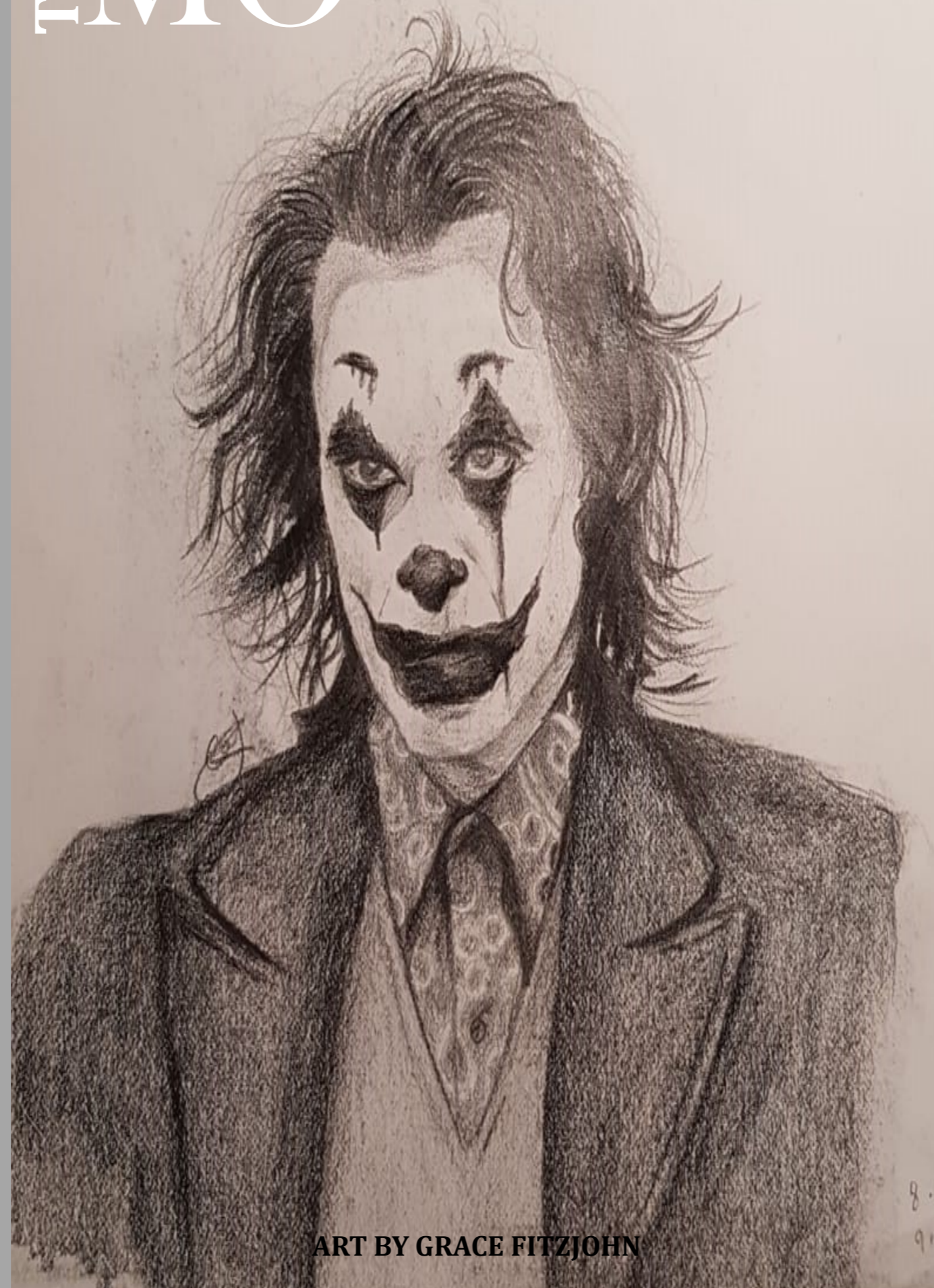


The MO



ART BY GRACE FITZJOHN

# EDITOR'S NOTE

By Ellen Berrill-Osborne

Hi all! Welcome to the latest edition of The Mo. My name is Ellen and I'm the new editor, taking over from the previous editor Neha Shah who was amazing. The Mo thanks her for all her hard work! I hope me and The Mo team can continue to push boundaries, challenge the notion that young adults have little to say and make this the best year for The Mo. I'm very excited to help bring this magazine to life!

Spooky season may be over and done with for this year but this month's edition will continue to pay homage to the twisted and strange as it delves into dark theories, intense stories and even some topics that may appear controversial - it wouldn't be The Mo without a little controversy! We have stories discussing: crime,, internet trends and opinions and questions may be formed after reading this.

This edition is a varied as the typical winter month ! We have creative pieces that explore the inner workings of the 'self', creative pieces that explore the dangers of others and feature pieces that explore the way media portrays people. There is a particularly interesting examination of the recent box office smash hit 'The Joker'. However, if that's not your vibe, then fear not, everybody's *favourite* trend the 'VSCO Girl' is discussed too. If you've been on social media at any point over the past year you will have come across this trend, these girls and their *enthusiastic* personality. If you're lucky, you may have even come across one of these species in real life (you may know one or you might even be one yourself)! Anyway, the article discusses the backlash and the negative reputation of trends like 'vsco' and 'e-girls'; it looks at how we can stop the spread of judgement and allow people to be whoever they want to be. Interestingly, this topic is similar to the issues addressed in the 'Cancel Culture' feature and how it thrives on sites such as Twitter and Instagram.

As always, we hope you enjoy this edition of The Mo and that it leaves you with many questions that you can discuss over your seasonal coffee drinks in your recyclable cups.

Ellen x

## OUR TEAM



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# THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA REPRESENTATION

Representation within the media is important to our lives; it helps us feel a sense of acceptance within society. As an audience, we aim to see a reflection of ourselves and an accuracy to daily life in our favourite TV shows, the characters we grow to love and even to the plot. The issue of accuracy in representation can influence views, our likes and dislikes and even our tolerances; therefore, it's important that the media is positive in its representation.

Positive representation within the media often means an inclusion of characters who are diverse. It allows diverse and minority characters to be placed in positions of high importance that play a huge part in influencing the plot. This includes gay, disabled and characters of ethnic minority. Whilst we absolutely need to see all people represented, what is perhaps a little sour is the fact that medial companies seem to make a point of developing characters of all shapes, colours and sizes to fit the brief of "inclusivity" and to prove that they have ticked all the boxes required from a modern and forward thinking company. So, has positive representation gone to far?

