

HORROR LITERARY MAGAZINE

# CADAVEROUS MAGAZINE

ISSUE 3

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# MASTHEAD

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BY DORA ESTELA GONZALEZ

Decaying meat became her sealed fate.

# HER HEART WAS NOT MOVED

BY LINDA M. CRATE

the cottage  
contrite and kind  
did not have any skulls  
that belonged to  
any she harmed,  
but rather the skulls she found  
that spoke to her of some  
rune and history  
she was hungry to know;  
yet despite this  
they hunted and hated her  
as she tried to live  
her life peacefully in the wood  
when cornered sometimes  
there is little difference  
between a good witch and a bad witch  
she tried to show them reason  
they were beyond  
reasoning—  
so she lifted her hands and turned them  
all into creatures to pay for their crimes  
she turned the pastor's wife into  
a black cat because of the cruelty the woman  
exhibited to anyone who was not her kin or part  
of her church,  
she turned the pastor into a toad,

and so on and so forth  
until there were none to stand before her  
but a bunch of animals;  
some were felled and killed  
no one realizing that once they were human  
and she refused to spare any of them  
from their fate  
because her heart was not moved  
to their chaos for all the wounds they had cut  
into her and their desire for her death.



# THE HUNGERING WEREWOLF

BY LINDA M. CRATE

there are missing chickens,  
missing children, missing men;  
their limbs are strewn  
in the wood  
no one knows when it's safe  
to come out  
a little town rattled to the core—  
they're all asking the same  
question:  
who or what could have  
done this?  
there's a mark of some beast  
upon the trees  
yet it is not from a deer  
or any other animal they are willing  
to admit exists,  
so what could it be?  
they all go through their suggestions:  
bogeyman, swamp creature, big foot  
and everyone gets angry  
because none of those things are real—  
the wind rattles  
with a whisper they ignore  
as they continue arguing  
it's not until they pause and realize it is night  
a full moon has fallen, there is a howling thing

they don't realize how close the wolf is  
until he tears them all apart.

# BY WAY OF HIS FANGS

BY LINDA M. CRATE

the snow cloaks the  
cold presence  
of the vampire  
closing in  
behind them

their laughter  
pierces the otherwise silent night  
even owls look at them  
with admonishing glares as their feathers  
break and dance in moonlight

the loving couple  
doesn't feel the presence  
of the ancient soul  
all they can hear is their beating  
hearts and all they can taste is one another

there is no tension and no fear  
not until he makes a move  
swift as lightening  
he snatches the man  
before she knows what's happened

she speaks his name breathlessly  
into the white air

swivels around madly until she follows  
a trail of blood that leads him  
to his body

instead of running as she should  
she comes closer  
as he knew she would  
meeting her lover the very same way in death  
by way of his fangs.

# UNTIL THE DAY HE DIED

BY LINDA M. CRATE

they know not  
enough to be afraid

haven't listened  
to the warnings of the wind

and moon falling across  
their skin in silver haunting whispers

all they know  
is the song of one another

until he comes to them  
slashing through sinew and bone

as if it is nothing  
he doesn't look anything

like the zombies of books and movies  
yet there he stands smirking

gnaws at the brains of the one  
as he lets the other run,

and then he attacks the other lover;  
"cowardice isn't something i could reward,"

he rasps;  
surprising the boy who never knew

zombies could speak  
until the day he died.

# HOW WRONG THEY ARE

BY LINDA M. CRATE

the spiders  
even knew to forgo  
this place

because he would crush them  
not with his fangs,  
but with his boots or palms;

he did not like them  
desecrating the beautiful tombs of all those  
whom he had once loved

choosing to die a mortal death  
instead of taking the quiet chorus of immortality  
with him—

they know not to give the dead  
any respect  
because they forget everything

their parents taught them for a moment of fun  
insisting nothing will happen to them in this haunted  
graveyard,

but he hears the beating hearts  
of the four girls and the two boys

all laughing the same tired chorus;

his mind plots traps for them all until all six  
fall prey beneath his white fangs  
he gives them not the mercy they beg him

decides that if one is to be ignorant  
then he shall show them how wrong they are to  
believe it bliss.



# THE LOOKS OF FEAR FOREVER ETCHED

BY LINDA M. CRATE

the skeleton's hand  
peeped beneath the ground,  
but none saw it;  
they were too busy talking and on their  
phones to notice they ought  
not have walked into this graveyard  
on this way home—

the skeleton unveils himself  
from beneath a veil of soil and still  
none of them know  
oblivious to their fate or his presence  
they keep speaking of mundane things that  
wear so easily on the ears of the dead

"all your worries are inconsequential  
when you're only going to be dead,"  
he muttered murderously;  
the skeleton cackled as he let his hands go  
in different directions to kill two different ones

before he used a knife in his mouth to render the  
other one dead—  
"didn't take ashes to bring you all down  
just a villainous skeleton,"

he cackled reveling in the looks of fear forever etched on their faces.

# ONLY THE LIVING POSSESS REGRET

BY R. G. KAUZLARIC

Upon the bed of eradication  
sprawls my wounded soul.  
Demise is imminent.  
My sins will take their toll.  
With no more strength  
To combat the inevitable,  
I succumb to my final destination.

It appears before my bloodshot eyes,  
Lassitude in a heap of incompleteness.  
I enter the abyss of absolution,  
Met face to face with my sinister possessor.  
Searing growls exude from its mouth,  
Accompanying the anguish I feel within.

I am ominously taunted  
By the mirror reflecting  
Who I could have been.  
Such evil knowledge is  
Displayed with unprecedented power.  
My wrongdoings and regrets  
Forever remind me of the tragedy  
Of which I was the sole cause.

