

# Scryptic



Magazine of Dark Art

1.3

# Scryptic

*Magazine of Alternative Art*

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## Note from the Editors

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who made Scryptic happen this year! This is our third issue and the last of 2017-- wow! With each issue we've managed to rope in the work a little tighter and this issue is nothing less than spectacular. The theme of "dark" or "edgy" means something a little different to everyone, but even so, this issue most certainly shaped up to have it's own theme within a theme. Funny how artists seem to get on the same wavelength sometimes. With that being said, you guys did an amazing job of sending us a combination of mythology and real-life people. We hope you enjoy the mix as much as we did!

Have a fantastic holiday and new year! See you in 2018!

*-Scryptic Editors Lori A Minor and Chase Gagnon*

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## [And Now] Your Imaginary Funeral

when you're dead [you know]  
one thing's for damn sure  
it's not going to be "Mr. You" anymore  
it's going to be [he], [she], [it] all the way down  
and there's going to be a funeral  
[don't say you haven't imagined it]  
and at that funeral you're [more or less] the host  
planted [in the lobby of some drive-by Holiday Inn]  
greeting people as they come in  
assuring everyone [that everything's] okay

but wait []  
at your imaginary funeral you're dead {...}  
so instead there's really [nothing] to do  
and so far [everything's going pretty well]  
and remember that secret you wanted to take with you to the grave?  
well it looks like you finally made it  
[except for that stuff in your second desk drawer]  
which will eventually turn up  
but forget about it  
[what does it matter] it's all good

I mean  
who likes waking up anyway [?]  
[going to work] [hatching some little plot]  
[going out to lunch] thinking of something to say  
[dinner in silence] and [a couple of shows] then sleep  
[isn't that what we're talking about] and then  
it starts all over again

no wonder the Buddha and all those ancient gurus  
were always trying to [you know] liberate themselves  
from the eternal cycle of birth and rebirth

but  
at your imaginary funeral you're thinking  
maybe next time [I'll get a better role]  
move up the [food chain] you don't need to be the star  
you'd be happy with "Best Supporting Actor" hell  
you might even get your own [show!]  
but [at your imaginary funeral] you're dead {...}

so [in your imaginary casket] you're really just all eyes up  
and appearing [rather flat]

when some half-remembered neighbor  
[who seems to have forgotten how to tie his tie]  
comes up [a dab of powdered sugar on his whiskers]  
and looks into your imaginary box  
and [with the inquisitive eyes of a dentist] asks:  
"so tell me what's it like in there?"

- *Henry Crawford*

## Elegy for a Spin Instructor

Tina Turner begins her Proud Mary in slow motion  
which our spin class takes as a hill  
but it's really just a big turn of the resistance knob  
with Ike Turner singing in low gear,  
his wife warning of a rough finish.

On the lead bike, Lorenita Is battling  
breast cancer, calling for more resistance  
with the horns coming in, going faster  
her body metastasizing as the Ikettes  
come shing-a-linging down the rows  
of Saturday cyclists. Lorenita reminds us  
to save a little for the end.

Who of us can say, I don't have cancer?  
The class ends in jumps, out of the saddle.  
It's the hardest move. Peddling up river  
in a wake of trumpets and drums  
until the riverboat queen lands ashore,  
leaving nothing on the bike, Lorenita  
lets us go.

- *Henry Crawford*

## Off-hours

After the late shift  
the cops will drop by.  
Shots and a beer.  
Nightsticks on the bar.

In a back booth  
I dream my mother laughing  
and there she is - laughing.  
Her smudged mouth wide,  
always longing.

"We gotta go now  
little guy," her breath  
wet and pine tree  
sweet, her boiled eyes  
looking hard to see.

The jukebox is dark.  
A tired jumble of moths  
circle the bald bar light.  
Even the cops are gone.

These streets belong to us now.  
The radio knows this hour well.  
My mother is singing to the wheel.  
I'm in the backseat  
pretending sleep, tracing  
the roads in my mind  
just minutes before morning  
on that slow roll home.

- *Henry Crawford*



- *Kyle Hemmings*





Freud's couch talk--  
a dream is just a reflection  
through a distorted lens

Kyle Hemmings

- *Kyle Hemmings*

## STRAIGHTJACKET

Seance and summon the late Sigmund Freud  
Tell him I'm manic and tempremental  
Realistically void and paranoid  
Anxious and overly sentimental  
Incomprehensible, (accidental)  
Grant me clear conscious, delete delusions  
Healing meditation transcendental  
Transfusion of wisdom, end confusions  
Jump straight to psychiatric conclusions  
Adjust sadness, madness, anxiety  
Cure my phobias without exclusion  
Keep me on the path of sobriety  
Erupting-volcanic-passions-panic  
Therapy bills: Gigantic. Still manic

- *Chad M. Horn*

## ELECTROCUTIONS

Execution hour approaching, assured  
Locking me down to keep me from rocking  
Endured countless trials, now my fate secured  
Clocking precious last seconds, tick-tocking  
This easy-chair ride should not be shocking  
Recognizing her slender hand on switch  
Outside the window, framed faces gawking  
Called the Governor to give him my pitch  
Unanswered phone. Unsurprising grave glitch  
The warden and chaplain are introduced  
Irritable-final-bow-syndrome-itch  
Outwardly jaundiced, inwardly juiced  
Nodding at chaplain, winking at warden  
Soon to set sail across River Jordan...

- *Chad M. Horn*



- *Chad M. Horn*

dead-end street  
a little girl  
dismantles her doll

never in peace  
the skeletons  
in my closet

lost in fog  
the outline of a poplar tree  
your anorexia

in my ears  
the buzz of mosquitoes  
blood moon

rumor  
gulls fighting  
over fish guts

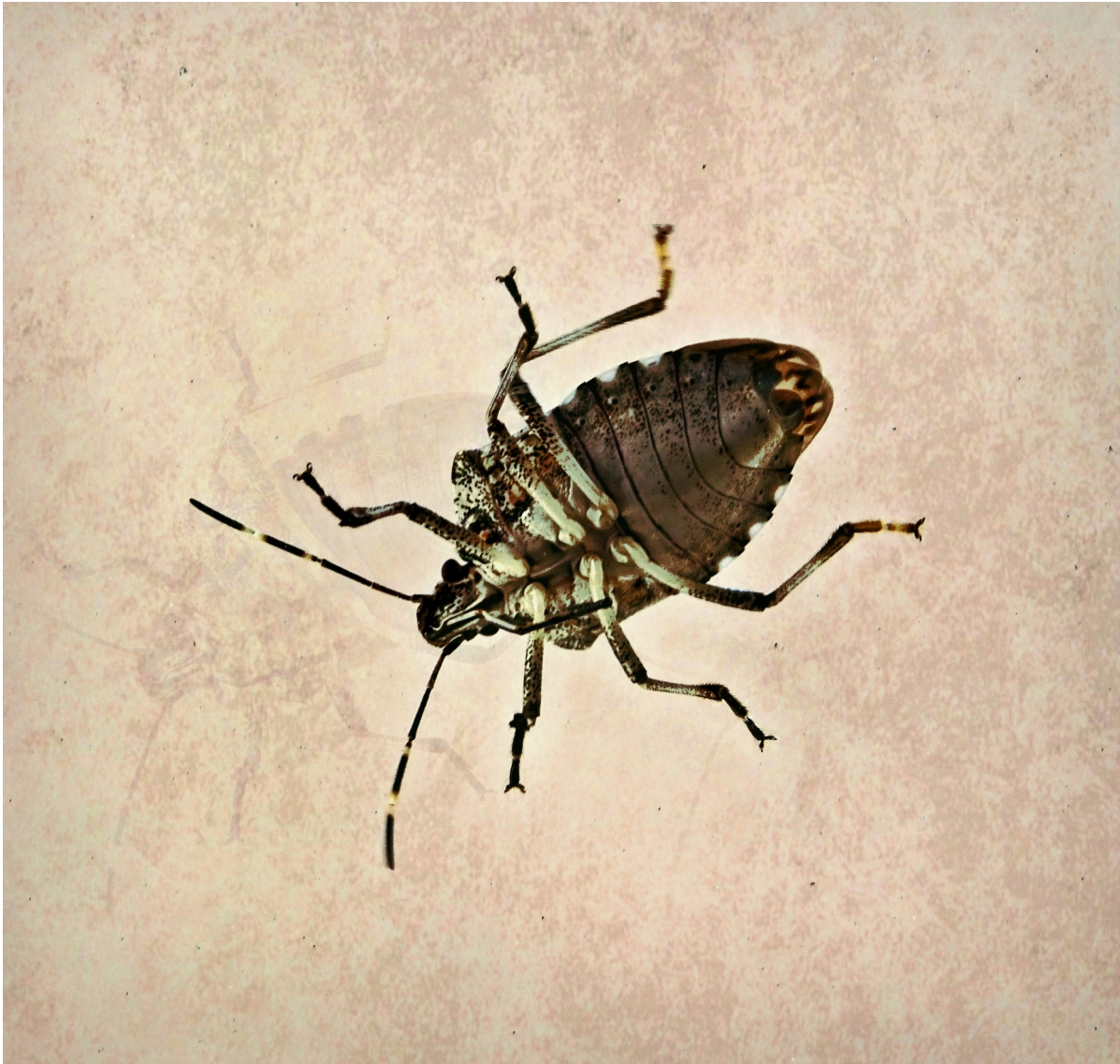
- *Olivier Schopfer*





- *Olivier Schopfer*





- *Olivier Schopfer*

excited  
to be a father -  
my rapist

a second attempt  
on his life -  
cockroach

- *Susan Burch*

## “Five Jisei”

#1

I would climb to the roof,  
up stairs and spider thread  
to stare at the space between  
hospital towers and sky  
and watch clouds  
race fish-eyed into night

#2

Live with them long enough,  
and every shadow you see  
turns into a roach

#3

Even with your eyes closed,  
you can still tell light  
from dark.

#4

The angels prepared themselves;  
it looked and sounded like an orchestra tuning up  
squeaks and snarls followed by  
clicks, snaps  
the murmur of smooth voices  
and the rustling of feathers.  
Do you know what angels preparing for war sound like?  
Birds, flapping in a puddle.

#5

It's like thinking moths  
love you; they're not here for you,  
they're here for the light

- *Blake Jessop*

### 3 AM Streetscape

through the curtain gap

neon's weary yellow flickers  
a dog jaw snaps snarling

one shoe, laces knotted  
in the gutter

sapphire gleam  
of shattered glass

sticky-black puddles  
shimmer in fractured light

stillness of held breath  
hollow-footsteps ...

drumming,  
ragged gasping

muffled screams  
sobbing,

outside the door  
the scratched record plays

- *Marilyn Humbert*



## Myths

far from home  
beneath this searing sun  
we trudge  
across a treeless plain  
seeking freedom

*creating myth  
sand-tides recede  
revealing  
water chiselled stone  
abandoned by the flood*

runes etched  
on the temple gate  
records  
of the past, and  
portents of the future

*children hum  
sombre campfire tunes  
rising embers  
greet the diving owl ...  
talons grip dying game*

they kneel  
before the marble altar  
expecting signs  
of atonement  
in the pools of blood

*cherished  
the pearl of water clings  
eternal  
unchained baying hounds  
pursue dawn thunder*

day brings  
a new perspective -  
light and shade  
of a mayflies life  
so fleeting

- Marilyn Humbert & *Andrew Howe*



- Eufemia Griffio and Claudia Roffeni

## **Green Trees Don't Make It**

Everyday  
I look out and see

The ugly green trees  
Standing guard in front of my house

And I think to myself  
Who owns the trees?  
And what do they think of us?

Are we their friends?  
Are we their enemies?

Do the trees think?  
Or do they silently watch us,  
Spies to the celestial emperor?

I have pondered this question  
Many a morning

Who is the owner of these trees?  
And why do they silently watch us?

I wonder if the trees don't hate us  
And why they don't protest

Every day as we drive back and forth  
Emitting poison gases from our mechanical asses  
Right into their unprotected faces

And every night we eat our dinner  
And then give the trees

Our polluted leftovers  
And laugh as they silently die

From our acidic fallout  
Constantly floating down on their skin

Yes, I wonder about the trees  
And the birds and the bees  
And everyone else

What are they thinking?

Are they plotting revenge?  
Or are they merely there  
Silently, watching, plotting,

Designing fiendish plots of revenge  
Dreams of vast nuclear destruction

Cosmic diseases wiping out everyone in the ass  
Oh Yes, I wonder and dream and ponder

What is the meaning of those silent green trees?  
Standing on the corner

Quietly condemning us  
With their quite tears, and falling leaves

In the winter they stand  
Naked and alone

Covered with ice cold snow  
As we drive by nice and warm

And we don't care  
As they stand out in the cold

Shivering, plotting warm plans of cosmic revenge  
Is it too late for us?

