

# THE OVERCOAT

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## EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

We have missed you.

But we have emerged with something we hope is worthwhile: a collection of minor masterpieces.

You may be wondering why this edition has so few names in it. The answer is simple: we had two outstanding submissions that required many, many pages. They are an exciting mystery by debut author Indiana Davidson, and a rural Victorian epic by poet-in-residence Sean Feeney. We hope you enjoy the journeys! In addition to these two works we have a delightful poem by Emily Buchanan, a vignette on siblings by Luke Faure and the emergence of an anxious finale in poetry by Dane Nolan. Experience a sense of intergalactic freedom with Lachlan Dean, and follow the carefully drawn lines of Jemma Drew on pages four and sixteen. Alexandra Meyer has kindly and dexterously provided an intriguing portrait for our fantastic cover. We hope you can find your thoughts somewhere within...!

Editors & Co.,  
The Overcoat

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# *Barney's Disappearance*

BY INDIANA DAVIDSON



The rush of the river fills my ears. Slow rustle of tree branches. One foot in front of the other, a set pace, all the way to the horse agistment.

"Hi Summer!" Uncle Tim calls from the stables. I smile politely, but don't feel as if I need to say anything. Usually I'm very friendly, not today though. Today is another gloomy day. Walking slightly to the right of the stables to get a sneak peek at the new yearling, I spot Barney with his head poking out of the stable door. He greets me with a gentle neigh and I slide my hand down his white blaze. "Barney!" I wince as he grabs a handful of my black shirt in his mouth. "Summer, you alright?" Uncle Tim whispers, as he puts a reassuring hand on my shoulder. "I'm good!" That was starting to sound like me again, not quite though.

A white Hilux pulls up in the driveway. A woman wearing a white tunic, grey trousers, a limited edition jacket (that there is only one of), and a bag dangling at her wrist, steps out of the car. "Summer, where have you been?"

"Just here Mum...you knew that," I raised an eyebrow.

"Ok, but we need to go, now! I have to show my coworkers my darling daughter! But you can't go out looking like that, I've got a change of clothes in the car". I look down at my black jeans and baggy t-shirt, wondering if maybe I do dress badly.

"Don't I get a hello?" Uncle Tim laughs.

"Oh, hello Tim". Mum immediately looks away after the hello, marches, and waits for me to follow. Tim's smile fades and he attends back to his work.

At home, I watch the window while the hours pass. Dad offered me dinner a while ago; I wasn't in the mood. My head sinks into the pillow and my breathing steadies.

"I'm going out with some friends to have some dessert or something, I'll be home soon". Mum's voice calls from the laundry. I notice that she isn't in the laundry, and is at my door. "We have a lunch to attend tomorrow at twelve, bye now".

"I'm not going to lunch mum, I need to check on Barney". Mum spins on the spot to face me. "Well you are coming, you have no choice," Mum mutters something under her breath, that sounds like, "well-Barney-is," and I only catch parts of it.

"What was that Mum?". She paces up and down the kitchen for a second then leaves.

I wake with a jolt. My mind is swimming. I rise and gather in the kitchen with my dad.

"Morning Summer," he says, rubbing jam off of his jumper.

"Morning," I say back, nicely. I pour a bowl of cereal and eat it in a haste. "I'm going to the stables Dad, love you". I stop and run over to Dad giving him a quick hug. The door closes behind me and I go down the steps.

The stable is empty, Barney is not in there... Uncle Tim must've put him in the paddock, I think to myself. I check every paddock, stall, roundyard, I look everywhere. "TIM! TIM!" I screech. He runs out of the stables "Yes Summer, what's up?"

"Barney – he's gone, I've looked everywhere Tim, everywhere!! Barney, couldn't have gotten-" Tim cuts me off: "Hey, hey! Don't worry we'll find him, Summer". I manage a smile.

"How are you so calm?"

"Oh Summer, I knew since this morning. I heard some banging in the stable and I went to check. Barney was gone after that...". Tim stares at the concrete.

