

Bleached Butterfly



Vol. 1:2

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September 2019

Editor: Lori A Minor

Cover Art: Mark Meyer

A Note From the Editor

First and foremost I would like to thank everyone who submitted. Submissions are continuously growing and it's nice to see some new names, as well as old favorites. I would also like to sincerely thank Mark Meyer who provided the incredible cover art for this issue!

As you will see, the formatting for this issue is slightly different for this issue, as opposed to the last and I think it looks a bit cleaner, so until I run into some issues, this is how the formatting will stay.

This issue contains a fantastic mix of fantasy, sci-fi, and horror, which I'm really stoked about! Again, thank you for your continuous support. I hope you enjoy this kickass issue!

- Lori A Minor

Contributors

John McManus
Igorina Darsa
Mark Antony Rossi
Veronika Zora Novak
Martina Rimbaldo
John Grey
Roberta Beach Jacobson
Lavana Kray
Rp Verlaine
Kelly Sauvage Angel
Mark Meyer
Ben Nardolilli
Robert Beveridge
Thomas Zimmerman
Colleen M. Farrelly
David He Zhuanglang
Debbie Strange
Mark Ward
Julie Bloss Kelsey
Brian Rihlmann
Lucy Whitehead
Neni Rusliana
Mark Gilbert
Marilyn Ashbaugh
Elizabeth Alford
Michael Morell
Gary Hittmeyer
Padmini Krishnan
Christina Chin
Kara Goughnour
John J. Trause
Anna Maria Domburg-Sancristoforo
Beatrice Orsini
Ed Schmidt-Zorner
Juan Manuel Pérez
Sanela Pliško
Anna Cates

Julie Warther
Andy N
Susan Burch
John Sherier
Christina Sng
Carol Raisfeld
Robin Anna Smith
Cailey Johanna Thiessen
Kushal Poddar
Shannon Elizabeth Gardner
Clement Olujide Ajidahun
Jordan Faber
KB Nelson
Ruby Van Bendegem

six senryu
by John McManus

blue crocuses
my veins become
a waterfall

the rattle of pills
in my date's bag . . .
happy hour

mental health questionnaire
a glimpse of the koi
beneath the duckweed

woodsmoke
she orders me to get
a vasectomy

I smooth a crease
from her polka dot dress –
funeral home

sun-bleached skull
a noise I didn't know
my son had in him

artwork
by Igorina Darsa



artwork
by *Igorina Darsa*



Painkiller Patty

by Mark Antony Rossi

Her hands shook like a palm tree in a tropical storm. A bleached blonde scarecrow with the mouth of a sailor. This creature was a teacher hooked on pain pills and pacing erratically in the hallway---a secret loser seeking to admonish a wayward child. But I swear SHE needed the discipline, the hair brush and 14 step program to curb painkillers and profanity. I never wanted to scream at a woman until I met this touched-up toothpick. She tried to sound intelligent by spitting out mumbo jumbo jargon at machine gun speed.

Yet the final result was a washed up whack job dumped by her husband because Father Time knew her first name and her last wrinkle. I had no patience for this melodramatic nonsense and had to rescue my kid from her greasy grasp. My kid could tell something was wrong with her like spotting a drunk uncle in the supermarket. You must walk in the other direction and pray to the heavens shame doesn't find you on the playground. This is the era of public schooling where trophies are given out just for showing up and every excuse has a disease and every disease has a protest rally.

Maybe I'm just a middle-class taxpayer who wants his kid safe. There's no parental support group for me, no daytime talk show about me, no special laws to help me, only a slew of complaints claiming I don't understand because I'm male and I am not sensitive enough. But a father's love for his child shouldn't require a political litmus test. That love is real and more powerful than the school rules and teacher unions. Yet how do you truly keep your child away from drugs when his teacher is an addict.

Pepper Gun Punks

by Mark Antony Rossi

Train robbery was not restricted to rogues of the Old West. In the Big City my friends and I liked to jump on cargo trains and open up the doors of the freight cars. Inside were boxes of clothes, electronics and other street-worthy valuables. They were there for the taking and we tossed cases of goodies out the car and into the thick vegetation below. Our set up guys were ready to recover the merchandise and store it in a neutral location for the six-way split.

This process of theft, storage and loading an awaiting delivery truck for sale to local neighborhoods formed the street legend "it fell off the truck" whenever someone asked where you got an expensive looking item. There were deals to be had. And every mom on the block was looking for a nice winter coat for the kids during school season.

These discounted goods came at a cost. We had to go to war with suburban train guards armed with billy clubs and pepper spray guns. One shot of that pepper stray on your clothes or nearby would cause you to vomit and lose control of your balance. Two things I can't advise when robbing a train traveling on a bridge. A bandanna over the nose helped somewhat until you could get close enough to billy club the bastard into unconsciousness. Left face down on a cargo hold they posed no threat. One we got together and started peeing on his body. I wish I could be there when he woke up drenched in human urine with the knowledge that fourteen-year old's beat his ass.

But this was serious business and I had no time for practical jokes. We all got paid. No one got killed. Railroad insurance took care of the rest. It went on for years until I got bored and got a real job working in a hardware shop. The thrill like smoking cigarettes slips away and all that remains is vicious acts against people three times your age. I started growing up and discovering girls were more dangerous to chase. And if their fathers ever gave me any crap, well I have experience in that area.

four monoku and one senryu
by Veronika Zora Novak

ghos(t)rain

dreamscape drops of Jupiter orbit my mind

becoming in its unbecoming the passage of now

whispers of the dead lead me in dreams

chasing
what she does not understand
ghost butterflies

Cold Sweats

by Veronika Zora Novak

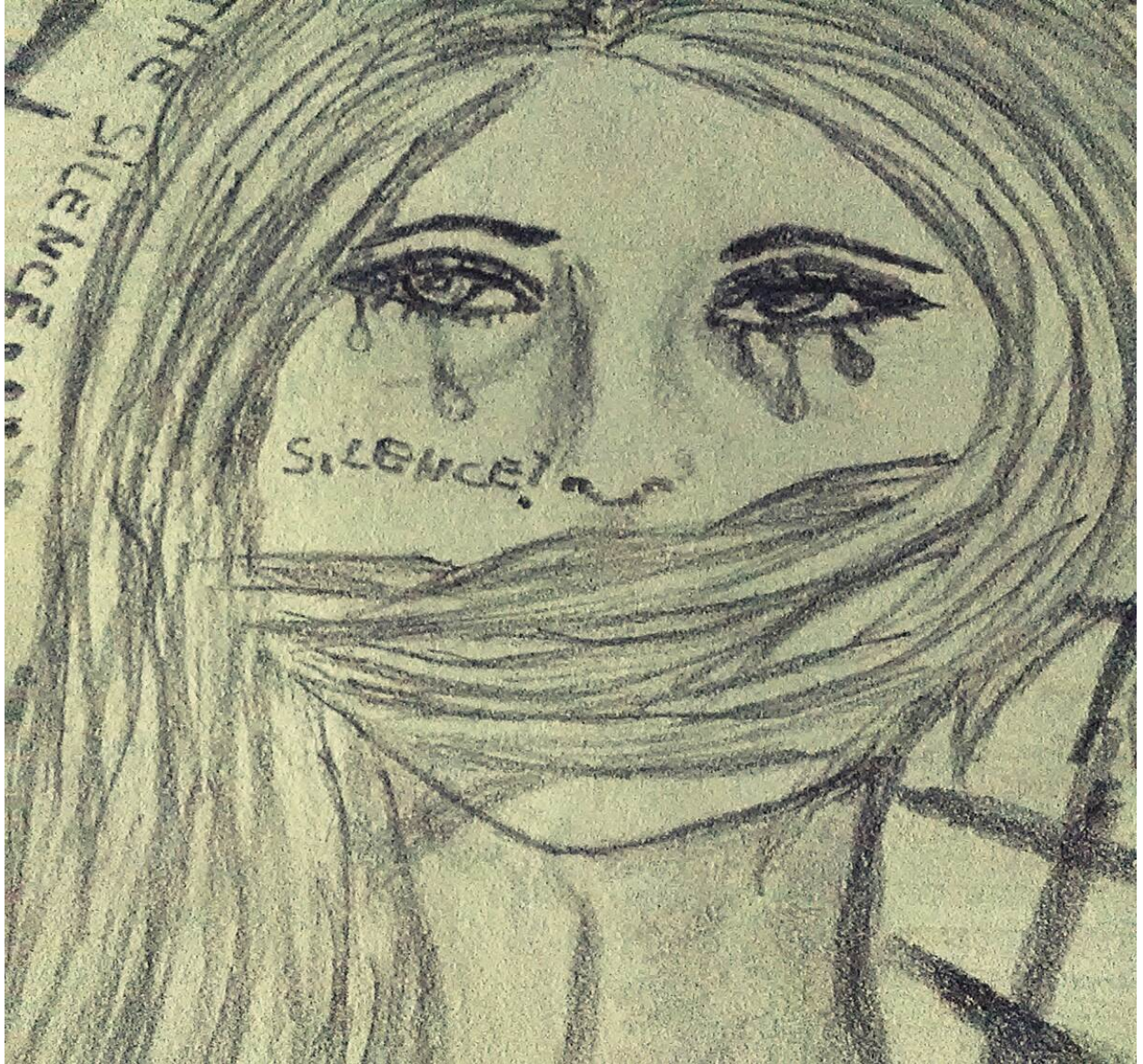
I pummel through dense forest. Having reached a clearing, dead white rabbits everywhere. Their red eyes open to the sky. I'm frantic. Desperate to revive them all. To no avail. I begin digging a mass grave. From behind, the snicker of trees mock me.