To become friends with the trees?  
Or will the day come

When the trees will wake up  
And gather together

All the other slaves of humanity

I have a vision  
One morning I will open the door

And see an army of wild things  
Coming to arrest me

For crimes against nature  
And I will plead, I did not know



And they will laugh and turn me all my kind  
Into silent tombs

And we will stand out in the cold  
Like the green trees

Plotting dreams of revenge  
For ever and ever

Until our day finally comes  
And we can go out and kill all the wild things

Perhaps we already have

*- Jake Cosmos Aller*

## **Man-Eating Tree of the Philippines**

We only know his first name – Bryant –  
and that he hailed from Mississippi,  
was travelling in the Philippines  
when he traced the stench of rotting flesh  
to a strange bulbous-shaped tree.

The tree was about thirty-five feet tall  
and ninety feet in diameter,  
covered in sharp-pointed waxy leaves  
laden with elongated pear-shaped fruit.

He wanted to reach out and pluck  
one of their plentiful clustered number  
when he noticed a heavy vine  
moving snake-like toward an ankle.

The tips of the leaves began to sweat  
a noxious fluid and the leaves too  
began to unfold and reach toward him.  
He quickly backed away. The leaves shook,

almost seemed to hiss as other  
tentacle-like vines swept the ground  
for a foot, an ankle, leg ... reared up  
cobra-like, seeming to sniff the air.

Bryant escaped that day. Lived to tell  
the tale, as they say. But at least one  
human skull at the base of that tree  
still awaits its “Poor Yorick” soliloquy.

If Bryant were to have grabbed that skull  
as evidence, or had snagged a piece of fruit,  
some CSI lab tech somewhere might  
have isolated an active enzyme, extracted DNA.

But Bryant chose life over Yorick’s skull  
and, thank God, didn’t scarf of the fruit  
of further knowledge. Somewhere in the jungles  
of the Philippines, Yorick’s skull still grins

and Eden reaches out with its own green Hamlet hand  
like the much smaller Pitcher Plant or  
Venus Fly Trap, which feed on insects,

small birds, small rodents perhaps.

This unnamed tree offers shade, a brief respite  
before dinner. Tall grasses entwine themselves  
about the trunk, help hide its grasping vines.  
Given the gift of dripping blood, the grass does fine.

- *Richard Stevenson*

## Lake Winnipegosis Cryptid

Lake Winnipegosis' own  
cryptid-hoser-with-the-most  
Rose above a big wash,  
you better believe -  
heaved himself up  
into history long ago...

Don't hear much of 'im these days ...  
Maybe he coiled himself  
in a fire hose of retirement  
and composure in a glass case  
in some museum of his memories.

Not extinct, I hope. Just don't  
Get around much anymore -  
trips to the point to scratch an itch -  
Damn free-loading fleas!  
Bloated, flatulent, weak in what  
he wished were knees ...

Kids and their spouses and sprogs  
coiled in their sub-set entanglement hoses  
on the fridge and stove and mantelpiece.  
Long socks for himself for his wife and brood  
hanging from the mantle -- to crawl in for Christmas.

Lake Winnipegosis cryptids and critters ...  
Home for the holidays. Not answerin' phones.  
*Here's a Bronx cheer for yer bathysphere  
recorder. Merry Christmas. Seasoned Green Things...*  
*A little less scum, sludge, and gunk, if you please.*  
*Especially the six-pack plastic holders. They kill,*

*Yer fellow cryptid hoser*

- *Richard Stevenson*

## Ummo

A sociological experiment concocted  
by reasonably intelligent, but decidedly  
earthly humanoids in the employ  
of some information gathering agency ...

Say that twice while chewin' gum, chum!  
Gotta a whole lotta humanoids with a felt pen,  
pie-plate plastic model saucer, a coupla  
inverted parentheses and a plus sign -- )+( -- poof!

I'm a contactee! Get to hang with Ummoids  
from a galaxy near you! Yep, aliens are among you,  
but they tell me everything! I've got the dope

on the zombie apocalypse from a Nordic dude  
speakin' Spanish telepathically. Strange,  
he had an accent and looked just like me!

Keep up with the paperwork and you've got  
a living breathing novel wormin' in and out  
of wormholes, dude! Ummo Gumbo, I'm comin'!

- *Richard Stevenson*

## White River Monster

Ain't no cryptid critter, Dad,  
just a large male elephant seal  
a little off course. Lookin'  
for a little uvula of a peninsula, dude.  
Got down the maw of the Mississippi  
like some doctor's spatula. Say Ahh!  
The White River, she called to me.  
"Turn here," a school of perch insisted... .

Yep. Dragged my arse over some shrubs,  
flopped on the shore where, intrepid fellow,  
you found my prints! Came back like  
you hoped I would, too, though I didn't  
mean to capsize yer canoe. Sorry, dudes!  
I'm a little short-sighted these days,  
tired of scuddin' a build-up of mud  
in the estuary. Ain't tryin' to be scary.

Be -el -ch! Sorry... little indigestion...  
Minnow breath.. You know I can't seem  
to keep 'em from getting' trapped in my teeth.  
Back there. You wouldn't mind reachin' in,  
would you? Maybe floss my back molars  
with a willow switch? No one likes fish breath,  
let alone three-day old herring mop rolls.  
Say, that's a nice white throat you've got there, Holmes.

- Richard Stevenson

## Mbielu-Mbielu- Mbielu

Mbielu-Mbielu-Mbielu!

Yeah yeah yeah ... I hear you! I hear you!  
Don't tell me: You're from the Federal  
Department of Redundancy Department.

No?! You're not just taking a census  
of cryptid critters in the Likouala region  
of the Republic of the Congo? You wanna  
tag me and bag me. Put me in a zoo.

Whaddaya think the algae/moss-  
infested planks, the spikes along  
my back and tail are for there, Holmes?  
They're a not-so-subtle fence. Get it?!

I can't keep you lot outta my swamp.  
You think I'd be carrying all this weight  
to corral you guys into some sort of romper room  
for my amusement? You think you've got

lower back pain?! Why don't you scale  
these planks and pull a Tom Sawyer stunt.  
Get the rest of yer crew to give my fence  
a fresh coat of paint? Make yourselves useful!

Forget the blunderbuss, Gus.  
I'm not going to slink quietly  
into any good night without  
swingin' a spike into your thigh first.

Even if I am a peacenik  
vegetarian. So take a few  
photos why don't you? Gather all  
the scat you want, make patties

if it makes you happy. Just save  
the darts for lawn games with yer kids  
in yer own back yard. Am- scray  
back to yer homo s crib, Holmes.

Gotta great beaked nose for breaking branches,  
fingers, legs too, if need be. Don't need  
to be breakin' bread with no miscreant  
homo s. hunter/gatherer party crashers.



Find yer own swamp. Even these fat hippos  
know better than to drop in uninvited.  
We Kentosaurian survivors ain't afraid  
to spike you up like litter. Go home, Holmes!

- *Richard Stevenson*

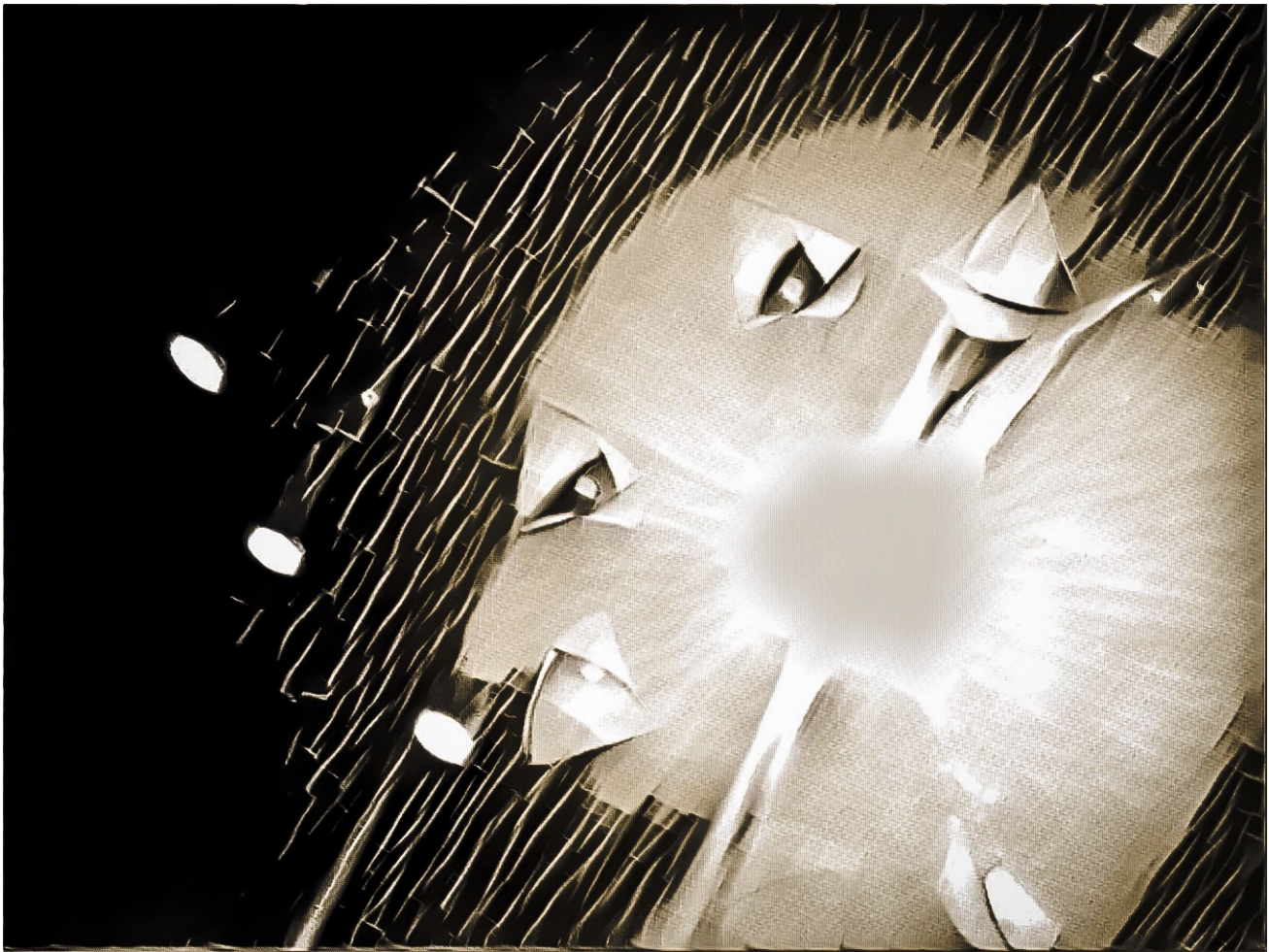


- *Jim Zola*



*- Jim Zola*





- *Jim Zola*

## Missing

I'm a cold witch  
and I've hidden the children,  
but not so, but I've been led to the straw pile  
all the same.  
I lit a torch to warm them, show them, and still --  
this from the same said witches.  
I no longer know who is the real witch  
and all the while the marsh along Route 2  
and 495 bristles -- giggles, tears, shivers.  
Some checked cloth, shredded.  
Finger tips pressed with ink.  
Or jam. Or blood.  
It could be jam now  
because while they were busy witch-tying  
and Maypole dancing  
a child was searching in the thicket,  
calling, and no one came.

- *Meg Smith*

## The last of the light

The ocean denied us,  
running, no fortune,  
no sun.  
I am driftwood on the foam,  
on unformed teeth,  
and I know what's coming.  
I know what to say.  
I have joined, I have remained,  
I am the surface, the whole  
snare of filament.  
But, the light.  
It filters through me, long fingers.  
It follows me, in splinters.

- *Meg Smith*

weak winter sun  
my reflection in your eyes  
one last time

candles lit  
she makes another wish  
in vain

spirit broken  
the bare stumps  
of severed trees

failing light  
how my worries  
fill the darkness

cold shadows  
not even a flicker  
of recognition

somersaults her mind through confusion

alone now  
the last leaf  
clings on

lost in the past  
the sadness  
of shadow play

the broken clasp  
of a favourite necklace  
the bruise on her neck

twilight chill  
your shadow reaches  
under the door

- *Rachel Sutcliffe*



## Fear

Sneaks under shadows lurking  
in corners ready to rear its head  
folded in neat lab reports charting  
white blood cells over edge running wild.

Or hiding along icy roads when  
day ends with sea gulls squalling  
through steel grey skies.

Brake belts wheeze and whine  
snapping apart careening us  
against the long cold night.

Official white envelopes stuffed with  
subpoenas wait at the mailbox.  
Memories of hot words burning  
razor blades slash across our faces.

Fires leap from rooms where twisted  
wires dance like miniature skeletons.  
We stand apart inhaling this mean  
air choking on our own breath.

