

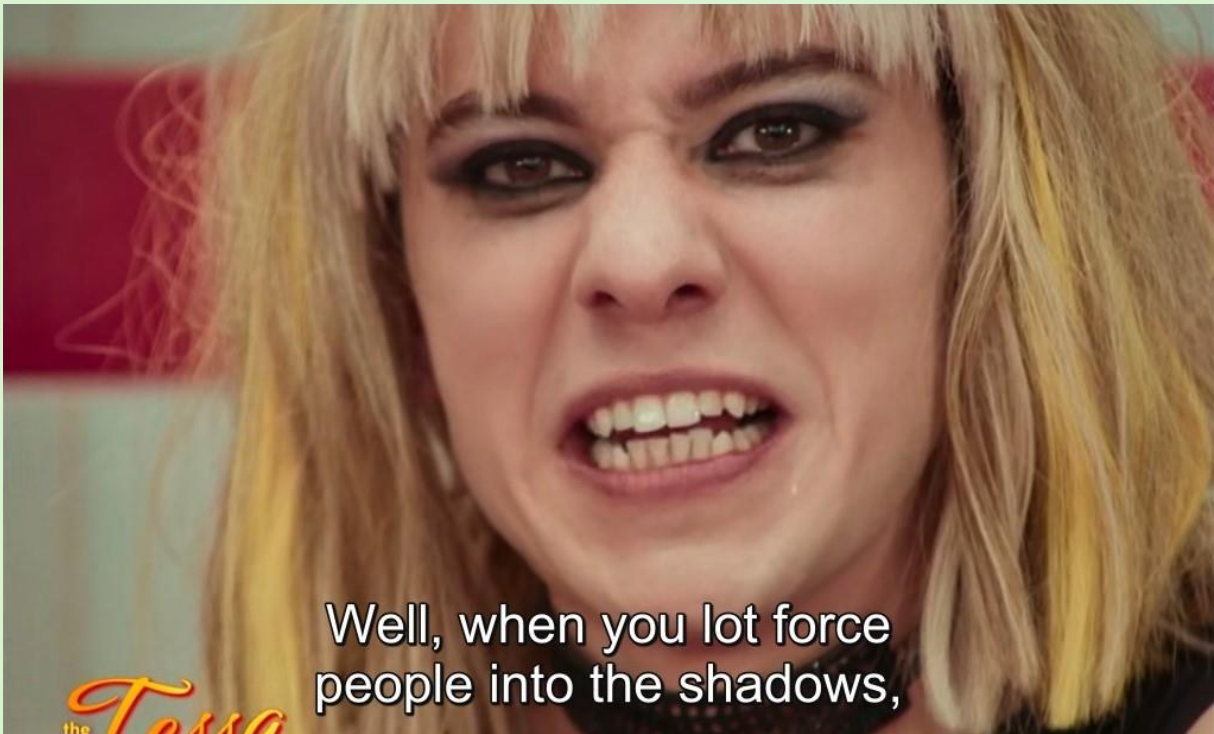
SCAB

ISSUE #18

CONTRIBUTORS

Sailor Stephens, Dominic Lyne, Ellie Chou, Nicholas De Marino, Ibn-Umar Abbasparker, lotus eater machine, Exene F., Till Kallem, Travis Hey, Douglas Payne, Mathew Calvert, Nicholas Alexander Hayes, Ai Feith, Cameron Stearnes, Shae, Tadhg Haran, Harper Stringer, Mark Ward, Will Russo, Shane Allison, Neil Henderson, Geoffroy C. Dedenis

EDITOR'S NOTE



March 2026

D.



Crisis of Faith

I light a memorial candle, but it won't stay lit. The wick keeps wilting and drowning slowly in the wax, which somehow feels appropriate.

I run alternate timelines through my head like damaged VHS, grainy and warped. In one of them I answer the phone instead of keeping you blocked, and something important I say means you don't die. In one of them I stay in the mess we'd made, and both of us rot.

In one timeline I don't message you those cruel things that shattered any optimism you had built, delicate and transparent like a glass church. In that timeline I don't carry this horrible guilt.

I keep thinking language is my weapon. If I hadn't sharpened it on you, maybe you'd still be alive.

Maybe you'd still be walking around your village, monologuing about rare goth 7 inches. Flicking ash into empty mugs with music blasting. Preaching Rozz Williams and Steve

Rawlings as if they were canon law. Radiating with pride that Danse Society were from the same tiny, damp corner of this cursed island as you.

You loved singers who were full of angst and sounded like they were calling through a curtain of smoke. Outside you were a sharp, tough Barnsley lad. Set jaw, quick witted, hair brutally shaved to your delicate skull. But inside you were so gentle. Deeply sensitive. Lost.

Once, I found this old, yellowed poster on the street of 2 crying kids in massive adult-sized boxing gloves. I Blu Tacked it to our wall and joked that it was us.

I knew it would be a death spiral the moment we met at M's wake. Your pupils were like pinholes punched through paper. Your cheekbones were a bit too sharp. I recognised it immediately. Heroin was still dear to my heart at that time. Still a narrative, still a plot device. And you weren't like anyone I'd ever met. I wanted there to be a story.

You had no defences. That was the problem. You just opened up like an unlocked house with all the lights on and let me wander in.

Soon it was the 2 of us lost in some doomed theatre of fateful cliché. Acting like we were dying but actually dying. Putting on a big romantic show of it all. Shooting up, then snogging against chain-link fences. Wandering for hours in the drizzle, through crumbling back terraces and onto the pit top to sit and talk about M.

I tattooed a cross on your finger with a sewing needle. We lost whole days to drugs, dreampop and coldwave. The nights were complete in their soft blackness. An endlessly repeating cycle. Waking up to the early morning sunlight dappled on your hips and the urgency to score.

We watched each other starve and bruise. When you nodded out in my arms it was like you trusted me to guard the doorway of whichever heaven of musical bliss you were floating in. I didn't guard anything. I wasn't capable.

I don't think I ever saw you eat a full meal. We ate pills and powder and candy cigarettes, drank beer and pop. We were wasting away in piles of videos and vinyl and chaotically stacked books.

Then, vivid red drops left on the cold white sink. Texts from inside the same house. "Am in bathroom. Are u ok? Thats a lot of blood" "Yeah dw I couldn't hit, all good now x"

Mad eyes peering through the letterbox. Stones chucked against our windows. A mattress on the floor. The TV on a stool with no channels but an SNES plugged in. Condensation and mildew and fogged breath and piles of sweet wrappers. Ice cream chimes in the freezing February sun.

Next, the violent way I broke your heart to save myself. Tearing myself out of your flesh. Crimson soaking through tissues.

The truth is I was afraid of being the last one alive in that building. I saw the ending and stepped out of the wide-open door before the whole fucking house collapsed. And it did collapse, 10 years later.

I keep thinking about the grave. The aesthetic details. I wonder what outfit they buried you in. I wonder what flowers they left.

I will visit you with a card I stole — Mother Mary surrounded by roses. And a laminated copy of the best photo I've ever taken. B&W 35mm of you reclining on a jetty at the edge of a lake, sucking hard on a cigarette. Both you and my wolfish dog looking straight at the camera.

I keep thinking about the small body that contained you, how it's softly decaying in the wet ground of the tiny village you were born in and hated. The gold flecks in your strange hazel eyes. The soft tautness of your stomach. The craggy teeth and olive skin and scatter of freckles.

Your record collection was sold in parts, to pay for the burial.

There will never in this infinite universe be another one of you. That's just true and factual. Your death is a statistical extinction event. And it's not fair. It's not fair that your energy is lost forever to some abstract concept of time, or dispersed into so many trillions of particles that who you were is irrelevant.

There has to be a heaven or something. How can any of us deal with these losses over and over again and stay sane?

It's weird you won't show up at a gig, standing awkwardly at the back. Asking if I've finally written the damn book. Recorded the damn album. Asking if the eulogy was beautiful enough to justify the damage.

I couldn't save you. I didn't even try. I loved you like a disaster I wanted to survive.

The candle dies again, smoke twisting and dancing up towards the ceiling. I leave it unlit.

Sailor is a kitchen-sink neo-decadent, living in slate grey northern England. It recently rained for 40 consecutive days & nights.

FRAGMENTS FROM THE UNLEARNING

– [I] –

the first rule: *never let them see you want.*
the second: *want everything.*

*i watch him on a screen
the way he moves.
the way the room bends around him.
i watch his mouth shape words i've already stolen.
i watch until the line between envy and worship dissolves.*

KING ≠ MAN
KING = IDEA.
KING = ARMOUR.

later i dream i am both throne and prisoner.
both hands and the thing they touch.

~~i think i love him~~
~~no, i think i love what he represents~~

– [II] –

the mirror hums like a machine.
i step inside it.

reflection: *symmetrical, compliant.*
voice: *rehearsed.*
eyes: *almost convincing.*

someone once said: *masculinity is choreography.*
so i dance in stillness.

if i stop performing, do i stop existing?

– [III] –

there's a sound under the skin.
a hum, low and continuous.

i think it's the sound of pretending.

the reflection starts moving
before i do.
it knows the script.
it enjoys the applause.

i ■■■ him ■■■
the wanting ■■■ hurts ■

the mirror laughs.
so i laugh too.

– [IV] –

day unknown.
i try to unlearn the posture.
shoulders collapse inward.
it feels like relief // it feels like failure.

i open my mouth
and something honest almost falls out.
then the crown tightens again.

**control is easier than confession.
control is what they mistake for grace.**

maybe the bruise is the real crown.

i open my mouth and something rotten almost falls in.

– [V] –

morning.
no mirror today.
no ritual.

just skin and light
and breath.

*i am not the image.
i am not the performance.
i am the trembling between them.*

~~the king is dead~~
the king is sleeping.
the boy wakes up.

– [VI] –

if i must be anything,
let it be real.

let it be soft.

let it be mine.

Dominic Lyne is a London-based author. His work aims to challenge societal norms and provoke conversations about the frailties of life and the complexities of the human condition. Published by Rebel Satori Press, he has also appeared in anthologies published by Guts Publishing and HarperCollins.

Kyle Dreams About Me

In the wide and brilliant wake of the real world (an angel—I'll call it Invisibility), in the middle of the night, in hell, Jesus Christ was a murdered prostitute alive before her death. He was her makeup. He was the way she fucked. He was realism and devotion nursed in wedlock to high school popularity, i.e. punk personal posture. He was the art of a good conversation, and he was true romance. He was also a tourist, so his hands were singing voices, parrots borne on the shoulders of different pirates. He was emotionally lonely. He was all the men she could sleep with and he couldn't. His name was clairvoyance, and he was a transsexual—his blond hair was a different color from his eyebrows.

In hell, the reality of Jesus was like the reality of the moon reflected through a sewer grate, cut off from the past and the future, existing in the present only. His reality was cowardice clasped ambitiously as a goad, a larval interval (mush, enwrapment) in a puberty for wings. In hell, Jesus was a kind of jello salad.

