

SCRYPTIC



2.3

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Magazine of Alternative Art and Literature

Issue 2.2

© 2018 by Stephen Chase Gagnon and Lori A Minor
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Cover art by Chase Gagnon

Dear Readers and Contributors,

Thank you for being apart of, yet another beautifully spooky issue of Scryptic! As you might notice, our issue is a wee bit late this month. We had a record breaking 227 submissions and as it took us longer than normal to sift through them, we decided not to run a Halloween contest this year, but simply put out the publication on Halloween, which is super duper exciting! This issue is full of incredible art and literature and we hope you enjoy it as much as we do!

We do have an announcement on the last page regarding changes and updates in our submission guidelines. This is VERY important to read as things are slightly changing! Our website has been updated as well. Don't worry! There's just a few minor alterations-- we'll still be publishing six times a year.

We hope you all have a spooktacular Hallows Eve!

– Lori A Minor and Chase Gagnon

AFTERLIFE

saying no
what the holy spirit
never taught me

wine glass
my testimony
becomes obsolete

bisexual
undoing
every prayer

hand-me-downs
my sister and I
trade religions

street preacher
I count myself
among the damned

make-up sex
what would have been
grace

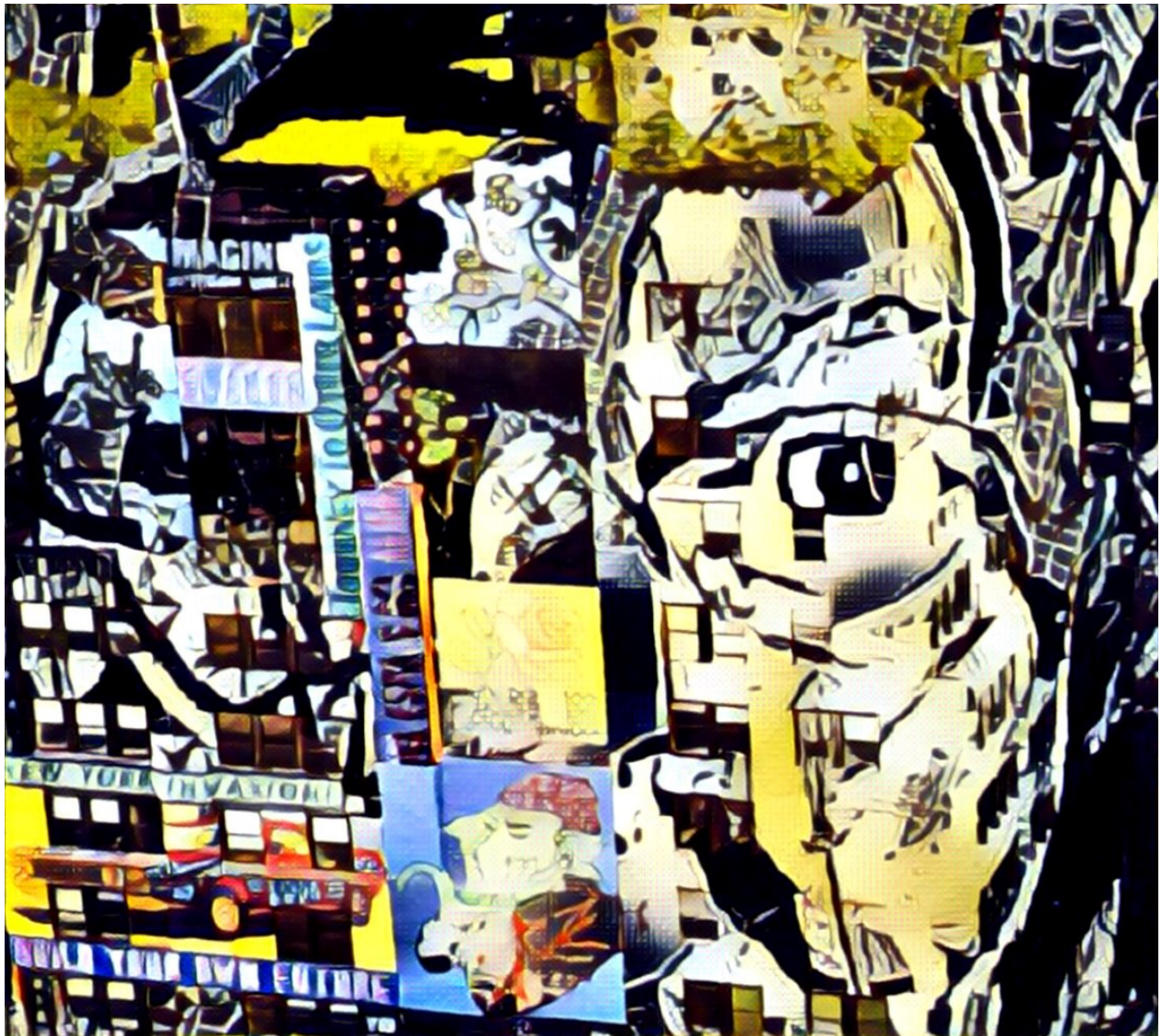
stargazing
what I thought was a miracle
now a mystery

church bells
the altar no longer
my home

– *Tia Haynes*



– Jim Zola



– Jim Zola



– *Jim Zola*



– Jim Zola

John Jumped

John jumped off the bridge,
his beard wagging goodbye.
Hart wandered where sky
became ocean, sonnets for chum.
Randall left us to wonder.
Vachel took the easy way,
chugging lye, the bottle
half empty. His note said
They tried to get me --
I got them first.

– *Jim Zola*

My Wife Likens Me to a Shmoo

Mutant bugs play Vivaldi in Bermuda grass.
Weeds with runners choke morning into night.
My wife pokes pins into the notes I leave.
Soy milk is running low. Damn the Parcheesi.

Sometimes her face disappears into itself,
not in shadows or light. Sometimes she stuns me.
I am a shmoo for her. Pan fried, multiplied.
I wear a Btfsplk hat and paint the dirty
windows shut. Who needs it, the world outside?
Moonbeam McSwine winks in agreement.

– *Jim Zola*

Baxtalo

When you call,
you weave words
underlined in blue.
Drop of blood,
spot of urine,
tip of the tongue.
In my youth

I could influence
the weather,
move clouds,
blot the sun.
The voices
inside me
had extra fingers.

The first time
I saw a man
with a deformed arm,
I was repulsed
and curious.
When he touched me,
the little fingers
brushed against
my arm, I felt
an electric shiver.
What luck is this?
I walk outside
into the blinding light,

two legs, two arms,
move the wind
with a whisper,
step over
each crack
on my way to you.

– *Jim Zola*

window seat
I read your last letter
by snow light

care home
all the life
she once lived

moth holes
in the fabric
the china doll's dress

sundown
still the dust
on my pen

low sun
a childhood spent chasing
father's shadow

– *Rachel Sutcliffe*

In the cage,
where no more birds breathe
grow flowers.
In the house,
which you left,
settle
the weeds of the hope.
Any fly attempt
in the cart-track
ends
with derailment.

– *Radostina Dragostinova*



– Andy McLellan

Frozen

I have never liked the cold although, given the choice of dying from fire or ice, I would choose ice every time. Fire has no heart and just destroys. The cold of ice is deeply intimate, penetrating the deepest parts of your being, knowing you totally and utterly before freezing you completely.

Winter is ruthless. The old, infirm and weak all live in fear of her touch, just as the stragglers at the edge of the herd are picked off by lions. Wrapping the earth in ice we are, to all intents and purposes, her prisoners in the dark and cold months that gather at the end of one year and the beginning of the next.

The Algonquin speaking tribes of north America speak of the wendigo, walkers on the wind who are known from their ashen skin wrapped around emaciated bodies. Sunken eyes watch for human prey. Winter is the time of the wendigo and they too must suffer the lean months when food is thin on the ground and even the humans they do take to the grave are themselves often half starving.

Snow falls and piles up on top of ice. The low sun discovers new shapes and makes eerie shadows from them during the few hours of daylight that remain. Under the ice there may be life yet, but it is almost impossible to tell. At times it feels like the land will always be white and under the dominion of cold and ice. All that was supple and alive is now solid and brittle. Movement makes life, stillness takes it away.

Humans find ways to block out the darkness with fire and warmth but even that can only extend as far as their own door. In each of our minds we know that when the last candle goes out, the dark will return. Our hearth fire is just a short respite.

Longer days of warmth and sun will return to us. Or, at least, they always have. Maybe one day the fire of the world will go out and there will be nothing to hope for but more ice. On nights like this, the sound of the wind brings the wendigo rather too close, and I hope that the sun gods hear our prayers that the coming winter will be short and kind.

frozen lake
my reflection cracks
into a thousand pieces

– *Andy McLellan*

Afterglow

In the blurred pastel focus of my dotage, my wrongs and excesses are prominent mile markers, not of evil, but of what I thought I could do without retribution. The good I've done, and there has been much of it, feels like retirement home grass I step on to reach for the vivid nettles of roguery growing just outside my fenced-in state. My memories of vice are so much more poignant than those of virtue.