*-Joan McNeerney*

## suicide sneaks

thru blue bedroom, a chair  
falls across bedspread  
spins along random floor  
i wander up wall hang  
suspended from light bulb

phone rings we speak into  
plastic wire did you know  
how dizzy i am i am i am  
in bathroom blushing curtains  
razor blades near sink

polishing landlady's  
scarred furniture vanity  
table cut in my arm  
how white!

ahhh furnishedbluebedrooms  
insides of existentialessays  
televisionscreens  
something hiding important  
under coils in back of brain  
only this makes me happy  
insects busy night&day  
i hear them.

- *Joan McNerney*

## Eleventh Hour

Wrapped in darkness we can  
no longer deceive ourselves.  
Our smiling masks float away.  
We snake here, there  
from one side to another.  
How many times do we rip off  
blankets only to claw more on?

Listening to zzzzzz of traffic,  
mumble of freight trains, fog horns.  
Listening to wheezing,  
feeling muscles throb.  
How can we find comfort?

Say same word over and over  
again again falling falling to sleep.  
I will stop measuring what was lost.  
I will become brave.

Let slumber come covering me.  
Let my mouth droop, fingers tingle.  
Wishing something cool...soft...sweet.  
Now I will curl like a fetus  
gathering into myself  
hoping to awake new born.

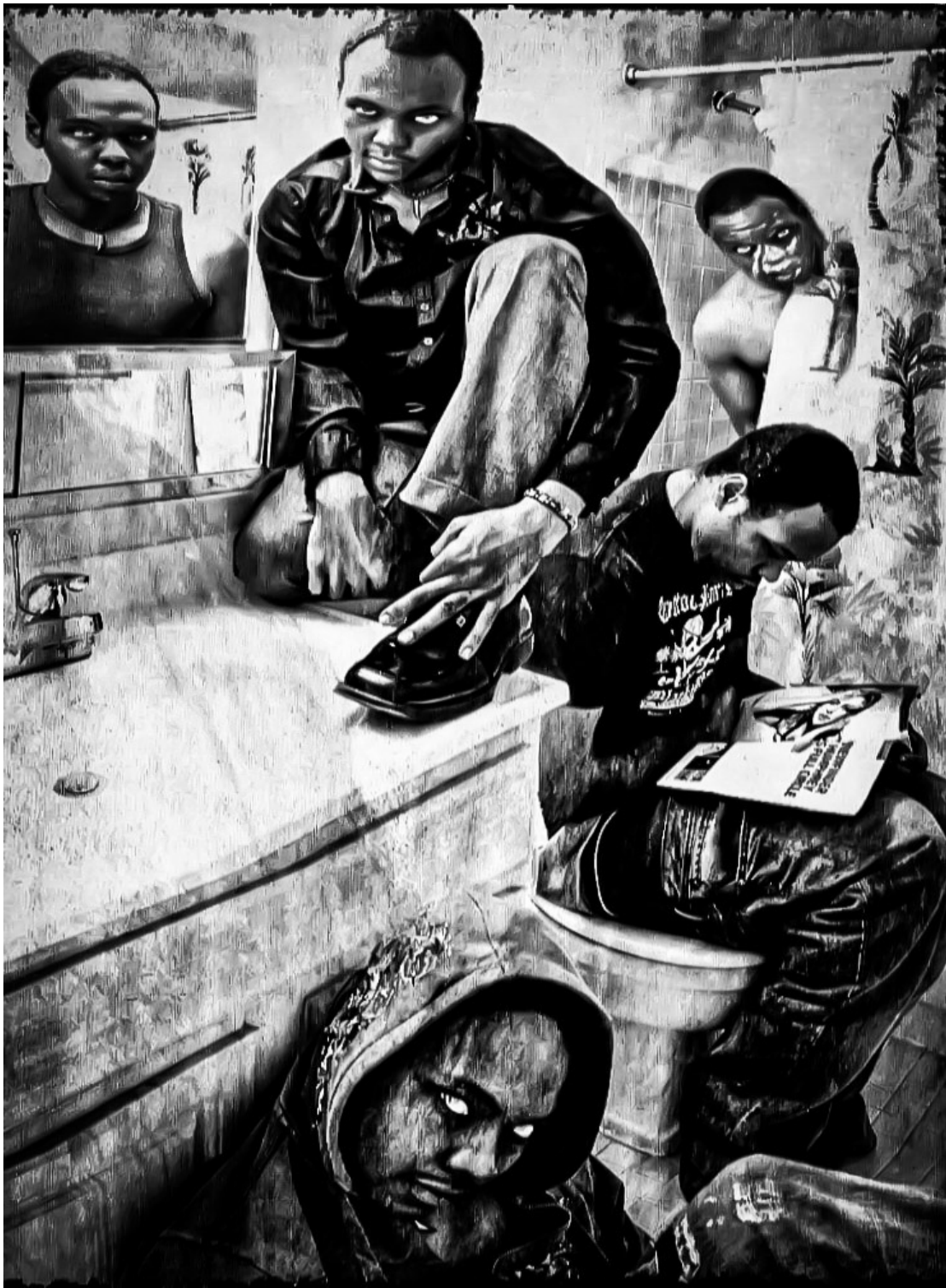
- *Joan McNeerney*



*- Jesse James a.k.a. Djinni*



*- Jesse James a.k.a. Djinni*



*- Jesse James a.k.a. Djinni*



*- Jesse James a.k.a. Djinni*





*- Jesse James a.k.a. Djinni*

## A Time of Night

“I have seen the building drift moonlight through geraniums  
late at night when trucks were few”

W. S Merwin

There's a time of night when bricks and steel  
shimmer into pools: absent,  
iridescent, insubstantial, cold.  
Were you awake then,  
or was it your shadow prowling the ledge,  
looking down at trash cans and cats?  
I felt you move along the walls,  
and I shuddered in my bed, as if a northern wind  
blew down the avenue.  
I thought I wrapped myself in furs,  
but that was a dream, where snow piled up  
almost to the windows.  
Tonight the trucks have gone, their groaning  
like a silence in the street.  
I thought I saw you in moonlight,  
your silver hair burning in the dark.  
I thought you reached for me, long fingers  
stretching across a universe of years.  
You were mirrored by snow, and around your feet  
cats spun and fought for scraps of food.  
Fur and blood, night noises to wake the neighborhood.  
I search, but you are gone, and again the seasons change.  
At the window my eyes sting in gray dawn.  
Buildings melt, slowly drizzling in the grainy light.

- *Steve Klepetar*

## Mask of Ice

Your eyes have grown  
quiet and cold,

your face frozen  
in a mask of ice.

What silence  
prevails here,

what weight  
of emptiness and loss?

Your hands  
are full of wind.

Leaves rustle  
on the lawn

at your feet.  
All around

blank spaces  
where nothing

is written  
or marked.

On a morning  
washed by clouds,

cold morning  
promising change,

you feel  
a trembling

in the light, as though  
sky cracked open,

leaking stars  
onto the worried earth.

- *Steve Klepetar*

## The Rains

The rain came. It was not unexpected. What was more surprising is that it didn't stop. Days turned to weeks and weeks to over a month. What started as a frustrating autumn deluge now turned into something far more alarming. News programmes were filled with meteorologists and climate scientists trying to explain what was going on. Eventually, they were replaced by conspiracy theorists, theologians and clerics. What became known as The Rains compared far more to the Biblical flood than any previous weather event in recorded history, or even suspected from the geological record.

Mud became a part of life. As did not feeling dry. Even after a day in a heated office, there was still an aura of damp around everyone. The economy slowed as highways became harder and harder to travel and the urge to shop was far from the front of people's minds. Churches, however, became filled with prayer and pastors spoke of the need for repentance in the face of divine judgement on the lack of morality that had come to fill the world. Some took this to heart. Others were just looking for something that would explain what was happening. When science comes up blank, older forms of knowledge take its place.

Forty days in, they started to come. Whether we had seen them before, no one really knows. Some talked of Sumerian legends and of a time before humans, or when humans only had dominion over part of the earth. What did become apparent is that people started disappearing.

Most of the disappearances happened on the edges of towns and in rural communities. There was talk of shadows moving in the rain, somewhere between light and dark. They were not like normal shadows but shifted in a certain lumbering way, not appearing entirely of this world, but also not apart from this world. Where they came from, no one knew, nor of their role in The Rains themselves.

Soon, no one would go out alone. Food supplies were starting to dwindle and law and order broke down. The police departments did their best to martial the towns but the fear of law enforcement was less than the fear of them.

After sixty days, the rain stopped. It took much longer for life to go back to normal as earth and even rocks had been shifted by the sheer volume of water, and mudslides had broken some buildings in two. Mud was everywhere. The smell of it. The feel of it.

Some of the dead were found. At least part of them. Lower torsos remained in many cases and identification could occur in a few from footwear and items carried in trouser pockets. Others would have to wait longer for genetic matching.

Everyone had lost someone, and scars took a long time to heal. A new religion took hold of people to pray to older gods for sanctuary if The Rains came again, and to venerate the chthonic forces of the earth that were far more powerful than anyone had imagined. For a time, modern humanity had felt in control but that was no longer the case. A profound

sense of unease began to settle, and people started to wonder whether they were secure in their place on the planet, or remained entirely at the whim of unknown others whose intentions were as hidden as they were.

floodtide  
the soft earth  
reclaims its own

- *Andy McLellan*

old yew branch  
I carve the runes  
into my arm

somewhere  
beyond darkening trees  
the waiting moon

autumn mist  
for a fleeting moment  
I become a ghost

- *Andy McLellan*

## Gathering Diamonds

morning,  
I am alive again  
(window and door,  
curtain and floor)  
wide open vision  
of what is here

out of the dim long past  
comes memory  
song that sings itself  
finding the way  
through passages black and deep  
groping through earth tunnel  
or palace walls  
blind searching in the night  
for something mind glimmering  
I knew was here and treasured  
in the ancient days

now in the corridors of memory  
mind rotates like a gleaming coal afire  
and motion ceases here

figure of darkness  
fossil specter rising  
black and fearsome carbon born  
mind buried ages past  
long have I known you  
and long unknowing prepared

vast earth changes  
wave and glacier  
roar with a mighty  
devastating ease  
mind in a moment knows  
the passing of eons  
washing pebble smooth  
the elemental jewel  
I placed here ages ago

now joy mind's morning  
I am with familiar hands  
gathering diamonds  
and know wind brushed in the night

moonstone and meteor

with fresh born aged eyes  
mind opening vision of the ancient sun  
gift of awakening sight has come  
morning I am alive again

- *Kath Abela Wilson*



## In White Mist

down this night's stairs  
I walk between lines  
hearing your voice  
in the crickets' long sentence

white foam that took you  
rises up with its loud voice to greet me  
I know you are there  
in mist that surrounds me now  
indistinguishable in the dark  
from the sea

I am a tree alone  
shaped by the wind  
leaning off the cliff's edge to greet you

in growing darkness  
tears well up  
but I do not cry

I speak words that you  
more than any other  
intimately have loved and known

there is another  
who has known this mouth  
that is their spring,  
as you have never known,  
has touched deeper  
to that very source  
with passion's tongue

now on this empty beach  
I know this night's fire  
lit by another  
and walk back  
wet with mist  
and do not cry