The town of Rondel appears fast in my vision of sight, the pub is full of people who are laughing, some are staring at me, they look like cats, ready to pounce. A small blonde haired girl knocks into me, she apologises. Uncle Tim opens the door for me as I walk into the post office. There is no line, luckily.

"Hi Sherrel, we just want to put some posters up about a missing horse. His name is Barney, B-A-R-N-E-Y," I wait next to uncle Tim, foot tapping. My dark brown curls fly wild as the door swings open, a tall bald man steps in and observes the magazines. "Tim, fill out this piece of paper including all of Barney's information. The posters will be up tomorrow.

"\$4.50 please". Sherrel waits for Tim to pay, I fumble in my pocket for money and slam it on the counter, quicker than Tim.

It's been two days since Barney disappeared. I lie on the concrete at the front of my house. My heart rate goes up. A shaking hand runs along my face.

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"Summer?" My mum shakes me, "Summer? Darling, what are you doing?". I'm suddenly on my feet. I noticed something.

"Mum, where is your jacket, you would never lose that..." I realise that I have said that out loud, and instead focus on being mad at her. "Mum! Where were you last night? You never came home, I-I-". She pulls me into a hug and I break it. Her face stills.

"Where were you, Summer? I was worried about you!"

"Were you really worried, or are you just saying that?" I blurt out, a bit angrier than I expected.

"Don't you say that!" She grabs my hand in an attempt to pull me inside. I lunge forward and strain against her grasp, she blinks slowly and her expression changes into a slight pleading face.

"Mum, Barneys gone...he's been missing for two days now". Mum's head tilts to the side and she frowns.

"I'm so sorry, I heard about it from Tim". My eyes narrow.

"When did you find out? What time, I mean".

"I don't know exactly, but on my way home yesterday he told me, we spoke on the phone". Uncle Tim didn't know until this morning that Barney disappeared... What is he hiding? He always wears that silly, blue shirt, every single day! Ugh— he doesn't even— oh my gosh he could know something about Barney! No he couldn't, wait he said— while I'm busy fighting with myself, Mum stutters "Before you ask, I haven't seen Barney on my way back from the night out with— Jill and Emery. Honey I'm sure he's okay, we'll find him".

Her face is different, I can read her expression, anyone could tell that she was lying.

My teeth are gritted, my hands balled into fists.

"Ok, what's going on?! Mum!" A door sounds and I turn to face it. "Hello!" Dad calls from the front door.

"Hi Hon, uh-Summer and I are just having a-di-scussion" Mum's head lifts higher.

"Oh okay, I'll leave you to it. Summer, we are making dinner soon...and I was thinking maybe you could help me?". Dad smiles willingly and waits for my response.

"Sure I'll-I'll help".

"Me too. Actually, I have washing to do". Her brown eyes stare into my deep blue eyes.

I look down at the plate, a full bowl of chicken and mushroom risotto stares back at me. I spoon it into my mouth.

"Where's your Mum?" Dad rubs his forehead.

"I don't know". I fold my bottom lip. Deep breaths pour into the room, Mum serves herself some risotto.

"I have to go to the bathroom," I say almost as soon as Mum sits down.

"No, just wait, we never finished our discussion".

"The discussion is finished". I reply to Mum, eager to get out of this awkward kitchen.

"I don't think it's finished, now sit back down, please," Mum adds the "please" on to sound nice and disguise her mean voice.

"I'm good actually, also I'm full. So goodnight". I hug Dad but skip mum, I'll be in trouble for that later...

I begin writing on a piece of paper:

"Barney's Disappearance":

1. Tim and Mum, have claimed to have seen him at different times.
2. Tim never had anything against me or my family (no reason to take Barney)
3. ....

"That was no way to speak to me at the table, Summer!" I shrug.

"Well how should I speak to you?" I mutter gingerly. Mum thinks and hesitates, thinks and hesitates, until she finally decides on what to say.