Just past 4 a.m. I awake in a cold sweat.

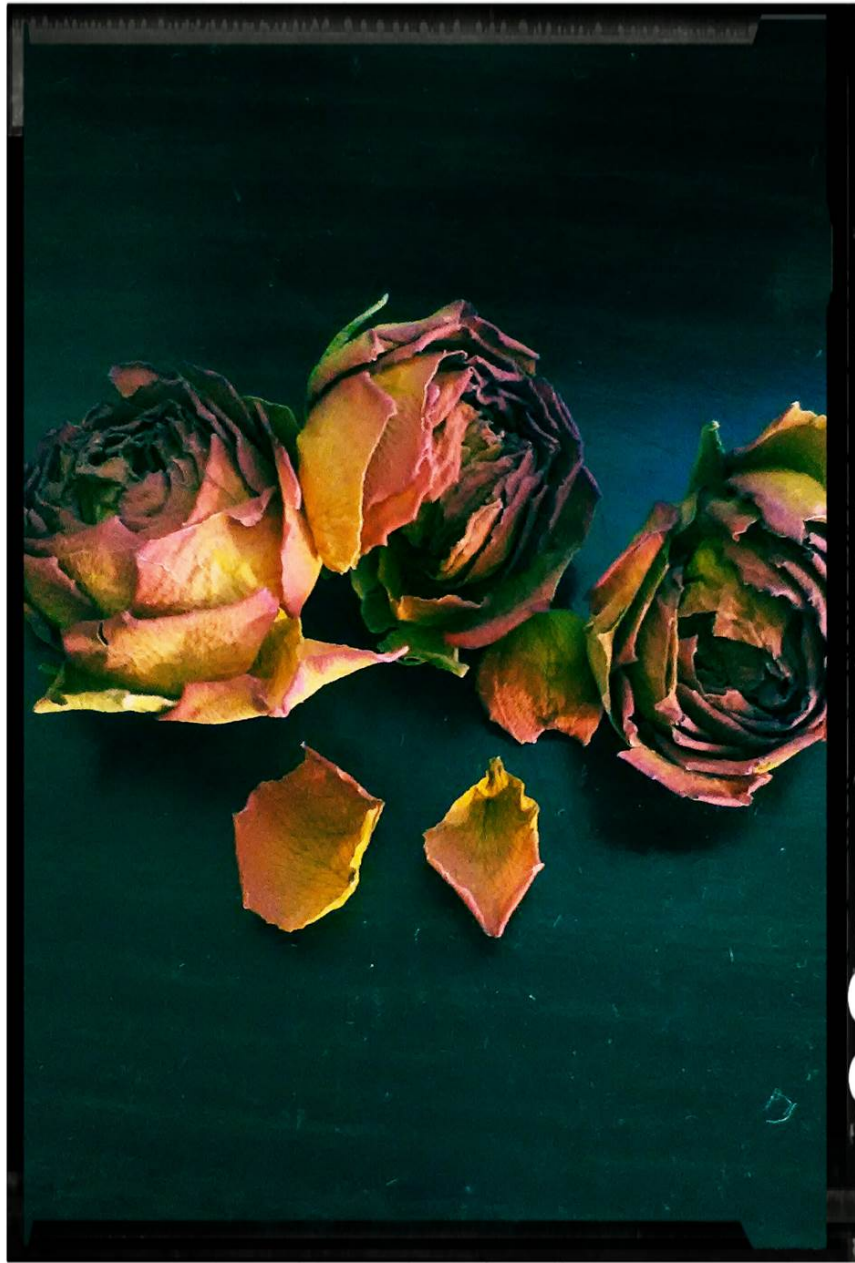
first frost

I see only that I
cannot see

artwork
by *Martina Rimbaldo*



artwork
by *Martina Rimbaldo*



MY HOSTS FOR THIS EVENING

by John Grey

The woman's hair is matted, unkempt
like Medusa's scalp of snakes.
In fact, that may well be an adder
slinking through that hirsute forest. And the man's eyes glare
shimmering red
like a burning boat at sea.
Her mouth dribbles bile.
His spits crimson.
She grips a strangled cat to her breast.
He holds tight to an axe with bloodstained blade.
I was expecting some light conversation
but these are serious people.

MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM

by John Grey

I still hold onto my anus
though my legs are missing in action.

I possess, so to speak,
a skull, even if worms use it
for a play-pen.

And I've a slither of spine...
as if the earth needs backbone.

And a pelvis. A rib or two.

Of course the tongue
has long since disintegrated,
along with the throat,
so speech is out of the question.

And no heart for romance.

No blood for fever, no nerves for fear.

Not forgetting no brain of course,
the work-dog of poetry,
that mass the first to go,
gulped down like tapioca
by the denizens of the dirt.

But thankfully,
someone had sense enough to dig me up,
sit my remnants in a chair,
prop me up before a computer,
drop my finger somewhere on the keyboard.

Like a good master,
he shares the writing duties.

I came up with mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

He did the rest

four monoku

by Roberta Beach Jacobson

composing myself as he decomposes

haunted fruit always the pear

island death by molten ash

temple ghosts haunt downed columns

haiga
by Lavana Kray



hospital alley –
crown canopy and hair
turning into fall

Lavana Kray

haiga
by Lavana Kray



narrowed eyes
inverted wings –
amnesiac on his way

Lavana Kray

Displaced Residuals

by Rp Verlaine

After the rain
nary a rainbow
on wet soulless streets.

Hooker telling me
as she gets undressed
I'll pay for my sins.

Another day
spent drinking into the next
to ask what happened.
Asking someone who was there
unlike me.

Yet we kissed
till it was almost real
this feeling of nothing.

The displaced residuals
of feelings
all gone.

Unencumbered
I walk the late night streets
wanting a tour guide
unafraid of death.

But living
The nightmare I go to sleep
with my eyes open. Last
woman I slept with stole
my blindfold.

Jesse 23: Trash

by Rp Verlaine

A drunk whore who shot speed into her thigh
with strangers at orgies for ready cash
who had fragments for eyes long shattered by
men who despised her, in her tragic past
ongoing still, stole Jessie from my arms
beating her and left her strung out on meth
a street pimp couldn't have done as much harm
I feel nothing and poetry's useless
to explain how it all ended like this
in a car circling a river that waits
fighting tears until I feel Jesse's kiss
hear her tell me to stop somewhere safe
I can't and won't near this bridge by the river
thinking of her and what fate delivered.

six monoku

by Kelly Sauvage Angel

thirst of thieves the water peddler's severed head

rain-slick silhouette how lonely the embrace of the living

welcoming even the naughty faeries honeyed milk

midsummer's night the lure of a lone faerie's flute

how fierce your lovelorn monsters yet suckling in their sleep

a draught of the lone dragon's sorrow morning mist

haiga
by Mark Meyer

*mare o' the night –
'round and 'round it goes
in his fevered brain*



haiga
by Mark Meyer



*even to this day
I hear their screams...
you devil river*



River Big River

by Ben Nardolilli

Four strands of barbed wire impress
the voters in the towns I never want to go to,
meanwhile, in the country, civilians
bleed and sweat on both sides of the border,
they turn the desert into more
than we who want to drive them out deserve

Talk about the laws abounds, excuses
for a slaughter of those coming in, and a theft
of what was earned by those who made it,
in the cities, my neighbors applaud
this bravery and mistake it for desperation
caused by their coups and bombs

Do It Yourself

by Ben Nardolilli

Over the coffin colored stairs,
I calmly walk down to see if tonight
there is a chance at union,
no demand will be made,
this is just a fact-finding mission

on the crimson sofa, I see my answer
illuminated by the TV screen,
defeated, I go back to my room,
Penelope is busy once again,
knitting a carpet for the backyard

GONE VIRAL

by Robert Beveridge

The video languished in YouTube's
dark corners until tweeted
by a conspiracy-theorist blogger
convinced it was a sign
of the imminent zombie apocalypse.
Evidence: inconclusive; how a tooth snagged
on a neck may or may not transmit
anything more fatal than a hickey.
The phone used to record not good enough
to determine whether his skin did indeed
have a telltale greyish cast, and you know
the ambulance showed up seconds after
the fade to black. Word on the street
is it's advance marketing for a horror
movie. You try again to call your cousin
in Seattle. It occurs to you it is more
right than usual to be worried.