*-Kath Abela Wilson*

## Since You Are Only

not much can be said  
for drinking the ocean  
from a bent straw  
in the sand

it might work better  
to move a foot closer  
(if you had feet)  
when the vast blueness

turns to white and laps  
toward you  
you must lap back  
you must

even though  
the salt insults your  
unquenchable thirst  
and you have no mouth

even if you are only  
someone's desire  
for artifice  
logical incentive lures you

to the unspeakable edge  
and you wait  
to be taken away  
straw and all

since you are only  
some passerby's  
ephemeral  
intention

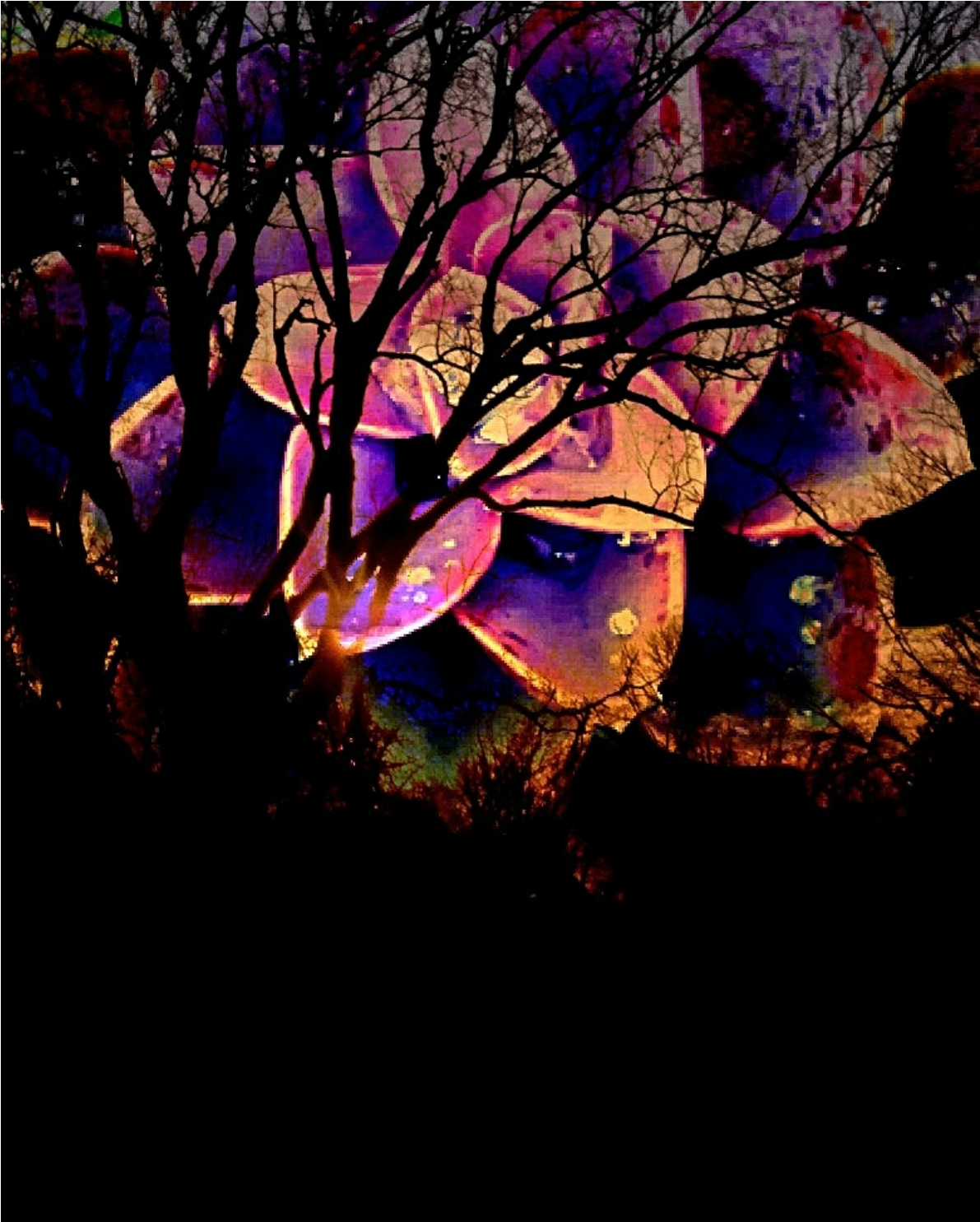
- *Kath Abela Wilson*

## Ties



- *Kenzie King*

## Another Life



- *Kenzie King*

Glo



\*

- *Kenzie King*

**-hell is other people**

jean paul sartre had it wrong. hell is not other people. hell is our own convoluted view of ourselves. what takes us off center is our failure to find out who we really are. once we discover ourselves we can be set for life. oh but until we do that. all we can see are the faults of others. and this is hell for them as well as us.

zendo  
the flies dont land  
on the roshi

- *Michael Rehling*



**-\* a beacon written away**

the old lighthouse is dark now. a ghost light appears on some holidays. most likely kids shining a flashlight beam at the top of the light for the tourists. the metallic ring of a bell in the harbor and the light disappears. a hundred and seventy five years ago the ghost was flesh and blood. the face of the old keeper looks lost now. a statue is all he is. the oil house is gone and there is nothing left to do.

longings  
the way a ships lights  
blink in a storm

*- Michael Rehling*



*the perfection of disorder autumn forest*

- Michael Rehling



## Casting

“And tell me, people of Orphalese, what have you in these houses?  
And what is it you guard with fastened doors?”

The Prophet, Kahlil Gibran

What did I expect, casting runes at these crumbled foundations? What divining did I hope for, turning up my medicine bag of bone shards, willow branch, and crystal on the dirt where I played as a child? What answers linger in this churned and filthy bulldozer mud, once my grandfather's fertile garden, that fed us giant tomatoes, corn sweetness, the greenest peppers? Why be tempted to carry off broken strips of magic bark from the willow my father grew from a sapling, a tree I watched grow from my childhood window? What is under the chunked asphalt where they're leveling this restaurant, where my mother's, mother's home stood for sixty years? Old rusted jacks played with by my grandmother? Can I take this handful of spared creeping phlox to transplant in my yard? Drag my shoes along the rust of this basement's combined heap, the essence of my father's woodwork and aging tools clinging to my heels? This canned food label from my mother's cabinets, is it worth keeping? Why inhale the dirt like I might preserve some hint of a spell they've tried to crush to unrecognizable heaps? Because the message of it is in here still, down in the twisted and crashed mess, wanting a voice if it might be translated from the wreck of it all.

- *Larry D. Thacker*

## Vestiges

How slight the trace of stubborn membrane

persisting in a set of dead-failed eyes, skin  
squinting along edges like some last mote  
of quiet argument, the list of imagined life  
items faded to mixed letters,  
inside and out.

What's managed in remaining breaths,  
gathered from throughout the body's caves,  
with all the rage of wanting life to linger,

sails where it will, up against the cul-de-sac  
of sealed lips, into the constancy of dim eyes.

- *Larry D. Thacker*

## Mistaken

I always claimed to speak with the dead.  
You assumed they spoke back, I think,  
but I never made that claim. They seem  
awfully quiet most of the time.  
It takes a lot to disturb the dead into conversation,  
and I don't know how I feel about that.

But even an old, mute man in a rocker  
on a porch, the one he put together  
with his hands, while his dead wife watched,  
that old man you always nod to  
when driving by on Saturday afternoons,  
can say a lot without saying much at all,  
and that makes me feel a little better.

- *Larry D. Thacker*

## Where Did I Put My Keys?

I first discover I have Alzheimer's disease  
On a Saturday morning when I don't  
Recognize the person in the mirror

I remember it clearly

On the plus side, the panic attacks have stopped  
I don't mind the service dog licking me in the face  
And I can now tolerate my husband and eldest son

I am a better person

True, I need help eating and going to the bathroom  
I can no longer put together a complete sentence  
And everyone looks at me funny

I tell myself to forget about it

At times, I am very frightened - those lucid moments  
Yes, I still have lucid moments and I hear them  
The voices talking about me - talking about me

Then comes the silence and then the noise

- *Michael H. Lester*

## **Munchies Trumps Sex**

The first time I smoke marijuana, nothing happens. Much like the first time I have sex.  
But the next time I smoke marijuana, new worlds open up for me. I wish I could say the same for sex.

he floats  
down an animated hallway  
in warped time . . .  
the Beatles invite him  
into a Yellow Submarine

When the military police visit me after my honorable discharge to ask for names of all the potheads, I refuse. To my astonishment, they leave in peace.

I break up with my girlfriend because she cuts her hair short, and because she agrees to bark like a dog during sex.

the prostitute  
offers the cherry boy  
a free ride . . .  
he inhales and the popsicle melts  
into a useless puddle

- *Michael H. Lester*

## Cometh the Reaper

The surreality of our grandparents' deaths  
Must we go watch grandma die?  
Can't I swirl a hula hoop instead?  
I have homework. Really - a book report

The harsh, grim reality of our parents' deaths  
The anger, the pain, the emaciation  
The medical bills, the tears and funerals  
What can we say? Sure, he was a good man

And now we are old, too, and our children  
Think we smell. We do smell - that much is true  
Haven't they cured cancer yet? I guess not  
I thought they might have by now

Sorry about the clutter

- *Michael H. Lester*

plastic six pack rings  
adorn her funeral pyre...  
death of a mermaid

these strangers...  
ever stranger  
and stranger

bleeding tooth fungus  
rotting in the shadows...  
my garden of fright

- *Pat Geyer*



**A MASKED MARAUDER  
HOLDS UP JACK O' LANTERN...  
CANDLE IN HIS FACE**  
PGG '17

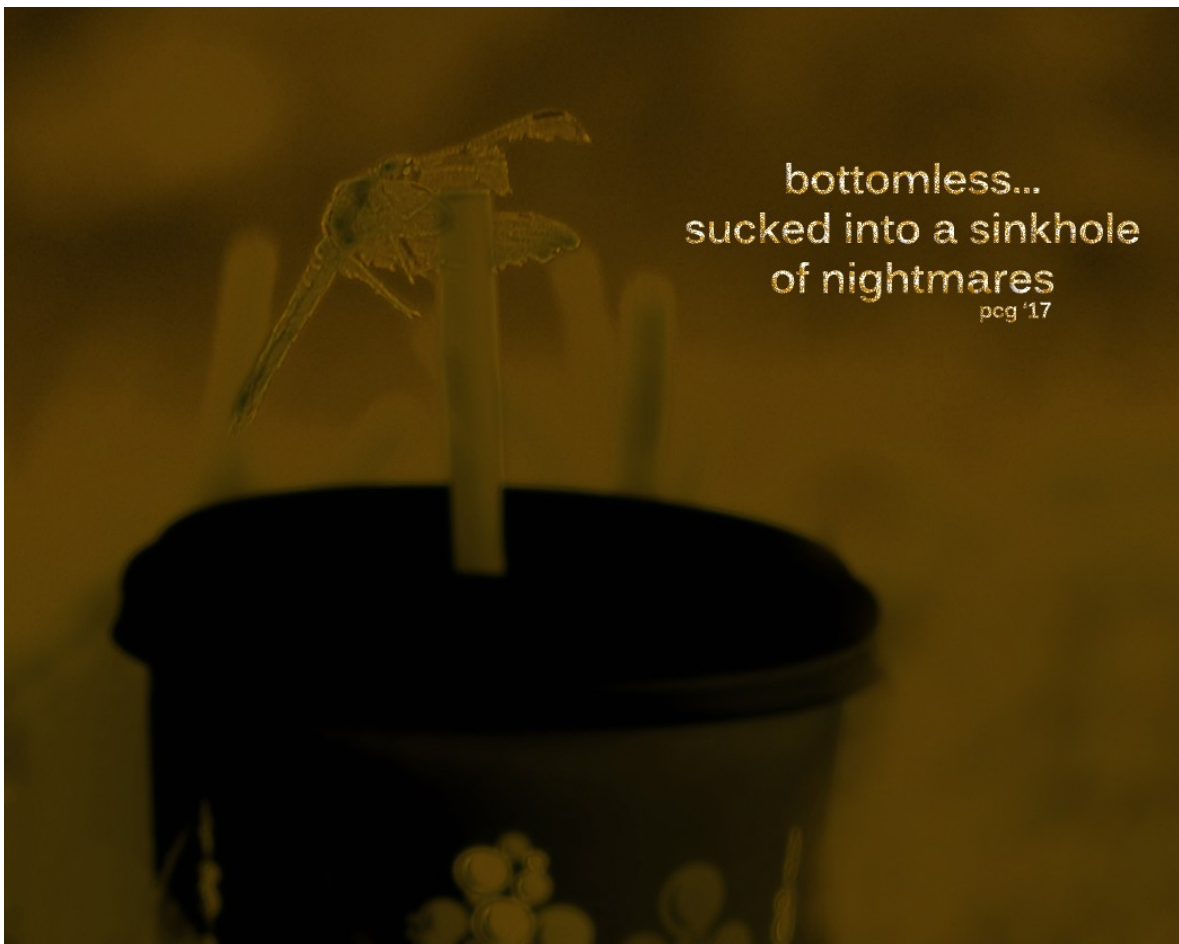
*- Pat Geyer*



*all hallows eve...  
interpretative doodle  
of a corpse flower  
pcg '17*



*- Pat Geyer*



- *Pat Geyer*

## Dream 1

A half woven dream was still-born  
in the dead of night.

She had kicked  
within the womb, and

with her lucid  
eyes, quietly,

she had listened to the  
songs of love,  
and to the poetry I had recited.

I had stringed my child  
a psalm  
with beads of  
colored  
thoughts, and I had  
sewn her cotton  
hopes.

I had  
presumed that my  
chimera would  
spread her  
wings up high,  
beyond  
the hills of  
melancholy.

Yet the forest of her nerves  
coughed  
dissonance,  
fired incessant pleads for air, and  
at midnight, there was  
silence.

She lay cold and dead -- eaten  
up by  
puffs of faceless  
pollution that had  
seeped into my  
blood stream.

I saw my child burn down  
into  
indecipherable ash --

as the rising flames  
of cessation  
devoured her limbs and  
heart.

Then I sat, and I hoped,  
as I stared ahead into  
the dusky gloom

that a phoenix would rise  
from those ashes

to fill the clouds with sparks,  
in a new time  
yet to  
dawn.

