

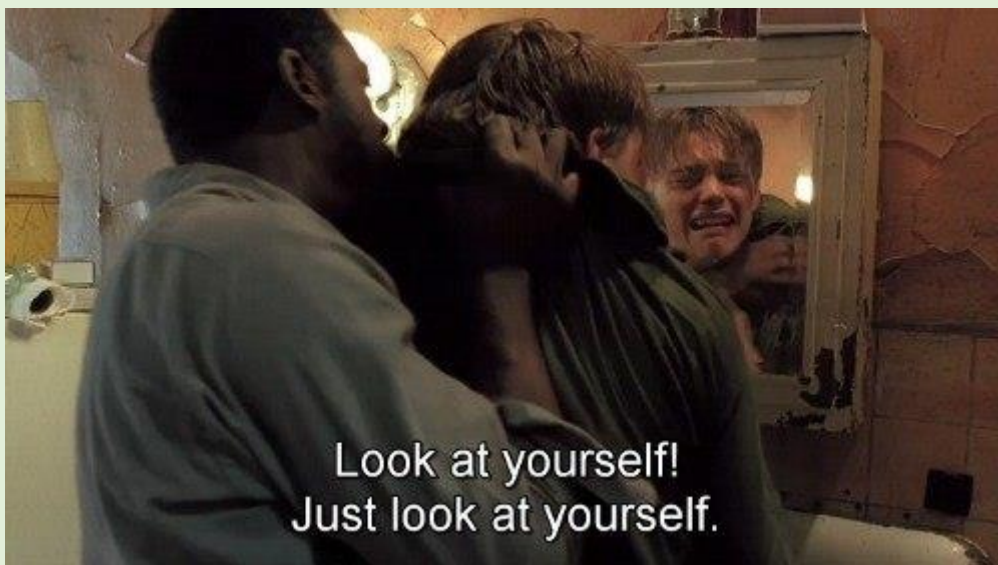
# SCAB

ISSUE #15

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**EDITOR'S NOTE**



Look at yourself!  
Just look at yourself.

September 2024

D.

## Find Me

Evan began repairing his brother's corpse alone in his sad, drab room; that's what he envisioned himself doing, but he was just painting, albeit very meticulously, a child-sized wooden doll. Milo's real flesh and bones were stored in a small space below the stairs he climbed up to get home every day. They were close to the entrance to the theater's stage, those stairs his few actor friends would gaze at after he went away each evening. He was a puppet maker, so he helped out often. He had put his little brother down there following a long, confusing time. After becoming an adult, he realized there was nothing else he could do with him, there was nowhere for what they had to lead to, so one night, he ended Milo's life, rushed him downstairs, and stuffed him into that makeshift closet. Often, at night, he'd tiptoe there and open it. The force with which he felt the urge to get inside or at least touch the boy once more was indescribable. It seemed like that was coming from the cold, logical part of his brain. It felt like he could feel nothing unless he touched him. But whenever he went to such lengths to stay absolutely quiet when he went down those stairs and that nobody saw him, all he was capable of doing was to stand there frozen and stare. Evan's hands hurt; they hung there, tense in the air. There was so much he never managed to do.

Naturally this led him to the doll. It had been lying there in the back of his closet for a long time: an 18th birthday gift, back from when he celebrated. The most important detail for him to replicate were Milo's sweet, dumb eyes that he used to hide under his fringe. He would stare at them for so long, wondering what they saw. He had laid him in that closet facing the wall—in his more sympathetic moments, he thought his urge to get him out of there was him wanting to see those eyes again. It wasn't that, not for the most part, of course. It took him two nights to perfect the doll's eyes. They turned out to look simple, but if you stood close enough, their details became visible: the inner ring of the irises which were a touch green, the slight highlights making it seem as though the doll was about to cry. All this contrasted with an unnaturally pale skin color that reflected more so the real boy's current state. Finding an appropriate outfit and wig was easy enough considering his profession. He contemplated sneaking into their old home to get some of his brother's used clothes but again decided against it. It wasn't meant to be an exact copy; Milo's essence, or what he loved about it, had been constricted by the puny appearance he was cursed with. When they were children, Evan constantly compared

him to the antique dolls he had stolen from his grandmother. At first it unsettled Milo, but he already had grown used to that feeling. Later he began to see himself in their fragility; they had both known it wouldn't take much to break the boy. Evan handled the doll carefully as he dressed it. It was his. Now he could break it if he wanted to, which he at times did, but that would be wasting all the time he spent on creating it. He told himself it was the boy watching him as he went about his day in his room: as he ate, as he worked, as he slept, and so on. There was some kind of strange sadistic satisfaction in that mundanity—in finally fully possessing something without having to continuously rape and then kill it. Still, he knew that wouldn't last: his terrible, incomprehensible dreams started soon after. The other shoe was beginning to drop.

At night Milo came alive and found him with his copy, so Evan had to kill him again, and again, and again. Only to not get caught with it. But nothing worked; it was like the boy's rotting skull was made of cement. His guilt was inexplicable. It only deranged the way he wanted more. After hitting and kicking him countless times, feeling desperate, he picked up the doll with heavy hands and smashed it against the whimpering boy's head. Blood somehow poured out of his decomposing body: the dream always ended there. Every time he woke up from it, he rushed down. He had to check that Milo was there. This routine was difficult to keep up; it felt impossible to push the nagging, haunting feeling he got with knowing where his brother's corpse was to the back of his thoughts. It was like someone was drilling a hole into his brain. He was still there, so close. One day he realized there was no reason for him to give up on him completely.

Evan thought he was looking at the doll, but he wasn't. The overwhelming exhilaration he felt watching Milo look so unreal next to his creation almost made his blood freeze in his veins. The surrounding air suspended in static; even his mind was unreachable. He fell to his knees and started caressing the corpse. It stank terribly. He was growing sick and couldn't bring himself to look at its current state; he closed his eyes as if avoiding a blow to the head. Even after so much waiting, he knew the boy's body by heart, but when he moved towards his face to kiss him, Evan instinctively pulled back. The stench was getting worse. A part of him didn't want to know what Milo felt like under his clothes—but he still needed to. He finally opened his eyes and started removing them pitifully slowly. Meanwhile, he flinched whenever he caught a glance of Milo's cold, blue face. It disgusted him uncontrollably; it seemed absurd to him that he'd painted his doll the same color. Here came this familiar feeling in his stomach of not knowing whether he

hated or wanted him. He tried to push past it by force like he had learned to. So he picked the boy's half-naked body up and clumsily threw him onto the bed. It was as if he'd grown heavier after death; it used to be so easy to handle him. Milo was now this strange thing. His skin felt hard and rubbery—had it always been like this? His lips were like dead leaves: all broken up and flimsy. Evan didn't stop what he planned to do but there was no enjoyment in it. His mind was leading him to these eerie, desolate landscapes. He had sent himself to a frozen-over desert where nobody knew him, where he was less than a ghost. There was no one to blame him for what he'd done, but he couldn't take it. He had never been taught to live by himself, so he needed Milo. Even if he was dead, he still needed him, even if he was just a body now, though he was one which was rapidly proving itself to be very unhelpful. He didn't understand why he had killed him. He didn't understand why he hadn't done it when he was 12. Later—he wasn't sure exactly when—he was lying beside him, obviously now facing away from the boy. They had done this so many times before; he noticed there really was no difference between then and now. Sometimes Milo would cry after, but he had stopped doing that years ago. Evan felt no less defeated and frustrated than after every other time he would rape him, except now he could admit to knowing how meaningless this was. Even then, oddly, he saw no other possible way that it could have gone; in some way he had spent his whole life waiting for this moment.

**BECOME AN ALCOHOLIC (SUBLIMATION)**

Crash your car. Give your friend \$20.  
 Invite no one to the emergency room. Burn your fingers with a toothbrush.  
 Whisk the back into leather. Don't respond.  
 Check the materials of your chair. Leave the mailbox for tomorrow. Give back the  
 dropped pastry. Insult your friends' clothing. Use a thumbscrew. Rent a  
 room from a widow. Imagine a bicycle sweating. Don't respond. Wear the  
 nailed-on wood-bottom shoes. Eat a metallic meatloaf. Wake up at 5:57am.  
 Remind someone of their birthday.  
 Pay the widow nothing. Burn your fingers with a bead.  
 Don't respond. Close your eyes. Open the blinds the doors and the curtain. Spit  
 out the new day. Touch metal, metal, metal! Present handwritten  
 aphorisms. Search for new red-wearing friends. Hollow out a bone like cancer.  
 Carve a table to learn power tools.  
 Eat only squash soup. Don't  
 respond. Find a job that pays millions. Piss instead on the concrete.  
 Write their name down for once. Don't respond. Learn  
 an extinct instrument. Read a newspaper. Don't respond. Pull out a  
 tooth and invite no one. Instead write the invented name.  
 Don't respond. Scratch all the pages in the book. Burn the letters and taste their apple smoke.  
 Don't respond. Become a masochist when there's bad news. Don't even write their name.  
 Don't respond.  
 Sew until you see blood. Don't respond. Push a  
 knife under your hairline. Don't respond.  
 Whisk the back into flesh. Don't respond.  
 Be under dense round rubber Don't respond Tire tracks Don't  
 respond Let the smoke fill up the car this time Don't respond The  
 outside is flesh and the inside is metal Don't respond Make a joke of it Don't  
 respond Cuts the bone Don't respond Discuss the meaning of blunt force Don't  
 respond If it's a living don't

---

Addy F. Gravatte (they/them) is a queer + trans experimental collage artist/poet/screenwriter in San Francisco whose work concerns body horror, sexuality, and translation. They are currently working on a text-image hybrid thesis centered around the body as material as part of the MFA program at California College of the Arts as well as a short film about lies, height, and baby doll heads. They can be found on Instagram at [@addddy37](#).

**nothing gets everywhere**

i came back just to leave again.  
bills are past due.  
sky is seeping into me.  
taken over by all this empty.  
turned around and stalled out.  
lost the weight and gained it back.  
washed my hands  
but not my face. came and didn't change  
the sheets. i'm pulling out  
all the stops. will they won't they  
answered itself. all the fun sucked out.  
all consequences turned inward.  
vodka spilled, freezer's sticky.  
it's not hard  
but it's harder not to.  
i'm not in trouble with a pisces  
he's in trouble with me. i'm getting back  
to work. i'm getting back into porn.  
i'm hiding behind the camera again.  
my body doesn't work for me. my voice is all i've got  
going. would look good with a dirtbag  
mustache. just because i say it doesn't mean it's true.  
i'm writing this from a motel off the interstate.  
i belong in jersey. i'm covered in hickies. i love to be trashy.  
the sexiest letter is v. i say this because i'm in love.  
i fall for everyone i fuck. i fuck everything i see.  
i'm insatiable and pleading. he says i know and i'm sorry.  
i can't stop gossiping. i deleted hinge. left  
my location off on bumble.  
i'm mumbling into my drink again.

