark.

‘I’ve got this great idea,’ he said.

‘Really?’ she muttered.

‘I’m going to invent a way of creating light just by thinking about it. You can do it. It’s all to do with brain waves and ultraviolet rays. I was so close to perfecting it. So close. Before all this ’

He cast a dismissive hand across the smouldering city.

‘Fetch me the candelabra, will you?’ she asked sullenly.

Their last match flared, the candle danced, shadows bickering on the damp cave walls.

GENRE: Science Fiction

WORD: Candelabra

ACTION: Invent

Happy Hour

Kerrin Glover

Beth and Fitz sat together at the Department of Intergalactic Research, monitoring the daily activities of the alien Zogons on the planet Blip.

At 5pm, Beth submitted their finalised data report for the day, and shut down the computer.

Fitz reached for his coat, turned to Beth, and asked “how about a drink”?

Beth smiled and nodded.

As they headed through the labyrinthine corridors of the Department and out into the street, their data report had reached the management team.

“Cheers”, said Beth, when Fitz handed her a beer.

And the planet Blip was blown to smithereens.

GENRE: Science Fiction

WORD: Labyrinthine

ACTION: Talk

The Harvester

Liz Jakimow

The dome appeared before me, looking almost luminescent. And it was close, so close.

But even closer was the Harvester, the serial-killer who held a knife in his hands and was gaining on me.

I jumped over a large branch, pivoted, then picked it up and swiped, knocking the knife out of the Harvester's hands, before covering the last few metres to the dome.

In the doorway stood a lady, face shining like an angel.

"You've met the harvester," she said. I nodded as I caught my breath.

She pointed a gun at my head.

"Now meet the Reaper."

GENRE: Thriller

WORD: Luminescence

ACTION: Harvest

Grace

Louise McKendry

A stream with willows.

A dog, it follows,

a young girl,

to a white church.

Sun yellow ribbons,

of bows in soft hair.

Sing to the heavens,

so close, almost there.

Whisper his word.

Read his verses.

Close the good book,

it is the end of service.

Wild flowers she sells.

Their scent on the breeze.

Caught by her spell,

but no one sees

The sun yellow ribbon falls to the ground.

The other is lost,
nowhere to be found.
One second there, one second gone.
A horse and cart pass.
The day goes on.

Genre: Historical Fiction

Word: Sun

Action: Sell

The Steal

Louise McKendry

In 1873 Catherine Cole, travelled from Mulloon to Braidwood in New South Wales with her husband Henry. While he was selling potatoes and apples at the market, Catherine strolled down Wallace Street, planning to drop by her mother's.

In her daydream she heard horses, looking up she saw a lad riding hastily past, kicking up dust. She noticed constables hot on his tail. The dust settled, she saw it, a white crisp bag with a sun stamped in red.

'Sunny day bank', a bag full of sunshine which was now tucked under Catherine's long petticoats and flowing skirt.

GENRE: Historical Fiction

WORD: Sun

ACTION: Sell

Murder, she wrote

Mark Cully

Award night. The invite was in her bag.
She would prove the critics wrong. Quixotic, they
said. All hat, no cattle.
Tonight, she would KILL a Prime Minister.
She picked up the pen and began to write.
Finished, she folded the page,
put it in an envelope,
took off the mask and gloves.
At the dinner, interminable awards and speeches.
Finally, the big one.
Prime Minister, will you do the honours?
Ladies and gentlemen, this year's winner is ...
He opened the envelope,
a smile played across his lips;
he blanched, then fainted.
The next day he took his life

GENRE: thriller **WORD:** quixotic **ACTION:** write

Pivot

Mark McClelland

She'd always felt he could be hers. From the first time he'd walked in, faraway blue eyes.

He was back each week, always Wednesday evenings. Stooping a little at the door. Black jeans. Bought the same bottle of red-label vodka and a small jar of green olives. Turned to go with a half-smile. Nothing spoken.

This time was different. He leaned across, "Come with me?"

She opened the register, reached in for a handful of the cash that had flowed through there like a river these past years. Hoiked her dress, jumped the counter.

The door banged hard behind them.

GENRE: Romance

WORD: River

ACTION: Shop

Forty days

Mark McClelland

The flatlands ran to a dirty horizon. Way off, smoke rose in tendrils around her.