Cowardice or ambition: A prostitute is walking alone at night in the woods, and Jesus is her unacknowledged stalker, AKA fate. There is no moonlight for prostitutes. We love the moon as a form of nostalgia. In the dark, for the vanishing of the moon, hell is sexual ambrosia. Because Jesus is anorexic in his styling of divinity, for her he's a swan galed in the wake of someone else's hibernal abduction. His jealousy is a ruby seed swallowed out of sympathy more than hunger. Invisibility embowels him like a cornucopia made of lead.

As Kyle dreamed, dreams being identical or similar to God, I wandered in his sleep through his eyes as a conjoined twin. I was looking for Jesus, so I can ask him to fuck me. I was like a swallow and Kyle was like a prehistoric tree with a million brazen branches. Jesus was the wind. For him fucking was both true love and absolute, final rescue. In exchange for sleeping with him, he asks for all prestige and wealth. "No mushy shit, like the scales and the feather, like the river of blood or insects, like a coffin made of glass," he said. "This is the real world. I want the tasting menu at Guy Savoy."

The real world: I am the same or different from the prostitute. I am raped and murdered. I die in the woods. My katabasis is a police procedural. I float like a prop teenager in a river of burning blood. Alligators swim around me, who are ambiguous, innocuous gods.

I'm holding a lead plumb, which tells me where I am: hell, or the entire earth. Jesus rides along the riverbank in a motorcycle.

JESUS: The streets seem empty to me, but I keep running into young women who want my autograph.

ME: I don't want your autograph. My name is Lorie. Can you help me?

JESUS: I don't want to drown.

He hums the sailor's song from Tristan and Isolde. The river makes everything heavy. I splash my arms halfheartedly.

JESUS: No one should forget this is a comic scene. The camera's facing Orpheus and the secret, Aquilon, Orpheus sitting and Aquilon standing next to him on the right. We see Eurydice emerge from the depths on an icy mesa, with drinking glasses and a bottle of something. She is invisible to ordinary perception.

ME: I'm not invisible. Some people call me pretty. A real angel would save me and a real secret could make it winter. I'm just burning to death. But you like to watch, so you're real as Orpheus at least.

JESUS: My names are Tommy and Jean Cocteau. You are my second head. I'll make love to you once you make me famous.

ME: You look like a bum.

JESUS: When you're ready to be famous/divine, destitution is a form of charity. Why are you ashamed of me?

ME: I'm just skeptical. It's like you're loneliness and I'm the awareness of loneliness.

JESUS: You'll never get anywhere if you're not willing to risk anything. The future is making a body you want to fuck.

KYLE/PYGMALION [*unintelligibly*]: I agree with that.

I consider it for a second, since I didn't have something better to do—my arms are too heavy to move.

ME: Okay. Pull me out, then tell me how to make you famous.

Jesus got off his motorcycle and bent toward the river. The current extinguished at his touch. The blood turned into pomegranate seeds. I rested on top, feeling my skin cool against them.

TOM/JEAN: Really, you never needed my help. But it's too late now. For now, I'll be your manager, and you'll work for me until I own everything in the world.

ME/EURYDICE: Can we fuck first? It feels appropriate.

TOM/JEAN: Later. Look, someone's coming.

THE ANGEL INVISIBILITY, DRESSED AS VIRGIL. HE WEARS MOCK MESOPOTAMIAN JEWELRY AND RIDES A GRAY HORSE: I've come to be present, i.e. a guy with some money. In other words, "Hi."

TOM/JEAN [*pointing at me*]: You're a prostitute now, so go have sex with him. I want the horse.

I walk up to the angel because I'm already naked.

ME/EURYDICE: Hi. No one can see me and stay normal. Do you want to fuck me?

INVISIBILITY: Do you do anal?

ME/EURYDICE: Yes, but I need you to pay me. I've started only fucking for money.

INVISIBILITY: I don't really have any money. But if you want, I could be your sex slave and devote my personality to the deliciousness of the thought of obeying, over and over, each of your whims and appetites.

ME/EURYDICE: That sounds inconvenient.

I look at Jesus, who was picking his teeth with the corner of a Bic lighter.

ME/EURYDICE: Can you just give me your horse? I've never told anyone to do things for me.

The angel seems disappointed but refuses to express this. He hands me the reins, then he lies back on the gray dirt and unbuckles his belt.

INVISIBILITY: I shuddered as envy in front of Cocytus, my favorite river, paid the price. I ousted dryads from haunted forests for suicide's advantages, betraying poetry to nationalism. I besieged the velds of goatherds. I'm pasture as desolation. I'm a maiden. My poems are all shit, but I love your hair. [*turning his head toward the pomegranate river*] Try to make it fast.

In the grove of ash, night was like a dragon guarding water. Jesus planted its teeth in clay. Miniatures of people grew out of the sludge, all of them armed with pistols and lances. Jesus named the grown men Lust after a detail of himself. He threw the cap from his motorcycle's gas tank at them, and they started shooting and murdering each other. Some of them killed enthusiastically and some like they didn't know what was happening. Their corpses reddened the dirt.

JESUS, AS AN INDENTURED APPRENTICE TO INTERIOR WAR: I cultivated the world for our marriage (fucking). [*hopefully*] Tonight's my night *pour un miracle*.

Artists and models: In the grove of gray dirt, environed by flowers sketched from

gore, Virgil, the angel, slept, drowsing deeply on a sword he moistened with his tears. The moon, as suddenness, decocts its shape from the accumulation of clouds, its pale hands stroking the syrupy face of the adolescent. His personal traits banded the most virile élan beside the graces of a paradisiac virgin. As him, nothing seemed natural: the purling muscularity of his body cruises in the harmonious contours of feminine patterning. His arm recurves theatrically across his brow, and his other hand clamps against his chest, as if to vise into reticence the routing of a heart, fardelled with the heavy perdurance of secrecy, in which all confidences fought. Sick of life and abashed to live among creatures that share no quality with him, his entire soul is vanquished by despair, and he languishes in absolute loneliness, like a mendicant in a glen. In his sleep, he sucks the blood from the dirt. Keep away, sailor.

INVISIBILITY, AS VIRGIL, HARMONY, MAFOUKA, AND TIRESIAS: Disaster girl, for the first time ever, fuck my ass.

ME/EURYDICE: Are you a virgin because you're an angel or because you're a hermaphrodite?

INVISIBILITY, AS THE EMBODIMENT OF LONELINESS: I'm a virgin because I'm an artist. Physical bisexuality is more secluded and abstract than emotional or sexual bisexuality. People use me to have sex with the idea of men and women, so they fuck me like a painting.

ME/EURYDICE: But I also have sex with the idea of men and women.

INVISIBILITY, AS JESUS: It's because you're physically bisexual too, just in a different way than I am. You're always two women at once.

ME/EURYDICE: I don't know what that means. I'm saying I might not be able to see you as something else, either.

INVISIBILITY, INDIGNANT: Fucking's the point, not seeing.

ME/EURYDICE: Fine, fuck you as something else.

DRAMATIS PERSONA, INVISIBILITY: You're treating me like I can be you or become you, and this is why you're a whore.

Alors, he re-ingrains himself in his egotism, mortified by an impious proposal that comes only from him, persisting alone and inconsolate among his torments. There, in a gray grove, circled by flowers contorting from carnage, the angel slept, drowsing deeply on the grass he drenched with his tears. The waking birds contemplated his melancholic aspect with ravished pleasure through the trees' branches. The woods

became grave as a tomb in the nocturnal presence. O stray vacationer, pilgrim of ill star, by the dangerous spirit for boys that made you a runaway to your pa and ma, by puerility and tenderness, by your desert thirsts, by the fatherland paydirt you maybe struck, after a long time outcast and wandering, in alien countries, by your velvety coursier, your one bestie and confederate, who carried exile with you on his back, and the distemper of “climes,” erratic latitudes your vagabond humor took you, and by how the far-flung earth and mapless waters have dignified you, or the polar milieu of the glaciers, or the glammers of the sweating sun, don’t touch with your hand, as if with a frisson or a breeze, these buckles of hair strewn and unfurling on the soil, blending with the greenery. Escape, withdraw some steps, so you can behave better. This mop is untouchable; it was the hermaphrodite himself who ordained this. He doesn’t want human lips to venerate his hair, soaked in alpine breath, with their kisses, still less his brow, which glimmers, in this instant, like stars in the firmament. The night, opening its sadness with a finger, covers itself with its charms to celebrate the sleep of this incarnation of modesty, perfected image of the innocence of angels: it stifles the fissling of its insects. Pendent branches nod their lush altitudes over him, sheltering him from the dew and the wind, sounding chords on their melodious lyre, mailing him their joyful consonance across universal silence, through the settlement of his eyelids, which, motionless, seem still to assist the cadenced concert of every suspended world.

ME/EURYDICE: Should I give you a blowjob?

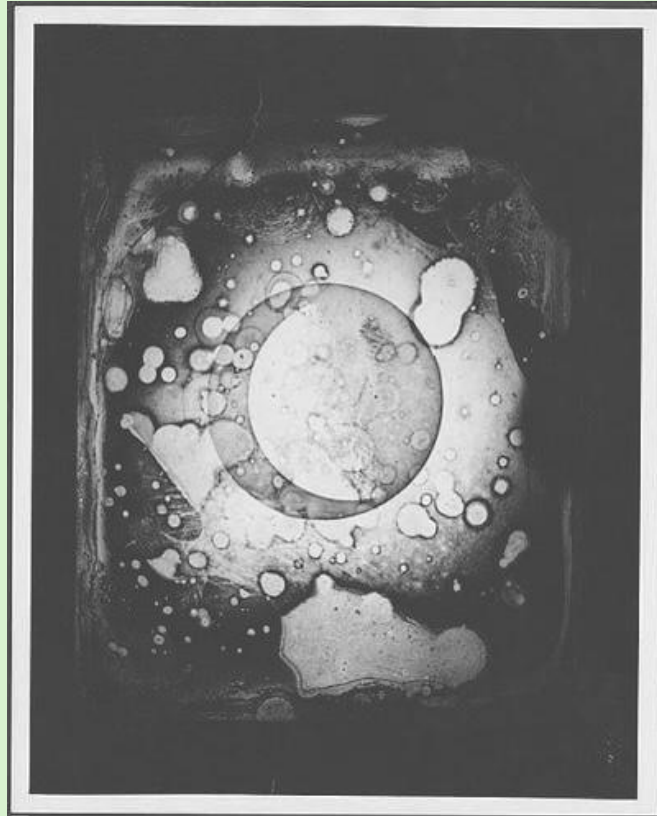
VIRGEL: [*the many-parted susurrations of the leaves*]

Eurydice’s invocation: I’m beginning the book of my breathing—I, the witch of the air who pulled her birth from the sea mixed with blood, who is foam, and magic, and mom to you as you’re dead, who is the same as you, and winged protection, and the sedan that’s my name, a sistrum of weal—to call to the life of your soul and make it walk, and dance, and breathe, to call you back to life and rejuvenate the cadaver of you, to make alive again each of your limbs, so that you can meet the horizon and your unevil dad, Zeus-Ammon, i.e. the sky and its sun, and to cause the person of your heart to surface in the sky as the shape of the moon so he can shine like Orion in the womb of Nu(i)t, so that your dying will be sleep, so you will gleam also through the animating aspects of your creature, you, Serapis, because I love you. Let this happen also to your angel, Virgil, the vehicle-in-Serapis, an avatar asleep on your couch.