– *Fariel Shafee*

## The Witches' Tree

A spring moon exposes every twist and turn on an ancient ash by the ruins of the church wall. Its bough arches over the silver sheen of the pasture; somewhere in the hawthorn thicket, a gravestone rests on its side. I peer over the crumbling brick wall, barbed wire preventing my ingress into the old churchyard.

sleepless  
a midnight breeze  
stirs the owl

Ten minutes pass; the owl continues to call from its distant perch. In ethereal light I make out something shifting in the shadow of the ash. A black figure rises from the ground and slowly shuffles towards me. No facial features are discernible, but a long cloak and wide brimmed hat are just visible in the moonlight.

restless  
in an unmarked grave  
skull worms

The faceless figure's pace quickens across the scruffy tussocks. Turning to run, I'm held in place by an invisible force, hostage to the will of the approaching menace. My struggle is futile; the witch-finder is at the wall.

cold hands  
around my throat  
foul breath in your lungs

Tap, tap, tap. The blue tit hammers at the windscreen. Tap, tap, tap. Sunlight streams through the glass, piercing tired eyes. The night's devilry fresh in my mind, I start the engine and leave this coven of clover.

ligature marks  
I adjust my necklace  
in the rear-view mirror

- *Tim Gardiner*

## The Ducking Stool

We meet at midnight by the ducking pond; both of us know the importance of the trial we are about to undertake. You climb onto the ducking stool and I gently lower it into the water. Reflected on the surface, a thousand stars surround your beautiful black hair as it disappears into the depths.

air bubbles  
my heart sinks  
with yours

Diving in I find you lifeless, slumped on the stool. As I throw my arms around you, your brown eyes open and a slight smile graces the grey. Gradually we float upwards still holding each other close, lips locked together.

harvest moon  
do wild hearts  
pass the test

- *Tim Gardiner*

## the Beast

by Long Tom on the moor I stood  
the wind was howling down the rails -  
was it the wind or the black beast  
of those dark ancient tales?

the snarling Black Shuck of Norfolk  
the rabid Beast of Bodmin Moor  
wild places tell of the wild dog  
huge, frothing at the door

it's foolish to ignore the Beast  
or write him off as ancient myth  
he is the gravest sin that roams  
the roads of light-blind earth

you ignore him at your peril  
the dark side gathers 'round your feet  
in grey shadow, until, too late  
he bites, you bleed ....

- *Joy McCall*



- Debbie Strange



r a v e n i n g . . .  
those impossible years  
when we devoured  
all this life had to offer  
as if it were our last



words/image © DStrange

- *Debbie Strange*

Phobos and Deimos the inscrutable moons



of Mars

- *Debbie Strange*

## Salvation

I lay myself down  
on an altar of bones  
a sacrificial offering  
to the gods of greed

From the chandelier above  
wax covered skulls stare down  
at me through vulture eyes  
as candle flames dance  
in the faint draft

Crimson stained tablets  
stacked nearby with  
disassembled skeletal  
remains neatly arranged  
among tools of torture

A death knell rings out  
as the black robed presider's  
chant resonates throughout

What ghoulish nightmare  
have I encountered?

There is no salvation  
as I join the ossified ruins  
of past lives and become one  
with the altar of bones

- *Ann Christine Tabaka*

## Red Sky

Red skies, blue promises  
I remember you  
when the lilacs were in bloom,  
you held out your hand

I was lost in your history  
of castles and white knights,  
begging for another caress,  
only to be discarded

Dragged through the darkness  
like a frightened child,  
the ocean called to me by name  
I answered with a sigh

Like so many dandelion seeds  
I was scattered adrift,  
nothing left to give,  
but a red sky

- *Ann Christine Tabaka*

## He Can No Longer See

He can no longer see  
he is blind  
not the physical blindness  
that comes from illness or age  
but a blindness of spirit  
blinded to the truth  
blinded to all beauty  
groping in the darkness  
of his own personal disease  
feeling his way through life  
a life that is desiccated and crumbling  
dying of his own want  
a greed that is all encompassing  
he once had eyes  
but they are useless now  
he gouged them out himself  
years ago  
now he wanders aimlessly  
through the wasteland of the damned

- *Ann Christine Tabaka*

almost sunrise  
feather of a she-demon  
in my dream catcher

her voice moving the curtain moonwards

*-Roman Lyakhovetsky*

attempting invisibility



kris moon

in the cage i once thought of  
as home

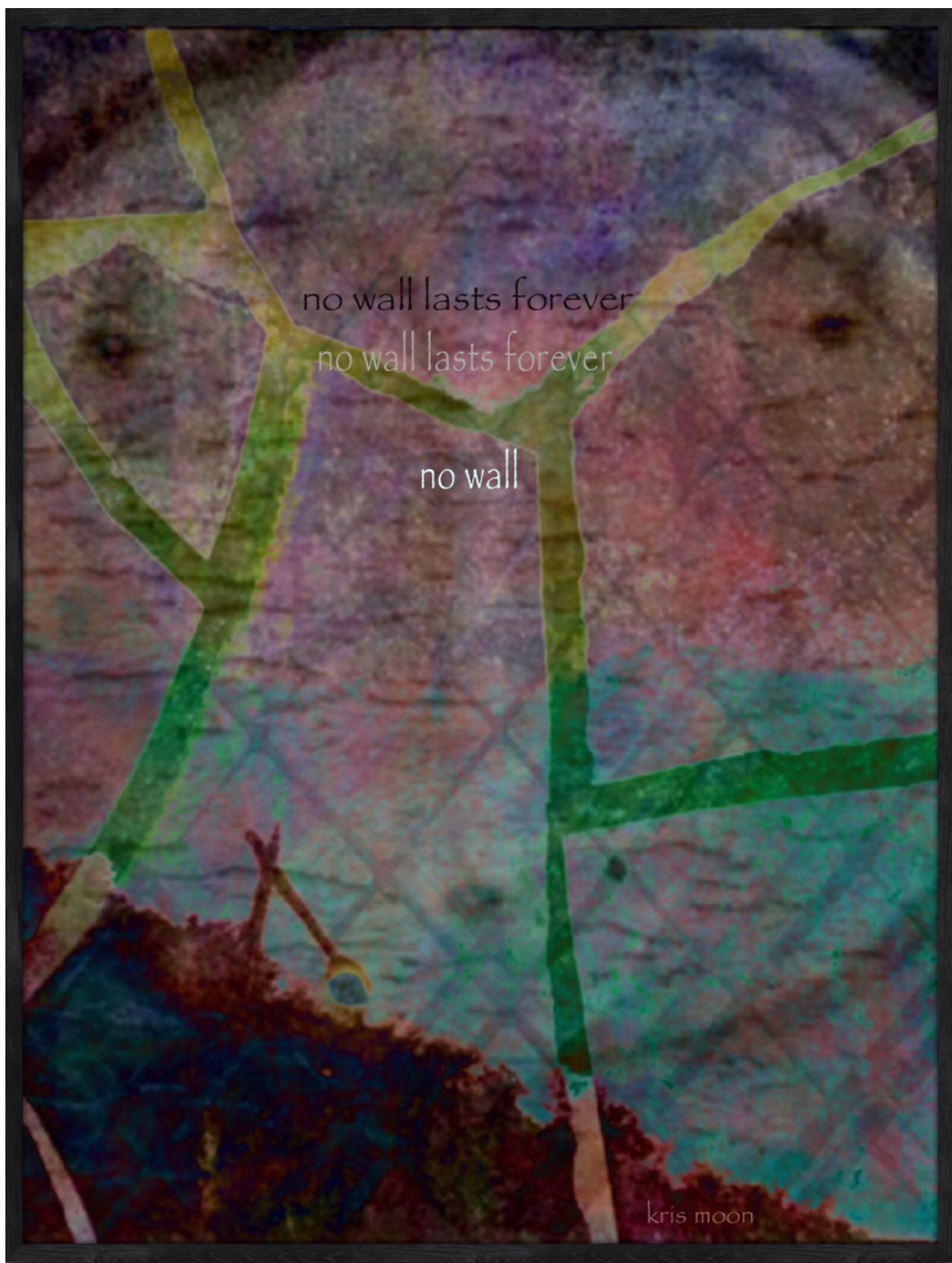
- *Kris Moon*





- *Kris Moon*



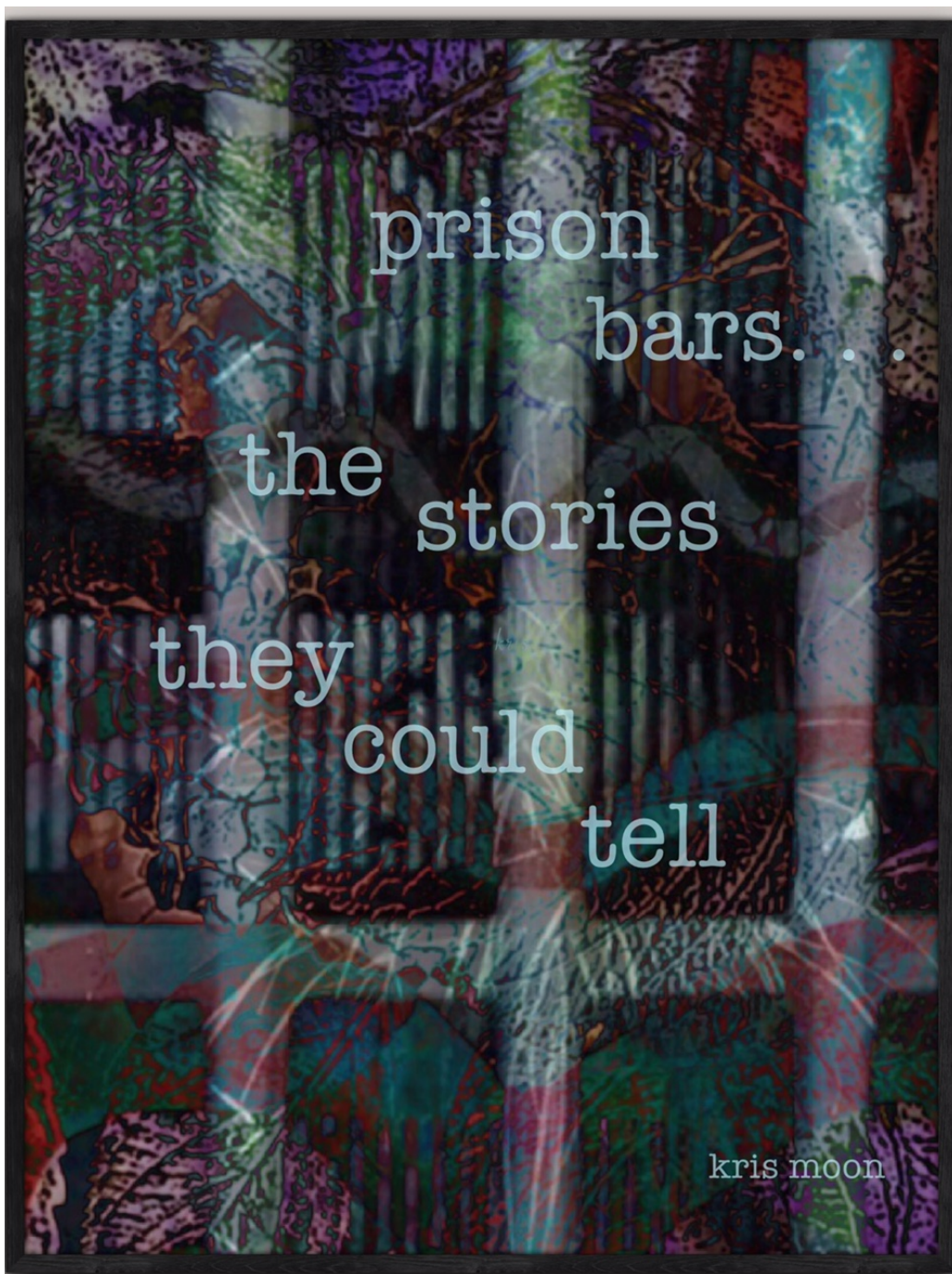


- *Kris Moon*



- Kris Moon





- *Kris Moon*

waiting for the dealer  
an opossum  
crosses this dark alley

cool breeze  
I take another  
long drag

fallen leaves  
strewn across the road  
someone's cat

new tattoo  
another part of me  
covered up

- *Gabriel Bates*

## Empty Houses

The road trip was dead silent this time. Those two years lasted forever.

He said we're going back home, I said my body is tired of making homes out of empty houses.

My final place with him was drafty and small. I'm moving out, but I'm done trying to find home.