HIVE

by Robert Beveridge

It is strange, this existence, this
collision of thoughts and cohabitation
with six-legged creatures and arthropods.
Months ago the hive was started,
the construction of gray matter
and sloughed-off skin, the odd
articles of clothing that jut
out. They live there, fight
all the time, tangled insects caught
in webs yet still infused with the struggle,
the bonded quest for freedom, the battle
of jumbled legs and stingers, emotions
that show neither mercy nor quarter
to the weakened, the sick.

They have chewed up boxes
and computer parts, old books
and pornographic playing cards. All
are hive. Everything is hive,
overripe cheese, the softened skull,
yogurt gone bad. I sometimes wonder
where the drive to continue is,
where it comes from. Is it genetic,
or do they have a queen, some uber-insect,
who exhorts them daily, reads passages
from Machiavelli and Carnegie
and talks about hornet utopia
or spider shangri-la?

The result is, of course, the same:
construction goes on, conflict
continues, and the sun
always comes up again.

At Dewfall

by Thomas Zimmerman

you feel feral,
fecal, fetal:
id a zygote
in a dish of lye.

The darkness tars
and mars
your sun's blood and
your own.

You want to burn your house
for light.
Your mother—yes,
the bloody one—she always was
the night.

You've Murdered Sleep

by Thomas Zimmerman

At 5 a.m., you lie
curled, naked on the tiles.
The paperback you've read
for hours: someone else's
tragedy you've grafted
to the family tree.

You've traded fates with Hades'
damned, your psyche running-
singed and singing-down
the subdivision streets.

Your voice: pure vinegar
that curdles angels shunting
through the clotted sun

Trial 30-B-317

by Colleen M. Farrelly

The time manipulation machine worked well enough for the *C. elegans* batch, the toads, and even the mice, who seemed to remember the layout of the maze as well after the journey as they did before the journey. The monkeys, however, suffered from a wide range of side effects, including constipation, agitation, memory loss, tail loss, and even what we termed "the inside-out syndrome." Needless to say, human trials were postponed, pending the next Institutional Review Board meeting and the results of the latest tinkering on the machine.

But, you know what they say. The thirtieth time is the charm. I placed monkey K-1127 in the chamber and pulled the lever. With a whir and a clunk, he was off to 1999. The recall lever, however, caught on the side panel. I tugged and tugged until it gave.

a crash
and a flash—
time collapsing

In the Shadows

by Colleen M. Farrelly

They came at night—the shadows lingering over her bed, sliding their fangs into her arms and sucking a little more of her away. Sometimes, the shadows came as one or as a pair. Sometimes, there were half a dozen, all wanting the sanguine snack and huddling around her bed to take turns. They put blood back sometimes. Enough for her to wonder if any of her was left in the bruised veins they seemed to love. She hated her veins. She hated them.

hushed voices in her chemo fog

two senryu
by David He Zhuanglang

war story...
every word acts
as a bullet

dead of night
we make a fire with
Gran's bones

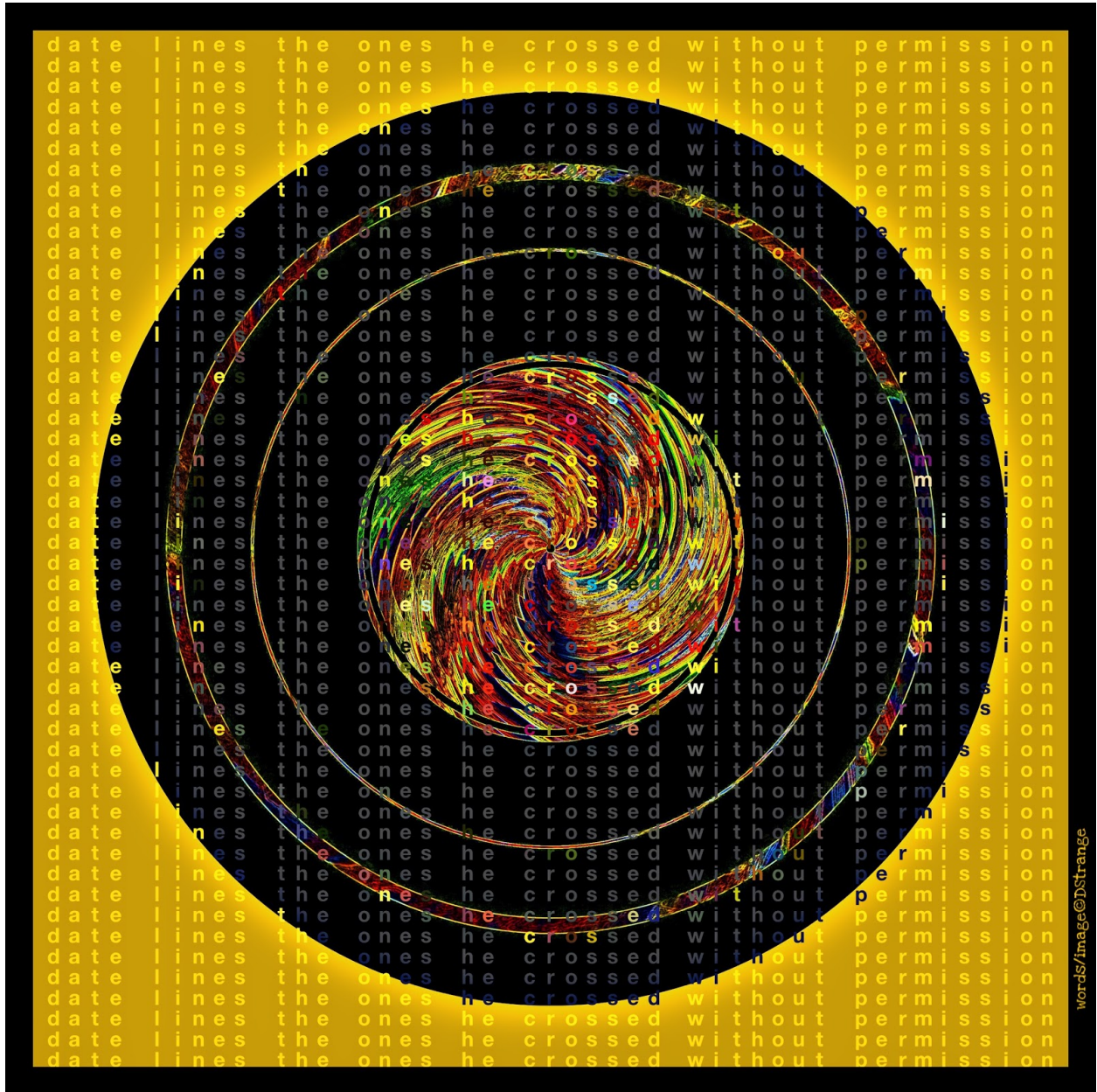
haiga
by Debbie Strange

anxieties
we
teach
ourselves
how
to
blend
in

words/image©DStrange



haiga
by Debbie Strange



words/image©DStrange

Neurotic Break

by Mark Ward

Things go away.

Another paper-cut unpicks your skin

as if it were a Dear John, something
you carry around unopened

and thumb idly, knowing that
the seal is safe. Everything goes away

in the end. These tiny cuts wreck a life; take
the breath from your bones until you cannot

answer simple questions about
your current state.

Maybe I should
allow the wounds to stretch their legs

and get some air. I can feel the infection. I plan my
escape, each detail listed: fake names, a destination, what to
do

in a new country. How to live with looking
over my shoulder. The creak will worsen as I get older.