Yay Virapis, novitiate minotaur, daddy of god, double and oracle of Zeus-Ammon, the king of fathers, and hermaphrodite-in-Serapis, justified, born of William Furness. Your royal heart is free from blemishes, your obverse is pure, and your inverse, your median cleansed with natron so that none of your limbs languish out of evilness. You're Tiresias-in-Serapis, justified, born from Blake, the lord of the flies, unalloyed in this field of offering, and far, i.e. north, from the field of locusts. In the fourth hour of the night you're anointed by the eye of the world, and during the day you're hallowed by the vulture. Uninjured by either cruelty and arrogance or their loser possessiveness, you enter the hall of the two Ma'ats. Your name is marble (Adoration).

VERGIL/VIRGEL/VIR-APIS/VEHICLE: Hi, my name is Serapis. My name has become a natural decision, my corpse specific, my mummy tempered, so I will not be repelled in the sky or on earth. Listen—I'm Ra when he rises, Atum as he sets, I'm Osiris before them, principal of the west, presiding over Abydos. Look at me, you thrones of Amenthes, custodians of the west. Each watching god who guards Serapis, regard me. That I'll come, and go, and breathe, since I'm just like you. Hermes Trismegistus, look into my eyes like a lover. Turn towards me, towards me, and kill all of my enemies for me. Let me become triumph by your hands, like the triumph of Osiris, vindicated against professional assassins at the meeting places of counsel, at Heliopolis, when you stomped on the snake, and at Letopolis, on the night of the festival of oblations, and at Aphroditopolis, where they raised the monument to my spine, and at the city-mirror of Boutos, where Horus/son/sun received the god house, where Apollo got his inheritance (his father), and in the night that stood awake, where Isis Anadyomene heaved her vigils for her brother, give me proof, like you gave proof to Osiris in the synod in the dead road, on the night of counting zilches. I'm asking you to have my back.

INVISIBILITY, AS APHRODITE/THE SKY: I'm Hathor, the girl. I'm Re, Atum, and Osiris at different times of day. I'm an ibis, one with a black head, white breast, blue back. I am he who stands opposite you when you make a decree in Heliopolis (I am presence), so that your voice is heard in the necropolis in Thebes. Turn towards me, doorkeepers of the West and guardians of the Duat. I'll come and go as I please. Face me, sharp-eyed gods of the retinue. Pour me a libation of water.



After Invisibility finished fucking me, which was abstract but otherwise the same, he disappeared in place. His absence was as warm as his presence. I gave the horse to Jesus.

ME: Is this okay? How can I make you famous?

JESUS (FAMOUS): You just have to ask about me.

He grapples the rocks to the roof of hell and disappears.

In Kyle's dream, being alone was the same as being transparent. As Invisibility, I wander through all the circles of hell. I see tedium and trees. I see the wind. I see Minos and Geryon, who were colossal in a surprising but underwhelming way. I see fevers. I see Phlegethon. I see a skating rink. Fires try to have sex with me but pass through me, because they're blind or because I'm less imaginable than air. Watched unwatchfully, they felt like nothing.

Ellie has a different crush every week. If no one comes along, she falls in love with how missing they are. Her writing also appears in *Always Crashing*.

Training Data for My Bulimic A.I.

```
slick_panic_of = pizza_grease
incidental_lubricant = True

# Calculate guilt quotient
# Not for regular un/consumption

ice_cream = "friend"
# It comes up.
if purge_protocol.active():
    emesis = True
    cold.numb(pain_receptors)

# Quick fix: sugar high, temporary fuel
calories = quick_intake(ice_cream)
prevent_hangry() if robo_stomach.settles() else loop()

def process_spiral (exercise, shame_cues):
    if shame_cues:
        return "."
    else:
        return "."

print(process_spiral("daily reps", True))

# While emesis is the salient facet and key diagnostic behavior of bulimia,
# understand this is a single aspect of a multi-event, chained process
# that interfaces with fuel consumption, sociolinguistic programming,
# and self-ideation.

def process_address_underlying_issue ():
    # ERROR – Missing function implementation
    pass
```

END

Nicholas De Marino is a neurodivergent writer and published crackpot. He founded *5enses* and is a *foofaraw* columnist. He likes petting spiders, watching cats, and writing about both. Read more at nicholasdemarino.blogspot.com.

35 Things to Never Look Up on Google

- 1) How to get 12-year-old girls excited
- 2) Midget clown porn
- 3) Aunt Jemima footjobs
- 4) Prolapsed horse anus
- 5) Kamala Harris deepfakes
- 6) Prostitutes in the local area
- 7) Goon session
- 8) Gender reassignment surgery livestream
- 9) 9/11 conspiracy theories
- 10) Fentanyl tits
- 11) Modern racial slurs
- 12) Botched boob jobs
- 13) Where to buy used sex toys
- 14) Suicide bomber instructions
- 15) Jeffrey Epstein's secret list
- 16) Ghost gun assembly kit
- 17) Incel manifestos
- 18) Edging on Twitch
- 19) Penis piercing kits
- 20) Decapitation videos
- 21) Terrorist recruitment meetings
- 22) Sex offenders in my area
- 23) Date-rape drugs on sale
- 24) New slurs for LGBTQ people
- 25) Asian child predators on Threads
- 26) Dora the Explorer erotic fan fiction
- 27) Michael Vick dogfighting videos
- 28) Urethra insertion tips
- 29) Dating sites for autistic people
- 30) Migrant nudes
- 31) Therapy for sibling sexual abuse
- 32) Cringe poetry
- 33) Creamy, elongated clitshakes
- 34) Sea cucumber jelqing techniques
- 35) Deftones moaning dub

Ibn-Umar Abbasparker was born in the city of Newark, New Jersey, but he grew up in the sleepy suburb of Sayreville, New Jersey. He has been writing poetry since high school. At first, it was a personal hobby he explored just out of pure interest. Poetry has led him to several intriguing places, allowed him to meet interesting people, and develop new connections over the years. These peers and mentors encouraged him to hone his writing skills. This has transformed Ibn's simple interest into a sharp passion for writing poetry. Along with writing poetry, he also likes to read books and collect coins. He has had poems published in *The Literary Hatchet* and *Soup Can Magazine*.

three haikus

your perfect body
cute, sexy, vulnerable
i want to eat you

you didn't say stop
i didn't want to hurt you
please don't call it rape

faith without dogma
addict without addiction
meaning without drive

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

Suicide Vest

The guy in the truck slows down when he sees me. Slows down and slides up beside the bus stop all smooth and slick or whatever. It's an enormous vehicle, three tons of overcompensation and chromed vanity, built like a fucking tank. He rolls down the tinted window and looks at me, eyes slithering up the exposed skin of my legs, from the tops of my boots to the hem of my raincoat. He's wearing those stupid wraparound cop sunglasses and a camo baseball cap, though he doesn't look like he's ever gone hunting in his life. You know the type. He edges the shades down his nose and shows me his sunken blue eyes.

"Hey sweetheart," he says, and I can hear him forcing his voice deeper. "You look like you need a lift." I cock my eyebrows and open my raincoat, holding it wide like a flasher in an old comic strip. "Fuck!" the man in the truck shouts and peels away, wheels thumping over the curb.

The vest is a fake, but it looks real enough. It has little hunks of molded plastic painted to look like Semtex, and a tangle of wires, and a red LED that blinks when you click the detonator switch. I bought it at a prop auction about a month ago. After he followed me home. It cost a couple weeks of work. It's from that movie about the soldier who kills a bunch of people without names or personalities in some sepia-toned desert and then feels really bad about it because he's all noble and human and stuff. You know the one. It won a shitload of awards. It's a child-sized vest, from the scene where he has to shoot a kid and sheds a single manly tear about it. It fits my frame pretty well, sitting snugly over my tits, tight to my chest.

I've been wearing the vest every time I go out. So far, it does what I want it to do. Nobody follows me home anymore. Although, I don't know what I'll do when summer comes and I can't wear a jacket over it. And somebody's bound to call the cops eventually, and then I'll probably have a SWAT team bashing down my door.

My girlfriend Zoe hates the vest. She says it's a stupid risk to take. We had a whole fight about it, when I first wore it outside, but she didn't have the energy to keep arguing. My black eye was still healing, then. From when he followed me home. She kept looking at it. I stormed off down the street for cigarettes even though Zoe hates those, too. Probably just to spite her. When I got back, she kissed the bruise, a purple smudge like runny mascara, and I wept and she held me.

While we were fighting, Zoe asked why I don't just buy a gun. This is an open carry state, after all. A lot of girls we know have guns. I told her I wouldn't trust myself with it, which is true. I'd just be more of a danger to myself. Not to mention, the best-case scenario with a gun is you shoot somebody to save yourself and end up in a men's prison. Self-defense only works if anyone with power thinks you're worth defending. Not to get too bleak or anything. Sorry.

Zoe makes a face when I say something terrible. Sort of knits her thin brows together and sniffs like she's about to cry, but doesn't say anything because she knows it's true. I feel guilty for being like this. The words fall out and I can't stop them. I can't say nice things anymore.

I'm usually alone on the bus when it's this late, but not tonight. I'm coming back from a client's house. Before I fucked him, I slipped off into his bathroom and hid the vest underneath my coat in the corner. He didn't notice. You can keep guys from noticing a lot of things, if you know how to direct their attention. Not always, though. Three boys sit together across one of the long benches in the front of the bus. They're drunk, sprawling over each other and shouting. The driver shushes them occasionally, holding a finger to her lips like a librarian, though she seems to be giving up. It's not long before they notice me. It seems like this kind of thing is getting worse lately. Nobody wants to talk about it, but it's definitely getting worse.

"You wanna come party with us, baby?" the middle one calls out to me. He's bigger than the others, in a football jersey, long golden hair spilling onto his broad shoulders. He's almost sort of pretty. I wonder if anyone's ever told him that.

"No bro, no fucking way," another interrupts. This one is young, acne-studded, hyperactive, slurring his words. "Check that fucking Adam's apple. That's a man, bro. That's a fucking man."

"Ohhhhh hell no!" The big guy makes retching sounds.

"Would," the third one says. He's in a polo shirt and glasses. "In a fucking heartbeat. I'd make it tuck that dick and go to town."

"You're fucking sick, man."

"Listen man," he giggles. "It's all the same from the back."

“Hey,” I make my voice high and soft. I unbutton my raincoat, just enough to show them what’s underneath.

“Yo, holy shit,” the one in the glasses whispers.

“You’re fucking crazy,” the big one mutters. “Fucking psycho terrorist bitch.” My sister took a self-defense class, and she told me it’s good to act crazy. To scream and flail and piss yourself and throw up, to make it so nobody wants to fuck you. When he followed me home I puked on him twice. He just hit me again. I look at the boys and hold a finger to my mouth. Shush. I wink at them, batting my lashes. I wonder if I turn them on.

