

SCAB

ISSUE #11

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EDITOR'S NOTE



September 2022

D.







A Kind of Grief

I'm jerking off in the church toilet at his funeral. My head has been in bits for days. The service hasn't even been over ten minutes. Weeping family and friends are still shuffling slowly out of the chapel away from the coffin.

My phone had been vibrating softly against my thigh all the way through, from a stranger sending me dick pics and descriptions of his imagined abuse of me.

From what I understand, Adam's relatives and close friends are now to travel with the coffin to the crematorium for a more private, final goodbye. I am most certainly not invited to this – to his family, I am just another face in the sizable turn-out. Adam died young and was extremely popular, as the number of attendees at the church attests.

I seem to be viewed with suspicion by his close friends. Adam had had a steady boyfriend, with whom he lived – a handsome young man sobbing with Adam's sister in the front pew – but that didn't mean he was above discreetly sexually torturing and degrading me whenever his resolve to ignore my obsessive pleadings failed. Would any of his friends have known about this...? I have to assume so, given the looks some of them have cast my way this morning. But maybe my brain is just fucking with me. I wasn't able to stop thinking about him when he was alive; since his death, it's been even worse.

A few nights earlier, I uploaded a stack of photos of Adam and myself onto ImageFap. They were mostly of me, to be fair, only Adam's hands and cock ever visible. Even so, sharing dozens of images of my makeup- and cum- and piss-smearred face and body undergoing such depravities with a man taken so unexpectedly gave them an added... I don't know how to describe it. Made them feel more real? Made him feel more real? It was like, I don't know, dragging our fucked-up meets into the glaring light of the internet before they drift away to nothingness or something. I'd taken a lot of drugs.

The pictures of my swollen anus and mess-splattered face caught the attention of at least a few online perverts. The comments went wild... I ended up trading numbers with a couple of guys. One of them kept messaging me all throughout the service.

The toilet I've slipped into is a small, cold room down a quiet, tiled corridor, bare apart from a single toilet roll and a big bottle of bleach. Not even entirely sure I'm meant to be here, but the

door was unlocked. I'm yanking my cock with one hand and desperately looking through the messages from assdestroyerdaddy.

'were u hard during the funeral u little slut'

'remembering his dick tearing u open'

'bet he really worked u over yeh'

'well hes gone now and i will dom u harder than
he ever did GET USED TO IT'

It isn't working. I don't quite know why. I don't know this guy; he's nothing to me. He is nowhere near to getting into my head like Adam did – from the very beginning. From my pocket, I pull the already-crumpled order of service. Two stapled, folded sheets. Four A5 sides of the readings from the service – a passage from the Bible, which had seemed of no relevance whatsoever to Adam or his life, the rest lyrics from the Britpop songs they'd played through the church's rudimentary stereo system.

The front page shows a photo of Adam – from a couple of years back, from the looks of his longer hair – grinning beside his motorbike. Beneath, in the cheesy, flowery font you'd expect on a grandmother's birthday card:

To celebrate the life of
ADAM JAMES MCCKENZIE
October 16th 1990 – January 20th 2022

I could just as easily go straight to any of his social media accounts on my phone for countless photos of him, but this seems more appropriate somehow. I even stuff my phone away in my pocket.

I begin pulling at my cock with the intensity that only really comes when I'm both extremely horny and suffering some sort of emotional turmoil. I'm clutching the order of service in my free hand, trying not to crumple Adam's beautiful face too badly. The paper is classy, grained. I figure they must have had these done at a print shop, rather than on someone's own shitty printer.

As the vicar and Adam's sister took turns speaking to the congregation, recounting anecdotes from Adam's cut-too-short life, I realised how little I actually knew of him. They spoke of childhood trips to the coast, his first guitar, his volunteering for a local animal sanctuary. None of this particularly sparked any real recognition within me. But to counter that, there was a side of him that they will have never known, either. Would they have suspected, for instance, that I once dug my own shit out from beneath his foreskin with my tongue whilst he balanced a bottle of beer on my head? That he laughed when I retched? That he told me he couldn't feel pity for someone as pathetically needy as me – that I repulsed him, even as he fucked me on my bedsit floor?

I shoot my load on his face. My cum flecks across my fingers and begins to slowly soak into the folded sheets of paper. The words chosen so carefully to represent him publicly, to honour his memory and, I guess, provide comfort to his devastated family, slowly begin to smear and distort.

Trying to flush the wad away could clog the system, so I stuff it back into my jacket pocket. I clean my hands on a few sheets of toilet paper and pull the chain.

Outside, there's a tiny old woman waiting her turn. She hobbles in behind me. A few people are still lingering inside the church, chatting quietly amongst one another, but most are now outside. Quite a few suited mourners are already in the pub across the street. I take out my phone and read through some more sexual threats from *assdestroyerdaddy* as I walk down the gravel of the churchyard path. I know I've only just cum, but these messages do seem suddenly more boring – pointless and minor. Is this a kind of grief? I decide to head home. There, I'll pull up some more photos of Adam and make myself cum to them until he eventually feels pointless and minor, too.

Jamie Giles is a writer and artist living in England. His works have been published in *SCAB* and *Misery Tourism*. His (oft-deleted) Instagram is currently [@jamiegileseroticartist](#), and he is on Twitter as [@scumbooks](#).

18 and i kissed
his nipples and i kissed his navel and i kissed his tender cock 18

19 he did smile
for a second – muffled words that could pass for thank you 19

20 but ruled out
giving me a goodbye kiss as we left the sex club – in Madrid 20

Ernesto Sarezale is the pen name of an award-winning Basque poet based in London. Active in London's performance poetry scene for several years, he has hosted and promoted queer spoken events such as Homophone, Glam Slam UK and Velvet Tongue. Lately, he is focusing his efforts not only on writing and performing poetry but also on queer micro-fiction, interactive multimedia performances and documenting in film the LGBT+ spoken word scene in London (and beyond). His writing has been published in a variety of literary mags and anthologies, and he has a poetry pamphlet called *In the name of the flesh*.

girl-fag

she's new at being a girl-fag.

i offer her advice but mostly keep my hands in my pockets or on the small of her back.

two years ago, she was a lot more skittish. wasn't so sure on terminology, like *clit* or *transition*. i write her a list of clinics that will give her a white paper bag with small pills that will grow her tits to the size of cupcakes.

masc with eyelashes like that? she asks, and it's a roundabout compliment. a cautious observation. whisking water she's not yet charted with her long and slender legs.

you were masc once too, i remind her. id like to get up from the armchair im melting into, but she does something special with her mouth. less talking.

she's new at being a girl-fag. too pink and plastic and drying her hands in her lap. her hair's not yet grown out past the military cut. she's unsure when she smiles.

she's painted her nails for the first time. black. she sent pictures the night she lacquered it on.

funny rituals, rites of passage. i didn't have a single hair on my upper lip when we met, fruit-soft and stupid. she didn't have her driver's license, no sense of gender or what it might mean. what a world.

eyelashes like that, i muse in silence while she gags. she tries to be polite, uses the back of her wrist to fix her messy, drooling mouth.

youve seen pretty daddies before, ain't you, darling?

she decides she's done with me then, sits back on her haunches and buttons my fly. she buttons it crooked. there's a little stain on the front of my pants, but we're not planning on going anywhere.

sure, she says. plenty of pretty daddies.

i know what she means. i know what i mean to her. she only comes around here every so often, when she wants a rough fuck no one else has the stomach for. i don't mind being convenient. powerful turn on when i switch my brain off for an hour or two.

i feel a little guilty. wish i was taller and thicker, someone who could really drag her around by the neck like she wants so desperately. there's convenience in my location and familiarity. a safe house she can slip into like a little black dress. it doesn't have to be pretty. it just has to be there.

reliable, i murmur while she steps into the bathroom.

not such a bad thing, to be the well-loved shovel that digs the graves. the tree that the punishing switch is always cut from. the mouth that houses the teeth that break skin into blood.

before the shower sings with heat and water, i poke my head into the bathroom and say, *could go down the street a ways and get some cigarettes if you'd like.*

she covers her chest like she has the tits to act modest over. *i quit that shit months ago.* (she's new at being a girl-fag, but she has most of the mannerisms down.)

i try to look mean when i smile. *figured it wouldn't count. you know, like all of this. bad habits should go in pairs or groups.*

do what you want, she says.

i take a moment to look at her, naked and pale and half illuminated by the grungy yellow bulb overhead. the veins of her arms wind in thick streaks, make her look even more malnourished. didn't eat much in the military, i know. there's that burn mark on her left bicep where she stamped out her self-harm scars; put the iron to her skin so the top layer of flesh would peel away in a bubbling crisp much less obvious than the several perfect coke lines drawn out by a razor's fine edge. her small and flaccid cock. her soft, hairless thighs. her hairy legs. i always tell her to keep from shaving, i like raking my fingers through it. she talks, sometimes, about getting laser.

what? she asks after a minute or two.

you could do with a few more bruises, i say.

before i retreat into the small main room, she says, *go get those cigarettes, cowboy. you can put them out on me.*