Sink into inscrutable surroundings. Submit to the skit
of their sway.

three sci-fi tanka and one scifku
by Julie Bloss Kelsey

cast-off bodies
behind the alien cafe
the delicacy
of freshly squeezed
human eyes

alien waste pit
amid outgrown appendages
one severed head
"Made in the USA"
stamped on the helmet

intergalactic scandal:
during diplomatic handshake
I realize
I'm shaking
something else

through the portal
a final glimpse of Earth
my tears

float free

BEYOND PALE SUBURBIA

by Brian Rihlmann

It would've been reasonable
to go to college
and while I was there
to meet my future bride
we'd have waited to get married
until we were established in our careers
and financially secure
able to make the car payments
the mortgage

then we'd have planned
for children...two
the perfect number
a boy and a girl
if we were lucky enough

it would've been more reasonable
than to follow
such a long and tortuous path
the path of whoring
and drunkenness
and agony
that I did choose

but that dark dream
was what drew me
what whispered to me
promising life beyond pale suburbia
all through my teenage years
like a wild beast alive in the night

and so
I let that alternate version
of myself gladly suffocate
in some parallel universe
scratching at the lid
of his coffin

THE EITHER/OR

by Brian Rihlmann

which is worse—
to sit in a room alone
or with someone
who chatters
and picks at your soul
until it resembles
a stripped carcass
by the side of the road

I lie on my bed
stare at the ceiling
and ponder the either/or
as people in pairs
or in groups
pass by my window
talking, going somewhere

A moth flies in
through the blinds
circles the light
dances with his shadow
inside the shade
and then leaves again
evidently not finding
what he sought

five senryu
by Lucy Whitehead

sleepless night
a black wind howls
in the shape of trees

undiagnosed illness
my parents untangle
a ball of wool

news of her cancer
first frost creeps
up a flower stem

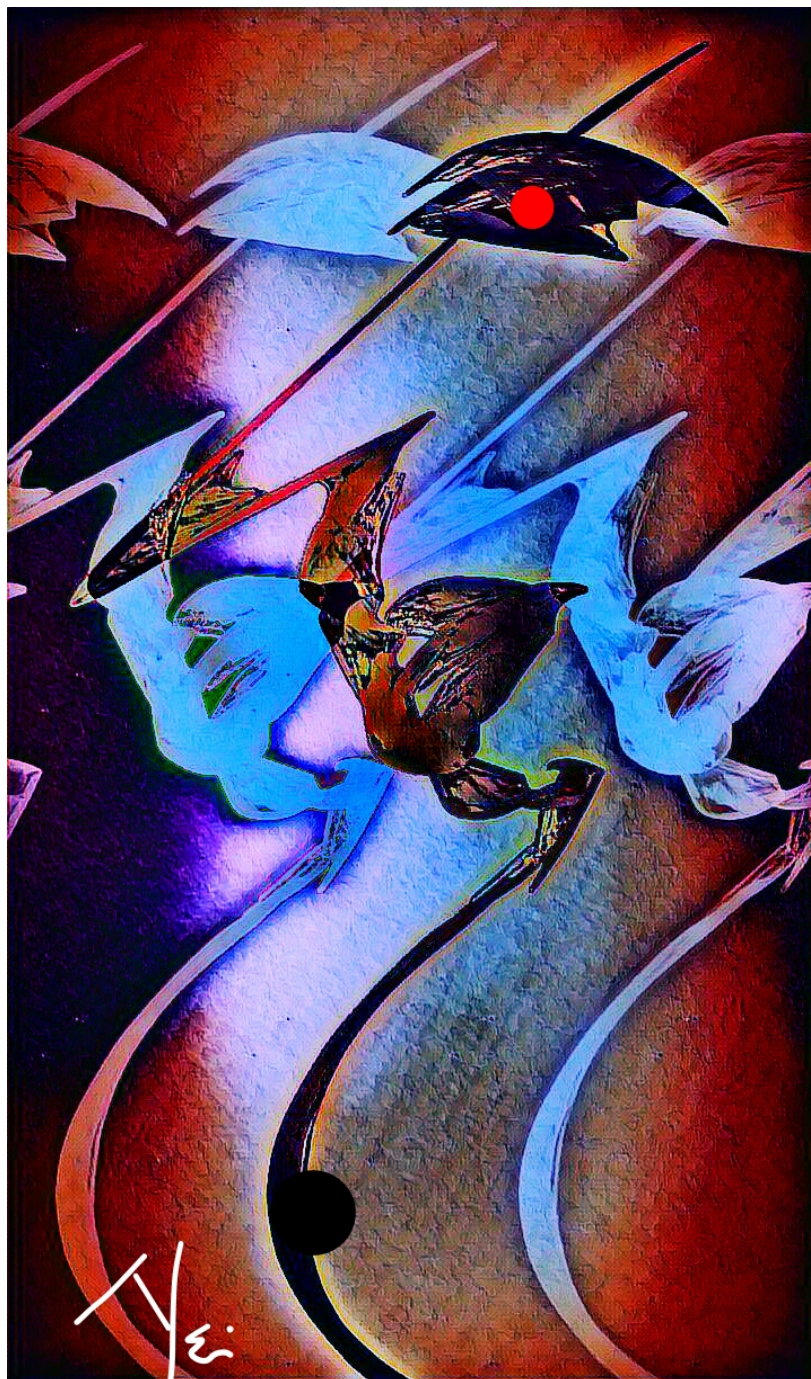
hospice window
a change of light
in the ivy leaves

first draft
of his eulogy
footprints in the snow

artwork
by Neni Rusliana



artwork
by Neni Rusliana



four senryu
by Mark Gilbert

a battle to the death
the spider
in my shoe

showering pixels
stars spinning past
the dustless window

no more trauma
a star explodes
far, far away

cliff top walk
the whole sky hanging
from a nostril

three tanka
by Marilyn Ashbaugh

pages of paper
prayer beads of blood
in my church
the rape of altar boys
a priestly privilege

in the cheers
of sports fans
the trafficking
of our daughters
trail of tears

beneath the bridge
in cardboard boxes
war veterans
still battle
the enemy

one senryu and one monoku
by Elizabeth Alford

turtle power
my wind-up toy
hits the pizza box

trypophobia the holes in his story

Sapient

by Elizabeth Alford

By the time she was found, the picket fence enclosing her childhood home had fallen to carelessness, casting odd patches of sunset on the front lawn where the wooden planks had split. The roof tiling had split and scabbed over with pine needles and branches, the rest left to waterfall over clogged gutters onto the concrete below. The giant flower pots by the front door appeared shriveled and barren, their innards reshaped by years of dust and mud, sticky with webs and thick with weeds.

She saw all this with an attention to detail born of stillness, of watching and listening, learning when to run and when to strike.

The grip on her shoulder tightened; the blue-suited agent seemed to be pushing her towards the door. Wide-eyed like the wounded animal she still was, she continued traversing the path to a sun-bleached straw mat which had long since been worn of any possibility of welcome.

leaving worry
to the people-watchers
 blue fairy wren

3 Texts Over 800 Miles

by Elizabeth Alford

I. *"I love you"*

The hours tick by without ticking.
(Is the clock on my phone even working?)
Like a fool, I try turning it off
and back on again.

II. *"I miss you"*

Hours later, she responds (finally)
tossing the heartfelt words back at me
as one might toss scraps to a hungry dog.
And I do often feel like a dog.
(panting, frisky, waiting by the door)
(almost too happy to see her)

I think of commands to stop—of NO!
DOWN, GIRL! and even GET OFF!
And (God help me) I miss
when the NO meant "Yes"
DOWN, GIRL meant "Lower"
and GET OFF meant something else entirely.

III. *Message not delivered.*

You see, she doesn't know
I've already said my goodbyes
(a hundred times, a thousand times)
(a million different ways)
(the million different texts I typed)
(each abandoned and erased)

...or about the plane ticket
(bought for August, not September) which,
like a glowing, half-extinguished ember,
is already burning a hole
in my pocket.

Racing Into Grief

by Michael Morell

i race into grief
like a jazz improv
wailing sax notes
leaving the brass
of my body
in a rush of wind

throwing out the
dog's blanket
the day she died
because i know
she's not
in there

or of there
and if i touch
that blanket
it's not her
i'm touching
just some thing

a replacement
a symbol
a memory
and it's her paw
i want
pulling me back

when i pull away
from petting her
but she's gone now
pulled away
from me
permanently

physically
the only thing
i feel or know
is loss
the thing
that stays

inside me
loss loss loss
the permanent
feeling that stays
when the grief
has gone away.

haiga
by Michael Morell

steeped
in silence...
mother's anxiety

Michael Morell



four monoku

By Gary Hittmeyer

the shape of insanity tracing the veins in my hands

something has gone wrong on both sides of the river

brutal waves a fake headache besides

elevated adrenaline world wide twitches anger

three haiku

by Padmini Krishnan

moon melting into clouds
the milky fragrance

dark ocean
wail of thousand preys
in a whale's scream

sighting dead caterpillar
my hands numb
on my silk gown

one monoku and two senryu
by Christina Chin

ant invasi[on] my chutney the optimal bait

street food
and hell bank notes
Hungry Ghost Festival

in good company
of familiar footsteps
home alone

Waiting for the Dead to Return

by Kara Goughnour

In the morning, half asleep,
you kissed my cheek and whispered,
That's the price of security,
and I didn't understand until we stood
in the grocery store and I saw the produce aisle
but you called it vore -
this sexualization of self-consumption.
The starving artist isn't thin enough
if they aren't scooping their soul
into paper cones; if we megaphoned this suffering
would more than sufferers listen?
This love of art is suicidal, and this love of artist is worse -
this willing ruin of wanting to live
on the finite, this wishing the body
a resource instead of a crumbling home.

Housing Plans

by Kara Goughnour

We build our homes in the same way
young people go about improvisational theater;
an underbaked joke of drywall jutting
in the hallway, loose lines of electrical wire
hanging before the silent audience
of the pieced-together plywood.

