



# WHAT'S THE Story?

A collection of short stories written and illustrated  
by young people living in North Belfast.

*Created with the support of Beat Carnival &  
The Executive Office. Published March 2022.*

# WHAT'S THE Story?

A group of young people from North Belfast & surrounding areas have been brought together and supported by Beat Carnival to create this book of short stories and illustrations aiming to answer the question – What's the Story?

These stories and illustrations explore themes of personal identity and community through the lens of a young person today. Each participant has gathered a collection of their own works that are close to the heart, intelligent, comedic and wonderfully creative.



## Thank You

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Thank you to the participants,  
*for being yourselves.*

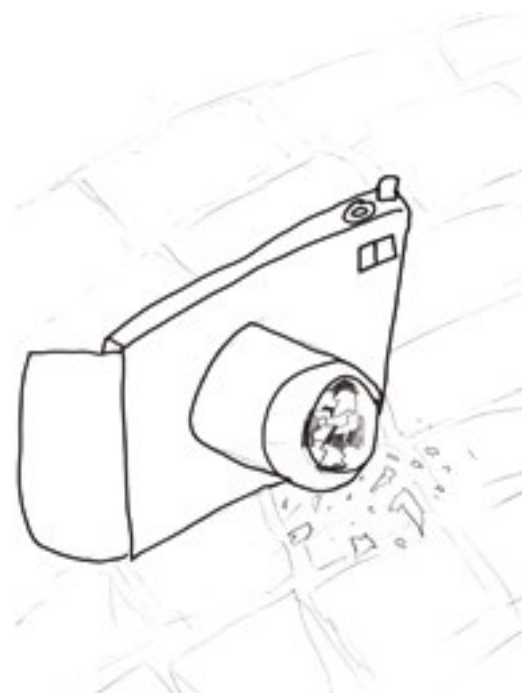




I had just finished the 30 minute walk to school – my hair had been messed by the wind and my leather shoes were already rubbing my heels. I walked through the looming iron gates and was finally able to appreciate the huge beauty of the castle-like building.

In first period, I shivered knowing I would be watching the weekly execution in 30 minutes. The teacher was trying to teach us Latin – none of us understood a thing but we sat in silence anyway because we saw the beating stick ready on the teacher's desk.

We all stood in the playground, anxious as the execution would be happening in a few minutes. The poor old lady – yet another accused of being a witch yet everyone knew they were just paranoid. She stepped up to the guillotine, and the crowd went quiet.



# Through the Lens

The old tin of the camera sent tingles into my fingers, making me drop it into my lap in shock. There was a creeping feeling in my chest that my life would never be the same and as I found out as the years reeled by, I was right.

## Scene I

*(My bedroom; A room in our attic. It's taken me sixteen years to get my own room but it's been worth it. The room is painted red and decorated with posters from many different fandoms).*

**Charlie:** *(Confused, holding the camera).*  
Ok...thirteen photos is the limit right?

**Casey** *(my older cousin who gifted me the camera):*  
Yep! I mean I've never used it so *(he starts for the stairs to leave)*. Don't stress out.  
You've got your whole life to take the photos.

**Charlie:** *(Calling down the stairs)* I'm NOT stressing!

I was. I'm very much a one and done type of guy, if I don't get it done in one go, I'll often procrastinate until I forget about it.

**Charlie:** *(Leaning camera against windowsill)* Ok. I'll take one photo now and then..*(looking at the camera)* throw it in the back of my cupboard.

The camera clicks and a chill goes down my spine. My ears ring and I drop the camera once again.

## Scene II

Five years later. Somehow I didn't forget about this weird camera. Currently I am in Denmark and am visiting Tivoli Gardens. It's beautiful. I'm staring in awe at its beauty.

**Adam** *(my younger brother):* *(Trying to take the camera off me)* Just give me the stupid camera!

As we struggled for the ownership of the creepy camera, he accidentally pushed down on the button a few times.

**Charlie:** *(Wincing in pain)* Agh! Stop! Stop it!

I drop the camera once again.  
The pain shooting through my body.

**Adam:** *(Confused)* What happened?

**Charlie:** *(Frantically looking around)*  
What?..There's something following me!

In a rage, I pick up the camera and drop it to the ground with full force, its delicate glass shattering and covering the ground beneath me. I didn't know why I did that but I knew it was justified.

**Adam:** *(confused as ever).* Dude, you are insane.

But I'm not. I finally see it. A creature with the head of an Irish wolfhound stood before me. Its limbs were humanoid and twisted. It's been following me since I got the camera. I didn't know what to do, how to protect myself, it all went black.