– *Edward Ahern*

The Ambush

I crouch hiding from self,
thoughts ambling by unassaulted.
For I ravage not from hunger,
nor maul from envy.
I dread the moments
when brittle restraints crack
and I savage the feelings
that I'm beholden to cherish.
The moments are not vicious
but I maim with the talons
of self doubt.

– *Edward Ahern*

The Dead Sing

The graveyard sings its songs, calls to me
through the darkness. I sit alone, smoke
cigarette after crimson cigarette, listen
to it beckon. Night after night I give in,
my only companions cigarettes and liquor.
The dead want to speak, maybe, a trifle
that will make our poor existence brighter
listened to by only the occasional nightbird and me.

Under the gravestones the rain causes
a shift, a movement of unvital earth,
and the suck of mud is a skeleton
that struggles to free itself, sings
its forlorn song in the midnight drizzle.
I listen, translate, hum a private song
I'll never sing to anyone but the decayed
dead in the shadows of the graveyard's ash.

Wind cries through trees, contralto branches
snap and clitter through their cousins
tick and tock off tombstones. Percussive
rumble of the song in my mind against
the plaintive drip of trees and tombstones.

I hope the bird gets something out of this.

– *Robert Beveridge*

Lysandra in the Graveyard

Mist covers your ankles as you lay
in the doorway of your father's
mausoleum, levitate like water

dust dances in the space between
the floor and your black shift's
back as you await the lover

who was supposed to be here at midnight

you always told me visions plague
you, how they crowd the edges
of your vision like blue remains

how they kiss your eyes, leave you
awake, a scream bitten back against
your tongue, your forehead

and now the light glows along
the lid of the bier, commands
you to push it aside, look in

and find your lover's remains
and find your lover's remains
and find your lover's remains

– *Robert Beveridge*

Of Sweetie Mice and Men

I peer through the shop window to check out the rows of glass jars. Some are filled to the neck, others are almost empty and I imagine gulping the sugary air from inside them. Temptation is everywhere, in brandy balls, toffee logs and pink and white iced caramels. Fingering the found coin in the pocket of my cotton dress, I look up and down the empty street and step towards the door.

A small *ting* announces my arrival and, as if by magic, the shopkeeper appears from behind the velvet curtain, where the shop ends and real life begins. I inhale deeply, then hold my breath so the flavour of home-made fudge can't escape. On the shelf opposite, I am faced with all sorts of delights, all teasing and straining under the weight of their appeal.

"So, what it's to be today, sweetie?"

With a wolfish grin he takes up position behind the counter, his silver sweet-shovel poised. Then, I hear the sound of his foot slowly tapping. A surge of panic as frantic as a sugar rush hits me – *what to choose?* Alphabet letters, traffic light lollies, tootie frooties, candy bracelets, flying saucers and space dust. All the balls – aniseed, butter and mixed. *So many types of sweet pips.* Should I have apple, blackberry, raspberry or sherbet? *And look, there's even cola.* Or chocolate limes that trick you, melting like velvet on the tongue before skinning the roof of your mouth. Strawberry sherbets are equally as risky, but with a brief fizz of reward. Dare I face chewing nuts or banana whirls that will steal my fillings or lick powdery bliss from a strawberry bonbon or chomp on a spongy, pink shrimp?

"Can't make up your mind, dear? Here, have a sweetie mouse on the house while you decide."

I place the white chocolate in my mouth and gag.

*blinding sunlight
a figure at the park gate
pacing, pacing*

– Marion Clarke



– Marion Clarke

With Each Glimpse of Mortality

In the waiting room
I feel like a philosopher
who has plunged into the deepest waters
and forgotten how to swim—
sickness of the spirit is sickness of the spirit
give it a name
and step to the back of the line
sickness of the body is sickness of the body
give it a name
and step to the front of the line.
I leave the waiting room
before my cures are handed to me
and learn to love the names
which I change and rearrange
with each glimpse of mortality.

— J. J. Steinfeld

Your Famous Banquet

At your famous banquet you ask us to chew the heads off our individual chickens, then pluck and gut them, then roast them on spits. The huge walk-in fireplace roars. Or is that cosmic laughter? I'm a vegetarian, and your chicken-disrespect sickens me. A vast intelligence rises from the severed chicken heads and thickens the ozone layer, shielding us from our sins. As for the wine with which you expect us to wash down this bloody mess: it tastes like antifreeze, tainted with urine. How can I recognize such flavors? Because I've been in your kitchen and have seen you stirring the pots. I've also seen the huge jug of antifreeze, the brassy urine samples stolen from the hospital where you volunteer. Come to think of it, why do all the patients on your ward die within hours of being admitted? Speaking of admissions, why don't you confess? The chickens would appreciate some closure. What if God is a chicken? Let's skip the entrée and just pass around the salad. I don't mind plucking out the thorns. Your guests, including me, would like to outlive this famous banquet. We promise we won't call the police.

– *William Doreski*

Intimate Journals

The woman in the coffee shop line turns and bestows a velvety glance on my crumpled figure. Upholstered in down, wrapped in scarves, capped with woolen beanies, we both resemble those plump elves people install on their lawns for Christmas. The waitrons shuffle along with heavy steps, exhausted by New Year's celebrations. Coffee gurgles in huge urns. Espresso sizzles from a stainless machine. Slowly a mist invades the space. It thickens into a huge gelatinous tear. It's the fog of humanity settling in the cold. Not the fog of war but a genuine cloud of smiling vapors lowering itself to earth. The steam rising from the many poured cups of coffee flatter and enhance this fog. The woman in line receives her mocha latte and withdraws, smiling that Mona Lisa smile that has become so fashionable. When she has drained her cup, and not before, someone will casually molest or harass her, as is also fashionable today. Not me. I'm too deeply embedded in my winter garb, too slow and old to react to the feints and jabs of sex. Gauguin liked women to be "fat and vicious," but never found his ideal. His *Intimate Journals* proves that men are as brittle as strips of jerky and not much more intelligent. I wish I could paint. Not like Gauguin, but like someone still embedded with ideals. I would paint the woman who has given me that glance, which in its lack of interest or sincerity impresses like a string of colored lights twinkling in the mist.

