

# estuary

acadia's creative arts magazine

Edition 2.2

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# Andrew Atkinson

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## Smoking

The way you stand there smoking,  
(lingering fumes from an unseen source)  
makes me wonder if you were a poet.

I imagine  
freedom  
grabbed you and ran . . .  
the indifferent freedom  
that honed granola mountains,  
in one beat,  
and  
ushered worshipers  
through flushing whore house doors,  
with the next.

The smoke that rises  
through your grey rooted black hair  
reminds me of smouldering embers  
from a burnt forest.

Its charred skeletons a tragic ode to mistake.  
(Your smoke urges my youth to be cautious.)

Ian Brunton

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**first snow of MCMXCIX**

snowfall  
silently sifts sounds from the still air  
replacing them with a magical  
tragic twinkle  
at one in the morning  
November eleventh  
an early hint  
of white winter whispering  
soft icy sibilance  
on red flowers

# Ann Dickinson

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## Counting

In the parking garage  
with a stale and cool air  
the lights went off  
counts from ten to one  
didn't count on us  
Stroking  
thundering fireworks  
in the pit of my stomach and overhead  
Sparking  
you lit a cigarette  
I popped the champagne  
licked the bottle  
spun the wheel  
we drove over a ramp  
we were always underground  
in those days.  
I stared at the parked cars  
while you watched the rearview  
Remembering  
The Way we Were  
eating our Breakfast at Tiffany's  
swallowing each other whole.  
The hysterics passed  
Ticking  
at twelve o'one we didn't change  
from fairytales  
and we weren't projecting  
Marliyn Munroe shapes  
or screens that sort of flickered  
your car was dry  
I put on my lipstick  
Blotting  
whatever the New Year brings  
the deep crimson truths

that there we were  
Searching  
and unable to find space.

# Jesse Lund

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## Colour and faith

Came into this space with nothing  
Leaving tomorrow with my hands clean  
Dirt so thick it'd make you sick  
Eyes so heavy from the sun

Two nights ago the snow kept me  
Tight with sleeping sickness  
So I got below  
In the storm  
I shut the locks cold

follow me  
Through the distance fields

Hands in your eyes  
All hungry ghosts  
Crowd the corners  
From time to time  
Must find a little taste  
Just something to keep the demons at bay

I'm so tired of moving  
I just want to sleep this life away  
Just wake me from time to time

This liquid day impossible to hold  
The dream sinking under the weight of my skin  
Laughing between tears  
Underfoot of angels  
Lonely for the vision  
Of movement without sadness

# Melissa Melanson

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## After Separation

Valerie bleached her hair,  
a fading brunette  
turned platinum.  
She taught me how to garden,  
four inches deep  
and two apart.

Her house,  
once full of  
painted rocks,  
music sheets  
and apple dolls,  
is now an empty playground.

Small towns gossip  
she haunts Tim Hortons,  
hates coffee but  
can't face  
an empty home.  
She's looking for someone.

The tulips we planted  
haven't bloomed in years,  
your plastic bird feeders  
hang cracked  
drained  
and forgotten.

I watch her walk the beach,  
a separated, thinner version,  
an emaciation,  
six feet of  
skin and bones,

a fifty- year old waif  
with  
bottle blond  
dreams.

She searches, collecting  
sand and shells,  
leaving no imprints  
behind her,

each  
step  
takes her farther,  
away from home.

We walk together, unbalanced,  
like her, because  
of her  
I fear  
a strong wind off the ocean  
could carry us both  
away.

# Stephen Murphy

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## untitled

fire goes lightly  
drawn inside  
the smoke rises in ringlets  
encircling the halo  
formed around your hazy  
aura

# Elsa Pihl

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## Tomorrow

even in this world of shadows  
light filters in somehow  
as quickly as the madness descended  
the fog slowly lifts  
I had felt alone and scared  
but now I feel hopeful  
the rain cloud has dissipated  
and I am left to deal with the puddles  
manageable puddles  
I can splash in them  
at least

# Joe Ruelle

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## Exams

clicking  
tapping  
biting  
and  
squeezing  
words  
out of a  
plastic  
stick

# Audra Tynes

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## **My Past is My Past**

Though my hair has kinks,  
And my nose may spread wide;  
Despite much melanin in my skin,  
I can still strut with pride.

