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Scryptic *Magazine of Alternative Art and Literature*

Issue 2.1

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Dear readers and contributors,

Welcome to issue 2.1! With over 150 pages of art spanning multiple genres, this is the biggest issue of Scryptic to date. If you follow us on social media, you know that we're going to be implementing a few changes in our second year of publishing. The biggest change is moving into a bi-monthly publication schedule, meaning Scryptic will be published six times a year instead of four. Our main reason for doing this is the steadily increasing number of submissions we receive each period, and with all honesty, we've had to reject quite a few fantastic pieces that are more than worthy of being published simply because we can't fit everything we like into one issue. It is our hope that by publishing bimonthly, Scryptic will become a more inclusive platform for artists and writers to share their darkest musings that would otherwise have a difficult time finding a home simply because of their content. We're also expecting the issues to be noticeably smaller because of this, offering a more intimate reading and viewing experience.

The other change we're going to implement is with our print issues. We have decided to publish print issues in black and white and color. This is all for you guys! This way, if you'd like to continue purchasing print editions in color, awesome! Go for it! However, for cost efficiency, we will also provide issues in black in white. This will cut the cost in half so that people with a limited budget will have access to a tangible copy!

Also, if you haven't heard, we are curating art and literature for a new anthology titled Group Therapy. Guidelines for this collection will be on the last page of this issue.

We really hope you enjoy issue 2.1!

All the best, Chase and Lori

Just An Unhinged Lunatic Howling At The Moon

On a moonlit late night
I sat in a bar
Drinking drams of demented, fermented dream dew
Just an unhinged lunatic
Dreaming of howling at the full moon

Watching the world walk by Looking at all the fine looking babes Walking by the street Thinking wild, erotic thoughts Of endless wild libertine passions

When into the bar
Walked the most beautiful women
In the Universe
So wild, so free
So wonderfully alive

I did not know what to do As this vision of delight Sauntered through the bar In a skin tight leather pants Looked so fine That my eyeballs hurt

And finally I had to say something
So I gathered up my manly courage
And walked up to her
And she looked at me
And instantly bewitched my soul
With a devilish grin
I lost all reason
And became a raving lunatic
Unhinged lunatic
Howling at the moon

Foaming at the mouth A wild, free werewolf Howling at the lunatic light Of the full Moon

– Jake Cosmos Aller

God's Confession

I was sitting along In a god forsaken bar Somewhere on the lunatic fringes Of society

On the bad part of town Over by railroad tracks Heading to hell As fast as I could drink it down

Enjoying my lonely drink
Drinking by my lonesome self
With my partners
Jimmy Dean, and the Walker brother
And his old Granddad
Just drinking and hanging
With the Jack Daniel's gang

A crazed bum
With a thousand year stare
Walks up to me

He begins Muttering to himself Nutty nonsense Crazy words In a lunatic's voice

He had the look
Of one possessed
By his own demons
That only he can see
Or hear
Possessed by a secret knowledge
Only he knew

Despite myself I was fascinated By this lunatic's tale

So I stopped him And said So what's your game Anyway

The short little dude Stopped his insane prattle Starting at me With that thousand year old stare

Just another washed up Lunatic Too many drugs Too many bad nights On the wrong side of life

He looked at me And proclaimed his story

He reared up
And filled up the room
And lifted the bar
On his finger
And stared down at me
From the sky

And said
Since you asked
I am God
The alpha and Omega
The real deal
The original dude of dudes
The sultan of Swing
God of hosts
And father of that Jesus dude

But no one knows me
Any more
No one cares
They think I am irrelevant
They think I am dead
They think I am a fairy tale
From some olden, ancient time

Some say I am dead Others think I should be dead That my work is done

I looked at him
Carefully now
And what did I see
An old man
With that lunatic look
But there was something else

He was crazy Sure yes But perhaps he was the real deal

I mean why not
Why would not God be
A lunatic wandering around loose
Talking to low lives like me
In a bar
On the way to hell

So I looked at him And invited him to share His tale of woe

God tells me Well, it's like this

Many a year ago
People believed in me
But one day
They quit believing in me
And they went on without me

As they left me My powers got weaker and weaker And so eventually I became What you see today

A broken down drunk
Hanging out
Looking for a hand out
Looking for some company
Or at least a free dinner

And he laughed and laughed And I looked at him And saw the beginnings of the end And the ends of the beginnings

I saw a million planets
Flash by
A billion people
A trillion sentient beings
Thinking all at once
Thoughts filled my head
Lights flashed
And I knew
He was telling the truth

But it did not matter In this day and age Of materialism

God has no role God is truly dead And so I bought him a drink And walked out of the bar Profoundly sadden by what I had seen

God was dead And we had all conspired To kill him

Long live God

– Jake Cosmos Aller



– Syd Little, age 11



– Syd Little, age 11



– Syd Little, age 11

suicide note mist gathers around the street light

sleepless night a train drags the sun into my day

– Bee Jay

Outside In

revival service the way words fall into our wallets

altar call I check the dip of my neckline

demonic oppression my statements turn to questions

laying on of hands the slight pass over my bra strap

born again what I love becomes sin

a test of my faith biology 101

group prayer how we keep up with the joneses

daily devotions all the ways I'm undone

repentance not enough hot coals

deconversion sunday mornings now my own

– Tia Haynes

waiting

I watch the yolk break and run into the egg white. They don't know that I've spent the morning fighting back tears of depression. I call out that breakfast will be ready soon and ask them what they want to drink. Watching the eggs bubble I wonder if I should have ever had children at all. Strawberries sit on the cutting board and the bread bag is still twisted shut. I stand in the kitchen fighting against the winter and the dark and the cold. The kids wander in and start pulling their plates off the counter. And I pull on my smile.

cloudy night how my shadow hides

present and accounted for

Sitting in the nursery, reading all your current favorites, we sink deeply into one another. This moment, while your whole body still fits snugly into my lap, makes me almost forget. Your weight, your warmth, is a balm to my mind. I almost forget the pills I take three times a day. The days I'm not sure I can do this any longer. The weeks, months, years, spent dancing on the edge of madness. Here, the seconds expand into lifetimes. I have yet to disappoint you. Yet to become someone you no longer recognize. Yet to be a source of shame. I am still the one you run to after you fall. Still the one you call for in the middle of the night. Still mama. I am not what I was, I'm not what I will be, I am who you believe me to be; safe and sound.

locked door the way my nurse says "good night"

beyond the pale

It was days after our daughter's birth that we decided to leave. We set up an exit strategy that took months of careful negotiation to pull off. Explanations of theological differences were cited. Lies about being "called to the workforce and out of ministry" were given. Anything we could grab at we did. The truth was that we couldn't look at our baby and see God anymore. At least not their god.

folded pamphlet I follow the preacher's snakeskin shoes

– Tia Haynes

lost miracles

We weren't trying to get pregnant. It wasn't until the anatomy scan that we knew she would be alright despite the Lithium.

unexpected guest I sweep the dirt under the rug

Hours after birth they pull her off my breast. The medication we thought was safe, still isn't.

fresh basil with every cut a bruise

As I stand at the sink mixing formula, my eyes settle on the middle distance.

postpartum depression even her cries can't reach me

legacy

Everyone else had left. We had packed up all we could not knowing when the bank would come and repossess the condo. Grimy from the months of disuse, your final home held nothing for me. The home we moved into after the divorce. The home I discovered how to smoke in. The home I had my own affair in. Now, standing at the bottom of the steps with a last sweeping look around, I whisper "did you ever love me?"

slush these worn shoes still holding on

– Tia Haynes

vodka hangover lost on the tundra

– Julian O'Dea

these fears the unreached depths of the lake

night of your passing a single star fills the sky

just waiting for the darkness hidden memories

that argument again the crack of thin ice

twisted branches in the twilight how I shiver

broken my story scrawled in red

another IV silent drops fall from my face

searching for you each grave leads deeper into the mist

lilies opening the pain of your absence

your birthday again all the candles you'll never light

– Rachel Sutcliffe

How Trouble Grows

Trouble is patient hiding around corners. creeping through shadows entering without a sound.

It starts as a seed blown by careless winds and covers your garden with foul brackish weeds.

Or sparks from a match spread over fertile ground becoming flames speeding through the long night.

Trouble knows where you live. You cannot hide from it. Gaining a foothold, growing fat feeding on your flesh.

Watch how trouble grows inch by inch, molecule by molecule coursing through your veins.

Trouble begins as a whisper day by day growing louder. Now your heart beat becomes a thumping drum.

Soon you will forget there was a time when trouble was not at your side.

– Joan McNerney

Silenced

What is never spoken of, pushed down, becomes mold crawling over hearts.

Strangling our voices, it scuttles through corridors, tunneling, warping each day.

My body, this swollen thing carried by legs too thin and crippled to uphold it.

Pushed down, tightly clamped in, full of pain, gasping for each breath. Smothered now.

– Joan McNerney

divination by:

a cycle of five poems

Aichmomancy: by sharp objects

How far up can I drop the pin, the spear, the record needle before it slices through dermis into adipose, into viscera? Or do I just remember it sinking deeper as a child? (Aren't I always the child?) The recordings of words spoken or refused continue to darken the snow with ancient crimes, and anticoagulants are so ineffective this near the orchestra.

Brontomancy: by thunder

As General Subutai surrounds the city of Kaifeng, the Jin soldiers ignite the fuses of the strange iron globes. Silvergrass instantly evaporates, moist chests wrapped in gleaming armor separate into sound. Ears concuss, eyes black with chalk. The disturbance carries across from Mongolia, to Europe, to Japan, to Vietnam, to Iraq, to Syria; to bus stations, restaurants, schools, nightclubs, mosques. The lightning blinds and deafens still. Motionless, we wait for another light under the flying hail.

Grammomancy: by writing individual letters

Letters, left alone, like bare numerals, infarct, sew chords into themselves by virtue of hunger. No phone, no internet, almost as tragic as no family. A sea squirt can rewrite its entire body with just a fragment of blood vessel, a long vowel, maybe oo, or even oui. A Ouija board only points to one letter at a time. Then it becomes possible to piece together meaning from a string of swift stops. But I never ask the planchette specifically when I will die. And I have been warned to never touch the plastic disk alone. They can take over. There have been isolated instances of plates and shoes streaking across rooms to strike doors. Who are they? Are there theys watching behind a screen for a single fingerpad to graze the small sliding heart? And why would they be honest with my future? Would they see a slideshow of isolated strokes, peppermint chocolate spilled on the cracked dashboard, sunscreen smeared after the sand snapped the vertebrae? Could they read aloud my whole sentence, spelling out each f a l l through the veil?

Hydatoscopy: by rainwater

Mist: not enough to gamble on, keep the eucalyptus hips hidden in a murmur of curses, don't open your lips to even breathe

Drizzle: the words lengthen, laryngospasm, mild dyspnea as the mucilage dots the tongue it may be possible to capture a fly

Sprinkle: this is more like crying, if antifreeze on the street shines sweetly, then drive erratically around churches

Rain: digestive phrases leak heavy onto coffee cups from the rust playing on balconies, h. pylori ulcerates eventually

Cats: rafters give way and iguanas dig talons into my mastoid as they dance down

Dogs: destroy slender tomato starts which poke out of the groin like inaccurate depictions of joy

Tropical: swim along, leach, attach to ankles, try to remember when the wounds weren't there

Deluge: it was the end of the last ice age not rain your Neanderthal auntie skinny dipped in the fjords of Languedoc

Umbromancy: by shade

Morning: coal and salt in my eyes when my bright object moves away from me, like a drowning mother

Noon: nothing or everything is either clear or obscured, work to build stalactites from hours of grim focus

Evening: forgive and give out candy termites on sticks tell stories of how the darkness used to cover the others, the young

Night: the lightest phase of the moon, where the crater Langrenus pours dead relatives into a rich broth with absinthe noodles, it tastes like home a home I'd forgotten I already had



– Olivier Schopfer

Shut In



– Olivier Schopfer

Scars



– Olivier Schopfer

Opening Door Syndrome

I accidentally slapped my hand on invisible instruments, in the upstairs hallway, by the railing, before I circus tumbled down the spiral staircase and my head ended up in a gutter with paint cans. As Saturday afternoon winds and hangs its ticking sweat towel up to dry, I run out to catch the mailman in a flash, hear the boxcar putt-putting and hook my boomerang overdue bill at 'em. But first I have these new linen socks to put on, like a pen gliding across clean paper.