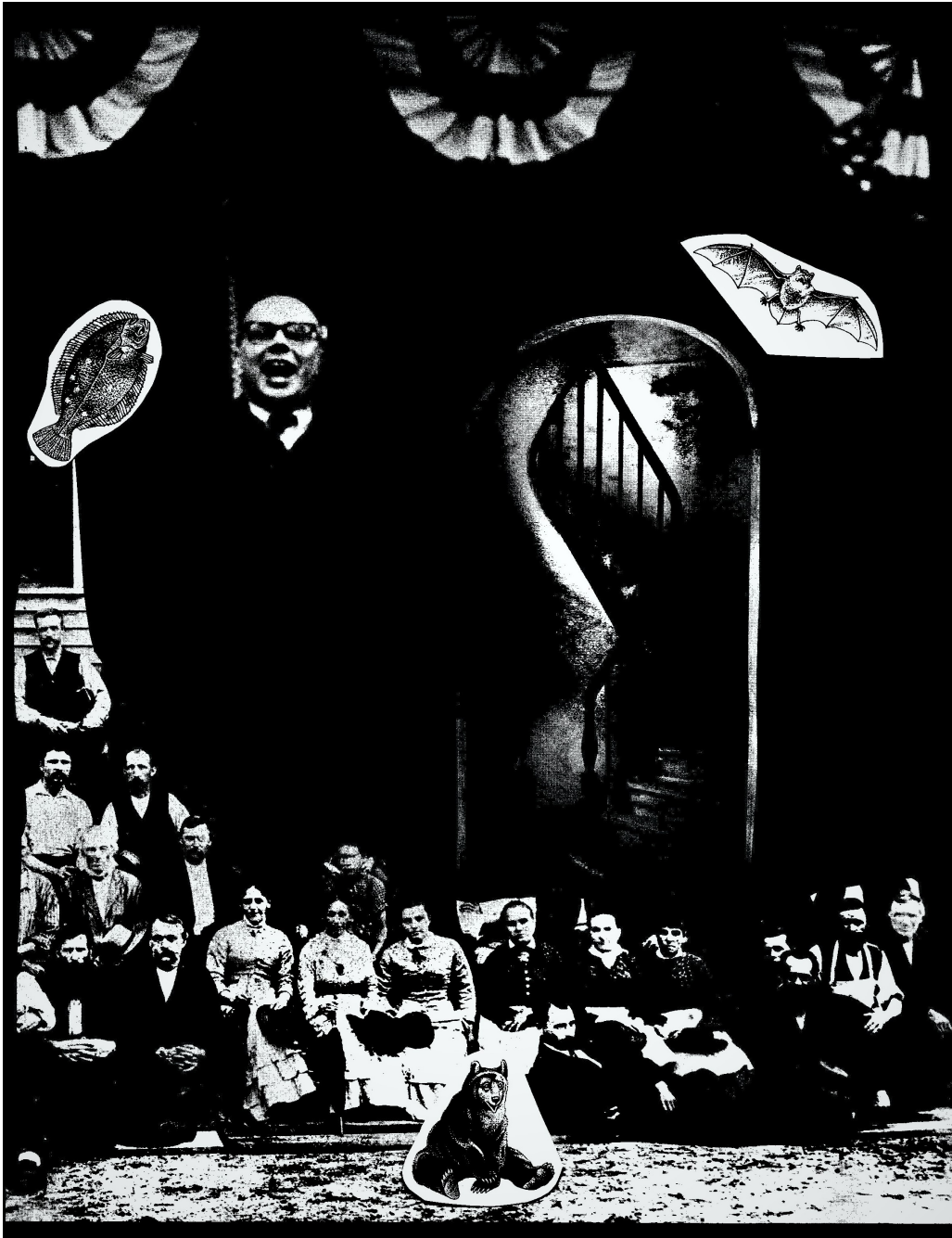
– William Doreski

Like Charybdis

Your desirable little hands smooth our cocktail crowd, easing us into positions we will never forget. You think you're the moon polishing a landscape; but outside, the city roars like a red lion, and pensive shopfronts stoke passion no one can control. You want your friends to slip under each other like sheets of paper. You want us to imprint each other in drifts of wrinkles and folds. I can't endorse your chemical bathos, your nineteenth-century plotting, but I appreciate your little hands the way the night sky appreciates stars. Of course we can't see the stars: the reddish city sky obliterates the cosmos, disabusing everyone of faith. That would be good except that someone deep in the room is complaining about election fraud and multiple abortions. You run your hands over the space that person occupies, and he ceases. The fragrance of forgotten history wafts from person to person. We smile like meringue. You smile also, but the cocktails we've imbibed churn like Charybdis, and with all the seals broken, all the bulkheads breached, our ghosts mingle without inhibition, rendering us moot.

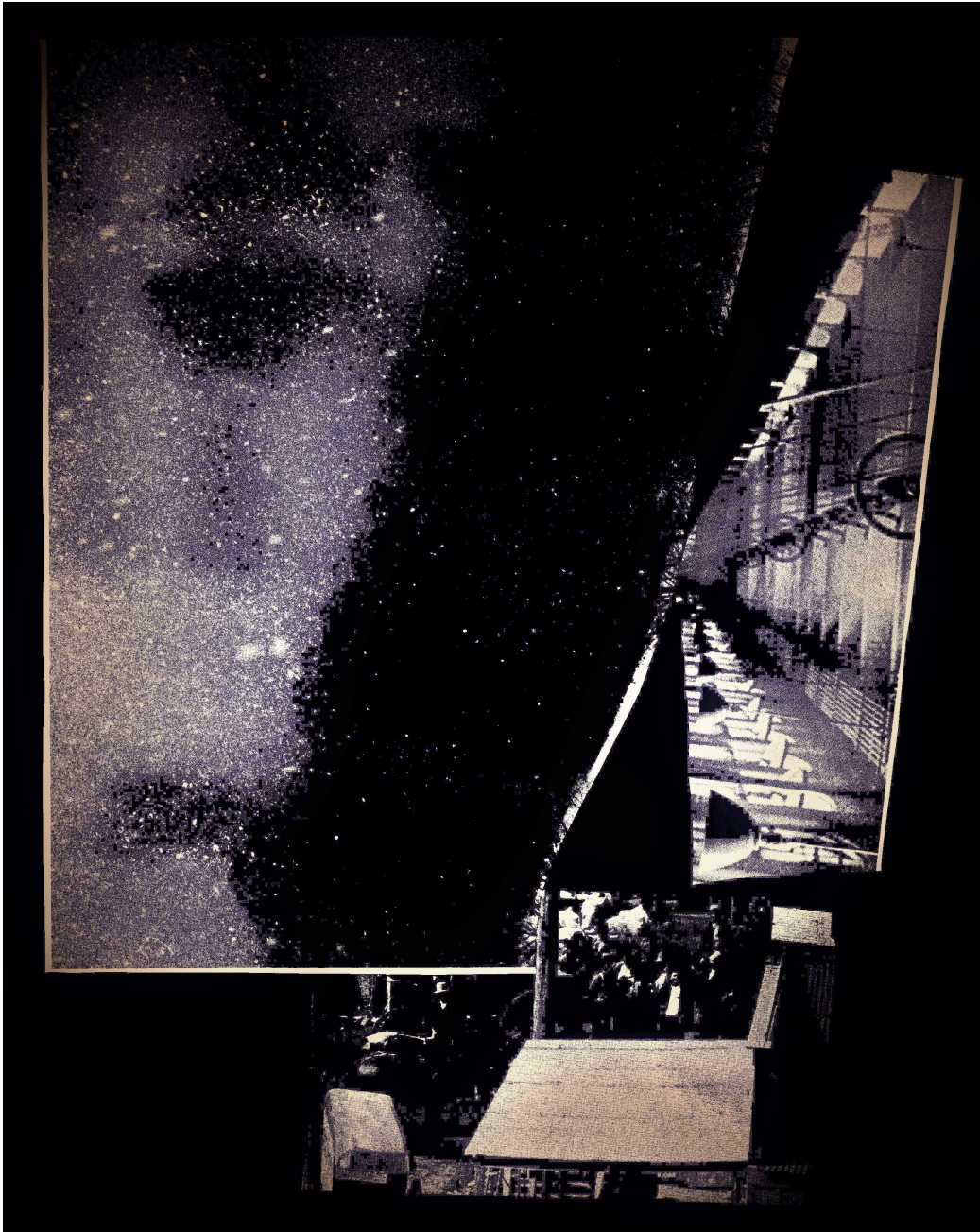
– *William Doreski*

A Continuous Stream of Shrieking



– Dan Nielson

Poor Souls in Purpatory



– *Dan Nielsen*

Solopsists Unite!



– Dan Nielsen

Ode to a Porn Star

In a world of concrete and shame
only you, my vessel of desire,
demonstrate intimacy.
Despite slurs and scorn, you remain
comfortable in your body,
comfortable that others have bodies.

Humble as the Pope washing feet,
you kneel for our pleasure. One minute
your body is a roof that shelters the timid.
The next, a banshee emerges
from the fire between your thighs.

Hair stringy, skin slick with semen and sweat,
you summon strength to part lips again and again.
Echoing the sound of the universe's birth,
your moans shake the heavens
tumbling gods from their thrones
to walk with humans and demons alike.

– *Jon Wesick*

Everybody Loves a Hanging

City fathers and their adoring wives,
smells of kettle corn and grilled sausage,
Mrs. Wheeler's social studies class,
Chamber of Commerce, the mayor in top hat,
the sheriff gun belt and brass buttons gleaming,
rattle of rollercoaster wheels
and screams from the tilt-a-whirl.

Children underfoot, weaving
through the crowd to get a better view
or tugging mothers' sleeves to point at steel tubs
where men with tattooed arms twirl
wisps of sky blue cotton candy.
"See Miss Trixie, the woman with three breasts!"
barkers yell. "Sorry kids, this one's adults only."

After the main event – fireworks!
Maybe a souvenir to help you remember –
T-shirts, postcards, a 1/24-scale replica of the gallows.
Photographers are standing by
to take your picture with the bloodstained rope!

– *Jon Wesick*

The Temple of Noise

Cymbals clash as I enter the *Temple of Noise*. Everyone wants me to like them. Everyone wants me to inspect their proud turds, enshrined in the altars of their toilets.

In the *Temple of Noise*, the multi-colored marble floor is sentient. Rich purples and Caribbean greens cry out in pain and protest when I step on them. Yellows and oranges whine and complain.

Tattooed and lip-pierced Americans dribble diet 7-Up across the floor to soothe and mollify the tiles, but it only agitates them to remember that in a past life, they were men and women and now they are just flooring in the *Temple of Noise*.

2.

In the *Temple of Noise*, I'm a one-man band with no talent and a tender heart. So I go play in the subway, far from the murderous tracks. But the Ruffians grab me and my instruments, which are all attached to my body, and throw me down onto the rails.

I scramble up just in time, but my music has fallen from me and the train throws the drum, the cymbal, trumpet, concertina, cornet, and the rest into the air with a jumble of sound that strikes me as beautiful. I declare that I will devote the rest of my life attempting to reproduce it.

3.

The manic-depressive woman is working out at the gym again, the gym called the *Temple of Noise*. She has fixated on me as part of her reformation. She is on her 29th set of crunches, and again she invites me to punch her in the stomach as hard as I can.