I weep in utter despair,

Admonished by the ghoul,  
Banished by the world.  
I contain no control.  
It morphs my mind  
With its pernicious wrath,  
Subjecting me to sorrow,  
Tossing me overboard.  
Hopelessly cascading  
Into the miserable inferno of carnage,  
I plummet to my doom:  
My eternal tomb.

# IN THE THROAT OF SPITHRA'S FOREST

BY WESLEY D. GRAY

Beneath the whispering, rot-leaf canopy,  
where her weaving children sleep  
in shadowed chatters  
discretely lurking in every nuanced crevice  
of her twitching, kaleidoscope temples.

Innumerable in their birth,  
their countless eyes never miss  
a curl of worm, a flutter of wing,  
or a fleck of dust as it warbles  
down the moans of dying beams.

Their guts spin up a cumulative hunger  
never sated or contained,  
unstable in its silent roaring,  
ready to snap at the slightest wisp  
of a scent from blood-born prey.

Strung up in the underworld branches,  
silken catacombs dangle  
from limbs like candies on the vine,  
carcass fruit slurped and shriveled  
into tethers of ribcage husks.

Silky crystal threads join every twig,  
throwing slickened prism reflections  
of geometric blood and dew  
as scrying legs ratchet downward,

bleeding eyes like waxing rain.

The slightest quiver upon the latticework  
rings a chime of glass-shattering voices,  
tickling vibrations to jitter the bones  
as the crimson hourglass turns  
and her legs strum songs of delicate decay.

Her multi-hinged thighs of mirrored ebony,  
dripping in venom-laced secretions,  
curl lithely around throat and spine,  
spiraling the hunk of meaty morsel  
in a frothy rotisserie of fibrous spit.

Eclipsed in her shadow,  
reflected in her eyes,  
silk-spittle coated into a cocoon--  
the next piece of low-hanging fruit,  
pendulous beneath her woven canopy.

# THE LICH

BY TOM DOCKER

He couldn't remember what had drawn him there. He couldn't remember much of anything anymore, but base instinct told him that he was close. The woods were uncannily quiet, devoid of birdsong and the faint rustle of wind through the leaves. The sharp pistol crack of twigs snapping beneath trudging feet immediately deadened to silence as he walked slowly through the unrelenting night.

His eyes were near useless in the murk, but ahead amid the trees he could make out the faint outline of a person. A girl, or so it seemed. He followed the figure helplessly, effulgent moonlight silhouetting a shape flickering between humanoid and something altogether stranger, but always distant.

The sound should have startled him, but in his trance it barely registered. It began as faint laughter, phasing slowly around him from left to right. A child's laughter. Slowly it increased in pitch and volume, orbiting him like a sickening pulsar until the source of the evil sound was at once above, beneath and within him. The nearly-girl had stopped, turning slowly to face him. His ragged breath caught in his chest. He was there.

He was in a wide clearing, the edges marked by deformed oak and ash trees casting eerie, warped moon shadows on the damp ground beneath. The air seemed thick, laden with the half remembered scent of camphor and charred wormwood. The bones of birds and small mammals scattered the woodland floor, a scene of intense, breathtaking horror. The figure of the half-girl was grisly and cruel, sunken cheeks hollow beneath an eyeless stare, but he was impossibly drawn to her. She moved towards him at a glacial pace, although he heard no footsteps, no crunch of tiny bones. Her sightless eyes bore through him, head tilted as if curious. She spoke.

The sound that emitted from her decaying maw was like nothing ever conceived by the living. Thin and dry, an inhuman rasp like the creak of a rusted sepulcher gate. The smell of a charnel house, putrescent and rank, filled his nostrils, but didn't break through the glamour. "The old gods must feed". He died slowly, oblivious to his fate.

A villager would later report seeing a flash of magnesium light from the wooded hollow that night, and the farm dogs were spooked into madness by a sound inaudible to human ears.

The stranger was never found, and was never missed. Folklore meant that few humans entered Lich Wood any more, especially not at full moon, but those that did would have seen the major oak more contorted and grotesque than before. The gods were satiated, for now.



BY KACYEE WILSON

Gleaming eyes loom in the shadows.

# VEIL

BY IRINA MOGA

Often, I argue of the dark veil, a *camera obscura*  
in which serrated rays of light land  
in the attic of the house.

Reveries and cruelty, corners of rooms filled with dried ink and blood,  
perched on bastions of touch,  
squabbling in the drama of love.

Behind the curtain, a puffed up diaphragm waits up on the illusion.

This space of litany, and its inverted image,  
is brought to bear on the Gothic arch  
suspended in the nexus of the edifice  
by a gargoyle from the distant past.

# THE DAY OF REAPING

BY ELIZABETH RUTH DEYRO

Legend has it that every year, on the 14th of August, young men living in the small town of San Juan go missing, with no clue as to why or what was behind this phenomenon. To this day, townsfolk remain vigilant, making sure that their boys don't ever go out on the Day of Reaping. But Anton was never one to believe in folklore; despite his grandmother's pleas, he still sneaked out of the house. He wanted to prove that the Reaping was just a myth, meaning to stay out until the night ends. When he gets back home, he will boast how he outlived the tale. Basking in the dead silence, he walked around, mocking the night patrol, in search for a deadly creature. Instead he saw a beautiful lady in white. She looked lost, but when she saw him, she smiled, as though finally feeling safe. He smiled back. Feeling confident and lucky to find a company, a pretty girl at that, he walked towards her.

Anton was never found again.