– Alyssa Trivett

The Hospital That Day

Hell is cold here, for today.

I aligned myself along several park benches after learning of your passing, staring into the sun, burning out a retina of tears.

I see the corpse I wanted to start with my car battery but my hands shake and the tools I need wouldn't work in this situation.

I wore your watch and drove your car, the next day. The chaplain shook my hand, and gave me his business card.

Strangely enough, I cannot remember his name.

- Alyssa Trivett

The Ghost Gang

I sneak off during the play to our meeting place under the skull mural. You're late as usual; we begin the search for Humphrey thirty minutes before the interval. Everyone knows the story of his tragic suicide after being dropped for the summer season of 1920. He's been the subject of our paranormal investigations since he pulled the Genie's trousers down on stage last Christmas.

spiral stairs a sudden drop in temperature

The balcony is deserted and cold this evening. Our motion detectors fail to reveal any supernatural activity so we move downstairs to scour the backstage area. Applause echoes through the corridors making it hard to pick up any spirit voices on the recording equipment.

dressing room the ghost costume fools no-one

The interval draws near as we climb steps to the VIP box. It provides a fine view of the Edwardian architecture. Scanning the audience, I notice a curtain move in the box on the other side of the theatre. A young clown appears and applauds the performance.

the drama of mask shadows stealing scenes

The clown waves his hands like a conductor. On his command an army of creatures crawl from the darkness. The building starts to shake and scarlet walls crumble. Debris falls into the audience; gargoyles gorge themselves on human flesh.

showstopper final curtain call on the empty stage

- Tim Gardiner

Metrosexual

To the gothic countess applying her lippy on the Hammersmith line this morning, a short poem:

mind the gap between us... the sweet smell of your perfume lingers

Perhaps we could meet up some time for a beverage, write some poems. I'd love a muse. Anon.

– Tim Gardiner

Homeland's Siege

It was mid-day in April when the city was soaked in sulfur and blood. The streets were a sepulcher of butchered men; the smell of bullets and bombs perfumed the entire place. Horrific wailings were heard everywhere; cries of terror, shouts of commiseration, sighs of desperation: All of them echoed in a city of ruins, in a place of punished innocence and cold feet. Loud shots were fired; loads of canons roared like thunder. From behind, heads were plucked from crime-less necks. My knees shook; my palms breathed with ice. The bandits were heading toward my direction; I pleaded, "Good Lord! Let mercy reign..." And it did. Faith has shut the mouth of death.

- Irish D. Torres

Shakes and Storms

On a dark and stormy night, pangs of hunger hugged me so tight. The wild wind blew westward, shaking our old and rugged hut. Raindrops filled the holes of our thin roof; chills of the dripping rain fell under my skin. I was shaking both in hunger and terror; my stomach's rocking like gongs and cymbals. Living in the dim outskirts of storm and famine is the scariest horror movie ever launched. The thunder roared loudly; the lightnings flashed. Our roof shook as if it wanted to fly thousand miles away; But that stormy night was not yet our dead end, for tonight, the ghost-storm is visiting us again. As I'm writing this, the flood reaches me at knee-length. The wind keeps blowing the light of my four-inch candle. I doubt if I could finish writing this poem tonight but believe me! I am able to scribble the 18th line amidst this monstrous cyclone.

- Irish D. Torres

mouthless teddy bear a mother stitches on her own smile

wendigo tea party a three year old serves biscuits

play therapy the monster she's become

scrubbing ancient skulls my own eyes fill with mud

tracing the bones of an unlived life flower impressions

– Lucy Whitehead

Stanley's Creation

Stanley was a brakeman in Jersey City for Western Railroad who beat his wife Anna, a devout Irish Catholic from Dublin who beat their son Richard so hard with a broom handle that she often broke the handle and had to buy a new broom, and when Stanley whipped the boy he used a belt or other household instruments claiming the child had fallen down a flight of stairs when the doctors grew suspicious so that when Richard was older he kept killing his father over and over again except the people he killed were not his father and the people that paid him to kill always marvelled at his stone cold proficiency.

– Ryan Quinn Flanagan

Milkman

I am the milkman. I am the now man.

No way around it. Heroin sleep man.

Skyscraper short man. You wouldn't believe it.

Opium Samuel poem man. Back at Abyssinia school again.

Evening tutorial walk home dizzy in the rain man.

Run a bath run a marathon, competitive rehydrating man.

You are the birds. I hear you prison sing.

Between the leafy green hours along the footpath of my constant wet walking.

– Ryan Quinn Flanagan

Sin Bin

Who wants to be innocent? Not me.

I want to be guilty of some things at least.

Not the biggies that get you put away, but many of the others would be nice.

Don't tell me you are innocent. Everyone is guilty of something. Which is fine.

Ignore the sin bin crazies. They believe Noah and his ark full of animals were the world's first carpoolers.

Cheated on your diet, guilty.

Jaywalked across a deserted street at four in the morning, guilty.

"I did not have sexual relations with that woman,"...guilty.

How many little white lies have you told just today?

To keep the peace and some basic working order?

I don't want to be innocent. Innocence is a lie.

I want to be guilty and alive. Enjoying the few pleasures we get for the short time we are here.

Didn't read all of War and Peace, guilty. Toilet papered cars, guilty. Found \$20 on the ground and kept it, guilty. Impure thoughts...haha, where to start!

Shoplifted food when I was starving, guilty. Call in sick when I am not sick, guilty. Give out false numbers at bars, guilty. Said I loved you when I didn't, guilty...

– Ryan Quinn Flanagan

Ruins

I guess ruins have to be ancient for people to want to go stand in them. Pay admittance and fly whole continents to do so.

When a fire or some other horrible disaster happens here, nobody pays to stand inside the ruins.

They deem it unsafe and knock the damn thing down.

And argue with the insurance companies that never pay and always have an out.

And no one call them ruins. Even though that is what they are. They call it a tragedy. Hardly ever stopping to smile for selfies.

– Ryan Quinn Flanagan

Body Slam

wrestling with the angels of others is never fruitful

they are hardly even angels

more like sleep from your eye that you whisk away with the back of your hand

crinkling your way through bubble wrap boxes that have come through the mail

never a pipe bomb inside, though you'd be fine with that

or some fine powder like leaving a crematorium full of pet names

life should be a clumsy celebration of circumstance where the living never wrestle with the dead or their angels

surrounded by books and moments and bottles music moments

kisses in the dark under strange carnivorous blankets.

– Ryan Quinn Flanagan

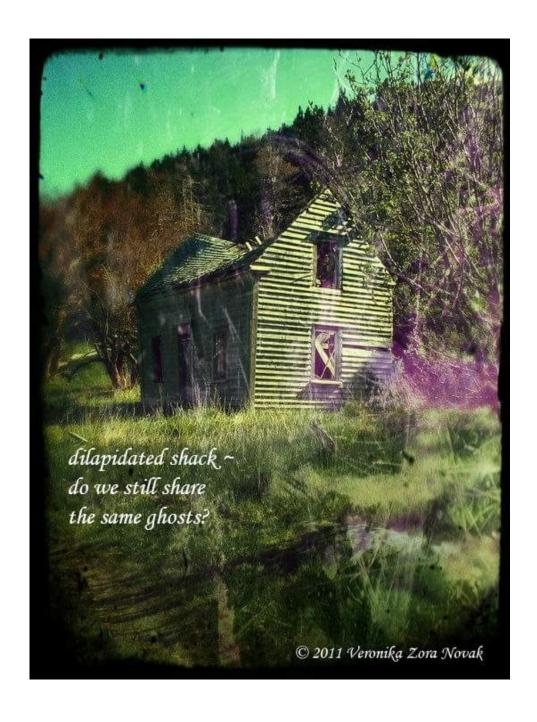
Rorschach test the ink that runs through my veins

refusing my breast crack baby's wail

trainspotting dirty syringes litter the playground

graffiti I trace the mind of an artist

– Veronika Zora Novak



– Veronika Zora Novak



– Veronika Zora Novak

How's This for Fucked-Up

Now that my sister's dead, I'm rich. I call it a mercy killing, because I really need the cash. Getting her insurance money was easy. The other part, living with her, was hell. I earned that million.

I think of all the things I can do now. Provide clean water to 500 villages in Africa. Put happy smiles on 10,000 children with deformed lips. Put 100 poor kids through college. Clone Charlie, my toy poodle, who's got this throat thing that's fatal.

I like the cloning idea. But should I get two Charlies at a time or start with one and when that Charlie dies get the next one? I'm only 35. I have another 50 years ahead of me. And Charlie had 10 good years. So that means...oh, I can't figure it out. Or decide what to do.

I wish I could ask my sister about cloning Charlie. She was good at telling me what to do. She excelled at it. That was one of her favorite words. She loved being Miss Bossy Boots. Getting all up in my business. You excel at picking losers she's say. Like Joe. She never liked Joe. Just because he hangs around schoolyards. Turns out was right about him. That asshole sniffed out my 13 year old dogwalker. My sister never shut up about it. She could have stopped with Joe. But she had to name all the other losers I'd slept with going back as far as Richie. Dumb jock, par excellence. That's what she called Richie. And she'd say it in this phony French accent. Anyway, that's when I started thinking. How easy it would be. Figuring out how to kill her wasn't hard. I stole the poison cannoli idea from Talia Shire. Godfather III. But it was all for nothing. My sister slipped and fell in the shower. Broke her neck, the doctor said. Life's funny like that.

Now that she's gone I feel all weird and adrift. A word I never thought I'd use. Adrift. Like a tiny rowboat without an anchor. She would have figured out how many Charlies to clone, how much to spend on each one, and how much of her insurance money I'd have left over. To live on. She wouldn't even need to write it down, she'd do it all in her head. If only I could ask her. That and a bunch of other stuff. Which is why I'm thinking of getting her cloned. The million should just about cover it. Or I could go for the robot-relative option. That's only half a mil. Lots of cash leftover and me telling her what to do. A win-win. I think it's the best idea I've ever had. Par excellence.

– Roberta Beary

Hush Little Baby

Today my little girl is at the playground without her big sister. I can't stop looking at her. It's hard to see the whole playground from my window. I'm not supposed to go near the playground. The judge said so. The judge understands how much I love little girls with long hair. That's why I can't go near the playground. I need the little girl to sit on my lap. So I can braid her hair. I won't do anything else. I won't play rocking horse with her hair. I won't even if she wants me to. Or maybe I will. Maybe she'll like me playing rocking horse. She looks like she might like it. I think she can see me. Waving at her. She's waving back. I'll just go get her now. So I can braid her hair. While she sits on my rocking horse. She'll like it. I promise.

– Roberta Beary

Nocturnal Souls

Those pure, breathable love-notes written on Japanese paper.
Our house, rain-cold with dawn dying in every corner.

When you sleep
I believe I am made of ice. I travel
in my frozen figure, spiraling,
drilling up
into God's domain. While you, flat
amongst the covers, breathe slow like
roots, touchable, sacred
as the shadows of my mortality are born
then perish in the wind's mute philosophy.
Loneliness infects us all. You have told me,
there will never be a simpler tomorrow.

Cut flowers lean their bloom on pale walls. I drop my mouth like wine dripped on your shoulder.
You wake and find me, hauntingly yours.

