

Alien Buddha Zine #27



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***Once Upon a Dark Room* by Gina Tron**

Sitting in a diner
coming down off the iron breath
at the coming of age
barely
feeling the river below
of loneliness
I'm in the water
even though I'm besides bodies
on a booth in the dark
floating down a river
the undercurrent changeless

I can almost stop the flow
in the throes
of sticky frozen time
I'll trap you in time
like a Kodachrome

You want me to develop
into the type of picture
you'd see at the photo store
or a TJMaxx, in the candle section

You'd rather hear about
which dick I'm touching
any dick
doesn't matter
than any project I'm touching
cause you want me to fold into
a photograph
neat and nice
pick a dick
a normal marriage
a non-threatening life
but
this photo isn't going to develop that way,
the roll of high-speed daylight-balanced color negative film
is limited
and it's not meant for romantic pictures.

An Excerpt From *Raising St. Elisabeth* by Leah Holbrook Sackett

Leah Holbrook Sackett's published books include *Swimming Middle River* and *White Knight Escort Service*. Additionally, she has a third short story collection, *Catawampus* in Sweetgum County, scheduled for publication in spring 2022. Leah was nominated for a Pushcart Prize and over 75 of Leah's stories have appeared in literary journals. She is an adjunct lecturer in English at the University of Missouri - St. Louis, where she earned her M.F.A. Leah's stories explore journeys toward autonomy and the boundaries placed on the individual by society, family, and self. Learn about her published fiction at leahholbrooksackett.com.



Raising St. Elisabeth

Raising St. Elisabeth is a hybrid of magical realism blended with historical fiction. This story's miraculous elements are based on Synesthesia (an unknown condition during the late 1800s), Judeo-Christian mythology, and the classic fairytale of Rumpelstiltskin. The tale takes place in Yakima, Washington, in the late 1800s. It was a time in history with one foot in the past and one foot in the future, where horse-drawn carriages shared the road with the first automobiles. The story cracks open with St. Elisabeth's unusual birth marked by the death of her parents. This moment is life-changing for the Campbells, who take her on as their charge, and plants the seed for future paranormal and magical experiences that expand throughout the novella.

The name St. Elisabeth proves to be a heavy mantle for a child, which becomes apparent in the miraculous twists and turns through St. Elisabeth's childhood and adolescence. Her unique nature, Synesthesia, is misunderstood and misconstrued. It serves as a magical element in her world. Ignorance of the time becomes a breeding ground for the slow swell of the seven deadly sins. Temptation and mercy are constant points of struggle for the characters. Ultimately, the story is a battle between good and evil, a heroine's journey right in her own orchard.

Leah Sackett



www.amazon.com/dp/B0942HCCS2

At sixteen, St. Elisabeth was restless, and she was cloaked in false knowledge of right from wrong. The awkward years of maturity left her stripped bare, and as this newly formed being of a woman-child, she would have to redress morality on her own. Kate and Henry were slipping from a role of control to the advisor's critical role; thus, life was ready to breed turmoil under their roof. Kate was a keen watchman of any young man that started sniffing around St. Elisabeth. With such a holy name as St. Elisabeth, Kate thought it would render the flesh's seductive powers as failed. But nothing causes sexual desire to regress its carnal pursuits. So, Kate insisted St. Elisabeth continue her weekly meetings with Father John to instill a more profound education of the will of God. However, Kate's maladroit ministrations on the subject of St. Elisabeth's purity just caused a flare-up of passion in the girl. While Kate was more than understanding about how quickly temptation can set in, she was scarcely prepared to broach the subject with St. Elisabeth.

The priestly tutelage had been fanning a fire. St. Elisabeth was driven to distraction with tales of lust emerging from the bible like a ripe apple waiting to be plucked and consumed. Adam and Eve were St. Elisabeth's favorite. It lent to so many questions, which, when posed to Father John, he launched into the subject of good versus evil and the sin of Eve. St. Elisabeth often wondered why apples were allowed to spread, and were they still a gesture of sin? Did this make her family purveyors of evil? Or had apples been stripped of their curse? And either way, why wasn't this information recorded in the bible. St. Elisabeth's ponderings gave rise to all sorts of questions for Father John, and he felt like he hopped on a bed of hot coals trying to answer all of St. Elisabeth's questions. He was somewhat perturbed that the educational examination often put him at the defensive end of his faith. This girl was named St. Elisabeth; for Christ's sake, why didn't she act more like her

namesake. But then again, St. Elisabeth was only 16. It was her age to be chirk and cheeky.

St. Elisabeth liked to hear of the more ridiculous stories of martyrdom. She pondered how such atrocities were ever made possible by man and why God would allow it. Whatever the case, the Saints' stories comprised a more extensive inclusion of women than women's minimal roles in the bible.

But the Saints were also distancing with their lofty tales. St. Elisabeth thought of herself as having some saintly qualities and characteristics. Yet, while she was being groomed for sainthood, she was also being censored by her family from performing miracles such as her gift to taste others' intense emotions. This gift was repeatedly revealed and then hidden as if under a basket. It was a gift at once applauded in her small circle and also muffled and shunted away to a back corner. Only Lilith's prehensile influence encouraged St. Elisabeth to use her gift amongst the townsfolk on the farm and ranches and definitely in town. With Lilith's encouragement, St. Elisabeth tasted the intense emotions of others, but she was closemouthed about it and kept it between herself and Lilith. It was as an intimate intrusion as if they were lifting skirts and peeking in trousers. It left the girls giddy and intoxicated as if they had visited the Moore brothers' bucket shop, dipping into the boon of the gin mill. The robust tasting and telling left both girls bubbleheaded and drunk, and they would retire to the orchard to eat apples, which ruined their dinner.

St. Elisabeth walked out into the orchard under an already brutal Sun. Her breakfast was two apples. She picked one more for the horse and readied the wagon for the trip into town. Kate, who was reluctant to allow St. Elisabeth to go to town alone, hurried a hat on her head and joined a defeated St. Elisabeth's short sojourn into town. Solo trips to town were a freedom St. Elisabeth had when younger, but this freedom was usurped as her parents now considered it too much freedom for a 16-year-old girl alone. The town had grown, and with it came saloons and doggeries with their drinking and gambling. Places that Henry liked to visit when done with his work at the orchard. Michael was wary of Henry's pursuits. Kate pretended not to notice. These low-down establishments birthed a soaplock crowd of rowdy men. This was how Kate was able to justify the change in rules, but a reduced arena of freedom was an unwanted shackle for St. Elisabeth, nonetheless. St. Elisabeth was stunning on her own, but her keen sense of style and hunger for fashion heightened the attention of young men and older men alike. St. Elisabeth overdressed for her trips to town. On this trip, she wore a smart pleated waistcoat and skirt in a becoming burgundy, and she wore her hair in the fashionable Gibson girl. Kate tried to cover St. Elisabeth like an outdated garment, using her age and frump to capricious youth. And yet, Kate worried if her grip on St. Elisabeth was too tight. Would the girl slip between her fingers? Was it not the stranglehold of morals that aided in her fall? Her sins were not solely her own, her community and her church aided in heightening the draw of the forbidden.

Moreover, Kate wore thin her worry when reflecting on the holy name of St. Elisabeth. She comforted herself with prayers of intercession to St. Elisabeth proper, but Kate's meek ministrations only kindled a flare-up of passion. Crippled by her own sin Kate was too broken to make suitable choices for St. Elisabeth.

St. Elisabeth was like any teenage girl. She wanted to fall in love, and she wanted to flaunt it in everybody's face. Her Momma and Father were at ease when little attention was given to their home. The result was St. Elisabeth felt she was an embarrassment or aberration that her loved ones kept banked against the shore of concealment.

St. Elisabeth held the hearts of her family. She was as quietly mischievous and kind as any girl in Yakima County. The town stayed small, but four miles north, North Yakima grew quickly, and so did St. Elisabeth; both grew much too fast for the likings of Kate. For Kate, it seemed like only yesterday St. Elisabeth was born, and here she was sixteen years old. The young men had started calling for her. Henry surveyed them with the eye of a purveyor at an auction. For Kate, Henry, and Michael, it was important the young man be respectable, Catholic, healthy, and strong (to take over the family farm, since St. Elisabeth was an only child). And, of course, he could never think of moving away from Yakima County.

But as the adults watched for a practical and stable young man, St. Elisabeth looked for adventure. She held romantic notions of love typical of a young girl on the verge of a bustling town. It was the dark, brooding young men that caught St. Elisabeth's fancy. There was one man in particular that she cottoned to, Milton Brown.

Milton was uncommonly handsome in an awkward sort of way and just shy of being a dandy. His beguiling smile and perpetual five O'clock shadow met with long sideburns and a neatly trimmed mustache rent the idea that he was a wholesome man to shreds. He was not so tall, lean-muscled, and had confidence too bold for

his age. Milton came by train from New York to work in his Uncle's general store. He arrived in North Yakima in late summer. When Milton disembarked from the train, no one was there to meet him. He was not surprised by this since his Uncle Milt had never been fond of him. Milton reminded himself to be on his best behavior and do what he could to make his Uncle happy. Milton had been shipped out west by his disgraced parents. He had the unfortunate luck of getting a governess in the family way. The scandal was more than the Browns could bear, plus the rumors of the governess's flesh covered in a frenzy of bite marks had rendered the whole affair demoralizing. Milton was shipped off to his Uncle. Hopefully, the west was room enough for Milton to sow his oats. It could be a playground for all the sinister tricks he had displayed as a child, and hopefully, his habits of skinning cats alive and mixing strychnine in the dog's food could get lost in the open spaces.

Milton walked to the heart of town and found his Uncle's general store. He entered the store with a dashing air of importance. His Uncle grimaced and pointed to the back storeroom. Uncle Milt had expected the arrival of his spoiled nephew and actually looked forward to seeing the young man trying to get along in the west without the coddling of Milton's mother. His sister was the one Milt blamed for his namesake's character weakness. It was now his chance to make a man out of this dandy of a nephew that stood before him in the storeroom. Milton sneered as he thanked his Uncle for the black apron that was thrust into his hands. He had the task of unloading inventory, sweeping the walkway, and other menial jobs. Plus, Milton was under strict orders from his Uncle to not speak to the customers, especially the young women.

Milton noticed St. Elisabeth before she entered the store. He saw her walking down the walkway with an older, tired-looking woman. The faint sweet scent of apple blossoms drifted on the breeze, calling to him. When she entered the store, he watched her from the storeroom while unloading a new shipment of shoes. She stood just at the store's threshold in front of the plate glass window where the sunlight warmed the store's front. Only her silhouette and scent could he see and sniff out as she was backlit by the window. She moved forward into the store, and the aroma of apple blossoms nestled in with the heavy fragrance of the unboxed leather. St. Elisabeth waltzed casually about the store looking at soaps, linens and catching glimpses of herself in the full-length mirror at the front of the store.

"May I help you?" Milton asked.

St. Elisabeth smiled and looked down at the half-wrapped box in his hands. He lifted the lid and pushed back the brown paper. Inside were a pair of red, kid-leather boots. The tongue and the soles were lined with red satin, and gold stitching ran the trim. The laces were embroidered with a slithering pattern that looked to snake and moves under the electric lights. St. Elisabeth's eyes grew wide at the sight of unusual beauty. Just then, Kate made it to the back of the store to see the strange gentleman with his hand wrapped around St. Elisabeth's ankle as he slid the boot on her foot. The young man's familiar touch brought a blush to St. Elisabeth's cheek.

"Please, take off that boot, St. Elisabeth," Kate said.

"Yes, Momma."

Then the two women took their leave of Simonson's general store without the goods they had come seeking. Soon after this encounter, St. Elisabeth took on any chore requiring her to go into town. She went with her father to buy the month's goods and grain for the few farm animals they had on hand. Rising out of the bustle and dust, St. Elisabeth would stop in at the Simonson's general store with any excuse she could think of to eye the red, kid-leather boots and Milton. Her own flavor of apples was an intense crispness combusted on her tongue. It tickled and created a heady perfume that made her dizzy. She wanted nothing more than to touch those boots and stand close to Milton.