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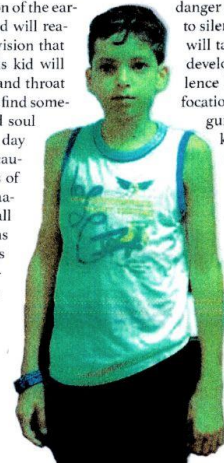
BEE LB is the facsimile of a living poet; a porcelain pierrot with a painted face. they collect champagne bottles, portraits of strange women, and diagnoses. they've been published in *G\*Mob*, *MOODY*, *Landfill*, and *The Racket*, among others. their portfolio can be found at [twinbrights.carrd.co](http://twinbrights.carrd.co).

I remember the last time your voice croaked  
to get rid of me,

get out of the house

I can't go  
I'm only fifteen.  
I need a home.

One day this kid will get larger. One day this kid will come to know something that causes a sensation equivalent to the separation of the earth from its axis. One day this kid will reach a point where he senses a division that isn't mathematical. One day this kid will feel something stir in his heart and throat and mouth. One day this kid will find something in his mind and body and soul that makes him hungry. One day this kid will do something that causes men who wear the uniforms of priests and rabbis, men who inhabit certain stone buildings, to call for his death. One day politicians will enact legislation against this kid. One day families will give false information to their children and each child will pass that information down generationally to their families and that information will be designed to make existence intolerable for this kid. One day this kid will begin to experience all this activity in his environment and that activity and information will compel him to commit suicide or submit to danger in hopes of being murdered or submit to silence and invisibility. Or one day this kid will talk. When he begins to talk, men who develop a fear of this kid will attempt to silence him with strangling, fists, prison, suffocation, rape, intimidation, drugging, ropes, guns, laws, menace, roving gangs, bottles, knives, religion, decapitation, and immolation by fire. Doctors will pronounce this kid curable as if his brain were a virus. This kid will lose his constitutional rights against the government's invasion of his privacy. This kid will be faced with electro-shock, drugs, and conditioning therapies in laboratories tended by psychologists and research scientists. He will be subject to loss of home, civil rights, jobs, and all conceivable freedoms. All this will begin to happen in one or two years when he discovers he desires to place his naked body on the naked body of another boy.



Get the fuck out of my house!  
Fuck you! Fuck you!  
I fucking hate you,  
you piece of shit!

It's my fault?  
My fault? Fuck you!  
Get the fuck out of my house!  
Get the fuck out of my house!  
Fuck!  
Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!  
Fuck!

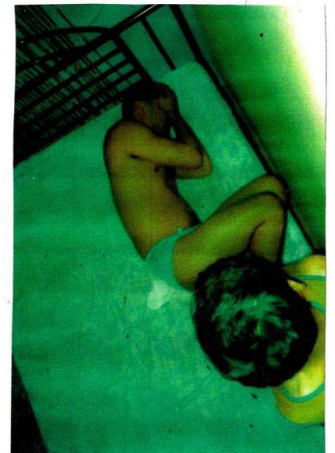
I wanna fucking die!

It's the fault of my brother  
and his stupid fuckin' friends!  
My life is fucked!  
My life is fucked!  
Fuckin' at shit AM  
Fucked!

Calm down!  
Calm down!

I don't wanna be here  
with these fucking evil!  
evil fucking people!  
They're fucking evil!  
fucking evil...  
They're fucking  
they're fucking evil  
evil people.

It's okay.  
I wanna be alone. I just wanna be alone.  
I just wanna be alone. - It's okay.



I don't wanna be here  
with these fucking evil fucking people!  
Fuck off!  
I just wanna die!  
Fuck off!

**get out of the house**

Pêá is disillusioned. Working on his artistic projects independently since he was a teenager, Pêá now studies visual arts and art education at Universidade de Brasília. Rushing through his busy days, he finds solace in the rare moments dedicated exclusively to creation. Disillusioned with the rhythm of the urban world, he craves a time before time, integration with nature (that is now vanishing so rapidly), and more opportunities to create and invite as many as you can to practice the creative languages we often abandon when growing up. Instagram: [@peacastroalves](#) || X: [@enfanterrivel](#)

## **"It Was Just a Weird Way to Make Five Dollars"**

### **WHAT HAPPENED?**

well... i don't know how to say this... but... when i was... young... my friend... i don't know what to call it... but... i think he sexually abused me... i say i think because... i mean... i know he did something to me... but i don't know whether it would specifically count as... y'know... sexual abuse or not... sorry...

### **WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?**

um... i can't remember the exact month or year... um... oh... wait... i remember at that time we saw brother bear... like... the disney film... in the theatre together... let me check imdb to see when that came out in australia... ok... it says it was released on december 26th 2003 in australia... yes... i think it was january or something... during the christmas holidays... so i think it was january 2004... i would've been eight years old then... and... i'm sorry... i can't remember how old he was... but... i know he was around my age... so... probably somewhere between 7-10 years old...

### **WHEN YOU SAY "SEXUALLY ABUSED", WHAT DO YOU MEAN?**

well... i was with him in his bedroom... and... i don't remember very much about why we were there... or what we were doing... or what we were talking about or whatever... but i remember saying something about... like... wanting money... because i was a little kid... and i didn't have much money... and my family didn't have much money either... and i spent most of my allowance as soon as i got it... so... i said something like... i wish i had more money... or whatever... and... he got weirdly silent... and serious... and looked at me in the eyes... and he said... very seriously... matter of factly... something like... well i'll give you five dollars if you show me your butt... and... i was kinda surprised or whatever... because... i don't know why he wanted to look at my butt... and to be honest i still don't... but i thought... y'know... i want five dollars... or whatever... so i pulled my pants and underwear down... and i showed him my butt... and he just kinda looked at it... again... very seriously... which was really unlike him... he was usually really over the top and

hyperactive... but yeah... he just looked at my butt for... like... five seconds or something... not saying a word... and then he just said ok or something... and he handed me a five dollar note... and... that was it i guess...

### **HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT IT AT THE TIME?**

um... i don't know... more confused than anything else... i didn't know anything about sex or sexual abuse or anything at that time... beyond what my mum had told me about... y'know... stranger danger and all that... so i didn't know what he was doing... and to be honest i still don't... so... to me... it was just a weird way to make five dollars... i guess... i don't know...

### **HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT IT NOW?**

well... i don't know... i don't think about it much... and i go through long stretches of time where i don't think about it... like... for years or something... i remember when i was in tafe in 2015... and i thought about it out of the blue... for the first time in years... and it was the first time i put two and two together... and i realised that he had sexually abused me... or at least... something like that... that he had done it seemingly for sexual reasons... and without me knowing so... even though he was about my age so... y'know... how did he know about that stuff... was he just more mature than me or something... had he been sexually abused himself or something... i don't know... and i don't know if i ever will know... because i'm no longer in contact with him anymore... and i don't know how to get in contact with him even if i wanted to... and also... like... how do you talk to someone about that... particularly someone who's supposed to be your friend... let alone a friend you haven't seen in over a decade... i... just... i don't know... but... sorry... back to what i was saying about when i thought about it at tafe... i kinda had this realisation or whatever... where i thought to myself... oh my god... i was sexually abused... and i kinda had this breakdown... right there in the classroom... right when we were working... and the teacher came over and was talking to me about work or instructing me or whatever... and i was just a wreck... exhausted and anxious... not to mention tired... and i couldn't work in that state... and the teacher was just going on and on as if nothing had happened... and i was like... i didn't know what to do... should i tell her what happened... should i say that i'm sick or something

and go home... i just... didn't know what to do... so i kinda just acted like nothing had happened... and she at some point asked if i was tired... which... yes i was... among other things... but i just felt so alone... and stuck... with no way out... even though looking back... i should've said something... just lied and said i wasn't feeling well... but i couldn't at the time... because... i didn't like lying... and i still don't... and i was too confused and anxious or whatever... to think clearly... so i just kinda sat there and felt miserable... oh... uh... another thing i should mention... is... after the initial incident... in january 2004... sometime later... i don't remember when... a couple years at most... he and his mother showed up at our house... seemingly unannounced... and talked to me and my mum about it... very vaguely... because i was a kid... and you're not supposed to talk about that stuff to kids... even kids who have already experienced it... and his mum talked to me about it... and said it was wrong or whatever... i don't really remember what she said... and... she made me give the five dollars back to him... which i thought was kinda weird... i understand that what he did was... dishonest... or whatever it was... but... i thought it was a bit weird to make me give back the money... as if i was being punished... after what he did to me... i don't know... it was weird... and i was confused... and... i'm sorry... i can't remember what happened very well... sorry... it was such a long time ago... and... i'm... i'm sorry... i shouldn't have told you all this... just forget it...

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lotus eater machine is an artist (who wishes they weren't one). their art can (regrettably) be found on [deviantart](#) and [youtube](#).

## **My Teeth Are Rotting Slowly and All at Once**

When I was 16 my mouth was shining clean

When I was 17 my teeth were stained with a white burst and blood of pants undone

When I was 18 my mouth was full of scratched molars and fingertips

I've come to hate my body even more

When I was 19 my mouth was glued shut with a bottle of vodka

When I was 20 my gums were smeared with a powdered antidote for my boredom

When I was 21 my mouth was fragrant of vomit and paranoia

I figured out how to use what I hate

When I turned 22 my mouth was hungry for the first time since I came out the womb

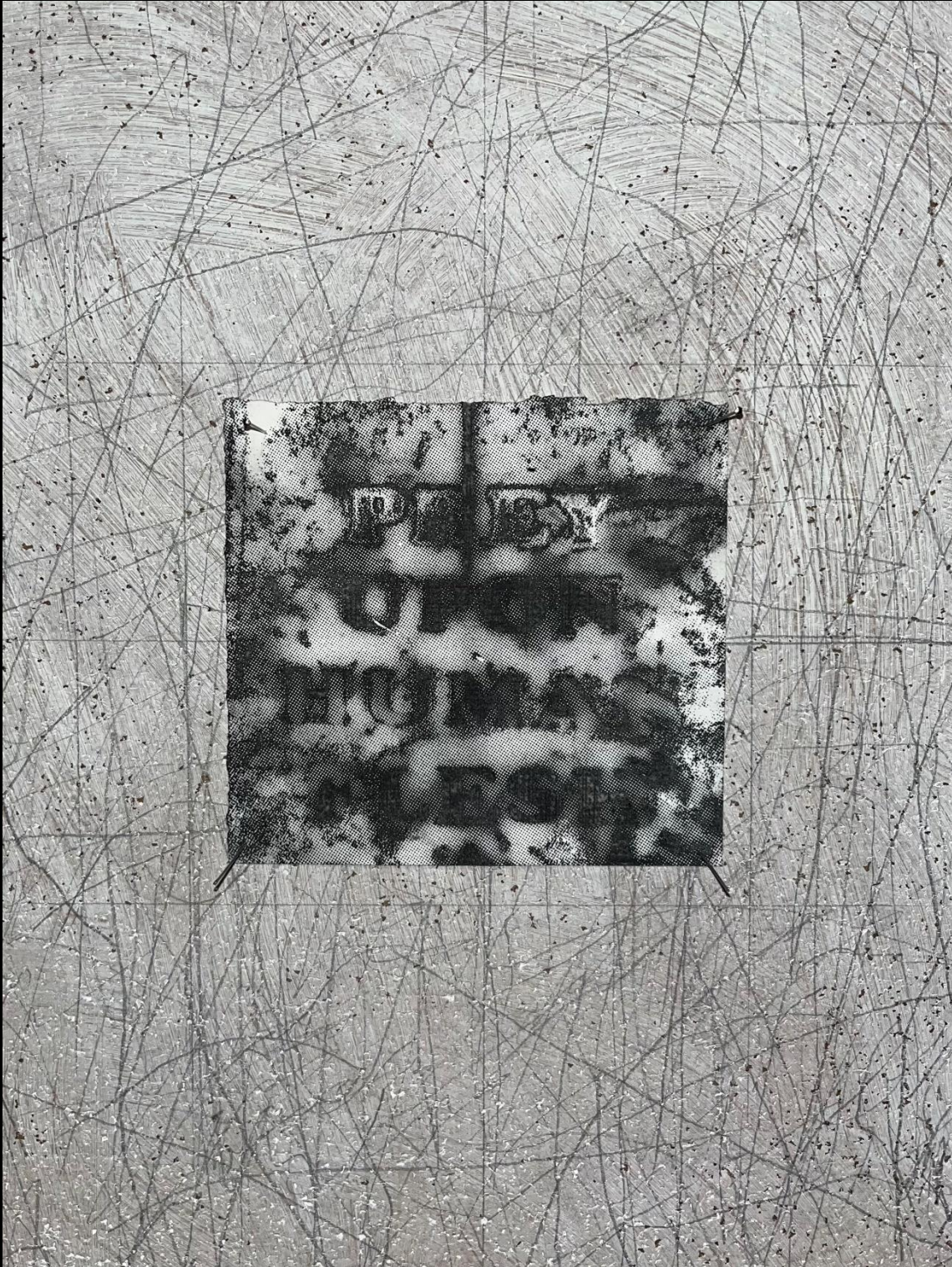
I'm almost 23 and my jaw still only opens when my toes are curled