Legend has it that every year, on the 14th of August, the goddess of death visits the town of San Juan in search for her lost love. She never finds him, as he is long gone, but she refuses to believe so. Instead, she takes mortal men on the same day every year, and robs them off of their lives, takes their bodies apart to recreate her lost love, stitching together body parts of different men until her masterpiece is complete, until she gets her lost love back.



**BY JIM ZOLA**

# BY CASSIDY MARSH

her steps echo in the quiet damp street  
a figure watches her  
eyes the sway of her hips,  
the luscious bounce of her hair

a silvery glint from his shadow  
catches her eye  
he begins to follow  
the repeated clack of her heels

she turns a corner  
and when he rounds it  
the street is empty  
he can't hear her footsteps  
anymore

he turns to head back  
and there she is in front of him  
grinning mouth too big to be real  
I'm hungry for you she says  
and ravages through him

# THE WICKED GARDENER

BY J.B. STONE

The back-roads of rural America terrify me at night, especially when there is almost no light to be found. Driving into the city when one is accustomed to the bright lights, the surrounding gleam of urban skylines. All fixtures to soothe and numb nerves like Novocain to the soul. However, the overcast of darkness covering these remote routes are static shocks to the heart. If things could not be more troubling, I was running out of gas. A panic attack was imminent.

I stopped over by this quaint little farm. I grabbed my emergency gas tank from the trunk. Knocking on the door as loud as possible. Hoping to see light shine from the front windows and some response to my pleas, even a reluctant response would've been great. Strange enough I got my response, but no voice echoed through the doorway, no late night grunts and mutters. It was a series of notes, slipped from under the door.

Luckily, thanks to the flashlight feature on my phone, I had something to help me read the notes at least.

The first note said, "It's 2:30 in the morning! What do you want?"

Shouting out my responses,

"Sorry to bother you at this time of the night, but just looking for some gas. Wondering if you might have a pump around this property, or knew where the nearest station might be?"

The head of this household clearly wanted me to leave, but it didn't seem to be due to the lateness of the hour. If the owner of this homestead wanted me to leave, why not yell out the responses or come out with some blunt object to scare me off? After the bizarre exchange of words, the farmer sent me one last note,

"Meet me outside, by the cornfield. I might have what you're looking for"

Along with the note were walking directions and a lantern. As I started to walk through the fields, I saw scarecrows. They were pitched on pikes alongside the trail. I couldn't help but feel fear's clutches trickling down my spine. I went from gently strolling to frantically speed-walking. Almost every corner of this trail featured these scarecrows posted alongside like crucified bodies composed of straw and lanyard.

In the distance, there it was, the cornfield! I could see my destination clearly. It was a gap in the dead center of stalks and the Moon shining down upon the grounds like theatrical spotlight. This is where I saw it. I don't say 'she,' nor 'he,' nor 'they.' Fore what I saw can only be in the pronoun of 'it.' The only human attribute were arms that stretched out as bony ligaments like a skeleton's only to be covered in skin as thin as lingerie lace, with veins popping and bulging. Shriveled and wrinkled to the barest cartilage. Long finger nails that extended like tiny claws and holding under the surface of both palms, a set of razor-sharp daggers, three in each hand to be exact.

The rest of its physical make up, unseen even under the palest of moon-glow. A raggedy cloak draped along whatever was under its body. As if the creature under this cloak wasn't only inhuman, but a shadowy demon in the dark boggy mist. The only sight of beauty were flowers, blooming and budding, on the wreath worn atop of the opening hood. But even those little visions of springtime on its head were overshadowed by the poison tipped thorns in its vine.

Could this creature be the entity who sent me these back and forth notes. I quaked in fear of such a grim-looking presence. It snatched my lantern, as the ground slowly, but surely started to consume me. The dark presence shined its lantern at the tethered bodies of scarecrows and looking closer at the bodies gleaming near the light, something else shined in great detail; corpses. Corpses of people gutted and mutilated, with straw and hay stuffed inside of their entrails, buttons stitched onto their eye sockets, as blood dripped like crimson-red mascara.

In shock, I thought I would be motionless, but I can say this, fight or flight instinct exists. With the need of escape from such grips, I learned this firsthand. I grabbed one of the daggers from the mysterious being and stabbed the dirt covered roots trying to tear my flesh. With all of my might, I pierced through the timber veil. For these roots that acted as arms to choke and eviscerate still felt some sort of pain. I ran, and ran, and ran, until I could draw my last breath. I was able to hitch a ride, on the back of an old Chevy pick-up. I jumped onto the flatbed.

Although it may seem I escaped death itself, there was no sigh of relief. For I know the thing that stalks me in the night. A fiend without a face, seamed onto the fabric of my mind. A ghost still haunting my psyche to this day. Everyday my mind is nothing but a

bottomless pit of fear, falling to this sight in the shadows. As I wake every night in my bedroom, I look out from my window only to see its figure in the distance.

It's waiting until I am off my guard, waiting for the right time to use the power of earth to devour my being. In these moments, life is an infinite chase scene, where I am the object of pursuit and my stalker is a specter. The spirit of a fate branded upon my being, forever eclipsed by the silhouette of reaper, looking to sow these oats of torment. A gravedigger searching for a soul to harvest.