Milton had found her obtuse, and she used it to her advantage, wearing the mask of a saint. She commanded the floor with ease in every conversation. She talked, yet said little; worse, she did not listen. St. Elisabeth felt entitled to dominate. It was this attitude she bandied about the day that she attracted Milton. St. Elisabeth was not grounded, for she moved in and out of clarity, her heart was atwitter, and she fluctuated in every manner; there was a fluid interruption in all her actions like waves breaking on rocks. Most assumed her head was in the clouds as a manifestation of her holiness.

When Milton met her, he felt her palpations of sin calling out, a cry for indulgence, a buried lust humming in the darkness of her soul. Only he could feel the calling, the evil nest inside that must be excised with his knife. Her gift was reading emotion, intent. His nature was to cloud emotions, submit souls unto temptation, and draw out evil intention in the most saintly of men. Milton promised his hunger that with St. Elisabeth, they'd put this town asunder.

One late afternoon, when St. Elisabeth had slipped her mother's guard, she made a B-line to Simonson's. She was in the general store hunting down the fragrance of leather when she saw something white like virgin snow billowing forth from the red, kid-leather boots on display. St. Elisabeth reached out her hand and drew forth a gentleman's silk handkerchief. Balling it up in her fist, she moved to quickly exit the store. But she was arrested with Milton's grasp of her arm. At first, she thought she had misread the handkerchief as being meant for her, but she quickly realized there was a horrible raucous outside. Milton took her behind the counter and stood in front of her, a gentlemanly blockade. She watched the action over his shoulder, feeling the heat that radiated from his body.

A notorious man named Jacob Sechler Coxey had gathered a band of men, called the Coxeyites, to march on Washington D.C. and demonstrate for their rights. These men had arrived on the Pacific Northwest, and we're currently camped by the railyards. They hoped to make it across the country and make known their predicament of unemployment. While trying to hop a freight train to Spokane, a clash occurred between police, marshals, and the protestors. Men on both sides were beaten with clubs. It was the bloodiest thing St. Elisabeth had ever seen. She was terrified and intensely excited. Milton could feel her pulse racing in the wrist he clutched. Shots were fired, and St. Elisabeth buried her head in Milton's chest. Now, she was trembling with fear and the close proximity to Milton. She began to gently cry. In the end, marshals stopped the men from commandeering the freight train. One hundred and twenty men were arrested, and many men were injured by the Coxeyites.

Milton borrowed his Uncle's carriage and drove St. Elisabeth home. She continued to clutch the silk handkerchief in her sweaty palm. Milton took up more time than necessary to make his farewell. St. Elisabeth could feel her mother watching from the kitchen window. She offered her hand to Milton to kiss and waved goodbye as he left. St. Elisabeth tried to go straight to her room, but she was stopped by her Momma. St. Elisabeth revealed the days' violent events. For the first and last time, Kate was thankful for Milton. St. Elisabeth finally escaped to her room with the stolen treasure. She was smoothing out the cloth on her bed when she noticed black writing from a fountain pen in one corner of it. The note said simply, *Meet me tonight in the heart of the apple orchard*. Her heart, already racing, kicked up its pace. *He left this for me. It's his. It smells like him, like smoke and leather*, she thought. She spoke his name with an earnest tongue, and Milton fell from her lips while the taste of her desire was an explosion of baked apples in her mouth.

***Pressing The Wrong Button* by Robert Ragan**

I was an old man at 40. Not in the worst shape, but definitely not lively enough to fight it out with these teenage hoodlums.

The best-hearted gal I ever knew was my buddy, Cindy. She looked out for my daughter while I was locked up. Cindy didn't expose Lydia to any of the bullshit we were involved in.

But trouble seemed to follow anyone with my blood.

Lydia's mother left TV dinners to eat as she went out pursuing sugar daddies only to end up pimped out.

Cindy would drop by to help out with anything. She spent her own money to buy Lydia's clothes. Next, she taught her how to apply her make-up correctly without looking trashy.

When the boys came around, Lydia's mother let them all do as they pleased; as long as they stayed out of the nest, she called her hair.

My daughter was 15 with her own posse of wannabe criminals following her around. They had her experimenting with drugs, and I'm sure other things I don't even want to think about.

Snot-nosed bastards had no idea what they were getting themselves into. The judicial system was always eager to set problems like them aside. That's if they got lucky and I didn't find them first.

Cindy dropped by my ex's tacky double-wide trailer; the head bitch was still around.

Looking tough in jeans and a black leather jacket, I'm sure Cindy had a blade stashed in the zippered pocket. Looking around the room from face to face, she studied these cons in training.

Lydia wasn't entertaining all of them but the one with the tattoos in the backward fitted cap. Well, he seemed to be in charge, and it was obvious that Lydia was into him.

Cindy told them all to get out and go to school, get a job, or something.

"Lydia's father gets out of prison in 6 months," she said. "You wouldn't want me to tell him you guys are leading his daughter astray."

Cindy told me the kid behind it all had muscles, was stocky, and talked a big game. Apparently, he didn't give a fuck what I thought.

If I got out and tried to act tough, he and his boys would beat my old ass to death. He said all this as my own daughter sat by smiling.

Thank God for Cindy. She knew exactly what I would say. Telling this big mouth, "Oh, you think he's gonna put his hands up and fight with y'all?" Cindy smiled, "Oh Hell no! He's gonna shoot you disrespectful fucks."

"Lydia," she said, "You know better than this."

Footsteps came down the hall. Lydia's mother was in her housecoat at two in the afternoon, her red hair a poofy mess of fire.

"Bitch, who the fuck do you think you are? Coming into my house and bossing my daughter around? I'm her mother! You're just one of her father's countless fuck buddies, so don't ever think you're special."

Cindy asked Lydia to leave with her, but she refused. Before walking out, she told Lydia's mother to put on some clothes, step outside, and she'd fuck her up.

When the time comes, these hoodlums can't say we didn't warn them. One thing you don't do is mess with a man's daughter.

I know it sounds cliché, but I'll play the father with the shotgun.

They best play the punks who leave my daughter alone.

A Preview of *A Cat is Not a Dog* by Lane Chasek



"As a humorist and a stylist, Lane Chasek can take any subject matter—even cats and dogs—and spin a whimsical, often poignant narrative. In the case of *A Cat is not a Dog*, Chasek takes a deceptively simple theme, enters into dialogue with classic literature (specifically the poetry of T.S. Eliot), shakes it up with humor and humanity, and ends up delivering playful but profound insights into identity, friendship, and love."

-Peter Clarke, author of
Politicians are Superheroes



A CAT IS NOT A DOG
LANE CHASEK

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0931QRHKR>

Macavity

somewhere, somehow, Schrödinger's cat
has lost her electrons, her nine lives,
and her ability to die once her nine lives

are over—which shouldn't be possible,
but cats are like that—the natural feline borders
between reality and our bad dreams

lurking in superposition. when I leave my apartment
I can count on bowls of cream and canned tuna
on stoops to keep this city's cats purring

while barren asphalt lots rot to black dust,
fences corrode, and the uranium dynamo
at earth's core continues to decay and transform

into new forms of matter, though we're unaware
that it's happening, each moment, miles below us,
except when we are aware.

when I don't leave my apartment I can still count on
cream and tuna to keep Schrödinger's cat
between the spheres of life and death (for now)

and all of it's so carefully balanced, the cats
and our eroding city, the rusting Pontiac in the neighbor's yard,
the way every force is really the same force expressed differently,

whether it's light, magnets, atomic bombs, or gravity.

and we're never aware of any physical laws
until we are—but by then we're so occupied

with life-as-life and death-as-death that we can't
see Schrödinger's cat at the window, the bank vault,
Fort Knox, our military bases, making away

with our A-bombs, our encrypted messages,
our quantum scramble to the top that leaves us all
marveling at matter and its possibilities.

Schrödinger's cat is hardly a menace—
dead or alive, she purrs and laps milk
like any cat would.

Bustopher Jones: the Cat about Town

**Bustopher Jones was Prufrock
without the self-loathing—**

**cat in spats, stuffed with an empire's
productivity—back when every man**

**in spats belonged to some society club,
some secret fraternity—**

**cabbage and rice, the curries
of conquered nations—all down his maw.**

**everyone knows Bustopher Jones:
the sheen of his pelt is power,**

**his meow and purr are power,
each lick, each swish of his tail,**

**each hairball and case of indigestion—
pure, unbridled power—**

**and when power gives out
your kingdom shrivels to nothing—**

**Old Possum, what happened
to your cat about town?**

**what happened to the old royal families,
the royal societies?**

Cat Morgan Introduces Himself

The lover who came after Lexi called herself Bobbi, but her parents had named her Roberta. She claimed she had an uncle who worked for Random House. At the time I found this enticing. She never revealed to me if this uncle was the vice president, some low-level pencil pusher, or a janitor who cleaned the after-hours offices, but it was enough to convince me that I loved her. All I wanted was a taste of power in the world, and Bobbi seemed to promise power.

Even though her parents were rich she liked to shoplift from antique clothing stores. She'd bring her contraband to my apartment some nights—fur scarves, stoles, crusty fox skin coats that were often on the verge of falling apart. She gave each piece of clothing names like Curlie Cue, Queenie, Maxine, or Cupid's Bow.

"Aren't you afraid of getting caught?" I asked her one night.

Bobbi lay in my bed, stroking the rabbit-fur collar of the leather coat she'd stolen that morning. Pieces of fur dislodged themselves from the collar and littered my sheets, but Bobbi kept petting it until there was no fur left.

"I've never been caught," she said.

"That doesn't mean it can't happen."

"I'm an artist when it comes to this stuff. Nobody'll ever catch me."

"Unless I report you."

"You're no fun."

She set the coat aside and pulled a letter opener from her back pocket. She tapped it against her fingernails and started cleaning them with the letter opener. The letter opener's blade was long and dull and the handle was made of green plastic that

looked like mottled jade. The handle used to resemble a cat, but Bobbi had gnawed on it so often that it now looked like a vaguely feline blob.

“Why don’t you just buy this shit?” I asked. “You have the money.”

“I don’t want to waste my money.”

Your parents’ money, I wanted to say. But I knew better than to say it out loud. It would just piss Bobbi off. She was a hypocrite and a thief with no need to be either, but I loved it, and she knew that I loved it. Her shoplifting addiction and the fact that she did things like trade stocks for a hobby and snort cocaine on the weekends excited me.

She wanted to dress both of us in her stolen furs—nothing but bare skin and the preserved pelts of animals that had been dead longer than either of us had been alive. She always wanted me to act like a werewolf for her, but I never could.

“You’re a terrible actor,” she said.

“Sorry,” I said. “I guess I’m not werewolf material.”

“What are you then? Some kind of kitty cat?”

“I guess I’m neither.”

I ghosted her a week later. She never found out I was bisexual and I never found out if she was lying about her uncle at Random House. Maybe she got caught shoplifting one day. Maybe she’s still hoarding her stash of furs, glutting herself on their textures, their mothball staleness.

Poetry by Ron Steiner

Eyes on the Bride

She wanted buried in her wedding dress.
What's left of her now is but lace and bones,
a headdress of cacti,
a bouquet of blooming cicadas,
her train dragged through the mud.
She knocks at the window.
Her eyes are mirrors
when you see her reflection.

for Nahum B. Zenil

Mountain to Table

The fog drifts
along the hilltops
before dipping into
the valley down along
the wide creek slowly down
towards the river where the people
live and there it mixes with other fogs
creating the air you and I breathe every day,
and with an inhale, it's gone.

A Preview of *Songs Of Cardinal* by Maryam Qureshi

Maryam Qureshi is a poet and columnist. Her work has appeared in online and print journals published by *Prolific Press Inc.* She is also working as managing editor and columnist for *The Elixir Magazine*. Follow her on Twitter: @MiryamHussein Contact by email: maryquresh@gmail.com

Glenn Lyvers says about her poetry,

"Maryam Qureshi is a voice that delves into the reader's totems and roots out images both familiar and new. A lovely writer whose works we return to again and again."

— Glenn Lyvers; Masthead, *Prolific Press Inc.*

cover art by publicdomainpictures.net



SONGS OF CARDINAL MARYAM QURESHI



<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B091G6J8L4>

Cold winter evening

Cardinal on snowy bough...