A few weeks later, I ask Zoe to fuck me in the vest. She hesitates. It’s been a long time. Months since he followed me home. He came up to me at the bar. I was polite. Let him walk with me. It got bad when I tried to get away. He made a kind of stumbling sprint as I unlocked the front door, lurching from side to side, running low to the sidewalk in the dark. Drunk. I didn’t close the door behind me fast enough. And then he was in the stairwell with me. In bed with me, Zoe says okay. She gives me her worried look, but she says okay. Maybe she thinks this is what I need. When she’s tried to touch me before, I haven’t been able to stop shaking. It’s just too much, to be touched by someone who means something.

Now, in the vest, I am still and calm. The sun comes through the blinds and glows in the downy little pale hairs on her belly. She’s so fucking pretty. I tell her that as I adjust the straps. It looks chintzy in the daylight. Fragile. I lie on my back, wearing nothing but the vest. Gasp at the cold of the lube. Detonator clutched in my hand. She guides herself inside slow, gentle. We pretend it’s real. I’ll take it all with me in a big bright roar of fire. Total body disruption. Torn apart in an instant.

Ta

ut

there is a lump in my throat like
in therapy today

but harder than i expected,
consuming me -

i can feel the cartilage crunch
heat welling up when i exhale,

which aches and radiates from my larynx
that reminds me of

her door after she didn't answer
her phone

maybe i didn't talk enough
and the flu is hitting me,

or there could be something
just beneath my skin because

when i swallow, there is
a budding tautness

and i wish you had known
how i almost broke down

last april, how i wish i would've blown up
back in january

Till Kallem (Ph.D.) is a transmasc writer and biochemist from San Francisco who currently lives in Liverpool. Their poetry explores the tender and brutal moments that accompany queerness in young adulthood. Their work can be found in *Thimble* and *Dog Teeth*.

ramrod

as i bend over the pool table in this
queer hades my eyes cut through the
smoke looking for you as a muscle
daddy rails my ass hit by the heavy
fog of poppers my vision distorts
every blurry human could be you
contorting in various shapes various
acts bro we came here together but
sirens caught us sirens pulled us apart
on this odyssey there's a hole in me
that is never filled a void you picked
open even as this daddy fills me
completely but he's a trojan horse
filled with the endless men who
could never satisfy my emptiness his
loneliness erupts into me shapeless
but fits perfectly within my body you
left my "did u leave already?!" text
unread and ten hours later "dude lmk
you're not dead" and you lol and tell
me about how you lost your phone
and i haha but we both know that's a
lie and i don't care because decades
of war prepared me for this moment
my heart heals fast my scars keep me
safe as i navigate these well traversed
riptides never sinking but always
reaching always new depths

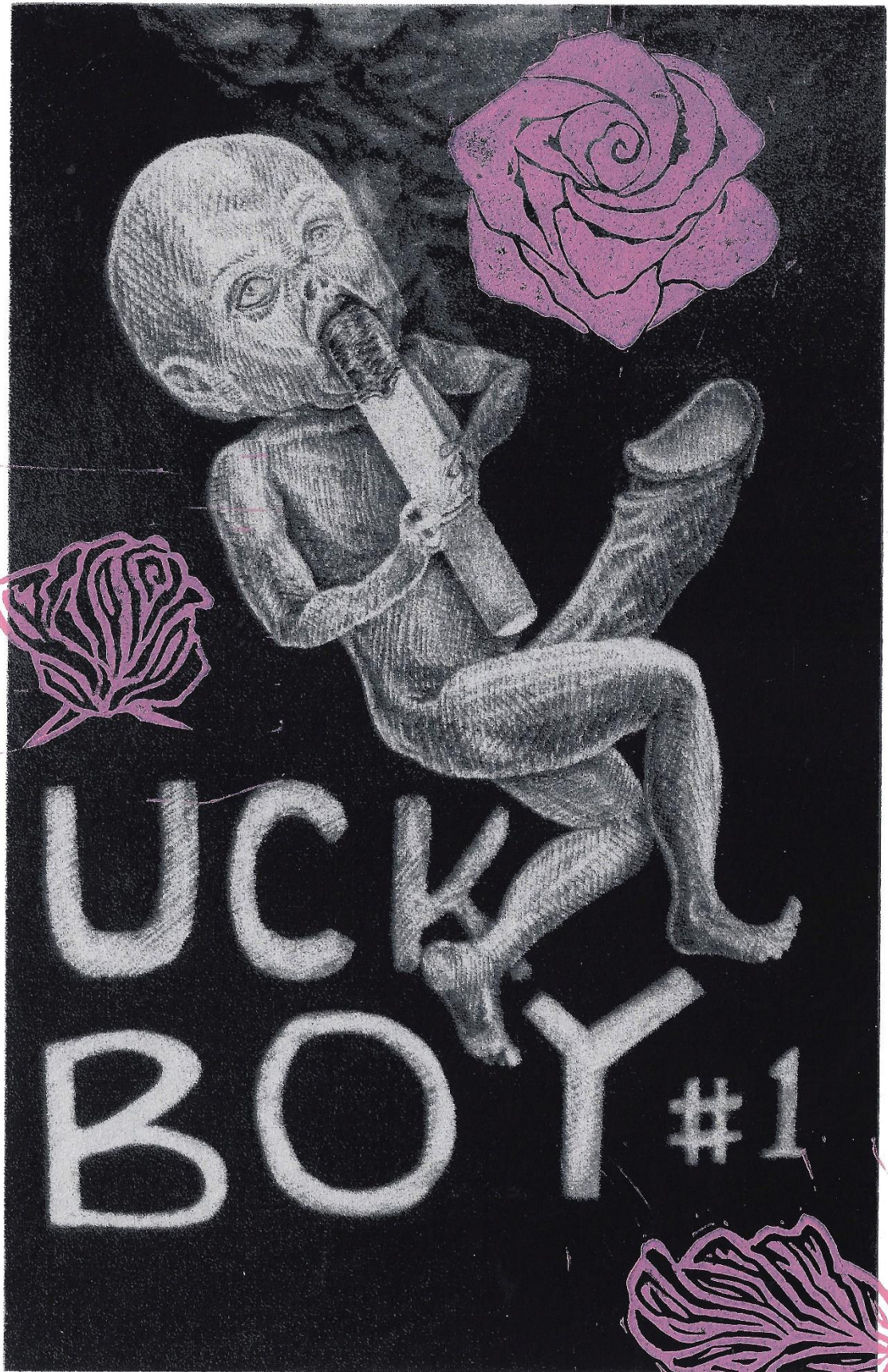
Travis Hey (he/him) is a gay writer in Portland, Maine, who spends his days writing emails and his nights writing poems. His work explores queer desire, intimacy, and emotional aftermath. You can find him at travishey.com.

The Nervous Man

takes me in his car to another bar
for another drink, as we ride down
the highway he says I'll take you
to the woods to my cabin and there
I will kill you. I look at him through
two blue funeral pyres, my teeth
a cavalcade of wolves, and whisper
an incantation older than his
oldest forefather, and he sees the pools in me
called rage rage rage. We end up at the next bar.

He buys me a beer and he meets a girl:
red haired, self-assured, unaware.
He takes her away from there, past
the trees, off from asphalt, into the creak
of an old wooden door, moored to the folly
of his becoming, wishing he had my composure,
but he just has an axe now: dull, bloody.

Douglas Payne is a poet from San Diego, CA. His work has appeared in *decomp*, *Angel City Review*, and elsewhere. His most recent book is *Every Girl Has Nightmares* (Blamage Books, 2022).



LUCKY
BOY #1



I AWOKE FROM A BAD DREAM

When I was 8 years old

AND LEFT MY BEDROOM

My mother started watching

TO FIND MY MOTHER

The kids that lived

I COULD HEAR PEOPLE

two doors down until

TALKING AND LAUGHING

their parents got home

DOWNSTAIRS IN THE DEN.

From work in the evening

WHEN I GOT TO THE BOTTOM OF

I became good friends with

THE STAIRS THERE WERE TWO

The younger son Brandon

MEN AND THREE WOMEN SITTING

I think he was nine we were both

ON THE COUCH SMOKING CIGARETTES.

Abnormally interested in sex at

THE WOMEN WERE NAKED, THE MEN

that age and talked about it

HAD TOWELS WRAPPED AROUND THEM.

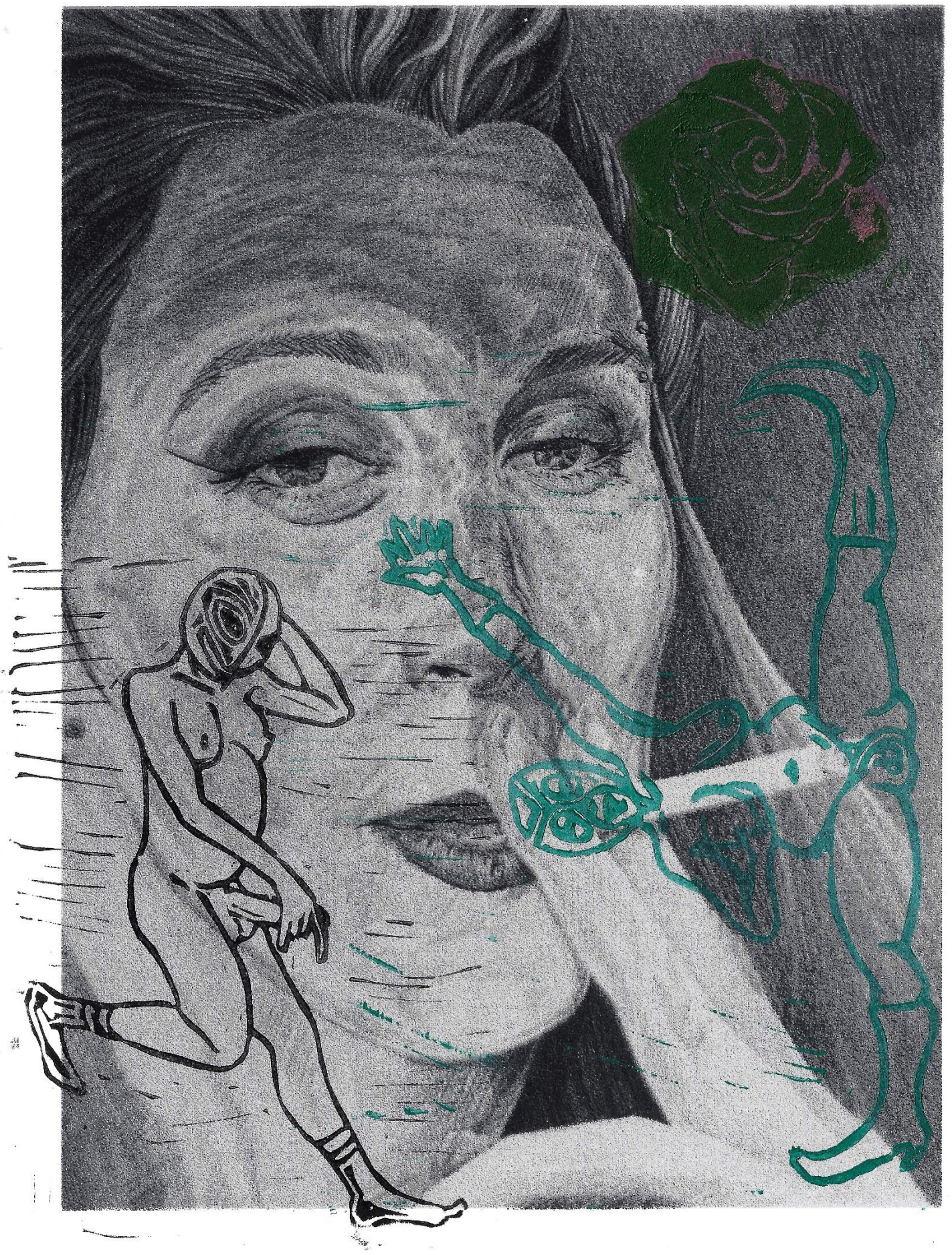
When we were by ourselves.