"You know what, I don't want you in the house for a while. Not until you fix that attitude". "Fine by me," I hold in a laugh. I know how Mum gets when you don't agree with her, or do something that pleases her.

A loud crunch under each step, Mum never told me where to go. She wouldn't mind me going for a walk. My head rises, I squint. I'm running. I'm never this curious, but I see a farmhouse in the distance, and I cannot hold myself back. The farmhouse is old, rusted roof, chipped red paint, surrounded by large trees, it is shaped funny, and the door is wide open...I step gingerly onto the wooden floorboards. The inside is still holding together, much better than the outside. I really shouldn't be here. A motorbike parks at the house. I jump into the nearest cupboard. It is cramped and has a broken handle, good enough though. I hear stomps, my eye peers through the hole where the handle used to be. I see a woman who looks strangely identical to my mum, with a horrid man. They pace around for a while.

"Angela, we need to get him out today, Barney will be found otherwise". I don't move. Angela? That's MY mum's name! I feel a bit stupid, the identical woman is my mum. "Banjo?! Keep your voice down". 'Banjo' who is he? Why would my mum know a Banjo? "Look, Barney does need to go, but my daughter, Summer, is here in the woods right now. She's gonna find Barney, I know it!" Mum suddenly looks right at me, I duck and hear more footsteps, did she see me? "Banjo! Get the door, someone is in this cupboard!" Maybe she does see me. "I knew you would be here". My heart skips a beat. A tear streams down my freckled face. "Summer-" She steps closer, and then she lunges at me. I flinch, "Summer, don't make this hard for me, please". Mum attempts to grab me. She succeeds. I cry out, "Mum! Stop! What are you doing!" Something binds my wrists. "MUM!" "What's going on!" She speaks to someone on the phone. The man steps closer. Eyes widened, I have to ask what's happening. "Mum! What are you doing?!"

"Summer," She runs a hand through my hair.

"WHAT!" I wheeze.

"This horse you have, is worth a lot, his breed is very uncommon. I know you won't let me take him without a fight. So I have to stop you." My head tilts and I fall to my side. I spring up and shake off the binds.

"You really need to learn how to tie knots". My legs work for me and I sprint off into the bushes.

I pull my phone out of my pocket. Who do I call...Dad.

"Summer?"

"Dad! I need to- Dad something happened,"

"Summer, just wait, I'm coming..."

It was barely even an hour ago when my mum was probably going to let a man kidnap me. I am in the Rondel bakery when the call comes. "Is this Summer Black?" a deep voice sounds on the phone. "Yes, uh-hh-yes!"

"Okay Summer from the town Rondel?" He seems to be fiddling with something. "Yes from Rondel, is this about school or?"

"Summer, we are at the Birken river, your horse, Barney, we have found some hoof prints which could be his". I exhale and with no hesitation:

"I'm coming to the Birken river, I'll be there". The man on the phone pleads and tells me not to come for some important crime scene reason and he says something about evidence. I'm still going to the river.

A tall man grabs my arm.

"Miss, you cannot be here. This is a restricted area".

"The horse we are looking for is my horse, Barney. I'm Summer Black, from Rondel. I was just on the phone to... one of your officers, I think". He thinks for a moment.

"You still can't be here, I know who you are, and that you're Summer". My nose wrinkles. I break away from his firm grip. I'm whooshing past police officers, jumping over crime scene tapes and cameras are flashing in my eyes. I don't know how far I've gotten until the voices and cameras stop. The river is the only noise. My chest burns. I hear a small neigh. "BARNEY!! BARNEY!" My head flies in every direction I still cannot spot him.

A small head pops out of the raging river, it's Barney, I see his white blaze. My chest is tight, and I don't think I'm breathing. Maybe I'm screaming. At least I think so. Sobs neverending, my body seems to melt into the ground. Dirt is swirled into my curly hair. I lie on the ground, pain all over. My eyes go dark. A hand is on my face. Voices call around me. I can only think of one thing: Barney could never swim.