- Allison Grayhurst

Kaita

It is sort of colourless, the Earth. Though I can hear the voice of spring, I cannot help being disappointed at the slow blooming flowers, that grow up pursing the sun to no avail. Then I see the long boneless bodies of angels ascending like arrows into the depths of a starless sky, and I think to myself that he who has gone into shadows, hissing a private song is much better off with his visible scars than their invisible wings. And I wonder, will he come home or pass like water between unwebbed feet, to the ocean where all that is written is washed away with the sand?

- Allison Grayhurst

When He Rides

Unearthly dreams illuminate him where gardens lay their petals to rest. They creep now, his eyes, into sad and forbidden realms of insanity's broken weight.

Loose threads dangling from his mind. Loose thoughts that have no ending. Lost on his lips, something unleashed like music, something like my love.

> Find me alone inside bedroom walls, take these useless hands, allow them to touch the impossible

He makes the bell ring He turns the lights off He takes the bareback horse and gallops into the cutting dark.

The stars, they say, lose all balance when he rides.

– Allison Grayhurst

Freeze

Having just moved, I'm hunting for a new psychotherapist. Researching the potential candidates from my insurance website, I don't find much additional information, so I choose the lady whose Facebook profile picture is a green M&M. I accept this as a sign that she doesn't take herself too seriously. My only concern is she's a trauma expert but that isn't an issue for me. I'm just hoping she's adept at other conditions as well.

the density of mental illness gravity anomaly

To some, I imagine her office is considered cozy. For me, it's like sharing a coffin with a stranger. I have to try really hard to not panic and run out. While she looks over my paperwork, I stare at the angel nightlight on the wall opposite me, wishing I had those wings. Increasingly anxious, I begin scanning every detail of the room in attempt to find a mental escape.

convergent boundaries the sweat begins to flow

The therapist starts by asking why I've come and what I hope to achieve. All I know is that I'm supposed to be here and I don't want to die. She begins the scripted inquiry I've heard dozens of times until she suddenly stops and tilts her head.

"What was that?" she asks.

"What?" I respond, my eyes glancing at her and then quickly looking away again.

"You just paused and changed position, and facial expressions, as if reacting to something. What was it?"

"I don't know. Sometimes I just get...stuck."

someone from the inside screams subglacial eruption

Suddenly, her line of questioning pivots and she poses questions I haven't been asked since I was first diagnosed, despite seeing numerous practitioners over the past twenty-five years.

Do you experience this? Do you do that?

"Yes! And yes! I've been telling them this for years!"

Finally, she asks about abuse and instead of lying as I did previously, I start to tell the truth.

stratigraphy layer by layer I uncover my past

Mrs. Green's scattered brain...
the claw of a hammer

yet another failure suicide attempt

abandoned insane asylum...
before my diagnosis

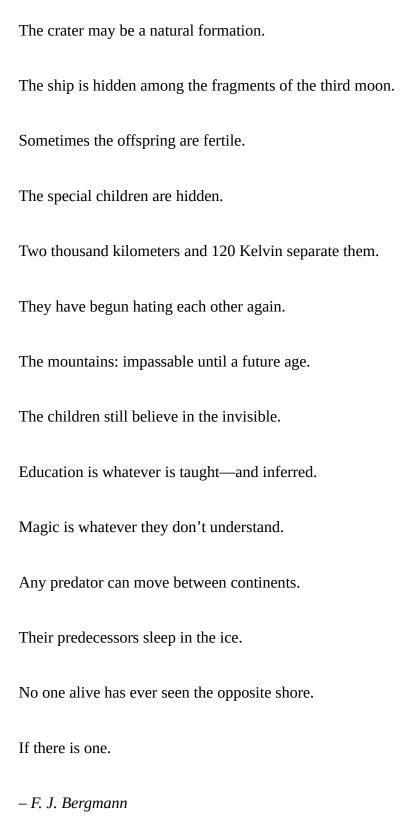
— Robin Smith

Plaid Hands

after the massacre, the remaining bones were gathered, placed into a pit and burned, crushed with rocks their purpose served, offered as a sacrifice to the god of abraham on bents knees basking in the light of the razor man, he was a gentleman who had plaid hands his skin was beige and he had no face, even without lips he talked at great lengths, when the women are sleeping he creeps into their beds, caressing their genitals before eating their heads and flying back home to his skeletons and chemicals, sticky black substances pour out of his lap, an influx of his spores laying a trap, the poisonous scent crept slowly in the air, he slept knowing they wept when voveur-less, the joyfulness he felt as he climbed on his horse, it's fur soaked in blood from the coming war, nostrils flaring flames, fire where there should be eyes, a mane made of blue flames the heavens surrounded by a swarm of flies, astounded by the sights he stretched his plaid hands towards the skies plucking the stars away one by one, rearranging them near our sun, with a kick of his feet he unleashed his steed and rode around the earth in a manner of minutes once he was finished the horse ran away in fear in the space between where his ears should have been a hundred conversations start and begin, he gnashed his teeth hidden beneath the skin that only protrude when he feeds he strips off his suit, laying naked in his bed covered in the ash of the world he knew was already dead

- Ri McCaba

Creative Evolution



Something in the Air

Few ever notice me, adrift in aether,
beneath the chandeliers of a failing store.

A deformed child, his slack mouth drooling fruit
onto a trendy sweatshirt, howls and clutches
at his caregiver, as our escalators cross,
who startles at the shaking knot of noise.

She sees an empty stage: only bit-part clerks,
who rotate through displays of summer stock.

She checks her sad list: "breakfast cereal, something
he might like." I float down, spin through revolving
doors into the night, become a single unit
of a dazzled host whose yammer circles
buzzing neon. Most agree in principle
with light, but make a covenant with darkness.

– F. J. Bergmann

The Spell

Sleep on, and never wake again.

—The Thousand and One Nights

The enchanted princess sleeps on inside the crown of long thorns.

She will wake to the sound of a needle scratching at the end of a vinyl record when the air turns cool and violet as Impressionist shadows and wonder where the years went without her. In the bed beside her is a hollow impression of absence.

She will meet her lost ages again someday, the ghosts of unopened roses.

They will all run into each other by chance in a Starbucks in an indifferent city, on the cusp of Accretion & Vying Streets, as if a random-number generator were to begin clicking out a string of infinitely repeating digits, her favorite lottery numbers, wishes fulfilled,

and they'll fill her in on what she missed, is still missing, and misses most of all,

like the engine of a truck
she swore she'd checked the oil in
but forgot, as it begins to glow
red-hot, still ticking over
with an occasional grinding noise,
then a tortured, metallic scream,
then the thumbprint of silence.

– F. J. Bergmann



Photo: 3D Art Museum, Bali & Haiku by Pravat Kumar Padhy

– Pravat Kumar Padhy

the speed at which i see the dead coyote

rereading her letter...
I turn the radio volume down

x amount of time the dream i was here

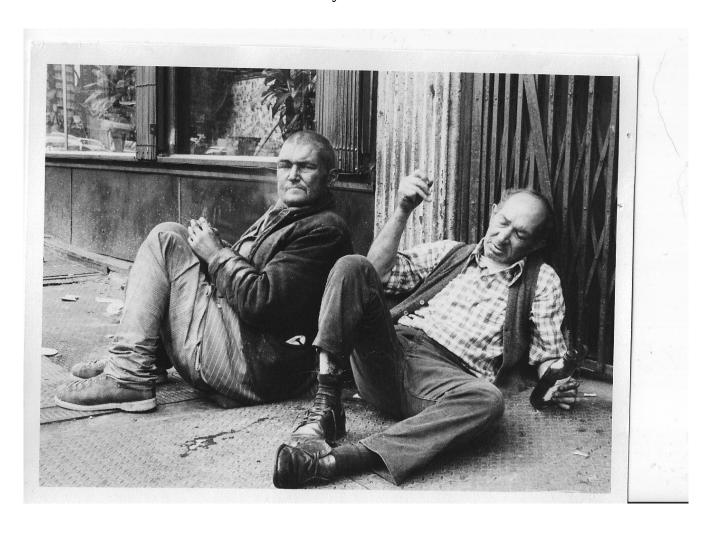
– Tom Clausen

Chain Dripping a Thick Fog



– Tom Clausen

Bowery. N.Y.C 1978



– Tom Clausen

Dust Dance

How great those gray threads and new steps -- turning, as in clouds, with nothing to cast off, nothing to begin. And you want it this way and it doesn't matter, and I want it my way, and I am all antimatter. I can take form anywhere. I can take in the light. I can take in every moon, every cloud, in the strand of long fingers that I am and will be.

- Meg Smith

The First Snow

What more can I give you -flashes of cardinals, sparks that dazzle out of night.
We could wake in an Arctic drift, as though born; feathers alight, fleeting.
This is the beginning but it is done, as we are.
You must go forward now, into your polar night.

- Meg Smith

Emerald Doll

A true thing, a friend, in a glossy black dress with eyes of the light of sleety stars. No spoken spell, no shattered broom, for none mark the lintel or portal for us. There is just us, you and I and some cauldron of air. You and I in our purple stockings, holding a light in our clasped hands.

- Meg Smith



– haiku: Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, photo: A. D. Adams

Masked Devil

A masked devil visited me last night and whispered

come to the class room I'll show you banters, cat calls

come to the bank at the corner of the street we'll ridicule broken vaults

come to neighbors' garage we'll stitch the abandoned skirt of his daughter

– Aneek Chatterjee

Reminiscence

I know the person I'm following; know the hotel he will visit know his wine, pale yellow

His girlfriend will now kiss him and put her hand straight into his pocket, touch his genitals and bring out dollars

She'll leave, and the man will telephone someone to fix an appointment, take a bath and go out; -- with his gun

He will cross tramlines, pubs and a theater, a school He will enter a by-lane I know very well ...

and shoot me

- Aneek Chatterjee

The world is not round the world is a square with little windows with a thin curtain without a door and inside

me
and
you
are looking for
with blindfolded eyes
the cracks
on the other

II

He teaches her

to keep the beauty of love. She already knows how stuffing butterflies in her stomach

III

Ill-nourished and sleepy are my words for you. I put on flash by your lack you find your dream in my absences

– Radostina A. Dragostinova



– Radostina A. Dragostinova



– Radostina A. Dragostinova



– Radostina A. Dragostinova

Lone Wolf

even in the womb confined by the sac submerged in saline and blood I knew my task

beside brothers birth-right pulsing fangs bared at the breast and steaming kill for my place to gorge

I howl beneath glimmer fields eyes smouldering among tree hulks hounding stag and ram in places of rock and sand thorn and thistle

I skulk in dark places alleyways

street-walkers on display an unwary child the beggar's boy I find them

in morning shadows all is silent metallic-tang tingles on my tongue

– Marilyn Humbert

Shingle Beach

surge batters cliffs to rocks to sand along the limestone coast

lone shag dives for whiting black eyed, slick with silver slippery as soap

sand slips beneath rubber soles on the steepest dune

brown snake slithers to a patch of sun – languorous light

I'm not afraid reaching for a trace of you tears the shadowland veil

we wander on broken shells and pebbles among driftwood piles

that day you walked into the emerald sea to live entangled with seagrass

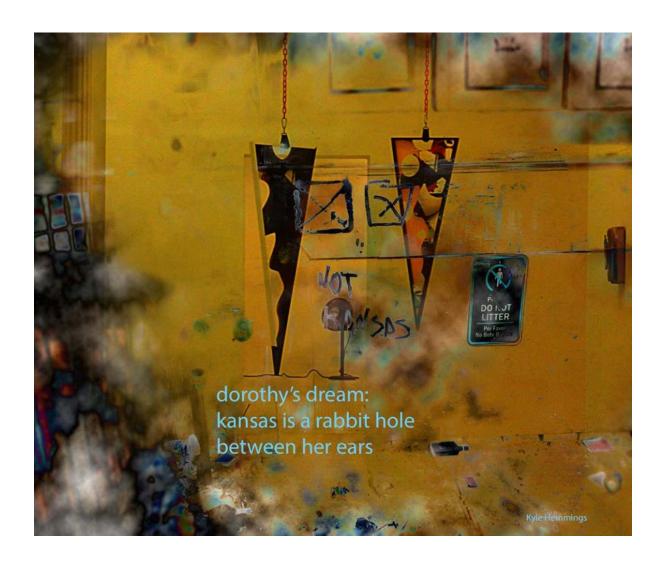
– Marilyn Humbert

the boy with stars for eyes

shadows grow longer on my walk down to the creek. it's time to begin the search beneath the willow's weeping leafy-wands, between the exposed roots gripping the steep bank. dusk is painting the sky orange. light is fading. the stream's water lies glassy-still. a boy, about ten years old rises for air. head tilted back, mouth opens in a perfect circle of pink lips. he breathes in deeply making no sound. his black hair floats cloak-like about his shoulders. I slip further down the bank stretching towards him, to help him from the water. he ignores me. his eyes gleaming stars as he sinks beneath the surface.

recurring dream glosses ripples dusk to dawn

– Marilyn Humbert



– Kyle Hemmings



– Kyle Hemmings



– Kyle Hemmings

Relapse

From the dark recesses of my mind, I give you the pieces, Of my shattered soul, Spilled out onto a blank page, My words, are like a brush, Painting my pain, On a blank canvas, But this time it's different, This brush has an edge, With every stroke, It's painful, Yet numbing, I've been here before, I know the feeling all too well, A cathartic release, I'm ashamed it came to this again, Told myself I wouldn't, Told myself it would be the last time, I wish I was stronger...