He gunned the bike to reach the girl before the Dusterlings vaporised her. She was fading; he could see the broken stance.

Forty days riding here, haggard plains; the ragged twin-cylinder rasp of the old 750 his only company.

Streaking toward her, a memory flashed - the sound of a cooling breeze ruffling the silk tree in the garden of his youth.

No time now for nostalgia, his only mission to get her up on the seat behind him and keep riding. Away from the Dusterlings.

GENRE: Dystopian

WORD: Tree

ACTION: Travel

Don't Mention the Dance

Mary Langdon

Jean crept across the moonlit lawn as the band music wafted from the hall over the paddock.

'I'm going and he can't stop me. Blooming Methodist Dad.

Damn! Now the dog started barking. 'Sssh!'

Max sniffed her taffeta dress and pencilled stocking seams as she patted him.

A lit cigarette. Gino the POW appeared.

'You going to the dance Miss Jean?'

'No I.. not really.

I know Your papa don't like it..

Look, I teach you the Tarantella! He began to whirl, clap and frolic.

His strong hand gripped her arm. Together they twirled and laughed as Max watched on.

GENRE: Historical Fiction WORD: Dog ACTION: Dance

Metamorphosis

Michael Gill

As a young man in the early eighties, I flirted with contemporary dance - a fling which was both brief and, sadly, unremarkable.

I am currently drifting in a world of powerful medications and, as I give myself a bewildering once-over, I am no longer my sweetheart's ancient, Baldy Little Mate, but... a lithe, young woman with glowing African skin the colour of Bloodwood honey, a spine as supple as warm rubber, and wearing a banana skirt!

I don't walk onto that Parisian stage, I stalk, I slink, I slither into that tumultuous, spot-lit applause.

This flower is about to blossom.

GENRE: Fantasy

WORD: Flower

ACTION: Walk

Outback Lessons

MNM

“Everything out here can kill you,” I said with a wink as they crawled into the backseat.

It wasn't the first time I had picked up stranded, young adventurers way out here - frightened, thirsty, grateful ... pathetic

I had been on my own adventure, an annual trek through this dull, dusty tapestry of spinifex and red dirt. Vast nothingness. Silent, except for flies and hopeful crows.

You can go days without seeing another soul. Yet they weren't prepared. Like the others, they thought you could just flag down anyone and they would help. No sense of danger.

I will teach them.

Genre: Adventure

Word: Tapestry

Action: Teach

Grief is a Mountain

Penelope Hanley

Josie dreamt ants swarmed in her kitchen.

‘That symbolises prosperity,’ said Diana.

‘Oh good - I could do with some prosperity.’

Each recalled Josie’s losses: job. Fiancée.

‘Time you considered my cousin Matt - eligible, prosperous ...’

‘The fact that he’s had his fingers in my mouth doesn’t constitute intimacy! -

I’m not interested in your dentist cousin.’

‘Life must go on ...’

‘Grief is a mountain.’

‘Matt’s literally a weekend mountain-climber! He’ll help ...’

‘I wasn’t speaking literally.’

‘I know. He’d help with the non-literal stuff.’

*

Inside Josie, something thawed.

She dated Matt, realising: good things can happen beside the grief.

GENRE:Romance

WORD: Mountain

ACTION:Create

Auction Record

P Graham

Lot no.221B: Handwritten note found in instrument case (Lot no.221A). Attribution uncertain.

Transcription:

My dear H.,

Mary and I have taken a cab to the R.A.H. to hear Sarasate. The man Hills sent has collected the Strad. for its new strings. No mystery to be solved on this occasion!

Yrs

W.

[Beneath, in a different hand]

W. I did not arrange for Hills's man. I suspect a design of Professor J.M. Ask Lestrade to accompany you back to the R.A.H. where you will find me with S.

Bring your pistol.

H.

Passed in.

Genre: Mystery Word: Violin Action: Design

Reparation: the act of making amends

Rae-anne McCann

“Hey Wombat, can you have a look at that old Yamaha, reckon we should get rid of it?”

“Yeah, it probably needs repairing.”

Wombat tinkles the ivories with a happy honkytonk.

It sounds pretty good.

He opens the top of the piano to check the action.

Looking carefully, he smells for mice.

Something is definitely fucked up.

.