6 weeks later:

"Summer, darling, I cannot begin to explain how sorry I am, please meet me at the Rondel bakery at 3pm, tomorrow. I'll be waiting. I am willing to start fresh and make up for everything. The decision is yours...". I replay Mum's voice message over and over, until finally Dad comes out from the hotel bathroom and presses a button on the remote.

"A middle-aged female, from the town of Rondel, Angela Borwick-Black, has been missing for a long while now and is wanted by local police for horse stealing and for communicating with a man from one of the police's biggest crime cases. She was last seen wearing a grey jumper, casual trousers. She has long dark hair and brown eyes, please call: 042865431, to report any sightings or communication with her. That is today's top story on 10-10 news".

The reporter's English accent still lingers in the room as Dad and I remain quiet. The sentence still in my head, 'The decision is yours...'. I glance over at Dad. "Summer, I- I promise that Mum didn't mean this, she isn't a bad person. She-she wouldn't-", Dad does a small laugh in awkwardness and blankness of what to say.

"Dad, she meant this. We all know it".

"She didn't mean any of this. Summer you need to help me, the police are going to interview us, we-we-need to say that Mum wasn't a part of this".

"But Dad, she was, she was a part of it, I'm not forgiving her yet and not lying either". I say bitterly.

"Summer, please, you can't hold a grudge forever and we are not lying, because your- your Mum was trying to do the right thing. She said to me, that the family was falling apart because you're always with Bar-"

"WHAT?! I guess she didn't tell you that she was selling Barney for the money, and she was planning to take me somewhere away from here!". Dad stops breathing.

An object vibrates in my pocket, "Hello?".

Deep breathing is all I can hear. "Who is this? Mum?"

"I-" the voice is unrecognised, Dad folds over my shoulder. "I can't-" Dad and I exchange glances. "You- you will never forgive me". I tense my body. The voice is hoarse, but still high pitched.

"Angela, if this is you, it's okay, come home. Summer and I-" Dad stutters into the phone. A loud crack and the phone drops out.

# *A Passion*

By EMILY BUCHANAN

Pages turn swiftly,  
In a child's haste.  
Folded, bent in,  
But looked after with care.  
Kept in a special place,  
Among others of its kind,  
All similar in their display.  
All differences lay beneath.  
A clear start and finish,  
Yet has no beginning or close.  
Pages stained for a purpose,  
Or simply none at all.  
The story could continue,  
Or leave you puzzled and confused.  
But whichever way you read it,  
It will never be overused.



'Musing' by Gabriele Muntz



# *On Siblings*

By LUKE FAURE

There was a boy and a girl, they loved and hated, bickered and fought: shared memories. The girl matured while the boy stayed much the same, leading to a friendship expected of siblings. Both expanded their families in the same vineyard. The boy moved around while the girl stayed near home, meeting together once a month. They shared their dreams over warm drinks until the only prospect was the unknown path walked by many. The boy faded first, leaving the girl weeping until both were only a memory to those who knew them.



## *Untitled 01*

By DANE NOLAN

Worry, worry, worry, worry. Four.

Practice, practice, worry, incoherence. Second.

Partake, worry, worry, give up. Mediocrity.

Cocky, prideful, worry, worry. Final.

Conclude, worry, worry, worry. Finished.

# Freedom

By LACHLAN DEAN

I didn't realise what it would be like, floating through empty space. The freedom from gravity, that cruel, endless master that imprisons all. Here, out in the depths of the inky black space, I became free from that, free to go wherever I wanted with the slightest effort. I looked out in every direction, and infinite stars looked back at me. I turned my head back towards the stars in this system, and the blazing fury of an ancient nuclear



death shone back onto my face, heating my skin with their rays of warmth. I was so much closer to these two celestial monsters than Earth was to its star, Sol. The planet I orbited was a beautiful gaseous tapestry of a thousand storms, deadly to any who strayed too close, but a mesmerising view from the safety of one of its rocky companions, ones that served as my current shelter. A ring of icy dust crowned the giant, seemingly containing the swirling blue and green clouds that reached out into space, yearning for their own freedom. I stood there, boots on nothing, and immersed myself in the emptiness for what seemed like an eternity, before retreating to the comfortable prison of solids and gravity that the gas giant's moon offered.