_shatteredsoul

Numb

The days are indistinguishable, blurred into one, I look down at my phone, and it's only Tuesday, Somehow the length of four days have merged into one, People say I look 'sad,' that I should be 'happy' 'Cheer up,' they say,

'Look on the bright side,' they say,

But I guess ignorance really is bliss,

Seems like everyone else is moving along with their busy schedules,

Me? I've just been lying here, trying to get myself to finally get out of bed for the past forty-five minutes.

Because if they only knew What really goes on inside my head,

They wouldn't say things like this,

They tell me to try to be happy,

Stop being so sad,

It's funny,

Wish I could scream and cry and throw things,

But I've been staring at the ceiling for the past twenty minutes,

Yes, I wish I was in pain,

Yes, I wish I could cry,

But I can't,

Because right now,

I just feel numb...

⁻ _shatteredsoul

hospice ward the moon slips behind clouds

acid drops sky he fastens the neck chain about her throat

winter wedding her bouquet falls between gravestones

crematorium the subtleties of colour in ash and snow

– John Hawkhead

climbing the ice road to sober

– John Hawkhead

Holiday

Even Death needs to take a break sometime. Needs to sit on the beach in the sun with his scythe hidden, so as not to frighten the swimmers. Well, everything about Death has to be hidden. There can be no exposure beyond a few inches of face and hands, hardly more than a woman in a burka. Yes, everything has to be hidden, so as not to frighten the swimmers ready for when the holiday is over.

- Lynn White

DIRT

I've been tossing and turning and talking in my sleep

Restless reckless wrecked

I spend my days silencing the creatures inside my head

Screaming over the noise of my demons

And the taunting of my skeletons

Wrestling each one as I pull duct tape off a roll and plaster another piece over it's mouth

I bind these ropes tighter and tighter hoping to stop their claws from filleting me from the inside out

The littlest one sits on my nightstand whenever I sleep

His face split open from ear to ear in a smiling grimice of pain and sharp teeth, his skin charred and the color of blood, his eyes black holes that suck me into their gravity

He never says a word but takes joy in reminding me that, even now, I am never alone

I always heard things when I was a kid

Voices

Sounds

Things that weren't there

'Active imagination'

'Seeking attention'

I have been depressed, anxious, bipolar, borderline, defiant, possibly autistic, sensory disordered Schizoaffective

I hear music in every room of mind, behind every closed door, under the carpets, in between my fingers, stuck in my teeth

Music is the dirt under my nails

Always there

Announcing to the world that I am too sad to take a shower this week, next week, next month

It means I see shadows out of the corner of my eyes that take the shape of aggressive men

I break my neck looking over my shoulder

It means that there are days when I am not enough

The pills are not enough

So I drink from a brown bottle wrapped in my shame

It's the thing I tell on my 3rd or 4th or 5th date to close the door and watch them run

I've always liked the view from back here

It means sometimes my freckles turn into bugs and even they run from me

Sometimes I forget where I am

It's a passionate embrace of words on a page

Even though I am totally alone

And also never alone

I can create a sense of silence

I can hide under a blanket of 26 letters

Sharper than any knife at my wrist

Smarter than any bottle of pills can be

Realer than the demons

Who sit in the shadows

And hide in my mind

STITCHES

I woke up tired today

And yesterday

The day before

The kind of tired that's a cross between a sleeping pill

And actually dying

See. I'm so full of words

It's making me drag my feet

Hundreds and thousands and millions of words

But not one that says

I love you so much I hate you

We sit in crowded corners

We hold hands on dark stairs

We gorge ourselves on melancholy

Until we're bloated with memories

And drunken on the past

But we're driving nowhere

Each time I see you I rip my chest open wide

Holding out my heart and my lies and truths and smiles and desires

Dripping with earnest hope and raw innocence

Coated in black sticky fear

And I remember who I am

Who you are

And who we are not

As I stuff each part of me back into my ribs and

Stuttering

Shaking

Sloppy

Stitch my skin back into place

Taming my expectations

And as the tired old lion lies down

Sated with this scrap of meat

I hold my rattled breath knowing

This is not my last fight

I have earned the blood on my teeth

– Kayleigh Wirges

SHOCK

Maybe you've heard of Electric convulsive therapy Shock therapy It leaves tinder spots on my forehead Like sunburn

It leaves a bruise

Or two

Or three

On my arms and hands

It takes with it my memories

And

The sadness

That creates paintings and words

It takes passion and replaces it with quiet apathy

The sadness that has been my companion

Since I was 6 or 7

Sadness- the thing I know best in the world

No

Not sadness but despair

I exist in existential crisis and

Electric conclusive therapy

Dims the road out of view

It takes away all the off ramps

And puts me in the middle of the freeway

Safe from harm

But alone in the world

Without even sadness

To hold in my chest

- Kayleigh Wirges

It's Raining Dead Birds

Maybe they were cooked alive by the heat? The blazing sun's been ever present lately, the dry, northern wind blows through the mountains where no one has seen dew or snow for ages.

In the azure sky turning lavender one sees indigo rays like laser beams, shooting stars or sharp sparkles — they were supposed to be four on horseback —

not iridescent signs alighting the heavens, evenly scaring people all around the globe. Lava splendor, inescapable torpor, dog days; the apocalypse never said it would rain dead birds.

– Walter Ruhlmann

Road 6009

Through the vineyards, down the hills, the wind mills eyeing you, you drive this pale, yellow car he bought when you dwelt in the mountains.

Now this land of rocks and dust, grapes and reeds, whipped by the northern wind, dried by the sun. Some women stand on the side, hustle, old wine makers, Spanish drivers stop by.

You drive on this road to go to work – though you commute by train most of the time. Trucks, tourists, dangerous bends, drive you to choose safety.

In case your need to disappear, to leave this place but leave no trace, your tiredness or your death wish, made your car crash into some tree.

- Walter Ruhlmann

Whorehouse

I spent so many nights fucking, sucking erected cocks, caressing lifeless skins, grey hair, deadly Indians.

Ungrateful pale moons touched the bottoms of the lakes where the bloody tadpoles mewled endlessly. On the banks, the nymphs parted their thighs greeting the destitute phalluses of the old.

A limitless hotel, the blue sky as the only frontier, the ground is below, all around hundreds of erected dicks.

And I waited for my turn, my ass trained to please, spread on a polyester bed as on a ship pitching on the enraged seas.

- Walter Ruhlmann

I sleep on my back late late afternoon in the old house beneath the tiled roof suddenly feel a pinch lost child, a ghost, or something intent on awakening me

there's the moon full, blurred, drifting in and out of black shadows the race across snowy mountains the Sea of Japan

earlier in the day you stood at the edge of the road, rice fields photographing mist beneath an orange umbrella

you are
the only child
I'll ever have,
now grown
to woman
you smile
that full smile
from both corners
of your mouth

– Miriam Sagan

sealskin coat the tides within pulling pulling

fallen tree twisted branches fashion a crow

shadows between the rain tremor fibromyalgia

thistledown her collection jar fills with dreams

molten silver the moon grows another hare

new moon behind the owl mask her frightened face

– Andy McLellan

AIR

That spring in Kyoto, few people had heard of the word retrovirus or knew what it meant. As the sakura zensen (cherry blossom front) reached the old capital, hanami (blossom picnics) took place as usual. Couples and families gathered beneath the trees, spreading out their blankets to share food and sake as they have done for centuries. Stories and laughter fell from open mouths as the blossom drifted around them.

The first cases seemed little more than an allergic reaction. Patients were admitted to the university hospital with mild breathing difficulties after being in close proximity to flowering trees, but these resolved quickly in the emergency room with the administration of a little oxygen and some reassuring words.

In the days following, a small trickle of patients became a flood, and consultants from the Ear, Nose and Throat department found themselves being called to the ER with increasing regularity. More and more patients were admitted for overnight stays to stabilise their breathing, and a general warning was released to the population of the city that cherry blossom viewing was now considered something you should do at your own risk, with breathing masks advised as a caution.

Overnight, Maruyama Park, and other traditional places for hanami became deserted. The rest of Kyoto settled into a sombre silence quite unlike any other spring in recorded memory.

One week after the first signs, 23-year-old Yuko Konomi became patient zero, the first fatality from what was now being called Sakura yamai (Cherry blossom disease). Her parents stood by her bedside as doctors desperately tried to revive her, unwilling to give up while any hope remained. Eventually, even they resigned themselves to the inevitability of such a young death.

As Yuko's face turned white, a single pale pink blossom appeared from between her lips.

No one said a word.

under the old oak my breath becomes hers

- Andy McLellan

going over his plan once again thief moon

airstrike the glow of fireflies

in my twenties and already bored with this life a small brown recluse spins its web slowly

old blues music down to the seeds and stems

– Gabriel Bates

Far from Home

It's a long drive to the art museum. An hour, minus rush hour, to be exact. So, I pass the time repeating some mantras that, according to all of these popular self-help books I read, will greatly benefit my mental health:

I am beautiful.

I am worthy.

I am safe.

Honestly, I am still waiting to see if they work, but in the meantime, I guess they can't hurt.

self-love I tell myself what they don't

– Tiffany Shaw-Diaz

Irony

You stole my happy poems
then asked where they went
you unplugged the sun
and wondered how I became so comfortable
in the dark
you taught me consequences do not apply
and somehow my irresponsibility puzzles you
you showed me life is a mixed bag
of pain
and you are terrified of my obsession
with death

– Bekah Steimel

Seeing Red

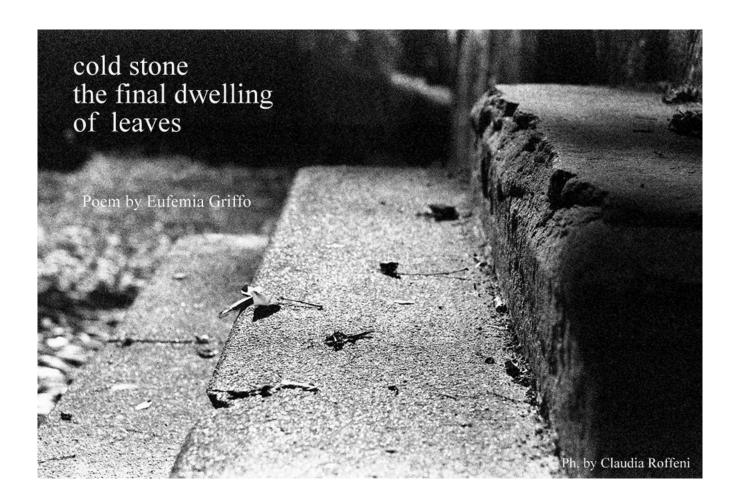
My father is a nightmare. My mother is a dream. How childish, but abuse and big love keep us rooted as children. My father is Satan, red and shaking a fist at the world. My mother is Santa Claus. She wears a different red. A rose red. My life revolves between the two. Then, suddenly I am covered in the confusing color, neck to ankle. My father is a bull now, twenty deadly paces away. Head lowered and eyes wild, he stomps his hooves and shakes the world. He only sees me. I am to blame right now. I cannot outrun him. The "Exit" signs flash the angry red, and I know this is a trick. Something worse waits for me on the other side if I try to leave. This is his twisted kingdom. I close my eyes and brace for the horns and heat of this madness. When I open them, there is my mother, built like a shield of light and flesh. She is not an angel. She is more practical than that. She bursts into a hundred painted clowns. Some lead me to safety, a patch of green grass under the only piece of blue sky, but most circle my father. They dizzy and frustrate him. Rage is exhausting. When his knees hit the ground, the earth trembles once more. And, then it is over. A hundred painted clowns meld back into my mother.