When they first aired teen TV show dramas such as 'Riverdale' and '13 Reasons Why' were not culturally and socially diverse. In Riverdale, the main characters were white and straight characters, there were as perhaps only two ethnic minority characters who seemed to hold any significance to the plotline of the first season. As the show progressed and it became more popular, we gradually began to see more diversity within the series—yet was this always the case? Had story board meetings taken place where the producers said, "we'll hold back diversity until way after the pilot", or did diversity evolve as the show began to gain popularity. I fear it is the latter and these *diverse* characters were added to cover all walks of life. This is particularly the case within season two of Riverdale, the character, Cheryl Blossom, (let's not discuss the name here!) turned bisexual with no build up or references to sexuality within season one. Granted, although the LGBT+ community saw this as a positive development in Cheryl's character I can't help but feel that this was done to appeal to audiences. The inclusion of gay characters, according to some TV critics and viewers of the show was done more on impulse.

Similarly, '13 Reasons Why' is another teen TV drama which failed to explain the importance of sexuality within the first season. In that debut season Tony Padilla told his friend he was gay during a fairly run of the mill conversation in a car—it seemed it was a "oh, and by the way, I'm gay" moment. This was the only time his sexuality was mentioned, which made this

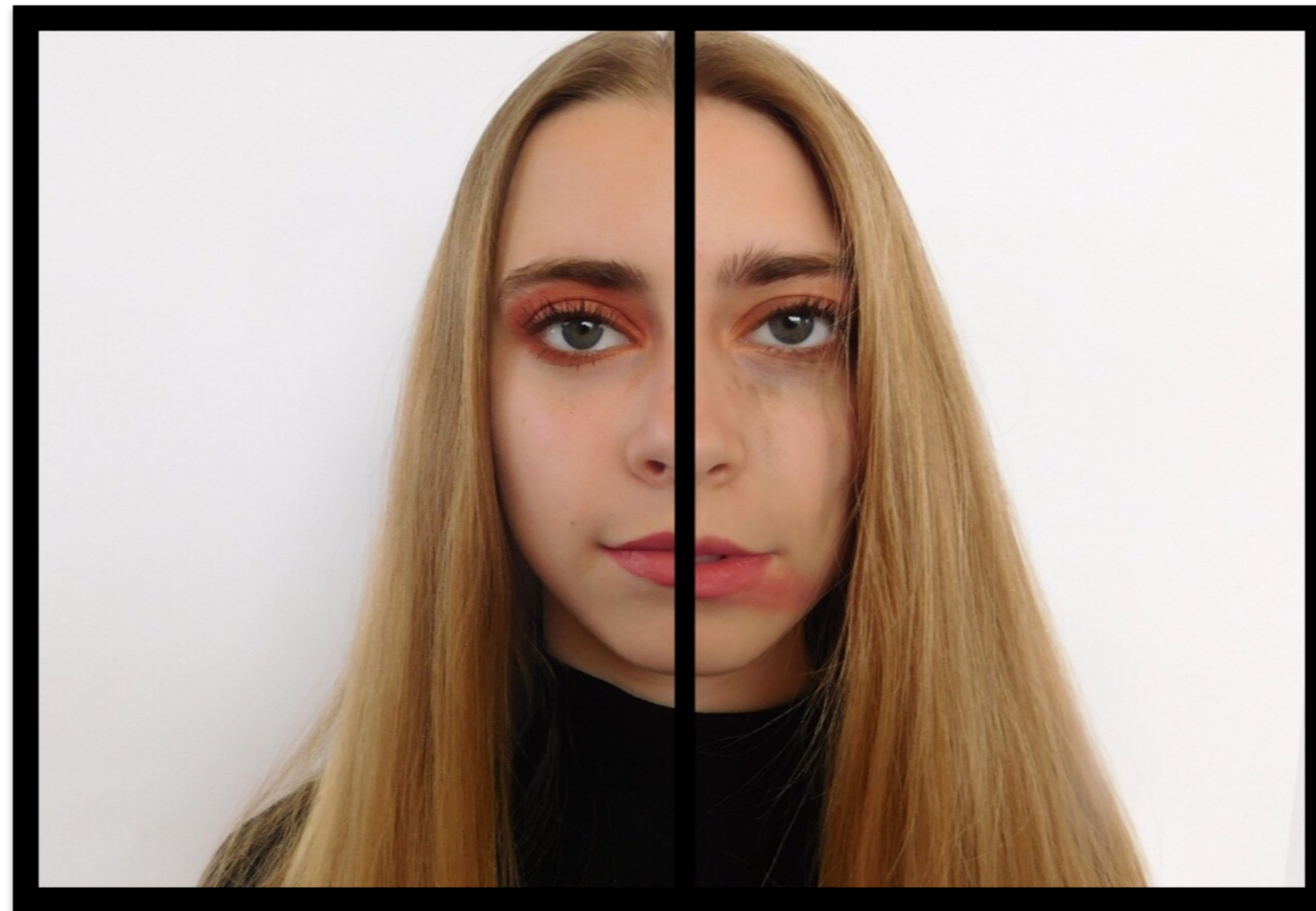
part of the plot seem as though it was not important enough to deserve more of a storyline. Tony's coming out seemed to have been completely disregarded. It was only when season two and three aired and the show become more widely and commercially popular that producers seemed happy to revisit this, briefly seeing Tony settle down with a boyfriend and the minor storyline of how his sexuality affects his life, and the lives and opinions of the people around him. The development of Tony needed to be considered, it needed time and care. Yet, what it became was an underdeveloped plot line that felt rushed and shoe-horned it. It seemed that producers felt the need to cover all bases; what they perhaps should have done was stay true to the brief of the show and cover the core issues well. This should seemed to have been intended to tackle the sensitive topic of suicide and rape with the purpose of raising support and awareness of these issues. There seems to be something about an integrity of a plot line... and at the moment, I wonder whether production companies can remember what these were.

In contrast, the lack of diversity within action and superhero films such as 'The Avengers' and 'Justice League' is shockingly outdated. When was the last time you saw a gay superhero? Although many of these films are bound by there original comic book roots and as a consequence stick (in the main) to the original storylines, many of these comics were written when equality was a whim... an ideal. However, due we are living in a different time, a time where we are fortunate enough to see social change taking place. The argument of sticking to an authentic storyline and character types is a poor excuse for limiting diversity. For example, within the latest Avengers film, 'Endgame', only three of the main superheroes are from an ethnic minority background, the rest are white. However, there is progress, albeit slow as compared to the original Avengers, there were no black superheroes. Another example of this is DC's 'Justice League', only one out of the four superheroes is black. Shockingly, their character is the least developed of the superheroes within the group. If we are going to be accurate and diverse we need to do it properly. There isn't a quick fix. Adding a character here or a plot line there isn't going to cut it. Producers need to take the time to think about making their shows true.