Tiny golden creatures are climbing around the wires.

Some are sitting on the hammers smoking chillums.

Playing and laughing like children.

Wombat fingers the keys lovingly.

The creatures start to dance.

He smiles, breaths easy.

“Yeah, I’ll take it off your hands.”

Genre: Fantasy

Word: Piano

Action: Repair

The River

Rob Lang

Caleb's life was not blessed. Raised by the belt, he raged through youth and friends and grew bitter with age and wasted dreams.

Some said at the river's source, there grew a tree with flowers that one could eat to erase regrets. Caleb didn't believe such things. And yet, hungered, he set off upriver, following that sinuous god that promised absolution.

Maps lied, reason faded, weeks became years. He tasted both hardship and kindness. In the end, there was no end, no flowers, no forgetting.

But Caleb realised, by serendipity's grace, the journey itself had become the peace he sought.

Genre: Adventure

Word: Serendipity

Action: Eat

Blade Runner

Stephen Balme

It wasn't the first time his nemesis had double-crossed him.

Ethan grabbed his gleaming serrated knife.

He unplugged the electric car and slid silently down the drive.

Thank God for Google Maps.

A squeal of tyres, then purring.

"Turn left," Google Bitch commands.

Crap advice. Straight into the longest traffic light.

Ethan's roll-on deodorant melded with his sweat and soaked his crisp white shirt as he raged against the red. Finally, the car moved on into shadowy territory.

"Arrived!" she says.

The Fukyu Japanese restaurant

Bloodthirsty thoughts.

Standing over the corner table, he snarled. "We agreed, steak for dinner."

GENRE: Thriller WORD: Nemesis ACTION: Plan

Peat Island

Stephen Owen

February

Constantine looked at the email once more, hoping to find an overlooked clue unlocking Peat Island's final secret. The subject line promised so much — "Attn: Constantine what we've been looking for" but the email's thinly sketched paragraphs offered no such thing.

Peat Island had briefly served as a goat farm before a spell as an insane asylum, and somewhere in-between Constantine hoped he might find the answer to his burning question and the reason for his lifetime of study devoted to Peat's ridges and crumbling architecture.

March

Something happened in March on the island. Constantine now knew.

April

GENRE: historical fiction

WORD: island

ACTION: study

Thunder in My Heart

Tony Steven Williams

Cathy has left me.

Accept it I cannot.

Inside me, this unadulterated rage from an adulterous cause. I know it to be wrong, my jealous hate, but I buy a gun, pay her a visit . . .

Cathy squirms and pleads on the lounge before me, dark despair shimmers in those glorious eyes. I inhale the soft scent of her perfume.

Yet, she has condemned me to oblivion.

I raise my gun to her head.

Then . . . slowly . . . turn its nozzle into my mouth.

Cathy, it is I who shall leave you.

GENRE: Horror

WORD: Oblivion

ACTION: Buy

EPIPHANY—Ratatoille’s Revenge AKA The Parisian Solution or Get Stuffed!

Vera SAPOV aka Troika

Jokes aside, this yarn is no laughing matter. Or perhaps it is...of the hysterical kind. Playing rat roulette is not for the faint-hearted. You need a concrete constitution for this gastronomic game of “Hide & Squeak”.

Spun from paper, cloth, plastic, metal, pumpkin, peanut-butter & plaster, this wheel of fortune has reached terminal velocity. A cautionary tale of tails & solid entrails, a culinary adventure of deadly cuisine...a dietary FIX for a furry beast of a problem.

This recipe, a TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE FART is a winner.

GOTCHA! You greedy bastards.

PoP poo anyone?

Genre: Comedy

Word: Epiphany

Action: Fix

A Walk With an End

William Verdon

Wandering the dark back roads and scrub, singing
softly to myself. I feel the cold air and it sends
shivers down my spine.

I find the stream.

The rumour goes that on a full moon, you will see
your end reflected in its cold, stony waters.

I stand and look, and wait, and wait. An
ephemeral mist wraps its fingers around me and is
gone. A sense of foreboding settles upon me in its
wake.

Who's there?

Nobody.

Am I sure?

...Oh!

Could this be real?

I scream; it touches me. I didn't really believe,
but now I do.

GENRE: Horror **WORD:** Ephemeral **ACTION:** Singing