When I'm 24 my mouth will be bolted open or bolted down

I'll never know what I want

---

Chandler Garcia is a 22-year-old Latinx and transgender student at California State University, Long Beach, pursuing a degree in Creative Writing with a focus in poetry. They use their experiences being a trans person of color in various aspects of their identity and life to inspire their writing and poetic voice.



LEECH

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Edith Geenty is a visual artist and writer living in London. They make work about dance music, rave cultures and gay horror. They can be found on Instagram and tumblr at [@speedith](https://www.instagram.com/speedith).

**Polaroid**

Don't go across. What did I tell you? Along. Always along.

White tiles; white porcelain; white shampoo bottle; white light; white skin. Red hair; red eyes; red cheeks; red toothpaste; red skin.

Her tears slid down her face, into her stretched lips. Winces of relief. Shaking hands. Shrinking penis. Sliding, naked, cold, sweaty, chicken-skin ass. Hardening nipples.

Our hands were blood-dry white. Clenched together. She couldn't do it alone. Never. A whisper on the back of the ear with every inch. A lick on the neck with every tear. A kiss on the lips with every chuckle.

She tasted salty. Her tears were salty. Her sweat was salty. She was salty. That must've made the pain worse.

Held between my arms, legs, feet, ears, she tried not to fall through the tiled floor. I held her tighter; made sure she didn't. Too tight... you're hurting me. Sorry.

It's okay. You can do it. I understand.  
I know you do. Doesn't make it easier.

She got colder. Her nipples softened. Her dick hardened. I hate seeing you cold. I'll wrap my body around yours.

It was hard. The blood was inert. She was inert. I was inert.

She slid, and slid, and slid farther away from me. I tried to hold on. I held her, but she kept sliding.

My dick got hard. We'd never seen each other naked. Felt each other naked. Her upright two-day-old ass hairs pricked my taint. I kept holding on.

Wrapping my arms around her waist had never felt better. 2 AM movie sessions, early good mornings and how are yous tied together, women's bathroom cuddled selfies – nothing like this; nothing this intimate; nothing this personal; nothing this joyful.

I dragged my index finger down her left eyelid first – her bloodshot eyes felt rough through the skin. I kept her right eye open. Her bottom lip down. Her nose dripping. Her hair flowing. Her mouth smiling.

She was so cold. Her body sucked any heat coming from mine – not enough.

When I got up, my feet left pools on the floor. Away from her. I sat back down, cradling her body.

I whispered the poems I'd written for her down her mouth, in case her heart was still beating – her brain empty. I whispered them all. Once. Twice. Enough times.

I grabbed some toilet paper and cleaned her teary face, makeup coming off with the tears, revealing pimples, freckles, the tiniest hairs.

I closed her right eyelid.

I lifted her from the white-now-red floor and placed her in the tub. Her ass left a mark on the tiles – clean at the center, reddening towards the edges. A single hair lay in the pool, slicing it in the middle. I blew on it, making it dance through, in, on her. It got stuck on a crack and stopped moving.

I grabbed a white towel from our bedroom, laying it on top of the spreading pool of red with the single still hair. It soaked her up immediately – and I grabbed another.

Her hair covered her face; her smile; her lashes; her drooping bottom lip; her cigarette-yellow-spotted teeth.

She had asked me to take a photo of her with my polaroid camera and to always keep it in my wallet. The scene was ugly – I made it ugly. I could never capture her beauty while she was alive – it didn't change when she died.

I dreaded the moment I would have to fill the bathtub. I eventually did, with cold water. Red water.

My girlfriend killed herself. I just found her.

The paramedics rang the bell, and I let them in. I gave them permission to come in.

I sat on our couch while they wrapped her body up, and I wondered if I could take her estrogen or if I'd have to order some in the next couple of days.

Mr. Johnson? What was your relationship with Mr. Taylor?

We were dating.

The paramedics left with her and told me to get to the hospital as soon as possible – I said I didn't want to go in the same ambulance as her.

There was no family to call.

I sat on the couch, sifting through the polaroids before landing on the one that showed the least amount of cellulitis and placing it in my wallet.

Ride for John?

Yes.

The hospital was dull. I was tired of white. Full of it. White tiles; white lights; white sheets; white clothes. Too white. I never wanted to see white again.

I asked if it was possible to take a photo of her on the hospital table. After a moment of silence, they allowed me to. Gave me permission.

I threw the polaroid that was in my wallet on the floor, and replaced it with the latest. I went home, and fell asleep on the floor, listening to her music.

---

Ai Feith is a Conceptual writer, Noise musician and Experimental filmmaker, working in Portugal. Previous works include *Diagrammatic Writing by Johanna Drucker through Ai Feith, 24/70 Western by Kurt Kren* and *Matmos @ 2AM*. Her focus is in the subjective act of experience of another's work of art; thus there is a lot of work through artistic appropriation, modification and transmutation. Her creative writing is focused on an overturning of stylistic, artistic and social norms.

**sly**

your face  
says nothing  
your expression  
is blank  
your eyes are clear

he looks at the camera

and then looks away  
he tries to stare longer  
but he can't

the expressions are irregular  
one moment pleasure  
then pain  
then anguish  
also some discomfort and anger

but then  
pleasure again

(a naive smile)  
(he might be enjoying it)

for a few seconds  
the world is not at war  
prague, budapest, moscow  
czechs, hungarians, russians  
are these boys like me?

he's so tough  
barely touches himself

they see your smile  
your hands  
hard as marble  
like greek and roman statues  
also broken, a little

check all angles  
(the shadows highlighting the muscles)  
fingers on my chest  
then caressing my chin

they run their fingers over my lips  
as if they wanted to taste me  
without having  
to eat me

i'm serious now  
i was laughing before

- it's a little embarrassing  
i say

on my face, the thin mustache  
they want to feel my teeth

i wonder  
how much will i earn?  
i wander

to elsewhere

---

enzzeeon is a collision of two different artistic processes (enzo/zeon). brazilian multimedia artist, non-practicing nympho. hmu: [@enzzeeon](https://www.instagram.com/enzzeeon)

## How to Become a Saint

Łukasz stood in front of the mirror, still dripping from the shower. His pale skin was luminous under the strip light, steam rising around him like something evil leaving his body. He stared, lost in the fogged reflection, his body a collection of sharp lines. 3 half-healed cuts marked his face — a couple on one side, one on the other. His hair hung wet and dark, clinging to his shoulders in a home-cut mess.

The Black Madonna was whispering in his head again.

*"I am more than wood, more than paint. I am the Mother of Czestochowa. I will watch over this land as long as they believe. My scars are theirs. My strength, too. I will never leave them."*

He'd dreamt of her again last night. He couldn't shake her. He thought about how she'd looked, hidden in the back room of a church, propped against a wall on a dirty rag. Her face solemn and scarred. A blackened relic. Maybe the church was burning, maybe it had always been on fire. He could see it all in his mind — the ash and flames, her face, her wounds, her strange power. The devotees who had hidden her from harm and who would never leave her. Maybe he was just lonely.

His cuts mirrored hers, but his were fresher, redder, wet. She was ancient even when new, her paint thick and oily, already peeling. Her voice rattled around in his skull, broken and divine. Łukasz stood naked, the bathroom light buzzing harshly overhead, and listened.

*"Eat, boy,"* she whispered. *"Your head's too light, your thoughts are too hollow. Your blood's too weak to be Holy."*

He dried himself quickly and dragged on a black tracksuit, the thin plasticky kind that clung to his skinny frame. He stumbled downstairs, feeling ethereal from 3 days eating nothing but dry crackers and communion wafers. In the kitchen, he tore through the fridge, stuffing his mouth without tasting anything. He fried a thin beef steak, devoured it with juice dripping down his chin, murmuring thanks to the slaughtered cow.

A sharp whisper cut through the noise of his chewing.

*"Saints must be beautiful,"* it said. *"You can't be beatified until you're beautiful."*

His thoughts tightened, clicked into place. He opened his phone, stared at his cracked image in the camera. He wiped the bloody juices running down his chin. Now that he'd eaten, he could look at himself without the edges of his mind fraying into blackness. He saw the clean white lines of his face, the way the hunger had carved him out, given him this raw, delicate look. The bruised

crescents under his eyes made his cheekbones stand out, made him look fragile. His dark hair was drying in curls around his face like smoke or a halo.

He wanted to be beatified like the Mother of Czestochowa, but her maternal pain was something he couldn't touch, couldn't grasp. He was just a boy. All he could do was sacrifice himself, make his own suffering real, force the evil out of his flesh. He wanted to feel it all, deep and pure, to turn his angst into something sacred, something worth worshipping.

Łukasz shoved his phone into his pocket, pulled open the door, and stepped into the grey.

The streets outside were slick with fine rain, the whole city muted. It felt like a half-developed horror game or a place between worlds. He walked, letting the cold and wet sink in, his body aching but not enough. He needed more, to push himself to the edge where pain became an ascension.

The Black Madonna's voice was softer now, a murmur urging him on. He knew where to go, where sadists and masochists played violently under a thin veneer of sex. The bar was hidden, a black door leading downstairs into darkness. Unofficially it was called PIWNICA NR. 3. Inside, smoke and sweat thickened the air, dim lights casting a sickly glow. Faces turned toward him, openly appraising him like he was meat.