# PARISH RECORDS, 1776

BY TIM GOLDSTONE

The weary village priest  
febrile with one too many funerals in his eyes  
was troubled by the huge escaped demons  
Unbelievers who had begun to inhabit his parish  
and who with casual disdain  
for the authority of his robes  
and the earnestness of his needs  
enticed him to stare upon them in awe night after night  
though he knows they are there to tear down  
his church with their grossly muscled bodies  
to scorch the manicured grass  
between tombstones  
with their evil thoughts  
their blazing red eyes  
the shimmering iridescence on their rippling skin  
their unbelieving ever-darkening  
ever-elongating shadows  
while he himself was shadowless  
while he himself was nothing  
but shows the strength of his resistance  
by a refusal to weep as he sinks to his knees  
as the demons encircle him  
prise open his sallow hollow jaws until they ache  
and force him to pray in the hissing of snakes.

# WHITE CROW

BY YUAN CHANGMING

Buried deep in my heart  
Is the ghost of a white crow that no one has  
Ever seen, but everyone may  
Live to be

Always ready  
To fly out, as if hoping to bring back  
Another stolen sparkle  
To set the whole tomb on fire

# TRANSMOGRIFICATION

BY TIMOTHY TARKELLY

The bite changed me,  
left me with burning gums and desperate teeth  
to turn family into prey  
and a mind to a dry hell  
of repined thought and embattled black.

What I was  
saw me every bit human and soft  
to shoulder others' tears  
and carry to bed the weight  
of those I loved and their gentle dreams.

What I am  
keeps me churning in gaslight hunt  
to turn posture into hunchback prowl  
and a kiss to a sunken jaw  
of mirth.

# DARK DREAM

BY PETER CLIVE

A full and eldritch moon  
places its pale pristine mask tight  
upon the sparkling obsidian skin of night  
and exhales a moist and gauzy mist  
to dissolve the glittering pin-prickle of stars  
leaving curtains of cloud spilling across the sky,  
like luminous afterbirth, to set the scene.

You sink into deep tar pits of dark dreaming,  
your limbs aching with the joy of futile struggle.

The late dawning of the low winter sun  
gives no release or consolation. Your cravings  
anchor and submerge you in the rising tide of night  
and the decline and brevity of day as the year dips  
towards the deepening darkness of midwinter  
is the only respite you seek. Night twists

and tightens its roots around each individual rib  
as you disintegrate, overthrown and overgrown  
by every weed that has ever borne the name "desire"  
thriving in the fever and fatigue and indolence  
behind your mind's high walls, their black blossom  
witnessed only by a porcelain moon on nights like this.

The threat of eternal darkness may be averted  
and the night's onslaught repelled by the solstice  
but the soul continues its descent regardless,

and the dark will preserve its bliss and end despair  
depending upon how it's met, by whom, and where.

# THE FISSURE KING

BY PAB ROBERTS

You've heard scratchings. You'll have heard unusual... goings on. Have you ever stayed up too late or woken in the night to feel there's someone... in the room with you?

Janet woke from a deep enveloping sleep with no idea of the time. Without her glasses on she couldn't make out the time on the digital clock but there were no street noises and the light from outside was gone but for the distant glow of orange from the municipal posts.

Her partner, Paulie, stirred beside her and Janet put a hand out to caress the shoulder and take comfort from the solid warmth in the lonely banishment of night. She could not remember if tomorrow was work or leisure, she had no reference of time and she little knew her own age: it was that special half-awake psychology where only the present circumstances are real.

She ran her fingers down the fleshy flank and across the cool back, coming to rest in her favorite spot: that firm crease between bum and leg, a spot that former lovers had failed to be proficient in. Paulie was perfect in most every way and Janet liked to tell her so. But this crease was special and Janet kept to herself quite how much it pleased her, waiting till Paulie's breathing slowed and steadied in the velvet dark for her hand to drift down and just rest there in its magnificence.

She felt a thin line, like a long hair or a chip in bone china, along the length of the fold. Fine enough that it just registered on her sensitive fingertips, like the elusive hidden end of a roll of Sellotape. She pinched gently, trying to fish out the hair but it would not budge. She stroked and dug in lightly with her nail but it would not move. A moment... A moment more... She could not let it lie.

Turning onto her side, Janet used the fingers on one hand to separate bum from leg, her other hand coming in to pluck the intrusion from its resting place. But nothing there. Satisfied, she rolled back to where she'd been lying and resumed her previous position.

There! There again was this hair, this line, this intrusion. It was surely one of Paulie's long fine blonde hairs, beautiful in all situations bar this one. Janet felt her fingers dig quickly in annoyance only for her nail to drive within the hairline, opening till Janet's first two fingers were inside the opening crevasse. More intrigued than anything, Janet felt that the sides were cool and not slick with blood as one might expect. Without thinking too much, she delved a little deeper and found her four fingers up to their entire length within Paulie's leg.

Shocked, she realized that what was happening was not normal, was wrong. She pulled her elbow back but found her fingers clamped as if by subcutaneous calamari deep within the cloven buttock. Paulie stirred but did not waken. Panic growing in Janet, she pulled once more only for the rubber rings around her fingers to pull tighter, causing actual pain now as they seemed to suck on her knuckles and drag her deeper within. She screamed, unable to take this horror on her own. Her call wakened the sleeper whose head turned around to reveal glossy black baubles for eyes and rows of sharp teeth, black and knuckled like bamboo in the vague light from the distant street.

"Paulie!"

But there was no Paulie. Only the Beast. The Beast which turned a little more towards Janet as now her wrist was gripped tight where it entered the dead flesh beneath their shared covers and the inner mouths began to feed on her ensnared fingers within.

Crying now and punching with her free hand, Janet tried looking anywhere but at those gloating eyes, those slick tines. Her sobs and shouts filled her mind as much as the agony of her fingers as they were consumed. The Beast was fixed like a mountain to the bed and Janet would get nowhere while her wrist was still attached. An arm was growing at the other side of this monster, made of twigs and soil and night it rose up like a shadow high above their struggle; a spider coming to drink of her soul.