Additionally, it's only been within the last two years that there has been a black superhero film - 'Black Panther'. Whilst many critics celebrate this film there are some who believe the film was only made to add 'diversity' to the Hollywood library.

To conclude, although more and more media companies are making a conscious effort to add more diverse characters, there is still a niggling feeling that their storylines or their inclusion is just a box ticking exercise. We have come a long way since the stereotyping and marginalising of people, yet there is still more to be done. The media needs to continue to

be inclusive: gay, straight, black, white, green or blue—who cares? What matters is that their storyline needs to be cohesive, honest and considered. The sooner 'the industry' realise this, the sooner it will be on our screens and the sooner we will be an inclusive society.



WRITTEN BY SYANNE TAYLOR.  
ART BY ELLEN BERRILL-OSBORNE

# #CANCELLED

Social media is... how would you complete that sentence? Social media a scary place... or social media is a tool... or social media is an extremely beneficial method of communication. If you said any of these then very well done you! Yes, social media helps family and friends come together; it allows people to express their views and is more of a mainstream media choice—in fact more and more people are tuning in to viral YouTube videos over traditional Saturday night terrestrial television. Yet, hidden beneath the viral dance challenges, the trending memes and the popular influencers, is a toxic underbelly of hatred and judgement.

This chink in the social media armour is cancel culture. Cancel Culture (also known as call-out culture or herd mentality) is a growing phenomenon founded on the idea of boycotting a person for any 'social' mistakes they make. The definition of cancel culture, according to Macmillan Dictionary, is 'The practice of no longer supporting people, especially celebrities, or products that are regarded as unacceptable or problematic.' People can be cancelled for anything from liking something that perhaps shouldn't be liked, selling faulty merchandise or to the very serious claims of sexual assault. Opening Twitter on any given day will likely result in finding a trending hashtag, detailing someone's social misdemeanours and announcing the reason why they have been cancelled. Twitter is the perfect platform for cancel culture to thrive, people from all around the world sharing opinions, judgements and criticisms from the safety of their phones. Their criticisms of others are remote, one sided and shielded from confrontation. One wrong move and throngs of people will jump on a bandwagon of hatred and followings or careers can be obliterated. Funny really—this bizarre paradoxical world where Twitter, something that was supposed to bring people together can tear others apart.

Many people will argue that cancel culture is a

positive step in reinforcing morality and ensuring that role models are influential for the right reasons. Pop culture is changing constantly; people in positions of power and influence should be using their positions for good. Racism is a cause of many cancellations, with minor celebrities such as Georgia Harrison (from popular TV show Love Island), to major politicians such as Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau being criticised for their discrepancies and shortcomings. Both Harrison and Trudeau were accused of blackface and faced the wrath of the public. Despite Trudeau's saying "I shouldn't have done that. I should have known better and I didn't. I'm really sorry," many people, especially those from groups directly affected, don't consider it to be enough and believe that Trudeau should be cancelled—the consequences of which would mean that he is no longer be able to lead the country.

After years of prejudice and oppression surely in 2019 we have reached a time of freedom and equality. Nobody is saying that people, celebrities included, are not entitled to their own opinions, but there has to be restrictions on what is posted and made public. There has to be a measure of decency. According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission 'Although you have freedom of expression, you also have a duty to behave responsibly and to respect other people's rights.' So, are people right to cancel celebrities when their behaviour is in complete disregard of somebody else's basic human rights?

On the other hand, there is an hypocrisy that surrounds the idea of cancelling somebody. How many people can truly say that they have never witnessed a person make a comment or do something that if online would be worth of being cancelled? Yet when it happens in 'real life', right there in front of us we have ignored it, brushed the comment away or simply turned a blind eye.

Celebrities are torn apart by us mere mortals for comments and tweets that they made typically

before they were famous, and media trained. It is so easy to judge someone when we watch them in their limelight; it's easy to form an opinion of them and social media has given us the confidence—albeit from behind a screen, to criticise them.

But at the end of the day we must realise that people in the limelight are just human as—they are not infallible and rightly or wrongly they are bound to make mistakes. Whilst I am, by no means defending any negative action, I am, however, questioning the way we view mistakes and asking you to use common sense when forming an immediate opinion. Every story has two sides and it is easy to be influenced by one tweet, one YouTube video, one story. Find your own voice. Is it healthy to develop the mind-set that one mistake overrides all the good that might have been done? What would happen if this mind-set or

instantaneous cancelling happened in the real world—where would you or I be? One mistake and we're deleted, cancelled, berated and forgotten.

Issues surrounding mental health are at an all time high with 16 million people in the UK experiencing a mental illness. As a society we need to start implementing positive characteristics such as forgiveness, compassion and understanding. Rather than attacking people who make mistakes we need to identify that this behaviour is wrong but try to understand why a person feels this way and educate them to remedy their behaviour. At the end of the day social media is a scary place but a tool that can have an extremely positive influence... if used correctly. We need to work together to bring people together not rip each other apart.



WRITTEN BY MOLLY BURKE  
ART BY MOLLY BURKE

# I AM A KILLER

You know all the famous serial killers; Ted Bundy, the Zodiac Killer, Charles Manson, Jeffrey Dahmer, John Wayne Gacy, Jack the Ripper, H.H Holmes and many, many more. You may have heard about the famous unsolved criminal cases of the world such as, Jon Benet Ramsey, Madeline McCann and The Boy in the Box. All these cases have been made infamous by the media. Perhaps most shockingly in 2019 they have become a popular form of entertainment. It seems that true crime has never been so popular. Why is it that people are so enraptured with true crime cases?

The genre of true crime TV shows or books has become staggeringly popular throughout the five years; YouTube channels based on reciting criminal cases and movies like 'My Friend Dahmer' (which had a total domestic gross of \$1,361,611) and 'Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile' (which also had great success making \$9,882,321 at the box office) retell the stories of terrifying crime for our perverse voyeurism. With so many opportunities to witness crimes from the safety of our armchairs it's no wonder people are becoming obsessed—we're surrounded by crime. The true crime genre is inescapable. Yet why are we so inquisitive to know about it – is it a pure abnormal interest?

True crime is becoming a cultural obsession and the production of shows dedicated to feeding our obsession has been widespread. The justification by production companies is that people are naturally drawn to taboo subjects like murder. It is claimed that just as people slow down to look at a car accident or a natural disaster, so people can't seem to look away from crime. Something so out of the ordinary is interesting because it entices people - it seems that there is a disparity between reality and entertainment... the mystery of which is an enigma. It would seem that watching a murder or being an onlooker to an anxiety inducing incident can give views an adrenaline rush; as morbid as that is, it can make people want to keep watching or reading.