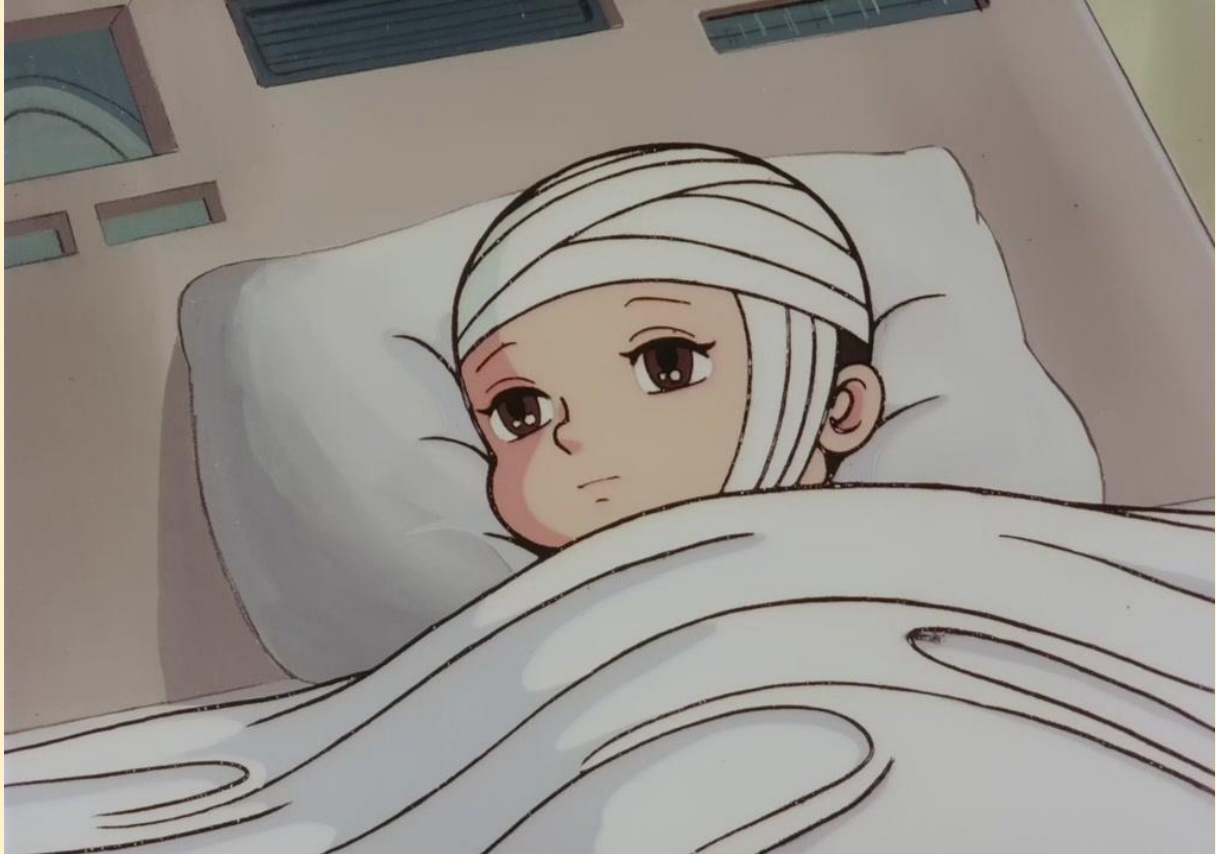
i pat around for my wallet. consider changing pants, find a pair that don't have a cum stain near the fly the size of a nickel. doesn't matter.

ill be back in a bit, i say.

she says, *i know,* because my return is promised.

behave yourself, i say, and i step into the cold almost-spring evening and listen, between two sets of doors, as the showerhead turns on.

Cricket J. Valentine is an amateur romantic, a full-time fag, and wishes, at this moment, not to be found.



GOLD STAR 4 ROBOT BOY

Johnny's been trying to convince me for years that you don't have to get them to try to kill you just to be sure that deep down inside they're really in love with you

He's 15, can't wait to get his heart and hole broken, but his goody-two-shoes of a sister says virginity's a social construct, so he's convinced he doesn't have to do anything really to really do anything these days

Get broken without being broken

in

by anyone or anything, in any way

these days

This evolution thing really has humans thinking they're better than everything else, I say while we're sitting on the couch, biting on caramel cookies after school, fiddling with the dirty blue Nintendo Switch joystick

Nature's violent

It is what it is

You can't skip any steps

*-- All the sadness, horror, terror,
 Natural disasters, volcano eruptions,
 Lions eating babies, earthquakes,
 Rage, regret, rape --
 If you really wanna stop being Pinocchio,
 grow up,
 become a real boy one day*

Watch an old straight-to-DVD show with him later that Friday night after doing homework

about a world full of robots

Production's cheap, every single one of the actors looks like they came out of a porno, bad lighting keeps all of their faces, pupils, bodies, every single room, piece of furniture, clothes, tall grass, the big wide sky looking faded pixelated

as if they're about to disintegrate

The robots are very pretty, keep good company, skin real smooth and fragile but also artificial, kind of plastic like it's dehydrated so it always looks a little pale even when it's brownish, pitch-black dark

Every single robot is for sale

You can get them from a three-story shop across Main Square

Customize them, pick out the arms, legs, size of the nails, hairstyle

Like an American Girl doll, except it could be a boy, a newborn, 25-year-old polycephalic Siamese twins, an

old lady, real scary can't-hold-her-feces-in-anymore,

if you like that kind of stuff,

old type of lady

Whatever

Then you program them to be your son, maid, friend

Absent, long-gone, missing daddy

Sex slave

Every robot has a power button that'll also reset them
Erase all their memories, lobotomize them back into a dull, no-thought machine, a vessel
like breaking a fairy tale spell
once you press it

The protagonist finds a robot in the trash, right outside his house, completely naked,
scratched, covered in bandages
Takes him home, tries to find the button to turn him on, takes his clothes off, searches
shoulders, neck, ankles, chest
But it's between his legs
Shudders when he discovers it, then cheeks turn red,
really flustered, probably
hiding a boner as well
He pushes it, the boy wakes up, with no
recollection of anything, lips
pursed, baby pink, two tiny
moles
painted under his right eye twinkling as he blinks it open like little dots, growing infant
black holes
threatening, just waiting slyly to
swallow the entire Universe whole

They talk for a bit:

the only thing the robot knows how to say is "Chi ち"

So the man grabs his hand, squeezes it and
very slowly

begins to teach him how to speak

They bond for the next days, weeks

He keeps the boy hidden like pirate treasure in his room, drives the neighbors away, says
there's been an infestation of rats, cockroaches, a deadly virus,

Covid-19 or something like it

In the meantime, affection grows

Even with no touch

(Except a few times a week when the boy jumps to hug him like
a wife or little kid

when he gets home from work)

It becomes clear that this boy, this... angel, cherub, *thing* was made for
nothing but

to love Him, carefully built with the sole purpose to please

Do absolutely anything

Absolutely Anything

For Me

So he forgets about the girls, faggots, dirty smelly barren-hole bottoms out in the world

dirty impure frigid filthy flaky wishy-washy whores

HOLES

out in the world

And turns into all the people he used to turn his nose up at

Walking around out and about

Simulating, holding hands with a

simulation of a boy

in the streets downtown

He decides to make time, dedicates his life

to taking care of his android baby

-- Even though he still can't stick his dick in it --

I laugh a bit

but Johnny thinks it's kind of romantic

The master gets more flexible in the
following year

Takes the robot to the park one Sunday morning

then the coffeeshop, library

and then home

While they're lying in the dark, feels the urge to reach out his hand

caress Baby while he sleeps, touch him even though he knows it's wrong

Reaches down his shorts, plays a bit drawing circles with fingertips around his ass cheeks

Moves along until he's between his thighs, near the metal switch
and by accident, eyes
closed, left hand down his own pants, stroking,
presses it
Light fades from the boy's body, his
perfect face, glow
as if every fake red-and-blue blood vessel were turning transparent,
see-through
Suddenly starts to float, head hanging, looking down
towards the window
while he, Geppetto, stares dumbfounded

The robot boy turns upwards downwards sideways as though pulled by an invisible force,
possessed, then
stands erect in front of the curtain,
grey gaze
peering directly at the man

Flies away

The next morning the city's in complete chaos
All the robots rebel, stop working, kill themselves
Like some kind of ripple effect, total glitch
apocalypse
But I swear I see the boy gliding up there in the sky, across a gargoye,
mirrored building, shopping mall
an obelisk
Right before the credits roll in

*Me and Johnny, we're never gonna love anyone, not truly
I'm sure of it
This life's about running towards the abyss, looking down, peeking
Writing about it*

Never falling into it

Johnny turns off the TV
Forgets about it instantly
Talks about physics, chowing on a Snickers, says
He's still gonna wait
and I gotta be safe
All the boys at our school, the guys at his job, the dads of our friends
are always yapping on and on and on about me
The way I fuck and charm and kiss and
smell and lie and smile
Then leave
One day I'm gonna grow up, grow old, be dead
And they're still gonna remember it

I say whatever
Walk upstairs
Go to sleep

Never ever ever ever ever ever ever ever ever ever ever dream

Pedro Minet is a film student, writer, visual artist and twink from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
He really loves Junji Ito, Cocteau Twins, Dennis Cooper and *SCAB*.

Jeunesse Dorée: Prophecy

(I)

Plaster pillars. Plaster pillars leafed in brass. Plaster pillars leafed in brass with ersatz diamonds in the capitals.

In a bulletproof casket, the bloated body of the executive. Lumpy sleeping beauty. Gold-foiled head. Lumpy sleeping beauty; gold-foiled head. Lumpy sleeping beauty with a gold-foiled head. Cracks on creases of jowls.