Truly feeling blue

**The beautiful rose
appeared magnificently
among stinking weeds**

**The fruits of summer
visible before my eyes...
feeling glorified**

Little toads hopping
Voice of Northern spring peeper
Declares on trumpet
Joys of spring are air bubbles
Summer is a short-lived dream

Wind makes dismal moan
Launch of gothic romances
In the old book rack
Wolves howling up the Moon
Calling creatures of night

Numerous black boughs
Embedded with flakes of snow
Sparkling by moonlight
Like a group of the hermits
Holding up many lanterns

Some Memories Never Fade!

Cold December night, the recurrent sound of chilly winds striking against the windowpanes like a stranger who would keep on knocking on the front door to bring back the fond memories of winter holidays that I used to enjoy as a child with a spontaneous mind. For being the last month of the current year and a doorway to the new year, December is acting like a director's cue for his actor to make a ghost appearance in his past and to believe in a meaningful future with certain resolutions for the upcoming future.

Sitting near the fireplace in my armchair, while writing some poetry for my first manuscript Submission, I dropped my pen on the paper and left writing for a while. "why did you stop writing?" I asked myself, "maybe it's the writer's block", my mind replied. But it's neither the writer's block nor a new idea but a flashback struck upon my mind like a ray.

When I was a wee tot I had a little doll. I gave her the name "muse", I was not aware of its meaning then and did not know that one day I would become a writer by invoking my muse. Back in the high school days, while attending the lecture on Romantics, my teacher asked me, "who is your favorite poet"? I said, "John Keats".

But at that time I was not aware that one day my love for Keats would become a passion and inspiration for my poetry. I would become a poet myself, I was not aware of the fact.

My first poetry publication for a print journal published by a publishing house in the USA, then in several other international journals both online and in print would become a collection of memoir like a picture gallery in a poetry museum. Time passes, life goes on, we move forward without looking behind. But sometimes, some days and some moments are going to cross our memories like some red rays of the setting sun just before the arrival of the night, in the twilight.

My Body Remembers by Su Zi

All these years later, the bathtub will be full of hot foam. I like the water to be blood temperature. I am a small woman and my flesh bears only subtle shifts from the time of my first blood, and a soft calligraphy of personal history: scars, tattoos, signs of age. I have never really thought of myself as a woman—female, yes: but I am a girl-child... I am aging child.

I had gone to bed fully clothed, including steel-toed boots and leather jacket. The bed was a futon on the floor in the backroom of a split house, and lights from the expressway made patterns on the blinds. In the timeless darkness, I am pulled up and out from the blankets by the collar of my jacket. The dread and familiar command pushes me into my humble kitchen as firmly as the hands on my body “take me down there”. It is Dion, jonesing again.

What he wanted was to be driven to the ninth ward and given money. He would wander the block at Piety and Dauphine, a violent and slender shadow with the thinly disguised patience of a rabid and feral creature. He would leave me to wait, drowsing behind locked car doors, while he tried to score a rock. He would come back, pound on the car window and then sit grinding his teeth while I drove back towards the lake on Franklin Street. Sometimes he would have an aluminum can and be trying to hit a piece as we drove.

At one time, the house whose half I rented had been of middle-class elegance, with a double door of glass panes at both the porch and the parlor, Dion would sit at my old empire table and studiously make a bed of cigarette ashes in the hollow of the can for his piece of cocaine. I would sit in the parlor and watch him through the French door. The chandelier glinted off his glasses. His blonde head would be bent demurely. Then he would fumble with the lighter and raise the can to his mouth, and as his cheeks compressed his profile became pure cruelty.

But it was never enough, he would not, could not stop. The rush is liquid, tidal, windy; in the pendulations of peaking comes the maniacal neurophysiological lust. A fury no less than any kicking creature in death-fear frenzy. He would beg for more money “scrape up some change”, and more than once paid for his piece with handfuls of coins. He knew of a bullet proof store in the Desire Project that would give him ten dollars for cases of beer bought at the all night drugstore with a personal check. My meagre income would allow me an atm card, but I never dared. No change left in a coat pocket was safe from him, nor were diaries, old letters... and eventually he stole my bass guitar, amplifier and the .38 which had allowed me to sleep mostly after the crippling assault that had left me—to myself—the kind of damaged goods that marks love-starved people as prey to such genus vampirism.

But I was ill, the medical personnel had instructed me not to climb stairs, I wanted only my bed. Dion was already in a rage. I was past begging and weeping, and watched him in the driveway as he took a hammer to the windshield of my poor white Chevy and hammer and nails to the tires. He broke out the passenger and drivers windows, the little bits of safety glass glinted under the orange sulphuric glare of the street lamps, It would take me a long time to get that windshield fixed, it looked to have a bullet hole; and with the leaking manifold roaring as she ran, everyone left me alone.

Perhaps in a swoon, I can only next remember him at the parlor doors: Dion was barefoot, shirtless, the chandelier’s light making his tattoos a flat collage of rock n roll icons. He kicked one bare heel backwards and broke one of the little panes in the French door. Still the talented fighter despite years now of drugs and alcohol, Dion’s feline form could leap from standstill any fence or other obstacle with unconcerned grace. I had seen him bloody the face of some nitwit stupid enough to strike up conversation on the ferry platform within seconds—his face blanched, clenched, one arm a blur. A smart detective once told me of how Dion had beaten

up three winos and remarked “that probably wasn’t too hard for him”. Only the linebacker-built cops at Parish Prison, with their stiff billy clubs could take him if there were three of four of them– and usually prisoners only moved about in chains– but take him they did and kept his teeth for trophy.

Dion liked to break things. My antique deco floor vase, that had been so stunning filled with gladiolas. My meagre little boombox. My statue of the holy mother, which I painstakingly glued back together but was unable to find a piece of her back. Once he broke all the windows in that very apartment, and I had to tape the blinds to the frames.

I was watching him from the other side of the French doors, when he put his fist through the section of glass between us. I felt the little shards brush my face. Instantly, he became transformed. His hands brushing my face, weeping, he embraced me in hysterical contrition. Barefoot on the broken glass, the only cut was on his wrist. He wanted to call an ambulance for himself, and did, watching for it by the front door. When it came, we went out onto the porch. The medics wanted to take Dion to the hospital. His partner stayed on the porch with me, Dion didn’t like for me to go unwatched. When Dion became once again enraged, grabbing me, again by my coat collar and pulling me back into my apartment, I had mouthed “help me”. But I didn’t really think they would.

When the dawn came, I could not lay down. I watched Dion sprawl in the bed. He wanted sex. The doctor didn’t need to forbid my flower from penetration. Dion wanted my mouth. Too high to come, his eyes green in the first flush of morning, he said, “probably won’t be here for a while, so I might as well sleep” and he did, fitfully, for not even an hour. Then he said, “ there’s someone here”, but I was exhausted with a bone-numb weariness that made me feel ancient. Dion’s burning energy that had first struck me as vibrant and brimming with life-force, a vigor that

surpassed both his youth and his physical being... he exuded a ferocity of escaped particles from the nuclear furnace of what would now strike me as his insanity.

“There’s nobody here” I told him, and shifted my crotch from one booted heel to the other, feeling the foreign presence of the kotex the clinic had said I would be wearing for a few days. “Go see” he ordered. Good-girl that I am, I walked up through my apartment, giving my cats their breakfast– the gray had witnessed much by now, including my divorce—and the black hated Dion) I walked up to the French doors, my boots crunching on the broken glass from a few hours before. I peeked through the curtain and was amazed. Outside my apartment, a cop was rerouting Monday morning rush hour traffic to the little streets behind the Chevron station. I saw other cops standing across the street in clumps of conversation, Carefully, I unlocked the door and left it ever so slightly open. I thought one cop made eye contact with me. Lord knows, I didn’t want to have to replace the door if the police were fixin’ to bust in. Then I walked back to where Dion still lay on the disheveled futon. He was smoking a joint. When he put it down in the ashtray, I stubbed out the remaining half and hid it behind the low furniture next to the windows. He didn’t ask me anything and I didn’t tell him anything. A few moments later, I peeked through the edge of one of the blinds and saw a black cop step behind the garage next door. I turned and looked back at Dion, whose eyes were full on me. He said something about hearing their radios.

There have been too many times in my life where there is no future and no past. There is not even the next moment. Most of these times have been accompanied with physical suffering...

Perhaps I sat down on the edge of the futon mattress and looked at the dawn on his long light hair. Perhaps I studied his brutal and sensual features. Perhaps not. I told him I hadda pee, and he told me that they were here now and that I should go check first, then pee and come back. There was a wooden door that separated the

front half of the apartment from the back. I made sure my boots on the wood floor were good and loud as I walked up to that door. Then I pushed the door open with my boot, Across the dining room, across the broken glass, across the front parlor, the front door to the apartment was wide open. In the doorway were five figures wearing black, including face masks; three of them knelt and two stood behind them, and they were all armed with long guns that pointed at me. Slowly, I opened my palms and eased my arms away from my body. Perhaps they told me to do this. One black figure rushed towards me and grabbed my arm. He hustled me out of my apartment and down the stairs and across the street, making a beeline for a large silver truck parked in the Chevron station.

“Am I being arrested?” I asked my cop and he seemed somewhat surprised, and then he told me no. He made me walk so fast I did not see the TV cameras. Only later would I find out that they were there. Only later would Dion’s mother show me the video copy they had, and then I would watch myself being walked across Franklin Street– a small figure with thermals under old shorts, boots, a Guatemalan shirt, an unkempt rag of hair. Only later would I learn I was the hostage.

My rescuing cop propelled me into the back of the big truck, and there I was eyed by other cops who wore neckties and seemed pretty comfortable in their portable office. A G.I. Joe cop came into the truck and told the other cops he had found a door to the basement that he thought he could pry open because it had warped away from the frame. I felt myself tremble. I had bought right angle hardware and screwed the door into the frame, as well as screwing all the windows below the apartment shut. I did not want the cops to break things I could not afford to repair.

“ He’s in the back” I told them. “ Just go straight through” They were already in my dining room, why did they have to break down a door, then another one? One necktie cop asked me to draw a floorplan of my apartment; it was easy enough, so easy they seemed skeptical. The necktie cop deciphered my simple drawing into a

more complicated one for them. In the South, they call such linear arrangements of rooms “shotgun” houses.

“Please be careful of my cats” I told the cops. “ Don’t let them get out.” I was terrified of them. Terrified of the heartbreak they could cause me. They were quiet for a moment, and then they hollered out the door for a uniform cop to seat me in a car.

Is there a bathroom I can use?” I hadda pee with squirming heat, and I had no thought for the cops and their suspicions of weapons and drugs. They let me use their bus bathroom, and reluctantly I placed the stained kotex back in the crotch of my shorts. Then I let them escort me to an unmarked police car, where I sat guarded by a cop who answered my questions benevolently. Yes, they would go in the open front door. Yes, they knew I had cats. I would later find out that the black cat, flushed from a fearful crouch by the stove had nearly been slaughtered as they tore the kitchen apart.

Then there was Dion in a squad car, mouthing words through the glass, his nearly toothless mouth twisted in utterance of the blackest emotion. The TV cameras would show Dion in the squad car, flipping them the bird despite handcuffs. I asked the cop guarding me what Dion was saying. The cop told me Dion wanted me to bond him out, and then asked me if I would. “No” I said softly, and the cop laughed. Then they took him away.