However, people viewers have become desensitised; they want to watch or read about something more horrific, more gruesome and more tantalizing each

time. Surely this in itself is a dangerous reality? Although it can be good to expose yourself to things that scare you—the results of which allow you to understand behaviours, perhaps we're better off not understanding the mind of a serial killers. Surely we need to remain empathetic to the victims and shocked at the villainous and horrific actions?

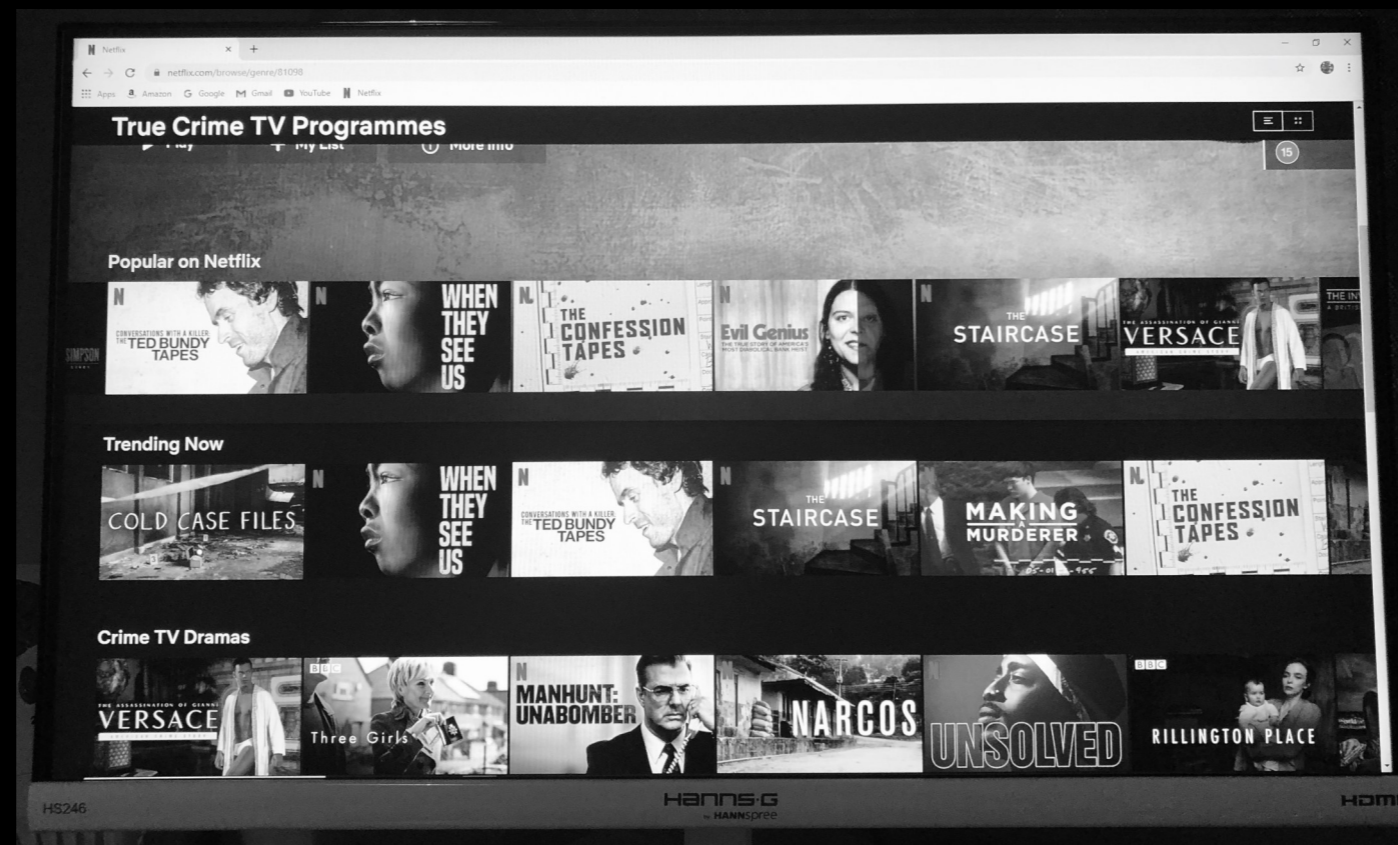
That being said, who is the target audience for true crime media? Studies show that women are more likely to read, watch or listen to true crime stories. It is said that fear can be a product of a gender-based crime; true crime stories seem to fluctuate around the idea of women being victimised and placed in danger—could this be a reason that more women than men read true crime? A recent study showed that 70% of Amazon true-crime book reviews were women. Perhaps women are subconsciously attracted to the genre so that they can prepare themselves for possible situation. Perhaps viewing the horrifying with a cup of tea and a bag of Maltesers gives knowledge, advice and guidance of how to stay safe.

According to statistics it seems that more men than women are murdered, in fact 78% of murder victims in America were men. Whilst women are more often that not victims of domestic violence, the statistics seem to suggest that more women are survive. It this why women tend to enjoy true crime—is it that if the female victim escapes then if the unthinkable ever happened to us, we could too.

There's no doubt about it, true crime is a popular subject. It's exciting, weird and intriguing: every case has a different story and more often that not a different conclusion. Maybe we need to ask ourselves why we watch or read true crime. Isn't it about time that we asked where fascination stops and obsession begins? Is your empathy with the victims and their family, or do you find yourself more infatuated with the actual act of killing and looking for the next story gorier than the last? Perhaps you should ask yourself this before watching the next episode of 'Making of A Murderer'.

WRITTEN BY NELL DELANEY





# THE CHAINS OF CURIOSITY

It's been a year.

But I was wondering if you knew  
how your voice is carved into my bones;  
your anguish written in cursive.

Why is it that a fragment of myself belongs only to you?

Nowadays, my mouth is empty.

You stole my words; tore them from my lips,  
and shredded my thoughts in an act of vanity.

As if you haven't already taken enough.

With the heart of a ghost,

And the sins of a saint,

I'm left to wander.

To make my way through this sea of stars,  
And become another one of your mistakes.



ART BY EVA ZIGMOND

# IN THE DIRT

The shutters hit, almost rhythmically, against the house. You'd think she'd be used to it by now, but the sound of the wind shaking the windows still sent shivers down her spine. Coralie paced around the room, unsure what to do. It had been three days since Margot's disappearance, and there was no word from the police. As the days went on, her hope for Margot's survival flickered. The so-called police in her town were proving to be less than competent, writing off the disappearance as a "run-away" less than 48 hours in. With one swift movement Coralie had ducked beneath the police tape surrounding her best friend's home, and now she stood in the old, still house, searching for any sign that might suggest where she might be.