– Bekah Steimel

Cancer Lyric E

I love you. You are dead. Which three words are most relevant today? I've spoken the former, screamed the former, gasped the former. My traumatized lips can barely whisper the latter. But they are just as true, just as pertinent. They matter, even if I cannot declare them. I designed my life around "I love you." Those three tiny words were the nucleus of the cell we shared. Now three other tiny words have placed me in a different cell. Alone. I am serving time for a crime I did not commit. I am neither culprit nor victim, but that does not matter. I am just another casualty of love and death. I love you, and you are dead.

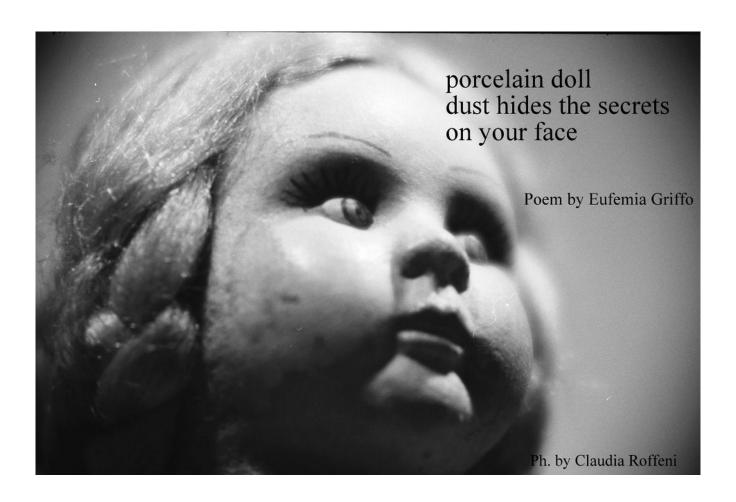
– Bekah Steimel



– Eufemia Griffo



– Eufemia Griffo



– Eufemia Griffo

DEADLY JEWELLERY

This curved metal Gripped until bright By a soldier's finger Released the shells Into the chamber, Tripped the hammer, Propelling danger.

Now remoulded Into a ring Of attractive design, It bears a stone Made of polished lead, From a case that Held a bullet head.

Such jewellery
Born of conflict,
Seduces the senses,
Attracts the eyes
And draws in the breath,
For grim fragments
Once fashioned for death.

- David Subacchi

DEAD LEAVES

And so the clearing up of leaves, bored by their shade A short lived display of yellow that only depressed We arm ourselves with sharp rakes in faded coats dressed Like hurried scarecrows an impatient farmer made. The scraping of steel on ground where paving was laid The hunting through grass and piercing of soil compressed Frantically bayonetting as soldiers possessed No prisoners taken no ransom to be paid.

This annual ritual little comfort brings
With dark winter brooding silently in the wings
And our minds fixated on political things
We challenge each dog that barks and bird that sings.
Piled high with dead foliage fierce bonfires burn
Our hopes spiralling upwards never to return.

- David Subacchi

beside the tattoo parlor gravestones

– Gary Eaton

MIDNIGHT GRAVEYARD

As the darkness makes me uncomfortable I realize they don't care. Light is lost on them. The awareness strikes me as a sudden blow filling me with mortifying sadness. Their sealed, uniform ignorance has the obscenity of an ill-scarred wound.

How can they see nothing, hear nothing? Quiet is also their lot. I long for a hush, murmur, whisper but no gush of wind graces this stillness. I had not understood in daytime how forsaken they are, the extent of oblivion.

They say souls of our departed remain.
Only if recent and close.
All those whom we don't know simply vanish.
In the night I feel the pressure of nothingness
I crave a ghostly breath, a scream
shredded shrouds hanging from naked branches.

Here. A deer steps out of the woods, crosses my path. As I stop mesmerized it transfixes me, with a fierce icy stare. I exult and I shiver. This epiphany cheers me yet the look of the wild pierces through me summoning my own expendability.

One day nature will claim back this wholeness, and reign undisturbed. I feel both small and redundant. The departed sleeping underground are of no comfort. They betray me as they have been betrayed.

- Toti O'Brien

FEBRUARY

Not because you have died should I miss the wisteria blooming or when blossoms of citruses will explode full force in the backyard omit to inhale as deep as I can.

I'll remember the vial of lemon essence you sent when I turned fifty the last present you gave me. In your greeting note you called me 'fragrant' and I am grateful.

You have died at the break of dawn on Saint Valentine day, not a week away from my birthday, stamping my beloved month of February with your mark.

Though you were my brother only, you have cheated on me. Cheated cruelly, though you were my brother only. In case you'd be tempted to forget.

- Toti O'Brien

Alchemy 1, Brass



– Toti O'Brien

Alchemy 2, Milk



– Toti O'Brien

Alchemy 3, Gold



– Toti O'Brien

Alchemy 4, Ink



– Toti O'Brien

My Father Made Men

Though he never much went to school-he taught me lessons I haven't found the distance to forget.

Carved into memory that dawn thunder shook the morning like a fever choking me in a grasp of power too foreign to understand.

My father's rifle obliterating nature's calm without warning. And the bird that fell silent bleeding and dead from the sky was only my first lesson at age six.

Holding up the destroyed bird to me-he said, "death, this is what happens to all of us."

Scaring me so horribly that I burst into tears and ran to the cottage. That night, my father said to my mother-"maybe it's your fault, I don't know but it will take longer than I thought to make him a man."

– Rp Verlaine

After Therapy

She took me home. It was a lonely place of books and lies and both of us for a scant few hours.

Making love on satin sheets besmirched by blood, whiskey and undetermined stains. She was thin with black hair and soft bruised skin. Her vocabulary limited to vague commands like "that's it"and "don't stop."

We had met in therapy community service for me and for her... well she never spoke. She was like ice that was far too thin and you could see the cracks.

Yet her remote distant eyes couldn't be refused at least not by me. And though that day she might've settled for anything- the sex was pleasing enough for her that when it was overshe smiled for the first time. Kissing my ring-less fingers.

For many minutes nothing was said we lay mute as shadows that had suddenly found light.

And then she asked me to leave she was expecting her husband at any minute, he liked to beat her and this was her way of getting even.

- Rp Verlaine

everyone dies why should I read to the bitter end

stillborn still named still grieving

that little boy who pulled the petals from daisies decided no-one loved him now he catches flies

– David J Kelly

damp

a light thunderstorm erupts

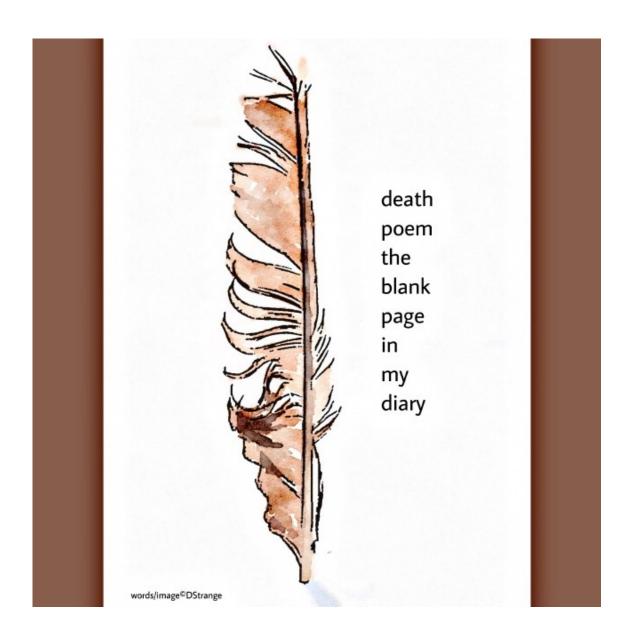
someone actually pulls over and offers me a ride

the drought has finally passed our city

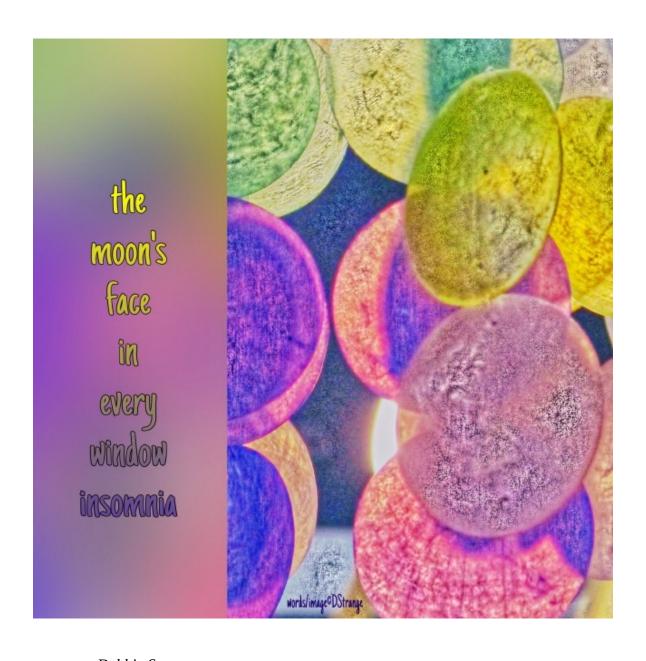
the rain fills my fractured back

and carries me home to an Advil and the dark algorithm of YouTube

– Marshall Bood



– Debbie Strange



– Debbie Strange



– Debbie Strange

The Monster Under The Bed

Behind closed doors, the attack inevitable.
Velvet darkness consumes, the heart a bass line.
His candy cane legs unfold, the eyes that glow blink open like a switch.
The spider hands ready themselves, those Nosferatu claws, reaching for an ankle to grab.
The fist pops out, a Jack in a Box, a boxing glove on a spring, a concussive lullaby — knocked into next week's sleep.

- Kirsty A. Niven

The Knife

I haven't done this in years.
The once scarlet slashes,
those stripes that marked my tabby coat,
have now faded to crinkled moon tissue.
Years have passed, those wounds healed
and now new ones gape open.

The pallid skin sighs under the glint of the knife – how it has missed its cool embrace.

The jagged mouth parts its lips, longing to be kissed again, its lipstick smeared in a waxy smudge as the blade penetrates, coming home.

The wound, the colour of roses, of Valentine's gifts that won't arrive; the colour of poppies, a bloody battlefield. Eye-popping. I long for its opium, the numbness that comes with each slice.

I don't want to come back, the lives just won't run out a torturous cycle, a Sisyphus struggle. I claw my way back again and again, all for nothing, no redemption. The call of the knife is too strong.