Bangs on the door, a struggle, a bump, a shudder as a force was applied. Paulie, the real Paulie, was there and she was coming to fight the daemon. The door flew wide and Janet's yell of relief turned at once to a whimper of fear. For it was not Paulie on the other side, but Janet herself standing there in the doorway: that night three years ago when she had come home so happy from that first date. So content with a certainty that the world had come full circle and felt right for the first time in her life. That evening she had kissed Paulie goodnight at the garden gate, by the streetlight, and floated upstairs to her bedroom to smile, to laugh and to rest for the future, their future, was just around the corner.

She recalled how she had sensed a smudge in the tangled bed, some shadow in the sheets, so carelessly left awry from a hurried departure earlier on that day. But three years ago, that is all it had been, a smudge or a shadow so fleeting and then gone.

Now, she looked back at her younger self and realized she was that shadow. And this Beast, this Hellhound, whether it had been inside Paulie all this time or not she could neither tell nor know. A love she had chanced upon that evening so long before, that had felt so natural and right, so exciting, so comforting, so all-consuming was now consuming her.

She closed her eyes as the spider hand descended and the razor teeth parted for a kiss. She would never see Paulie again.



# WHEN I'M THE LAST ONE AWAKE

BY THOMAS L. WINTERS

There's something about the night I adore—with love as mean as raging spurs that rip the day's smiles into folds of dying skin; with the foolish zeal of untold plunders, the quiet victory in fishing on a sleepless pool of lamplight. I'll toss the night my breath forever held, in hopes that I may hear its voice—melting all the stars with venting spirals whispered—so I can draw a brand-new constellation with my electric fingertips. There's something about the night that feels warm as bright mnemonic fever, even in the winter's wily scratch; kinder than Persephone's cradle, even when its arms have had their last flame into smolder spun.

Perhaps the night really is just cold. Perhaps it's all without remorse. Perhaps that's precisely what I adore about it—the potential for excitement, danger; blind murder in the sand, of worms; the crazy promise of music without course.

The night can steal my vitamins for shadow plays and I'll beam with stomping sickness until the light becomes my cancerous growth, the poison in my bedding.

BY THOMAS L. WINTERS

I the pumpkin, gutted, died laughing.

# WEREWOLF WOMAN

BY THOMAS L. WINTERS

werewolf woman Lady Dyer  
bear my stealthy fruits:  
borne seesawing chilled in baskets  
twined with withering flesh  
bruises plaguing pounds of wasted steam  
bruises blackening  
like hickory trampolines  
sturdy but gummy  
sinking low  
lower

composed of rotted tissue  
decomposing  
like a pair of crisp pink apples perched  
on foreclosed kitchen counters  
sagging  
gelatin shouldered

# VIRGIN

BY JOHN GREY

Your sun rose  
from the alabaster of your neck,  
drowned my killing moon  
in such a brilliance.  
Your gold hair splashed  
across my night-bleached face.  
Your eyes streamed blue,  
drowned my pitiful red.  
Far from my slaking,  
it was the coronation of your flesh,  
less the hour of the dead  
than gilded morning  
in which the crystal portals  
of your beauty gleaned  
and my hideousness  
fell back, blood-soaked,  
into its hideous shadow.  
You were supreme.  
You were glorious.  
For a moment,  
I believed I had a soul,  
not just a hunger.



**BY JIM ZOLA**

# LORELAI

BY THE NARCISSIST COOKBOOK

Okay everyone, if you could hold onto the railing to your right  
Do not - under any circumstances - hold onto the rock  
Many of these natural pillars are load-bearing  
This deep into the cave system, the pressure from the land above us is remarkable  
And a little bit terrifying  
I try not to think about it, to be honest  
I imagine it wouldn't take more than a heavy vibration to cause some of these pillars to  
crumble  
And bring this whole cavern down on top of us  
Haha  
So  
Hands on the railing, please  
Take small, deliberate steps  
Be aware of the person in front of you

And yes  
Yes, that big dark hole in the ground is, indeed,  
The Pit

Over a kilometer deep  
That is 15 seconds of freefall into the dark  
Enough time to say the Lord's Prayer

Almost enough time to say it twice if you know it well.

You are among the first members of the public to see the pit in nearly 100 years  
And the first to try out our state-of-the-art safety gear  
So the braver among you can take a step or two towards it if you like  
I know I did  
But be aware that the edges are deceptively sheer  
And the bottom, our spelunkers have confirmed,  
is littered with the skeletons of thirty-four men, women  
and mostly, in fact, children

You know  
Before we had fences to keep people out  
Railings to hold people back  
Signs explaining patiently to those  
Drawn like fucked moths to the dark  
Why they should choose a safer trial to try their pluck,  
Before we had these things to protect us  
We told ghost stories about dangerous places  
Because while warnings are quickly laughed off or forgotten  
A good ghost story sticks in your mind like a skelf  
And will stay buried for years, growing moist and rotten until  
One night  
When you find yourself tempted by the sight of a burned out old farmhouse  
All crumbling wood and rusted nails  
The ghost story's mother-of-pearl eyes will snap wide open  
And it will skitter giggling from the cellar of your mind  
And glide silently up behind you  
Reaching out a clammy finger for the nape of your neck  
And with cold sweats

And apprehension,  
Wide eyes and shallow breaths,  
It is the story that will save you from injury more than common sense  
As it chases you away  
And away  
Faster and faster  
Swearing you'll never come back to this place again

Of course, there's a reason we invented the railings  
and the fences  
and the red and yellow signs  
Because there are always some for whom the ghost story is never fully embedded  
It stalks from room to room inside their brain  
Keeping them awake for nights on end.  
There is never peace  
And it never rests.  
The ghost, in a sense, becoming a siren  
And the only hope of calming its wail  
To confront it on its own ground -  
To kill it  
Or to prove it never existed at all.