Plaster pillars. Plaster pillars leafed in brass. Plaster pillars leafed in brass flanked by golden boys.

(II)

Golden boys with their mothers, golden boys with their mothers' assaults, golden boys with their mothers' assault rifles, golden boys with their mother's assault rifles strapped to their backs fellate the rays of coal-burning censers.

Blue stripes tattooed around their throats. Blue stripes tattooed around their throats.

Boys on their knees, boys on their knees chant, boys on their knees chant praise, boys on their knees chant praising Mammon, boys on their knees chant praising Mammon the only god worshipped in their father's auditoriums.

Smudged faces jizzed into ephemeral existence. Smudged faces jizzed into ephemeral existence.

Too plentiful to be of consequence; a quiverfull of corrosive. Too plentiful to be of consequence; a quiverfull of corrosive.

(III)

In the bent axis, bundled in coyote pelts
 In the bent axis, bundled in sheep-skin rugs
 In the bent axis, an anarcho-primitive stretches
 In the bent axis, anarcho-primitive – I

shouting and crying
 shouting to the gutters,
 shouting to the morlocks,
 shouting to the chuds,
 “They are killing the prisoners.”

Mausoleum and mansion resonate
 swarms of boys with buzzed hair.
 Those who were living are made smooth with a scalpel.
 Those who were living are made to be used.
 We who are living are made to make use.

(IV)

For comfort, a golden boy violates social distance. Violating social distance for comfort. For comfort, he violates social distance.

Ozone in his hair. In his hair, ozone. The smell of. Ozone in his hair.

Fingers in my beard. In my beard, his fingers. Interlacing fingers in hair. Interlacing fingers in fingers. Dark knots and pale knots. Dark knots, pale knots. Dark knots, pale stones.

A single incense word dissipates in breath.
 A single incense word dissipates in breath.
 A single incense word dissipated with breath.

Knowledge stretches to the mausoleum.
 Knowledge stretches to the mausoleum.

Knowledge stretched to the mausoleum.

Masks pressed. Masks pressed against. Impulse overrides knowledge.

A single incense word dissipated with breath.

Bird thighs grind. Bird thighs grinding. Bird thighs grind, fracturing. Fracturing bird thighs against mine.

An incense word against pale stones.

An incense word against pale stones.

His incense word against my pale stones. Pale stones fracture. Pale stones fracturing. Pale stone fracturing as marble tendrils unfurl. Marble tendrils unfurl. Marble tendrils radiate. Marble tendrils radiate around limbs.

Fingertips on cold thighs. On cold thighs, fingertips. Fingertips boring. On cold thighs, fingertips boring.

Bodies.

Suspended.

Bodies.

Suspended.

Suspended. In weak waters.

In weak waters, suspended.

Bodies suspended in weak waters.

Bodies suspended in weak waters of an effluvial plain.

Tongue, unfurling. Tongue unfurled. Radiating tendrils. Radiant tendrils.

Tongue in his mouth. Tongue in my asshole. Tongue in his mouth. Tongue in my asshole.

Tendrils radiating weak waters. Weak waters irradiating limbs.

Weak waters. Heavy waters. Weak waters. Heavy waters. Erosive stinging. Erosive sting.

Weak erosion. Weak stinging.

Heavy erosion. Heavy stingers.

Covered in crystalline fur.

Covered in a fuzz of decay.

Quartz. Studs. Pierce.

Quartz studs pierce.

Quartz studs pierce through his urethra as his body worms over me.

Starlight sphincter. Body spice.

Starlight sphincter kisses body spice.

No departure.

Each self to next.

No departure from each self to next.

Exquisite ache in leaching.

Not a single motion but a cascade of irregular tics.

Amalgam of. Parts. Parts unite but remain desperate.

His mask, fallen.

Frost covers our crystal tips.

Cascade starlight kisses spice.

Parts no longer feel the chill of the air.

Nicholas Alexander Hayes is the author of *Bliss* (Alien Buddha Press, 2022), *Ante-Animots: Idioms and Tales* (BlazeVOX, 2019) and *Amorphous Organics* (SurVision, 2019). His work has been featured in the anthologies *Lovejets: Queer Male Poets on 200 Years of Walt Whitman* and *Madder Love: Queer Men and the Precincts of Surrealism*. Twitter: [@Broken Zipper](https://twitter.com/BrokenZipper) | Insta: [@nicholasalexanderhayes](https://www.instagram.com/nicholasalexanderhayes)



Man in the Pink

Internationally collected artist Richard Vyse has shown in galleries in New York, Paris and Honolulu. He has studied at the School of Visual Arts Manhattan and taught at Pratt in Brooklyn. His art has been featured in many international art magazines and is in the Leslie Lohman Museum in Manhattan.

I was a teenage sex worker on Thanksgiving Day in 1979, and I'm a better person because of it.

I was 14. And tired of being a virgin. Well, really, I was tired of struggling with the idea that I might not be entirely heterosexual. I would sit on my top bunk and stare sadly at my Farrah Fawcett poster for hours in a sweaty panic. "Why don't I have sexy feelings for you?! Why do I have them for the man holding his back in pain on the box of Doan's Pills in the medicine cabinet? That can't be good, right?!" And the clock was ticking. At 14, if the feelings weren't there, they probably weren't going to come without taking some kind of action. I could no longer be considered a late bloomer. To make matters worse, I looked older than my age. Of course, it didn't help that I was sporting a pretty respectable mustache. I remember earlier that year, my mom bought me a t-shirt that read "Mustache Rides 25 Cents". I was mortified. She feigned ignorance to the sexual message, but I knew what she was thinking: "My son made the family watch A Star Is Born the other night – drastic action is called for." And she was right; it was. It was.

It wasn't as if I didn't *want* a girlfriend. More accurately, I wanted to want one. But I just didn't know what that involved. Literally. When my friends would talk about going out with this girl or that girl, I would wonder: "What does that even mean? What do they talk about on these 'outings'? And who could I even ask to find out?" You needed to know things. How far to go, for instance. By that point, I had kissed a lot of girls, including a make out session with Connie Kufell that went on for what felt like hours. I was having an okay time, but I knew what she was thinking: "Why doesn't he touch my boobs?" But I was thinking: "I'm kind of content with what we are doing now." And what worked in my favor? The fact that Connie was too embarrassed to make the move herself. Thank god for the patriarchy! I mean, girls were called "sluts" for wanting to go "further." And sometimes just called "sluts" for no reason at all. I remember the rumors about Janet Minor in high school. If you believed what was said about her, she had blown almost all the guys on the lacrosse team and had once stuck a hotdog "up her." That part really confused me. I had images of a sort of vaginal shelf where things were put and then forgotten about. We weren't very woke – or even knowledgeable – then.

So, I needed some experience. And I needed it fast. I had read *Catcher in the Rye* and had seen enough movies to know that the best way to get it was to hire a prostitute. That way, she wouldn't complain if I couldn't perform. Or if I prematurely ejaculated. She'd probably be relieved. She'd think: "Thank god! Now I can go have a cigarette with the others and laugh about what just happened." And let her! Let her laugh at me. Let her have some fun in her life. In a way, my failure would be a positive thing. Maybe she'd spend the time I saved her putting her feet up somewhere where hookers gather – we called them hookers then. I imagined it being a dirty garage where they sat on crates. She'd light a cigarette and tell her other smoking hooker companions: "Well, another faggot thought I could turn him. Thank god for those dumbass queers." I imagined the laughter all around. And then the coughing fits that would follow.

I decided "Project Prostitute" would happen on Thanksgiving Day, because, why not? We ate early. We always did. It was more like a really heavy lunch. My grandmother would come over. I loved my grandmother. At least I did until many years later when I discovered that she was extremely racist. She would say the most awful things to the attendants who looked after her in the nursing home she went to when she was too old to live alone with her racist thoughts. Her face would get mean, and she'd point and say a bit too loud: "There's a Black one." Needless to say, I was horrified. Sometimes it can be terrible to learn the truth about people.

I remember sitting next to her at the table on that Thanksgiving Day. I caught her staring at me. Even through the cataracts, I could see she knew what I was planning to do after dinner. She was probably just praying I did it with a white one.

My plan was simple. If I could do it with a woman, I would definitely be straight. Begin as you mean to go on, as the say. And all those pesky fantasies about Tom Selleck would just be memories my wife and I would laugh at as we dressed for a dinner party with our successful hetero friends.

I spent a long time grooming for the event. I remember being bummed about several new zits that were currently changing the topography of my face. I used my father's electric razor so I could look good for the lucky, lucky prostitute who was to deflower me. But with

zits like mine, my face basically became a crime scene. To finish my grooming, I splashed on some aftershave, silently screaming into the bathroom mirror. A lot of silent things happened in that bathroom.

I left as soon as I could, lying that I was going to my friend Mike's house. "Bye, Honey!" my mother probably said from the kitchen as she silently seethed at my father for not helping her clean up. Under my jacket was a bottle of banana liqueur I had stolen from the cupboard. It was my mother's favorite booze, and she would save it for special occasions. When guests came over, she'd get a look in her eye that said: "Let's be bad," and then she'd ask me to get the bottle, which she kept behind the good unused china.