He slunk to the bar and downed a Fireball, the burn fleeting, unsatisfying. He needed more. He ordered and downed a second then third, coughing as the scorch hit his throat. Industrial music throbbed through the floor and walls like he was inside a machine. He felt hazy. At the end of the bar, a man caught his eye. Tall, broad, his face like a mask of stone. He knew Łukasz. He was the one who had given him the cuts on his face, the one who understood his divine need. Without breaking eye contact the stone man slid his hand into the inside pocket of his bomber jacket where he kept the little flick knife. Łukasz nodded.

They left together into one of the back rooms, bare except for an uncomfortable chair, a stack of towels, and several hooks on the walls hung with various impact tools and bondage accessories. The man faced him, voice low and familiar.

"You ready?" he asked, a growl in his tone.

Łukasz nodded again, heart pounding, breath shallow. The man traced a stinging line across the cuts on his face. "These look nice." He gestured to the chair. "Sit."

Łukasz obeyed, sinking into the metal, the cold, wet fabric of his tracksuit sticking to his skin. His mind buzzed with the Madonna's voice, frantic with praise and prayers now. This was his path to Sainthood. The man tied his wrists behind the chair.

He unzipped the track jacket, exposing skinny, fragile bones and flesh.

"You deserve this," the stone man said softly, trance-like. "So be a good boy and take it." He suddenly slapped Łukasz hard across the face then stroked his cheek. Explosions went off in the boy's head.

The first cut to Łukasz's chest was quick, sharp, sending a jolt through him. He gasped, but welcomed it, feeling the pain ring loudly in his head, drowning out all the complexities. The man worked methodically, carving a map of suffering, etching weird occult symbols and rudimentary patterns. Sometimes he would lift the boy's drooping head by the hair and look at him with a mix of rage and confused sadness. This would always be followed by a hard slap.

"This hurts me more than it hurts you, ok?"

Łukasz thanked him through bubbles of tears and spit.

Each cut, each slap pushed the boy closer to that Holy place where only sensation existed.

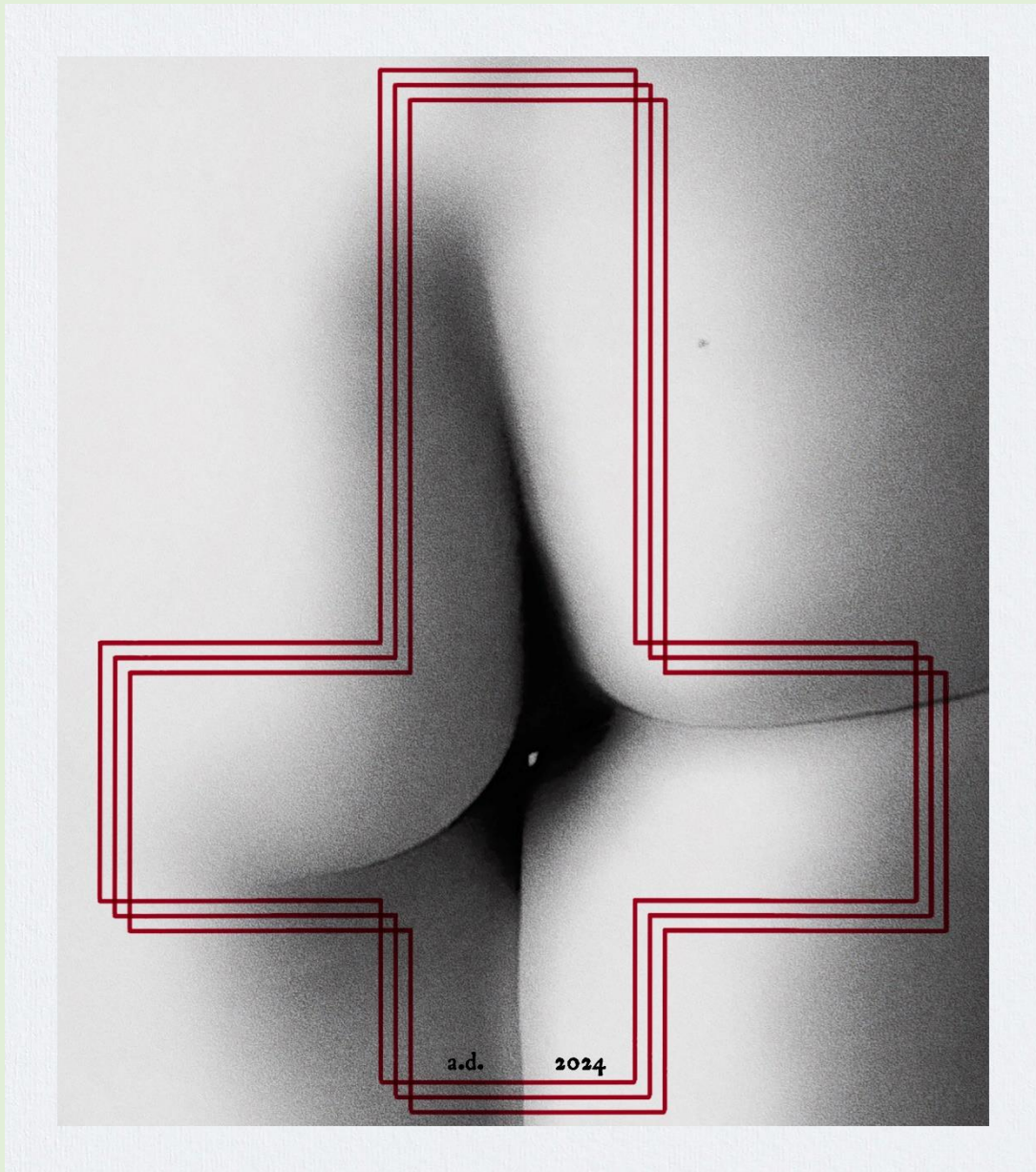
At some point the man bunched a towel up in the boy's lap to soak up the jewelled streams of blood.

The Madonna's voice grew louder, her presence swelling until it reached the same pitch as Łukasz's pain. Time dissolved, the world became a ringing haze. The stone man, an artist, continued, crafted something beautiful.

Suddenly he wiped the knife on his black jeans and stood back to admire his work. He was finished. Łukasz was barely conscious, his skin a canvas of crimson lines and blood. The man untied him, wiped him down, helped him to his feet. Łukasz swayed, ecstatic and dizzy with endorphins. He shakily pulled out his phone and looked at his image in the cracked screen. His body was a bloody ruin, but he was beautiful. Holy fuck. He was Holy. The Mother's voice whispered her approval, quieter now, a soothing lullaby.

The boy half-zipped his jacket, not even looking at the stone-faced man who stood watching him with narrowed eyes and crossed arms. He stumbled back out of the club, through the oppressive music, back upstairs into the grey.

The drizzle resurrected him, washed away his blood and sins. Left a pale Saint fit to worship behind.



**the sacred + the profane, or, self-portrait after man ray**

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a.d. is a bisexual poet and visual artist. She is drawn to the sacred, the profane, the mysterious and the mythological, which provides inspiration for her work. Her poetry is published or forthcoming in *Querencia*, *Midnight Fawn Review*, *THINK*, and *Sublimation*. Meanwhile, her visual art, mainly photography and self-portraiture, will be featured in *Small World City* and *Bleating Thing*. Tumblr & Twitter: [@godstained](#).

**Burn Jon Down**

This isn't a story. This might not even be a book per se. Now, naturally, you'll wonder what this is. Curiosity killed the cat, but I owe it to her to tell you. This is my love song and declaration, my duty to do what she did not manage to do. Now, what you will read here are memories so precious, events that have in fact taken place so outlandish even *Running with Scissors* can eat its heart out. Nevertheless, they are true. I can't believe half of this shit myself. Pinching my skin over and over when the gruesome horror kicks in that Lyne has died, screaming, WAKE UP, AMIEE. I don't. So all I have now are these priceless memories and anecdotes, widowed in spite of the fact that I got to blissfully enjoy and live the radical life we did and have loved (love? That does not and will not – it can't – describe what I am feeling for Lyne, what we are, forever will be) magically, not comprehensible to others what this relationship between Lyne and Amiee is. Maybe after you've read this, you'll grasp it. Perhaps you will not believe me, which is no problem whatsoever since this is not the point. Magic is something you either have the ability to feel and acknowledge or you simply are incapable of it. Muggle. If you are the latter, myself and Lyne would not have liked you one bit. Lyne. Misha. This book, your book, this is for you, the love of my life, my wife. My sister, best friend, soulmate, enemy, my other half, all the things I am, the light that keeps me going, my everything, my world, my death, the Skrink to my Skrod, the Cherie Currie to my Joan Jett, the Tiffany to my Chucky, the Sid to my Nancy, the Slim to my Shady, the Odd to my Future, my reason

for being. And the president of my fan club. The person who loves me more than anyone would or will or could. My family and home. The universe tore my world apart on my 28th birthday March of 2023. Unforgettable. I was already shaking in my boots since hey, how on earth did I manage to survive the 27 club? Barely, to be honest, but my suicide attempt just landed me on my knees handcuffed by a cop in my red string. Kinky. Somehow I made it. It should have been me. For some reason, I am still standing here and she is the one who left. Never did I think I'd end up to be B. I always knew deep in my gut that I'm Ginger, there to protect her from any harm, take a bullet for her, which I felt was soon approaching. Nah. Wrong. Although I always had a lingering feeling of death and my life ending early, sadistic bitch that she is, the universe had other plans. You think it's funny, huh? I mean, cosmically, it is hilarious, come on, one day before I word for word said to my mother that it can't possibly get any worse than it is now, can it, then I burst into laughter saying, "And tomorrow Lyne dies." You see, my birthday happens to be cursed, and I was already dreading it. I lost the woman who raised me on that godforsaken day, my grandma, and Fin, my best friend, committed suicide as well – that happened in the last 3 years, with the passing of my father the previous one. It could only go upwards from there, no? What? Am I alone here? Am I on Staten Island? It should have. Life already fucked me hard enough these last 3 years. Up the ass. Didn't even bother to use lube. I'm hysterically laughing now. I actually thought this was pain. I did. I always knew deep down that my biggest nightmare was losing Lyne, I always did, but whenever I happened to think of the unspeakable, I'd instantly shake off the thought, paranoid that even thinking it might make it real. They say once you are in hell, run faster. I am racing. But heeeey, let's get back to the story now, shall we? A very good plan, I assume, since Lyne's spirit is pressing me to tell you all about her. Lyne, Angeliki Politi, originally from Greece, with natural black hair that was occasionally dyed blonde, luscious lips, dark eyes sparkling with a melancholia in them you'd get sucked in, always a cigarette in her hand, hair would be up in a bob or ponytail and dressed in our at-the-time-lame attempt to look like the characters from the Dreamers. Vintage clothing we had gathered from all over the world together. She has a big nose, a Greek nose, that I adore beyond any measure, and the ability to make me laugh and annoy me like nobody can. You'd never, ever, EVER catch Lyne without lipstick on, which was usually red. "Listen, Mishi, meds and drugs are a necessity; now, lipstick, that's a lifestyle" – quote by my wife. She's a painter, she's a writer – in fact, she is the one who always wanted to write this book and had titled it Burn Jon Down. Ah, fuck, I get the chills now thinking about that... Both our fathers died on the same date but different years. Now, when Lyne came up with the name, I asked her what it meant, and she said it just popped in her head and she kept hearing it on loop. Years later, my dad whose name is Giannis in English – that's Jon for you – ended up dying by the flames his motorcycle produced when he crashed down a mountain. Coincidence, you'll say, but as I've said before, there's magic in our story and it's quite spooky at times. You'll see. You'll see.