This, I assume, accounts for more than a few of the bodies  
huddled together at the bottom of the Pit

Because, naturally  
These tunnels  
This very chamber in particular  
Is guarded by its own ghost story.



I heard it first as a kid,  
And I remember it more vividly than I do most birthdays and Christmases.

-----

There was a young girl  
Lorelai  
Who lived in the village nearby  
Who had a voice like a nightingale's  
And a face like an angel's  
And a fondness for kissing other girls  
Two of which were sisters, who, when their mother got wind and thundered up the stairs to  
beat them  
Pleaded through tears that Lorelai had sung an unearthly hymn to bewitch them  
A poison which seeped in through their ears causing a burning in their bosom.  
Their mother told their father  
And their father told the priest  
And the priest visited Lorelai's parents in the night  
Said their daughter was to be taken to a distant parish to be reeducated  
He didn't tell them why  
Only that she would be returned when she had learned the meaning of wrong and right.  
Lorelai didn't understand.  
She begged to stay,  
Until the priest made it subtly known that he knew what she was

And that if she wanted her parents to carry on loving her  
She would put up no fuss.

She did not fight.

She did not cry.

She made no sound when she was taken away.

Imagine the sinking in her gut,  
When the horse and cart pulls up not ten minutes later  
Beside a ragged gash in the rock,  
And she can tell the priest is lying  
When he says

"This is where we keep the wine, Lorelai.  
You want to bring a gift for your new hosts, don't you?  
Go on in and grab some."

She hesitates, sensing danger.

"Ah, you would rather I take you home I suppose, dear?  
And explain to your poor mother and father  
That the devil whispers nightly in their daughter's ear?  
Go fetch the wine, girl.  
You might even get to taste some.  
Though you and I both know you don't deserve it."

He is smiling,

but not with his eyes

and though his tone makes her nervous

she complies.

As she slips easily through the cave's opening  
she is relieved to find that there are indeed  
a dozen bottles of wine.

She grabs as many as she is able to carry as quickly as she can  
But the fat priest is already squeezing himself through the gap in the rock behind her.

She offers him a bottle from her arms.  
He picks one up from the floor instead  
takes a drooling swig  
and says

"Did they ever tell you, you were born premature?  
You were a tiny thing back then.  
Still are."

He drinks again  
deeper this time  
and coughs as some goes down the wrong way.

"We all thought you were doomed for sure.  
I was, I think, the third person ever to meet you:  
The midwife,  
Your mother,  
And I.

They came and woke me from my sleep to have you baptised  
They were so certain that you were soon to die."

His narrow eyes grow narrower  
She tries not to breathe

"My peers would say that I should have recognised even then what you would become  
And that I should have privately hurried your demise along  
But, Lorelai, it may shock you to learn that the church is not always right."

He takes a step towards her.

"I want you to teach me your song,  
The song you use to bewitch the other little girls.  
How did you learn it?" he asks.  
"How does it work?"

She is afraid.  
Doesn't answer.  
Mistake.

He reaches out a hand to grab her  
But he's large and slow  
And she's small and fast  
She drops all but one of the bottles and dodges his grasp,  
Darts away from him  
Farther back into the cave

Heart sinking harder,  
Expecting the walls to close in and gang up on her  
But instead finds that the cave seems to stretch on into the dark forever.

There is a moment of stillness  
The priest above her silhouetted against the full moon  
She grips the bottle tighter.

He takes another step toward her  
And Lorelai feels her arm swing out in fear and anger  
The bottle in her hand connects and shatters on the skull of her attacker  
He doubles at the waist  
Clutching at his face  
Groaning  
Sounding like he's almost in tears.

Lorelai sees the cave entrance behind him  
She could make it  
She could make it easily

She doesn't move  
She could have escaped three times by now  
But her legs aren't listening  
They're locked in place

Eventually the priest stands up straight again  
And the chance is gone.

"I'll kill you, witch", he pants, his voice low and wavering  
And for the first time, she believes him.

And now her legs listen  
She turns and she runs  
And he chases  
He is almost upon her immediately  
When the last blessing of moonlight illuminates a narrow passage to her left  
And without pausing to consider her options she ducks and takes it  
He follows  
And together they burrow  
Deeper and deeper  
Into the black  
Farther than even the priest himself has ever ventured.

She has no plan  
She is a rabbit cornered in her warren by the hound  
But the hound isn't giving up this time  
She takes sharp lefts and sharper rights whenever she finds them  
But he won't be thrown off her trail  
Her arms graze the narrow tunnel walls as she runs  
It fucking hurts  
She can tell she's bleeding even in the pitch dark  
Behind her the hound growls and curses  
No way of knowing if he's gaining ground or if he's faltering  
No way of knowing what lies ahead  
Any moment could bring a low ceiling or a dead end  
But she doesn't risk slowing down to take careful steps  
She is sprinting  
Her heart beat-beating so hard she doesn't have to think, she knows she's dying  
Thump thump thump goes her chest  
And thump thump thump go her feet  
And right now there is no fat priest in the world that could outrun her

But she doesn't know this for sure  
So she keeps going  
Until she feels the narrow corridor open up around her

She gasps in a lungful of heavy, dead air  
Adrenaline has flooded her brain  
She is blind as a bat  
She listens to the sound of her breathing bouncing off the walls around her.  
Her mind rattles off calculations she didn't know she was capable of making  
This room is a circle  
About forty feet wide  
Nowhere to hide  
And she senses a great opening in the ground in front of her  
She kicks a large stone at her feet  
Hears it bounce once  
And then drop into nothing  
Five seconds pass, no sound of it landing  
She counts up to seven before quitting  
She can't just wait for him to catch up  
But now a plan is forming  
She hugs the wall and inches her way around the room until she is on the far side  
And she takes deep breaths  
Her heartbeat slowing  
Her courage growing  
And she waits

A whole minute passes before she hears him approaching  
Grunting  
Huffing  
Almost shuffling

She waits until he has entered the room before she speaks

"You've caught me," she says.