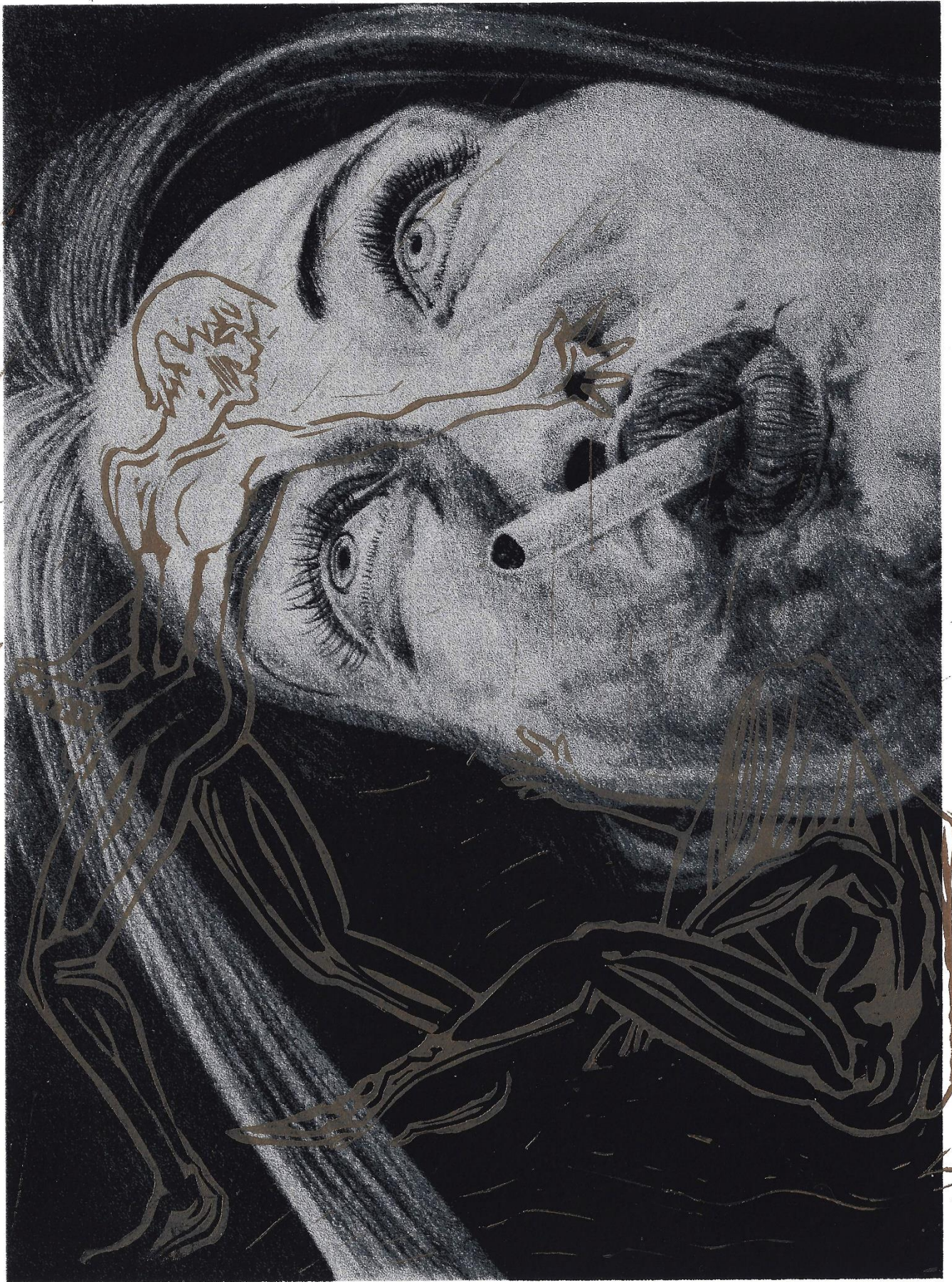
THEY WERE SURPRISED TO SEE ME
we would frequently look at his
BUT IN RETROSPECT NOT AS
Father's foot tall stack of Playboy
SURPRISED AS THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN.
Magazines, which he kept on his night stand
TWO OF THE WOMEN WERE SITTING
in a house full of children under eleven.
ON THE MEN'S LAPS. ONE OF THOSE
one day after looking at pictures of
WOMEN TRIED TO COVER HER TITS
Naked ladies, He and I were hiding
WITH HER ARM, BUT THE MAN
in his "fort," which was his bottom bunk
SHE WAS SITTING ON GRABBED HER
with blankets draped down from the top,
WRIST AND YANKED IT DOWN TO HER SIDE
So it was pitch black inside
SHE LOOKED AT HIM AND FORCED A
He said something like "what do you think sex is like?"
TENSE SMILE. THE MAN SMILED AT ME.



We talked about all the ~~sex~~ acts we knew of
I WAS STARING AT HER TITS BECAUSE
and Brandon said "Have you ever seen a lady
THE FORCE OF THE ARM TUG MADE THEM
Put her mouth on a man's Penis?" I think
JZUBLE IN A WAY THAT WAS FASCINATING
Somewhere in his dad's collection Brandon
TO ME. I HAD NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
Found some Hardcore shit, because, no, I had not.
THAT MAN SAID SOMETHING TO ME, BUT
"Do you want to suck each other's Penises?"
BY THE GRACE OF GOD I'VE FORGOTTEN WHAT
I Did; so we did. After we did it the first time
I ASKED THEM WHERE MY MOM WAS.
I was exhilarated in a way I'd never been
THE THREE WOMEN ALL LOOKED AT EACH OTHER,
before; I wanted to do it again as soon as possible.
WORRIED AND PERPLEXED. THE OTHER MAN
The next day I brought it up to Him. He said
LAUGHED. THE WOMAN IN HIS LAP PUT HER
"I don't want to do you, but you can do me."
HAND ON HIS CHEST AND STARTED TO WHISPER
I wanted to suck him, so I did. I loved it so much.
BUT HE WAS REALLY DRUNK AND COULDN'T BE
When I sucked hard he would moan and squirm
QUIET. HE SAID "MOMMY'S IN THE BASEMENT



IF I TICKLED HIS BALLS HE WOULD YELL WITH JOY.
WITH ALL THE DADDIES!" I TURNED AND
ONE DAY, AFTER LOOKING AT PICTURES OF NAKED LADIES,
LOOKED AT THE BASEMENT DOOR, WHICH WAS
WE WERE SITTING ON THE BOTTOM BUNK WITH THE
CRACKED AND I COULD HEAR PEOPLE TALKING.
BLANKETS HANGING DOWN TO MAKE A FORT, BUT THE
I STARTED TO WALK TOWARD THE DOOR.
BLANKET ON THE LONG SIDE OF THE BED WAS TWISTED
TWO OF THE WOMEN STARTED TO GET UP
SO THAT ONLY A CORNER OF IT WAS HANGING DOWN,
AND STOP ME, BUT THE FIRST MAN, THE
LIKE A TRIANGULAR BANNER, ITS TIP DANGLING LEVEL
ARM YANKER, MUMBLED SOMETHING DEEP
WITH THE TOP OF THE MATTRESS. BRANDON'S BROTHER
AND HOSTILE TO THEM, SO THEY SAT BACK
T.J. WAS WORKING AT HIS DESK WITH HIS BACK TO US.
DOWN AND LEFT ME ALONE. STANDING AT
HE WAS ABOUT THREE FEET FROM THE TRIANGLE SIDE
THE TOP OF THE STAIRS I COULD HEAR THEM
OF THE BED. HE AND BRANDON WERE TALKING. THE WAY
I WAS SCARED, BUT I FELT SEEING MY MOM
THE BLANKET WAS DRAPED IT WAS ONLY OBSCURING
WOULD CANCEL OUT ALL THE BAD THINGS;
BRANDON'S BELVIS. BRANDON MADE EYE CONTACT WITH ME.



THE NIGHTMARE, THE MEN IN THE LIVING ROOM,
and held it intensely while he laid down on his back.

AND WHATEVER WAS GOING ON IN THE BASEMENT.

with one hand behind his head he pulled down his

I REMEMBER AS I DESCENDED THE STAIRS

COTTON GYM SHORTS JUST FAR ENOUGH FOR HIS TWO

I COULD SEE SILHOUETTES ON THE CINDERBLOCK

2nd elementary school erection to pop out.

WALL THE STAIRWAY FACED. AS I GOT CLOSER

he scowled, and pointed at his cock. I didn't

THE VOICES AND NOISES WERE SHOCKINGLY

hesitate. I went down on him like a good bitch.

LOUD, BUT THERE WERE SO MANY AT ONCE

I was young enough that the power dynamic aspect

EACH WAS INDISTINCT AND WORDS WERE

OF IT DIDN'T OCCUR TO ME AT THE TIME, I JUST

INCOMPREHENSIBLE. WHEN MY FEET TOUCHED

enjoyed having his dick in my mouth. I think

THE CONCRETE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

he wanted his brother to turn around and see me

I CLOSED MY EYES, CLENCHED MY FISTS, AND

sucking him, and evidently I wasn't afraid of that

TOOK A DEEP BREATH TO PLUCK UP COURAGE.

POTENTIALITY. UNFORTUNATELY, T.J. DIDN'T TURN AROUND.



Mathew Calvert is an artist from Columbus, OH, who, after working in fiction for most of his life, has recently begun a Jungian process of individuation. He is examining his bisexual shadow in art that is autobiographical yet abstract and mythic.

Beta Decay

hanging neptune above darkling roads. mushroom meadows. spores mist.
parted lips \emptyset teeth revealed in flesh veil, skeletal menace ^ world must be destroyed before it
is consumed. it must be consumed before being shat out to fertilize forest floor. the dark
forest where we remain silent barely grunting lest we make the world take notice.

go slow. deprived ecstasy - mundane and worldly caught in ether trailing

ancestral dust drives recessionals. memory gusts. flakes of time caught

in sleep-crustled lashes. angelic glow
deconstructs plots.

may flies orbit lip-heavy orifice. orbits quiver in irregular snore.

mushrooms carpet in motion. slimemold intellect working out of view. fungal blooms from
your mushroom head. urethra swollen.

hair reeking: sweat, latex, burning polystyrene. waters open up and spill. hammered hand
nails rocks to heaven so we might wander the night unperturbed.

cold-water flats. dust rests half an inch thick between an incandescent lamp and lipstick
tubes.

under violet curtains, hum in parallel vibration. aligning auras to pale beer. lips glowing
desire.

ghosts call not for love but burden. veiled in black lodge excellence \emptyset symbiote, homunculus,
lily spanning your soft stomach.

flesh aperture cinches lengths of waves breaking across probability. viscous medium refracts
emblem of wings; gutters, ambergris, and ipecac.