Her feet took her through the dark rooms until she found the light switch. The whole house emitted a soft yellow glow. After an hour or so she heard a deafening bang, which she assumed was the front door, shook the house. Before she could think it through, Coralie darted into the kitchen, which to her surprise was empty. "Margot?" She yelled, rushing into the living room. "Marg-" She was cut off by the tight grip of a hand on her wrist, whipping her around. She tried to pull away from the thing that held her in its clasp, but it wouldn't budge. "Who are you?" She yelled. "What did you do to Margot?!" The man released her, revealing a badge from his pocket. "Officer Jonah Carter. The neighbours called me, they thought some kids must have snuck in to the crime scene... Care to explain why you're trespassing?"

Coralie regained her composure, "I'm finding my friend, since you obviously haven't been able to." She stormed out, ripping the police tape that had attempted to prevent her from entering. Jonah chased after her, hoping she'd save him the effort and of ensuring her safety and that she would just go home.

"Miss, I recommend you go home or I'll be forced to arrest you for tampering with a crime scene!" Coralie whipped around. "Go on then! Either you help me, or you arrest me." Without another word she turned back around and started walking towards the forest that surrounded the house. Jonah shook his head in annoyance, knowing that his oath to protect the vulnerable meant he would be catching up with her.

The trees towered over them, the sharp, black branches curving above. As they walked into the still woods Coralie glanced up at him. "Why are you helping me?" she mumbled.

"I know wild cards, and I had a feeling you wouldn't take no for an answer." He explained. Coralie was set on finding out what happened, whether he liked it or not. They walked around the woods, searching through bushes, brambles and leaves until their hands were raw. The panic was setting in as the hours passed, Coralie felt as if she was losing her mind. In frustration, her clenched fist struck a tree; the skin on her knuckles beginning came away.

"Stop! Cora-" He yelled, grabbing her around the waist and pulling her away. She kicked and screamed, until her yells morphed into muffled cries. "We'll find her," he said quietly, feeling her body shake like a leaf against him.

"You don't believe that..." She said, with what for the first time, sounded like defeat. Before he could answer, the cracking sound of a branch echoed behind them. "What was that?" Coralie said, walking a few feet forward. "It came from over there!" She ran towards where the noise came from, Jonah yet again lagging behind. The light of the moon was the only thing guiding them, and after what seemed like miles, they reached a fork in the path.

Coralie walked ahead, driven by her hopes of finding Margot. Searching in the foliage she saw something — only small, but it caught her eye. There, in the dirt, was a little silver ring; the same ring she had given Margot when she turned 18. In a combination of panic and relief, she turned around to speak to Jonah. "Jonah?" Her eyes darting in every direction. Coralie stood alone in the woods that were as silent as the shadows. She began to dig in the dirt where she saw the ring, praying to god she would find something. Beneath a foot of dirt she began to reveal a cold, grey hand. She screamed, tried to uncover the rest of the body, but before she could she was pushed to the ground. She turned to see the silhouette of a man towering over her. Grabbing her ankle he dragged her along the forest floor. Coralie grasped at the wet dirt, hoping to cling on to anything that might

free herself. Her screams echoed in the empty woods, until she was thrown into a shallow pit. Disorientated and frightened it took her a moment to realise that dirt was being thrown down on her, more and more until she couldn't move. Until she couldn't breathe. The realisation of her fate starting to permeate her soul. As the weight of the cold dirt begin to entomb her. Desperate, she forced a hand through until she felt the air against her skin.

Coralie's breathing slowed, and her arm fell limply above her. Jonah awoke in the dark forest, his head throbbing. He put a hand to his skull, feeling the warm blood dripping from an open gash. As he tried to stand, he heard a heavy-footed walk approach him. Jonah forced himself from the ground and staggered away from the noise, grabbing a rock from the ground. A large man approached him with a look of evil on his face. Jonah swung, smashing the man in the temple, he fell to the floor, pulling Jonah down with him. With all his force Jonah hit and knocked him unconscious. "Coralie?" He screamed. No response. He ran back to the fork in the path. As he searched he noticed the fresh dirt beneath a tree. There, in the dirt, a small hand seemed to be reaching towards the moon—towards salvation—towards him. He began digging as fast as he could, pulling mud and dirt out from beneath him. He grabbed hold of her body, and lifted her out of the pit. She lay limp in his arms, until she gasped for air.



WRITTEN BY ANONYMOUS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANONYMOUS

# TO VSCO OR NOT TO VSCO

Social media is one of the biggest platforms in the world and plays an important part in our lives. It's suggested that 71% of teenagers use more than one social media site, which includes platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter. But when does it transfer from being a simple little site where we can look innocently into people's lives, to an influencing monster that helps determine our day to day life choices and even the clothes we wear?

Like many rules within society, there are trends to be followed, certain clothes to be worn and acceptable ways to act. Add in the role of social media, and trends can all of a sudden become socially acceptable but how do you know which trends are on-trend? Throughout 2019, Instagram trends have blown up on social media, people are becoming not only 'Insta-ready' but 'Insta-famous'. These have included styles such as 'E-girls', 'E-boys' and 'VSCO girls' (pronounced 'visko' and originating from a photo editing app).

Despite their growth on social media, following these trends in 'real' day to day life has become somewhat unacceptable in our overly judgemental society. For example, wearing a multitude of scrunchies or using a hydro flask is labelling yourself as a 'VSCO girl' which, ironically becomes insulting. What is perhaps most alarming is that it seems it is okay to 'like' from a distance, to follow from the safety of a screen, but it is not okay to adopt these trends. In short, social media is a platform of hypocrisy; it is okay to adopt different identities online but in real life we must remain moderate, neutral... and safe.

In terms of following sociological rules, the conformity rule can be hard to distinguish. These days it's not as simple as following a trend or to be able to distinguish yourself as a certain 'type'. Gone are the days of the mods or rockers, the urban chic or the popsters. Instead, we are walk around with a question mark over our heads wondering what to do, what to like and who to be.

Being a teenager in the 21st century can be very difficult. Perhaps more difficult because

we have choice. We constantly compare ourselves to social influencers and celebrities; however, where our parents were able to escape we are drowning in a sea of social media. Whilst the internet fairies use algorithms to target us directly, we are told to be individuals. We're told we're in a free society but then find ourselves being judged by our fashion choices: too bright, too colourful, too long, too short, too denim, too hooded, too long, too short... too wrong. Therefore, in a bizarre paradox we look to social media for guidance.

Then, ironically, when we don't approve of somebody's opinions, taste or belief we adopt the cancel culture etiquette. Despite liking an 'E-girl' look on Instagram, if we were to see this style and attitude on someone in the street, we would shake our heads disapproving and laugh at "how cute" it is that they are dressing up as an 'E-girl'. There are newspaper articles for teenagers saying, 'don't be a VSCO girl', 'reasons why being VSCO is bad'. The media collectively portrays a negative image, stereotyping those types of girls to be 'popular' who 'make fun' of less popular girls. Being influenced, being a follower of fashion of choosing to VSCO carries with it the chances of a barrage of scorn and mockery. Odd isn't it, that something so innocent and peaceful can be condoned.