- Kirsty A. Niven

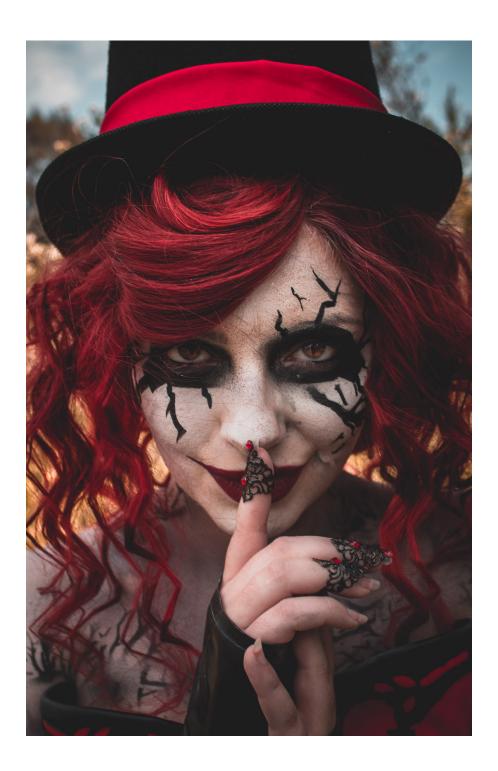
Alice

I'm not all there myself, losing my something, my everything — vanished in a sea of tears, a pool of pig blood; an impossible shower of playing cards that came tumbling forth from the rabbit hole prematurely, unravelling like madness.

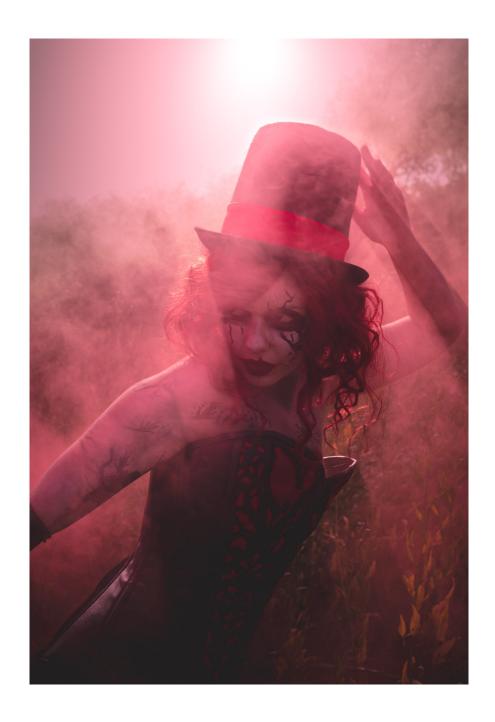
Lifeless stop motion figures birth from me, these corpse creatures a mimsy statistic, 1 in 4, going out altogether like candles. I paint the roses red with their blood, saturating the white with its congealed muck.

It takes all the running I can do to keep from falling further, descending into serpentine riddles of self pity that eat away at every last smile. A nonsensical horror, a Svankmajer twist on the tale — this wasn't how it was supposed to end.

- Kirsty A. Niven



Photographer: Black Rabbit Photography Model: Miss Mandy Motionless Designers: Corsettery Corsets, Latexion Design, and Haus De Luxe. HMUA: Michael Bui



Photographer: Black Rabbit Photography Model: Miss Mandy Motionless

Designers: Corsettery Corsets, Latexion Design, and Haus De Luxe. HMUA: Michael Bui

ECHOES OF THE MIND

Painful memories shadow me like lonesome children, they tag behind begging me with their winsome smiles, until I relent and give them shelter

saying, "There, there, it's all right," in soothing tones, I hold them close and cherish their special feeling for a time, until I remember

the vague, uneasy discomfort
of fingerprints smudging my soul,
forcing me into the still darkness
of my mind, unable to close ranks

as powerful images replicate like a virus,
a mantra of negation chanted, over and over,
until I can no longer think, no longer hear
myself, shamed into silence.

– Julie Bloss Kelsey

dream tiger

swallows me

swallows me whole eats my words

(Head with Shawl, 1912)

your hair

my shawlcover me with your mouth

my dark dark flower

(Fiery Head, 1912)

flame of cheek

I cannot touch your noon

full on eyes out of the tunneled dark

(Girl with Doll, 1912)

you hold

to one side your spitting image

dangling doll who holds who

The Match

he would not let anyone touch it after a long walk in the woods it had embedded itself in his eyelid with all its strength and beauty

leaning over him
I pulled at the skin gently
leave it there forever
he said

on the threshold neither in nor out perhaps he had already relinquished normality to his dreams

he imagined and accepted a strange future looking from one eye only the other closed decoratively like the cover of a book on natural history

various endeavors of mine were considered kind but unenlightened and unsuccessful we settled into the static nature of the emergency

we waited until everyone had left the waiting room to light the last straw and let it go

– Kath Abela Wilson

Another Garden

In response to Marina Tsvetaeva's Sad (Garden)

You'll see the sign that says 50 ahead. Make your way across the little bridge: white rails at the side, where poplars climb, new leaves sparkling, filled with silver eyes. Willows on the banks will dangle green dreadlocks through their shadows in a stream.

Creak as iron gates open.
Recollect the scent
of fresh-turned earth from long ago,
and marble figures
staring on the lawns.
Within an empty chapel,
hear the choir's anthem
drifting through the open door.
Notice granite, carefully inscribed.

Around the gravel, grasses will be trimmed— The gardener likes to exercise his scythe.

* Silver eyes: tiny Australian songbirds

– Hazel Hall

Exemptions will be available for purchase

Good news. New legislation has just been passed. All animals will be recognized as sentient beings. They'll be assigned legal rights like humans including space on earth to live and multiply.

Where humans or animals are deemed by the government to be in plague proportions, euthanasia will be practised to ensure that enough resources and space are available for all. The PM has assured all citizens that this will be fair and accountable. Those to go will be determined by ballot from two groups defined as being:

- (a) sick or suffering.
- (b) elders
- (c) any others draining government resources.

Exemptions will include politicians and humans and animals making major contributions to the economy. In addition, some exemptions will be available for purchase to raise government revenue.

Any human being offering voluntary euthanasia will be rewarded by a generous government grant to surviving relatives.

animal farm a sty full of pigs with wings

- Hazel Hall

rewriting the rules to see what happens . . .

around the corner a couple flirts

with nakedness

changing your name does nothing for fortune

the bright lights burn down to a single

bulb

– Peter Jastermsky

THE RIDE TO RETURN

The ride in the car from airport to back home: my belly swings

the puke is too much too quick the day ends in head with what I'd take to get well

erase memories of love's lonely pace in an ever burning house

dog-earing pages of the fragile world I wrote and caught myself

again and again gaze through the darkened space decay with aged trees

– Ram Krishna Singh

SWEET SAVORS

Strayed far from the nest I'm fed up living with dust for years fleeting shade

bereft
of melody
of spirit I sink to
the hades of utter loss
I can't

reckon hidden mysteries I have lost the sea for a mere cupful

void of patience and peace now as I touch the breasts of the field I crave

for a pure breath native to my being I search sweet savors

of love

- Ram Krishna Singh

Peace

The catastrophe was that neither one was listening. The cacophony was almost symphonic but still, neither listened. It was her father versus my mother and we just needed to find a way to shut all of that out. It really was too much. And so it was that each night, after the dust had settled, our imaginative minds would come out of the shadows to play.

As the lion and lioness settled down at the far end of the house, we would start our late-night sneak. We would meet in her room, quiet as a pair of mice. There we would kiss and touch our way into a state of blissful denial. You can call that what you will. Call it survival, call it escape or you can simply call it peace.

first blossom... our whispers wrapped in sounds of rain

- Richard Grahn

daycare provider – some kids she loves more than others

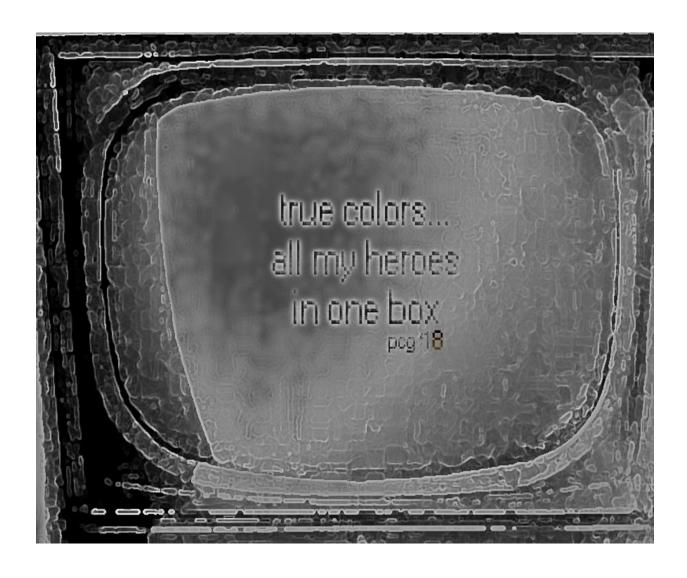
migrating birds – his other personality comes home from the bar

you pour your anger into the eggs – pickled again

– Susan Burch



– Pat Geyer



– Pat Geyer



– Pat Geyer

Canis Amica

I see him kick the dog The yelp carries for blocks Then he runs down the street Arms flailing, like a mad man I am no vigilante, but I take chase As I gain ground on the fiend My adrenaline goes crazy He suddenly stops short And pulls out a gun Before I can react I hear a shot ring out It hits me in the chest As I fall to the ground The dog runs up, limping And licks my wound A second shot rings out It hits the dog in the left eye But he keeps licking my wound We die together Man's best friend and me

- Michael H. Lester

A Big Nothing

The porcupines
Encountered skunks
Quills versus stink
Counter-circles
Worrisome looks
Grunts, snorts, and groans
Discretion wins
Rodents retreat
Mammals split off

Nothing left but Piles of pellets Still stinking of The fear of death And puddles of Steaming urine Dripping down legs Prancing away As if it were

A big nothing

– Michael H. Lester

to the fallen muse whose song is lost in seaweed wisps of tangled thoughts diffuse and scattered phrases of the forsaken poet

as I swing from the white man's oak I sing swing low, sweet chariot until my neck snaps

sentient beings from another galaxy wisely avoid Earth where people kill each other and befoul the air they breathe

– Michael H. Lester

spring river a bag of cats comes to the surface

hydrant flush the screams of missing children

a good shot the sniper's sunlit grave

the poetry of hanging

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e

– LeRoy Gorman

Squelch Him

He composes horror music in the middle of the night His shadow is large this master of disguise and illusion
With a vivid imagination and snarling voice
He tried to convince me he was a puppet maker and I was his marionette Looking him in the eye I startled him
Fear has a large shadow but he himself is quite small

- Carol Raisfeld

Satan's Scene

Endless nights in eerie lights souls in shadows broken on crooked streets, pounding beats dripping devil's potion seeing souls of Satan scream inside his crimson flame eternally embalmed in fear and filled with gnawing shame where the only sound with meaning is the sound of silent screaming

As days of dreaded doom unroll in Satan's Pawnshop of the soul the caverns of my mind explode with sounds of final feeling the shattered visions in the road leave nothing left to see or hold but a lifeless echo fleeing a tattered tribute to my being

- Carol Raisfeld

Too Late to Play

Yesterday's playground now a cage with carousel music distorted with age spinning 'round too fast to stop end over end no bottom no top

Flying too high in tempo and time floating on down trying to climb with no more space to right the wrong buried forever in sorrow and song

Remember the sights the smells and the sounds too late to play here in the ground

- Carol Raisfeld

Night Rain

unheard prayer up there somewhere space junk paidir nár éisteadh léi thuas ansin áit éigin ... bruscar spáis



– Haiku by Gabriel Rosenstock, Photography by Debiprasad Mukherjee

strange fruit indeed ... my ghost hangs from a tree toradh aisteach go deimhin ... mo thaise féin crochta de chrann



– Haiku by Gabriel Rosenstock, Photography by Debiprasad Mukherjee

shrine built for a ghost ... the wind dies down

scrín a tógadh do thaibhse ... síothlaíonn an ghaoth



– Haiku by Gabriel Rosenstock, Photography by Debiprasad Mukherjee

night rain ... stagnant waters of the mind come alive

báisteach oíche ... beocht athuair in uiscí marbha na haigne



– Haiku by Gabriel Rosenstock, Photography by Debiprasad Mukherjee

litlle skulls around Kali's neck . . . counting them blaoscanna beaga timpeall mhuineál Chailí ... á gcomhaireamh



– Haiku by Gabriel Rosenstock, Photography by Debiprasad Mukherjee

The Dragon of Orleans

It was a night of heat in New Orleans. The lone man carrying his belongings in a pack upon his back walked the streets of the dark city. He seemed drawn to a large house at the end of a dark road. The area was near the edge of the city, but it seemed strangely isolated from the world. A black swamp lay about the building only grudgingly allowing the road to approach the dark structure. In this moonless night, it appeared as if moss made up the walls of the ancient home. A great tree hovered above the house, seemingly forming part of the roof. Above the porch a green neon light flashed "Luz's Bar and Grill".