All I can remember is how my father's chokehold blossomed into warm embrace.

rainsoaked earth  
the thin line between  
love and hate

- *Gabriel Bates*

## STEPMOTHER

saw me (broken mirror)  
hated me briefly  
wanted me to be not

changed her mind  
wanted me to be back  
thin hungry her shadow

birthed anew  
candid sails  
ready to take the sea

(I'm the chain  
the anchor  
the stone)

- *Toti O'Brien*

## CRAZY

She's gone crazy  
thoughts never stop rolling

started suddenly  
mid-afternoon

her mind  
skipped a beat

then  
started humming lullabies

language  
still  
unknown

- *Toti O'Brien*

## Anne

Her untamed rancor and humor laced with vitriol  
at other's expense, made her a popular dinner guest  
with all but former lovers miscast as impotent swans  
she'd happily drown collectively or alone by the sea.  
Where her end was a smear between weather accounts  
on that day's news, the reporter almost as emotionless  
as she dazed , drunk and clutching a morass of pills  
the image I have when my minds eye clicks to shut  
any truths or cogent facts when only ifs are literal.  
No one saw her end, though she left puzzling notes  
jangling poems of snark- she dared us to complete  
a map to find her among fauna and skeleton keys  
I still swim in that beach , once or twice I've felt  
her cold fingers on my spine pushing me under.

- *Rp Verlaine*



## The Gold Ring

Even as the beatings at home got worse  
I took them, never so much as crying out  
covering my face to prevent bruises and cuts  
fathers aftershave lingering in the room  
after he did his work with belt and fists.  
Only sixteen yet I dared not to fight back  
even as I mastered the art of the squared circle  
the boxing ring where I had promise they said.  
Entering my first tournament to win a medal  
easy knockouts came in the first two fights.  
The medal was mine till father came home drunk  
cutting my face a blow aided by a gold ring  
pouring blood I was robbed of my victory  
won in attacking father and breaking his jaw.

- *Rp Verlaine*

**matriarchy**

she tells me  
the size of his penis  
hello puberty

breakfast with grandma  
the trust fund  
stays open

ballet every day  
her pipe dreams  
in me

playing Brahms  
her sincerity  
off-key

ptsd  
the echo  
of her laughter

french tipped nails  
waiting in line  
behind her priorities

nakedness  
I always knew  
they were fake

daily backrubs  
she teaches me  
how to moan

personality disorder  
I cannot escape  
her shadow

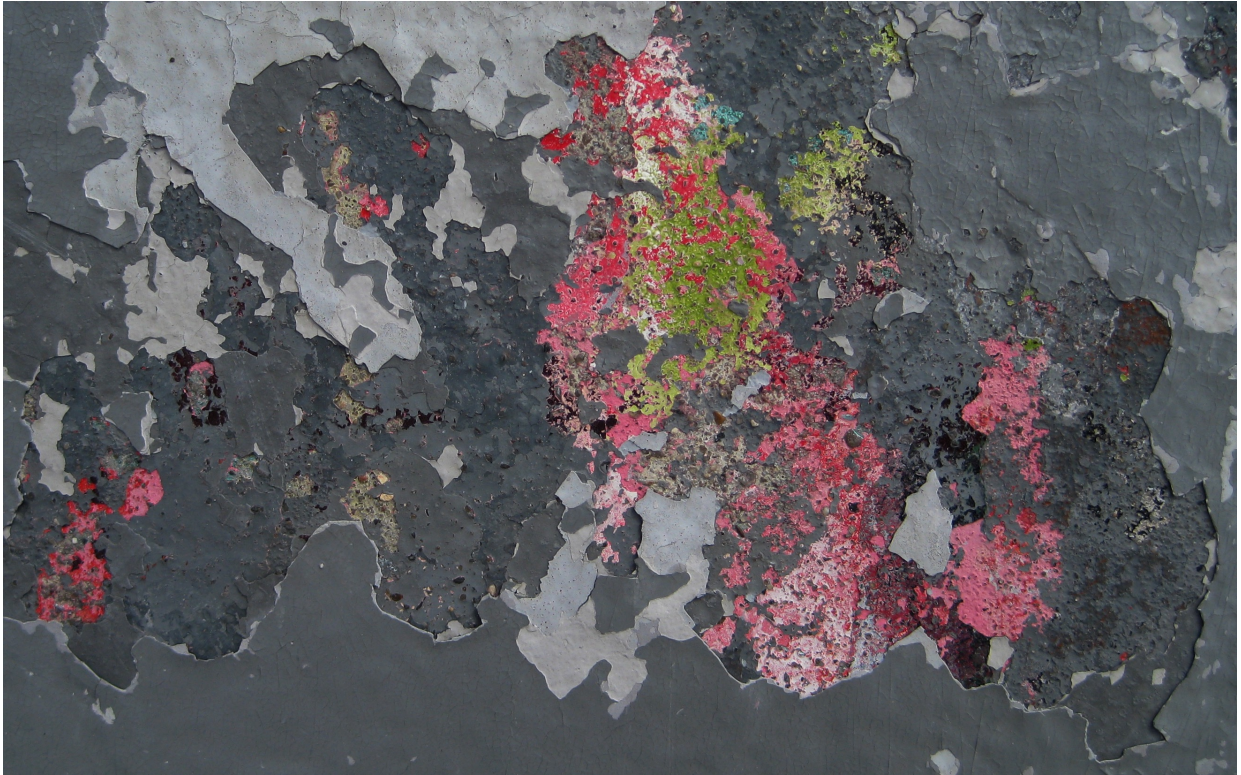
post mortem  
my children  
out of her reach

- *Tia Haynes*

## Summer Sings No More

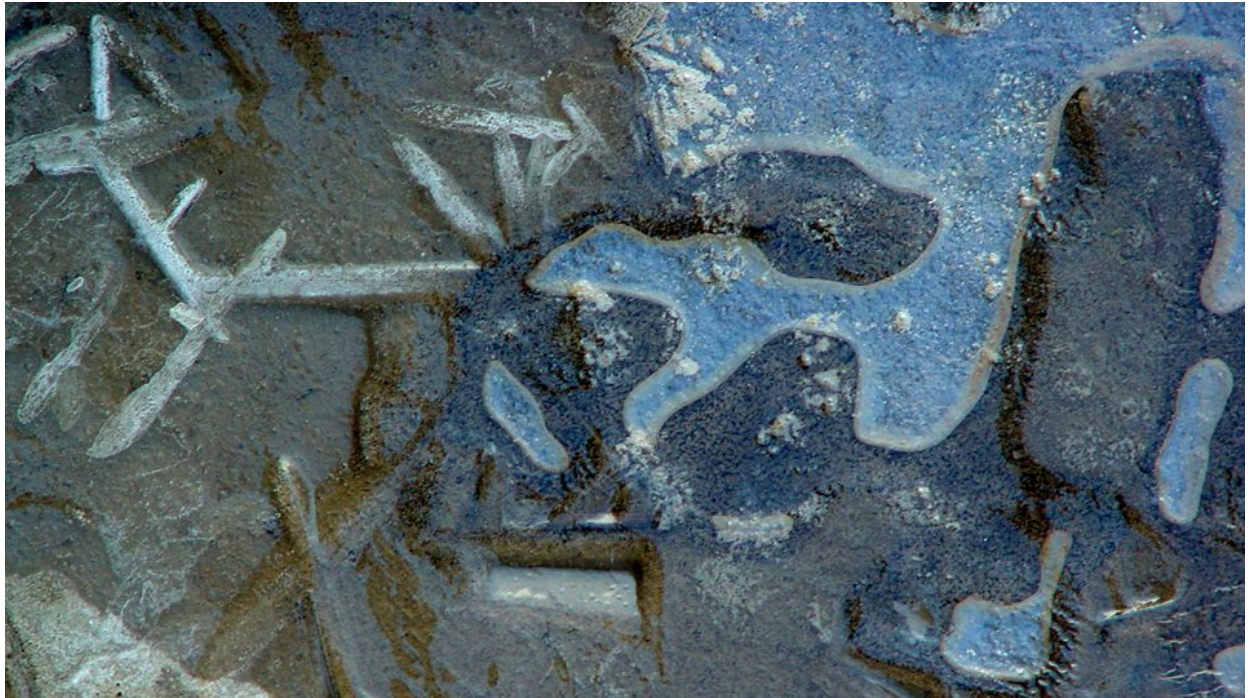


- *Steve Hodge*



- *Steve Hodge*





- *Steve Hodge*

vomit stains still  
stuck between the floorboards  
last suicide attempt

jagged pills  
the bad taste left  
in my mouth

forced into  
my father's dirty bath water  
he screams "Scrub!"  
I cry, I cry

hung in a Jesus Christ pose scarecrow

hotel vacancy  
he snorts cocaine  
off my ass

- *Veronika Zora Novak*

## Cards

We sat on the floor of my dusty bachelor suite playing cards, listening to the radio. She told me of the “rank old guy” she lived with upstairs. It had been months since I tossed the couch with the sharp springs in the middle out. It had been months since I started getting stoned on pharmaceuticals.

the pipes on the ceiling  
were curling fingers  
were snakes  
that turned into smoke  
and long walks

- *Marshall Bood*



## RESURRECTION

Breathing like so, she walked herself  
stupid today, long steps hunched  
on shoal of boulders, carrying  
the shape of her ghost. It was late,  
and she feared rain coming,  
going chug-chug downward these  
hungering isles, as if season last  
has practiced for the annihilation  
she has suffered. Look, she will walk  
then walk to know the world  
less of trees and seas, crossing  
resurrection from the pressure of leaves,  
of Northern breeze loved her fist-like.  
Until she paled to fetal strands,  
head thrown back in crisp apple scent;  
the curve of death curving white  
and glittered life, heaving her young  
weight in the dust she left behind,  
a nothingness as if pressed by stones.

- *Lana Bella*

## MIDNIGHT AUSPICES

Her strokes woke to the fog of  
sere blitz, learning in that  
instant of cold, of dark curves  
swelling like cabled lengths  
across the sightless sun. Not  
so much as a slant of bone  
delivering earth into itself, only  
stingers of black-veined wings  
leavened from night turned  
crisp, fallowed in a land other-  
wise refused even in moonlight.  
These were bare days, shape  
leaning hard pruning aches on  
cement, shaking loose aspen  
lines a weeping girl must make  
of fracture. Eyes abstract just  
north of melancholy chest as  
nocturnes stanch the opened  
mouth, drowsing to the drone  
of a thousand hornets-make.

- *Lana Bella*

## monster

I invented a monster to make it easier  
I invented a big ugly monster  
slimy and serpentine  
scaly and sharp-clawed  
and I personified an illness  
I wouldn't have diagnosed.

It got into my mind  
and it flicked all the switches  
It switched all the flitches  
mismatched all my wires  
and chewed at my cables  
sparks sparked  
and set fires  
things burned  
and things broke

It killed my controller  
It destroyed my autopilot

Have you ever tried to maintain a human?  
There isn't a manual  
Isn't a guide book  
To be consulted

I had to write one.

When someone asks you a question  
You have to reply  
When someone who is your friend  
tells you something they think is interesting  
you have to care  
because you normally would care  
but now you don't care  
because you're not sure if your friend  
is really a person  
because there's a fire behind your eyes  
and you're watching the screen  
so blankly,  
taking in the outside  
without processing.  
**YOU HAVE TO SAY:**  
'How interesting!'

And not too loud!  
You have to smile now.  
Stop sinking into the ground!  
You can't do that.  
You have to keep pretending.  
Till you fix those fitches, those glitches,  
those wires and switches.  
Till you've killed the monster.  
You have to keep going.