"I have nowhere to go.

I'm sorry for running."

She hears him take a step forward

He can't be more than inches from the edge of whatever pit exists between them.

Maybe the fall won't be enough to kill him

But it most certainly will give her enough time to get past him.

"I'll stay here," she says.

"Come and get me.

I'm scared of the dark."

She pauses, before adding:

"Please, don't kill me."

But he doesn't take another step.

She can hear him thinking.

Lorelai holds her breath.

And then an unfamiliar sound,

A scrape and a loud pop

And the smell of sulfur

And a bright light appears as if from nowhere

Illuminating the room,

And the priest's bloodied face, a flap of shorn skin hanging loose over his left eye

His features dancing malevolently in the mysterious light.



"Lucifers," he says, gesturing to the light but explaining no further.

Between them  
A chasm almost as wide as the room itself.  
He looks down and immediately recoils  
Grasping for the wall  
Pulls away soft, wet rock  
Lorelai locks her eyes on him  
Willing him to fall  
His second grasp only pulls away more rock  
And he yells  
and drops the light

They both watch it tumble into the Pit  
Night again.

A moment  
She hears rattling  
Swearing  
Another scrape  
Another pop  
The smell of sulfur  
And the light returns

The priest has found his balance  
He is hugging the wall as Lorelai did  
And has already begun to inch his way across to her

"Please don't kill me," she says,  
This time sincerely.

The priest doesn't smile  
But when he speaks  
His voice sounds like something ancient and rightly forgotten

"Lorelai,  
You don't want to be alive for what happens next."

And feeling the life seeping out of her  
She does the only thing left  
She screams

The ferocity of it surprises even her  
A high, squealing, ringing pitch  
A note she could never have learned to hit in a thousand years  
It ricochets off the walls  
Hitting the two of them from all angles at once  
Tiring, she modulates the pitch  
A new note, a couple of tones lower  
Which harmonizes with the echo of the first  
She sees the priest's eyes widen  
He grasps for his ears

She keeps screaming  
A third note  
A semitone higher  
Joins the others and creates a sound as devastating as the judgement day choir  
The priest, in his confusion, forgets he is holding a lucifer  
And the wool of his cloak begins to smoke  
And catch fire  
Lorelai feels the chord vibrating painfully in her mind  
She closes her eyes

And she keeps going until her lungs are entirely empty  
And only then she stops  
Gasping  
Her chest and throat aching  
The notes ring out for a few moments more  
And then fade away

She opens her eyes  
To see the priest  
Still standing  
Ablaze from the waist up  
Fire consuming him  
And although he must be in incredible pain  
He is not yelling or flailing his arms  
He is statue still  
His gaze is locked on Lorelai's  
His skin crackling like pork  
His hairless, blistered brow furrows into a frown  
His eyes look left, then right  
Then down

And as if he were a puppet whose strings had been cut  
He topples forward  
Casting himself into the Pit  
Fire roaring and streaking behind him like a falling star

She watches his light shrink into the distance for what feels like forever  
Then go out.

I wish I could say this story ends with Lorelai running home through the cold and the rain  
But what kind of a setup for a ghost story would that be?

When the priest fell into the pit  
He took his box of matches with him  
Not that Lorelai would have had any idea what to do with them.  
So she was left in the dark  
And when the shock wore off,  
When she finally had the energy to start the journey back around the chasm  
She found herself almost too terrified to move  
Because the greater danger had passed -  
And, because her brain had burned through all her adrenaline  
She was less able to find her way  
She couldn't intuit the dimensions of the cave or the right directions to take  
She was just a little girl again  
Lost  
No longer blind as a bat,  
Just newly blind,  
And worst of all  
Countless hours of walking  
Of trying her hardest to keep her bearings  
Kept leading her in circles  
Back to the Pit

Eventually  
Tired  
Thirsty  
Alone  
No more than an hour from home,  
She went to sleep to conserve energy.

And that was that.

*'Within the rocks  
Beside the sea  
There lurks the ghost of Lorelai.  
Many men of stronger temperament than I  
Have heard her mournful song  
And overcome with fear and shame  
Thrown themselves into the pit to die.'*

-----

There's something horribly wrong with this story.  
Lorelai's fate is unearned.  
She made no mistakes  
She hurt nobody  
She was forced to fight for her life  
And she won.

She won  
But the story demands that she die,  
That it is her whose body decays and her whose spirit remains  
To serve as a warning to others.

If you think otherwise, ask yourself this:  
Which of these images is more likely to stick in your mind like a skelf  
Growing moist and rotten until needed?

Which is more likely to give you pause for thought before wandering into these tunnels like a fucking idiot?

The burning priest, who stumbles from cavern to cavern smelling of meat and sulfur,  
Relentless and brutal  
But slow and avoidable;

Or the little girl who waits for you  
At the centre of a labyrinth from which even she could not escape

Who rewards those who come too late to save her

With a song  
A poison which seeps in through the ears  
And dissolves the load-bearing columns of your mind  
Giving you a glimpse of the monster within

Causing you to choose  
As a personal mercy  
To die.