We embroider flowered rounds
of fabric pulled taught like botoxed skin
with love-letter lines, like

*This house would still be the same without you,
or Your presence here is barely noticed.*

We waste postage on letters addressed
to this very house, each other's names
scrawled on the yellowed envelope,
tucked into the rusted mailbox leaning
like a cardboard crown on a rained-out playground.

We like the taste of wasted love,
we like the power of faking it,
this kingdom of breaking things
beneath our feet.

**A Love Letter from Bernd Jürgen Brandes to Armin Meiwes
Mistaken for an Insult**

by John J. Trause

Eat my dick.

Playing Doctor

by John J. Trause

I was a normal child.
Like the other children
I played doctor.
For me it was
Doctor Mengele,
Doctor X,
Doctor Kevorkian...

one tanka

by Anna Maria Domburg-Sancristoforo and Beatrice Orsini

and

photograph

by Beatrice Orsini

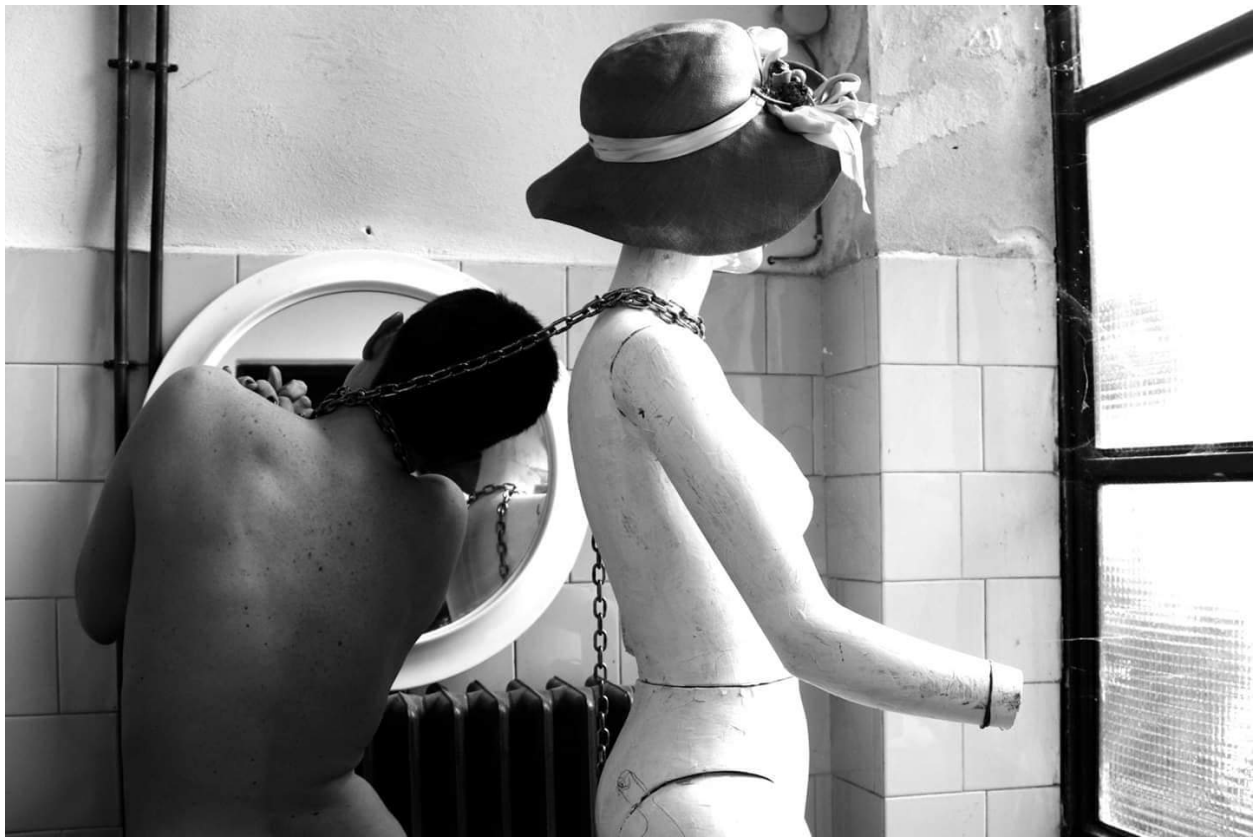
enchained

my withered bloom

can't be reborn

on the chair beside me

the shadow slowly lengthens



one senryu
by Anna Maria Domburg-Sancristoforo

and

photo
by Beatrice Orsini

glass moon
for the sins I don't have
I ask forgiveness



Robo-Araneae

by Ed Schmidt-Zorner

YUQ is unable to move because he is slowly running out of energy and has to recharge his body load cells which control his movements. He barely manages to switch on the charger. Though most of this body parts and organs are artificial and consist of metal parts and joint replacements, he feels human. A robo-psychologist, though there is no psyche any more, once told him: if you have still fragments of human tissue in you, you are human.

YUQ dozes off and wakes up from a grinding sound in his vicinity which intensifies from second to second. What is causing it? He turns his head and sees a gigantic robo-spider hanging in the corner of his room.

Insects became robots after drones copulated decades ago and they multiplied and mutated. An armoured glass window in the wall bears witness after a robo-wasp crashed against it. To prevent attacks and nesting of those species, he tries to hack into the system of those intruders with the software he specially had designed for this purpose and to protect him.

YUQ tries to lift his head to see the display on the time indicator. His heart, made of plastic material, pumps a blood substitute into areas of his body which are residues of his human past: brain, left arm, right hand and genitals. All without use. Robots multiply now on assembly lines. They are released into an existence, without feeling, empathy and deep sensuality.

On the illuminated screen he sees with this telescopic eye that it is the 215th day-split of techmonth 3018.

The spider scans him with its greenish eyes, its legs are moving, sending sound waves to evaluate the data of his prey. The hair of his legs swipes over YUQ. They feel like a metal brush.

The spider descends on a fine-spun wire rope. Liquid from the tip of the claw drops on YUQ's skin and makes the surface melt. He slips into a dreamlike mood. The spider looks into his eyes.

The last he senses is a sting through his skullcap, no pain, only a vibrating sensation.

While his senses fade away, he sees green landscapes, humans in white garments surrounding a lamb which they call Emmanuel.

Lucille

by Juan Manuel Pérez

What drives men to the point of their own end
Giving proper Christian names to objects
Lifeless, unable to care for themselves
Intimate with one's pain or one's pleasure
Baptizing them in precious, living blood
Or the walking carcass of what once was

What drives men to name inanimate things
That can not reason about life or death
Nor distinguish between master or slave
Or nakedness, or arrogance, or sin
Or love, or hate, or fear, or conclusion
For sure, man has made this practice perfect

This machete. There are many like it.
But this one is mine. His name is Desi.

Music

by Juan Manuel Pérez

They say the sound of silence
Is still itself a form of music
One that would be subtle and soft
Just below the pitch of your own breathing
We live in a world were silence is gone
Where it is a rare find of music indeed

With the sound of cell phones ringing and dinging
The hustle and bustle of human interaction
With the crowing and crooning of musicians
With the chitter chatter of the work place
With the whining of sirens and booming of planes
With loud, boisterous traffic; now all of it gone

Now listen to the gorging and gurgling of zombies
What is that music like? Heavy, death metal?

two senryu
by Sanela Pliško

verbal abuse
down my throat ambles
a house centipede

sunday school
the reverend curses
my mixed blood

PROTOGE

by Anna Cates

"Some wizards choose
rainbow colors,
others light.
But beware
the deceptive glimmer
of fool's gold, my child."

"The light is greater
than the darkness . . ."
The good wizard huffs,
"It's not all about
dragon's glass
at the end of a staff!"

SCRAWLINGS AFTER A DREAM

by Anna Cates

You stood beside that dark door
Where they herded the women like cattle.
They entered one by one, "bitch" to "whore."
You stayed outside that dark door.
To each his own; I've heard the adage before.
But why should people be treated as chattel?
You stood beside that dark door
Where they herded the women like cattle.

suminagashi artwork
by Julie Warther



suminagashi artwork
by Julie Warther



The Missing Sermon of Reverend Collier

by Andy N

Drumming across the windows
In both of the toilets
Banging could frequently also be heard
Dragging chairs under the stairs
In the entrance hall

Thawed in the cheesy music
Leading to the main bar
Twitching across your back
Like a whistle blower
Drowned out by the noise

Curving into a maze of bodies
Over the sticky floors
And watered down lager
Aglow in a series of frantic lights
Sweeping diamonds in their dreams

Caged with the TV Screen
Dangling half drunk from the ceiling
Scrunched with a frightening rage
Held back by invisible hands
Wishing for the carnage to end

Over the top of a sign that always said
Drinking, dancing, cavorting
While the reverend sits there unseen
Constantly spitting feathers
Throwing toilet paper in the air

And attempting to push staff
Down the stairs as if to say
They weren't getting out of there
Anywhere near quick enough
For his liking.