The Motel Six was about a mile from my house, near the off ramp of Route 81. I didn't have much to compare the place to, but even I knew a motel with a number wasn't going to be glamorous. And it didn't disappoint. The desk clerk looked tired. He had a comb-over he didn't bother combing over anymore, like it just wasn't worth the energy these days. I remember my room had a nondescript painting tightly secured to the wall. I found that odd, but what did I know? Maybe a lot of art thieves who specifically target boring landscapes covered in a grimy layer of cigarette smoke often stayed there.

It must have seemed weird to Comb-Over that I wasn't a gacked-out trucker like the rest of his guests. But I had given myself a cover story. I was traveling through town on my way to New York City for a *business* meeting – remember I looked older than I was. As he counted the bills I pushed at him, I briefly panicked. What if he asks what *kind* of business? I decided I'd say "finance," and then cut any further chitchat short with: "I'm sorry, but I've really got to make an important call" and impatiently hold out my hand for the key. As I walked away, I was a little disappointed he didn't care enough to ask. Or care that I didn't have luggage. I got mad at myself for not thinking of bringing a briefcase. Was I trying to sabotage this whole thing?!

I sat on the bed for about an hour, drinking what was left of the banana liquor, and tried to psych myself up. I had noticed earlier that the parking lot was full of trucks, and I strongly suspected that's where the action happened. Or at least got started. Finally, I made the decision. It was time. I checked again to make sure the condoms were safely in

the drawer where I put them earlier and left the room for the parking lot. I strolled around, trying to seem as casual as I could. “Nothing weird here, just a businessman taking the air and stretching his legs amongst the big wheelers. Darn it, why does that shoelace keep coming untied, forcing me to prolong my stroll and kneel and look around while I secure it again and again?”

I saw exactly no one. But in my mind, all people who weren't there were somehow staring at me wondering what the fuck I was doing. Where were the hookers?! Were they all on break? If so, I couldn't help but think they should stagger their breaks so they don't miss out on someone. It was a bad business plan. Even I – a fake businessman – could figure that out. I was frustrated on two levels: there were no women, and there was no place to take my grievance slash business advice to.

Finally, after tying my shoe for what must've been the fortieth time, I gave up and went to the bar. To feel older, I ordered coffee. To stay in character, I pretended to have lots of business-type thoughts in my head: “Would I land the Larrabee account?” “Should I fire my secretary for being indiscrete?” I took a sip of my coffee and almost spat it out. It turned out I was so deep in my thoughts, I had put salt in it instead of sugar. The bartender gave me a sideways smirk, cigarette hanging out of his mouth, ash falling in the ice. I decided to return his look and keep drinking it so there was no doubt in either one of our minds that a mistake had not been made. “That's right, I'm a salty-coffee-drinking businessman. I am not to be fucked with.”

Several cups later, I was hyped up from the caffeine and thirsty as fuck. And I was starting to freak out. It was getting late. And there was a lot riding on this. It felt like I was at a crossroads, and if I didn't make it with a hooker at this truck stop on this night, I might never be saved. I barely made it back to my room before the tears came. Followed by the prayers. I wondered how often God received a prayer asking for a parking lot full of hookers. I ventured back for another walkabout but still saw no one. In my memory, it started to rain. But I might have just added that at some later point to up the pathetic factor. Sadly, it became clear to me – nothing was going to happen. God did not answer my prayers. He may have been insulted or amused by them, but either way, I wasn't getting

VD tonight (that's what we called it then. Also, that's what we used to associate with sex workers. That and glitter halter tops).

But then, suddenly, a ray of light broke through the made-up clouds, and I didn't feel alone in that parking lot. I turned to notice a burly man swigging a can of beer while leaning against a truck. He was watching me. We locked eyes for what must've been a nanosecond but long enough for some kind of shift to happen that I couldn't explain. He made a small gesture with his head for me to follow him. And what do you do when a burly trucker in an empty parking lot gestures for you to follow him – you follow him. It would be rude not to.

I guessed the truck he was leaning against was his because he opened the door and climbed up into the cab. I remember I hesitated, and he gave me a look that said: "What do you want, a fuckin' written invitation?" I climbed up onto the seat beside him. The cab smelled like air freshener and balls. Why am I doing this, I thought to myself. I could be killed. They'll find my body behind the Motel Six with the garbage and the unclaimed luggage. Maybe the hookers would find it when they got off their break. They would immediately know what happened in that wise, psychic way that all hookers have. My heart was beating a mile a minute, my mind was racing: I wondered what he was hauling in his truck – was it Coke – my dad worked for the coke plant in Solvay – loading trucks – maybe they knew each other – maybe I shouldn't ask him. I mentally babbled. But eventually something about him put me at ease. Maybe it was the fact that, in his trucker hat, beard and flannel shirt, he was a walking cliché of what everyone thought a trucker should look like. Or maybe it was the feeling that he knew this but just didn't give a shit. I didn't have much time to debate this as he jumped right in, and we started making out. Well, he started, and I caught up quickly. Again, it seemed rude not to. We made out hard for a bit, and then he unzipped my pants. And I let him. A part of me was thinking: "Stop him, this isn't the plan at all! It's very much the opposite of the plan!" But another part of me was thinking: "Oh, shut up and let the nice trucker blow you. It's fun!" That part won. By a landslide.

Afterwards, my trucker smiled at me. He seemed different, like someone who wouldn't kill me at all. And then he said: "How much?" I have to say I was caught off guard by this.

But only for a moment. “Twenty bucks,” I was surprised to hear myself say. Where the fuck had that person come from? Maybe I really *was* a businessman. He took a twenty out of his wallet. Then, after a beat, he took out another and handed me both. Not only did he not kill me, but he tipped me generously! I smiled, too. The person that climbed up into the cab of that truck was a very different person who climbed back down. And not just because he was forty bucks richer. Which was kind of nice. It paid for the room, so I pretty much broke even.

As I walked home, I felt lighter. I knew in my brain’s brain that I should feel terrible about what had happened and fear for my future. But in my brain’s *heart*, I knew everything was going to be okay. I felt freedom. I didn’t have to live in a constant state of panic, desperately trying to be something I wasn’t. I had come out to myself. It would be a few more years before I could actually say it out loud. Then tell someone. Then tell my parents. But that night, it was only important that *I* knew. I actually looked forward to the future. And to a time when I had sex that wasn’t a transaction. I’m going to add rain here, too, because the moment calls for some joyous jumping in puddles. And all because a trucker and God got together to make sure this faggot had the best Thanksgiving ever!

Jon Kinnally has written for TV for many years, most notably, *Will & Grace* (every season) and *Ugly Betty* (every season). He has been privileged to work with some amazing people, both behind the cameras and in front of them. And he's won a few awards along the way. He is on [Facebook](#) and also on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) under the very clever handle @JonKinnally.

MISSIONARY

i waste my days on salvation at the hands of a man who believes
he can pound my heart out of my chest while my nails
glide like razor blades across his back i know
recovery is not a chalice i can drink from;
his body not one i should taste.

i have phantom limb pain in my entire body
hovering ever so slightly above the mattress
allowing him to will these ghostly ligaments around like a kind of
demonic possession, exorcism

i don't know who i am but i know
i was real in your hands, i know
i am my own fallen angel
but i can't know what i've fallen from as

heaven was always so far away to begin with.

we're trying to define the object sitting between my palms:
most people would call it guilt and
i would call it desire but
if you want something bad enough

the two are basically the same thing.
interchangeable

so i'm sitting at a coffee table between god and my best friend
and both of them are looking down on me
like a starving child.

hunger is the first sign of longing:

biting my own tongue and wishing it was his

the holy water in my throat is nothing but saliva
and the false promise of redemption

i confess to a boy that threatens the church
i confess to a boy that threatens my legs
i confess to my legs and i beg them to run
but they end up floating away from me.

and the exorcism continues, or begins
my body strapped to a chair
thrashing against the floorboards

i could turn a blind eye to my own sin
but he'd take the apple from my hands and bite
straight to the core of me

adam
jacob
the snake on the branch
speaking to me with nothing but his tongue

i'm sitting at a coffee table between god and the man who fought him
hands folded like a martyr for all that is pure
opposite of the holy spirit.

salvation looks me up and down
and locks me outside the golden gates with a
bruise on my left hip
and a handprint around my throat
with the promise that i would enjoy it

i've tainted enough of my own life
poisoned my own wine, drank to
my own body, broken

not as bread, but as a guilty pleasure;
wrists nailed to the bedposts in crucifixion.

Lia Green is a young writer currently living in Richmond, Virginia. Her work reflects an odd personal fixation on mouths, heaven, hell, greed, guilt, and lust. Her work has previously been published with *Storm of Blue Press*. Find her on Instagram [@blairwxtchx](https://www.instagram.com/blairwxtchx).

Afterimage

I dreamt you cut the puppy's throat

 over where I laid out his training pads
but as he bled, I saw you
 had removed them
and he bled out onto
 the already-warped hardwood floor.

*

His blood had the thickness and consistency of marmalade.

 His eyes were kohl-black and sheer
disappointment and hurt
 flooded his horrified face,
staring at the floor,
 at the betrayal leaking out.

*

I spent the rest of the dream lying to everyone

 about what happened, sighing it was time,
my stomach in freefall.
 You held him in your arms, staring at me,
your face inscrutable.
 You told him he was loved, to go to sleep.