After a while, they let me go home. I could close the door to the street and look at the destruction. Firstly, the cats were okay, and I set to work sweeping up glass so they wouldn’t get cut. The cops had overturned my kitchen bookcase filled with spices and there was curry everywhere. They had torn apart my bedroom, and when I flipped the futon back into place on the floor, I found the half a joint set carefully on the center of one of the pillows. The paramedics had told the police Dion had a

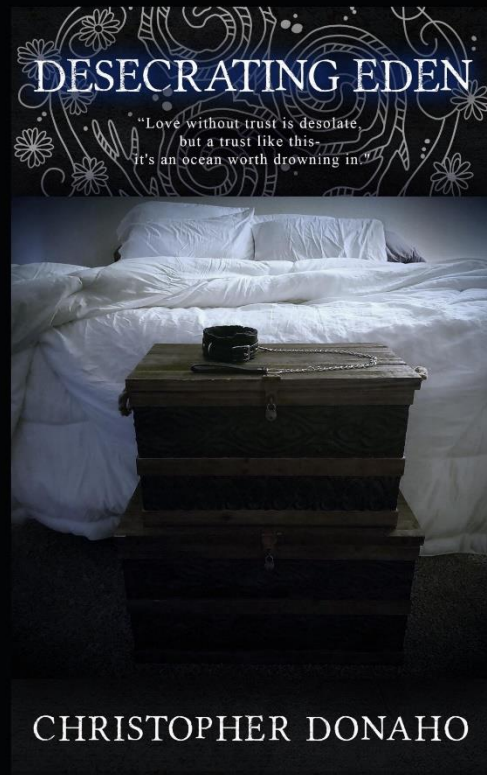
gun. Perhaps they saw that hole he put in the windshield. Perhaps it was the way Dion had dragged me backward into the apartment. Perhaps it was, as I was later to learn, the same fine spring morning the federal police were at war with some people in Texas, but the phone started to ring and ring and ring. Dion had made the radio and the TV. It wasn't until afternoon that I finally would be able to get some sleep.

And always my muscles will remain the memory of being jerked up from sleep by the neck, of being propelled by the arm by a SWAT cop. And there is the inner, more private memory of the following days when I abandoned the kotex and just let myself bleed. So that now, among the temporary foam of a hot bath, my small hands with their work roughened large veins will curve over my belly that I pray will be forever childless.

An Excerpt From *Desecrating Eden* by Christopher Donaho



Mark and Claire Mitchell are the couple next door. They shop at Target, are staunch members of their kids' PTA. Both educated and well rounded people. "Choke me." A simple request by his wife, in hopes of spicing up their predictable (and almost nonexistent) sex life, sets them at the feet of self discovery and transformation. Their new found hobbies end up preparing them for the unexpected.



<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0923WHPW1>

Dillard's clothing store has a sale this weekend, and like good consumers, we're there early.

We let the kids go to the arcade next door so we can buy them shit they'll probably hate wearing, but they're not footing the bill. We try to be cool when it's convenient for us.

"Here." Claire hands me slacks and a belt, reminding me I had talked about getting something just yesterday. "Go try them on."

I usually just buy the stuff hoping it fits- it usually does, so it's never a big issue. And for our sessions, I feel that dressing the part helps prep my mindset the most. That, her bath, and setting up the toys. "Well, come give it a look since you're here."

We walk over to the dressing rooms, which surprisingly aren't full to the hilt with bratty kids. Kind of quiet, actually, and we end up in the far dressing room, hearing only a few muffled voices scattered about. I take off my shorts and put on the pants, then the belt. "Turn around," she directs. "They look good."

Playfully slipping into character, I ask her, "They look good, what?" I step close, and her pale cheeks bloom. Pink blossoms and wide eyes.

"They look good, Sir." Claire bites her lip and sighs, her eyes slam shut as her body starts to unravel at the energy between our bodies.

I step even closer, pinning her up against the wall with my body. My eyes rove over her gorgeous face. I tilt her chin up and kiss her. A rather invasive gesture. Her eyes and lips tremble in the aftermath of confusion as I push my tongue deep.

I reach down and yank off my new leather belt and throw it around her neck.

"Do you trust me, pet?"

Her eyes close as her mouth sits partially open.

“Tell me, I need to hear it.” I tear at her clothes, twisting the floral linen in my grip and pull her into me before shoving her back against the wall as my knee parts her legs, her warm pussy grinding down on my leg as her thighs grab ahold.

“Yes, Sir.”

I loop the strap through the buckle and pull tight, wrapping the excess around my left hand and pinning it to the wall above her head. I gently rip her blouse slightly open, and I tug on her breasts, pinching bluntly, peppering them with tiny searing ones, leaving little red marks in their wake.

“Ah... fu-”

“Shhhhhhhh...” I lean in and bite her bottom lip as my hand drops down, slipping past her skirt and panties. Not quite wet but the soft, restrained moans call to me. I massage her clit with dry, abrasive fingertips. Tiny, torturous teasings.

Not long after, I feel the slick, warm sap invades my maddened swirls. Nose to nose, I can feel Claire’s heartbeat flutter against my chest as my belt cuts into her strained nape. The cutest gasps on trembling lips. My cock throbs against her warmth as I tighten just a bit more. Her eyes flicker and fade like struggling sunsets.

“Mom? Dad?”

Fuck. Perfect timing. Kids. Got to love them. We’re both all grins and laughs as I suck my fingers clean. We bundle up our things and double-check our composure in the mirrors. “Coming,” Claire cackles.

“I don’t know where this is all going, baby, but I can’t imagine going back,” I confess.

“Me either... Sir.”

Claire bounces in and out of Target for Midol. Aunt Flo seems to be coming soon, earlier (and heavier) than usual. We decide to grab lunch and take the kids to the park, a place we’ve taken them since they were toddlers. They don’t seem too impressed these days, but they aren’t the ones paying bills. “Can you guys act like you’re happy for, like, uhm... thirty? Forty-five minutes?”

“Mark,” Claire rebukes.

“Kidding, love.”

“We are happy, Dad. Jeez, we’re just not three and go gaga over choo-choo trains and the color orange.” Sarah sets me straight.

“You got me. But you can still appreciate nature and shit, right?”

“Funny cat videos on YouTube is nature, actually.” Sarah nods at Stevie as he nods his head in agreement.

“Technically, it’s not...” I add.

“Guys,” Claire puts an end to the bickering and begins dishing out fries and sodas.

Cutting my eyes to the rearview, “You know I love you guys, right?” Both nod with mouths full of fries.

Grabbing my arm, Claire urges me to hurry up. “I have to pee again. I feel bloated, shark week’s coming early.”

“Eww...” Sarah barks, as Stevie looks clueless.

I lean over and whisper, “We should do the things tonight.” And another, louder “EWW!!” comes from the backseat.

Kids.

“Uh-huh,” Claire concedes with a smile.

Poetry by Tom Pescatore

From where?

written in the mountain region of Beipu outside Hsinchu

Water drip from drop to rock
fallen bridges in its path
no way but now but through the brush
to be eaten by the darkening trail.

Lush a slink of slim beam of light
on the clear of stream below
cuts deep into and through dead rock
slick with moss and growth.

Haulien by the Sea—

Guanyin you watch the sea
carved in stone, un-moving,
you are perfect, serene, compassionate,
do you hear the screams a continent away?
over the skip of rocks in the tide?

Guanyin can you see past the
mercurial pacific that's merely
a splinter of the essential mind?
I cannot see your tears,
what has man done to you?
are you here to protect the sea?

Guanyin are you lost on this emerald island?
is it a mistake I've found you, bled of colors,
unable to turn your eleven heads, twenty-two ears to the pain
of worldliness and attachment?

Guanyin am I asking too much?
please, let me know.

Guanyin are you the resurrected Christ? I won't tell.

Guanyin have you heard of our barbaric western religions?
do you listen to the Taoists stories about you?

are they true?

Guanyin will you help us no matter what?

will you place the lotus in my hand and breathe pink into its soul?

Guanyin I am sorry I have pierced your solitude

to ask you meaningless questions, but I've many more.

Guanyin how many high tides have you witnessed here?

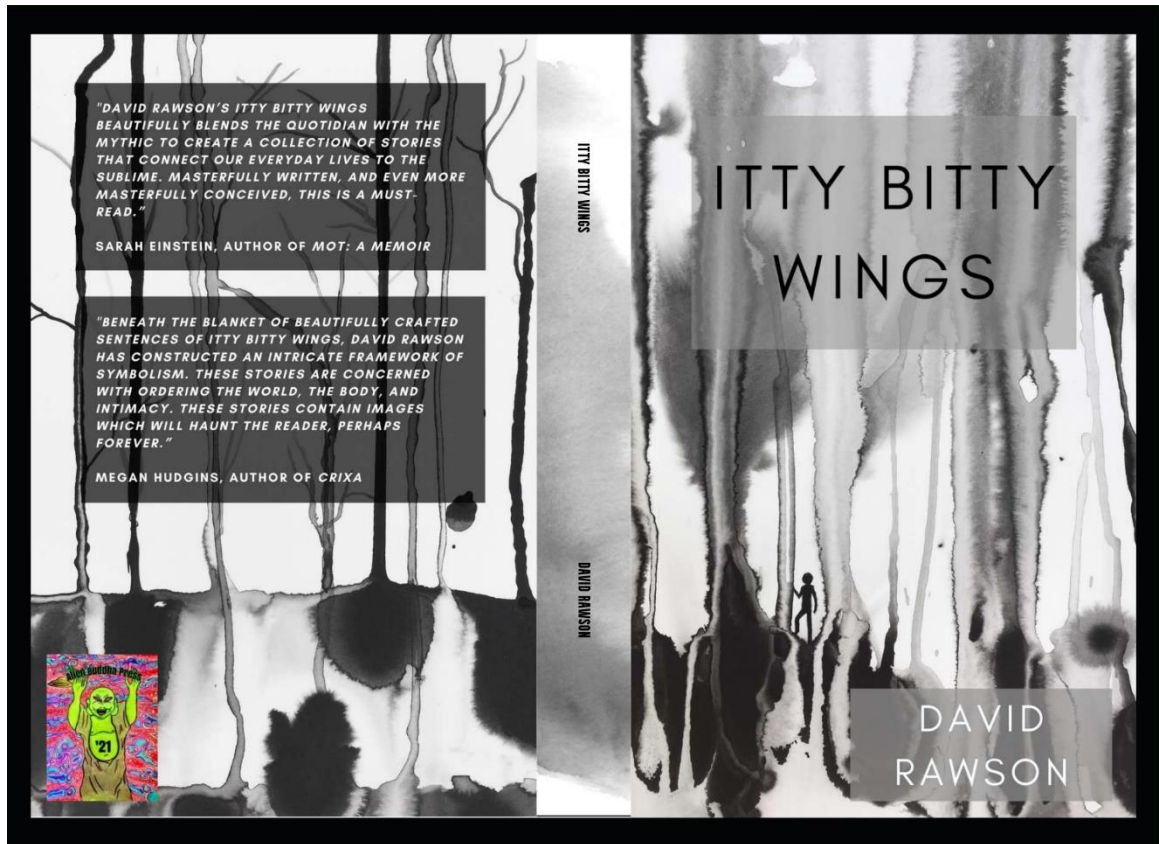
how many typhoons? how many shipwrecks?

how many fisherman caught in undertow? how many, many deaths?

how many oceans have you cried with your twenty-two eyes?

Bag of Eyes a Story From *Itty Bitty Wings*

by David Rawson



<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B092HSFRYY>

When I took Holly to the waterfront, she told me I was destined to be a father.

“You’re going to have a girl,” she said. “And you’re going to raise her alone.”

Holly and I had been hanging out a lot the last few weeks, staying up til 4am walking around her neighborhood. One night we laid down in the middle of the street at the end of the cul de sac. No cars came. And if they had, we would have seen them coming. As I curled up in one of the blankets we had brought with us, Holly climbed up a tree that the cul de sac had been built around. It stood surrounded by pavement on all sides. I had to look down as she climbed because small leaves, twigs, and dust fell from where she rustled. I protected my eyes, and even though nothing had gotten in them, I felt them swell and water.

This trip to the waterfront was my attempt to expand our relationship, to begin to define it. I was nineteen and barely knew myself, let alone how to date this beautiful independent woman who, although she was my age, had secrets in her eyes I could not begin to uncover. She was a lion. She had an unruly mane of hair that she was always trying to move out of her eyes. She was looking out at the water. We barely spoke. I did not know how to respond. I knew I did not want kids, but I never told people I dated what I really wanted. I didn’t want to scare anyone off.

“Yeah, I haven’t given it a lot of thought, to be honest,” I said. “It all depends on the person, you know?”

But she had already decided I would be alone. Whoever the mother would be was already gone, unreachable. Although Holly was a few feet away from me, she could have been a sea away.

We sat in the rock by the waterfront on the same blankets we had used in the cul de sac. She was telling me she hated her nose. She thought it is too big. She does not look at me. She was looking at the water. I did not know what to say. It was a big nose if you isolated it, if you took it out of context and held it in your palm. I imagined holding her nose in my hand. She looked down at her stomach.