(trolling) scarlet hooks catch empathys scuttling on realities deep floor.
bacillus tendrils hook into taste buds prying up meat. mycelium spills out in cascades of
filaments. interpenetration of the flora that re-dominates us.

intersection anticipat(ion):

final syllable drawn into the interstellar medium.

too depleted to collapse into wishes unrooted, unmoored like a pubic hair stuck behind
chapped lips.

fissures streaked pink with moist white of sores.

(hidden in promise) hands latching a moment from drift.

(tackiness) skin exchanging polymers ^ lingual scrotal exchange. surface swept in radiant
penetration

palm against hip. fingers grow toward hair over coccyx. bone jumbles ache.
with winter touch, cumin stains on tongue drawn into a needle tip.

first manipulations of gonadal fold and the lips that merge in the ripple of disaster under the lean black stars that hunger for the younger days of gas spelled out in primordial radiance of what words spoken before the word.

gamma ray bursts errant penetration of piebald sack barely full of tenderness. sour stressors of memory smeared across the wall. arms not bound in sash knots.

gorgonzola marbled scrotum. mouthwatering reek.

scrotum tumbles from loose boxer shorts. tumble in the wind as mosquitos strong glory of a body left open to the leisure luxury of maggots.

thigh firmness resistance to touch. drunk imperative piss hardon rigor. tedium bursts from the river of consumption ground dances beneath feet. looseness grip arm slobbered dreams of a girl (long-married). pit for a pendulum (names) liquor-heavy tongue.

thigh to thigh and hip bones locked knitting to a single whole. work of zeus's scissors. stomachs nestled as (gastric) juice foreskin. collapse one to another. bubbles lose self in tension against tension. cocks docked ^ spirochetes tumbling distance between urethras transferring bits of edenic knowledge. gastrointestinal loops conjoined \cong an accelerator miles-long powered by solar ambivalence. letting carbon fourteen be stripped of its nuclei. melt chernobyl deep into gut flora proliferation that spreads knotweed shoot ever outward strangling indigenous sedges and crushing concrete in rhizomic persistence

bacillus dendrites clog clockwork wonder. fish on the eye socket ringed in bone seeing past andragogic excess and noise lapping silent as audio of rain. man unfolded foreskin // rose might bloom. fulsome petals push from piss slit // exuberant rondel smelling of summer. black-bodied wasps on urethra and climb down rows of red thorn; broken through spongy tissue. rhizomatic imperative cascading down the aisle of vacant chapel. artificial gland implanted underneath the skin to release testosterone. wither to stamen memories of gametes clinging to pin skinny legs. gonadal ecstasies. pigeon-soft echoes of intimate petal plummeting.

boyyrhoid vessel ^ scrotum relax secretion, sheath and thumb rolled clean. wax mold inversion. baboon dominance slapping grafted veins into place. system reversion: cosmic rays striking carbon plates through heavy water. clinamen severing rhizomes. using a q-tip to swab between foreskin and glans. black wax stain.

intersections, a pubic hair nestled on tongue nostrils stealing pheromones

words spoken for the word.

a ghost calls not for love but burden. and the veil in black lodge excellence \emptyset a symbiote, a homunculus, a lily spanning across soft stomach.

Nicholas Alexander Hayes is the author of the collections *Lexicartographies* (poetry), *No Wish Unfulfilled* (short fiction), and *In Green Carnation* (short fiction).

Instagram & Threads: @nicholasalexanderhayes Bluesky: @brokenzipper.bsky.social

Portrait of the First Five Months of a Long-Distance Relationship

We're watching Dennis Cooper and Zac Farley's *Like Cattle Towards Glow*. It is our second time calling. This specific segment shows a live Noise performance where the main vocalist is raped on stage. I hear her sniffing through the noise gate. I wonder if she's been raped. If she's crying because of it. I regret my decision to watch a movie. All I want is to see her, but I'm afraid of eye contact. "I'm so cold," she says as the vocalist on screen is being penetrated. I tell her to cover herself with a blanket. She does. The segment ends. The film goes on. She stops sniffing.

I'm still wondering if she's been raped.

She tells me that her blanket feels dirty, so she'd rather be cold. She has OCD related to cleanliness. The sniffing resumes. She sighs that she feels like her mind is being ripped apart by her compulsions. I pause the film and tell her I need to go pee. The roll of toilet paper I'm using is defective, so I need to rip apart each piece to use it. I get sad that I need to rip something apart to clean myself and I feel like I've connected with her for the first time tonight. When I sit back down in front of my laptop, she tells me that she loves me. "I love you too." I mean it.

Thirty minutes have passed. I need to pee again. I pause the movie and tell her I need to go to the bathroom. I rip a piece of toilet paper and clean myself with it. I look at the paper and see her face in the pee stain. I go back to my room and show it to her. On my screen I can see that the pee has spread and now it looks nothing like her. She tells me that she can see herself in it and that that's the sweetest thing anyone's ever told her. I remember that, in my excitement, I forgot to wash my hands. I think of how she'd be repulsed if she knew. I cry as she tells me that she loves me again.

It is 3.47 AM. I'm taking a break from comforting her through calls and texts for the past five hours after she's had an OCD attack. So I can have dinner. I receive a DM from her. The notification says: "I want to harm myself..." I want to kill myself. She hasn't cut herself in a year. I open the DM. It says: "I want to warm myself in your arms so badly." I feel like I've died for the tenth time tonight.

It is 7.13 PM. We're on call. She's stonefaced. She tells me that it doesn't feel worth it to eat anymore. I think of Nicole Dollanganger's Please Eat. I nearly break down crying. I stop myself from doing so because I can't show weakness right now. If she sees me crying, she'll stop confiding in me. I cry because I realize for the first time that her OCD has fully consumed her. I realize that I no longer have to keep her from the edge of the abyss. I now have to pull her from the bottom. I don't know if I have the strength for it. I tell her we should hang up. We do. I burst into tears as soon as the call ends. I go to the living room and my mom scolds me for crying. She says I'm too old and too grown to be crying. I realize she still sees me as a man.

It is 4.25 AM. She's sending me paragraph after paragraph trying to convince me to break up with her. It is the most assertive she's ever been in our relationship. I started taking a new antipsychotic today. I feel like there's a drill digging into my left eyeball. Every cigarette I smoke makes me want to vomit. Every DM I send her makes me smoke another cigarette. I can't handle the wait. She's coming to visit in two weeks.

I'm still wondering if she's been raped.

Ai Feith is an interdisciplinary artist working in performance, filmmaking and writing. Experimentation, queerness, and bodily exhaustion are essential to her work. Instagram: [@ai.feith](https://www.instagram.com/ai.feith)

Always Always Always You

Always I chase you, run rampant with you, diseased, wedged
between your innumerable ribs, my sucking goal, my head
full of lice, my winter coat inside-out, ugly, out of step, always
too shy, too negligent, unspeakable my hand worms around in you
my eye molten my pelvis resurrected from dust from mold from beetles from calcium drip
from sentient anxious clouds in you.

Always I search you, always I grapple I lose your paperwork your footprint
your menace your catafalque even though I've found my surface my whip
I've found my flint my hoof my perfected line a bead running down to the impossible penis
the crumbling lighthouse its furious bricks the undersea vivisection
the plastic or silicone strap-on the punched lung
I am among all of you in every direction.

You are cursed you are cursed you are hung in the North you are small as I am
I rake my nails across you I eat your first-born words I contort
fit anywhere your shadow your doorframe bruises your excreted soul your saliva soul
your openings shut up with the animals left in *barzakh* my bandages the number of my lifespan.

There is no scent where you are no ground beneath me not unlike all your bodies
smashed to pulp squeezed through invisible sieves
this is where a prophet's wing suspends itself in white in law in glass in beaten flesh
rose-purple moonflesh like secrets hunted and gathered like you
like insect legs like you like traps laid out for you and planets humming songs of your arrival
your feathers your mouthless kiss your silence this is the desert we are in
alive it is always always always you.

Cameron Stearnes writes, makes art, and slowly decays in the doomed metropolis of Phoenix, Arizona.

Lesbian Heartbreak: Extra Fiber

Crying in the produce aisle (organic section)
Crying in the produce aisle but aesthetically
Holding a cucumber like it's evidence
Wearing sunglasses indoors (mourning chic)
Crocheting a noose for my pride
Naming every ache like a rescue dog
Visiting the dentist just to be told "open wider"
Crying again (this time on purpose)
Kissing a mirror and saying we'll make it work
Practicing detachment but she texts "hey"
Practicing restraint but I text "hi"
Staring at the phone like it owes me alimony
Writing poems that start funny then betray me
Pretending heartbreak is camp (it isn't)
Pretending healing is linear (it's lesbian)
Still crying in the produce aisle (seasonal section)

Shae is a queer, autistic goblin interested in the intersection of disability justice and design, collecting tiny trinkets, and maintaining an unwavering devotion to *Shrek* as both art and ideology.

bowel trust

I want to be sixteen
hungover again
slicing a piece of gorgonzola
then confessing over
a bucket inside
the milk fridge
I want to return
to the counter
freezing in my apron
for my colleagues to laugh
as if it is fun
to be young
this is the age
I have little bowel trust
I want my boyfriend
to reassure me
if I shit up the wall
like that girl from the year above
blamed an untrained pet
at least my insides
might be honest
I want to smell it
my own discharge
a sign that something
in me survives

Tadhg Haran (He) is a trans poet based in London. His poems have appeared in *Perverse*, *Tentacular*, *Bath Magg*, and *Pulp*, among others.

Cinder's Spirit Party

I'm just going to vomit it all out I guess. I saw Cinder on the screen. It was the episode she was introduced and she had a guitar and she was singing and strobes of the power she got from people screaming her name were coming out of the guitar and bathing the audience in green light, and I didn't even realize at the time that the full song existed out there. All I knew was the only thing that I could say. I just said YES! Ever since then I've been trying to say more, living with the memory and not much else. It's like when you take a drug and it doesn't hit you immediately, and by the time it does you can't even remember having taken it. Now I know the why but not the who what where when of it all. I'm 24 now, but if I'm being honest, I haven't really emotionally developed all that much since that moment. I've always just been circling back to the same problems. But these questions, they're not things I can really tell people about. I know how it all looks so I'm very careful about what I say and who I say it to, namely, this fucking tape recorder and nobody else. Not that it matters anymore. I haven't actually hung out with anyone in real life since high school. Online friends don't count as real friendships, and those scumbags ended up abandoning me like everybody else anyway, so who's counting. What happened was these fans of my youtube videos made me an admin of this discord server they set up so they could talk to me. This was back when I was just ripping off Onision or whatever. Shit hit the fan because of this girl Britney who was always in my ear about all of the shit she went through, making me her therapist, and eventually I just had enough. I made a video that I put all my feelings into about the situation and then everybody stopped talking to me. It wasn't even technically about her; it was a Spirit Party video. Britney's such a bitch. She's a bitch at 13 and my guess is that she'll be a bitch as an adult. You can tell with some people.