# My Story

It was evening, I was walking with Pink (my dog) through the small park near my house, when I realised that it was quieter than usual.

The football pitch was empty, the swings were hardly swinging in the wind, and the slide had no one in it.

I was walking when a random meteor fell from the sky which knocked me over.

I drew close to the meteor and touched a glowing rock on it: a small creature jumped out. It looked startled and started to run.

Pink ran after it.

It ran to the local shop and into the bathroom (everyone was very startled).

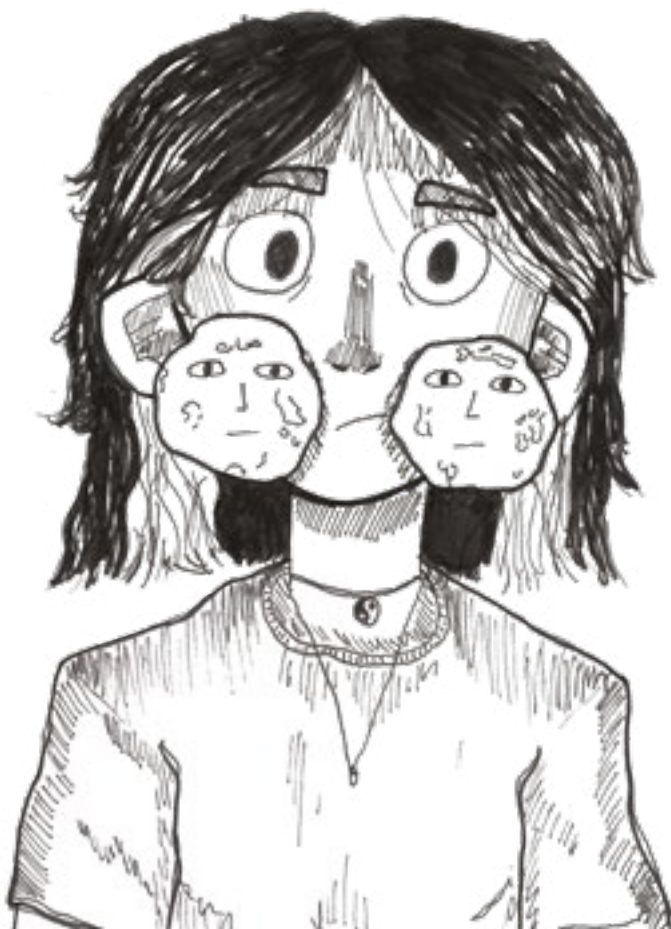
The toilet suddenly moved and the creature jumped in a passage. I jumped in after him...

Chris - U



moon face :

a side effect of taking  
steroids, often prednisone,  
for an extended period of  
time. It's swelling in the  
face, giving a rounded appearance,  
hence the name.



# Moonface

Summer arrives  
Furnished with sickness  
Unwilling to release me

Robust health  
Once taken for granted  
Has bid farewell

Instead of me  
Moonface I see  
In the mirror  
Peering back at me

The sickness has been sourced  
And beaten away

Summer ceases  
And so does the sickness  
Yet all I see is Moonface  
Not me

# Ciana

KATIE  
aka  
Little hits

## Too Late

The leaves under my feet crunched as I paced back and forth at the edge of the estate, my friend Estelle should have gotten here an hour ago and she wasn't replying to my texts, that doesn't surprise me honestly. We were going to get pictures for my art portfolio and do some ghost busting too, just for a bit of fun tonight. I made up my mind, I would go in by myself as it was a three-hour train ride to this place, and I wasn't going to waste it. The rusted bars of the large gate creaked and groaned as I climbed over it, but I didn't mind, after all the estate had been abandoned for fifty years, there was bound to be a little rusting. I overestimate my jump from the tall gate and land on my front, with mud on my face and the smell of grass in my nose, I stand up and wipe myself down. The dark path in front of me was so overgrown the only indication of direction were the trees which parted to reveal a narrow winding pathway.

About two minutes into my journey up the path I discovered two things, the first being that I should have brought a coat as the wind had picked up and I started to hear the soft patter of raindrops on the leaves overhead. The other thing being the fact that my phone was on three percent and 'Stell was supposed to be the one handling the portable charger. I pushed anxious thoughts of being stranded on my own with no contact to the back of my mind and thought about how good the shots of the house would look in the portfolio focus, The Haunting Hollows of Britain. The soft crunch of the leaves was calming for a while until I got to the clearing in front of the manor where everything seemed so much more sinister than the path leading to it. As I approached the manor, I felt a pit forming in my stomach as the rain was getting heavier and heavier and the roof of the old manor was almost completely caved in. I think I want to go home; no, I can't leave now.