(Brannigans is a now closed Bar in the centre of Manchester which was reportedly haunted by Reverend Collier, a fierce anti alcohol reverend at the start of the 20th Century of which his church, Albert Halls became Brannigans at one point)

Robot Hitch-hiker

by Andy N

Recreating Keroac's on the road
nobody knew where the first hitch-hiker came from
and whether it was just dumped on the M1
as a scientific experiment
or it simply decided to walk away from service
to some forgotten human.

Nobody knew whether it started
right at the beginning of it at Hook Moor
or right at the end in London
and it worked its way
backwards and forwards
in-between cars on a endless road trip.

The staff at Woolley Edge services
reported seeing him several times
over the first few weeks
even offered him free shelter
on the days when it was raining
growing attached to its tuneful singing.

Some of the others like at Roadchiefs
were less friendly, even hostile
banning in their words buckets of rust from them
and even resorted to calling the Police
when it kept coming back every few days
no matter what they said to it.

One of the newspapers put out an appeal
for people who picked it up to come forward
and was amazed when they got told it was on the M62
then the day after the M45, the M55
and the M77 within just a few days
until it apparent there was not one

but several travelling up and down everywhere

fluttering up and down the country like wingless birds
leaving everybody in amazement
until it became apparent too late
they were simply scouting out
where they could strike first.

three sci-fi tanka
by Susan Burch

what would I do
without you?
I shiver at the thought
of an unloved me
in a parallel world

we become
the aliens we hate -
exterminating life
on other planets
for our own habitation

too close to war
aliens melt
the ice caps
and start earth
over again

Spooning

by John Sherier

Except for the occasional dinner outing or breakfast date, the two spoons had snuggled contentedly in the closed-drawer darkness for decades. Lately, though, they each felt the same vague longing—though each would never be able to voice it to the other: *It sure would be nice to fork once in a while.*

Services

by John Sheirer

No one in the congregation knew much about their new minister, young Reverend Ashcroft. He just showed up one Sunday morning and told everyone that Reverend Dunbar (who was eighty years old) had retired. Attendance at the church had been dwindling for years, well before Reverend Ashcroft's arrival. And, frankly, few people were paying attention as he muddled through his first sermon. But when he lifted his arms above his head in prayer, everyone saw the jagged, purple scars on the inner sides of each wrist. Reverend Ashcroft was pleasantly surprised when more worshippers occupied the pews the following Sunday.

three short poems
by Christina Sng

THE DRAGON GRAVEYARD

Walking through
The dragon graveyard,
I wept rivers of tears
For the brave souls lost
Battling the humans.

THE GIFT

My body no longer
Listens to my brain,
The tether they had
Slowly unraveling.

Death's cold hand
Reaches out for me
And to my surprise,
I take it.

THE REASON

Does good
Truly conquer evil
Or is it there
To give us a reason
To fight?

tanka art
by Carol Raisfeld



tanka art
By Carol Raisfeld



Moving On

by Carol Raisfeld

Beating a kid never made a bad kid good. He beat every hope she ever had out of her so she would become everything he said she would.

When he hits her mother it's a horror movie and she can't get out, nor block the sound and the agony. She wants to kill him and herself sometimes. There is a monster in the house. She calls him 'father'.

shadowy marsh
murmuring bees in the
faded blooms
the willows drip
into dead calm

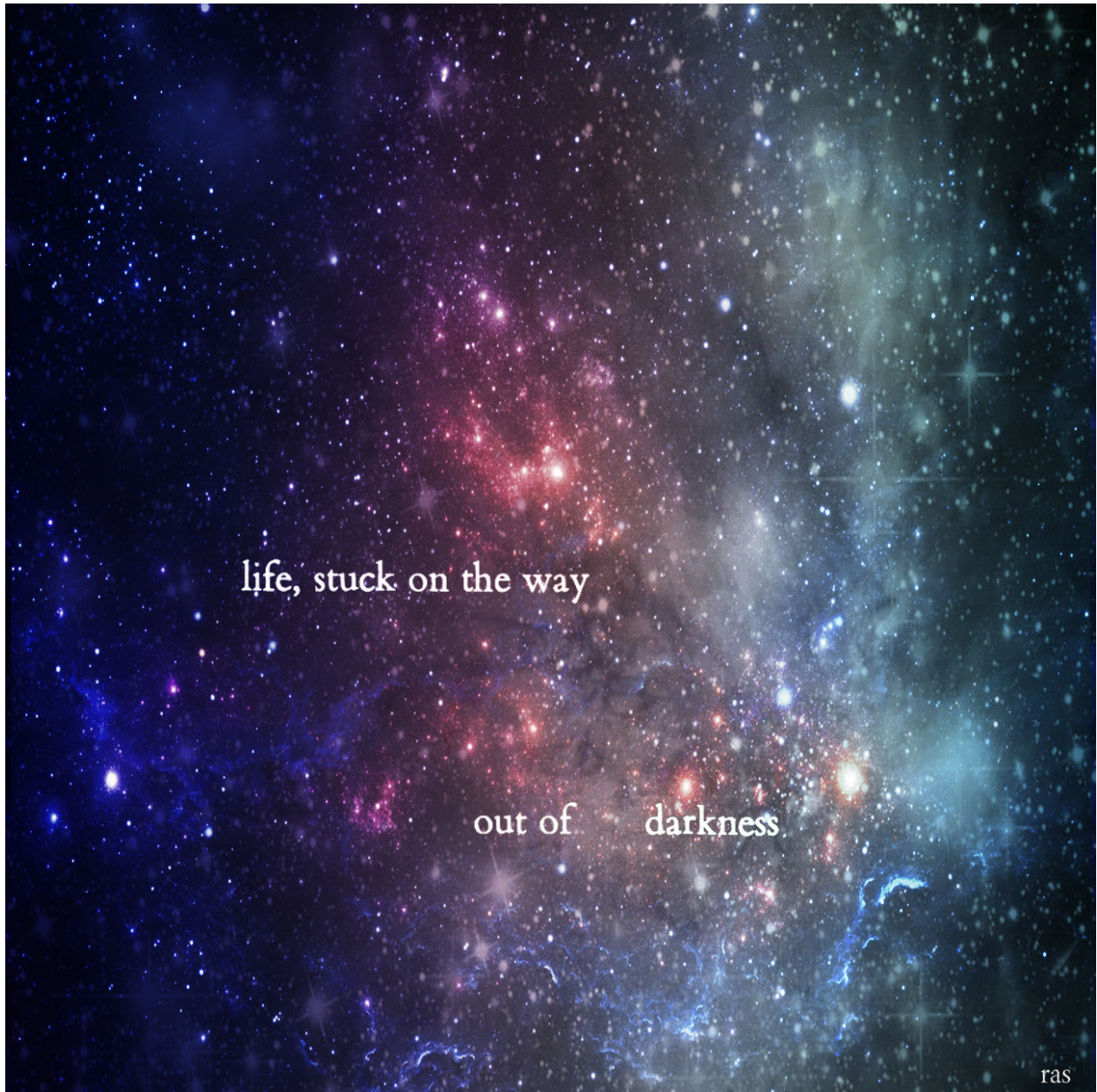
Found poem/art hybrid

by Robin Anna Smith



(Source: Remixed tanka with words selected from the following Mary Oliver Poems - "White-Eyes," "The Shark," "The Mango," "Songs for Autumn," "At Black River.")

Found poem/art hybrid
by Robin Anna Smith



(Source: Erasure poem from an excerpt of "Yakut Five-Liners" by Gleb Gorbovsky.)

Faltering

by Robin Anna Smith

compressed lips
imbedded in the moon
 gnawing on wonder

improper logic
breaking down
 in tangles of anxiety

I cannot speak:
it is not easy to bear
 a long pause, so tight

I gaze
into the off shade
 of shadow

(Source: A remixed poem culled from Happy Days by Samuel Beckett.)

no guts or bones belong here

by Cailey Johanna Thiessen

my body is made of the dust
that falls through the cracks
of our atmosphere.

i am somewhere between star
and the leftovers of a corpse.

my body has no blood,
but my fingers are stained black
from a glass quill. stained pink
from excess nail polish.

my body is held in constant
upkeep—but not like you think.
it is carefully crafted

into "i am what i am"

i don't care (except when i do)

i am effortlessly
put together, just..
don't check the seams.

my body is a freckled galaxy.
my eyes are a spaceship staring
back into the darkness
of my skull, my hair
is a forcefield i put together myself.

you can't change me if i first
change myself.

the dirt at my feet is no different
than the dust of my skin,
than the earth of my being,

than the powder that coats my words.

when the breaking is inevitable
who will breathe space
into my tattered flesh?

the lungs are a space
between the spiders' web.

the stars are here inside me and the stars
are beckoning upwards. the stars are
everywhere in and around me,

but they are so dark.

on finding out the nightmare is me

by Cailey Johanna Thiesse

it's something at night that scratches on the windowpane.
i tell myself it is only a passing car, the scritch is
rubber to road. nothing more. i roll deeper into a sinkhole
of pillows and sheets. the corners are all pointed
in the wrong direction. beside me, you snore.

the window continues to bark at me. in the lack of breeze
i imagine a hand lifting the curtains. i imagine
the fabric brushes against my cheek. lovingly.

when morning breaks, there's nothing there but blood.

i follow the day without looking at my broken nails
and the skin missing off my fingertips. i forget the ache
of headlamps in my eyes. nothing exists anymore
once the daylight scatters my eyelids and i wake.