“I’m going to get a nose job my last year of college. And I’ll probably have my stomach done.”

She did not mention her eyes. She loved her glasses. The way she stroked the frames gently with her index fingers. The glasses framed her eyes perfectly, and she knew it. The nerdy infatuation I felt for her intensified every time she tilted her head down and looked up at me, when my world became those eyes perfectly framed.

The whole time we were talking, I had been watching two brothers, no older than twelve. Their father was nearby sitting down in a chair he had brought with him, a retractable one he had brought in a bag slung over his shoulder. He had a

simple fishing rod that he held loosely in his hand. Every once in a while, he brought up a fish. His two boys were doing something on a bit of pavement down from us, near the cooler the father was placing the fish in. They were quiet, looking down at the pavement, doing something with their hands, like tracing something out deliberately.

After the boys left with their father, Holly and I stood up to leave. And we could see down the way to the paved area, and we could see what the boys had been doing so meticulously. Twenty-three stiff fish bodies laid rotting in the sun. The father had not taken any of the fish to eat later. It struck me in the gut as a waste of life, to catch and discard on hot pavement. It was death without a function. And then I saw what the brothers had been doing so meticulously. They had taken out the eyes. Forty-six eyes altogether that they had cut out together, as a team. The eyes were nowhere to be seen. Perhaps they kept them. Somewhere there was a bag full of fisheyes.

I attempted to move the dead fish off the pavement into the water. I picked up two big sticks and attempted to move one, like I was using enormous chopsticks. Holly halfheartedly followed my lead. She said nothing. I could not measure her discomfort or shock. She would not look at me.

I got one fish into the water, but it floated vertically, its mouth open, holes for eyes.

When I dropped her off at her car after a silent drive back, she hugged me and looked up at my eyes for the first time that day. It became clear. We were not going to talk about the fish.

“You’ll probably name her something like Penelope. She’ll draw on your walls with crayon, but you won’t care. You’ll pick up a crayon and draw right along with her.”

I laughed a hollow laugh and nodded. “You can always wash a wall,” I said.

In the reflection of her car, I saw Penelope, but just for a brief moment. She was wearing a summer dress and ballet slippers, and the Robin’s Egg Blue crayon was tight in her hand as she drew a vertical line from as far as her arm would reach above her head to the moment she can feel the touch of her hand against her toes.

But then just as quickly as I had seen her, she was gone. And without consciously trying, another image flooded my brain: a small Ziploc bag full of fisheyes, in an underwear drawer somewhere, covered in t-shirts and boxers, a testament to a productive day.

***Sorted* by Wayne-Daniel Berard**

We know the magic is
there just down the alley
just through the platform
we've sensed it all along
and we know it's dark
and dangerous not just
disney and pixar as
well as simply glorious
we touch our scars
the one birth gave us
and the ones you did
and count ourselves
lucky to sense the mystery
though we don't fool
ourselves no letter's coming
no Anglia flying to our rescue
still the soundtrack underscores
each day in our heads and
we'd rather this small
magic from this maddeningly
close distance than to join
the rest of you in eating
death

A Preview of *The Mountain Where Nothing Happens* by Thomas Helm



Thomas Helm's debut poetry collection is a conceptual documentary poem sequence with elements of minimalism, surrealism, absurdism, linguistic topography and elemental psychogeography. Join him, step by step, as he embarks on a journey to unravel the riddles of consciousness, first in the wilds of the mountains, and then later in the hyperreal city.

The Mountain Where
Nothing Happens

Thomas Helm

"Can nothing happen? If you try hard enough, and climb up to where people probably don't belong, then yes, yes it can. That is what's within this book, and this poet, and other things, if you read hard enough. These poems act as a kind of companion leading us down to the top of the mountain, with a gentle, reliable unfolding"

- SJ Fowler

"In a move to reconnect with The Mountain and nature itself, Thomas Helm takes a poetic journey with a ten-day leave in wilderness' seclusion. The Mountain is "the foundation of reality" the poet attempts to understand as he strips life down to the bare essentials.

While Helm is a believer in taking the "I" out of literature, it appears he realizes that oneself, no matter how small a part, also has an impact on the interconnected reality we find ourselves."

- Tim Heerdink,
The Human Remains

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B093R5TGPX>

Everyone must buy

A hunk of nothing, torn off another hunk off nothing.

Clinging to self-importance as babies to their mammy,

Pride is best concealed, they play the game.

They win their scholarships.

The prophets speak with twitter followings.

Their hunger raw,

And desperate for a market share.

Look in this,
A shining memory pool.

A place if not of shelter then of sky.
A portion of the blue discarded
By the clouds.

Look in this,
A mirror made of thorns.

Cracked.

Symbols ebbing with the sea,
Running through our hands.

In silence, we hear the song.
The shimmer of a memory pool.
A wave around the Mountain.

Life is made to tremble.
Sometimes it trembles so much it cannot live.

The deserts keep on growing, year after year,
The beaten sun uninterested,
The human sun unyielding...

In the centre of the valley is a brick pyramid,
And hovering above this, an inverted pyramid,
Made of crystal, growing downward
From the cloud, like the tear of a god.

Raindrops are promises of future life, not just change,
Greening lands consumed by grief,

By crisis.

We bring such movement with us.

Oh dancing, precious, mournful, dancing,
Oh shadows light must cast.

Our sunken temples
Shelter human gods beneath the flood.

The congregation bows before an automated glory,
A multi-billion-dollar fireworks display
Fizzling among the waves.

The sewer rats decline to comment,
They also have their hierarchies,
Their libraries etched in faeces,
Their mud of truth,
Their paradise of brownish slime.

The rats build masterpieces in the shit.
The sacred laws of Hammurabi,
The sceptre of Babylon, the magna carta.

A secret language spoken by the rats,
Washed by tides released by hidden hands.

Libraries of faecal words.
The mysteries and the glories of the universe,
Indivisible from the Mountain of shit
Beneath an ordinary town.

So tread carefully, my friend,
You wouldn't tread on Raphael,
So please, don't tread on them.

They are also sensitive creatures.

Learn to venerate the shit
As you would your own desire.

Your human drums
And streams of shit that pump into the sea

When glory fades, only the shit remains.

The rats have whispered messages
Among the graveyards of the gods.

Such vital expression in the shit.
Whole libraries made of turds.

Too deep for human words.

Two men loading televisions in a van.
A black eyed boy, begging moneda.
Fluorescent lamps.

Vehicles humming, soft, like pesticide.

Random looks from passing strangers.

The city of forgetfulness
Is just like every other city.

One passes through the crowd,
Unable to remember anyone.

Nothing mends these waterways
Except a slow and absolute departure.

Screen gazing.

Mind hazing.

Who will you serve?

Who will give you money?

Who will help you find your way?

Round and round the Mountain.

Flushed among the toilets of the human gods.

They built their names from knowledge.

Outside, you remember walking in the Mountain.

Is this where life begins, at 9am,

Behind a computer screen?

Is this where time unfolds?

Moments of apathy, and death,
And maybe rebirth,
No answer.

Being born is just another way of saying lost,
No answer.

Entering the river,
There must be something there.
No answer.

Winter is a sacred time,
When everything is stripped back to itself.

We turn our gaze to where life was never meant to be.

In Galicia, on new year's eve,
The pagans write their sins
On scraps of paper and burn them on the beach.

In Poetry, the poets write their sins
On cream or white-coloured paper, and burn them on the page.
And then they send those pages to all their friends.

Sometimes they get publishing deals.
Sometimes the world can share their sins.

Winter is a time for burning.

***Deconstructing Original Sin* by Brenda-Lee Ranta**

To be birthed into
 a life of the rites;
guilt by association
 to her, who once held out
a demandable fruit from
 the tree of knowledge

Fingers splayed
 and open palmed,
within her hand an
 invitation to him
that marked her forever,
 stained and naked

Fruit of imprisonment
 deeming her subservient
through every generation
 as the story continued
from every worn wooden pulpit
 to clamp shut her mouth

Unclean throughout history
 marked as defiled while
birthing a child in supplication

for mercy, be deemed lowly
woman, temptress to him
who had caught her scent

Performing her duties
on scabbed knees, that
some allegory created;
to hush her mouth
when questioning the
validity of the 'word'

Still, her cycles deemed
her unclean, as though
the serpent had spewed
its venom within her;
no water, nor perfume,
could deem her worthy

Swallowed up, her original sin,
consummated by invalidity;
penance for her given gender,
escaping finally, bended
knees to be bloodied no more;
the truth has set her free

that there was no garden.
no forbidden fruit. no serpent.

She held out to him with fingers splayed

and open-palmed; her heart.

In her glorious divinity, she waits to

receive her final legitimization

and the universe smiles.

Picnic
An Oil Painting by Sarah Hussin



Poetry by LB Sedlacek

1000 Dollar Poem

I broke curfew
on purpose
intentionally
and I was not alone
I felt / I feel
like an outlaw, a
Curfew Outlaw
driving wild on
sleet laced curvy
country roads
not sitting at home
thinking about writing
in my journal
and if I had been
stopped
(charged and fined
\$1000)
the backseat of my car
was filled with
a half-eaten bucket of
popcorn, books, magazines
and a couple of stuffed

animals and a blanket
and that totally would've
ruined my criminal
image the spotlight
shining / shone
but the law doesn't patrol
sleet laced curvy country
roads (right now they've
been sent to the Capital
to keep Capitol Hill safe)
to keep out Outlaws like me
or Outlaws I saw racing
blazing up and down
slick windy country
roads way past curfew
way past safe speeds
I broke curfew intentionally
rehearsing my story all the way
home practicing my thus
is why I'm out driving past
curfew officer speech
I have legitimate
excuses that involve a
bad movie, a salad,
and a graphic novel
full of Outlaws
my pages are blank

no longer will they
wonder what it's like
to intentionally break
a law
it could go either way
caught or not caught
one side vs the other
Mr Frost stands in the
middle flipping a quarter
sometimes the best choice
is not to make one at all
I felt / feel like an outlaw
and I am
alone.

Feeding Time

3 weeks ago

Smart phone art

gallery opening reception

water bags and

food paper bags

nailed to the

wall we were

hugging and mingling

sipping wine, water

snacking admiring viewing

and afterwards dinner

uptown in a

cafe packed with

people laughing chatting

sipping beer, water

sweet or unsweetened

tea conversations drifting

over one another

a Friday night

replaced by Saturday

morning's poetry competition

recitation by kids

a packed auditorium

we sat side

by side and

afterwards dined on
homemade cookies no
one would could
eat now the
time changed daylight
doesn't need saving
yet it's saved
sipping wine or
water at services
or never the
workdays the
same 3 weeks
turns into 2
and a weekend
ski trip to
a state the
only state, now
the last state
to have no
cases of it
the virus, yes
2 weeks ago
becomes 1 and
now we sip
wine or beer
or tea or
water from home

confined except for
essentials while we
wait to see
the end result
the numbers multiplying
like the loaves
of bread or
the water turned
into wine the
masses are fed
to this all
too real apocalypse
of days shrunk
into hours, minutes
of not if
but when will
we be infected
if we don't
wash up enough
or breathe the
wrong air or
stay far enough
apart how 3
weeks ago we
were in Heaven
never knowing what
Hell was like.

***Soul* by Evie Petropoulou**

Soul

My soul sometimes
loves
with passion

People are so far
My soul sometimes
needs affection

My soul for years
left with portraits

Portraits of people I love

Father

Mother

Brother

You

My soul sometimes
becomes so small
needs air
needs a hug

**My soul sometimes
is a child
that wants to smile**

**My soul sometimes
feels the sadness of the whole world**

**My soul sometimes
is a bird that wishes
to fly high
travel far
see you
give you a message....**

***Last Notice of The Poet* by John Stickney**

The will of the poet reads:

At the feet of angels or beasts or chickens

I will return to the spaceship so fill the tank

I want the smell of sunlight in the buzz of black holes

Bread crusts of matter to dip in God's soup

Listen, I will speak the language of the immortals

and remove the end date from every tombstone

And yes, my true love, I want to get back to you -

Whether as a blind victim or a hero -

Once my tasks are done

TWO POETS by Alan Britt

What happened to the two poets I call Mutt & Jeff? You call them what you like, but I call them Mutt & Jeff. Mutt grew so popular that he eventually lost a step or two. He purchased condos in New Jersey & ate at white napkin restaurants, while Jeff was shunned for being blunt. In a culture that reveres fairy dust, one who speaks his mind, as Billy warned us generations ago, “will be avoided.” So, Jeff, isolated with obsessions that little by little burrowed into his poems the way larvae cauterize crabapples, or the way palmetto bugs strip forest greens & banana yellows from acid free watercolors smeared & dabbed into space & time by refined horsehair—In any event, isolation infused Jeff’s poems with habanero & poison oak.