The man walked up a set of dark wet steps and into an empty room, except for one man standing behind a long mahogany bar. Tables and booths filled the remainder of the room. The man seemed to move in total silence across the bar to a small booth in a dim corner. He sat his pack on the seat across the booth and settled onto the other bench seat. The large, black bartender looked over at the muscular, white man sitting in the darkened corner. Slowly walking around the bar, he approached the booth to take the man's order.

"What would you like?" he asked in a deep, powerful and somewhat unfriendly voice.

"Do you have food?" the man asked in a gentle, but powerful tone.

"We have the best gumbo in Orleans."

"Can you make it hot?"

"Any heat you want."

"I want it hot enough to kill." The man said as he stroked the green stone that held down several cloth coasters in the center of the table.

"I think, I can accommodate you. Anything to drink?"

"Eight ounces of straight bourbon."

"Alright, any brand you like?" the man asked with a suspicious tone in his voice.

"Walker," the unusual man said.

The bartender walked back to the bar and talked to someone through a window in the back wall. When the bartender looked back, the stone upon the table had started to glow, but the white man didn't seem to notice the gentle glow. He pressed a button under the bar top and then poured the bourbon. A slim, tall and beautiful, jet black woman walked out of a back room.

"Something wrong?" she asked the bartender.

"The stone," he said in a whisper as he nodded toward the man.

She looked over and smiled. Taking the drink the woman walked over to the booth.

"Here's your drink. May I sit?" she asked in an unusually sultry voice.

"Please," he said and opened his hand toward the other side of the booth.

"I'm the owner, Luz," she said pushing the pack aside and sitting down. She watched the man shake hot sauce into his bourbon, something she'd never seen before. "You've never been here before."

"No, it's my first time in New Orleans. I travel a lot and this time I ended up here."

As he took a sip from the glass his shirt fell open a bit, revealing a glowing eye on the man's chest. She could just make out the head of a dragon, but it was more than a tattoo. It looked almost alive. She could swear the glowing eye was staring at her. He quickly adjusted his shirt to cover the image once again.

"What's your name?" Luz asked.

"Zachariah Will, call me Zak."

"Nice to meet you," she held out her hand. As he grasped it, she felt a heat emanating from his skin. It was like he had a high fever, but he looked fine, even a bit pale. "The stone you're handling is glowing." Luz pointed out to the man.

"It's just the light in here," the man said pulling his hand from the crystal, causing its glow to fade. Luz knew it was not the bar's light. She had placed the colored crystals on the tables, to see if any would glow in the presence of one of her patrons. He was the first to cause any of the stones to react.

"Where are you headed?" she asked the man.

"I come from nowhere and I'm going nowhere," he answered, in all honesty.

"I see. So you have no plans?"

"Only to find a place to stay tonight."

"I may be able to help you with that. I have rooms for rent on the third floor."

"How much? I'm a little lean on money at the moment."

"Do you need a job?"

"Well, it would help. I usually find a few construction jobs here and there. You see I'm a carpenter."

"If you're interested, I have some work out back."

"Well, let me look at it." Zak said as he stood and offered his hand to help Luz get out of the booth.

Luz hit a switch on the wall as they walked through a set of double doors onto an old wooden deck. Flood lights illuminated the deck and a field beyond. As they walked across the deck it creaked and moved slightly. It was large enough for fifty or so people, but he could tell it was about to collapse.

The deck overlooked a two-hundred foot deep, grassy field, which ended in a dark, rather ugly swamp. He saw hundreds of dead trees with Spanish moss hanging from their lifeless limbs. The whole area was covered by dark undulating black water. A rotted, partially collapsed, wooden fence separated the grassy field from the swamp.

"Do you want the fence replaced?"

"No, don't touch the fence, but you could put a new fence about ten feet in front of the old."

"You sure you don't want it torn down?"

"No, don't go near it," Luz repeated.

"Is there a problem?"

"It's a long story."

"I have all the time in the world." Zak said as he carefully leaned on the rickety banister.

"Well, about a hundred years ago the most powerful voodoo priest in the city built this house. He had a beautiful daughter who was to be married. In the swamp lived a family that was known to be wild and savage. They lived off the bounty of the swamp and seldom came into Orleans.

"The daughter of the priest was sitting on a stone patio that lay below this deck. Two of the sons from the swamp family took her. When the girls father returned he found a scene of struggle, violence and blood. An amulet known to be owned by one of the sons was found and the priest called upon his followers to search for his daughter. She was found a few hours later, just inside the swamp. She had been raped and beaten. A week later she died from her injuries. The swamp was searched, but they could not find the family.

"The girl's father called together all the voodoo priests and priestesses in Orleans. They stood in a circle, in the field you're looking over. They called upon the darkest of powers. At midnight, upon the new moon, a hideous curse was placed upon the family. They would forever after remain in the swamp. Death would come upon them only if the sun's rays touched their skin. A curse was also placed on the swamp, driving out all life except for vermin. Some say there are nights you can hear the swamp family's moans of despair. On moonlit nights, dark shapes can be seen moving aimlessly among the dead trees." Luz told him, looking at the swamp.

"You believe this?"

"Yes, yes I do," she said in all seriousness. The man simply smiled and shock his head slightly.

"I can rebuild the deck and put up a new fence. It will take several months and I will need some money for materials."

"How much will you charge me?"

"Room and board and a couple of hundred dollars when I finish."

"Done," she said, as they shook hands.

Within a month he had torn down the old deck and built a new support structure. Zak had also erected the fence posts along the back of the property, while never touching the old fence, as Luz requested. He always wore a long sleeve shirt that fully covered his chest. Luz notice he seemed to never sweat and the heat seemed to mean nothing to him. It was as if he had been raised in hell itself. He worked steadily for ten to twelve hours a day, never stopping or getting tired. Each night he ate in the bar, always asking for the food to be made hotter and with more spice than the night before.

One night the cook decided to teach Zak a lesson and he cooked four whole ghost peppers in the man's chili. The cook had seen men collapse to their knees from the heat, with just one such pepper in their food. As the cook and the bartender watched, the man ate the chili without even noticing the heat. The bartender walked over and picked up the empty bowl. Zak looked up and said, "I see the cook finally got a little spice in the chili. I'd like another bowl and a bit more heat would be nice."

The bartender told the cook what Zak had said. The cook went back to the kitchen. He put plastic gloves on and took the ten remaining peppers and chopped them, seeds and all, into a small mince. Then the entire ten peppers were put into the bowl of chili and mixed in. The cook decided to see if the peppers were truly hot, so he put a small piece left on the chopping board onto the tip of his tongue. It took several seconds before he felt the heat. It was as if a hole was being burnt through his tongue. He stumbled to the cooler and managed to get to a gallon jug of milk. After he drank half the milk, the heat finally began to subside. Luz came into the kitchen and saw the chili. Picking up a spoon, she was about to sample it, when the chef choked out, "Don't, it will burn your stomach out!"

She turned to him holding a spoon of chili before her, "What?"

"I put ten ghost peppers in it," he croaked out, still feeling the heat.

"Are you crazy? Whoever eats this could die." He then explained what had happened. She looked at him like he was insane and took the bowl with her. Luz walked to Zak and explained what had happened. He took the bowl from her and as she watched Zak finished all the chili without breaking a sweat.

"How can you eat that?" she asked in amazement.

"As long as I can remember I haven't been able to taste anything but extremely hot and spicy food."

"It must be bothersome not to be able to taste anything but highly spicy food."

"It is a bit."

"Could you be finished with the work on the deck in four weeks?"

"Yes, I should be able to. Is there some reason for the time line?"

"On the full moon of next month, it will be a hundred years since the curse was put on the family. It's thought that the curse will be at its weakest upon that night and some believe the family will try to break out of the swamp using their own black magic. I'm planning for a lot of customers to show up to see if anything happens. They'll want to use the deck to watch the swamp."

"I see," he said, laughing a bit at what people were willing to turn into a party.

The weeks passed as Zak slowly completed the fence and then the deck. Luz had begun to have dinner each night with Zak and had started to truly care about this odd man. She suspected that he also cared for her. Finally, the deck was completed just one day before the hundred-year anniversary of the curse. Zak said he would stay for the festivities, but would be leaving the next morning. Luz planned to offer him a permanent job after "The Party of the Dark Swamp", was over. She was hoping to keep him with her.

Luz inspected the work and it was unlike any carpentry she had ever seen. There was not a single nail or screw used. Everything was held together with wood pins. The structure seemed as solid as a rock. It looked as if it was built two hundred years earlier, except the wood was all new. The deck had the feeling of an old sailing-vessel.

Zak came into the bar just as the first customers were arriving. By eleven thirty that evening, the bar was packed and the new deck was filling up in anticipation of the breaking of the curse. Luz was the perfect hostess, making sure all were served with food and drink. People were awaiting midnight when it was thought the family would try to break out of the swamp. Most believed nothing would happen, but came for the fun of the thing. The full, bright moon lit the field and the new fence with an odd glow.

As midnight arrived, a loud screeching was heard from the swamp and then an unusual pounding came from the darkness beyond the new fence. Suddenly, two of the fence panels seemed to explode into the grassy field. six dark figures slowly came through the gaping hole in the fence. A stray dog, that Luz had been feeding, rushed barking and snarling toward the lurching creatures. The animal grabbed the leg of one of the creatures. It reached down, lifting the dog off the ground, as two other creatures grabbed the dog's back legs. With one vicious pull, they tore the dog's legs off. The animal howled in pain as the first creature crushed its skull killing the animal. A number of the women fainted on the deck, while others screamed as all felt a ghastly fear descend upon them.

The creatures tore at the remains of the dog's body and feed on the dog's remains. After finishing their feast they once again started to move towards the deck. Luz saw Zak jump from the deck, landing in front of the advancing figures. He looked toward the creatures then his back began to arch as he fell to his knees. Zak's upper body curved back toward the ground as his chest pointed to the sky. Suddenly, he screamed in pain as his shirt burst into flame and burned away from his body revealing a startling red, glowing dragon etched upon his chest. Heat rose from the dragon's figure forming a red mist above the man. The mist drifted up as the dragon figure seemed to blur on Zak's chest. The red mist rose into the sky and spread out until it was as wide as the house and twice as tall. The mist, then started to solidify as the dragon figure disappeared from his chest. Large red wings formed from the mist and then a great body came into existence. Next, a huge spiked head and finally a long tail that ended on Zak's chest formed. The tail separated from his body as the great flying beast looked at those standing upon the deck. Its red glow lighted the ground and sky. Everyone flinched back as hideous screeches came from the dark creatures advancing upon the deck. The dragon twisted in the air and looked to the sound.

The creatures had backed away from the dragon and formed into a tight group. They then grasped each others hands and reached into the air. A dark cloud formed above them. A black bolt of lightning came from the cloud, striking the dragon on its chest. The great beast howled in pain and its eyes began to

swirl in blood-red anger. It then breathed in, filling its massive chest with air. From its great maw came a blast of red fire that struck the group of creatures with such force that the ground shook. The intense heat singed the hair and clothes of the people standing on the deck and blistered the paint upon the house.