Post Summer Monsoon Disorder

by Kushal Poddar

In the shower I remember -
rain does nothing to me,
no memory revoked,
no joke, no reverie,

only I strolling at one place,
picking up the pace with my umbrella closed
as if my eyes still need their wraiths
and writhe to remain twin ostrich heads
buried in the cold of the fear's spread.

Six o'clock waterfall, I recall
what I don't and hence I do,
and my wet asphalt avails the highway monsoon.

Stygian

by Kushal Poddar

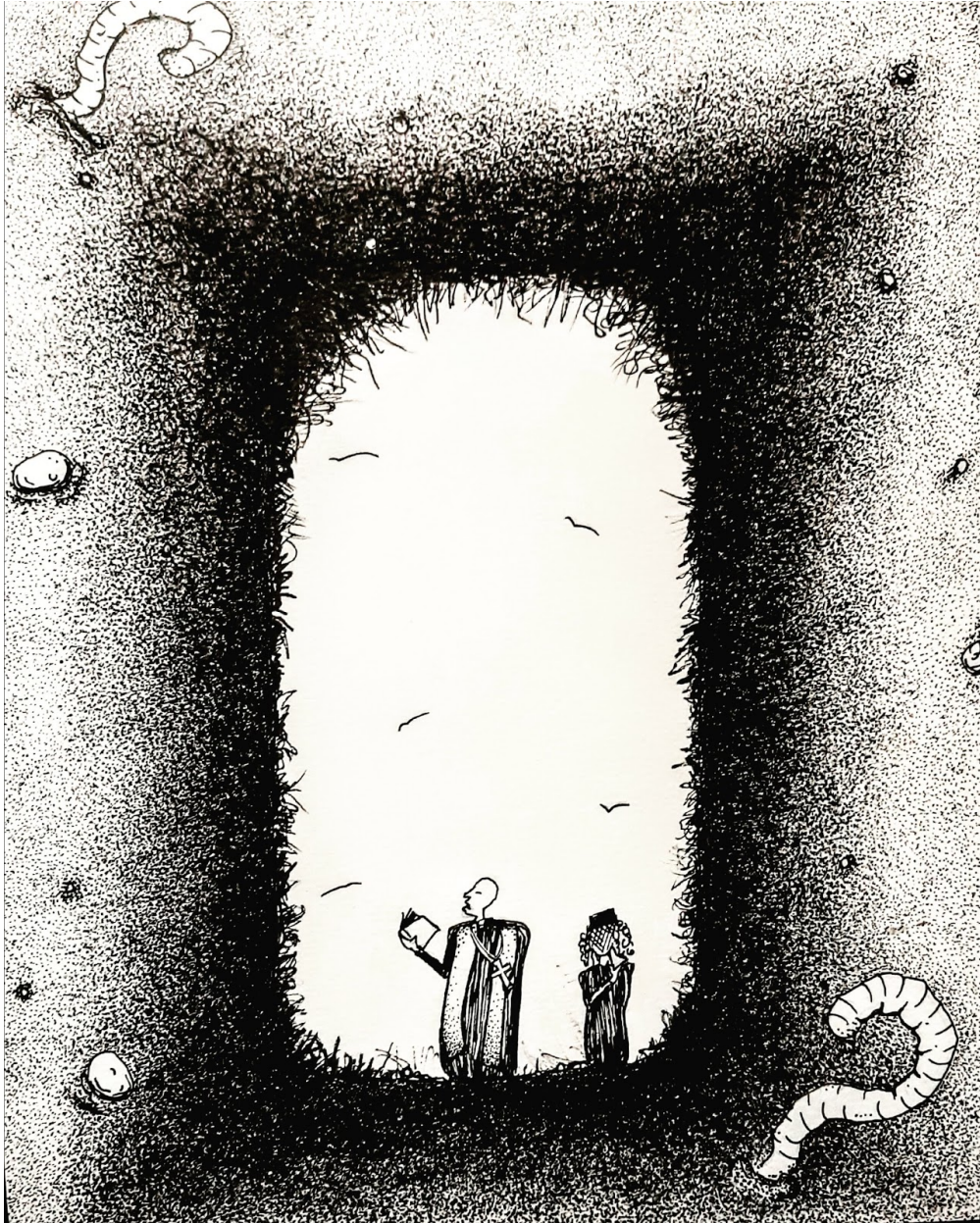
In the darkness bleached
a lamppost that survived pelting
preaches peace
to the insects flaming.

I swear I see myself afield,
in flesh and out of it, staring back at me
as if I am its only skeleton in aumbry
and to bade goodbye it must burn me,
scatter the evidence in the river Styx.

Anon, the lamp blinks.
Perchance my out-of-bodyness has hit
the heart of light.
Perchance knowing aught there is to know
births an insight stygian so.