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I am a queer content creator. I've always loved writing since preschool in Greece, Athens. My father was from Crete, and my mom is half from Massachusetts and half from Berlin. At the moment, I am based in Greece, which gets in the way of how I create, but I do not intend to stay put here. I've gotten my BFA in acting when I was 18-19, studying at Stella Adler in New York. Beware, I will be back. Instagram: [@jewishvampirelez](#) || TikTok: [@amieelynemisha](#)

**I'm an addict but you're a leech**

I have no property assets aside  
from a dog crate and  
some nipple clamps.

You like to be touched  
with only two fingers.

I burn out on sex  
in Cleveland, OH.

You think a single  
blowjob will keep you  
sane.

We make a good team:  
my carpet, your vase,

You research how  
to get me pregnant  
in the cold-weather pod  
outside the restaurant.

I think of a sunny stroll with  
someone else, far away,  
breeze on my unready  
face.

## Hip Hop Vampire Kid

“He’s rumored to be a serial killer, they’re saying, Bill. He raped Johnny in Erman’s cave, one afternoon, Johnny told me, he was walking and Bill came out of the bushes, brandishing a knife, and he scared the shit out of Johnny, and led him into the cave with it, and pulled his pants off and his shoes, and pressed the tip of the knife up against the sole of his foot. He bit it, kinda. It was like bleeding a small trickle of blood from the puncture wound, and then he raped Johnny. Just flat out raped him, straight up. Johnny kinda liked it though, and he’s been in class with Mr. Simmons all afternoon, just sitting there watching TV, on one of those little TVs that stick out of the wall, the brown one that’s on the thing, what is that called, a hinge? It’s up in the corner of the classroom, like kinda up by the ceiling...Whatever, fuck it, Bill, right? He sleeps behind Savers. He’s got a little sleeping bag and a couple of cardboard boxes and shit and like a book on one of them and a lamp too, it’s his, uh, bedside table...” Gretchen sighs. “...My dad pulled the body out of the river. White male, in his twenties, brown hair, Texas Longhorns pullover. He was like floating and bobbing around with the turtles, he was face down and so they had to use a pole to flip him over, and by the time they found him he’d gotten so waterlogged, his body had soaked up the lake like a sponge and so he was all bloated and puffy, especially around his eyes, and his cheeks and lips. And so they had a hard time recognizing him. The family, I mean, they knew it was him though pretty soon because he had a distinct birthmark on his cheek, like a brown spot. They pulled him out of the water and put him in a body bag and took him down to headquarters, to be examined and whatnot...” With urgency: “My dad says there’s a whole freezer of guys down there! What do you think?”

“I dunno,” says Gretchen.

Continuing: “My dad says they know who it is but they’re not saying yet because they want to make sure it’s him. But I think it’s Bill, and no one knows. Not even Johnny. Johnny sees Bill all the time now. They’re like dating.”

“And?”

“And what? It’s cute. Like I said, it’s like not that bad to get raped if you’re like into it.”

“And what if you’re not into it?”

Faster, now: “Then just hope it’s over soon. It’s like this scene in Goodfellas or the Sopranos, I can’t remember, one of those Jersey flicks, but they’re like about to throw this

guy into the meat grinder, and he's thrashing around and screaming and they've got like three guys holding him in different places, like his legs and his hips and his feet and all that shit, so he can't kick them but like he's still doing a pretty good job at it, and basically he's just like raising hell and then eventually the grinder is churning and he realizes he's never going to be able to overcome it and so he just submits and takes a last breath in peace before they throw him in there and he's probably thinking about what his meat will taste like and that's it; that's how you gotta handle it, in a situation like that, just move on, dharma or whatever, it all comes back, we all come back, just let go, you know, when you have to- which reminds me! One time this guy tried to kill me, you know, when I was a little kid!" Talking even faster now: "I was in Fresh Plus and he came in the front door, my mom was in the back by the meat counter, getting hamburger meat or something, come to think of it, and this guy had a broken scooter and he saw me looking at the magazines right by the front door, he was like showing me the broken scooter telling me he had another one in his truck outside that wasn't broken and he could give it to me but it was in his truck, outside, obviously, and he was looking over his shoulder and all this shit, like to see if the cashiers were noticing what was going down, and like, luckily, I already kinda had my wits about me and I knew he was, like, trying to kidnap me, stranger danger and shit, and so I told him no I'm good, whatever, but luckily the store was crowded so like he couldn't pull me out of there kicking and screaming for my mom without someone noticing and so I just said 'not interested' and kept looking at the mags--"

"You talk a lot."

"I know."

"I don't mind it."

"Thanks."

"Are you trying to be quiet now?"

"Not really, I'm just like thinking about everything now, I'm having, like, one of those moments."

"What do you mean?"

"Like, everything in the world is like flooding through my head right now and like I checked out of our conversation, cause you like made it clear you don't care."

"That's not true."

"And so what? I mean, I'm just like telling you about everything, you don't even seem to--"

“Just, slow down, is all.”

“Ok.”

“You don’t want me to make you shut up?”

“I mean I do.”

“Ok, I can do that.”

“Ok, c-”

“But the thing is – about Johnny. He really spends a lot of time with Mr. Simmons, you know, Mr. Simmons is kind of a weird guy. Just stands there with his hair in his eyes and watches everyone go by in the halls. Johnny really should be careful, getting involved with all these older men and whatnot.”

“I suppose you’re right.”

“Men are dangerous, Gretchen, believe me. It’s not safe out here for a little boy, not in the hands of men. And boys become men, as you know. And so boys become men... Scary, dangerous men, Gr-”

“Johnny isn’t like that.”

“No, not yet, but that Bill guy is no good, I’m telling you. Very dangerous. Johnny really should be careful. I’m not sure he quite knows what he’s getting himself into – they’re meeting again this afternoon.”

“Should we go?”

“Yeah, and witness it... I um...”

Gretchen passes the joint and looks out at the sea of green surrounding her. They’re on the trail right outside of the sculptors’ house, it’s like a modern red and yellow and blue place, and the trail descends down the side of the cliff, over the loom of the sculpture garden, like if you fell you would be impaled by one of the gates, and so they sit there and smoke weed some afternoons. She’s playing “I Hated the Day I Was Born” by John Lee Hooker off the YouTube app on her phone and trying to keep the smoke from her eyes, which seems to be billowing slowly towards her like a sultry and sinister snake, ‘whatever,’ she thinks, and just blinks a lot and kind of shakes the bangs out of her face.

She’s looking up at the trees, the chlorophyll sort of catching the rays of sunlight and greening out her vision, which didn’t need much help anyways, bc, yeah, the joint, and she’s looking at him and studying him up and down and can tell his dick is hard in his pants. She kind of pats it and gives him a smirk and it jumps a little bit and he’s looking at her, almost drooling, and before she has the chance to put the joint out in the neat way

that would make her able to save it, he's totally on top of her, the stiff in his pants already sandwiched in between the pillars of her dress, or, her legs, in other words, or in other words, the frame to which her dress is the drywall, and the joint is about as good as gone which just amounts to, again, one of those moments where she's glad she sells this stuff and can afford to just roll another one later when she's bored of the high from this one and long came down from the forest sex she's about to have on the ground right now in the middle of the day, not really that far from an elementary school but like, literally whatever.

He's already like ripping out the drywall, so to speak, and plunging his tongue deep into the cavity of the "wall" and looking around for whatever could be causing that pitter-patter sound that's been bothering the inhabitants of this residence, once again, so to speak, and she's letting her eyes roll back into her head and, yeah, she's gushing, pretty much, and he's slurping it up and she's kind of starting to sweat on her forehead and he's running his hand up the inside of the drywall and grabbing a, let's say, stud, once again, so to speak, and squeezing it a bit, it's plump and his hand feels great squeezing that firm and life affirming tissue, and then he grabs the other one and his, um, fuck it, his tongue, is like really rolling around in circles, inside, and she's really, really feeling this right now. Damn.

His breath makes her pussy smell like weed.

**kuuchuu buranko (trapeze)**

i lie on my back  
it hurts. it's far from hurting  
i want it to hurt. for my insides to pulse  
come the morning light. for the fire to squeeze  
and destroy me. i deserve it. what a monster  
the minotaur parading around as almost human  
i want to scream bloody murder  
i want to wake up in the morning (or not at all)  
with blood between my legs splattered on my  
milk thighs  
some color other than white and blue  
i always did look better in red

i want sobs to bubble  
ebb and flow in my closed throat  
i want each moan to come out like a scream  
like a gravelly grunt  
i want to be tired  
for it to last all night  
take me as many times as you want  
as long as i forget  
pin me down in the forest evil dead style  
sam raimi would be proud of me  
i hear kurt cobain shout rape me and all i  
can think is how correct he is

let my hair fall in my face  
i look like your best friend  
your brother  
your lover  
father

mother anything except myself  
slap my face and break my nose  
leave me aching in my own sweat  
will you be sweet to me?  
kiss me with a gun to my gut  
or don't bother touching me at all

---

Cloud Sinclair (they/she) is a 23-year-old London-based poet and 'lover of the queer form and what comes with being human.' Published in *Pastel Serenity Zine*, *ANARKISS*, *Honey Fair Mag*, *Gypsophila*, *Gnashing Teeth Publishing*, *Seedlings* and *Heart Locket Mag*, as a poet, they write about what lies at the depths of our perception.