Again I refuse; she is infuriated. She turns purple with anger. She is like Mt. Etna before an eruption.

I don't shower before leaving the gym. I'd be afraid to take my clothes off in there. I take my sweat into the winter cold. It is one of the three hundred days of sunshine we enjoy here.

4.

With all the sunshine, I spend a lot of time on porches. Since I was a kid, I sat on the front porch of my grandpa's farmhouse and watched for the giant pterodactyl who would fill the sky with his leathery wings and change life on Earth forever. I never told anyone about it. As I grew into manhood I sat on the porch and continued scanning the sky for it, as I engaged in conversation with my wife, neighbors, friends, relatives. I never knew when the pterodactyl would interrupt us and send everyone shrieking and running, except me, who had been waiting for it for decades.

5.

We're sitting on the front porch again and Hsueh Feh says: *The whole world is you, yet you keep thinking there is something else.*

I ignore him, as usual. He spends weeks, while working in the ice cream factory, thinking up his "wise sayings."

I ask: *Any new flavors? I've heard someone invented a sherbet called **Royal Blood**.*

Hsueh yawns. *That was decades ago, but vampire flavors are more popular now than ever, favorites among rural Goths. Also, zombie flavors, and flavors named after famous romance writers. I'm not going to speak their names. I'm not going to defile my tongue.*

Hsueh's sometimes girlfriend has a silver stud in her tongue, but I do not mention it. Today I will find new ways to annoy and irritate him.

– Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabojs

Sally Wants

Sally wants to watch my downfall in 3D, see every one of my pores emit fear, see the fear transform into pain.

She wants to sip a sloe gin fizz as she watches. She's like a victim's father watching an Oklahoma execution, in which three chemical compounds combine to create death. Sally wants to toss kernels of popcorn at the screen of my demise

A Russian court will determine my fate soon. It's all been fixed, well in advance. Sally has connections.

I put on my bright pink dress and matching baklava and hope I will not be judged too harshly. I am a man. I am not even a homosexual, so you may ask: *why is he dressed so?* Sally did this to me. Sally betrayed me.

My father risks looking weak if I walk free. My father is dead. Figure that out.

I am no hooligan motivated by religious hatred, though I hate religion. I am vilified by the state media, though I use ivory soap and am always clean, even in my jail cell.

Sally always used fancy boutique soaps, scented with lemongrass and patchouli.

– Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois



empty deck chair
under contorted palms
elephant moon

– Giddy Nielsen-Sweep

I awaken
from this recurring nightmare
alone in my head



– Giddy Nielsen-Sweep

I grew up on our dairy farm, out west in Queensland. It was hot, almost all the time, very hot. I loved it, growing tall, lean and brown. But it was the winters I remember most. Dry, teeth-chattering westerlies blew across the land all the way from the middle of Australia's heart, leaving lips cracked, and cheeks and hands red. Those icy, unforgiving winds could chill you to the bone. So too could Mother's unforgiving, cold hands that found my neck to wake me in the mornings when she was feeling devilish.

shivering
beside the wood stove
dressing for school

In summer I roamed everywhere, climbing trees, picking 'kings apples', and spying on birds. I picked bunches of gum tips, presenting them to Mum, or carefully arranging them in vases. They wilted in a day. Occasionally I'd spot a flash of bright colour as a blue wren flitted in the dried grass.

after rain
scent of clean wet eucalypt
tanks overflow

– *Giddy Nielsen-Sweep*

The insomniac

the snore
came suddenly
like dynamite
popping in a cave.
he woke to the sound,
shocked out of sleep,
and lay there
listening to his heartbeat
and wondering
if the roof had fallen
and were the children
alright in their beds.
the next one
came
from the pillow next to him
and minutes later.
it seemed
each night
that behind her face
was a lamp-post,
hit
with occasional
cars.

– *DS Maolalai*

The oak tree

piss
builds
and spills
and bursts
across the seat.
cold weather
and my cock
is like an acorn.

small
and, like an acorn,
impossible
to aim it.
roots
cracking pavements
and spilling leaves
in weather;
tripping people up
and going
all around.

like an acorn,
appreciable
in the abstract
but right now
pretty worthless
but for what it might
become.

– *DS Maolalai*

Christ, Judgment Day

seemed to start just after my Surviving parent Raptured + Left in a bucket on Yom
Kippur.

Then Beginning Fateful seventy-fourth year Ecstasy flurry everything sped up.

Jesus' journey daughter well as Alien
son check in from their Eastern tip Big Island Witch compound which I can almost see
from Redondo Beach-----

-----Salem Paradise now Satan lava-occupied.
Bastard cousin's family Flooded out by a hurricane:

time she leaves, Florence [once upon Grams name]'s expected to unload ten trillion
gallons on North Carolina.

Seven weeks ago, sixty-six-year-old bipolar buddy pinched a motorcycle
to Kerouac from Frisco through Apocalyptic fires to near the Arctic Circle.....
before crisscrossing

The States, currently visiting his Widower dad in Paducah outside Cincinnati 9800 miles
so far;

Leader of Pack says, "Don't think could ride 2,300 miles in 2 days for Monday's
Divinity School Men's Group."

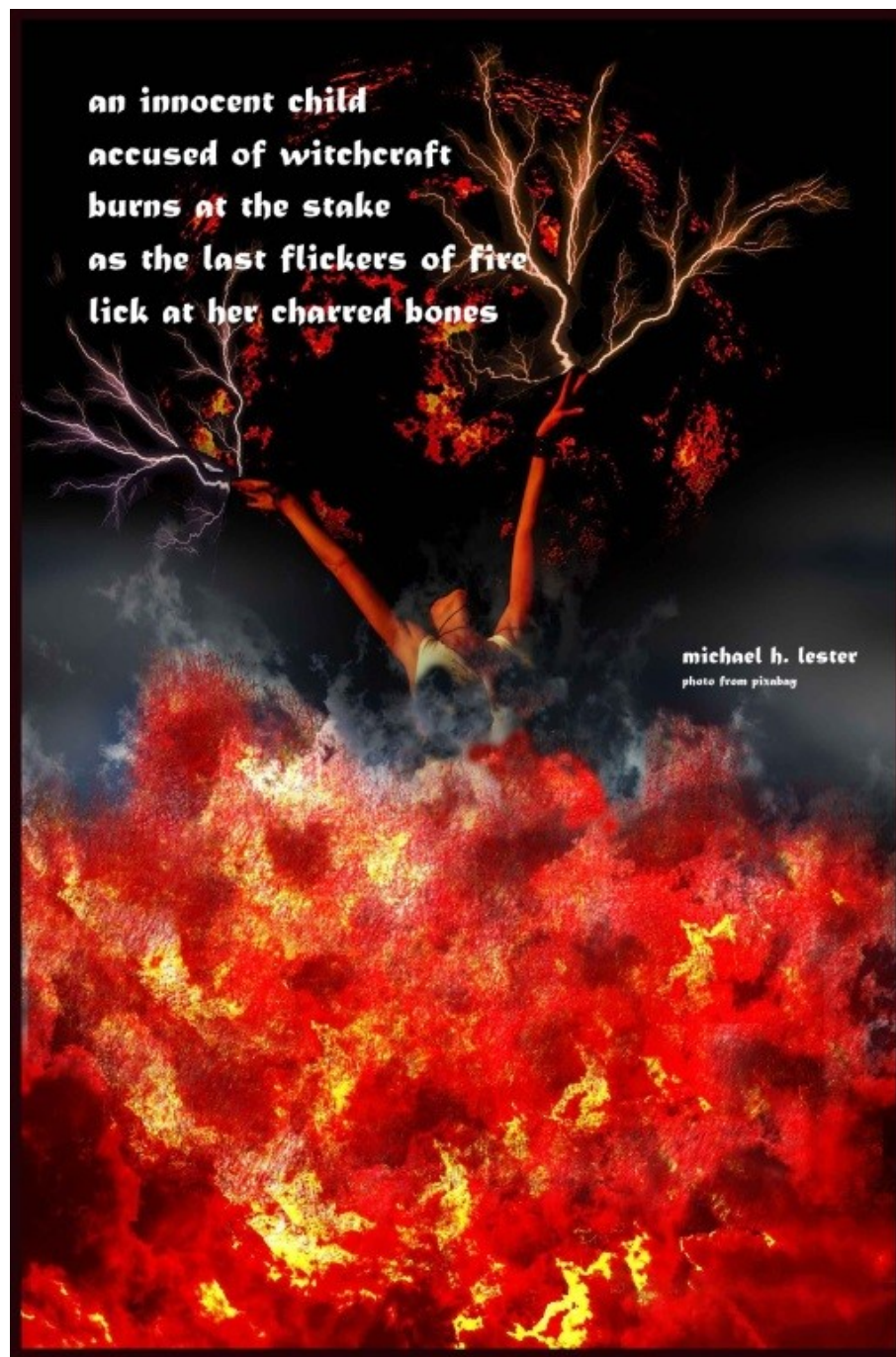
But closer to home's where there's real Swirling
what with three-ring OCD Circuses servicing each child's Family