I looked to my left to see a large stretch of land covered in headstones and I thought for a while about taking

shelter underneath one of the many expensive-looking mausoleums but decided that it would be disrespectful to go inside what was essentially a very large coffin. And although I didn't want to admit it, I suddenly became very aware of the creaks of the trees in the wind and the soft snapping of twigs behind me. I stood for a second and all of a sudden, CRACK! Something had fallen at the other end of the path where I had fallen off the gate. With my heart crashing against my ribs, I ran to the front steps of the manor; what once felt like a normal abandoned house was now turned into a tall skeletal building which creaked and whined as the wind blew through it.

Splat. Splat. Splat. SNAP!

Someone was coming up the path. Without a second glance at what had snapped that twig I started hauling at the grand wooden doors. They wouldn't budge.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap.

They were coming up the steps behind me. I grabbed my metal tripod from my equipment bag, quickly turned around and started swinging wildly in front of me with my eyes shut tightly.

CRACK!

My eyes flew open as I recognised that I had hit whatever it was in front of me. After all that struggle, I stared in shock at Estelle who was clutching her eye. She slowly removed her hand to reveal an extremely bloodshot eye that looked like it was going to bruise. She looked at me for a second, as if contemplating something, then she smacked me across the face. Which I can admit I really did deserve.

Thankfully we had no more "encounters" and we took our photos and made off for some well deserved tea, and in 'Stell's case, hot chocolate.

Will you please give me the charger?  
No you hit me with a tripod!  
Your phone's dead too isn't it?  
...  
Yes but that's not the point!





Today is my 15th birthday and I'm very excited because my Aunty told me she has a special gift for me. She called me to the kitchen and on the table was a blue box with floral patterns on it. It had a silky dark blue ribbon tied neatly in a bow.

*"You can open it now"*

I quickly but carefully untied the ribbon. I opened the box and inside was an old camera. I felt ecstatic, as I always wanted a camera. I lifted the camera up to eye level and explored the controls.

*"Thank you, thank you, thank you!"*

She started laughing.

"I'm glad you like it. Although the film for the camera is very hard to buy because there is not much left, so make sure to keep that in mind. It will only have around 13 photos now".

*"Thank you, I'll make sure to use it well"*





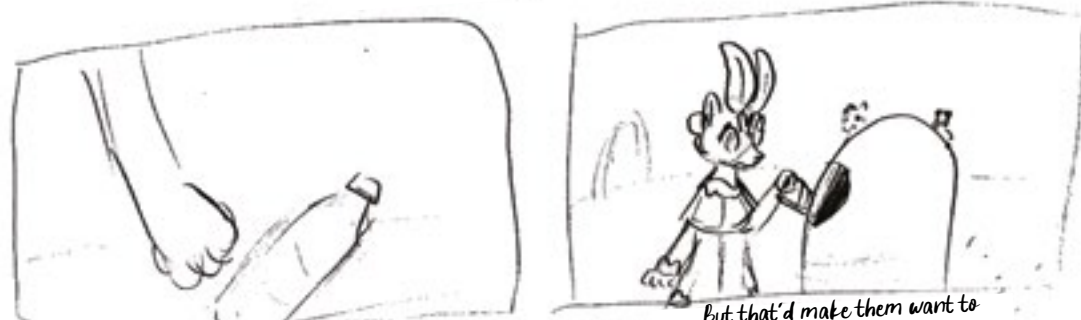
Sometimes I'd just be walking about in the playground.

Then some boys would come and annoy me.



In form 3...

... it was throwing rubbish for me to pick up.



I'd always put it in the bin.

... But that'd make them want to do it more.

Fin.

# Community is...

*"Community is to me like a second family. Being in my community makes me feel safe and like I have lots of support from my friends"*

*"A community is a bit like a family, just a big one. People in a community have things in common. Communities aren't all good, or all bad, like a family. The communities that I'm a part of focus on my identity as that is a very important thing to me. A community is anything that the big family wants it to be."*

"Helping each other out."

*"A group of people that help  
you to learn more about  
a shared passion."*

"A fixed group of people who make you feel at home. I am part of an art community, and they make me feel comfortable."

"Lots of people  
in a group that  
have something  
in common."







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**T:buc**  
Changing for the better, together

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