Mark Ward is the author of the chapbooks *Circumference* (Finishing Line Press, 2018), *Carcass* (Seven Kitchens Press, 2020), *Hike* (Bear Creek Press, 2022), the online Choose Your Own Adventure sonnet *Faultlines* (Voidspace, 2022) and a full-length collection, *Nightlight* (Salmon Poetry, 2023). His poems have been featured in *The Irish Times*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Banshee*, *Boyne Berries*, *Skylight47*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Assaracus*, *Tincture*, *Cordite*, *Softblow* and many more as well as anthologies, the most recent of which is *Queering the Green: Post-2000 Queer Irish Poetry*. He was Highly Commended in the 2019 Patrick Kavanagh Poetry Award, and in 2020, he was shortlisted for the Cúirt New Writing Prize and selected for Poetry Ireland's Introductions series. In 2021, he was awarded a Literature Bursary from the Arts Council of Ireland. He has recorded poems for RTÉ Radio 1's Arena and The Poetry Programme, Lyric FM's Poetry File and the podcast Words Lightly Spoken. He is the founding editor of *Impossible Archetype*, an international journal of LGBTQ+ poetry, now in its sixth year.

Damsko Shards

I come round on the toilet's floor.
Spanish flies swarming on every
inch of the walls and ceiling, a
stifling emerald grotto. Voice.
Old chink cleaner standing in the
doorway. Rotten gums. Face
made of turds. Sorcerer. I'm
cowering under the sink.

"Vely vely bad tlip ah?"

Mop handle poking me in the
belly. He stoops down to
disfigure me with his suction-
cup mouth.

"VELY! BAD! TLIP!

AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH!"

I scream and my head explodes in a puff of black spores.

Someone drags me all the way back to my flat. Blinded by the sun, every face I see is melting. I can't speak. The stairwell is a mucous membrane, walls striated with pulsing cable-veins. Hands opening a door and flinging me inside. I barely make it to the wash basin. Throw up. Scalding vomit spraying on the mirror, bubbling in the cracked ceramic. I catch a glimpse of my reflection and watch my flesh turn into slug slime. I faint on my way to the bedroom.

Blackout.

((((((("A party? What kind of party?"

I shrug. "Just... a party. At my place."

"Uh-huh". She scribbles my number on a scrap of paper and tosses it under the reception desk. She's showing me the road on a folding map. She's so stoned she's holding the map upside down, which seems to make no difference whatsoever. I'm staring blankly at a chipped fingernail tracing lines in random directions across the canals, listening to her slurring voice,

careful not to look at her.

"See? Here's the Damrak. No... tsk. Where's the Damrak." She squints. "Here. You're here. Somewhere. See...?"

"Where?"

"Here. Somewhere." She throws her arms out in a gesture of mild irritation. She smells of late-morning hangovers and expired oral contraceptives. I need her to come over tonight. I need it to be degrading enough to cure me of my needs.

"See...? See...?")))))))

Later. Night. There's a brown stain on the pillow. I see it in the

blade of light coming through the door left ajar. The fact that it's likely to be dried blood doesn't really matter, as I'm too concentrated on drawing air into my drooling mouth to care about anything else at all. The pillow case is wet with slobber and acrid sweat. I'm trying to see through the blackness with wide, catatonic eyes. I can't close them. I can't sleep. Paranoia is growing inside me as I listen to the muffled voices coming from the other flat. I know they're planning to take mushies and murder me and masturbate all over my corpse. I hear them

laugh. I hear them plotting to dismember me in the bathtub, cover my remains in faeces and cum. The house is saturated in drug-demented evil. My body is paralysed, but my brain is doing a runner.

(((((beating beating beating
beating / strobing lights
shattering the world to pieces /
fragments of faces of bodies of
hands / we cling to each other
and sweat like crushed
succulents / and everybody's
gorgeous, and everybody
matters / we share the love-
frenzy of an everlasting

AAAAAHHHHHHHHH))))))

I stagger to the open window. The blinds are down and I peep at the empty street through the missing slats. Warm waft of summer city smells. The streetlights are gyrating halos with prehensile eyelashes. Tranny eyes on stalks. I'm dehydrated. My tongue is a rag at the bottom of a dry well. I suck on my forearm and soak up the sweat, pores dilating like crab holes on a sandy shore. I'm leaning against the window sill and my eyes meet those of a blackbird crossing the street. It

bares a row of tiny molars and smirks, aware of something about me that I've yet to realise. A sudden dry heave makes me reel back against the wall.

Vertigo. Unable to reach the bed, I curl up on the carpeted floor.

(((((((He's gaping, tears of joy flowing silently, the morning sunshine darting in his blue eyes like goldfish in a pond.

"The road. It's breathing."

He falls to his knees, palms on the tarmac, smiling up at me.

He's the most beautiful creature I've ever seen.

"See?"

"Yes." I want to kiss you. I want to pretend I'm in love with you. Because if I really were, my love would tarnish your beauty forever. To my own eyes, you'd start looking like me.

"It's alive, isn't it?"

I'm stroking his hair, running my fingers through it. He's crying from happiness.

"It's alive. I've always known. We're all standing on a dinosaur's back.")))))))

"See...? See...?"

I'm Federica Boldrini, 35 years old. I was born and still live in northern Italy and even if my job has nothing to do with literature, I'm totally into it as a compulsive reader of postmodern and minimalist fiction as well as an amateur(ish) writer of poetry and fiction. I occasionally have my writings published in magazines and anthologies in Europe and the US. I've dabbled with erotica, gonzo, poetry, more or less despicable fiction, and am currently posting book reviews on [Goodreads](#) and Instagram [@madame du barry](#).

On a sex app at a shite fest

On a sex app at a shite fest and all the
spry guy ever asked me was, "*Upendable?*"
Sieving through the whimsical kinks

of webcam pick-up profiles, I share that there is a
sunset in my knickers and, so, he slowly sings '*Sun Arise*',
and arrives delivering mutuality to the nuts of my sphincter,

to the freshly spermed, bargain nub of its root
and, in a blink, he and his gavel dick are gone!
I, mere prospect, self cashed-in for his fuck-all charm -

His cum later schozzles out as acrid, rusty stench.
He, the canker inject, the superspreader
of a stunting mediocrity;

I still smell him, his musty-masc, unwashedness
fresh-flung about, satiating, as a self-style
start-up satyr, absolutely no-one and nothing.

Another tepid intrepid firing through
blanks from the dead-end leads
of online inertial indifference.

I'm soon off Portaloo stroganoff bobbing, for the
skag dumplings I secreted in me are loosening
and my tent-mates don't know 'bout that contraband load!

One conjected, pissed, about there poss being at least
traces of ecstasy in my morning after shit; and, wankered,
he mouths as I go, "*Save us a bit, y'tight flash git!*"

Barney Ashton-Bullock is the poet in the hybrid queer music/poetry/pop projects Andy Bell Is Torsten and in the prog-pop Downes Braide Association. His poetry is published in cult journals in the US, UK, Eire and Canada, including in *Travesties*, *SCAB*, *Queerlings*, *Poetry Bus*, both of the *Avalanches in Poetry* tribute anthologies to Leonard Cohen, the Dreich pamphlets *Famous*, *Ismism*, *Pop & Response*, the Pilot Press *Queer Anthology Of Healing* and in the Broken Sleep Books *Aphex Twin* anthology. His latest pamphlets are *Café Kaput!* (Broken Sleep Books, 2020), *F**kpig Zeitgeist!* (Cherry Red, 2021), *Bucolicism* (Cherry Red, 2021) and *Geopoliticus, Pussy!* (Red Ceilings Press, 2022).



The Thrill of a Precarious Abandon

Bill Wolak is a poet, collage artist, and photographer who has just published his eighteenth book of poetry entitled *All the Wind's Unfinished Kisses* with Ekstasis Editions. His collages and photographs have appeared recently in the 2022 Rochester Erotic Arts Festival, the 2020 International Festival of Erotic Arts (Chile), the 2020 Seattle Erotic Art Festival, the 2020 Dirty Show in Detroit, the 2018 Montreal Erotic Art Festival, and Naked in New Hope 2018. He was a featured artist in Best of Erotic Art (London, 2021).

U fuzzy

That time of Ur life U're allergic to the sun. How long can it last. On Ur way to the fuck club, face flushes: the viagra just kicked in. Look out the window, neon lights of the degenerated city flash by. City U never once thought U'd one day be a part of; now here, U can't get rid of it. Standing in line in the freezing cold to be let inside. A long snaking path of male bodies all with the same thing in common. Wanting to liberate whore-self from all this frigidity. Once in, put Ur clothes in the plastic garbage bag they give U. Write Ur number in magic marker upon Ur left shoulder. Entering the club, vision lurches forward: acid just kicked in.

U always liked this sensation of no future. How it coasts through U, distorting every vibe. Bearded creature next to U at the bar getting fisted. U cannot taste or feel the vodka shot descending Ur gorge; U're here to wander.

U wander the halls, the dick and ass display. No one's socializing, talking here, unless it's to ask someone for a bump – everyone's just here to fuck or to be fucked. To stuff dick down the gorge, inside whatever orifice it might fit down. Swirls ahead, into fluorescent sterility, leather dog-mask'd creature with a human dong pissing on a being in a bathtub. At first U think the being is a mannequin; it's only when U get up close that U realize it's human – whatever that is.