Though my history was germinated in sorrow,  
As my past is marred with pain;  
I look forward to a brighter tomorrow,  
And obliterate forever the shackles of shame.

# Jenny Willis

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## Fall

the distance of summer was painful  
but all the same in september again  
we are at last.

We pull our blankets and towels outside  
Cool enough though to sip sugared tea from flasks  
Each morning I dare to lift my head  
watch the tips of beaks that yodel on my window sill  
who catch me staring, blush madly,  
fly away.

# Tegan Zimmerman

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## Queen Bouddica

In bronze she stands  
amongst her daughters,  
He who wrote her pillages in pages  
heroine, patriot.  
so near he can almost smell her scents in his snuffbox  
but he doesn't  
like blood underneath fingertips  
Spinsters, penniless and landless –  
carefully concealed  
in history's closet,  
amongst corsets and Burano lace  
women silently frozen,  
paper dolls,  
in January  
ignored,  
pouring tea  
from exaggerated wrists.

# Kerri Anderson

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## after some time

there are thoughts waiting, behind whatever other thoughts occupy a mind, to be thought of, if only they are acknowledged. it would be false to say roux had “not thought about jessie in a long time”—if roux had thought to think of jessie, she would have many things to say. if she does not think of jessie it is because she doesn’t let herself do so.

roux, walking home, remembers the reminder just a few hours ago.

“roux! roux! you’ve got to meet my friend jessie!” lina’s voice was anticipating, excited.

roux looked up and felt something drop in the pit of her stomach. *this is not jessie!* her head screamed, as though ‘jessie’ was somehow different from other names, that it was not free to belong to just anyone. immediately she knew how ridiculous this was. there must be a million jessies out there. how could she imagine she would be reacquainted with the one she already knew?

but as ridiculous as it was, she couldn’t shake it off. she looked dumbly at “jessie” and found nothing at all to say.

she was, instead, remembering jessie’s body exactly. jessie’s straight brown-red hair, cut close to her head, those full lips of hers, her round eyes full of forgotten meanings and bright tenderness, like a flickering candle. *that look...*

“hi,” roux said to this-jessie, trying not remember jessie’s outfits, black from head to toe but subtly uplifted by the flare in her skirt, the way she moved her hips.

“hi,” this-jessie said back, friendly, unaware that her entire body was wrong.

“i knew another jessie once,...” roux tried to dispel the awkwardness by naming it.

this-jessie laughed, “oh, yeah...?” she said, as though she thought it the most inane thing to say.

roux felt silly, too. what a thing to say to someone.

she shrugs her shoulders against the cold of the night air. she walks on in silence, but her thoughts are loud company.

jessie.

she can't say the name without seeing jessie's body, her short, round body, the way her smile crept up on her face, the way she moved, always easily, always within the comfort of her own quirky way of seeing the world.

jessie gave love. it came pouring out of her, almost as though she couldn't help it. and some people borrowed jessie's love from time to time, and other people roved in and out of it like jessie was just swiss cheese that wouldn't mind one more hole.

roux thinks wryly: *and we know which ones we were, don't we roux?*

jessie shared her body like it was a cloak to warm her friends with. always afterwards they walked away from her again, and jessie packed herself up as if it didn't matter, until the next time when she would stand there with her eyes brimming with giving, and it didn't seem like such a bad idea...

roux sometimes thought she hated jessie. she was disgusted by her. she ached for jessie's impossible—

roux stops, her realization like glass in her stomach, the shards sending needles of pain up into her abdominal cavity. she ached for jessie's impossible incapacity to see that she was being used.

the judgment makes roux taste raw onions though she hasn't eaten any. she shakes her head. no. her stomach hardens. her mind, in the rush of its own uncharitableness, ploughs on. no, the truth of it is, all this time she was never prepared to realize that what she held against jessie is what she holds against herself.

jessie glowed with her very own source of light, and roux couldn't handle that. she would disclaim any feeling at all rather than acknowledge she loved jessie.

she walks faster, the pain tearing her open as though she would burn from the realization. "jessie!" the name is a curse, a shame on roux's conscience.