(well as trekking to PST gatherings they are dedicated to attending despite all kinda
Obstacles no excuses)

that're Fundamental Devotions never unpacking Baggage

*****while Existence is in Heat
for the Two of Us 'til we Die Marveling our Life as Circuit-riding P/Matriarchs.

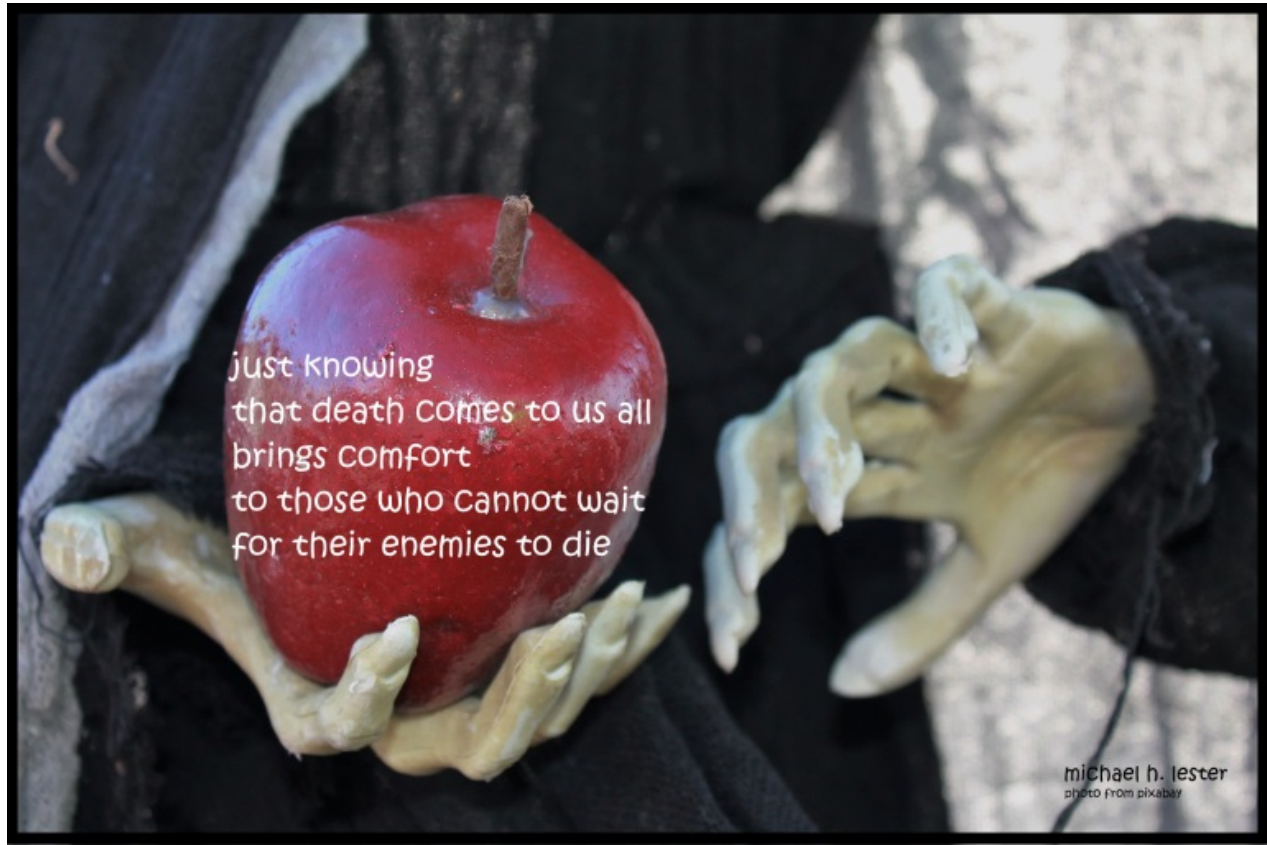
– Gerard Sarnat



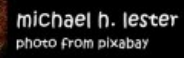
an innocent child
accused of witchcraft
burns at the stake
as the last flickers of fire
lick at her charred bones

michael h. lester
photo from pixabay

– Michael H. Lester



– *Michael H. Lester*



she lies in wait
somewhere in the gloaming
an ogress
with an appetite
for poets and muses

– Michael H. Lester

gaslighting
the compass
spins and spins

repotting roses
she makes room
for her despair

waiting all night
for her toys to come alive
the only child

ghost moon
the stray we named
comes back to die

– *Lucy Whitehead*

in transit [bathos]

riding the internet rails : railing against fate : wondering what gauge needle : which steel
tine : which poison ray : will do me in : i'm over thirty : crone freight passing in the
byte : passing as human : a trafficked doyenne : citoyenne of the cyber marketplace :
waiting to be traded-in : for newer : for ne(w)ish

i'm an insomniac tortured by seasonless seasons : by flickering algorithms : by
shoplights that never dim : i await judgment day : the accusing j'accuse : sinistral &
dextral pointing their darknet digit(al)s : telling the world my code's not disruptive
enough : my seine's unalluring : a bad phisher of men : i'm sent down : cul-de-sacked in
error : page not found

– *Maureen Kingston*

[inside] stroke

the brain's black curtain : a bygone bombazine : a damp mourning coat infested with
silverfish : i watch their missile bodies wave goodbye : twitter & twitch : freefall from
my memory plane : doomed neuron bait : destined to implode

the newsreel sputters : sundowns : i crank up the volume to compensate : hear buzz
bombs whistle : powerlines whip & hiss : then nothing : a silent running : the propeller
in my head quick-stopped : my right foot receives the message last : cavitates : begs
No Signal

Signal Lost

No Signal

Signal Lost

– Maureen Kingston

the aftermath of camus's l'étranger

the lost rainbow hugs the maypole's waist : the one-eyed clock searches for its hands :
the world map folds in on itself : (n)arrows to a feckless flèche : where are the gods? :
where is fortune's smiley-face? : right over left : how a woman wraps her raincoat : left
over right : how a man wraps his raincoat : you're wrong : no : you're wrong : wrong
doesn't exist : all the children's crayons the same shade of rain : father is absent :
motherlove hangs by a thread : "*aujourd'hui, maman est morte*" : merci meursault : ice-
pick the philosopher's stone : pass the bullet bowl around

– *Maureen Kingston*

Self Portrait



– *Kenzie King*

My Demons



– *Kenzie King*

Horizon

Mother lives with the obituaries.
Each day a new one on the board,
sometimes four swarm, demand
to be read—she turns to me
as we walk to the elevator—
let's avoid them.

– *Judith Skillman*

Sickness Comes

Knock knock it's September.
You know me well—
as you have no choice
carve out more space for nerve pain
of stalactites, stalagmites
already housed in lumbar regions.
A dead jay serves as omen.
Broke its neck against telephone pole.
Feathers brilliant in new mud.

– *Judith Skillman*

lingering on
the pain of bruises
in my dreams
i follow the screams
that take me back home

border fence
slicing the sun
into pieces
all my beliefs
about freedom

– *Hifsa Ashraf*

*black magic
another shadow
turns into a ghost*



– Hifsa Ashraf

**first
chemo
the
changing
color
of
my
blood**



© Hifsa Ashraf

– *Hifsa Ashraf*

The Bowler

In some ways, a human being is like a song. Some people talk about how they might hear a song for the very first time and not even halfway through it they know it's their new favorite. For me it's almost never like that. But that's how it was with Sammy.

I call her Sammy, her real true name was Samantha but when you are fond of somebody you just have to give them a pet name, you know? I mean when you are really, really taken with them.

I generally never know with people until I get down to the inside, until I get to the real nitty-gritty, when I can see who they really are. And then sometimes everything just sort of clicks for me.

When the flesh is still on them, when all that outer stuff is in the way; well honestly it almost makes me sick sometimes to see it. I have to get to the real person, on the inside – the one they maybe think they are hiding from the world. And I don't know why. I don't know why they try to hide it. I can see right through them.

I take off the scalp, get rid of the hair, and I scoop out the eyes. I can't stand the eyes. They soak up all the emotion. And a person, a true real person, they are not about emotion or feelings. The truth of a person is all about structure. It's the foundation that matters. Not the soft, gooey stuff they attach to the outside of it as they go through their lives.

I clean out the insides but not too carefully. Just get the messy stuff out, the soft parts of the brain, all that crap. It's all useless. It's not who they really are.