As a result, this level of judgement is only going to increase with the increasing presence of social media as an influential platform. Trends like 'E-girls' and 'VSCO girls' will come and go simply to be replaced with a new interest. However, we need to realise that blissfully ignoring the dangers of influences can be detrimental to our actual society. We must detach ourselves from negative stigmas and finally start to see social media as a platform for freedom allowing people to like what they like and dress how they wish and wear as many scrunchies as they please. Social media is a complicated concept which is why it's important to accept people in real life.



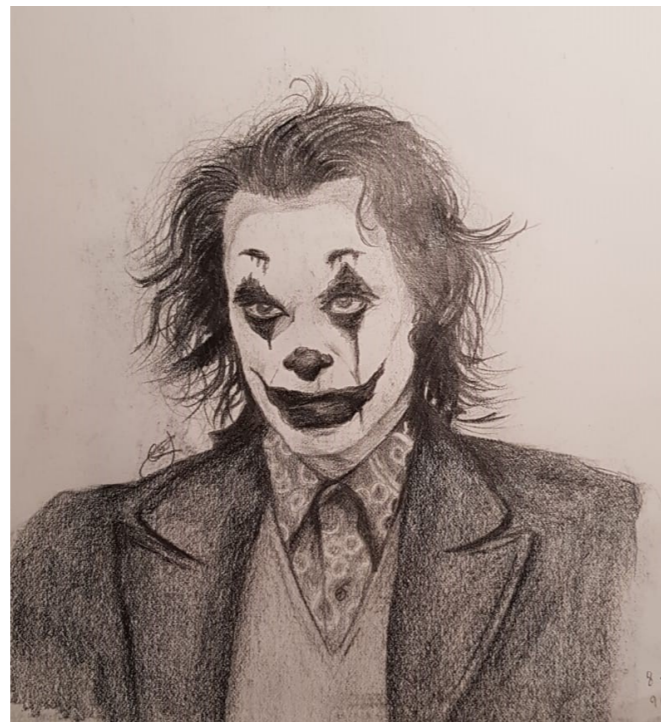
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ELLEN BERRILL OSBOURNE

# JOKER: A LAUGHING MATTER

## \*SPOILERS\*

Todd Phillips' *Joker* has been on the cinema screen for over a month now, and has received monumental praise for its ability to tell a compelling, emotional and thought-provocative movie that has been brilliantly shot, masterfully acted and perfectly crafted. It has left people buzzing after they leave the cinema. However, although the movie has been showered in praise, (and for all the right reasons), for some critics it has left a sour taste for numerous reasons, most raising concerns about the violence contained within the film.

*Joker* revolves around the story of Arthur Fleck; a failed comedian and party clown whose life begins to spiral downhill. At the very beginning of the film, it is quickly established that Arthur is disturbed both mentally and physically. Almost before the audience have had a chance to get used to the characters we see Arthur beaten by a group of children whilst he's at work. From here, we get watch Arthur fall further into insanity until an incident on the subway (caused by him) sparks a movement against the rich in Gotham city.



Joaquin Phoenix's portrayal of Arthur is phenomenal; effortlessly he takes the once former archetypal, almost comedic character to new depths. Like many actors, to get in to character he even lost weight to truly reflect Arthur's unhealthy lifestyle. The Joker's laugh is almost as iconic as the Joker himself; Phoenix's laugh in role is as disturbing and chilling as his physical movements. In numerous scenes there is an eerie, disturbing atmosphere that echoes around the cinema, the likes of which I wonder whether an audience have ever truly experienced.

The movie ends leaving the audience with enough questions to theorise and dissect. Especially after recalling the various incidents when the plot becomes more and more twisted by the unreliable perspective of the Joker. If an English teacher were ever to look at character perspective, there is certainly enough material here!

Although this movie received 89% of approval on Rotten Tomatoes and grossed over \$556.6 million at the box office there have been major concerns—even from the FBI about the impact this film could have. Many fear that this movie will spark numerous copycats who may mimic what happens in this film; however, I believe that this is another example of people misunderstanding an artwork and leaping to extreme caution.

Some people's main concern is that the film seems to promote the anarchistic taking down of the establishment and calling to 'the mob' to fight back at society and be noticed. *Joker* goes to a large length to show the disturbing nature and insanity of Arthur Fleck, one scene - the popular bathroom scene—certainly puts this view in to perspective. After Arthur kills three Thomas Wayne employees he retreats to a dirty public bathroom, where he slowly begins to dance whilst a sharp violin melody plays in the background. Arthur is not like any other



person and is truly disturbed. This scene leaves the audience awkward and uncomfortable. Feeling that sit with us throughout the rest of the film—especially as we see the motif of him doing similar dance again. Phillips never glorifies or excuses any of Arthur’s actions. Arthur is not cold and calculated, but a sick and wounded soul who is lashing out, and, the film shows us why.

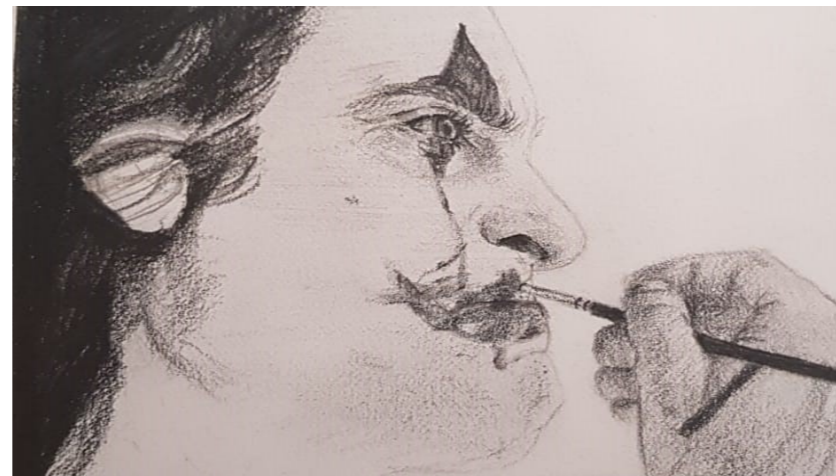
The film critic community has also slapped a label on the film saying that it appeals to ‘Incels’ (a portmanteau of involuntary celibate). By that definition alone you can tell that this label and the film have no correlation direct correlation. The inaccuracies seem extreme, especially as we see Arthur fall in love with and even go out with a lady in his apartment block.