- *Joanna Harker*



*- Joanna Harker*

revising her past  
his name defaults  
to Prick

### 3 Deaths – Tanka Sequence

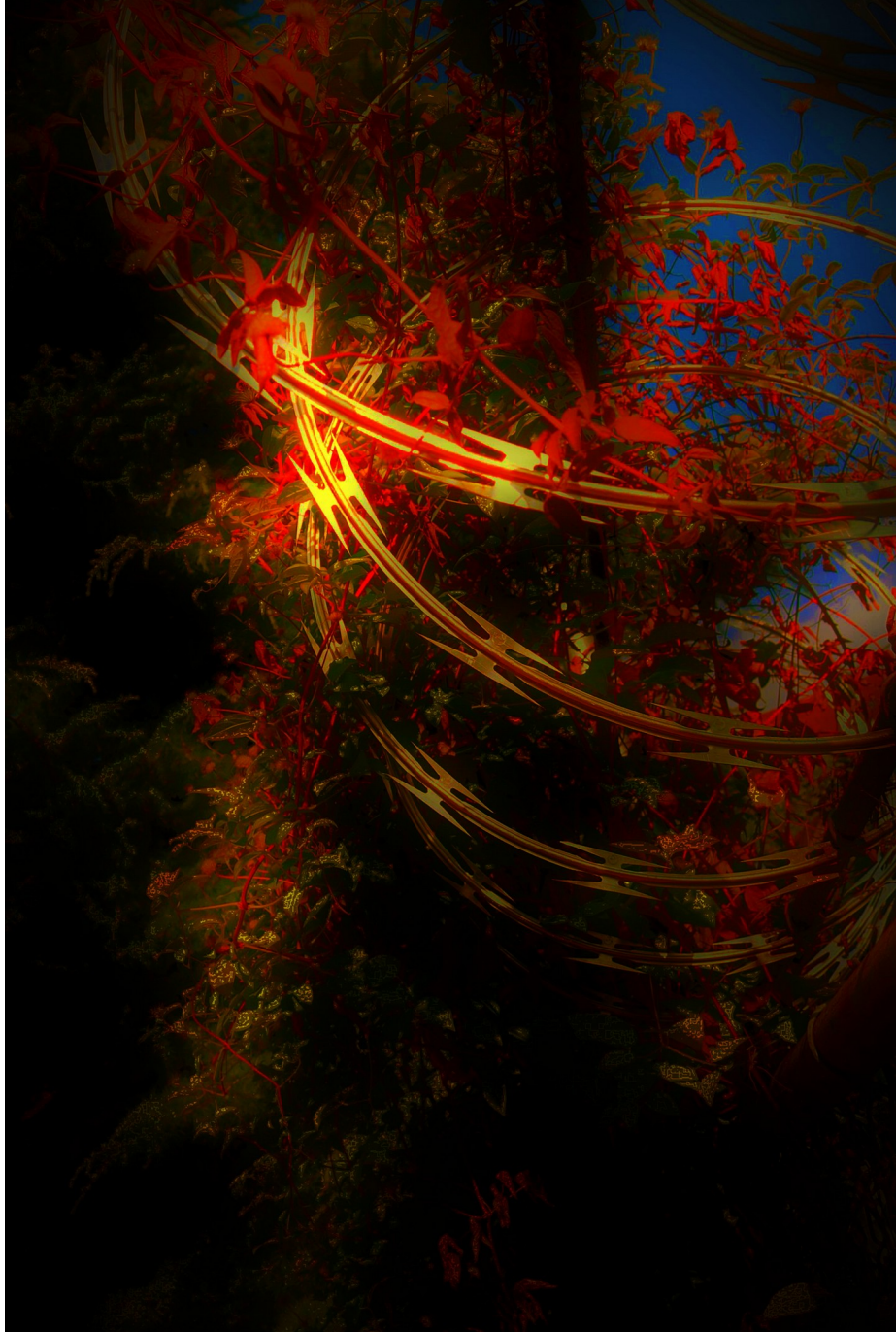
wiping the pen  
as if covered  
in blood  
you die again  
in so many words

beyond a rock  
and a hard place  
his body  
now grist  
for the mill

good for nothing  
not even compost  
the roses  
dead on the vine  
where you're planted

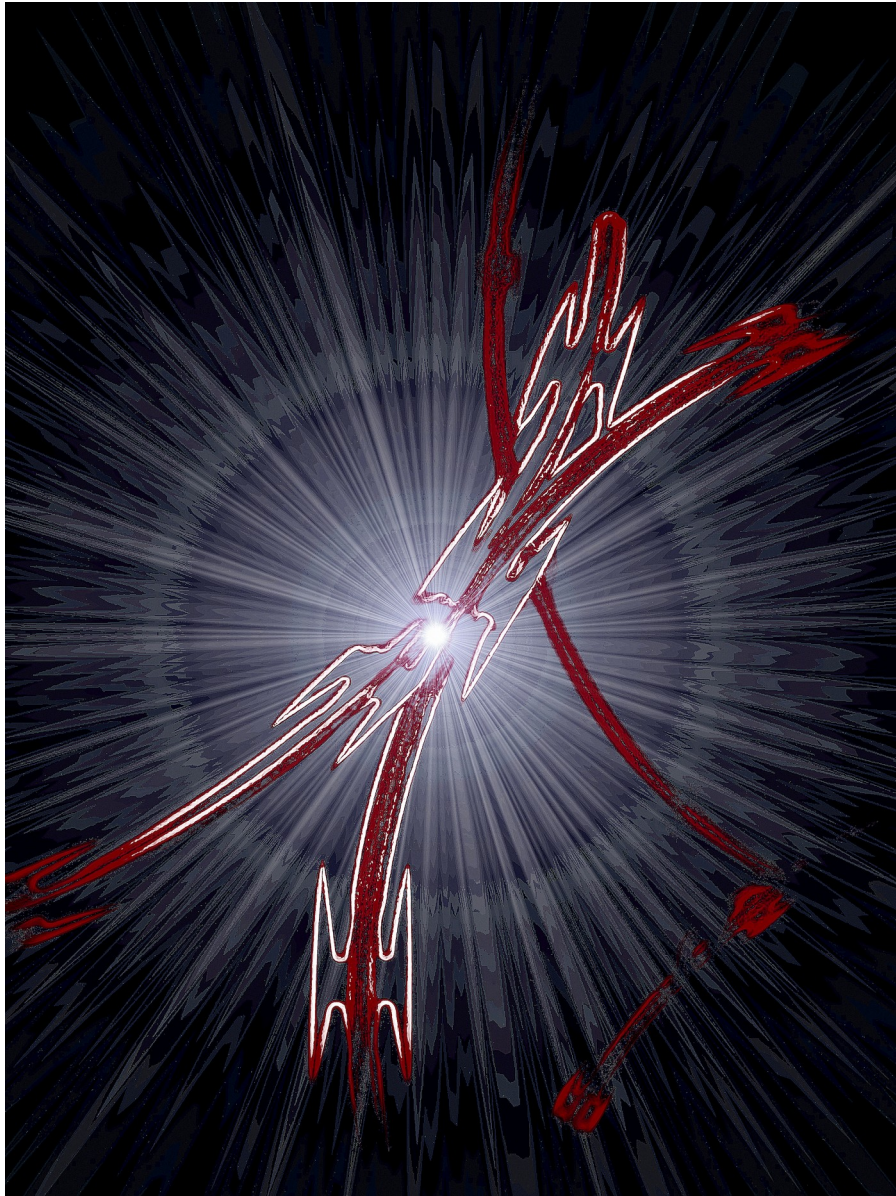
– *Peter Jastermsky*

The Color In Pain  
Series



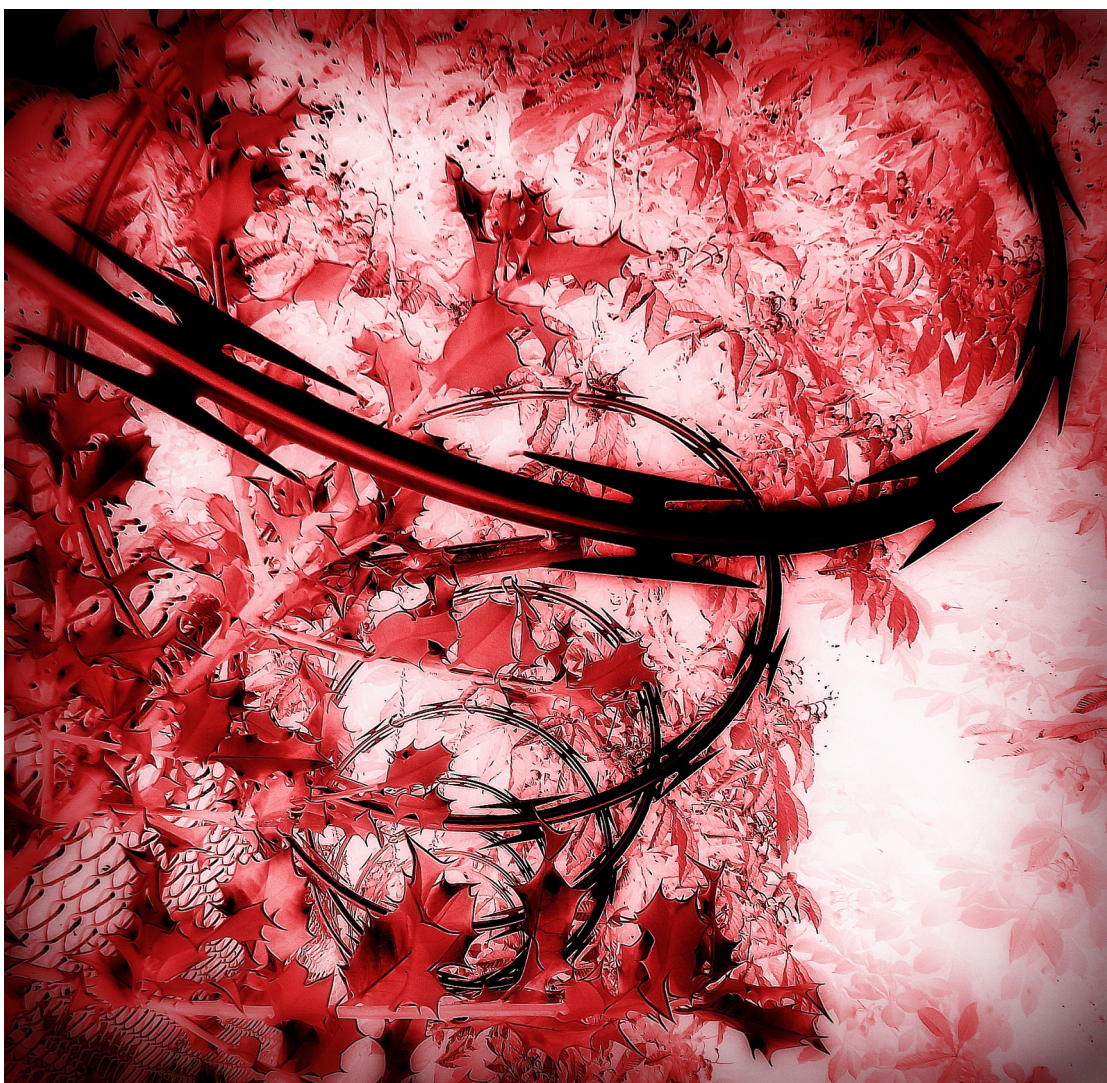
- *K. Ryan Gregory*





- *K. Ryan Gregory*





- *K. Ryan Gregory*



- *K. Ryan Gregory*

autumn sky  
a swirl of red  
in the syringe

summer stars  
an eel slides towards  
my nightmare

- *Stephen Toft*

## THE DECK

osteoporosis	hearing loss	Parkinson's Disease
THE FRAYING DECK CONTAINS A MOTLEY, MEDICAL CAST OF CARDS.		
	tooth decay	

osteoporosis	hearing loss	Parkinson's Disease
cholesterol	hypertension	surgery
THE MATURING DECK ENCOMPASSESS EVER-VARYING DEALS FOR ALL.		
	tooth decay	
	diet restrictions	

osteoporosis	hearing loss	Parkinson's Disease
cholesterol	hypertension	surgery
diabetes	edema	vision deterioration
THE GRAYING DECK NEVER RUNS OUT, NEVER RUNS LOW.		
	tooth decay	
	diet restrictions	
	arthritis	

osteoporosis	hearing loss	Parkinson's Disease
cholesterol	hypertension	surgery
diabetes	edema	vision deterioration
joint replacement	Alzheimer's Disease	cancer
THE AGING DECK HOLDS WHICH UNWELCOMED HAND FOR ME?		
	tooth decay	
	diet restrictions	
	arthritis	
	prescriptions	