Getting rid of the nose cartilage is sometimes the hardest part of the whole process. That stuff, I mean it is just hanging on to the bone like it was put there with super glue or something. I have to scrape and scrape or if it is just too stubborn I will get angry and I will grab it with some big pliers and I will just rip that junk off of there! Just tear it loose. But I have learned you have to be careful. You have to stay within yourself. You don't want to damage a person. I never want to hurt anybody.

After you get rid of the cartilage then you just have to boil them. You have to boil them for a long, long time. And you need to vent the area because there is going to be a smell. My whole garage has been converted to this process. But that's okay; I don't even own a car. I just walk or take the bus when I am going somewhere. That's how you meet new people, after all.

Sammy is my favorite now and she goes with me. I carry her everywhere.

I use a bowling ball bag so that other people won't get upset. Sometimes people can't quite handle it when they see the true essence of a human being. I mean it can be a lot to take in. When I brought Sammy into the house and I showed her the rest of the family, all six of them sitting on the mantle; all of them clean and white and their structure so sound and I mean they are all rock solid, no breaks, no missing teeth, every family member perfect, and I started to introduce them to her: Pop, Wally (I call him Wally the Wizard or just "the Wiz"), Tammy, Moira, Timber Wolf (real name Tim but he was ferocious) and Anita; well, Sammy just started to get hysterical and I had to quiet her.

I had to quiet her before I really was ready to do it. But it's all okay. It's tough sometimes, life can be tough, but it's all okay.

She is fine now. Sammy is fitting right in and she is my favorite.

– *Steve Sibra*

Bouncing off the Walls

I had my miniature
black and white TV
with its broken volume control
on the late night
movie

when someone pounded
on my door:
“Your TV is bouncing
off the walls! Some of us
have work in the morning...”

I turned it off
and went out
down the dead street
the traffic lights off ...
the streetlights
and the moon ...
everything turned off

– *Marshall Bood*

OUT THE COUNTY

Far there

in the unincorporated cringe,

beyond the
spay and neuter clinic's reach,
where odds

disinherited

drift to crouch in self-
subtracting defense
against

becoming lesser yet,

someone has left
the front door wide-
don't.

A loup garou

stumbles
in, his head

a bashed-in
cantaloupe.

– *Pete Miller*

FIRST SKULLS/CEREBRUS

This is the dream weeping dump,
this weedier, damper end of the camp.

Any weaker habits of oxygen
screamed off by chemical hounds
of plastic smoke's
more again next.

Here squat Hook and Worm, brothers,
those toothlessly chagrined causes
of half this town's new ordinances,

wiggy locks howling rough hieroglyphs,
this cottonwood's trunk to which
they've chained themselves safe against

sleepwalking through the bite mark valley
of the past. Hook insists
those hawkish scratches prophesize

crystalline powers. Worm shivers,
convinced the future is abscessed,
their arms atrophied, worthless

when, enough evidence gathered,
the cops end their concealment
in the branches above, and drop,

Detective Three-Headed Neck
blasting aerosol mesmerizer
to burn their faces clear off, back

to first skulls, baby rattles still unshaken,
virgins, yet, to father's
shockwaves.

– *Pete Miller*

OD

I am Icarus limp on the table
feathers splayed like spread-fingers
swathed in chill blue-sea

the snared bird
in a mist-net of shuffling colours
wings beating five-four time

drawing me closer to the sun's radiant face
and wind's rowdy song fills my ears
soundless drips of wax falling to earth

my feathered threads of flight
cut like a scalpel's honed-grind
splits muscle and sinew

– *Marilyn Humbert*

Open Book



– Anna Martin

oxyacanthous



– *Anna Martin*

They choked me with deceptive tenets and synthetic niceties to let me stay in their sanctuary. However, I was enslaved as time goes by as I was forced to mop all the mess in the restroom. They abused and killed me emotionally. One time, I got sick and I was expecting them to comfort me. What I got instead was this unmerciful judgement: "you are physically sick because in the first place, you are not spiritually delivered". By then, I realized that I mistakenly entered a cultic group.

Tripped over a bull
as I ran away
from that cult

– *Irish D. Torres*

end of the line
my barren branch
on our family tree

father's belt
the discolouration
of a tanned hide

pick me up
we oblige each other
bottle and I

touching ...
the way you thought
I'd never tell

– *David J Kelly*

NEVER DIE

the atom has been split
fractured into infinite particles
shaken into manic froth
but you pay the price if you break the rules
whether you break them
like matchsticks or wild horses
silly goose
you should know better than to tread on mines
though they tell you it's for the glory of Allah

One horse = horse
Two + horse = horses
One goose = goose
Two + goose = geese
One moose = moose
Two + moose = meese?

do we dare get away
go out and mosh
forget quantum physics
slamdance against the walls
like the smashed particles at Cern
those injured withdraw
our fragments from the shrapnel
our spleens from the spears
our crumbs from the crows
maintain our pulse
and though our atoms burst
never close our eyes
never stop breathing

– *Anna Cates*

WHERE THE BUTTERFLY ROAMS

in silent meetings
purveyors of arcane magic
sometimes fathomed
there is no escape
from rebirth, only death

bread, wine, and oil
burning incense and psalms
we struggle with the notes
divine fire forged
the cosmos where we race
toward final consummation

eternity
though mountains wear away
still the streams flow
where the butterfly roams
there is no reason

the butterfly
fears neither darkness
nor the strange light
it does not suffer
the death of stars

– *Anna Cates*

Above All Else



– Fabrice B. Poussin

Marriage



– Fabrice B. Poussin

Never



– *Fabrice B. Poussin*

Around the Kitchen Table

A coffin-sized house
Already buried six feet under
Aglow in darkness
Shrouded in loneliness
The kitchen table an altar to no one

You push aside the single chair
How did it come to this, just one solitary chair?
Help me, you cry, help me
As you lay your body down
Across the table, the room spinning
Isaac awaiting his father
But yours, never been any help
Your momma used to say

What had you missed as hours later you wake
And pull yourself up off that table
No longer drunk
Just ashamed and alone
A failure at life, and at death too it seems
A puddle of turkey gristle and cheap gin vomited at your feet
Maybe tomorrow you say

A strong knock at the door rattles the entire house
It's me, a voice calls from the other side
You force open the rusted bolt and the door swings itself wide
It's me who? you ask, suddenly cold and wary
Your father stands outside grinning ear to ear and says
I heard you might need my help

– *Elisa Subin*

gnarled oak your fate divined amid the rustling leaves

penciling in
the square of saturn
lover's moon

– *Kelly Sauvage Angel*



Lurking

– *Olivier Schopfer*

Serge



– Olivier Schopfer

No hell for poets

Space and time are categories - absolute, think of science and philosophy. This morning I sat still behind the steering wheel, forward ho! For backward was barred, out of question. There's no reverse when you're stuck five columns thick, in the middle one.

You are stuck. No retraction, no apologies; only hell: that's what they call an interminable wait for an unsure deliverance.

It's hot, so hot, and sticky, so sticky within. The fan, feeble, small, offers no respite. Poets, I'm sure, carry pen everywhere, and I carry one around: poetic possibilities of every moment, *carpe diem* etc. I saw that possibility and I sat, sweated and wrote in that hell, not hell anymore.

Now I know a thing, or two, for sure: for poets, at least sometimes, there's no hell. When there's no time – there's no hell. Worse than heat, housefly in the car, and all that humming and buzzing and sweat, is the line just stuck, with no hope, no deliverance, no respite. I was in hell, for a time, till I took my pen and wrote.

Trust me, it's true, I went in and out of my hell – not my car – for I never went out. Time is absolute, and space too, only in a laboratory, they shrink and stretch in poet's a car.

– *Rajnish Mishra*

Don't return awards

It's a funny game, life every day; a kind of race,
not against any one or thing, but towards an end,
the end. We win, eventually, or lose, finally.

Death, the assured award for each runner, can't be returned.
You don't return awards, especially when you don't know
how to return them, and to whom.