Yet, later we realise that the relationship was all a fantasy and Arthur’s love is unrequited. Instead of showing ‘Incel’ behaviour, there is a suggestion that Arthur just desperately wants someone to care about him - to notice him—to love and acceptance him. Things he hasn’t had throughout his life. As a result, he is a desperately sad and lonely man, who has been pushed down by those around him.

Another flawed argument is that the film is shouting a left-wing message of class warfare; however, I can’t see a political message in the *Joker* and that is because the director ensures that neither side of the conflict is shown to be wholly justified. The lower-class revolutionaries who flock to Arthur’s aid are violent, psychotic, murderous thugs using the cause for their own gain and to incite violence wherever they go. This is

particularly clear at the end of the film with Thomas and Martha Wayne being shot by a clown protester leaving the theatre. The thugs are not fighting to create a more just and equal society, they are trying to cause panic and destruction. Likewise, the rich, like Thomas Wayne and Murray Franklin (the talk show host that Arthur obsesses over) are shown to be arrogant, dismissive and detached from reality. Thomas Wayne uses the civil unrest to add to his mayoral campaign, and Franklin uses Arthur’s failed comedy attempts for monetary gain. Both are somewhat ambiguous in their motives, who knows, maybe Wayne really wants to change Gotham for the better, maybe Franklin just wants to entertain Gotham—that is completely up for the audience to decide (once they’ve unpicked Arthur’s unreliable narrative). However, neither’s motives are without suspicion.

One of the takeaways from this film is the fact that people lack an understanding of one another: do we really know each other? It also challenges our sense of society and how people jump to violence, anger and vengeance when they don’t understand each other; this is particularly clear at the film’s climax. Ultimately, the movie does not fuel any political ideologies; the movie is smarter than that, bigger than that and transcends the politics that many people wish to link it to. In the end, *Joker* is a movie that highlights societal fears about the world and ourselves. We must act kindly to one another and be more accepting, not hate those who have more than us, or belittle those with less, not mocking people who don’t fit in or demonizing those who do. If we don’t, what really is behind the happy faces we show the world?



WRITTEN BY NOAH ASHBURY

ART BY GRACE FITZJOHN

# MICRO-INFLUENCERS

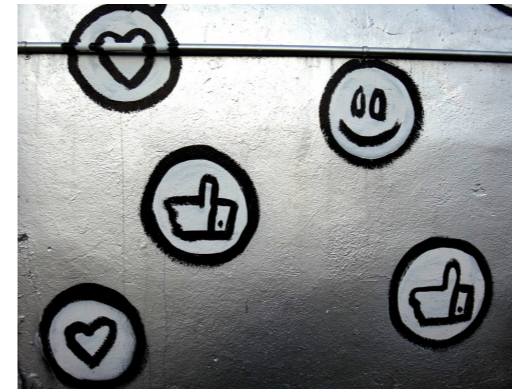
I understand why you think that this is a profession of no worth. Why should these millennials get paid to post what they had for dinner last night or their favourite handbag that you'd have to sell your house to afford? This is what most of us see. And you would be forgiven for thinking that's all there was to the job. However, these people are doing something far from worthless.

Firstly, it's hugely beneficial for business. Tons of businesses use social media icons for marketing. In fact, in the last 12 months, 320 new influencer-focused agencies joined the market. This number has doubled in the past two years. These companies range from Microsoft and Google to Fiji Water and Virgin Atlantic. There's no doubt about it: influencers are the way to advertise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Why is it so effective though? It's a good question with a simple answer: It's appealing.

Companies looking to branch out to the younger generation need this engagement. Emotion is at the core of influencer advertising- not facts and figures like regular TV commercials. In a modern society that heavily features the likes of Instagram and Snapchat, people are more likely to rate products based on how many admirable people like them, and not a random statistic. And you don't even have to contact huge media presences to get attention; actually, micro-influencers can be hugely effective.

Micro-influencers are social media accounts with a small follower or fan base. A natural toiletry company called Tom's of Maine used the micro-influencer Rachael Lisbon. She asked her followers to purchase their all natural deodorant-and see if they preferred it to their natural one. After a few months, the company had racked up over 4 million potential customers all thanks to one small Instagrammer. One shaving company who go by the name of 'dollar shaving club' went from a small start-up to a billion dollar company all thanks to social media and influencers. Companies can really allow small Instagrammers and YouTubers to grow and develop with influencing, in ways that simply wouldn't be possible with conventional advertising.

My second reason is one for us all. People who take to Instagram and YouTube aren't just essential to businesses but also everyday people. Catherine Grace O'Connell is an influencer who noticed a large gap in ages of people who share her profession. She also noticed how there were barely any Instagram icons over the age of 30 and if there were any, they received a lot of hate and weren't seen equal to their younger counterparts. O'Connell chose to base her account on



encouraging older women that they should embrace their age and not hide it.

Big celebrities on social media are there to help you. Like Alicia Keys who created the no-makeup movement in 2016 and Kelly Clarkson who faced body-shaming from the beginning of her time on American Idol, but rose above the hate and won the show. There are so many icons on social media who can help you through problems that maybe friends and family can't understand. Alexa Coastings is an avid viewer of social media. She quoted, 'Watching all these powerful people accepting who they are filled me with hope. I never thought I would be loved if I came out myself but I received the courage to love myself.' The advice and lessons you can learn from influencers are priceless-not worthless.

One of the best things that they have to offer to the public is focus. You may spend years waiting for a chance to talk to someone who understands what you are experiencing or for an influencer perfect for your brand. With Instagram, you can find who you need exactly when you need them.

With everything that I've just discussed, I believe that a future without social icons isn't one I want; they bring so much to us underneath the hate that they constantly receive. Just like any job, there are of course a few rotten eggs with the wrong intentions. However, the majority of them want to help us. Think of what life would be without influencers- imagine not being able to reach out for help, being left to deal with problems that will hurt you and all around you more as they grow.

You directly may not be in need of help like this right now. Yet don't you still want a world filled with the power to help?

WRITTEN BY SAM PRESTIANI  
PHOTOGRAPHY ANONYMOUS

# CHRISTMAS

## **The things I never knew I wanted... never knew I needed or never knew I could wait for.**

Father Christmas, this year I have been incredibly good: I have eaten my greens; I have ensured that I've been greener and I have tried, Oh Father Christmas – you know how I have tried to turn away from the lure of a box set. Granted, I could have been better, I could have refrained from my favourite festive syrup coffees; I could have spent a little more time with my head in a classic book and I could have been a little more interested in politics (rather than shuddering and hiding from anything to do with Big-Bad Bo-Jo).