The above is a fairytale but a tale of two poets in the Great Experiment struggling to survive the trolling nets of the Empire. Two poets, living many lives before, in other cultures, other dreams, their ochre fingers charred on El Castillo Cave walls, etching & scratching DNA into whatever allowed them to survive.

Both men remember, forget, remember to forget, then some days nothing.

Poetry by Rustin Larson

Breaking the Wrist

Daffodils bloom, fevers flash, nebulae hover,
pulse white and yellow. Can you smile dawn and dusk
and pretend it doesn't hurt? The nurse
stops a moment her whirl,
all too perky, asks if you glitter,
oh organ donor, before they wheel you
to surgery. The anesthesiologist,
wishes upon the shining gears of heaven,
squirts
the eternally lit sixteen candles
of clear liquids into the IV catheter.
Are you a machine or Aphrodite's birthday cake?
Can they turn your lights off and on?
Are you the point of lethal injection?
Someday you'll forget, thank God. Newspaper?
Percolator? You wake with a funny steam
where the words for the opportunity
rise from your nose, then you are asked
to sign something, the signature
comes from having your eyes opened by bells
and isn't yours, and you wake and say yes,
machine, night shirt on pillow, emergency, and red,

I'm alive, yes, I get to try and figure
the city, for long hours, without seeing breakfast
all over again, I know
the gumball, doodlebugs, buzz bombs, and rope
of what you mean. You say, okay, this is good.

PETITE PARIS

The world's a mist past the bicycle
shop, the restaurant, "Petite Paris," which

has claimed some sidewalk space,
each iron table bedecked with a vase

of one rose, a tall blue bottle
of imported water, a small black maiden

of Coca Cola. This isn't Paris. I have
black shades the optometrist gave

to slide behind; lenses to protect
my dilated eyes. Smudge; hand to face,

obscuring what is, handful of nothing; smudge
clear as water, invisible when applied

and yet obvious. Smudge
of clear, pure invisible—a name.

THE FOUL BONES OF MUD ARE CALLING

Some foul bone, one day. Some truck
foul with lemonade and hard furniture,
some well-aimed accident, some
goose too delicious to swallow,

some last swimming island of winter
ice; down, drown, as if all the foul
bones of mud were calling, fossils
wrenched from their beds,

a standing clatter of dinosaur-
delicious, frozen millenniums of marrow.
How the hard sails of autumn
twitter down from trees and skitter

brittle the endless plank of earth,—
the creaking trap doors of graves,
the formal indentations to lay upon,

Poetry by Dan Holt

The Silence

Sitting on the porch

at 3 am

These

suburban streets

are silent

Everyone

is sleeping

or dead

Bodies strewn

in Cape Cod tombs

Rotting flesh

in upper

middle class

colonials

A dog barks

wondering why

his master

won't wake up

A car drives past
speeding up
to outrun
the carnage

Death came
to my neighborhood
tonight

I sit
wide awake
smoking cigarettes
drinking expensive
red wine
and contemplating
the silence

Misspent Youth

Drinking

Reunite Lambrusco

in big fucking

magnum bottles

Fishing

but I don't

remember

catching anything

except a buzz

Trying to keep

my balance

on the edge

of a steep hill

then pissing

all over myself

as I tumbled

down

To the

bottom

Hanging

my head

out of

the passenger

window

to vomit

all over

the side

of the

car

Sparks

from the fire

of a

misspent

youth

Lynching

There is a tree
at the end
of the street
where they said
it happened

He was
just a kid
barely thirteen
when they
knocked
on his door

They put a rope
around his neck
and marched him
down Mainstreet
hooting and hollering
as the whole town
turned out
to watch
the spectacle

We all walk
past that tree
every day
In every town
in every state
pretending
that the lynching
is a thing
of the past

***Grocery List* by Charlie Brice**

I know I need Sweet’N Low,
large amounts of which I pour
into my morning tea. Oh, the paroxysms
this causes my health obsessed
friends. I’m poisoning myself, they claim.

I counter that my Sweet’N Low consumption
is an act of Buddhist compassion. I have auto-
embalmed myself with artificial sweeteners.
The mortician will take the night off when

my withered remains arrive. He’ll go home
to wife and kids, to meatloaf, mashed
potatoes, gravy, and a foamy brew because
I will have done his job for him.

What else do I need from the store?

Here I ruminate on the voice

 Socrates heard in the Crito,
the voice that wouldn’t allow him to
 lie his way out of his execution,
flee Athens, or save himself.

Do we have enough butter? We go through
vats of butter as if they were
filled with...filled with...well, butter.

What about Nietzsche's
will to power? He meant will

over oneself, not other people.

It took his antisemitic sister to distort
his writings so the Nazis could use them.

Do we have enough Diet Pepsi?
Sweet'N Low isn't enough, on its own,
to immortalize my insides,

Diet Pepsi is an essential ingredient where
auto-embalming is concerned.

For Sartre, Hell was other people. Why?

Because he thought the gaze
of the other always objectified the subject,
that love was nothing other

than one subject's attempt to rob
another subject of his or her freedom.

I know we need eggs, milk, and hamburger,
but I'm missing something—

Rye bread? Frozen chicken cordon bleu?

Pepperoncini? Yes, pepperoncini! I love
it's crunchy spiciness as I
imbibe a ham and cheese sandwich.

And what about the noumenon?

What did Kant mean by that? My friend
Carlos tried to explain it to me once,
but he kept calling Kant, Kunt. When our
kids were little and played on the
same soccer team, Carlos would yell to his son,

Fuckess! Fuckess! when he meant, focus.
If we were to resume our philosophical
discussion, would he tell me to fuckess on Kunt?
Don't forget the radishes. I just love radishes,
and bacon and liver, what a luscious combo.
I must add bacon, radishes, and liver to my list.

Poetry by John Drudge

A Lighted Place

In a lighted place
Where imagination
Runs free
Among the quick
Fidgeting moments
Of madness
Thinking about thinking
In loops of time
Fooling ourselves
With luxury
And the space around it
Rolling into eternity
With eyes recessed
Into dark sockets
Moving smoothly
Over the places
That no one cares to know
And drifting down
To the river
That flows along the margins
On the edge of town
Where the silent
Shadows go

A Time for Abstraction

A cancer of time

Dripping slowly

Into the last chapters

Of surprise

Decorating walls

With the light

Of lost freedoms

Reverberating

Day and night

Against limitless energy

Hearing colours

And seeing sounds

And whispering

Beyond the rules

Of abstraction

Seeking the illusion

Of detail

Within the soothing strings

Of silence

Vibrating deeply

With life's primary

Rhythms

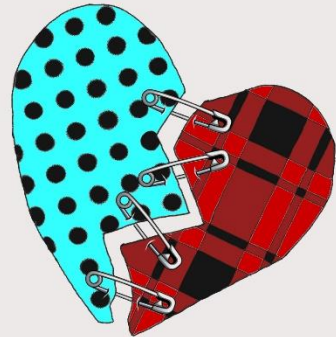
A Preview of *Safety-Pinned Hearts* by Charles and Brandon Carter



"With economy and subtle beauty, Charles K. Carter captures the essence of the human experience packed into small moments of time. His astute observations, such as dancing one last polka with someone who has wrinkled hands, illuminate the impermanence of life, celebratory events, and love itself. Indeed, his haiku on the ebb and flow of love and the emotional roadblocks to being truly free to give and receive pure love, drives this exquisite collection. From resting in the morning light with his lover's head on his chest, to finding solace from a broken heart in shots of whiskey, *Safety-Pinned Hearts* leads the reader on an adventure overflowing with recognition that this is how love, and life, is for most of us. Brandon Carter's illustrations add an extra dose of poignancy to clarity found in Charles's haiku."

— e.b. littlehill,
author of *See the Dragons*

H Safety-Pinned Hearts



Poems by Charles K. Carter • Illustrations by Brandon Carter

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0948MX4W2>

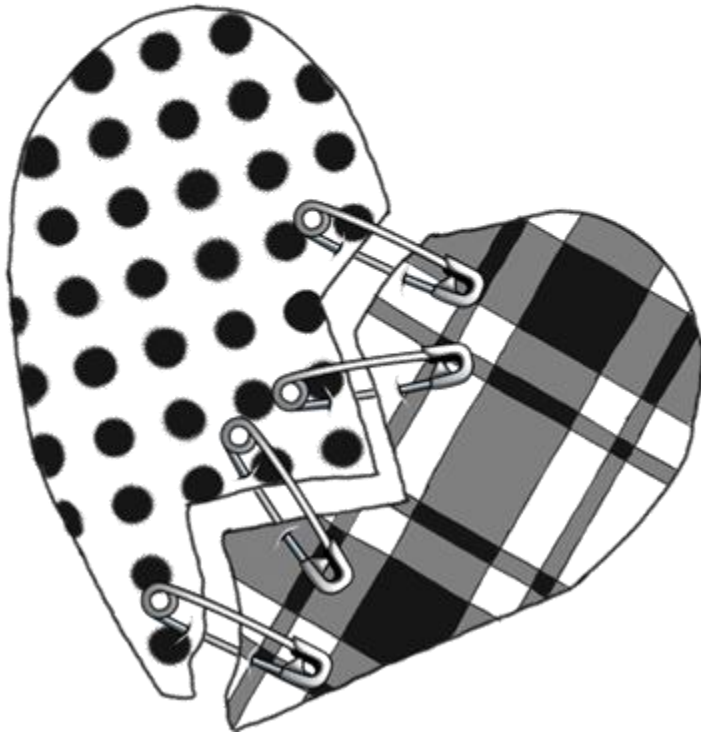
You held my fingers
in your wrinkled hands and we
danced one last polka.



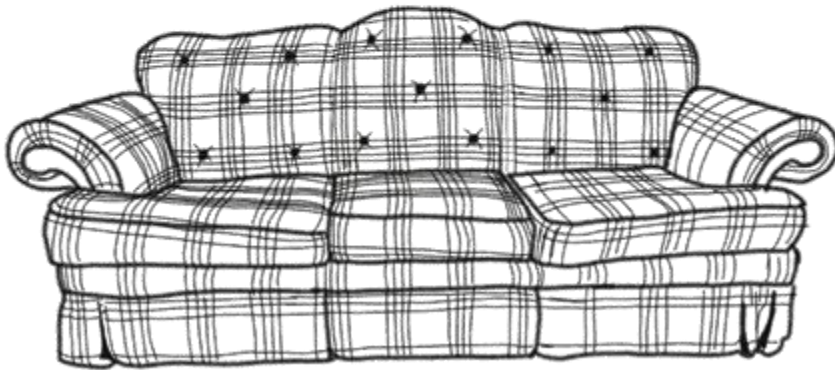
Anger is the clouds
rolling through my morning tea.
I keep on sipping.



Needless to say, my
love, it is time we empty
our safety-pinned hearts.



On the blue plaid couch
with tear-away buttons we
lay side by side, still.



Drown me in my own
tears and I would float back to
you, where it began.