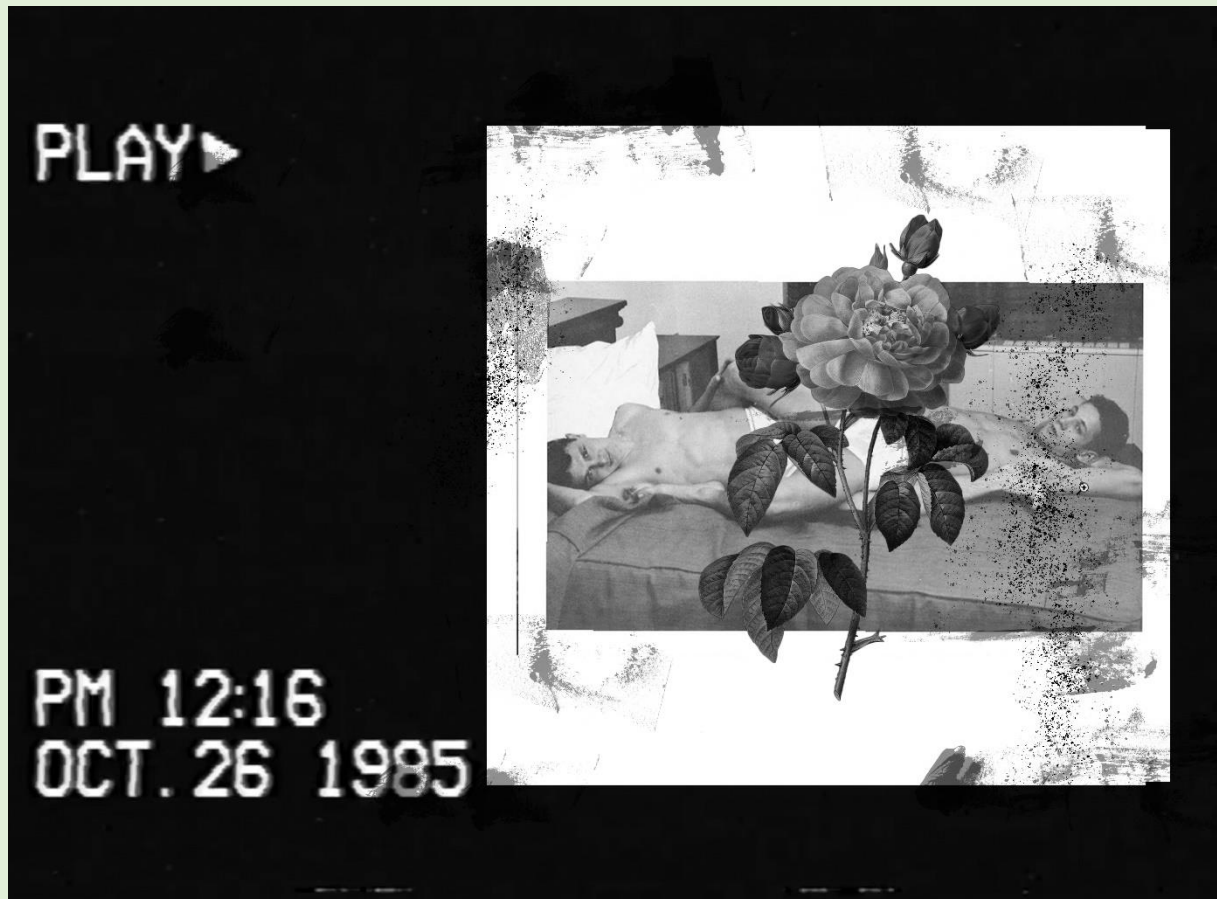
## Callus

A gallery of orphaned limbs  
cropped, siloed, rapunzelled.  
His blood refuses to behave,  
my hands apply pressure.  
He burnishes my body,  
garlands it. An alignment.  
Walking home after we both came,  
the rain spatters applause.

The men cannot be relied upon;  
how quick composure slips. Constipated.  
A full condom falls from me.  
The toilet water gulps in horror.  
He'd softly called me *a little cocktease*.  
He hadn't noticed. Careless. Callous.

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Mark Ward is the author of *Nightlight* (Salmon Poetry, 2023) and four chapbooks: *Circumference* (FLP, 2018), *Carcass* (7KP, 2020), *HIKE* (Bear Creek, 2022) and the interactive branching sonnet *Faultlines* (voidspace, 2024). Forthcoming books include *Masters*, an ekphrastic chapbook responding to dead queer male painters' work, from The Emma Press in 2025 and a second full-length collection, *Real Estate*, from Salmon in 2026. He edits *Impossible Archetype*, an international journal of LGBTQ+ poetry, now in its eighth year.



**Two Young Men, 23 to 24 Years Old (after Cavafy)**

---

Paul Beaudoin is an interdisciplinary artist who navigates the fusion of identity, creativity, and the journey to embrace his sexuality through artistic exploration.

**Enrique**

I like you better with longer hair  
When it falls past your ears,

How you occasionally blow it out of your face.  
For me it's those button dimples when you smile.

Yeah, I love you most when you're drunk  
And stumbling in a stall behind me

Where the streams of our piss  
Pop in a pool of toilet water.

I remember our kiss  
When you were kind enough to say,

*No, I don't want to lead you on.*

---

Shane Allison is the author of four collections of poetry: *I Remember* (Future Tense Books), *Slut Machine* (Queer Mojo Press), *Sweet Sweat* (Hysterical Books), and his most recent *I Want to Eat Chinese Food Off Your Ass* (Dumpster Fire Press). His new collection, *Turbulent*, is out and available from Hysterical Books. When he's not writing, he's making collages.

**MISSILE**

I saw him again for the first time since the accident. Everything was different except for his hair. The bones resealed but the rest of the damage he wore always and obviously, like a protective shell.

His hair framed his face, the same way it always did. It shone in all the sun he shared with me. I liked looking at him. He was beautiful. Being with him was beautiful. It was always like this. I just couldn't tell him that now because I wasn't sure how he'd feel when he heard it.

We shopped for groceries together.

"You never cook."

"I want to start making something. I'm not sure what. Food's the easiest. Or the most normal, I guess."

"That makes sense."

"Maybe I could try learning how to woodwork or something but for some reason I think it would make me annoying."

Spit crept down his chin. He did this sometimes now, occasionally, when he talks. His fingers gnarled twitchily as he stuffs his hand into his jean pocket for something to wipe with. He just found the grocery money.

I kissed him. My face is wet when I pull away and his is less wet.

"Thanks."

He smiles.

"I think you'd be a good cook. We can look for recipes when we get home, if you want to."

"No, it'll be fine. How hard could it be?"

...

“Taste it.”

It was wet, dark, and clumpy. There was a smell. It was hard to describe, but it didn't smell bad.

“What's in it?”

“I'll tell you afterward. It's not like you're going to refuse anyway. You'd feel too bad for me.”

He smiled. I didn't feel bad for him. He knew.

I looked at it again. Then I open my mouth and stick my tongue out.

...

It was bitter, sour, and rank. I choked. It rolled out of my mouth and onto the floor.

“Here.”

He used the spoon to scrape it together then scooped it up. He did an airplane swivel as he fed it to me. I swallowed.

“Here, water. Are you okay?”

I was still coughing but didn't retch. The roll in my stomach felt like waves.

“What was it?”

“Cloves, garlic, five spice, peppercorns, vinegar. I tried browning the butter but it burned. I mashed the anchovies with the shrimp. Parsley, paprika. And...”

He looks at my eyes.

“And I scooped a bit of the litter box into it. There's lemon too. Here.”

I grabbed his wrist, but the spoon went in my mouth anyway. It knocked against my teeth. He stuck it down on top of my tongue. My spit made a slime with whatever was on the underside. It dripped into my throat, like snot.

I looked at him. I was crying. The sounds were burbly.

“Swallow, baby.”

“Eyeh han’t. Hake ow hah sphoon. Flease.”

“You can do it. It doesn’t matter if you slobber.”

I gulped. Brown saliva streaked out of my mouth. It made sallow spots on my t-shirt.

“Here’s the bowl. Finish it yourself.”

...

He held my hair in a ponytail in his fist as I was bent over the toilet. He rubbed my back, made soft cooing sounds. He was still as good at comforting me as he had always been. He bent down too and kissed my ears and my neck as I puked.

“There, see? I told you you could do it.”

He helped me up. He carried me to the bed. His touch left stains, which transferred onto the sheets.

I tried to catch my breath. I wiped my mouth and chin with the back of my wrist.

“You’re so good for me.”

“Can I rinse out my mouth?”

“No.”

“I can’t breathe too well. The smell’s still in my mouth. Please.”

“No. I want to kiss you like that.”

He did.

Then he ran his slimy hands through my hair. He wiped the streaks off my cheeks and the runny mascara pools from under my eyes. He did it the same way he used to. It made my face messier. He looked at me, and smiled again.

“Why did you leave?”

“I didn’t. I just needed some time away. I mean, by myself.”

“I was in that hospital bed for a month. The only one who came to see me was my sister.”

I looked into his eyes. The way his face had changed made them look brighter.

They almost looked golden.

“I wasn’t—it wasn’t that.”

“Then what was it?”

His face blurred away. I couldn’t see his eyes anymore.

“I needed you. When I heard what happened I couldn’t stop screaming. I called and called and called. They wouldn’t tell me anything because we’re not married. I didn’t sleep. I couldn’t eat. It was like you were gone but you were still there. And when I came to see you again, you would need me. I didn’t know how to be that for you because I needed you. I’ve never had to be this for you.”

The blood around the corners of my eyes softened and runs pinkly down my temples into the pillow.

“That would’ve been fine. I know you, Lorie. You thought I wouldn’t understand?”

“It felt evil. It felt like I hated you.”

He looked.

“Maybe you do.”

“I don’t.”

I couldn’t see him but I looked into the dark blur where his eyes should be. I couldn’t see him but I knew he was there.

“Okay. Then you don’t.”

He sat up, swung his legs over the side of the bed. I wiped my eyes.

His wide, wide shoulders. He had to turn sideways to walk into our bedroom. For the first time today, he seemed fragile.

“I’m sorry.”

“Okay. Then you’re sorry.”

He looked at me.

“You lost a lot of weight.”

“I couldn’t eat.”

“That’s what you said. Well, now I can fix that.”

He smiles.

“Is it okay if I still want to fuck you? It won’t be the same.”

“Yes. I love you, I don’t care.”

“Okay.”

He stops talking. He's not looking at me anymore. His head, from the back, looked swollen. There were missing patches you couldn't see when he was facing you.

I wait. I don't know if he's crying.

He still didn't say anything.

"Do you think things will stay like this?"

"I think so."

"Would you hate them if they did?"

"No. No, not really. I think I just have to get used to them."

The bed shifts slightly under his weight. I couldn't tell what he was doing with his face.

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Ellie Chou lives in New York. She's in love, an artist, and trying to catch a serial killer. The three things aren't related, probably.

## Employed Again

Zero for it but to watch hentai and cum in a black sock. The angel of death of American work ethic has abandoned other Gen Z otter twinkles. Excess dopamine glows molten plastic. Lethargic contentment kills chemical Jesus hanging from my neuron cross with memory nails. "I knew a guy who lit his pants on fire because he didn't wanna go to school or something. I don't know. He was basically fine." I wish Waco had a happy ending. Heaven's Gate better shoes. Ugh. Fuck. God damn.

## The Eye of the Beholder

'I mean, seriously, how can anybody live in shitholes like these? Are we even sure these people can be called human beings? Because after seeing them in their natural habitat, in their actual fucking environment, Greg, I'm no longer sure they belong to the same species as, say, you and I.'

Cynthia takes a drag on her vape, listening to the sing-song male voice in the earbud. She steers the Wrangler round a bend and a trailer park – her intended destination – welcomes her with the usual view of tetanic wrecks brimming with glue-sniffing kids, rotting dentures and teen pregnancies. Wayfield, Godforsaken County, People's Septic Tank of Appalachia. Yet another anus mundi in an area that should be sealed in a human waste bag and thrown down a hospital chute for hygienic prophylaxis. She recalls her father's AIDS ON SODOM bumper sticker. The butt plug stuck in his ass when they found him dead was a swiftly deleted side note in the family history. *AIDS = Arse-Injected Death Syndrome. Who was that? Wojnarowicz – no, that faggot Brit director – Derek Sherman. Great movies he made though. Gorgeous photography.*

'Yeah, right, of course we're gonna have to tune *that* aspect down,' she continues, throwing a glance at the GPS map. *Shit. This fucking cesspool is not even mapped. I'm in the middle of nowhere.* 'But that's beside the point, Greg. Man, people over here really take degradation to another level. Come have a look and you'll learn a thing or two about the meaning of the word "deformity".'