From the safety of the gravel surface of this moon, I again appreciated the grand view, but now in the context of the terrestrial. The night sky here is a dense smattering of stars and nebulae. Looking up, we are not greeted by the moon's phases and a black backdrop, but rather with a vibrant rainbow of a million stars, each with its own unique shade of blinding colour. Even with the daylight from both suns of this system, Apollo and Artemis, shining from above, the further stars are not drowned out, and you can see the celestial tapestry of the galaxy in every direction, from horizon to horizon.

I looked up into the mess of stars, trying to find the faint dot of light that was our beginning, our home. Mother Earth had borne humanity in her cradle for so long, but now our wings have stretched into the depths of the galaxy, even to here in the centre of it all. I could not find it. Our home was too humble and dim to be seen amongst the majesty of Apollo and Artemis's neighbours, here in the core of the galaxy. I could easily see the brightest of these, so near to us I felt we might crash into them in this dance of the heavens.

I retired to the calming metal of my grounded shelter, my mind still swimming with the overwhelming imagery, and my futile attempts to grasp it. I found solace in knowing that all of these stars were homes to humanity, and this galaxy, in all of this vastness, was but a humble home as well.

# *Silos in Stardust*

BY SEAN FEENEY

In fractured glances between the grasses that dart beyond our vision,  
Watched one by one or let pass, horses rise among the fields.  
Every so often, throughout the trip, as I'd eagerly predicted,  
They appeared throughout the world in motley cliques and wisps.

The workhorses pulling ploughs in Katamatite,  
Imposing on the sky, and above, a train coasts over a bridge  
Past First Nations people who turn bark into a tool,  
Holding it over a glowing fire in the woods.  
The broken-windowed silos-turned-dovecotes  
In St James' yellowed grass, where Tim Bowtell  
Guides the horses past the bags of grain. Birds flitter  
Through a hole and dance around his head,  
Like clouds around mountains spinning drafts throughout the air.

In Devenish, a soldier stands beside his horse,  
Reigns slack within his grasp,  
A hundred metres tall above the Earth  
In aggregate and sand;  
And wooden beams define the place,  
Which wreaths of poppies populate;  
Two women stand on either side  
In wartime uniform.  
Three Clydesdale, in bits and bridle,  
Pull ploughs In Goorambat.  
They kick up the earth in clouds of dust,  
Sun scorching on their backs.

Rows of corn go on and on somewhere near Tocumwal  
That, in a flash, are gone between the frequent stops  
And starts. The way back to Melbourne departs. The same logo again:  
A pegasus in a ring of light adorning the front of a shipping container  
Buried amidst a motley clique of trees, before we're  
Lured by a stranger into a gallery in Berrigan  
Housing staples of Americana, number plates,  
And portraits of wild stallions.

Bush-wandering, past dilapidated, isolated, and yellowed  
'Private property' signs, along the Murray River, seeing,  
Though appearing like a statue in the reeds, a figure, who,  
When the signal came, bolted from his chair to grab the reel,  
Reeling in the silvery fish I saw fight and rub against the rocks  
As it rose above the currents, and peering through the wind  
That ran above the canopy, and as I admired the silence,  
The shifting luck of men and fish, the insects still  
Coasting on the surface, I was struck by an idea:

Leaves are birds or swarms of bugs,  
Impressions captured on a strand,  
And the Earth itself is on a branch  
That twists around one's hand.