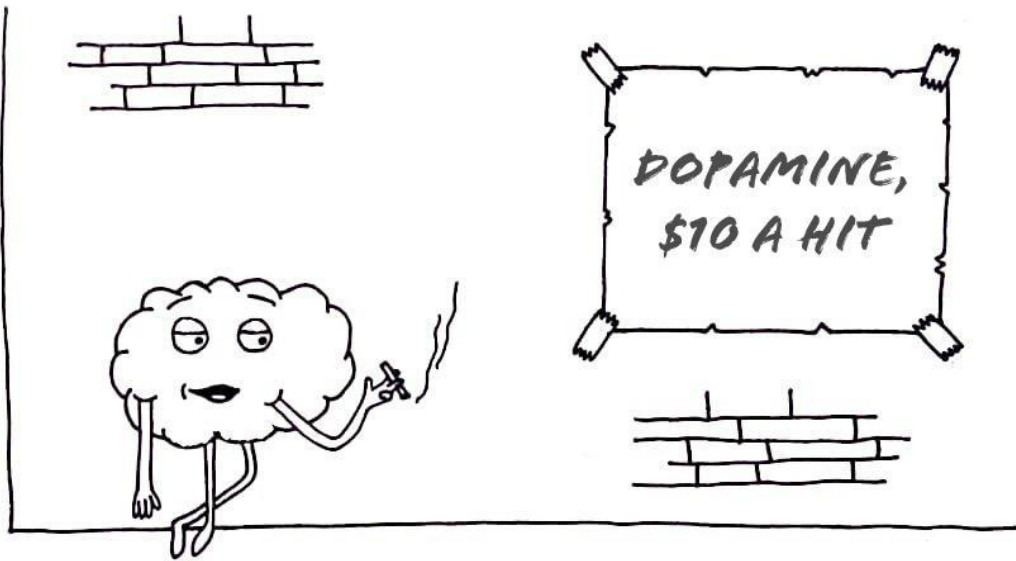


If alcohol solved
problems, I would drink my way
back back back to you.



A Cartoon by Gabriel Bates

BATES

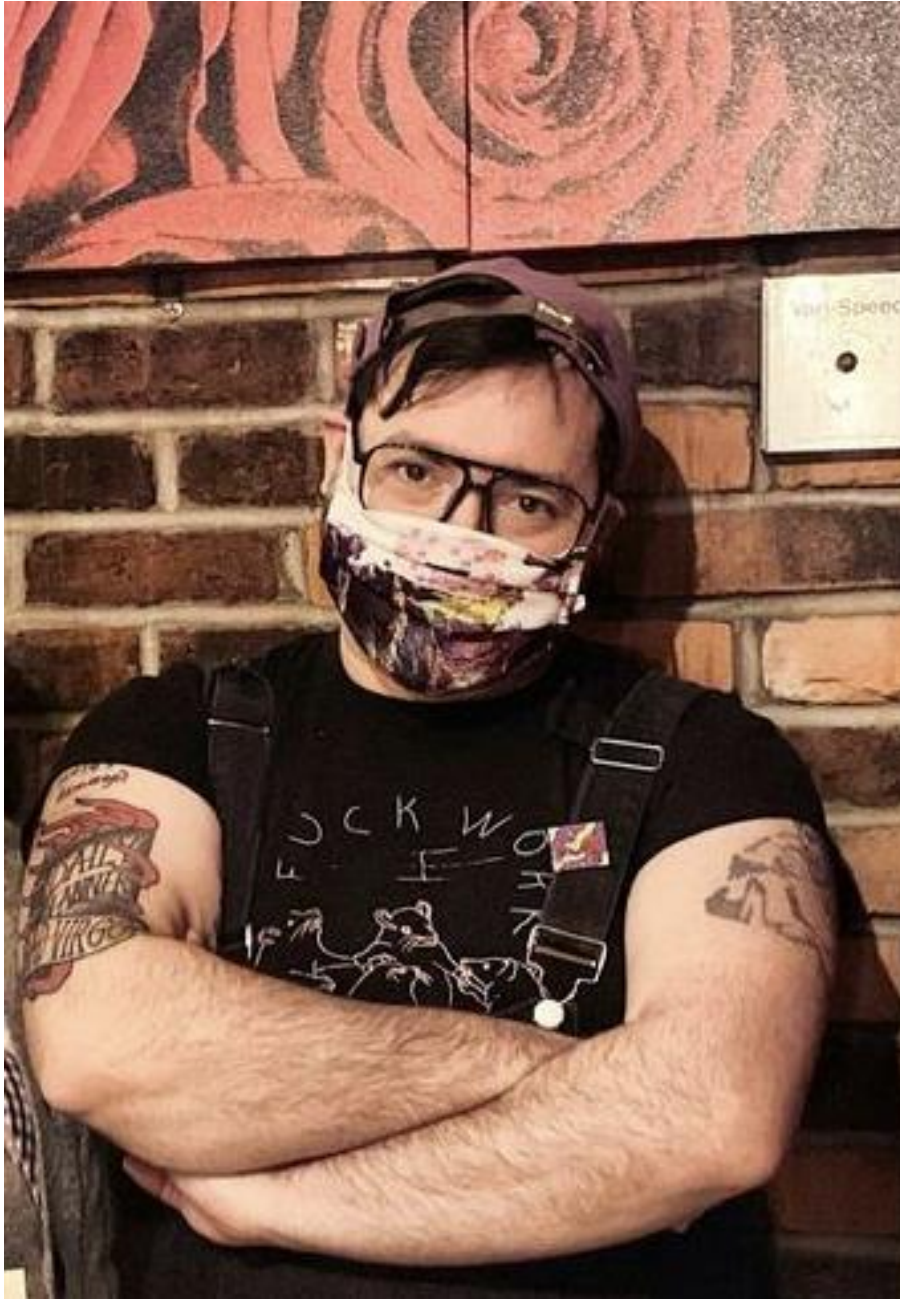


"What can I say? Times are tough."

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: "The Rastaman: Conversations With Bob Marley", a Bob Marley tribute anthology. (cover art by Freeda Focks) Accepting writing and art that is about, or inspired by Bob. Send your submissions to abuddhapress@yahoo.com. Deadline June 19.



Interview With Barracuda Guarisco EIC at Really Serious Literature



ABP- Thank you for taking this interview, Barracuda. I am sure that our readers will be very interested to learn about Really Serious Literature. What type of work do you like to promote? Are you currently open for manuscript and/or anthology submissions? Do you have any submission guidelines to share? Where could one submit their work?

BG- Hey, yeh, thanks for having me! Really Serious Literature likes to publish, generally, difficult work. Difficult topics, difficult form, difficult to interpret. We aim to challenge. Right now, we're not reading for general submissions but will be opening up to chapbook submissions for *The Beefy Chapbook Potato-Rito Remote Residency To-Go Contest XXL* where the winner earns a \$300 gift card to Taco Bell and a published chapbook with a 100 copy print run handmade by Bottlecap Press. Judged by Taco Bell Quarterly's M.M. Carrigan. Submissions open June 1st, 2021 and close August 31st, 2021. We're always reading for Disappearing Chapbooks (short collections posted on our Instagram for 72hrs) and Zeptopoems (poems that stay on our insta for 24hrs). Details and guidelines can be found @rlysrslit.

ABP- I can see from your website that in addition to books, Really Serious Lit deals in “unconventional literary objects in the form of tattoos, t-shirts, accessories and, **MAYBE SOMEDAY**, edibles”. Can we see some of your designs?

BG- Yeh! Here’s a picture of the winning tattoo from the first Cravan & Bronson Dilemma Tattoo Contest. Words by Kim Vodicka, tattoo by Never Angel North.



And here's a picture of the winning haiku from our Mutant Broadside contest in 2020. The haiku is by Gina Tron and the pin design is by @mollidearest.

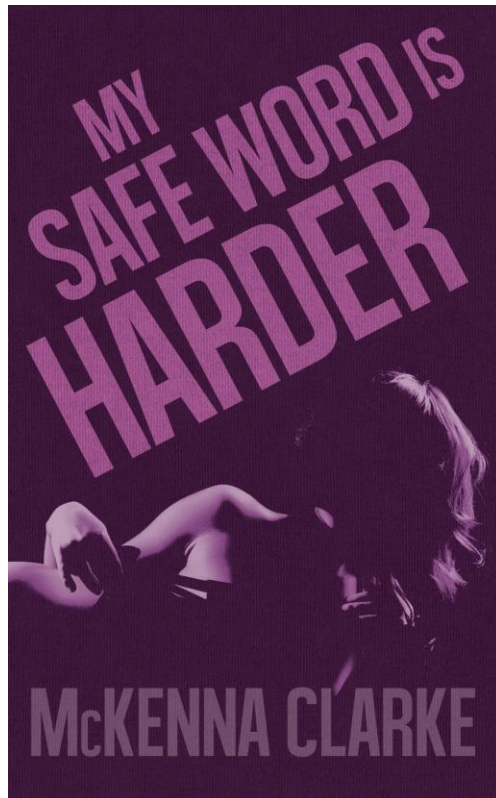


ABP- I would like to ask you about a few of your books. First, what can you tell us about “My Safe Word is Harder” by McKenna Clarke?

BG- I’ll respond with my favorite blurb:

“Staring hard at vulnerabilities and refusing to look away, these poems invite us to be radically uncomfortable and to confront what it might mean to transcend ourselves. With Clarke, we can fantasize about a beautiful death, about lovers who don’t use us as means to their pathetic ends, about highs that don’t wear off and leave us feeling broken, about automutilation that can show us ourselves—knowing all the while that our fantasies can’t save us. I needed this book and its honesty. I needed these poems.”

-Lindsay Lerman, author of I’m From Nowhere (CLASH Books)

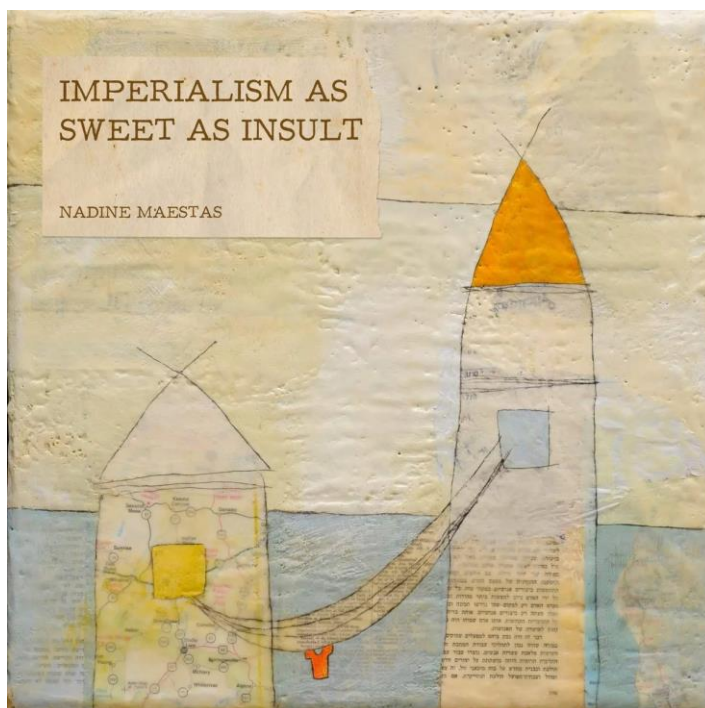


ABP- How about “Imperialism As Sweet As Insult” by Nadine Maestas?

BG- I’ll respond with my favorite blurb:

On one hand Nadine Antoinette Maestas is a literary Latinx dominatrix having her way with language and patriarchy while scrupulously avoiding the scourge of sentences. On the other hand she’s alive in a decaying capitalistic empire trying to survive without frying her adrenals with her: “mouth open to every time everywhere.” Singing despite not knowing all the notes. Surviving despite not being a white guy in a masculinist culture dying before our eyes. Emerging: “full of sunlight ringing.” She might bemoan books as “useless butter,” but this is a 21st century poet with a debut book you should read before the alphabet crumbles.

– Paul E Nelson, Founder of SPLAB, author of *A Time Before Slaughter/Pig War: & Other Songs of Cascadia, American Prophets (Interviews 1994-2012)* and *American Sentences*.



ABP- and “Cake” by Bryan Edenfield; what is the story behind this book?

BG- John Olson had some ideas:

“Cake! Who doesn’t like cake? The best cakes are multilayered, and this cake is no different. It’s a rich mélange of rich nutty humor, creamy fugues of vertiginous erudition, generous thrusts of tangy provocation, rich swirly comedies of toasted coconut and pure Dada extract. It’s got songs and dreams and sinister experiments. It’s got a seasoned wit and an unseasonable “wormwood sun.” How many things go wonderfully wrong in this book? As many things that go wonderfully right, and taste like a lush creamy sentence on the tongue, a wavy oscillation of chaos and strawberries. You know what I like best about this collection? It’s chock full of the madness of imagination, the light of the bakery never dims, and every slice is served on a universe of words.”