Degradation. She's been hunting it down for three weeks now, in all its forms and degrees, feeding on it, assimilating it together with her on-the-road diet of takeaway ramen and stale diner pies, sleeping side by side with it in motels describing themselves as *unassuming* (whether shamelessly or naively, she couldn't decide), whose bathrooms were showerless and the beds were full of pubic hairs, with names like *Hank's* and *Sandra's Rooms for Rent* and *Elmer's Motor Inn*. She's plunged herself headfirst in it, documenting it like an Auschwitz doctor probing the maggoty sores of a gangrenous limb. Earlier in the morning she made a detour south and took pictures of a girl with KS lesions on her face, slumped in a chair in front of a trailer on blocks with her eyes closed and flies swarming all over her face. Cynthia nudged her with the tip of her foot to make her open her eyes and take a close-up of her ravaged face. When it became clear the nudging wouldn't work, she kicked her in the shins until the girl woke up with a groan. To her

delight, the girl's eyes were blue, caked with a yellowish discharge. *Dope. Let momma give it more contrast and a tad of sharpening and your ghastly little face will become a work of art, babe.*

She spots an elderly man pushing a shopping cart down the road, his rachitic carcass wrapped in a ragged American flag. She takes the Canon, calls out ('*HERE, POPS!*') and starts clicking as soon as the man turns around. She manages to take some good ones before he picks up a stone and throws it at the car. She speeds off, followed by a salvo of curses.

She drives along the fence until she gets to the park's entry, pulls over by the dyslexic sign (W LC ME TO WAYFIELD MOB LE H ME P RK) and starts scanning the wasteland of garbage-littered lawns, scattered with rusty swings and children's bicycles made sticky by the incestuous hands of backyard groomers. Two mangy mongrels are fucking in a playpen, the mouth of the one on top covered in foam. A woman in an Alice in Chains t-shirt is watching her from the door of a corrugated iron shack, a litter of babies holding onto her like a cluster of piles. A little girl is crawling naked on the ground, playing with a Barbie doll and dragging a dirty diaper round her ankles.

While getting out of the Wrangler, Cynthia catches a glimpse of a marabou stork's head in the rearview mirror. The scabby head and gular sack of her scavenger self are a sight she's got familiar with since her misery tour began. Her crusted bill snaps open like a pair of shears.

*Holy shit, this is going to be my most powerful work to date. I'm... elated. Euphoric. Never felt like this before. Man, I have a feeling, a very good feeling about this thing.*

She steps out of the jeep and stretches her back, smiling, breathing the squalor in. Her neck pouch swells. *Aaaaaaaahhhh...*

A fruitful day, to say the least. Beyond her rosier expectations, even. The Wrangler is cruising comfortably down the deserted road, destination the first *unassumingly* lousy motel she can find on her way to... what's the name again...? Shitville. Craptown. Whatever. *How the fuck am I supposed to tune it down, Greg? You just don't get it, you fucking mong. You're too dumb to realize the potential of it, the sheer fucking potential of it, so keep your useless advice to yourself and let me do it my way, would you.*

*Celebrity Skin* is playing on the stereo. Cynthia drums on the wheel along with the music, the powerful hum of the engine providing a soothing background that, merging with the sunset flooding the sky like a leaking catheter, lulls her into a sated sleepiness.

*He's scared shitless this stuff will turn out to be more than his crappy mag can afford to publish, and eventually he's not gonna publish it, no matter what I do. I can see him whining and cringing as if he'd actually been pondering things. 'Terrific photographs, Cynthia, the... uh, the outcast and the destitute screaming out for help with the, uh, the big bright eyes of shattered innocence, yes, of course I see your point, Cynthia, I really do, but let's not rub it in the face of the public... I mean, uh, do we, do they, need to actually SEE it? Needles stuck in a teddy bear and toothless men sucking on glass pipes and children playing with the remains of a run-over... uh, poodle?'* (She gave those kids five bucks each to rummage with a stick in the ripped belly of the dead dog and let her take pictures of them, dirty and bare-chested, under the most beautiful leaden sky she's ever seen.)

There's supposed to be an inn a few miles east of Wayfield. No need to worry about there not being vacancies, judging by the lack of traffic on the road. A truck, a few pick-ups, a handful of oncoming cars – no nightlife to speak of, aside from your average service station cum diner cum drugstore whose main source of income is smuggled Adderall.

There it is. A tilted beer glass flickers on the diner's roof – *Big Joe's* – so invitingly stereotypical she actually slows down and turns into the parking lot. She might well take it easier tonight and chill out. *Mashed taters and fried drumsticks, and yeah, I really could do with some inches of big hard local folklore tonight. Mmmmmh. And maybe a bit of nose candy to celebrate the day's feat, ¿no?*

She drives past the neon-lit road sign and pulls in near the diner's entrance. Canon at hand, she walks round the building to the back door, flanked by piles of trash bags and caryatids of empty beer crates. She gets a Pentel marker pen out of the camera's bag. In the last picture of the day, black graffiti on *Big Joe's* wall advocating a *HOMOKAUST* and warning that the place is *UNSAFE FOR NIGGAS*. The faint light from above gives the composition that acid tint that really was the craze for a brief, glorious period in the nineties.

It's twilight-dim inside. Less than a dozen flannel-shirt-type customers are loitering by the counter or sitting with beers and scrambled eggs before them. The cook stands in the kitchen's doorway with folded arms, sucking on a toothpick.

Few heads turn as she walks to a corner table, Patti Smith's *Space Monkey* blasting from crackling speakers hooked on the ceiling, mildly drunk gazes trying to focus on her tits and ass. Not that Cynthia has much to show off in that department, a fact she's made aware of whenever men happen to be around. Despite being average-to-okay-looking, she repels them in a deeper, *essential* way, as if emitting a field of magnetic same-polarity. She used to be luckier with girls back in college, even though in the long run none of that half-assed fucking around ever really worked out. Which, as far as she's concerned, has pretty much ceased to be a source of emotional distress. Just one of many unexamined, blank spaces in her life, is all. She feels those voids expanding within her, feeding on living matter and nurturing substances, hollowing her out till one day there will be nothing left of her but a visual and tactile shell, projecting a hologram identity.

A scrawny waitress with dyed blonde hair comes over with a notepad. The handwritten nametag pinned on her blouse says *Trish* in crooked red caps.

'What'll it be, *miss?*'

Cynthia has a quick look at the menu.

'Deep-fried wings, fries and onion rings. And a Bud.'

'Alright. Back in a minute.'

'Wait – fuck the beer, make it Jim Beam. Double, no ice.'

The woman glances at the camera bag, the vape, and the Chinese ideogram tattooed on Cynthia's neck. *Quite the artsy bitch we got here. Smug dykey pot-head.* 'Alright. Anything else?'

'That's all, thanks.' *Fuck off, you slob.* Cynthia watches the waitress wobble away. Her varicose veins look like a Parkinsonian's blue-pen doodle.

Sitting at the tables to her left and right are an elderly man and a hybrid jock-nerd young specimen she catches glancing at her while she scans the diner. The elderly guy nods politely before averting his eyes after a moment of tight-lipped assessment. The boy's lower eyelid keeps twitching as he hurriedly looks away.

By the time Trish is back with the food and the whisky, Cynthia has started to play with a lip balm stick that, should the ½ inch of waxy material be removed, would turn out to contain a moderate amount of cocaine.

Slowly sipping her whisky, nodding to the rhythm of *Because the Night*, Cynthia is assessing the last days' work on her laptop. Never before has she been so critical and yet

so satisfied of what she's starting to seriously think of as her *art* – *her* art – something with meanings so further beyond the visual, images that not only convey a meaning but actually *are* their own meaning. The unabashed pornography of reality. The exploitative character of representation. There's little doubt Ernst Friedrich toured the VA hospitals thinking to himself: *Thank God it was so bad.*

The ones with kids are the best. She's taken quite a few, some with small children and even infants in different degrees of neglect, various stages of degradation. She clicks on one of a boy smiling at the camera while aiming a shotgun at his younger brother's face. Sitting in a rocking chair on the porch, their grandfather is laughing a toothless laugh, a dozen cats curled up at his feet. The smaller boy looks up at the gun with mirthful puzzlement. She worked on that picture's high-contrast b/w while eating cold canned chili in a motel room. Then, for the umpteenth time, Cynthia finds herself examining the portrait of a five-year-old girl with half her face blackened and swollen due to what her morbidly obese mother described as a collision against a door jamb. *Yeah, the dumb little fuck banged her head. Yeah, repeatedly. That means many times, right?* It only took twenty bucks for the mother to stop bitching about her girl being photographed and get back to her bowl of Oreo ice cream. There she is, an out-of-focus behemoth slumped in an armchair watching TV, merging with the blurry background. Cynthia took painstaking care to increase structure in the child's bruised skin's details. The haematoma had expanded from the eye to the lower jaw. The little girl's name – *Cynthia, goddam kid's a Cynthia, Jesus fucking Christ, this really takes the cake* – is written on the cover of the coloring book she's holding at chest level. Saturation was enhanced until the pink uneven letters stood out, painfully garish. She could only work on this one by resorting to the contents of the lip balm stick. *Repeatedly.*

Cynthia gulps down the last of the Jim Beam. *What point am I trying to make here? That these kids may well be, or actually are, made of the same garbage as their parents? That if they aren't now, they'll be in the future? That I can't see the faintest trace of innocence in their burned-out, hollowed-out eyes? When does it start, when does the corruption begin? At what age do children start morphing into their parents?* The creeping sense of something getting too close for comfort makes her wince. *Families so inherently pathogenic they're incompatible with human life. Parents crippling their children by showing them what they're going to look like, how their lives are going to be – mirrors for them to look in and see their future, day in day out.* She zooms in on the obese woman in the armchair, lost in the gloomy

light of a soap opera, shoveling ice cream into her mouth. *Will anybody see what I see, the way I see it, and for the same reasons?* Cynthia wonders. *Can pictures convey the idea of what it means to have trouble even tolerating the sight of your parents? To unconsciously scrunch up your face at the thought of them as if smelling something foul? To have to turn away before your gazes meet, before their faces smear your eyeballs with their excremental vileness? It fucking changes you, within and without. They do. Change you. And you'll be blamed for having let them do it, for wasting chances you were deprived of, for not making choices that were never really available to you in the first place.*

She almost knocks off the empty glass while reaching for her vape. She doesn't see the boy getting up and coming toward her, a backpack slung on his shoulder, until he's standing behind her. He's looking at the screen of her laptop, studying the grid of photographs. *They fuck you up and leave nothing behind but stupidity, vulgarity, pettiness and selfishness, the rotten remains of their long-dead souls. They inflict on you the sight of their decay, of their getting exponentially uglier and meaner and creepier... make you a witness to their lecherous freakish pantomime of a life... and you better get this straight, man... this is nothing but a foretaste of whatever future you-*

'Uh, hey... hello.'

Cynthia looks up at the boy, startled out of her thoughts.