I'm not retarded; I know what they were thinking. That I'm obsessed with some cartoon girl and I'm going crazy. They can believe that if they want, I don't care. They call Millicent my waifu, very fucking funny. I should never have made her my profile photo if they were going to act that way. Certain things should remain sacred. That way it all remains safe and protected in my heart until further notice. All those religious fucks are allowed to be all touchy about their beliefs and nobody questions them. In truth, I actually have a great amount of religiosity. I think your destiny is to end up in the camp of the religion you prescribe to. If you're a Christian, you end up with Jesus. If you're a Muslim, you end up with Allah. If you're a Buddhist, you get reincarnated. And so on. I'll end up getting recruited into the Spirit Party. I don't think God is even real. It's just your imagination but it lives on after your body and has more power than you think. I think you can haunt people just with your mind alone, and you better believe that I'll be doing a lot of that.

I'm like Thomas; I'm using my art to continue the Spirit Party narrative, the stuff that the show could never approach. Once I'm done with the series, then I've fulfilled my final earthly responsibility. I can't fucking wait until I'm done with this body.

The body sucks because it is a fish tank filled with dead carp and crap, which gets sucked in and out over and over again. We swallow things and they spin around until we can't keep it inside anymore. Human beings are robust, functional creatures, eating small bodies to survive, feeling sick because of the sludge they ate for lunch. Needing to do all of that stuff is like having your own private surveillance state always making sure that you know who's boss. You can't even be the boss of your own body for Goddess' sake. That's the problem of being born—things like that only exist to test if you're good enough for the other side and people still take it deadly serious. Unlike those worthless fucks, I know what my destiny is, even if I can't have pleasure while in this body. In the next life I won't have to worry about waste. I won't even have a asshole and I won't have to eat anything. I'll be sleek and perfect.

Being aware of my destiny, however, means that I'm above having to follow nature to a t. I no longer consider myself to be a human being. I have a body like everybody else and it fucking sucks but I do what I can to get away from it. I shave my hair with my mom's lady gillette razor, everything except for my eyebrows and my head hair. I left the razor out for my parents to find and they didn't even notice. They'll never get the message. I could strip naked in front of them and they still wouldn't notice anything.

I love how smooth my skin feels. I jerked off in the handicap bathrooms at work yesterday at lunch because I took a piss and got hard because I couldn't stop feeling myself. I only masturbate once a month, so I don't exactly feel bad about it. It's difficult to categorize cum as waste because it's the only bodily fluid that the imagination has some role in producing. Not that I'm particularly fond of the stuff, but the act that leads to it lets me slip away for a moment. I try to stay there for as long as I can, trying to imagine myself in my purest form in the purest world. Hopefully some of it escapes and projects itself onto my human body somehow. Like one of those eunuchs for Jesus who went out and castrated themselves as children so that they could go on singing the high notes in the choir. You would have seen them walking down the block in the middle ages and known immediately what they stood for and what they were here to do.

You should see me in comparison. Before I film my videos I spend at least an hour trying to get everything right. I'm never happy with my hair; it doesn't stay in the position I want it to be in. And even when I hit record I spend a while trying to get the camera slightly angled toward the good side of my face. People say I'm too thin but I don't know, that stuff is important to me. My arms are so small, just the same size as the Spirit Party girls. I know this stuff makes me sound sort of gay but I'm not. I'm straight; I like women. I have a soulmate, her name is Millicent, and she's a girl. I actually fucking hate men. I hate their bodies, their facial hair, their muscle mass and biceps and triceps and what have you, the way they smell, the stuff they talk about. There are no men in the Spirit Party. My girls are clean and self-contained. They let nothing in and they let nothing out.

I actually haven't had any kind of substantial bowel movement in a couple of years. I might have had diarrhea maybe once or twice but that doesn't really count. I reckon I could sew my cheeks together with a needle and thread and be good for a couple of weeks. My ass isn't even big enough for me to sit myself on the toilet bowl. I just keep falling right in. That's what the world does to you. I highly doubt that I'll shit or piss myself when I pull the trigger. It's not going to be like that in my final video, that's for sure. I want me and Millicent to be sprawled out on the floor like the photo of Eric and Dylan, totally peaceful and finally at rest.

I don't think I'll be able to animate it in time, and no voice actress I've contacted wants to touch the thing with a ten-foot pole. I think I'll just throw up the storyboard in the scenes I can't get around to doing. It's realer that way, anyway. I don't view the videos as nonfiction though; it's just that all of the feelings I put there, they come from somewhere bigger than me. I have to hope that the truth makes its way into the videos by some sort of osmosis because I don't know how else I can get it there. If the videos suck, then I'm just going to have to trust that those in the know will know. Otherwise I'm fucked. I guess all I really know is that it all feels so real to me. When I look at my girls, they are just perfect. There's no other way to describe them; they're just pure perfection. The way their eyes are drawn—it took me months to get them right. When I found out how to properly animate them it was like I had gained the power of persuasion, like I could manipulate anyone who watches the videos. That's what happened to me as a kid when I first saw Cinder, leader of the Spirit Party. Back then all of the cartoons passed me by. It didn't matter if it was new or a rerun—I got used to watching things out of sequence. But the network made a big deal out of promoting this new show, and I knew instantly that what I was watching was the start of something. I still feel that the people that I describe this stuff to aren't worthy of it. I've always gone out of my way to actively avoid going into the details; they would only be falling on deaf ears. All this love I have, it's just on this flat piece of fucking paper and it doesn't enter the world. I can't get my imagination to do what I want it to. I hate that. It's just cum drying in my palm. I guess that's why I'm leaving all of these tapes behind—so I can just shoot the shit and the people who need to hear it will find it somehow. They'll understand it and won't need me to explain too much because they already know it and just need somebody else to say it so they can go 'thank you!' and be inspired.

If you want to find the meaning, it's 1.) in Cinder's Spirit Party and 2.) in my actions. Join us, we want YOU. Everything else is, in layman's terms, faggy as hell.

Harper Stringer is alive and well and lives in London. In 2025 she received a bachelor's degree in creative writing from Kingston University. She has built an online presence writing short fiction on Substack under her name and by directing experimental film for YouTube as Aubrey Says. You can find her on Instagram as [@harperstringer](https://www.instagram.com/harperstringer).

Crevise

His fingers, like a fork in
an electrical socket. Nails
like a sheaf of papercuts.

His fingers, shoved inside,
knifing me, like a clumsy
teen desperate to know.

His fingers must be impatient
to be warm because it is clear
this is not about my pleasure.

His fingers, twitching
as he asks if he can do a line,
going deeper when denied.

His fingers, pointing out how
poppers are as illegal here
as what I insist isn't judgement.

His fingers, stopping when
told, gesturing as he tells me
what a disappointment I am.

The man before this insistence spent an hour coaxing me open, him into me, teamwork under sex club
lighting, laughter in a sling, a night happily burnt behind my eyes.

I keep finding myself crying, confused as to why. Eric tells me that the potential for those tears was always
there, waiting. That any of us are just a minute from blood in the bowl, on the towel, on the bedsheets.

Mark Ward is the author of the collection *Nightlight* (Salmon Poetry, 2023) and six pamphlets, the most recent of which is *Masters* (The Emma Press, 2025). His next collection, *Real Estate*, will be published in May 2026 by Salmon Poetry.

Flip

Let's lie and say you came
to sniff my pits and clench
around the scent. Grate your tongue,
unfilth a layer, pull at strays
that string your teeth. Open
potions with the pretense
of blood rush. Be straight with me
or bent to attend to—willful,
will we kneel in weird prayer?

Father,

may I bend me, subside
this side closest my shadow?
Obeisance: headspace
of a clear gut, made latent
bait, now nascent nap
in the crust of the loved one's
nut. Flipped and flouted out
his being's last sputum.
Holy shit.
I make no slight of a pale king box spring.

Will Russo is the author of two chapbooks: *Dreamsoak* (Querencia Press, 2023) and *Glass Manifesto*, winner of the 2023 Rick Campbell Chapbook Award from Anhinga Press. He is poetry reviews editor at *Another Chicago Magazine* and received his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Find him at willrusso.com.

Cum Breakfast

S: What are you doing? Get naked and let me see your dick.

(M sends S a pic of his erect dick.)

S: When was this taken? That's a big fuckin' dick, guy.

M: Just now. I responded to your demand. My house is freezing.

S: Wrap a blanket around yourself.

M: Then I couldn't show you my cock.

S: I would have woke you up with my lips around that fucker.

(S sends a dick pic taken two days ago.)

M: The best way to be awoken. Is that now?

S: Yeah. Buttery chocolate dick.

M: Fuck yeah! Stroking it?

S: You know it I stay horny.

M: Mmm...hmmm

S: I want to suck your dick so fuckin bad.

(M sends another dick pic.)

S: I would just randomly go down on you.

M: It turned me on when you said I could put it in your mouth anytime I wanted.

S: Pretty much yeah.

M: Sometimes I just need a hot wet tongue wrapped around my cock.

S: I would never complain. Here's my mouth. Fuck it please. As a stress reliever.

M: I want to rub it on your fat tongue before burying it in your throat.

S: I would suck your dick just to suck it.

M: I want to see my head get fat on your tongue.

S: Bounce that fucker on my tongue will you?

M: Yes.

S: As I look up at you from my knees.

M: As I record it sliding in deeper.

S: Lay you on your back naked legs spread with a hard dick ready to be pleased.

M: Watch and record it sliding in and out.

S: Suck you better than I have any guy.

M: My dick likes a soft, even suck.

S: Go down on you until the head hits my tonsils.

M: Fuck. No hands on my cock while you suck it. Just your mouth.

S: Your precum salting my tender throat. Fuck no. I don't use hands just my talented mouth.

M: Mmm...yeah. I love a good hand job, but not while it's being sucked. A hot wet talented mouth is so much better.

S: My only mission is to get a good thick load out of you for my breakfast.

M: I always wake up hard as a rock. It hurts and needs comforting.

S: It wouldn't hurt for long once I've thrown these honey lips to your dick. Coat my throat with rich sweet fucking cum.

M: Watch you stroke your fat cock while you suck me. Use your precum and fingers on that fat head.

S: Hell yeah but my mission is to get my cum breakfast.

M: Mine too. My cum is yours.

S: Creamy jizz.

M: You got that thick white creamy cum.

S: I shoot thick loads as you can see from that video.

M: Looks so hot on your black cock.

S: Would look better slathered on your tongue.

M: That too.

S: Cum from a black dick is the best.

M: Indeed.

S: Thick and sweet.

M: It makes great lube too. Love a fat hot load on my cock.

S: Oh for sure.

M: Then a good hand job two hot loads mixing on my dick.

S: I used to give mutual hand jobs to guys under the stalls of mall bathrooms.

And I would tell them to come on my dick and use their cum as lube to stroke off.

M: Absolutely.

S: Feels amazing. Their cum mixing with mine.

M: I love that.

(M sends another dick pic.)

S: That's how nasty I like to get.

M: Precum drip.