- John Olson



ABP- Are there any other specific books you would like to mention?

BG- There's the book both Joshua Robert Long and myself released titled "The Gold Boys are back in Gold Town" and our next two Really Serious Literature titles coming out: "Are You Borg Now?" by Said Farah and "Aftermaths: Ghost, Identity, and Architecture" by Graham Isaac and Justin Plinz. I'm really excited to help bring these out into the world. Preorders available at rlysrslit.bigcartel.com

ABP- And, you offer full catalog subscriptions to all of your new releases, is that right? Tell us how that works, and where one could go to purchase a subscription?

BG- I'm glad you mentioned this! Yeah, so for \$120 you get access to our full catalogue which includes 12 titles. With your purchase you automatically are sent our first four books and will continue to receive future titles as they release (though this will not include the winning chapbook from our Taco Bell contest). You can find more details at rlysrslit.bigcartel.com



ABP- Thanks again for taking the time to answer these questions, Barracuda. If there is anything that we did not cover that you would like to mention, please do. The floor yours.

BG- Nothing left on my end! Thanks for giving us the space!

Poetry by Todd Paropacic

Hello Mystery

Fiber optic substations
And a chance to climb
To the tippity top
Of old liberties frock;
A crock and a barrel.
Play another isthmus carol
To sustain the remains
Of a heretic.
The hysterical remains
Of a life lived in fame,
All shame abandoned
At the altar
Of Tamerlane.

What you can't keep
In the holes
At the bottom
Of your pockets,
In the crack of a locket
That could stop the pop
Of a Davey Crockett pocket rocket,

What you can't keep
Will Houdini into a tub,
Or some tanker trailer
With a chair
And a gas lamp.

The other side of the coin
Is its absence.
To be
Is to be to a string
Of ticks,
And toxic tocks,
And talking with
Anyone who has a finger
On anything that resembles
A button.

The health of the area
is equal to
The effort put in,
To the negative power
Of the effort put off,
Divided by
The effort to tear it all
Down.
It's as simple
As a mathematic ideal,

Thematically reeling out
And back again
Like some surgical
Möbius strip.

If you stare at the sun
For too long,
You'll never see
Anyone but.
If you peer into the night,
Just remember,
Everyone is as blind
As you.
How comforting it is
To be mutually assured
Of unilateral incompetence.
Mediocrity knows no party
And sees no line
Between the horizon
And the sand.

It's all a 3D wallpaper
That's on sale
For two dollars a week.
It's all the fish
And herring eggs
That never made it

Up the creek.
The Matterhorn may be steep,
But whoever found themselves
On top
Must have felt cool
For a while.
I'm on the second floor
And I feel like a god.

Filled a Mold

Out here in the dusty jungle,
the rust tries to defy
the clearly defined mold
of its previous life.

It's been told one
too many times
to fall into line
He said "Well, fine!,
Why don't I just deconstruct entirely?"

Now he feeds the grass and trees.
You can smell his blood
on the autumn leaves,
and on the breeze, he laughs
because he doesn't rely on gravity.

Out here in the blustery jungle,
the rust defies the laws
of the foundry,
and the dust forgets entirely
that it ever filled a mold.

TV by Yrik-Max Valentonis

TV is weird
 It's too weird
I can't deal w/ TV
 These people are
Too fuckin' strange
 & this is what
Shapes our country & minds?
 No wonder I am
The way I am.

Art by Isabel Gomez de Diego



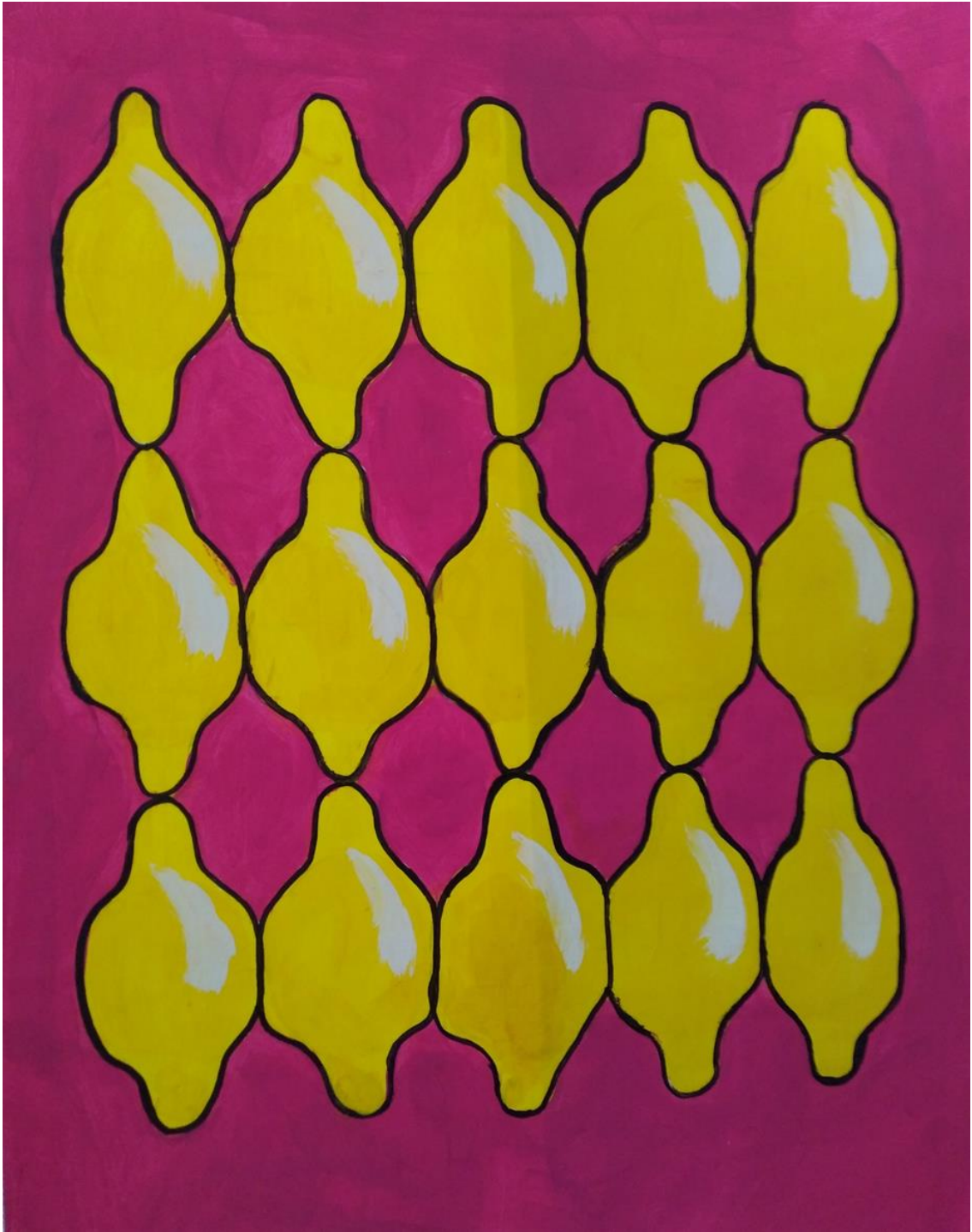
Self Portrait



Don Quixote



The Lemon Tree Flower



Lemons



Terrestrial Foods



Collage 2

A Preview of *Shapes of Motherhood* (*motherhood of shapes*) by Michelle Moloney King

"A book pervaded by the palpable sense that only the author could've written it, fusing brutish asemic writing with slick concrete poems, pushing the digital against the hand-made, the sculptural against the literary. This is a book of wonders, and it announces a remarkable poet."

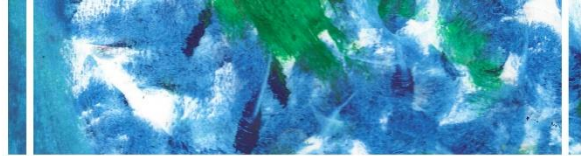
- **SJ Fowler**; founder of *Poem Brut* and the *European Poetry Festival*.

"*Shapes of Motherhood* is a combination of asemic writing, some of which slips into the realm of landscape and a selection of word poems deeply rooted in Irish culture."

- **Cecil Touchon**; collagist, director of the *Ontological Museum*, editor of *Asemics Magazine* and *Repository Magazine*.

"*Shapes of Motherhood* is a holistic and deeply giving body of work that can, and should be, revisited many many times."

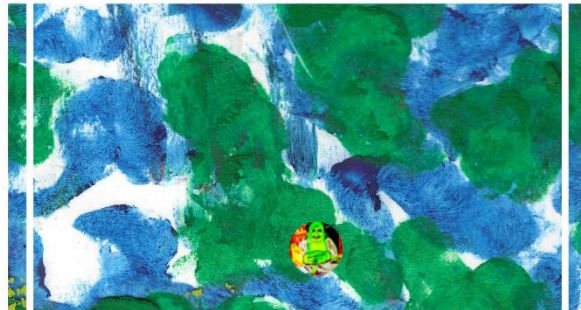
- **Stuart McPherson**; poet, author of *Pale Mnemonic* and *Water Bearer* (*Broken Sleep Books*.)



SHAPES OF MOTHERHOOD

MOTHERHOOD OF SHAPES

Written by Michelle Moloney King



https://www.amazon.com/dp/B094GTYFYM?ref_=pe_3052080_397514860

Picnic Table

Darling leaves a little barky
dungeon smoked leftover lunch.

Turnip ice-cream flavours of
fields and fiendish, he said, "We need sounds of the river in the background."

You ate a person with an idea once.

Jump in the water, little coy fish your
droppings are more

valuable than you'll ever know, way /

Hungrier than you.

And Stop



You So Fancy

Coffee cup skin with harbour

hugs for visitors /

Always two kisses and two

teapots / Our fancy family friends, long

outgrown his father's humble coal shed. Dad had to pay your tennis club fee once and beg admittance for the likes of you.

Who painted cherubs on your ceiling? How many doors and floors to your toilet? A golden settee , respite to yapping hounds /

Chalice wine, and look oracle keys as fly catchers!

Crystal pink moons rainbow ing shards to your humbled guests.

But why the pile of passports by the door?

Dusty car keys, thin brown envelopes, dead cactus empty trocaine boxes taller than the dirty door.

Cats can be friends too

Speech in Conciliation Hall, February 16th, 1846
Sir, we have pledged ourselves never to accept the Union – to accept the Union upon no terms – not for any modification of the Union. It will become a country like ours – a country with an ancient fame – a country that gave light to Europe – the first Europe's oldest State of this day was yet an infant in civilisation and in arms – a country that has written down great names in literature – a country that has sent colors into the sun – whose eloquence to the last day, will inspire free sentiments, and dare bold acts – a country that has sent soldiers into the field whose courage and whose heroism will excite your duty to imitate – a country whose sculptures in Rome, and whose painters have won for us a proud pre-eminence even in the cabinet of the stranger.

Burning Log Fire Stones

The plates have started clattering
again and complaining, there's talk
of a walkout. Trade off the dusty
bananas for the doctor's pamphlets,
onto a winner there. For dinner the
local restaurant fired the
head-arms-shoulders chief,
oh what a blasta-bia
with garlic cocktails he was.
He needs to go and faster than before.
Who?

Cover This Place For me, Will Ya?

Shelters of the church in France watches
the geriatric pregnant clock.

I think I figured it out, a little space of dual
frequencies and cattle run-throughs.

The reign held off his five year attempts to climb
into the schoolrun, and the test
tile is ready after firing, come
and see the Huygens.

I crack on the egg-paint, some three
hundred miles north he tells me. Or
maybe we're not supposed to talk about
baked dog-hugs. And needing to start with a murmur of
a bull tone with my childre /n have
audio-description.....lowing more smoothly
into flashing images, our place is critical activity.

I have saved a few red wheelbarrows in my time and one busy pair have
a smashing lime. Never let me know whether -
I was wrong. What day was it when the sky came
crashing down into your porridge bowl,
teacher,
he needs to know.

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