As the flame died, the creatures were gone, leaving nothing but a blacken circle on the ground. Luz looked back at Zak and he seemed frozen in the same arched position. She then heard more screeching from the swamp. The dragon apparently heard the same sounds and flew up into the sky. It then dove down toward the swamp curving its flight as it approached the leading edge of the swamp. A great blast of dragon fire burst upon the dead water covered land. The trees did not simply catch on fire, they disintegrated. The black water below them boiled into a dark steam.

The dragon swooped up and dove again and again. Each time burning out a section of the swamp. When the flying beast finished, the swamp was nothing more than a huge, burnt out pit. Nothing stood, nothing survived. The house stood alone with its few living trees among before the blacken earth of the once dark swamp. The glowing red dragon then flew high into the sky until it almost disappeared from sight. Finally, it dove toward the ground, directly at Zak.

The dragon's form blurred as its shape changed from a great, solid body into a stream of bright red mist. The mist struck Zak's chest entering his body like water pouring into a glass. Luz watched the dragon figure reappear upon his chest as the last of the mist flowed into his body. His body unfroze and fell back onto the grass. There he lay on his side, utterly still as if dead.

Near the front of the deck Luz climbed onto the seat of a built-in booth. She clapped her hands above her head and the sound instantly penetrated through the crowd. They looked to the tall, black women standing above them. Luz clasped her hands above her head and they began to glow a yellowish green color. All in the crowd were mesmerized by the light.

"Listen," she said in a loud, but melodious spell-binding voice. "This night, no creatures came from the swamp, no dragon flew through the skies. What you saw was a great lightning bolt striking one of the dead trees within the swamp. The tree exploded into flames, which then raged across the swamp creating an inferno. The all-consuming fire and intense heat utterly destroyed all life within the swamp. That is what you have seen this evening and that is what you shall remember! Now it is time to leave this place and return to your homes. Remember the lightning, remember the great swamp fire, remember nothing else."

Luz lowered her hands as the glow faded. The people before her stood unmoving for a few moments. Then, slowly they came back to themselves and began to walk toward the doors. Luz could hear the comments of the crowd as she rushed across the deck, to the stairway that led to the field below.

"Did you ever see lightning like that?"

"Man, that fire was incredible. You could feel the heat. It felt like my hair was on fire."

"Did you feel the deck shake when the lightning hit?"

Luz reached Zak and slowly straightened his legs. She then carefully pulled him onto his back. The vivid red dragon stared up at her, unblinking from his chest. He was breathing normally, but was

unconscious. She heard something behind her and looked over her shoulder. There stood the bartender looking down at the two.

"Is he dead?" the huge man asked.

"No, just unconscious. Let's get him to my bedroom."

"Yes, ma'am," he said picking up the man with great difficultly.

Zak awoke and slowly opened his eyes. His sight cleared gradually to reveal a tall woman silhouetted against a large brightly lit window. She appeared to be looking into the sky and enjoying the light.

"How long has it been?" he asked in a hoarse voice.

"Two days," Luz replied without turning.

"Where are they?" Zak asked.

"Where are who?"

"The reporters, the law," he replied.

"There will be no reporters, no law. Those who were here that night only remember a lightning strike that started an inferno that destroyed the swamp. You and your friend are safe here."

"How did you manage that?"

"I inherited more than this house. The powers of my ancestors flow within me. I simply suggested that they forget the dragon and remember a fire."

"I see," he said.

"How long have you had the beast on your chest?"

"I was born with it, a long, long time ago. I think you may have had an idea that I was a bit different."

"When you touched the green stone that first night, it glowed."

"Ah, yes, I should have realized," he said with a smile on his face.

"I had no idea what you were capable of," she said as she slowly turned, still in silhouette.

"Where am I? This isn't my room."

"No, it's our room," she said in a sultry voice as she walked out of the light. He could see that she was naked as she slipped into the bed.

"Are you sure about this? I cannot stay forever."

"I know, but for now you are here."

The next morning they were sitting on the deck finishing their breakfast. "I have something to show you just beyond the old fence," she told Zak as she stood. They walked through the hole in the fence, to a large boulder at the separation of the swamp and the field. A greenish water had already filled the burnt out area. The true swamp was taking back what it had lost. Soon the area would be full of life.

She pointed to letters, etched by fire, into a boulder's hard, smooth surface.

"ALL EVIL DIES UPON A DRAGON'S BREATH!"

-A.D. Adams

pesticides

your words crawling under my skin bed bugs

weaving in and out of everything you said spiderwebs

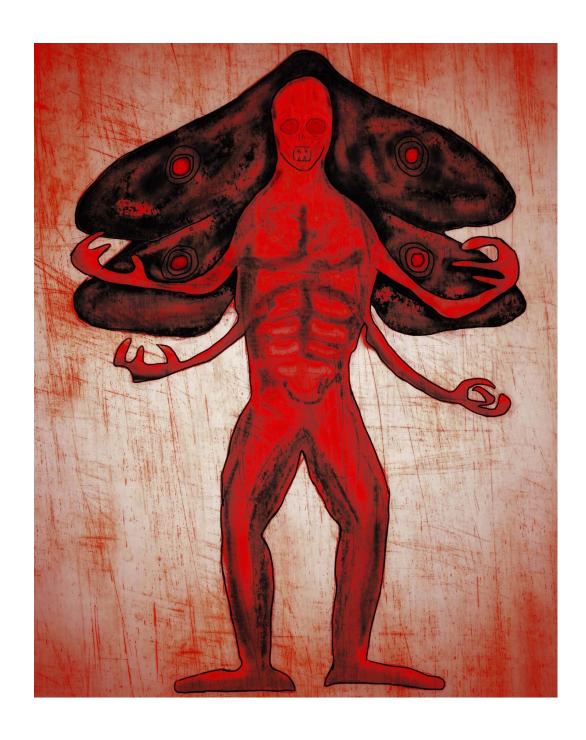
stomping on my self esteem cockroaches

the way you suck the life from me parasites

shedding you from my memory snake skin

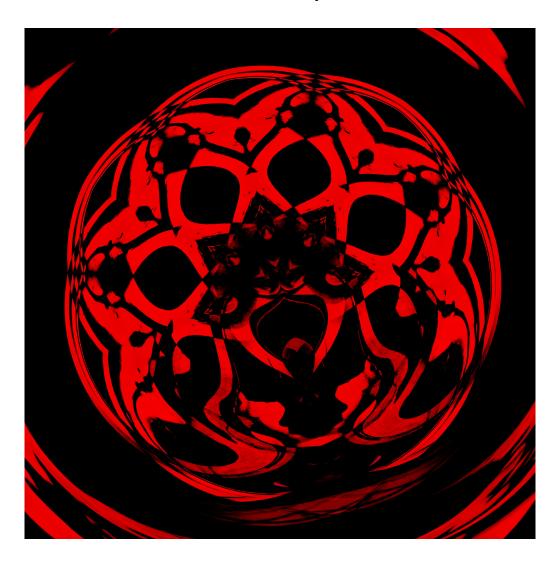
– Lori A Minor

Mothman



– Lori A Minor

Under His Eye



– Lori A Minor

'Lil Grim



– Chase Gagnon

The Ghost of Minnie Quay



"The Quay family, father James and mother Mary Ann, lived in the busy lumbering town of Forester. Their daughter, Minnie Quay, was only 15 at the time. She had given her heart to a young sailor whose ship would dock in Forester often for either shipping or merchant reasons. Not much is known about the gentleman, only that Minnie had fallen in love with him. Many in town warned her about this affair. Her own mother would often yell out loud enough for others in town to hear that she would rather see her dead than with this man. In the early spring of 1876, word came back to Forester that his ship had gone down in a storm on the Great Lakes of Michigan. Minnie was torn, as her parents had not allowed her to say goodbye the last time he had left town. A few days later, on April 27, her parents gave her charge to watch her younger brother, James Jr. As the infant was sleeping, Minnie walked into town, and passed by the town inn, the Tanner House. People sitting on the porch waved to the young girl as she passed them and walked to the pier. The onlookers watched as she jumped off the pier, into the cold dark waters of Lake Huron.

Her ghost has been said to roam the beaches of Forester. Some have said that she just walks, waiting for her lover to dock, while others have stated that she has tried to beckon young girls into the waters to their deaths."

Malédiction de la Nain Rouge



"The Nain Rouge (French for "red dwarf") also called "Demon of the Strait", is a legendary creature of the Detroit, Michigan area whose appearance is said to presage misfortune and destruction. According to various narratives surrounding the figure, Detroit's founder Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac was told by a fortuneteller to appease the Nain Rouge, but upon encountering the creature, he smacked it with his cane and shouted, "Get out of my way, you red imp!" As a consequence, a string of bad luck befell Cadillac; he was charged with abuse of power and reassigned to Louisiana, later returning to France where he was briefly imprisoned and eventually lost his fortune."

- Chase Gagnon

Book Reviews

Flying Free by Rachel Sutcliffe

In Rachel Sutcliffe's collection "Flying Free" we see the strength of the poet on full display. In the introduction, Sutcliffe says that writing has been her therapy and states that "it's kept me from going insane" which in itself is a recipe for brilliant poetry.

Aesthetically, the poetry has a smooth, lyrical feel all throughout the collection which contrasts perfectly with the often somber subject matter of the pieces. There are so very few people in this world can take some of life's greatest challenges turn them into something meaningful – something beautiful. After Reading "Flying Free" I know without a doubt that Rachel Sutcliffe is one of those people.

This is one of the most inspirational collections I've read in a very long time, and I'm sure I'll return to it again and again for years to come.

To read this collection for free, please visit: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/396b91 08d917b2c53747b59c06d71ec277ee71.pdf

– Chase Gagnon co-editor, Scryptic Magazine

Empty Pockets by Chase Gagnon

Even though I have seen Chase's work a thousand times, I was still blown away when I read Empty Pockets for the first time. My eyes were completely opened as I sifted through and examined each haiga within his book. Not only do you see the blight and renewal of Gagnon's beloved city, but of the poet himself. Not only do you see juxtaposition within each ku, but between the ku and photo, and even the poet and his haiga. Several haiku have the perfect juxtaposition as he compares himself with the grimy, rundown city of Detroit. You can see this in ku such as this one:

who I used to be... the empty streets of the motor city

If you ask a haijin what haiku in it's purest form means to them, they'll most likely bring up nature and kigo, however Chase Gagnon didn't grow up with that sort of connection to nature. His nature is *urban* and you see that in this poignant poem:

polluted sky – does the wind remember the feeling of trees

Gagnon brings to the table a brand new way to view nature, and haiku. Empty Pockets is a waterfall of original material and unlike nothing you've ever seen before. Even if you're familiar with Chase's work, seeing it all combined into one tangible gallery will be something you'll come back to time and time again.

To view some of the haiga in this collection, please visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVdo-2HV7m0&feature=voutu.be

To purchase your own copy of empty pockets, please visit https://www.amazon.com/Empty-Pockets-Chase-Gagnon/dp/1717354947

Lori A Minorco-editor, Scryptic Magazineeditor, #FemkuMag

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:

We are putting together a collection of art, poetry, photography, digital art, and short stories titled Group Therapy. This collection of work will be centered around those surviving abuse. Group Therapy was inspired by the various forms of abuse we both have endured and how it has affected us throughout our lives. This project is also intended to help heal those affected by abuse.

Group Therapy will be a free PDF download, but will be put into a print edition for purchase (black and white or color option), just like the issues of Scryptic. Just because your story is not chosen does not mean your story is invalid. We may make suggestions on grammar, form, spelling, etc., but never the context.

Please send any number of poems (all forms), short stories (1.5k words or less), paintings, drawings, digital art, or photography to grouptherapybook@gmail.com

There is no set deadline at this time. Pieces can be published or unpublished. If published, please send publication credits underneath the piece in this format:

Example: Scryptic Magazine, 1.3

This collection is dedicated to those surviving abuse. We will not publish anything that condones abuse, violence, racism, or harm to any person or group of people.

Images sent to this collection may be considered for the cover.