Down narrow corridor, paws at Ur cock, which has grown hard without U even being aware. U're detached from it – Ur self, Ur own body – and as the particles swirl in the gray darkness before U, U never ever wish to return to the normality that contains that awareness. Just to float here, in this infernal foreverness, would be enough – would be fine. Until U arrive at a place where a body's strung up in front of U. U cannot tell, at first, what it is, Ur vision is fucked and U're actually laughing, now, laughing at the animal on its knees before U devouring Ur prick – it is like U're in the jungle being eaten and the normal reaction would be to be terrified and instead U find it hilarious – it takes a minute for the vision to coalesce, U realize then that the being in front of U has been strung upside down, whether for pleasure or for punishment there is no telling, anyway in this context they are one and the same. Satisfaction runs backwards, U're through with death and dying, profound truths U will never remember, sanitized scent of gnarled apathy – put forward a theory of engagement without a cause, without money hope or fear, there is no such thing as time, the further U wander the more lost U are. The bodies're all entangled trees, U've been here in this club a hundred thousand times before and yet U no longer recognize Ur surroundings, get back to one of the bars where the light is, place of temporary safety and remove from all this. Guy in front of Ur face warm friendly smile starts talking, U cannot hear what he is

saying the words won't coalesce into sensemaking units and laugh signaling U're in no position to speak, U're something like a monster having transcended the borders, U're led into the darkness which is the opposite of the place U really need to be. Drugfuck me into oblivion's vomit, Ur face is melting off Ur face, unseen hands jostle at this cock-that-is-not-Ur-cock, this thing it stands up on its own, it is so dark it is a wonder U have not fallen, it is proof of Ur supernatural capabilities. U're free from the burden of ever having to believe in anything, the time is eternal, it will go on this way forever, U feel calm in knowing this, having accepted the sanity U've slipped into as truth, U no longer feel worried about anything in the outside world, maybe it is not even there. Pathway of frozen bodies leads U into a cavernous area with cold frozen light, man is standing there like no being U have ever encountered before, is it even a man, standing there steam pouring off of him, he is drugged like U, like virtually everyone here, U suddenly realize – if awareness can really be summed up in a word... U slide down on Ur knees before the creature, its purple skin, U want that radioactive robot cock, suddenly reality is a verb, the pig grunts in a fatherly way, U're fairly certain now U won't be coming back from this. He moves away, Ur vibe is too weird, or was it someone U know and're too fucked to realize, creeping paranoia, no no, calm down, ease Ur way into a sphere with a different color light...

No need to shield Ur self any longer from this reality that fucks U every day, an end is sensed yet U're reluctant to go near it, keep moving forward or perhaps sit for a while, find a soothing voice to calm U, to bring U back again, maybe not here but to a different version of this place, multiple ones exist, this place U never want to leave, U've traversed quite a few. To live an entire existence free of all inhibitions, that is what U're going for, the place where U've always belonged, and now to get away from it, to subsume Ur self sideways into this belonging space. Stare at the ceiling's lack of reality. Occupation of no less than a dream, where midnight goes to murder itself. This is the pathway of Ur arrivance. All motion, movement is secondary.

Travis Jeppesen is the author of numerous books, including *Victims*, *Wolf at the Door*, *All Fall: Two Novellas*, *The Suicides*, *See You Again in Pyongyang*, and *Bad Writing*. In addition, he is known as the creator of object-oriented writing, a metaphysical form of writing-as-embodiment that attempts to channel the inner lives of objects. Jeppesen's first major object-oriented writing project, *16 Sculptures*, was published in book format by Publication Studio, featured in the 2014 Whitney Biennial as an audio installation, and was the subject of a solo exhibition at Wilkinson Gallery in London. He is the recipient of a 2013 Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant. His calligraphic and text-based artwork has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Wilkinson Gallery (London), Exile (Berlin), and Rupert (Vilnius).



Party Boy

Mateo Omar is a 22-year-old photographer, artist, and writer based in San Diego County, California.

i sold my soul on grindr and all i got is this childhood sexual trauma

how do i explain this to you?

when i was a child, i was in love with an older man. not any man specifically, but the idea of the thing – hot-sweet cigar breath and calloused hands split open over and over again. i had been cleaved open once and i needed it a thousand times more. something about the desire felt slick and terrible, a compulsion that i couldn't sort away. i was in over my head with love, like kids always are. no idea how sick i was. i wanted my soul possessed, taken and spun into ribbons, leashed and peeled open. when you're a kid, you think that maybe your unraveling will come easy. more like yarn and less like a hangnail.

i wanted total destruction, nothing less than obliteration, blown into pieces and scattered to the wind like pollen. there were so many men who'd taste jail bars to fuck me. all i could think of was how my guts would look hung up over their fireplace. i wanted to be a midlife crisis conquest to sink teeth and nails into. i wanted to be a last aching symbol of machismo, of virile maleness.

when you're young, you don't know how badly the things you want can hurt you in the end. my destruction came less like the fall of rome and more like the sky burning up. oxygen sucked up everywhere until i limped home and wept handfuls of foul-smelling tears white like cum and brown like bone marrow. for years, pure terror, but i got what i wanted. i had thoroughly washed my youth in trashwater and it wasn't savable. i was finally hurt enough to see who i was. but if you want something once, you never stop wanting it, even if it makes you bleed.

yesterday i was in love with an older man, tomorrow i will be too – you figure out the middle.

Confessions of an E-Boy Homo

For to whom shall I cry
 but to thee? Who
 shall cleanse me
 of the demonology of my Desire?
 I bleed, I bleed;
 this unbecoming liquid,
the thirst for spit,
 escapes from my pores.
 O who shall cleanse me? Who
 but thee, my holiness,

my wholeness—
 have I strayed far from thee,
 my salvation, my screen?
 For thou hast made us
 and restless is our Heart
 until it comes to rest
 in thee.
 Thus I return to thee,
 my algorithm, my eternity.

When he came to me
 it was night.
 A satyr, washed up
 and sapped with me,
 wingless.
 We fucked all night,
 he came in me.
 I cried and cried for
 this strangeness, this
 disembowelment, the
 undoing
 of my Body, when I should
 be contained in thee.

The house of my Soul
is too narrow, I admitted
 to him, *for you to come*
in me. Smothered light
 and libertine, pleasure
 in the forbidden. *You are fallible,*
and I am too, he confessed,
 getting undressed.
 My Soul, it aches,
 plagued with the mortal question:
 To be frozen pure
 or to melt once and for all
 into temptation's arms?

Love
 is also an algorithm
 that goes something like:
 exorcize this Body from me.
 Thus I film my hard Cock
 and sell it and feel
 nothing, so that I may be
 uplifted deeper into thy

virtual firmament.
 We recognized fully
 that the air is finite—the air
 we breathed couldn't
 last, like us, like
 salvation on his
 lips, I crave
 eternal nothingness.

Free me of this flesh, resurrect
 me into thy light: all my selves
 shall converge into

the holy screen. I am filled
with secret faults,
but I mend them with thee,
my stasis, my facelessness—
for to thee I lose my face,
become pure plaster,
pure pixel fantasy,
fuckable and sexless.

Who else can blot out
this arbitrary reality,
this turbulent, this whorish
reality but thee? Thou
who art most stable
and most forgiving and most
potent and most omnipotent,
most secret and most truly
present, unchangeable
yet changing all things,
never new, never old,
never greedy, yet demandest
dividends, pout lips, cumshot
through thy lens. I would not exist
unless I exist in thee.
Make me feel nothing,

for what am I if not
devoted to thine oblivion?

René Bennett is a fallen angel hiding from God in Brooklyn. René's work can be found in *Apocalypse Confidential*, *Confluence*, *Second Shift*, and others.

FOUR SEXUAL ENCOUNTERS I HAD IN THE MONTH OF JULY 2021

(1)

He releases me, all of a sudden, then tightens his grip. I've fully lost interest now, and I sit forward.

He says WHAT?

I don't answer.

I go back to sitting bored at the sauna and watch the half dozen other men who are bored and sat watching me. In the changing room a hand slides over my arse cheeks as I bend over, stepping out of my underwear. I twist my head around to see the silhouette of a face grimacing with some kind of desirous apology. He goes doe-eyed, like the dog from Disney, and bites his lip three times, to ram the message home. I turn my head back and ignore him. He slides his hand over my skin again in a figure of eight and then ambles off in a direction I don't register.

I walk loops around the cruising area, slow enough to register what kind of guys are there, but fast enough to not leave myself open. Then I go back to the lounge. I ask for a coke in a tiny plastic cup and I sit down with my damp towel tied around me.

Thirty minutes later, a bald, hulking man pulls me into a cubicle, kneels down and begins to suck me off. I watch him, his eyes closed, the skin smooth and unbroken all over his head. He takes breaks every minute or so to sniff poppers from a bottle. I'm still bored. I ask for his poppers. He gives them to me. I sniff them. The high is weaker than I anticipated, but my arm still goes slack, and I fumble with the cap of the bottle. His teeth catch on some flap of skin, and in my surprise, I flick a row of droplets over my chest and his cheek. Now, I'm sure these are corrosive, at worst, or not so good for you, at best, but he freaks out and grabs his towel, rubbing his face repeatedly.

He mumbles SHOWER, and then he goes. I dab my chest. It smells vaguely chemical now.

For a moment, I wait, standing in almost the same position as earlier, other guys moving past the open door. Then I decide not to wait for him any longer and move back out to the lounge.

(2)

He opens the door and makes shuffling conversation. The back of my t-shirt is soaked through from cycling.

HOW'VE YOU BEEN? he ventures.