*how do we live with ourselves*, she thinks, and her fists tighten reflexively, as though she could bar the feelings from herself.

§

jessie stirs her goulash, listening to anton go on and on about his latest lover leaving him. she smells the rosemary rise in the steam off the stew. her grandmother made goulash. jessie learned from a cookbook though. some things don't get passed on from generation to generation, but must be stolen from another source, to restore a disrupted history.

“he never...he never...” anton can't come up with the words for what lawrence never did.

“anton. i'm sorry.” jessie says, turning to him, trying to reclaim the energy in her own apartment. it's only a little space: she doesn't have much room to hold all this negativity.

he looks up, drawn out of his own misery. “this never happens to you, does it, jessie?”

she draws a breath. “that's not true,” she says, and wraps another layer over her own pains, like a web of spidersilk over her eggs, an impenetrable cottony covering that will not tear.

anton shakes his head. “we're all fucked,” he mutters.

jessie's eyes survey the red walls, the cupboard doors of dark wood, the curtain that splits the tiny kitchen from the living room. “we're all—” she pauses. “we're all— gifts to one another, anton. that's what living is.”

anton shakes his head at more of jessie's hokeyness. he can't say anything though: after all, that's why he came here. he came here to be drawn in by jessie's way of loving.

“ready to eat?” jessie reaches for two bowls, the ones her sister made in pottery class. she fills them and sets them on her two-foot square kitchen table.

“c'mon, jessie, there must be somebody you could get mad at. somebody you could just punch in the stomach, if you saw them again...”

jessie sighs. “blessings on the meal.”

“okay, okay, not punch, exactly, but you know what i mean...”

jessie takes a spoonful of goulash. it is perfect. she always says she doesn't taste her cooking first, because she can only tell if it's good or if it's not: if it needs a little something, she's not good enough to know what that will be. but this one worked out perfectly.

"yeah," she says. "yeah, i know what you mean." she takes another bite of goulash. thick. good. nourishing. "but i try to think of it, as that they're just not. . .at the place i am. that if they can't see as i see now, doesn't mean they won't one day."

"well that's horseshit." anton says, splurting stew across the table.

jessie's eyes narrow. "no it isn't," she says firmly, and her eyes don't leave anton's.

he lifts another spoonful to his mouth, the broth dripping from his spoon back into the bowl. the potato bursts into flakes in his mouth, as though melting into his tongue, melting into his body. "i'm sorry," he mumbles, "i'm sorry, jessie, i'm just a mess." he doesn't know what he's apologizing for, exactly, but that is the power jessie has over people, that she can make them apologize just for making her feel badly.

after a minute he says, "does it make you feel any better though? does it make you feel better to think that they can go on their way and become somebody amazing without you?"

jessie doesn't answer, reaching down into her bowl for another spoonful. she has pain too, like that dark little pool in the bottom of her bowl. she has pain. she is not immune to it.

"i guess it makes you feel better than to think they'd go on being assholes staying with you," he laughs humourlessly.

*gifts*, jessie thinks. *i said gifts, not assholes. but then, lawrence and roux aren't the same person.* she doesn't say anything. she remembers roux. she remembers the good times with roux. she remembers the hard things with roux. she remembers that they parted as friends but immediately afterward there were things she couldn't name that hurt her still.

"but you go on loving them," jessie says. "no matter where they are, you go on loving them." she notices her soup bowl is empty now.

anton shakes his head. "not always." he clears his throat. "more stew?"