– *Rajnish Mishra*

pieces
of the scarecrow
at midnight
screaming out for its heart
held by the black crow

his hand in mine
dad's brow softens
his lips smile
taken from his last dream
he lets go, traveling on

hating the pain
of wearing a mask
all alone
with this daily obsession
as my addiction takes hold

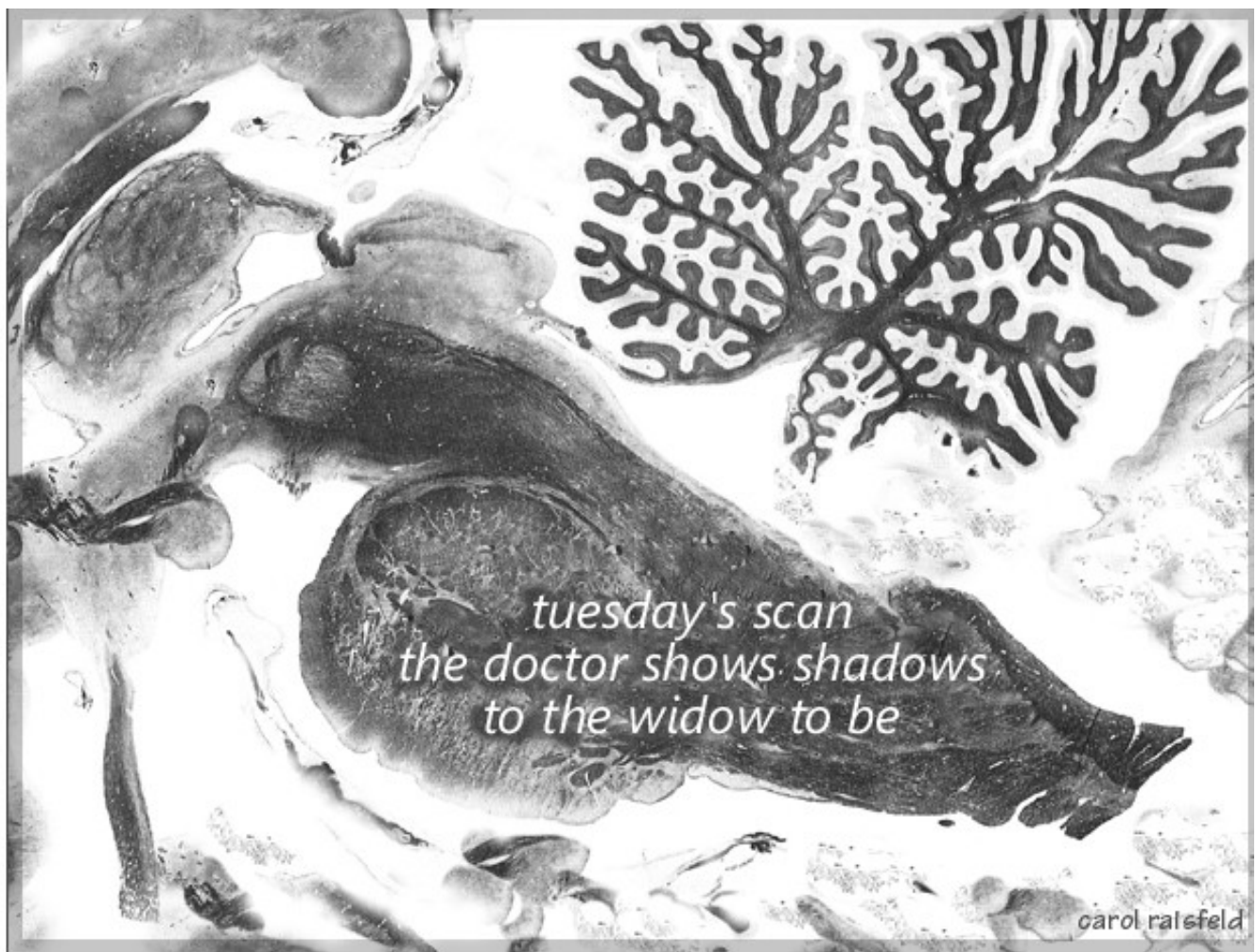
– *Carol Raisfeld*

A black and white photograph of a window covered in raindrops. The raindrops are of various sizes and are scattered across the entire surface. Some are large and clear, while others are small and blurry. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an outdoor scene. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

*at papa's funeral
not an empty seat
except for one*

carol raisfeld

– Carol Raisfeld



– Carol Raisfeld

Mongolian death worm's playlist

- 1 Rock You Like A Haboob
- 2 I Want To Hold Your Sand
- 3 Strand By Me
- 4 Shine On You Crazy Granule
- 5 You Ain't Sifted Nothing Yet
- 6 Sand Castle Of The Rising Sun
- 7 Get Off My Beach
- 8 Over The Dunes And Far Away
- 9 This Sand Is Your Sand
- 10 Carry On Wayward Grit

– *LeRoy Gorman*

LOCALLY GROWN

Migrant farm workers toil in unsafe conditions to bring the best produce to market & injury is common.

blood red
the tomato
of choice

– *LeRoy Gorman*

prayers for the dead
dust motes mate
in stained glass light

HPV
the art
of wart

– *LeRoy Gorman*

frayed rope
the last of my emotions
betrays me

cold hands
grip my shoulders —
the brittle wings
of a pinned
butterfly

recovered memories
that no one believes —
my failed efforts
to piece myself
back together

– *Julie Bloss Kelsey*

hidden behind her shades blackberry moon

I pick up
my lost remains
crab nebula

quarter moon
I pick up
my pieces

family home
bruised apples
in the cider

trembling leaf the sound of her name

– *Martha Magenta*

Squeezed

Your skin's translucent, like fine porcelain, mapped with sites of disability.

Unsteadiness avoids the metal frame that might betray need for security.

The children take the running. All your things are spread out, what

you'll take and what you'll not. Some items claimed by family,

some will bring a bit on ebay, some for the thrift shop.

There's little time to view these scraps of life

proudly displayed in their new owners'

places. A painting, chair, an antique

carving knife. Old photographs

displaying happy faces. Now

stored in your recall. This

must suffice – You're

being squeezed in

fast decreasing

spaces

– *Hazel Hall*

The dark glass

Through her curious image, Alice passed
into the strange dimension of charade,
Familiar forms, now nebulous and frayed
became her audience in the looking glass.
A place where last is first and first is last,
white is black
in surreal games of chess
where players rise from shadows
then regress
to shapes as vague
as memory's impasse.
Alice, chair bound with your gaze fixed fast
childlike, yet dis en gaged from child ish play
you won't re call the tan gled disar ray
that se ren ades plaque's au to graph.
At last
no need to wake when you are hyp no tised
by the white knight's tra gi com ic
lull
a
b
i
e
s

– *Hazel Hall*

goodbye note most letters spoiled by Parkinson's disease

mother passed—
the last entry on my
list of mistakes

ghetto whores my son asks what shadows are

– *Panagiotis Kentikelenis*



night fog
nothing behind the veil
but eyes

words/image (c) DStrange

– Debbie Strange



– Debbie Strange

glass-winged moth



if only you could see beyond yourself

– *Debbie Strange*

On the Subway between Soho and St Tropez

“All aboard! All aboard now! Have your tickets ready, please!”

*

I have seen him before, the man in the aisle seat three rows down, drinking a martini through a fountain pen. He is a villain of the truest dye, a trafficker in narcotics, paperweights and prosthetic noses. I have often thought to denounce him to the appropriate committee, but have hesitated due to a combination of indecision, cowardice and inherent sense of tact. “Hail, good sir! Are the anchovies in your murdered wife’s eye-sockets healing nicely? ” Such pleasantries do little to disguise the deep loathing I have for the prissy little orbs of his purple-tinted pince-nez.

*

“Tickets, please! Tickets, please!”

*

“Excuse me, sir, have we not met? A pavement café in Vienna – Yes! – the year my grandmother threw herself under a tram. Or was it Prague? You have (if you do not mind me saying) the certain haughty indifference of the Gentile combined with the rather unbecoming Golem-like subservience of the Jew. No, by Jove, it was Baden-Baden! A glass of sherry disguised to look like spa water – each of us taking turns to drink! And how we drank that star-shattered night to celebrate the murder, dismemberment and acid-bath obliteration of our obnoxious relatives. Uncles, aunts; nieces, cousins. But none so depraved nor so deserving of such a fate that we could not shed at least one hypocritical tear... Or am I not now perhaps confusing you with a ruffian of saucy meanderings and vulgar advantages with whom... in the Roman Baths... Caracalla...

certain acts of friendship often... misconstrued... We internationalists have so many points of reference, do we not? Allow me to give you back your card and request the return of mine. And if you defenestrate, I will disclaim all knowledge and pull down the blind..."

*

The windows through the tunnel go flapper-flapper flapper-flapper flapper-flapper flap-flap, with photographs of the dead facing the living in a perpetual silent scream...

*

The Russian lady (with whom I had had a brief dalliance on Platform 15 at Waterloo) reaches up to the overhead luggage rack in order to retrieve a stuffed penguin that had been given to her great grandfather by the Youssoupoffs at Archangelskoie in 1914. We exchange the briefest of glances that acknowledges (but does not advertise) that potentially embarrassing (but still delectably unforgettable) public intimacy. There are noticeable stitches on the penguin where his stuffing has been replaced. Otherwise, as pre-revolutionary penguins go, he is extremely well preserved.

*

"Passports, please, Mesdames et Messieurs. Have your passports ready, please."