Golden signs of want  
Where city-fringe factories now function,  
Three Carlton Draft Clydesdale  
Adorn the shopfront. Who demanded  
This station today remain open  
When we came upon it after Yea?  
Between the highway and the hills,  
A grey shape fit to be a shed  
But far enough that its purpose isn't shared:  
Cars go the other way; what purpose do they  
Follow to appear between places? It has all the purpose  
In the world; wind crackles like thunder  
Through the car door; did they go off running  
Into the Murray? The girl's body is found  
In the running hills; her limbs are the crook  
Of two long rivers; her supine torso  
Flows down the twisting fields  
Where two overo make their meals.

It was petals of peace upon the screen  
Between heights and idle woods  
That, by their sweetness, nurtured me  
Into dreams of leaves and doves,

But I don't believe in the impossible,  
And I'm not required to:  
Stardust is beside me  
Beneath this stretch of sky.

A 201 metre well of light:  
Cheviot tunnel runs beneath the Earth  
Near Yea, once a site for processions  
Of timber lines and locomotives  
Passing through the state.

The grit-dust by the circuit has built up  
With ravines into treelines and death-defying speeds.  
The four-pronged spirits in the distance  
Disappear with swelling night - golden and blinding -  
And municipal infrastructure - highway under highway -  
Built with sentience in mind. I rely on recognition:  
I understand this car will stop - will stop only when it comes  
And goes around this bend - will slow before it glides  
Too fast like golden glows across the sky,  
Too quick across the heavens - now he stops -  
And rubs his brow clean of beads of light,  
And traffic, exactly to the lines,  
Stutters and returns to life.  
The imagined scream only seemed to seep from twisted metal,  
Now ringing in my ear. Stardust seems asleep, sprawled across her seat.  
Light snakes across the bricks.  
Twisted metal seraphs bow over the streets.

In the mode of the unfamiliar, the familiar reappears:  
Signs I recognise - semblances that reassure - the same trademarks as before,  
Now for services close to home, but still a bore. The sky is blues and pinks.  
Roadside equines chew away at loam - what expanse can they imagine?  
It's populated with plants and oats, the likes of which I cannot see;  
The sundown stretch is mixed with sleep;  
Blinding hypnagogic shields and halos warp the dream.  
The trip is congealed scenes, haunted pictures,  
Visages of roadside ghosts, silos, and spirits. A map of roads, a map of stars:  
Spinning on a thread. The stars hang overhead, fashioned to the iron:  
In the tunnel they were hiding; now they're wild and free and glowing  
Over electrical wires, inexplicable metal spires, dusty industrial fans;  
They come from the cones: the horn of the Earth: the spirals 'round her head.  
For five days, the curtains have been pulled up against Earth and at last, we return:  
There's a safe and dear depression in the bed where Stardust rests:  
The starry-eyed dreamer, my celestial visionary: Stardust the cosmologist.

# Opportunities



VATE is excited to launch our 2024 writing competition A Story in Miniature. Students in Years 7 to 12 and their teachers are invited to submit a story between 300 and 500 words in length inspired by the writing competition theme.

Each entry must be accompanied by a completed entry form and emailed to [writingcompetition@vate.org.au](mailto:writingcompetition@vate.org.au) by 4pm on Friday 20 September 2024. Entries without a completed entry form will not be considered. The winners of each category will receive a \$150 book voucher, and their stories will be published in Idiom. The runners up will receive a book package from our competition supporters.

More info & submission @: <https://www.vate.org.au/story-miniature-2024-writing-competition>



More info & submissions @: <https://www.writerscentre.com.au/furious-fiction/>

## Student Film Festival 2024: Entries close 31 August

We're inviting student filmmakers to share their work for a chance to shine on the big screen. Submissions are open to all year levels and can be created by individual film makers or as class projects.

Selected films will be showcased at an in-person screening in Term 4, with prizes for creative and technical expertise, as well as People's Choice awards. The films will be judged by a panel from ISV, in conjunction with representatives from ACMI.

Entries are open until Saturday 31 August.

More info & submissions @: <https://artslearningfestival.com.au/news/student-film-festi->



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SPRING 2024



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[THEOVERCOATZINE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:THEOVERCOATZINE@GMAIL.COM)