# Sally Christensen

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## Suicide

Bert looked over the perilous edge, his heart pounding. The height made him dizzy, and he feared he would fall off before he was ready. This was very important - timing was everything. He searched in vain for the sounds of police cars and fire trucks, and his previously buoyant optimism faded. He felt the first waves of despair break over him, and decided that timing was nothing. He would jump now, cameras and pleading people or not.

Bert took a deep breath, mentally preparing himself to jump. As he was about to step into the empty air, a harsh voice interrupted his concentration.

“What the hell are you doing?” the voice demanded.

Bert took a big gulp, and replied, “I’m about to kill myself by jumping off this building, what does it look like I’m doing?”

“It looks like you’re being an idiot. Come down from that ledge right now!” This was nothing like Bert had expected. No sympathy, no begging him to reconsider. He was being ordered to get down. Defiance rose and replaced his fear.

“Screw you,” he said simply, and jumped.

The owner of the voice simply shook his head, and muttered, “Stupid kid.” He turned to go back inside the building, the sounds of maniacal screaming following his footsteps. Bert was falling rapidly towards the concrete street below him. He was about to slam down into an old Datsun, when instinct overrode his death wish. At the last moment, he spread his wings and shot upwards, ignoring the sounds of puzzled pedestrians. Bert grumbled to himself. He had failed again. Jumping off buildings was no way for a pigeon to commit suicide.

# Kamia Creelman

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## "A Person's A Person, No Matter How Small!"

Jeff took the same route to the clinic that we'd been taking for the last five Mondays. It felt awful to drive down those familiar, family ridden streets. It seemed in bad taste to let a cheerful, suburban scene be the backdrop for our baby's death-row mile; it seemed in worse taste still to conceive a poem about it as we drove; but I did that too.

"Why didn't you cross over and take Anderson?" I snapped at Jeff, after we were through the intersection and it was too late.

"We never take Anderson." Jeff said, confused. He eyes left the street to throw me a curious glance. I caught and wizened it with a hateful stare.

"Well, maybe we should have." I said. Jeff jerked his eyes back in front of him and stopped playing innocent.

As we pulled into the clinic's driveway I saw my friends blocking the walkway that discreetly wrapped itself around the side of the building. It was there to lead certain women, like me, to the back entrance. Jen was crouched down on one knee, tying her sneaker, while Heather and Natalie huddled around her. All three girls were wearing their school soccer jackets and from where I sat, they appeared quite the formidable defence team. I had a soccer jacket too; but I'd left it at home today and borrowed my mother's long, cashmere overcoat instead. I could see Jen's mouth working along with her fingers and I wondered which words of wisdom she'd chosen today. As team captain, Jen felt it was her responsibility to be the one to conceive and distribute life's sorely needed pep talks, both on the field, and off. And to her credit, she had often inspired me.

Jeff and I stayed in the car and watched Jen finish speaking and the huddle disperse. As she stood, Jen reached down and picked up a large sign that had been lying facedown beside her. She then crooked her elbow to raise it above her head and joined the others on the picket line.

"A person's a person no matter how small!" The group chorused as they marched a circle and thrust up their signs to the beat of the slogan.

“A person’s a person no matter how small!” My friends’ fit bodies and proud voices marched and chanted in unified rhythm. I recognized it as almost kin to their teamwork on the soccer field, always in sync. It wasn’t long before the circle turned Jen my way and she saw me and Jeff sitting in the car. Her, Heather, and Natalie broke from the rest of the picketers and started toward us so we got out and slammed our doors.

“I thought you said you couldn’t picket today.” Jen said.

“We can’t.” I replied.

Jeff took my hand and we walked past our friends. We wound our way down the walkway, around the side of clinic, to the back entrance. After we gave the registrar nurse our information we waited for my name to be called so the doctor could go to work.

# Steven Fortune

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## **Creatively Entrepreneurial: A Discussion with Harry Thurston, Writer in Residence**

As a writer, Harry Thurston knows the value of keeping in touch with the public. “As a writer, you want to communicate with as many people as possible,” he asserts. “It is our subject matter.”