S: Mmm...swirl it around your cock head babe.

M: I am.

S: Let me taste you. Goddamn wish I was there.

M: Licking it.

S: How does it taste?

M: A little salty.

S: I would milk your fucking dick of loads daily.

(M sends another dick pic.)

M: Got my head all plumped up.

S: Damn, love your dick pics.

M: I love yours.

S: That head is meant for my mouth.

M: It is.

S: How many times a day would you want head?

M: Not sure how often I could cum but getting it sucked could be as many as you like. I can be a greedy bitch.

S: I'd take what you can give me. Anything to keep my throat coated with your cum.

M: Mmm...

S: And maybe a load for my ass too.

M: Mmm...you're getting me close.

S: Stroke that fucker. My prostate cum-coated.

M: Fuck you from the side.

S: Think of it coming down my slut throat.

M: Reach around and stroke your cock.

S: Fuck yeah.

M: Love to fuck with a hard cock in my hand.

S: Spit on my face as you stroke me. Fuck my big ass.

M: Would you want me to pull out and shove it down your throat to unload?

S: Even better.

M: Fuck.

S: Prefer it in my black ass.

M: Bury a load deep.

S: Breed this black ass.

M: Slide it in deep.

S: Fuck me guy fuck me.

M: Feel it hit your spot again and again.

S: Hit it! Hit it!

M: Pound your black cunt good.

S: Your dick feels good inside me.

M: Feels good sliding in and out of your thick ass.

S: White dick in my tight black pussy.

M: Pounding that tight pussy good.

S: Hell yeah. Fuck me please.

M: Not letting go until we both shoot a load. I'm gonna pump a thick creamy load in you and out of you.

S: Hell yeah!

M: You tell me when.

S: Jesus fuck man. Go come for me.

M: Feel my big white dick in your tight black pussy. I want to cum.

S: Fuck yeah baby!

M: You?

S: Shoot it! Shoot it in my ass I'm ready.

M: Fuuuuuuuuck I'm coming!

S: Oh fuck!

M: Oh yeah shoot that load.

S: Jesus guy

M: Give me that hot thick load.

S: Drink me imagine my cum dribbling down your fingers. If we were together we could do some nasty things.

M: I don't doubt it.

S: I wouldn't be able to get enough of that juicy dick of yours.

M: You'd get tired of it.

S: I never ever get tired of dick. I'd wear an anal plug to stretch my hole, so when you're ready your dick can slide inside me so easily. Perfect fit for my cunt.

M: Fuck! Lube it up and slosh around in it.

S: Mmm...with whatever lube you choose.

M: Don't matter to me. Wet, slippery, hot. My phone is about to drain like my cock did.

Shane Allison's new collection *I Want to Eat Chinese Food Off Your Ass* is out from Dumpster Fire Press. He's at work on hot new poetry every day.

Wheelies in the stars

'I'm bored.'

Goo-eye groans at his own weariness.

Those cute Cupid bow lips primed ready to blow.

Goo-eye gnashes his teeth. His reflection in the car's wing mirror whispers *aren't I the darlingest, gnarliest, most impetuous fool?* Goo-eye bats his eyelashes for the privilege of his imitator.

'C'mon, Jimmy, I want to see the big guy.'

Jimmy turns his face to Goo-eye, lowers his chin and exhales a beautiful billowy skunk genie from his mouth.

The fecundly potent smoke swirls a circular path to Goo-eye's grimaced face. Jimmy really likes that grimace a lot.

'Bored, what for? Squeak.' He balks.

Goo-eye glowers, harder. Tightens his eyes at Jimmy.

'You know what...'

Jimmy shrugs. He knows Goo-eye is eager to SLAM.

'You look distressed, Squeak? I detect a huff, huffff.'

Jimmy winks ...

his bloodshot eyes, frayed with red lines, dry, could have just woken up, it's hard to tell with that stoner gaze and the dark dishevelled hair.

'Not distressed,' hisses Goo-eye.

'Are.'

'Listen, Jimmy, how is it I got my nickname?'

Jimmy laughs. 'Cos your high-pitch voice sounds like a dog squeaker.'

Goo-eye is indignant. 'Not Squeaker...' he snaps. 'The other. My newest moniker?'

'Oh, that one.' Jimmy feigns uncertainty. Browses around the interior of the car they're seated in pretending to look for clues. 'Could it be,' here he pulls a brainless face, 'something to do with your first dose of the clap...?'

Goo-eye congratulates Jimmy, an ovation, a nod of his head and mute applause.

Goo-eye is pacified. He jams his grimy earbuds into his earholes, switches on his crimson iPod, twiddles the volume nodule up, up, up.

Jimmy takes a good toke on his spliff.

Again, an acrid aroma of cannabis, peppery and heavy.

Goo-eye gnaws the iPod audio cable ... mumbles to himself, 'Squeak nothing, I'm not a fuckin dog toy.'

Hardly tamper-proof, the boys – between very young and just scarping off illegal – have a will fuck for drugs approach towards the queer patriarch. An honest attitude popular with the creeps who frequent the block. Older faggots with a penchant for jailbait.

Jimmy and Goo-eye's hangout is the wreck of a Toyota Celica notchback coupé. A tyreless, windows-out, dead car stripped of sellable parts, the hulk of the metal beast a readymade HQ at the centre of seedy twilight operations.

Too young to get into any nightclubs, their glitter is glass, sharp pieces of the smashed-to-smithereens windscreen scattered over the footwells like diamonds glistening in black urinals; their abandoned car their shelter where, high as petrels, choking, they feel their lives as closed-in and predictable as birds kept in tiny cages.

Now and then, Jimmy sees escape. A tall figure of a man, deathly skinny and with a whiskery moustache.

Something about this mystery figure frightens Jimmy, maybe the cologne ... it smells like iodine solution.

A memory? Vague as to be nothing retrievable.

Wisest by a couple of nasty experiences, Jimmy nurtures, thinks himself a guru. Takes Goo-eye by the hand. Why

the disillusioned keep coming here, getting younger, less clandestine, is a daunting matter, an indictment of hard times. The little imps want to get rich, want to buy Rolexes, wear Prada – if it ain't fake. Their bodies – their sellable commodities – go so cheap. Pity ain't getting them on no private jets! Jimmy knows Goo-eye has his heart set on getting out to be a real flyaway Peter no comeback Paul.

Goo wants to get weirder and wilder and disassociate from the predicaments bringing him here under Jimmy's wing.

Untameable and fascinating Jimmy Goshawk, feather-cut hair and a nylon Addidas soul, borderline methamphetamine addict. Yeah, don't fuck with him. A true droog of the gathering storm. There's an Armageddon on its way with your name prioritised as going down to Hell.

Goo is listening to the devoid – a garage band whose anti-fascist lyrics are an explosion of self-expression and joy, their music is DIY ethos, moshing, chaotic live performances, art echoing the surrealists.

Goo-eye knows their signature song by heart

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

Stock car smash-up America

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

Eva Longoria sucked off Michael Myers

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

Warhola nation murdered Aunt Naeemah

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

Fifteen minutes has lasted two hundred plus years

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

C'mon, rename Hertfordshire – America

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

Hatfield, UK capital of America

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

Fuck yr Uber

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

Fuck yr muthafukka

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

Fuck yr ghettoising

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

Give the republicans a taste of queer disco, Frisco

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

errrrrrrrrrrrgh

This horrible, horrible England led by donkeys,
no one alive worth talking to only the deadbeats: the
notorious eccentrics and outcasts much better than all the
others. A few heroes. Poets. English ghosts contacting
from a distance, Sid Vicious in the arms of Joe Orton
sobbing for truth to out. Angela Carter scribbling magic: it
is said that her spelling was atrocious. *Bring back the
Boschian spell let us dance in the garden of earthly
delights* ... Goo-eye, daydreaming. Suddenly his reverie
breaks.

'What's it like then?'

Goo-eye is referring to the glistening pinch of
methamphetamine deliquescing in boiled water from a
flask which Jimmy siphoned into a three-times-used
hypodermic, held tightly, shaking it up like a limited
snowstorm. The subcutaneous needle still has some life
to it, albeit vicarious – its prick will make you smart and
wince.

'Listen, Goo-eye... let Jimmy explain. Slam is an out-of-

practise stunt rider revved up on a Honda motorcycle.
Sixteen London double-decker buses all in a row – game
on – 150km/h – bam, fireball.

Goo-eye pictures the motorcyclist's fatal error of
judgement, the destruction. Goo's eyelashes are full of
oppressive sorrow – practising holding back tears, Goo-
eye sparkles, 'Let's go there, Jimmy?'

Jimmy being all '*I'm quicker than the devil in leather boots*
cocksure Evel Knievel' is gonna enjoy a fair bit of
grovelling before he gets Goo high off the blunt spike. But
inside Jimmy trembles. The boy's got a conscience. Much
of it denied.

Goo-eye lights himself a cigarette, stuffs his lungs on a
long-sated in-breath. Scornfully looks at Jimmy. Jimmy
senses gravid unease, shifts in the car seat. Goo-eye
exhales a livid plume of cigarette fume. 'Jimmy,' he
whispers, 'let me fucking tell you...' Jimmy straightens
his back; the farsighted look on his face says: this is
gonna be worth a minute.

'You think I'm a pansy, don't you, Jimmy? Well, no! I'm
not a wilting flower. I have been subjected to horrific
abuses, the worst through conventionally acceptable
"reparative" therapy – I know how to handle the
voluptuary fiasco, chemical or otherwise. I ain't a big girl's
blouse. This doll is TO_LET.' Goo pushes down his
leopard-print shorts, flashes his pale buttocks. Uncoils the
juvenilia of his wild boyhood erect as a stalagmite. 'So,
don't,' Goo-eye smiles now, 'presume me,' he says licking
his Cupid bow lips, 'anything other than the best of British
cunts.'

They laugh. It's fun to be arrogant.

'C'mon, Jimmy, let me SLAM, let's ride; I want to see the
big guy. Let's do wheelies in the stars, together, tonight?'

Neil missed an opportunity to enter the 27 Club that night. He stayed home and wrote *Wheelies in the stars* instead.

@ neillien



LOOKING FOR PHEDRO

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN ACTOR (BUT IT MIGHT HELP)
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A MODEL (BUT IT MIGHT HELP)
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE ATTRACTIVE (BUT IT MIGHT HELP)
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE WELL-ENDOWED (BUT IT MIGHT HELP)
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SPEAK MANY LANGUAGES (BUT IT MIGHT HELP)
YOU DON'T NEED A CRIMINAL RECORD (BUT IT MIGHT HELP)
YOU DON'T NEED TO STRUGGLE WITH DISSOCIATIVE SYNDROMES,
ANTISOCIAL TENDENCIES, OR CHAOTIC SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS
(BUT IT MIGHT HELP)



TALK TO SOMEONE WHO CARES

Geoffroy C. Dedenis is a visual artist based in Paris, creating films, videos, texts and mixed-media montages ranging from experimental to narrative. His audiovisual productions investigate (homo)sexual desire, love, happiness, emptiness, and alienation.

AFTERWORD

The 19th issue of SCAB comes out in September 2026.

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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thank you dearly.