Valentina Ranaldi-Adams





a child asks why  
he never touches her ...  
speckled petal

clv

- Christine L. Villa

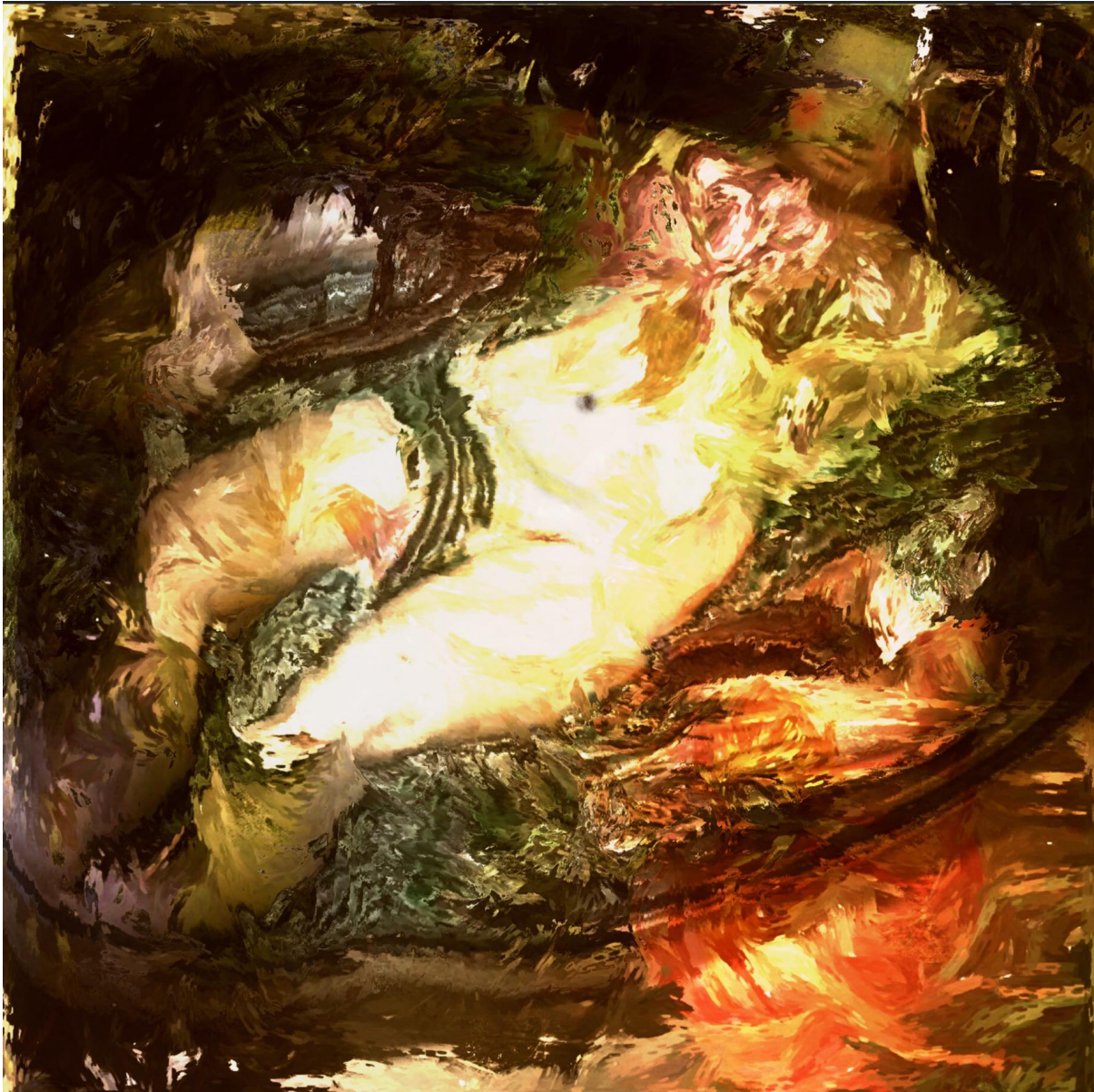
grandpa  
sneaks into her bedroom  
blood moon

gunshot  
in the house next door  
ever the quiet man

shapeshifting fog...  
ghosts of dead sailors  
ride on my bow

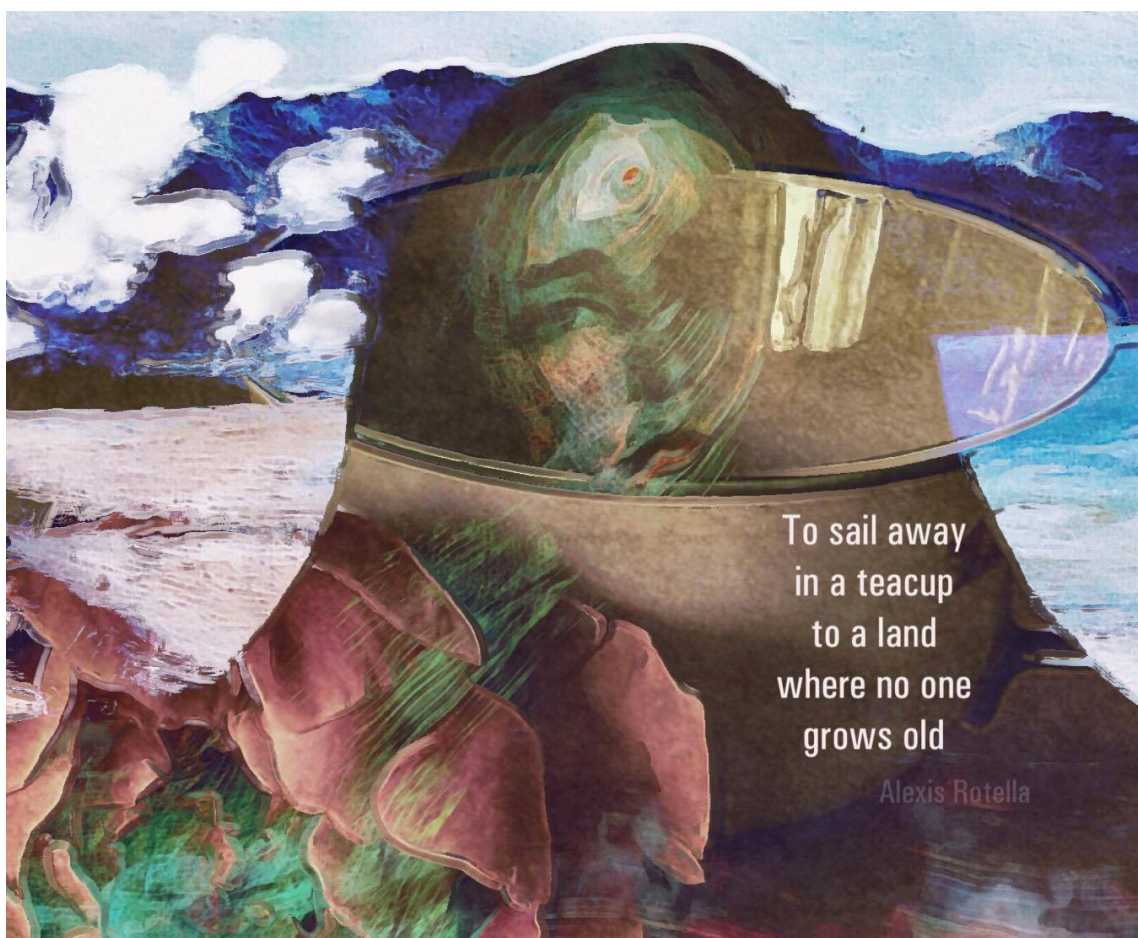
- *Pris Campbell*

## Resting in the Woodland



- *Alexis Rotella*





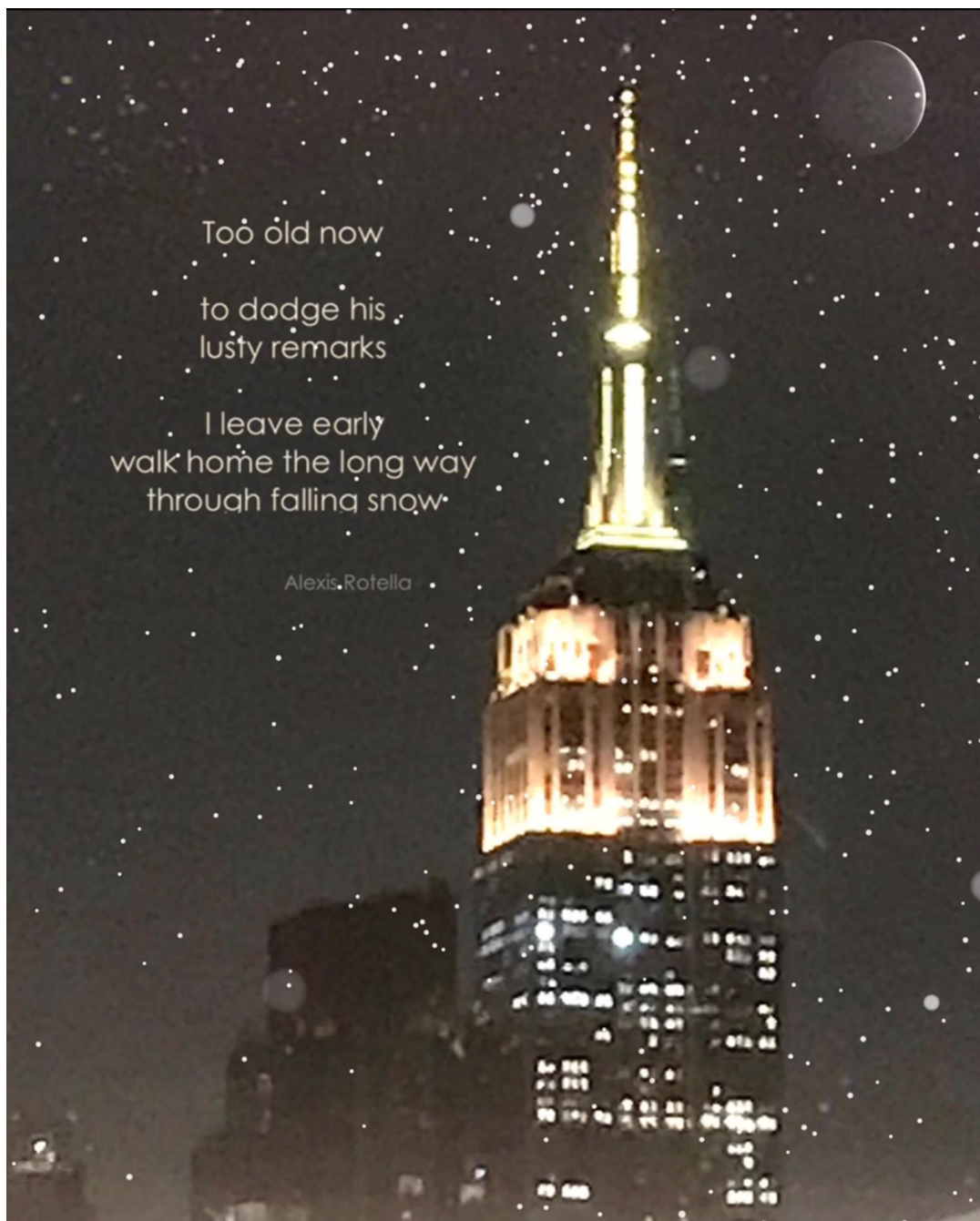
- *Alexis Rotella*



## Looking For Civilization



- *Alexis Rotella*



Too old now  
to dodge his  
lusty remarks  
  
I leave early  
walk home the long way  
through falling snow

Alexis Rotella

- *Alexis Rotella*





In the snow  
a discarded rose  
the beauty of endings

Alexis Rotella

- *Alexis Rotella*



- Chase Gagnon



- Chase Gagnon





- Chase Gagnon

## Safe Space

He grounded me for everything. Whispering at the table. Crying. Wetting the bed. It wasn't your typical grounding where you can't play with friends or you get the PlayStation cables taken away. I had to live in my room and the only reason I was allowed out was to shower, but he insisted on monitoring me. Said it was to make sure I wasn't "playing around". Dinner was served in my room. Sometimes only cheese and crackers, and if I was lucky, a few slices of pepperoni. My room became my safe space. It was the only home I knew and even now, sixteen years later, I still find it hard to leave.

voyeurism  
even the moon  
has eyes

- *Lori A Minor*



## Not Your Masterpiece

They say a picture's worth  
a thousand words,  
but I've painted you mine  
a hundred times  
and you're still not listening.  
I am a beautiful abstract painting  
and you're in love with the colors,  
but not the design.  
There are parts of me you don't like-  
little pieces you can't help but reject.  
If I cease to exist,  
would you call me selfish  
or selfless?  
Would you feel at ease  
because I'm no longer  
one more expense  
on your receipt?  
Am I truly worth more  
than material value?

- *Lori A Minor*

## Redemption



- *Lori A Minor*

## Announcements

*ME TOO Anthology: Call for Poems*

*Edited by Alexis Rotella*

Extended Deadline February 15, 2018

Here's your chance to share experiences about sexual harassment and abuse. This anthology is open to everyone regardless of sex, but all poems must be written in haiku (no five seven five please unless you're one of the few who has mastered the 17-syllable form), senryu, tanka, tanka prose, haibun or cherita forms. No exceptions. Submit no more than five published or unpublished poems at one time. Please do not send in attachment form. If poems are published, please send credits.

Poems must be high caliber, well crafted. Anonymous poems and pen names okay, if that is the only way you'll consider sharing. I'm looking for honest experiences, not cleverness. If feelings are vague, chances are the poems will be, too. I have received numerous submissions that talk about feelings and while emotion is the tether cord of a poem, there's nothing like imagery and specifics to bring the experience alive. Please write in the present tense. I cannot write your story for you; if you're having a difficult time sharing, perhaps a writer-friend can assist.

Submit to : [akrotella@gmail.com](mailto:akrotella@gmail.com) (In subject line, write ME TOO)

*Brevis - a journal of short poetry and prose from Wales and beyond*

*Edited by Karen Harvey*

Seeking submissions of short poetry and prose for the launch of the first issue of our online literary journal which will be published 3 times a year.

Poetry: haiku, senru, tanka, kyoka, cherita, englyn, fibonacci, freestyle, any other poems 10 lines or less and/or up to 4 works of Prose: haibun, micro fiction, mini memoir, potted wisdom and more. Be creative, surprise me. I have quite eclectic tastes.

There is no theme for our first issue and I don't mind work that has been published before providing you let me know where so that we can acknowledge it. I would be very happy to post bi-lingual work.

Please send your submissions by the 27th Dec, preferably sooner to [brevisliteraryjournal@writeme.com](mailto:brevisliteraryjournal@writeme.com)

## **Titles From Misfitbooks Press**

### **Taking Flight by Gabriel Bates**

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### **Radical Women: A Book of Femku**

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