It is also the audience. As Acadia’s Writer in Residence for this semester, Thurston has a direct mode of access to that audience, one that lends itself well to a certain intimacy of connection, and encourages enlightenment on both sides of the artist/audience equation. It is an opportunity he has thoroughly embraced.

“Residency programs are very important, not only for the artist but the community at large,” he says. “I think part of its function is to make that connection between academia and the larger community.”

Yet this only begins to explain the overall function of the Writer in Residence. It is also about mingling with other artists, trying to tap into their apparent strengths, and bringing those strengths out into the open so that they can be aware of them and benefit from them accordingly. A substantial portion of Thurston’s office time has been spent meeting with local writers – many of them young and aspiring writers from the Acadia campus – and reading their manuscripts, on which he offers constructive criticism and direction.

“It’s a dialogue,” says Thurston on the nature of these meetings. “It’s not simply me talking about how they should write. I’m interested in knowing what the ambition of the writer is too. My role is to help them meet their personal goals.”

And being a resource for other writers is not without its own rewards. “For me,” he reveals, “part of the pleasure is that I get exposed to a new generation of writers.”

This is not a totally new environment for Thurston. His literary and scientific travels (spanning three decades and taking him virtually around the world) have included a stint as editor and publisher of *Germination*, a “little magazine” that specialized in verse and targeted new talents on the verge of publication. He has also edited for *Equinox*, while his poetry and nature pieces have cropped up in a wealth

of journals, anthologies and magazines, among them *National Geographic*, *Harrowsmith*, *Audobon* and *Quill & Quire*.

But there are other factors that justify such reminiscences on Thurston's part. If the experience of the residency, as he says, takes him back to the days of *Germination*, then the surroundings that accompany it must also mark the closure of a personal circle. In 1971, he graduated from Acadia with a Biology degree, setting the stage for a prolific career that has deflated the myth of writing being limited to literary types.

"Ultimately the challenge is for the writer to find your own voice, and certainly some of that search comes out of literary experiences," he says. "We integrate what we know into our own work." But, "what it all boils down to is that the education is critical, whether one is self-taught or formally educated.

"When I came to study science, I had to take an English course. Suddenly I'm reading *Sons and Lovers* and William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound, and those books were a real revelation to me. I didn't know it at the time, but my life turned a corner at that point."

Having said that, Thurston is consistent in his aim to bridge the traditional gaps that divide the two spheres. "For science, I was only required to read one book other than a textbook," he recalls. "I think we can all benefit from the arts and sciences by learning more about the other." Thurston refers to such things as Acadia's Environmental Arts (in the present) and the Romantic movement in literature (in the past) to demonstrate how the two spheres can co-exist. "The Romantic movement was a very strong response to the Industrial Revolution," he notes, "and a lot of the stuff coming out now is at the other end of that revolution, trying to cope with the effects of it."

Aside from the resource-based component of Thurston's position, there is an overlooked but highly significant component related to his own work, for the Writer in Residence is also provided with time and financial assistance to continue his own writing. This is particularly helpful to a full-time writer such as Thurston. "People tend to separate art from business, but by necessity you have to learn to become creatively entrepreneurial," he notes. And the position is not just economically helpful; it is inspirationally helpful as well. "It has a positive effect on your work," he says. "It makes you start to think critically about your own work. I'm having a very good time, and I think it will pay dividends in the future of my own work." Surely his presence at Acadia, though short, will pay dividends in the futures of other writers as well.

# Kate Mullan

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## This is Home

Gabrielle forcefully pulls back the heavy ivory curtains, allowing the sun to temporarily blind my sight. Unapologetically she shakes the drapes and a million dust particles fill the air. Little pieces of sunshine are absorbed and my eyes focus on the exterior of the front room. The floors are smooth aged hardwood and most likely walked upon by many. I scan the room wall to wall. The only piece of furniture sits upon the small and elevated stage that is tucked into the right corner of the room. The brilliant white grand piano draws me near. I sweep my index finger across its velvety edge. Clean. The eloquent style and magnificent beauty of this piano intimidates a girl like me.