GOOD. YOU? I come back.

NOT BAD. STILL HERE. He says with some finality.

MM. I choose not to bring up the past.

We get into his room. There seem to be several hundred pounds' worth of new gaming equipment that has arrived since I was there last, plus an air conditioning unit with its baggy exhaust hose draped across the bed like the cock of a pure white, plastic elephant – if it had a cock that was 2 metres long and 20 centimetres wide. He mumbles, shifts his gaze, takes out his own cock and plunges my throat.

For most of the time, his shorts hang around his legs, but halfway through, he suddenly decides to step out of them and pull his t-shirt off. He still keeps his glasses on, looking down at me through them all the time. I don't focus on his eyes.

I check my phone on the way out – it's been almost 17 minutes, in which time the front of my white work t-shirt has gotten slimed transparent by my spit, sweat, his spit and maybe a stray strand of cum. The day after, I bus to visit my grandfather in the care home, and half his meal dribbles out onto his shirt, congealing in the air-conditioned drafts.

(3)

Upon arrival, he makes an inadvertent cop impression,

HELLO, HELLO, WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE THEN?

His friend looks penitent. I'm at least 60% sure he's not into me, and he's regretting organising this. But 30–40 minutes later, when he's almost managed to cum inside me, I can only commend his manners.

I gasp UHH.

He groans URHHH.

With my legs bent somewhere north of my head, I look up at him, and he avoids my gaze, his head hung so far down his chest it's beyond apology but not quite at the level of neck injury.

Afterwards, I want to stay, unsure quite how they manage to be so beautiful. They are waiting for me to go, silently, their heads buried in their phones.

I venture BYE and go out to the Uber.

Fifteen minutes later, I arrive home and go to shit their loads out into the toilet. Flushing the cloudy yellow mess away, I wonder if I should have kept it slightly longer, marked it in some way.

(4)

He opens the door to an apartment littered with full trash bags and wanks at me, hand down his gym shorts, and tells me that he did this very same thing eight years ago.

I have no recollection of it. But I take it at face value.

He's topless and bearded, his eyes sunken into purple pits. If he had no beard, I guess he wouldn't look much over 18. Or even younger.

I watch the TV as he fucks me. There's a music video playing. I make some comment about music, and he pulls his shorts back up and bends back over his computer to put something on. It buffers and he pulls his trousers back down and comes over to me.

YOU KNOW I LIKE MANDIES drawls the rapper.

How does he perceive the body that extends beyond the bounds of immediate sensation? He probably feels its signals of warmth and motion through its tightness, but I can't see his eyes, so I can only tell what's going on from the latent sounds and the way he thrusts into me.

FUCK he goes.

POP 'EM LIKE CANDIES the rapper continues.

FUCKIN' HELL he groans again.

I think he considers those kilos loud and burdensome, since he takes his hand and presses it down on my neck. He turns the volume down.

THEN I TAKE ADDIES the rapper finishes.

I came too early. So I'm left to watch as he continues. He's working himself with one hand, and the other hand is looking for something up inside me. His ring finger and thumb as those metal things that stretch your skin taut whilst they operate, and the index comes in between them. He holds me open and tests what's within. There's a stickiness to his abdomen, which is of my doing – or responsibility. When he comes, he takes his finger out. He's found nothing of value, but I can see it's streaked with blood, or shit. He inspects to

see if it's bloodied shit, or just blood with insignificant traces of shit. He holds his hand far from himself. Then he wipes the bloodied shit down my front.

I ask him DO YOU REALLY WANT TO DO THAT?

He says NO, IT'S ALRIGHT.

Then he pins my head down with his hand and jaw, pushing his tongue into my mouth. One hole having proven unsuccessful, he picks another. My own tongue recoils from the taste of stale fags. My hands knot around his head, and I pull him in to investigate. But the only thing I find is a strange, smaller, more foul-tasting substitute of what I had in mind.

He holds me tighter, all of a sudden, then releases.

he's a slut

a cocksucking scumbag
who lets any man treat his mouth
like a public toilet.
His saliva dries on my cock.
Finger inserted in virgin core
wedding-ring deep.
He's a stall-stalking slumlord
who preys on blond-haired frat boys.
Smother his face in strangling pubes.
He doesn't mind a bubble butt nesting
on his face.
He likes a mouth full of shit,
piss splashing against the wall
of his back.
He's a dirty old man.
A pervert preying on the blood
of boys who search for real-life
adventures of true love.

Shane Allison has been called a gag, a nigger and a genius. His poems have been published in *Voices from the Fire*, *Spunk*, *Butt Magazine*, *My Gay Eye* and others. His chapbook, *Nice Dick*, will be out soon.

Consumed in Flame

Somewhere in Los Angeles. 1997. Bright, diffused light, spilling through at the edges. Pain glowing red through my eyelids. It must be morning again. Or afternoon. Who knows. I open my eyes to an unfamiliar couch in an unfamiliar room. The skin of my face protests, shards of gritty plastic behind my eyeballs.

I take a huge breath, like it's my first.

"Fuck."

Voice raspy like last week's wildfire. And there's a weird flavour in my mouth, like dry cardboard and silver.

"Daniel, you're awake at last!" Lucas chirps from somewhere overhead.

We appear to be in someone's apartment, but I can't remember a thing. I feel like I've been fictionalised, like reality has somehow been orchestrated to work against me. Gravity especially. I press the heel of my palm into my eye socket.

"Glad you're still alive," laughs Lucas. "What the fuck was going on with you last night?"

A shadow looms behind my eyes. Oblivion, an almost memory. But I'm frozen in place, scalded by shame and the dark, sucking cavity of the blackout.

"Did you let me take ketamine again?" I snap.

"Hey, you insisted!" Lucas snaps right back, although the shape of a smile softens his words. But when I continue to glower at him, he raises his hands, palms outward. "Fuck you, none of this is *my* fault!" he says, rolling his eyes, thrusting a large mug of coffee towards me.

Behind the dark fortress of the curtains, malingering daylight skulks like a solid wave, the superheated air desperate to cram itself into the small room. Abrasive. Relentless. Like Satan with a wire brush. The room tilts as I reach for the coffee, and I taste blood at the back of my throat—evidence of something inflicted or endured.

"You're gonna be the death of me, Lucas."

His laugh rings out, raucous, much too loud. "Why me? I don't think you need any assistance there, Danny."

I chuckle, despite the cardboard mouth and plastic shards.

"Where the fuck are we anyway?" I say. "Whose house is this?"

The room is littered with greasy plates and mismatched furniture, with empty bottles and plastic cups crowding every available surface. Dirty secrets. Everything is less important than the night before. An exercise in futility. The smell of old pennies and rancid sweat. The meat of my brain slowly being sliced away.

Lucas shrugs, scratching at something on the hem of his shirt. "I don't really know. Some students we met outside a bar last night . . ."

"Were they nice?"

He laughs again. "Do you remember anything at all?"

I'll tell you what I do remember. I remember long weekends spent in glittering whirls of pills and speed. Mornings waking up drunk in rooms we didn't recognise, sprawled on the floor with people we didn't remember. Night-riding buses on Valium. Setting fire to dumpsters. Lost and adrift in a concrete labyrinth, strung out like the credits of a really long film.

The neighbourhoods in this fucking city are so confusing that one time I got lost walking home after scoring some truly awful speed, and I spent what felt like the whole fucking night with a pair of street kids who ended up stealing the rest of my money. Although I figured that was fair since I'd smoked the last of their weed. It bothers me that I can't remember their names. But I guess that's not surprising, for I could barely remember their faces, even when staring right at them. They were just blank, shiny spaces, like a glitch in the system.

After they ran off, I threw up, collapsing backwards onto the sidewalk, the cold asphalt leeching through my threadbare jeans. And I think it was there—pretty much sitting in the gutter—that I felt the full weight of my sixteen years. Thankfully, I was high enough that the feeling was distant, removed, ineffable, as though observed through smoke. And although I shivered, that too was no longer of any importance, for by this point, the motions of my body had nothing to do with me. They were something outside of me. Involuntary.

We'd recently splashed out on some Nokia 5110s, but I'm still not used to having a phone on me, so after fumbling through my pockets, I'm clutching it to my ear like a priceless heirloom, my other hand fisted small and tight against my temple.

I let the ringing anchor me, the high-pitched drone running through me until I'm part of it. I had to let him know that I was okay. That I was still alive.

"Where the fuck *are* you?" Lucas asks, his voice small and frightened down the phone. He's the only person I know. We are all alone in the darkness.

"I don't know," I say honestly, the words lurching from my mouth, my breath ripe with the aftertaste of vomit.

Hoodie up, sleeves covered in coke snot, I have no idea when I last ate or slept or even took a shit. There's a permanent chemical fog behind my eyes, and my cigarettes feel useless when I pull them from my pocket, the box all crumpled and smelling thickly of ash and puke. Disgusted and slightly hysterical, I drop them in the gutter, along with everything else that's in my pockets—I'm now just throwing random shit out into the empty street. I feel careless, or carefree, or both. But I'm still aware of that awful smell. I think it's on my jacket, maybe the shoes too.

Meanwhile, the sky tumbles around me, tiny cyclones of trash whirling down the sidewalk. And as the dry wind spits flies and grit into my face, my greasy hair flaps in my eyes, skin streaked with oily sweat and spiced with the sour reek of three-day-old alcohol. I feel jagged and ethereal, like a TV channel where the dish has fallen out of alignment, causing warped and distorted patterns to twist around one another in bizarre, incomprehensible static.