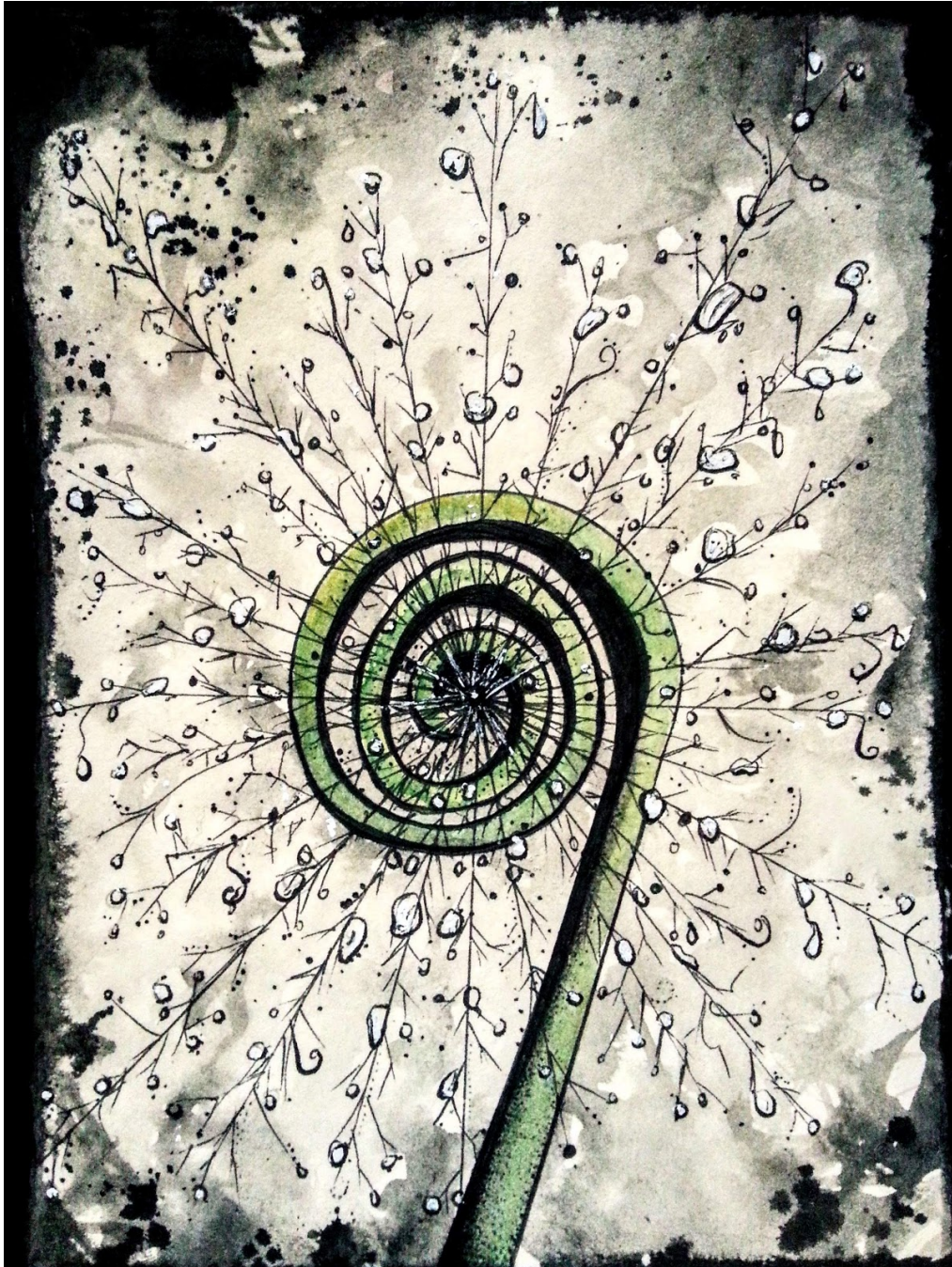
Grave View

by Shannon Elizabeth Gardner



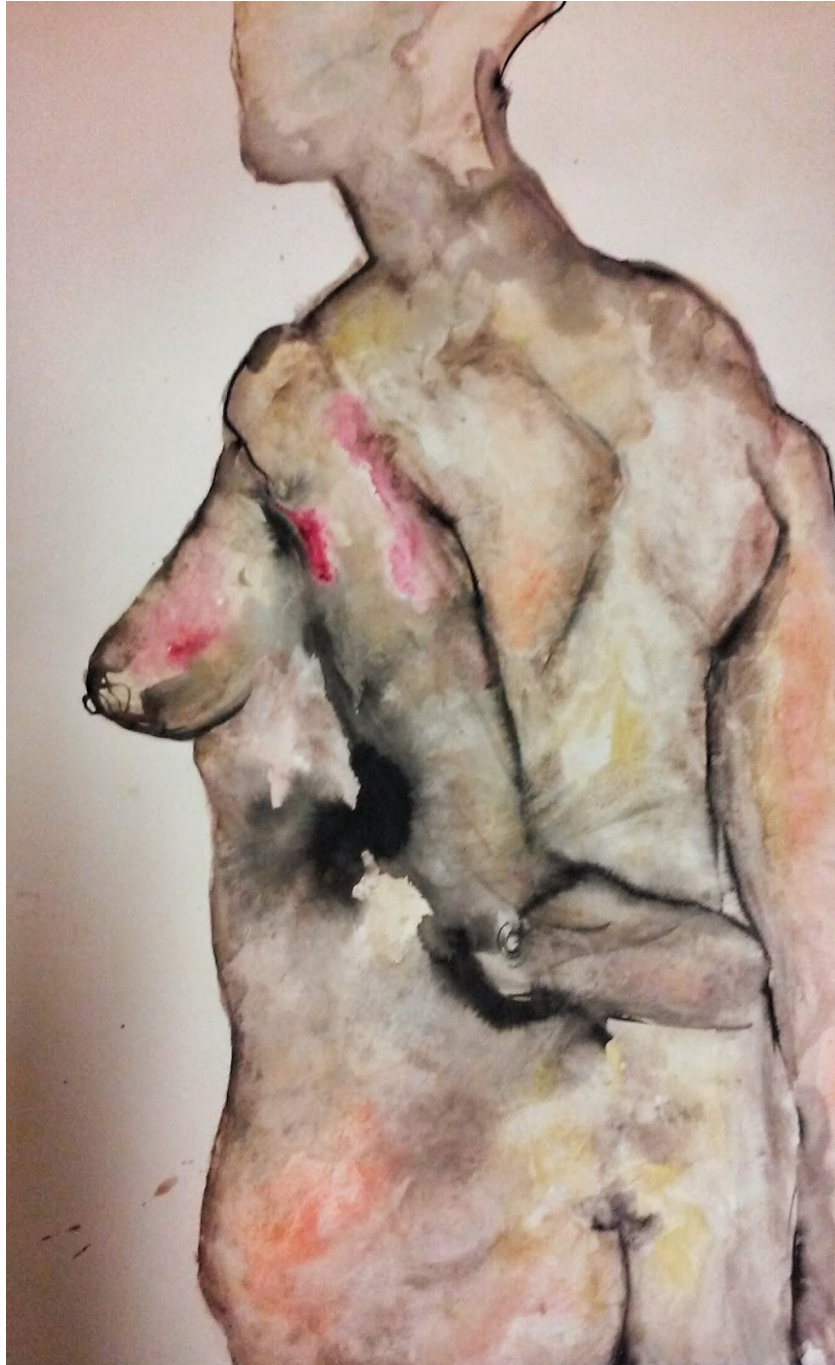
Koru

by Shannon Elizabeth Gardner



Cyanide

by Shannon Elizabeth Gardner



Maternity

by Clement Olujide Ajidahun

They left the maternity
With their babies in their hands
Some with theirs strapped on their backs
With the hearts of praise
And the mouths full of joy
They walked down home
To prepare for the naming ceremony.
But I left the maternity
With my own baby in my hands
Without life
Without breath
Without any warmth
And without hope
With the heart of sorrow
Without a song of joy
With a sagged mouth
To prepare for the burial ceremony
Of an innocent baby.
Life is a maternity.

All Hail My Native Land!

by Clement Olujide Ajidahun

Thy daughters wither in their prime
And thy sons walk as vagabonds
Thy garner are empty
Thy youths mourn
And they are frail
Thy aged are blind
Thy women suffer miscarriages
But thy land is fertile
Your people are famished
But thy land is green
And thy barn is empty
Your vine is dried
Thy schools are markets
Thy ivory towers
Now Sodom
Thy teachers are lechers
Thy judges are drunkards
Thy priests are wolves
And thy rulers are lions
Thy ministers are pests
Thy lawmakers are dragons
They starve us
And bury our money
In the cemeteries
Your virgins are
In the maternity wards
Girded with sack clothes
Your field is wasted
Thy children howl
There is lamentation in the land
Thy knowledge is perverted
Thy wisdom is corrupted
Your cattle have no more pasture
Their shepherds are murderers
Your seed is rotten in its cods
And your corn is withered

Thy light is turned into darkness
Thy roads are death traps
Den of robbers
Hide outs for kidnappers
Thy checkpoints are
Naira collection points
For thy cops
Thy zebra crossings
Are mere paintings
Thy toll gates
Are gateways for corruption
Thy cows are kings
But thy citizens are dungs
And meat for the cannibals
Thy oil our doom
Thy bread for the rich
And pebbles for the poor

A Good Party

by Jordan Faber

They had been living in their glass house nestled into the inky woods of a forgotten Chicago suburb for a year. And it would be a good party.

The home was mid-century; the day was white-hot.

A good party: the words unfurled from Pearl's glossed ruby lips as clean, pressed linens.

Red gladiolus filled every vase. Her husband, Calvin, was out cutting the weedless grass.

The sun had set. Pearl needed matches needed for her beeswax candles; her ballet slippared feet hit squarely on each tigerwood step.

Pulling open the drawer of a teak desk, she heard a percussive thud sound against the glass wall to her right, the one which separated inside from outside. Not a bird flying into the glass, the thought thrummed through her—not this late.

Pearl turned around to see a thin man in a clown mask, wearing a dirt-stained, pink tutu and a white, ripped, T-shirt. He stood outside, five feet from the window where he'd just thrown a stick. He stared at her through the glass from behind his black-and-white clown mask with emerald, bloodshot eyes. He stood with his feet widely apart on the manicured grass.

Pearl opened her mouth, and the house seemed to reel itself into a Hitchcock film, her scream running through her guests' blood: fire melting ice. The sharp fluidity of her voice erased what calm had come before with the absolute truth that when chaos reigns, it thunders down.

The masked man would learn it was Pearl Moore's dinner party he'd undone with a single non-fatal arrow plunging into the flesh of his back two minutes later. She'd grip her hunting bow firmly with her carnation pink nails.

He ran, zig-zagging between evergreens through the dark forest to the east. Her gray gold flecked eyes tracked him.

Calvin's body, uncoordinated, spilled down the spiral staircase, crashing towards Pearl.

Call the police—she told her husband, and check the cake.

A Fundamental Change In Approach or Underlying Assumptions

by KB Nelson

In the dumpster behind the fish market,
a torso. Our flashing blue and red lights
arrive after gross remains are discovered in
this vile garbage bin, under fishy piles of
guts and heads and fins.

Top half of a young woman,
frozen rictus laugh displays malformed
teeth perhaps, or filed for body
modification. Pointed incisors, pointed ears too,
natural rounded breasts, cold seashell-pierced
nipples point to the clouds.

We think, perhaps, a crime
of rage, throat and neck savaged
like we've not seen before,
til my buddy the M.E. opens her ribcage
and nothing is right, and we
remember we saw one long, strange,
filleted fish body with
no matching head.

In a moment, you have to decide,
deny in comfort or accept that all
you hold as true may be not.

So now my buddy and I,
both recently and suddenly retired,
walk the shore, pretend to fish
and talk to whoever
might be under the waves,
listening.

Little Mermaid
by Ruby Van Bendegem

Illustration to accompany A Fundamental Change In Approach or Underlying Assumptions by KB Nelson