Gabrielle motions me to follow her, so I leave the piano behind. She seems to be the type of woman who considers everyone the same. Regardless if I were three, thirty or sixty, I believe she'd still behave in this uptight and formal manner towards me. However, there is something inexplicably familiar about her that leads me to shadow her along the hallway. To our left is a playroom equip with three tickle trunks, a ten-foot circular railroad, and a fine set of trains. There is a huge window that accentuates the whiteness of the walls.

The room to our right has a different feel to it; an eerie feeling that promotes the growth of my body hair. Red tapestry covers the wall and a portrait of an old lady rests in the centre of the room. This Madam possesses an ghostlike ability to see from her painting and into the eyes of her visitors. I turn my attention away from the portrait in search of something less disturbing. I stop in front of an enormous mirror. Its frame is an olden brass pattern that must have years of history engraved in each chipping. In the mirror I see the reflection of Gabriella as she stares into my eyes. She looks as though she's waiting for me to answer. Oddly enough, she hasn't asked me a question.

Then I notice another woman standing in front of the mirror. She must have just entered the room. I turn to meet her, however she has vanished. I return to face the mirror and I'm startled to notice that again this woman is looking right at me. In fact she is standing in the exact place that I am standing. My heart stops and I stretch out my arms. I examine the front and then the palms of each hand. "These aren't mine" I exclaim. I bring my chin up and confront my reflection. Fear draws

me closer and I press my right palm against the glass. The face I'm wearing is wrinkled and supple, my hair is short and grey. I'm smaller and thinner than I was yesterday. I place my fingers on my silky cheeks and glide them up and down the softness of my skin, across my lips and then pull them through my fine pearl hair. "Is this me?" I inquire. "Yes sweetie, its you" Gabriella replied. "Then why do I feel so young?" I question. "Because my dear, you are home," she explains.

# Nathan Patstone

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## **Bait**

My folks told me that the fish had died as I made my way from the living room to the dining room with the small canister of food in my hand. The former pair of fish had been the second part of a Christmas gift and had only held residence in the small hexagonal fish tank that rested on my dining room table for a little more than three days. As my parents watched television I went to feed the sole survivor the small flakes of dried foliage that served as the daily meal. As I broke up a few large flakes between my thumb and forefinger to make eating them easier I made a mental note to remove the dead fish after I had finished feeding the live one. Removing the cover I dropped the particles into the aquarium. The dead fish sped forward eating a few of the particles and then returned to its previous corpse-like position. I smiled to myself and whispered, "Lazy fish."

# Vanessa Shaw

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## Return to Sender

They walked side by side, plotting the afternoon of play that stretched before them. The road was wide, freshly paved, bordered by an abundance of greenery. No cobbles here, Aidan thought as Haley skipped next to him. Nervous, suspicious, his eyes swept the tree-lined street, coming to rest on the front steps of his aunt's house. A package. Though at least fifty feet away, he could see it clearly. Nondescript, about the size of a shoebox, wrapped in brown paper and tied with a string. He froze, and staring blindly at the parcel, saw not its plain exterior wrapping, but rather another similar parcel left on his neighbour's doorstep back home. *Tiocfaidh ár lá*. As the earth shook beneath his feet, he flung himself to the ground, arms over his head, hands plastered against his ears. His body quaked uncontrollably; the air couldn't reach his lungs. He squeezed his eyes shut but could not erase the burning image from his mind: roaring fire, shattering glass, screaming... He was about to pass out from lack of oxygen when Aidan felt someone shaking him and he heard a distant voice. Haley. Cautiously raising his head and opening his eyes, Aidan peered up at his friend, relieved by her bewildered expression. Oh Canada.

Deanne Gill

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**3 Barrels**



Shelly Suffron

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**True Love**



*Unfortunately some of the artwork originally published in this web edition cannot be displayed due to technical difficulties. The staff offers its utmost apologies for this inconvenience.*