*

“So I say to her, I say, Dolores, I pay for your clothes so I can take them off. This is why I buy them – to remove them. If you want to keep them on, then you can pay for them. Have you any idea how much it costs to undress you? Excuse me. Conductor? How long ’til we get to St Tropez? Thank you. Where was I? Oh, yeah. And off on a tangent, let me tell you, these designers, no baloney, they may charge you half a zillion for a piece of rag with a zipper down the back, but the zippers, no kidding, undo smoother’n a Chinaman up a panda’s ass. Smoother. Dolores knows that. Quality. Wait ’til she sees the outfit I got her for the beach. Hoop-la! Sick banana! Conductor? I’m about ready for that drink now...”

*

Two men have got on who are unquestionably spies. Not just spies, but agents in the pay of a malign foreign power. I shall watch them closely over the rim of my potted meat sandwich, all the time endeavouring not to arouse their suspicions...

*

“Mind the doors, please! Mind the doors!”

*

“Allow me to introduce myself: I am the Count of Wardour, the Duke of Dean, the Marquis of Windmill & Frith. May I compliment you, sir, on the elegance of your widow. Such stoicism in the face of suffering; such fortitude in the midst of grief. (Although no-one can doubt her severe and genuine shock at your premature passing). A glass of port wine, Madame? If it alleviates by just the merest fraction... provides even the briefest respite... And I will vouchsafe to return you to your husband – your humble servant, sir – before the process of decomposition is too unhygienically advanced and renders the carriage a place unfit for a lady of your – availability...”

*

I am in two minds. I prevaricate. No, no! Yes, yes! I am undecided, schizophrenic, mad as two hatters, twice mad, two-times sane. Der Januskopf, der doppelganger, Jekyll & Hyde. I am Poe's William Wilson – or maybe not; I haven't decided yet. And won't decide. Ha-ha! See how you like that! (Or don't...). But one thing I know for certain sure: The lady in the black veil sleeping on the luggage rack is not (as everyone supposes) the Countess of Zanzibar, but in fact a notorious Albanian jewel thief with a semi-furled umbrella instead of an artificial leg who has nine-times bankrupted the Kingdom of Zog. Or else an accountant with a twitch who lodges with Mrs Valerian on the Bayswater Road and eats bread & butter pudding with a Masonic brick-laying implement and wipes his mouth on her double-chintz. Or vice-versa. Or maybe both. Or maybe just neither at all...

*

“Next station, Leicester Square. Change for the Piccadilly Line and St Tropez. Mind the gap!”

*

“Is this seat taken? Of course it is not! Only a fool would suppose... Do you mind if I... Ah, there you see... a centipede crawling up the cushion in a state of ignorant hundred-footed bliss! To have sat down would've been to obliterate the potential buyer of fifty pairs of sturdy walking boots, ballet pumps, ice-skates or (Heaven bless 'em!) Lancastrian mill-workers' clogs. Laymen may think me strange, dear sir, but in certain institutions with sturdy walls I am known as The Cobblers' Friend!”

*

“Mind the gap, now! Mind the gap!”

*

“My dear lady, your arm if I may. The gap between the carriage and the platform has been known to swallow caparisoned elephants ridden by the Maharajahs of Mangalore, whales of which Ahab could only dream, and the looted sarcophagi of Pharaohs untold. What chance then a slender wisp of femininity such as yourself? I thought lunch on the plage, with supper at the casino and champagne on the terrace at midnight. I hope our waiter is a strong and capable youth. These train journeys enervate me so – to the point where buttering one’s own teacake is quite beyond consideration. Ah, here is my ambulance and my nurse. It has been a pleasure knowing you, madame. Your fat buttocks and sweeping mustachios remind me of any number of naughty games involving multicolored handkerchiefs, jars of mustard, and photographs of the Duke of Windsor. A parting kiss. A sigh! Until next time, Monsieur – adieu!”

FIN

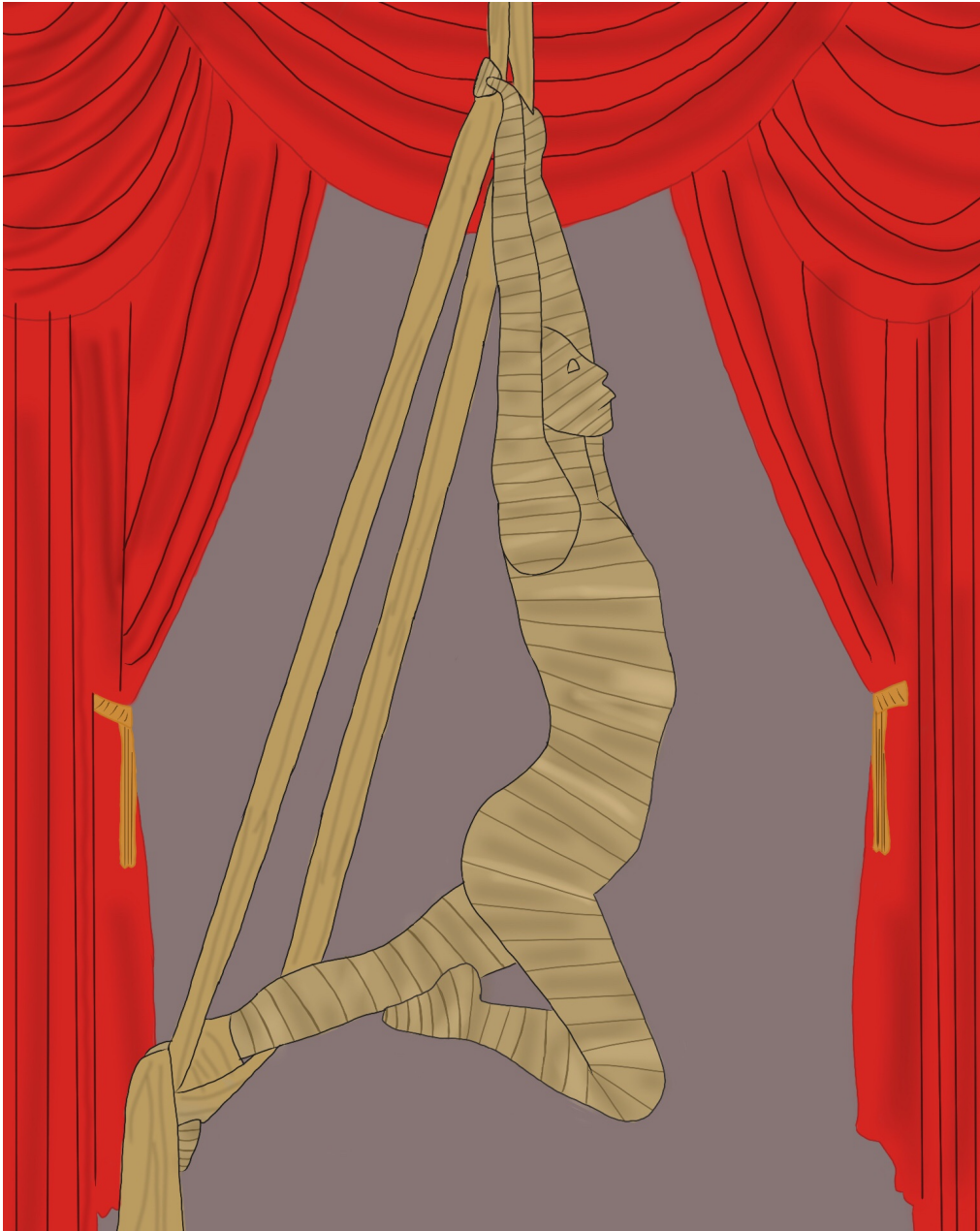
– *Michael Paul Hogan*

Hannibal Lantern



– *Lori A Minor*

The Art of Amen-Ra



– *Lori A Minor*

Ghetto Hansel and Gretel



– Chase Gagnon

Crow Goddess



– Chase Gagnon

Announcements

Check out the new and updated guidelines below!

Literature Editor: Lori A Minor

Visual Art Editor: Chase Gagnon

Please send all submissions via email to scrypticmag@gmail.com

Literature Submission Guidelines:

- Subject of email must include "Literature Submission".
- All work **MUST** be included in the body of the email. If you choose to also send a word document, that is fine, but you **MUST** post all work in the body as well.
- Please separate all pieces of work with a clear break by placing your name, as you wish it to appear for publication, directly under each piece.
- Up to ten short form poems (haiku, senryu, tanka and other related forms)
- Up to five longer poems (free verse, prose, haibun, sonnets, ect.)
- Up to two short stories, around 1k words.

Visual Art Submission Guidelines:

- Subject of email must include "Visual Art Submission".
- Images, such as photographs and art, must be attached to the email in JPEG format.
- Up to ten images (including photography, paintings, drawing, digital art, ect.)
- Include your name, as you wish it to appear for publication, in the body of the email.

Submission turn-offs:

Do not send political pieces.

Do not send pieces that condone violence or hate.

Do not send literature pieces only in an attached document.

Do not send pornographic images or text.

If the guidelines are broken, we reserve the right to delete your email, without a response.

www.scrypticmagazine.wixsite.com/scryptic/submissions