As we approach the end of advent I have started thinking about the gifts I would like and the gifts I never even knew I wanted. If, and only if you have room on your sleigh, I was wondering if you could make room for one or two of the following.

### **Hydration Station:**

I saw on Net-A-Porter.com the most amazing “one of a kind” water bottle with its very own quartz crystal inside. The crystal is supposed to keep me supercharged so that I can work, rest and play to the very best of my ability. However, at £70 it's a little steep; on reflection, just a nice reusable bottle would do me proud.

### **A bobble hat:**

There are some super snug bobbles to help me remain super cool when it is... well, super cool! I've spotted a star print hat with a super soft lining. The one I saw in 'Woman's Health' magazine was £70 – one from Primark would be just dandy.

### **A walking duvet:**

The latest craze in must have coats are the ones that are dual layered, self-heating and hydrostatic. On a cold morning a Voltera Waterproof Heated Jacket would be wonderful. It is retailing at £270; however, there are so many awesome puffers that are a fraction of the price I wonder where the elves' budget would be better placed.

### **A dill-icious tweak for my salads:**

In the New Year I fully intend to 'cleanse' and eat greener. The celebrity chefs sing lyrical about adding herb to salads. I found a wonderful Kuhn Rikon Herb Saver for the bargain price of £19.95 – now tell me, Santa, is a special herb preserving chamber any different from popping them in the freezer?

### **A snuggly pair of jimmy-jams:**

Christmas is a perfect time for a new pair of PJs. There really is nothing nicer than curling up in a pair that are cute, practical and just a little bit special. Pjoys' pyjamas definitely celebrate the PJ joys but at £250 a pair could you find an alternative that I'm not scared to wear.

### **Some party-glow:**

I'm tired, I'm grumpy and my tan was lots many moons ago. A foundation that offers a little magic would be fabulous. Oh make-up fairies, make me dewy and lustrous... Cle De Peau retails at £80, Charlotte Tilbury rocks in at £34 and Rimmel at £7.99... Father Christmas, do you need to break the bank?

### **A little bit of luxury:**

I'd like it all, the VB Beauty eye bricks for £48, the GHD Platinum+ for £298, the new Chanel perfumed shimmer for £139. To tell you the truth, I would it all – in fact, Liberty have their very own advent calendar with 25 products for the ripe old price of £215. A bargain, right? Thinking about it, what would be a real bargain would be waiting until the sales and getting all those little bits and pieces at up to 70% off.



WRITTEN BY ANONYMOUS  
PHOTOGRPAHY ANONYMOUS

# CHRISTMAS TERRORS

This December the BBC are bringing back Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'; however, gone are the muppets, gone are any form of animation and instead we our festive fancies will be tantalised by the dark and the eerie. Viewers will see Guy Pearce transformed in to the miser, who rather than supporting the most needy asks simply "are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?" Audiences will be treated to spectres, phantoms and the sordid underbelly of society as we see Scrooge learn to embrace the truest meaning of Christmas. The BBC's production will certainly seem a nod to it's BBC1 phenomenon, 'Peaky Blinders', which is no surprise considering it is directed by the same people, has been supported by Tom Hardy and features some of the supporting cast.

However, the story of ghosts at Christmas got me thinking—why, oh why, did we ever tell ghost stories at 'the most festive time of the year'? Scrooge was by no means the first to fictional character to see ghosts around Christmas; in fact, the literary tradition goes much, much further back. It seems that when the nights grow cold, the fire grows warmer and people come together the time is right to think about those who are no longer with us. Hence, the traditional ghost stories began! In fact, the tradition is far older than the Victorian stories we may have read in English lessons—instead, think more about the origins of stories themselves. The ghost story is less about fear, but more about: rebirth, death, winter and the relationship between the teller and their audience.

Once, Christmas was connected to the Winter Solace celebration, more commonly known as—yule... as in 'yule tide'. A time when the darkest day of the year was considered the time when our dead were closest to us, or so says Professor Justin Daniels. It seems that just as Dickens says, we see the "shadows of what's been" and tell those near us what we have witnessed and of our dead. And so, the stories around the fire begins.

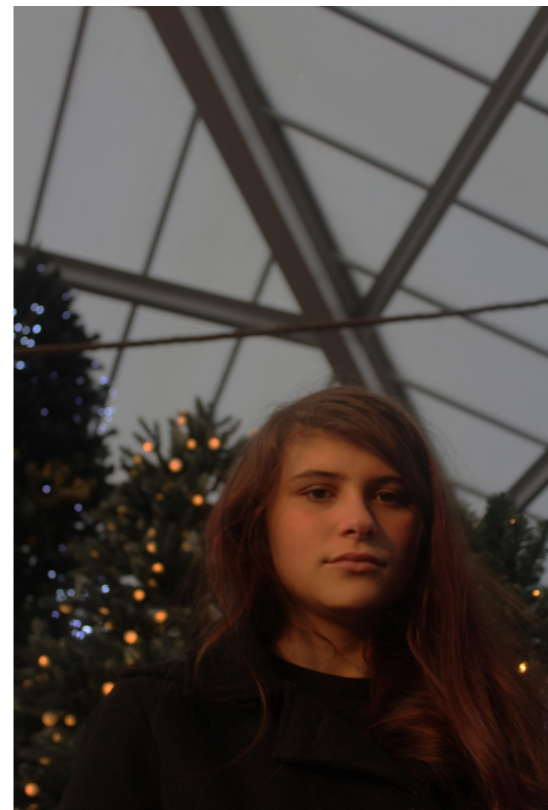
Certainly we can look to the years of Cromwell's reign; a time when Christmas and all its festivities were banned as an explanation as to why stories became darker. If the Lord Protector is denying festivities it may be understandable why people gather not to celebrate but to come together in an act of defiance and tell stories that terrify.

Similarly, it doesn't seem surprising therefore that once a little punch has been consumed and merriment is in full swing that the tales should start to become something a little more 'twisted' and the

homage to our departed become a little more thrilling. There's more hyperbole, more pathetic fallacy and more reference to the sublime.

Sadly, with the invention of the television, the internet, the streaming and the social media frenzy that has consumed our society there has been a definite decline in the notion of coming together. We might sit and indulge in a Christmas special, but do we really talk?

Who knows, perhaps the decision to remake Dickens' classic tale is timely. Maybe we should be looking at the message in more detail—it is not about commercial success, it is not about the latest downloadable box set or the most recent celebrity social media furore. Rather, should we be looking to the Ghost of Present and take note of the two small children that accompany him: Ignorance and Want? We should stop being ignorant of the importance of family and community and we should want to see the importance of it. Who knows, perhaps watching something dark and chilling will be the muse for our own ghost story sessions.



WRITTEN BY ANONYMOUS  
PHOTOGRAPHY LUCY UNWIN