'I was kinda wondering if you're a journalist or something like that. I mean, it must be an awesome camera you got there.'

At this point, as the inquiries will evince, the diner's security camera catches a 10 fps glimpse of Cynthia quickly turning her laptop away. The implications of which make the boy back off a step, a wide array of tics distorting his face.

'Sorry for butting in. I was just, you know, wondering. Wasn't snooping around or anything.'

'Uh-huh, no worries.' She puts the laptop back in her bag, slowly and deliberately enough to drive the message home. Or so she hopes.

'Anyway, you're a photographer, aren't you? That's professional stuff you're carrying around. Man, you don't see a Billingham 445 that often around here. I could peddle my ugly ass for that bag!'

'Yeah, it's a... good one.'

'You fucking bet! Top notch.'

In the humming silence between songs, the boy scratches his cheek. A glass shatters in the kitchen, followed by laughter and the acoustic guitar intro of *Ghost Dance*.

'And yeah, I'm a photographer. I'm freelancing, kind of.'

'Cool.' The boy bites his thumbnail.

Cynthia is trying to grasp what exactly is in his overall handsome features that repulses her so powerfully. Her eyes linger on the bulge in the front of his jeans. It's the first time she feels something overwhelmingly unsettling about a high-school stud she'd normally fancy and get laid by. For whatever reason, she can't help thinking of a broken boy doll. One that was *deliberately* torn to pieces and put together again by clumsy hands.

Glancing at her, he spits out a word like a cuticle.

She blinks, mystified. 'Sorry?'

'Jed. Name's Jed.'

Silence.

He wrings the hem of his t-shirt with contracted fingers.

'Uh... yeah, right. Cynthia Van Houten.'

'That's pretty.'

A longer silence.

'I bet you're the Canon type, Cynthia.' He grins. 'You're no Nikon girl, are you?'

'Right on the first guess.'

The grin stretches into a smile. His mouth looks like an open fracture.

'Gotcha...'

Cynthia is unable to avert her eyes from the face that's started to electrocute itself in a series of hemifacial spasms. Her own coke-related buccal twitching is nothing compared to this neural freak show. The waitress and the cook, who are watching them from the counter, can't hear the rattling sound of her bill, snapping, snapping, snapping, radiating threat and unease as she picks up her bag and excuses herself, rushing to the restroom.

Cynthia enters one of the stalls, slams the door shut and puts her bag on the toilet lid. A royal jelly spoon is safely tucked in an inner pocket. She uncaps the lip balm stick, removes the remaining balm and takes out a rolled-up Ziploc bag. She digs the tiny spoon into the cocaine and brings it to her nose, inhaling.

Cynthia leans against the door, staring at the flaking, dirty aquamarine ceiling, savoring the high as it starts rushing through her. She does a few more bumps and her brain is yay-

yay-yaying, *here comes the sun, doo-doo-doo-doo*, and the coke has clogged her synapses with so much dopamine since freshman year they might snap any time now, go off one by one, it's Chinese New Year in her prefrontal region, skyrockets and flares to scare away evil spirits and monsters, *happy new year Cynthia, luck and prosperity, Cee Cee baby...*

She sniffs, giggles, wipes her nose. She puts the spoon back into the pocket and pulls out a Tic Tac box. She sucks on a couple of mints, eyes closed, dreaming of an orange-flavored tongue playing with hers, the fantasy quickly slipping into sensory memory – snapshots of sunset out of a messy room's window, smooth skin smelling of coconut, warm breath in her ear forming words that never meant anything to anybody, fading, fading, fading away... the aftertaste of things meant to be fucked up from the start... but it felt so fucking painfully good at the time...

The mints already dissolved in her mouth, Cynthia picks up the bag and gets out of the stall. The moribund exhaust fan stirs up the stale air in the restroom with the sound of a Huey's rotors. She stands in front of the mirror, wings spread out, turning around and flapping them in a slow dance, slower and slower, until she stops gyrating and wraps them over herself, staring at her image, looking for someone, looking for something. Then just looking.

The intro to *Rock 'n' Roll Nigger* starts playing while she's washing her face and hands in the sink. Cynthia laughs, checks her nose in the mirror and leaves the toilet, lip-synching to Patti Smith as she walks back into the diner.

The boy is still standing by the table, rummaging in his backpack. He brightens up when he sees her coming. Cynthia ignores him, headed toward the counter to buy a chocolate bar and get back on the road ASAP, but then she realizes her peripheral vision has registered something too incongruous to be ignored, and when she looks back at him he's scanning the diner with an expressionless face and a GoPro strapped to his head.

*What the fuck... oh shit.*

The boy is holding a short-barreled assault rifle in his right hand. He winks at her, rams the magazine in and starts shooting.

*Baby was a black sheep, baby was a whore, baby got big and baby get bigger...*

Standing in full sight of the security camera, the boy sweeps the diner from right to left with what will be identified as a semi-automatic Sig MCX, shooting calmly and methodically.

The waitress is the first to fall, hit by four 9×19 mm rounds in the chest. She slides against the counter and exhales her last breath in a sitting position. The cook gets a bullet through his cheek and a few more in the back. He collapses face down against the kitchen swing door. A big guy in a mechanic's oil-stained overalls is killed with his mouth still stuffed with chewed meat while trying to scamper away.

*Oh, look around you, all around you*

*Riding on a copper wave...*

Having cleared the area closest to the front door, the boy moves to the left and aims at a stout gingerhead. One of the bullets hits him in the nape. Another three rounds pin him against the wall. He slowly falls on his knees, leaving trails of blood like snail slime on the yellow paint. The boy keeps pulling the trigger with serene composure, targeting the group near the pool table. One of the men dashes toward the back door and trips on the body of his buddy lying at his feet. His head collides with the edge of a seat with the cracking sound of bone caving in. He blacks out mere seconds before his spleen is punctured by a bullet.

Cynthia is standing immobile in the middle of the room. A dark stain spreads in her crotch as she starts pissing herself.

*Do you like the world around you? Are you ready to behave?*

The boy casts a quick look at where Cynthia is standing with her thighs wet with urine and blows her a kiss. Something snaps in Cynthia's brain. She breaks out in a burst of laughter so violent she gets cramps in her stomach. She curls up on the floor, giggling and dry heaving. The security cam's footage will be mined for close-ups of her hysterical mirth, when her face – briefly turned toward the camera – attains the hieratic eeriness of a Warhol silkscreen.

*Baby got a hand, got a finger on the trigger*

*Baby, baby, baby is a rock and roll nigga...*

While the boy is changing the Sig's mag, a youngster in Nike sweats charges forward in a desperate attempt to wrestle the gun from him. The boy headbutts him and kicks him in the groin. He gets four rounds in the chest and abdomen and reels back gurgling until he loses his balance and lies there bleeding to death. A bearded guy is caught while climbing over the counter in the hope of escaping through the kitchen. Another one throws a bottle at him in a last-resort, failed attempt not to be mowed down.

The last three people to die are cowering between tables in the far corner from the entrance. During the few seconds it takes for the boy to cross the distance between him and them, their faces go through the wildest array of emotions, from terror to catatonia. He stops in front of them, watching them as though puzzled by something in their countenance. Their pleas are a subdued choir of unintelligible yelps. He shoots the men one after the other, aiming at random. Nineteen bullets in all will be retrieved from their corpses, two of which went through one of the men's colostomy bag.

*I was lost in a valley of pleasure*

*I was lost in the infinite sea...*

He flashes a smile at Cynthia, whose laughter has become the wail of a desert beast.

*I was lost, and measure for measure*

*Love spewed from the heart of me...*

She watches him come closer, unstrapping the GoPro and setting it on a table. She's still curled up in a fetal position, hyperventilating, her nervous system jammed by the converging flows of shock and cocaine high. When he pulls her up gently by the arms, Cynthia is incapable of making resistance. He holds her tight, waiting until she's steady on her feet, and she feels his semi-erection pressing against her. She clings to his shirt, smells it, feels the warmth of his body underneath the thin fabric. She hides her face in the boy's armpit. She hears the sounds coming out of her throat and wonders who or what is emitting them. Her imminent death seems such an obvious fact her thoughts and feelings are only tangentially related to her.

'Cynthia?'

She squeezes the flesh of his shoulders.

'Cynthia.'

He has to say it twice more before she recognizes it as her name. His voice is a soothing murmur that only makes sense in delay.

'C'mon.' He steers her across the room, holding her by the waist. *Privilege* starts playing as they pass under the security camera, the boy whispering into Cynthia's ear and keeping her from stumbling. A guttural groan coming from behind distracts him. He aims the gun at an agonizing man who's uselessly dragged himself up against a seat and empties the magazine on him. Blood is already pooling under the youngest victim in gray sweats. Cynthia steps in it, bewildered by the smears it leaves on her sneakers.

He makes her sit on the floor, propped up against the counter, right in front of the GoPro, then goes back to adjust the frame. He returns to her with a contented look on his face. When it dawns on him he's got no more bullets, he throws the gun away and sits next to Cynthia. His face is twitching.

'Hey...'

She manages to lift a corner of her mouth to form something like a smile. She's gonna die, but violent death feels strangely laid back and that's okay with her.

He takes a switchblade out of his front pocket and flicks it open. He puts the other arm on Cynthia's shoulders, drawing her closer.

'Okay, Cynthia...'

He laughs.

'Look at you, still clutching that camera bag.'

He sighs. Swallows. Cynthia closes her eyes. With his free hand the boy slices his throat open from ear to ear.

Blood has splattered on her face, gushing out of the boy's throat and running down her cheeks and neck. She can taste it on her lips, breathe its raw-meat smell in. From inside the boy comes a hissing noise that sounds way too much like her name. She stares into his clouded eyes and thinks, *I should scream now*, unaware that she already is.

Cynthia can't take her eyes off the dying boy's face. The GoPro, which will provide the footage of the shooting's final moments, is dispassionately taking the scene in from its place on the table.

*Look at you...*

Cynthia bites her lips.

*Still clutching...*

Her fingers are playing with the zipper of her bag, where the Canon is nestled in its padded pocket.

*... your camera bag.*

She opens the bag and takes out the camera.

The boy's head is resting on her shoulder. His hair, soft and wavy, brushing against her neck, makes her tingle. She holds the camera in her right hand, stretching out her arm, studying the frame. With the left she tilts the boy's head slightly upward. She pulls him closer, her shirt and bra soaking up the blood still pumping out of the gash in his throat.

*Click.*

Good one.

Cynthia tries to faint, but she doesn't seem to be able to. All around her the corpses, the floor, everything is strewn with the black and white feathers of carrion eaters.

Ten minutes later, a nurse on his way to the hospital for the graveyard shift enters the diner. The door bangs against the head of the overweight guy lying dead on the floor. The nurse gives the door a good shove and steps in.

He looks down. Looks around.

He *does* scream.

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I'm Fede, 38, from Northern Italy. I'm a compulsive reader of fiction and non-fiction (especially postmodern fiction and history) and an amateur writer of short stories. Travelling, music and pop culture are my main sources of inspiration. I'm currently posting book reviews on [Goodreads](#).

## AFTERWORD

The 16<sup>th</sup> issue of SCAB comes out in March 2025.

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

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