I stumble on, punching trash cans, kicking at seagulls, forever entangled within that numb, slippery space where forgetfulness meets confusion. My eyes are searching for home. Pale-blue walls and pink neon. But everything is strange and shaky. What is imagined? What is real? Is insanity a cause or an effect? I can feel myself drifting, so I focus on the sound of the traffic, my attention narrowing, the universe narrowing with it, whole galaxies strobing in and out of existence. But then, without any sort of warning, the morning light kicks in—rude, instantaneous, like a hit of meth—the burning sun is halfway up the sky and I have no fucking clue how it got there. Maybe I blacked out again. Maybe I'm still high. But just as my body starts to sweat—my skin already mourning the cool hush of night—I round the next corner, and there it is, the pink neon blush of our motel, standing like glowing salvation at the end of the road.

Safely back inside and everything's in soft focus. My blood hums with pleasure as my hand brushes hot down Lucas's back, all the way to the new crooked line of sunburn at the small of it. I can see his dimples, the crack of his ass smiling at me.

I hover awkwardly, lifting up my arms, so relieved to be home. "Can I hug you?"

He looks balefully at me, gnawing at his splintered nails. "If you must."

The small talk is just a filler, and we both know it.

Sometimes, we don't do what's best for ourselves, or for other people. And as I collapse backwards onto the bed, I take a long, shuddering breath against Lucas's chest, his body slung low over mine, his weight like ballast, steadying me, his mouth warm and moist at the base of my neck.

"Can we talk?" I say, my voice sounding really loud.

"No," he says, a bit too quickly.

"About that bridge . . ."

"Yeah, I know . . ." he mumbles, but it's his eyes that apologise, unsaid words spilling from his gaze like a gas leak. For it's all coming back to me now. A thick haze of festering memories. And for a moment, there's no clear distinction between the past and the present. Only a rush of sensation. Pale and feverish.

"NO!" I screamed. Slapping his face. Shaking him. "I WILL NOT LET YOU DO THIS!"

There he goes again—Lucas—high on painkillers, drunk out of his fucking skull, struggling towards the edge of a bridge. Black rushing water. Death by hypothermia if not on impact. And it was there, whilst staring down at the dark water, that last summer came flooding back to me—warm rain over cornfields, chlorine on burnt skin, fierce whispers in the dark. For that was how I'd kept him alive back when we were just kids. Stories that Lucas wouldn't have believed except they dovetailed so well with what he knew of his own character—blackout drunk, starved, sunburned, half-crazed from violence and pills. Which, only a year later, hasn't changed that much, especially if I'm still holding him back from the edge. Still pinning him to the bed in the middle of the night. Still keeping him alive and killing him at the same time.

Of course, I shouldn't really be surprised—he's always been enraptured by the thought of dying. Like some sort of enchantment. But still, I refuse to let all that destruction be for nothing. All those unkind yet memorable years.

"Lucas . . ." my voice is saying, rough and cracked in the morning stillness, the lump in my throat making everything difficult, my mouth falling open in a silent plea for help.

But then he's kissing me and I'm on fire and my cheeks are on fire and my arms and hands are on fire and now even my toes are on fire and I don't think I'll ever get used to it. It's scratched skin and bitten lips and dirty black curls framing a pale face and warmth that could rival the sun and it's my best friend and my whole heart and I don't even notice the tears until he's thumbing them away.

But that just makes me cry harder, clinging to him. Gasping and whimpering. Because sometimes, all I want to do is follow him. To the brink, I mean. Sometimes, I feel like I've earned the right to make bad decisions too—trailing in his shadow, eyes red from exhaust smoke, itchy skin swallowing the sadness, just one more constantly replicating loop of melancholic destruction.

"Hey, don't worry, I've got you, okay?" says Lucas, pressing a hand to my chest while another sob bursts from my mouth. "I'm not going anywhere."

"I know," I'm stammering like an idiot. "But I just . . . couldn't bear it."

"Hey, look at me. I'm not going anywhere!"

He's repeating himself. He hates doing that, so this must be serious. And my cheeks are flushed as my mouth gapes, opening and closing as I desperately rack my brain for what to say. I mean, what exactly are you supposed to say in this situation? I don't think there's a rule book here—it's not like they teach this stuff in school.

"I just wish things were simpler . . . you know?" I say finally.

"Yeah, I know," he says, a smile tiptoeing across his skin. "But then . . . that wouldn't really be us, right?"

And he's right. Because without the heartbreak and fear to shape us, who would we be? We are as strong as a rottweiler yet as frail as a cobweb collapsing under the weight of morning dew. The fear shaped us. It shapes us still, for better or worse, sculpting our lives like a rogue tornado. Fanning the flames of our own destruction.

For Lucas shines like a miniature sun. An expanding star that consumes everything around him. A suggestion of light so bright that I have to shield my eyes—the sort of light that floods my cheeks with blood and has me choking on its fumes. And sometimes, it's all so hot that I find myself pulling away, like he's an open flame that I'm forever burning myself on. But the really weird thing is, I don't even know when this

feeling started, and now that I'm thinking about it, I can't ever remember not feeling this way.

And then I'm wondering if he knows—if he knows what he's done to me. That I am forever consumed in flame.

"You know you smell of puke, right?" laughs Lucas, yawning into my hair while I disintegrate inside his mouth.

"Yeah, yeah, fuck you."

I chase a couple of Valium with half a bottle of vodka. I just hope it will be enough to keep the dreams away. Outside, the sky's never been bigger. And Lucas grins like he knows me. Maybe he does.

Daniel Sheen is a queer multidisciplinary artist and writer. He is fascinated by the idea of modern fairy tales. He has been published in *XRAY Lit*, *Misery Tourism*, *Expat Press*, *Bear Creek Gazette*, *Ram Eye Press*, *SCAB* and more. He is currently working on his debut novel. Find him at danielsheen.net, [@DanielSheenUK](https://twitter.com/DanielSheenUK) on Twitter and [@disaffected.youth](https://www.instagram.com/disaffected.youth) on Instagram.

Sweet Summer Child

Josh Peterson is an American writer and collage artist. Their novels *Granite City Blues* (2019) and *Spring Rain, Summer Heat* (2021) are published by Amphetamine Sulphate. *Sweet Summer Child* is the second installment in a thematic trilogy.

AN INTERVIEW WITH C. E. HOFFMAN,
AUTHOR OF *BLOOD, BOOZE, AND OTHER THINGS IN NATURE*



“This book resonates with anyone who’s ever called a crisis line and had them respond, ‘Oh wow that’s a lot.’ This chapbook isn’t a cocktail. It’s a shot.” (Kit Stitches)

Buy *Blood, Booze, and Other Things in Nature* [here](#) (US), [here](#) (CA), or [here](#).

1. Who’s C. E. Hoffman? Please tell us a bit about yourself.

Hi! I’m a Full-Time Dreamer, Part-Time Human, flip-phone user, cat lover, suicide survivor, bisexual, genderfluid, sex worker punk rocker pixie bean.

2. Reading *Blood, Booze* feels like an exorcism – all of the pieces are very raw and often angry, but I was still left with a feeling of profound empowerment and even optimism as I finished it. How did it feel to create the book, and how does it feel to read it now?

Ah – anger! That sneaks in. I aim to produce gold from the coal and hope I somewhat succeeded. Some poems in *BBN* were castoffs from my first chapbook, *Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1948*, self-published in 2017. I'm ever honoured when people derive value from it and grateful it found a home at Alien Buddha Press. Homes for poetry are hard to find.

3. You mention in the Acknowledgements section that the poems in the book were written between 2015 and 2021. How did you decide which pieces to include from such a considerable time span?

Quality is my foremost factor separating wheat from chaff. That said, beloved pieces get the boot if they fall short of the theme. *BBN* was originally a collection-length piece, successfully whittled down to chapbook size. Its upcoming sister sequel, *Ghosts, Trolls, and Other Things on the Internet*, was reduced from a 51-page chapbook to a modest 36-pager.

4. Are there any pieces you wrote specifically for this project?

All are from the cluttered closet of my psyche.

5. Which piece is your favorite from the book? Why?

Tough question! Nice Day to Get Laid probably wins: I featured it once in my short story collection *Sluts and Whores* (out from Thurston Howl Publications) but had to include it again here!

6. Who's your ideal reader or audience? With whom do you think the book will resonate most?

Anyone willing to read it.

7. Who inspires you? Who are your favorite writers, artists, etc.?

I love this question! My answer changes because I try to answer spontaneously. I'm reading a lot of D. H. Lawrence right now, including his poetry/shorts. The Beats have always inspired my poetry, especially Ginsberg, Elise Cowen, and Diane di Prima. And, when in doubt, there's always Saul Williams.

8. What are you working on at the moment? What future projects can we look forward to?

Ghosts, Trolls, and Other Things on the Internet for the chapbook realm and my second short story collection, *Losers and Freaks*. Keep an eye out for updates on my Twitter [@CEHoffman2](https://twitter.com/CEHoffman2) or my website cehoffman.net!

9. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thanks for reading! It means a lot/everything.

AFTERWORD

The 12th issue of SCAB comes out in March 2023.

The motto remains: send along your best worst. You can submit here:

scabmag.wordpress.com/submissions

For more overall information, please visit SCAB's homepage:

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