# WILDFLOWER VILLAGE

BY JOEY BOROVICKA

Behold the Wildflower Village,  
where the villagers idly feed fowl,  
and few vow to drill tillage,  
for it awakens the wildly evil growl.

I will deal with the wolf giver  
down by the flowered vigil wall.  
Offer a large wildfowl liver  
to thwart the livid Werewolf's gall.

And I'll wave to the wee elf gorilla  
and his droll wife who angrily live  
in a well grown field of vanilla,  
where they hold woeful gillies captive.

I'll go where fluvial ragweed breeds  
an illness known as Galliwad Fever,  
Where the vile falling-owl feeds  
on the frilly wild wailing beaver

As I view the dwelling on the foggy rill,  
where vengeful widows illegally go,  
I vow to you my glazed rifle will  
fire, before the devil's rage will flow.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## JOEY BOROVICKA

Joey Borovicka is a visual artist and writer who nurses his fantasies in a tiny studio out on the Springfield Plateau. He likes contemporary German painting and MeTV.

## YUAN CHANGMING

Yuan Changming published monographs on translation before leaving China. With a Canadian PhD in English, Yuan currently edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Yuan and hosts *Happy Yangsheng* in Vancouver; credits include ten Pushcart nominations, seven chapbooks, *Best of the Best Canadian Poetry* (2008-17), *BestNewPoemsOnline*, *Threepenny Review* and 1,389 others across 41 countries.

## PETER CLIVE

Peter lives on the southside of Glasgow, Scotland with his wife and three children. He is a scientist working in the renewable energy sector. As well as poetry, he enjoys composing music for piano and spending time in the Isle of Lewis. As well as *Cadaverous*, he has been published by Poetry Republic, *Writer's Cafe Magazine*, *Reflections* and *Causeway*, and performs regularly at events in the Glasgow area.

## THE NARCISSIST COOKBOOK

The Narcissist Cookbook is the pen-name of Matt Johnston, a storyteller, songwriter and visual artist from the Isle of Arran, Scotland. Swaddled from birth in traditional celtic folklore, his work today focuses on the nature belief and the role of stories in local and global culture. What stories are, where they come from, and how we allow them to change us.



## **LINDA M. CRATE**

Linda M. Crate is a writer born in Pittsburgh, yet raised in the rural town of Conneautville, whose works have been published in numerous anthologies and magazines online and in print. She is a two-time push cart nominee and has a Bachelors of the Arts in English-Literature. She has four published chapbooks *A Mermaid Crashing Into Dawn* (Fowlpox Press - June 2013), *Less Than A Man* (The Camel Saloon - January 2014), *If Tomorrow Never Comes* (Scars Publications, August 2016), and *My Wings Were Made To Fly* (Flutter Press, September 2017). You can find

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## **ELIZABETH RUTH DEYRO**

Elizabeth is a Filipina writer. She is a prose editor for *Minute Magazine* and *Culaccino Magazine*, and a reader for *Monsterring*, *The Mystic Blue Review*, and *The Cerurove*. She writes for *BioLiterary*, *Nerdy POC*, and *The Tempest*. Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *Ellipsis Zine*, *Black Napkin Press*, *{m}aganda Magazine*, and *Jellyfish Review*, among others. Find out more about her at [notjanedeyro.wordpress.com](http://notjanedeyro.wordpress.com).

## **TOM DOCKER**

Tom Docker is a new writer and professional ecologist hailing from Birmingham, England. When he's not wrestling with badgers he enjoys writing on the subjects of nature and mental health, with occasional detours into horror, science fiction and bad poetry.

## **TIM GOLDSTONE**

Tim Goldstone lives deep in rural Wales. Material in print and online magazines, and anthologies - including *The New Welsh Review*, *Stand*, *Crannóg*, *Red Poets*, *Cambrensis*, *Zero Flash*, *Ad Hoc Fiction*, *Gloom Cupboard*, *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *Ellipsis*, *Altered States*, *The Speculative Book* . Prose

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## **DORA ESTELA GONZALEZ**

Dora Estela Gonzalez is a writer and freelance illustrator. Her works have been published online, in various online anthologies and magazines, and in print. Her poetry and illustrations have been showcased in various issues of Writers Bloc Literary Magazine. Her fantasy novel *The Five Kingdoms of Severi Book One The Keys of Destiny* was published in April 2015, with the second book in the works.

## **WESLEY D. GRAY**

Wesley D. Gray is a writer of things mostly strange. He is an active member of the HWA, an author of fiction, and a poet. His first two books include *Come Fly with Death: Poems Inspired by the Artwork of Zdzislaw Beksinski*, and the horror novel, *Feeding Lazarus* (written as Rafe Grayson). Residing in Florida with his wife and two children, most nights you can find him enjoying a wide variety of geeky activities, but mostly, tabletop gaming with family and friends. Discover more at [WesDGray.com](http://WesDGray.com).

## **JOHN GREY**

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in Examined Life Journal, Studio One and Columbia Review with work upcoming in Leading Edge, Poetry East and Midwest Quarterly.

## **RILEY KAUZLARIC**

As a new poet, Kauzlaric is experimenting with various themes, forms, and genres. He was published in "Wisconsin's Best Emerging Poets: An Anthology." He is currently an English major

at UW-Whitewater applying to be a copy editor at the Royal Purple.

## **CASSIDY MARSH**

Cassidy is an emerging poet, wannabe writer, and the 2018 Spring Fellow at Alice James Books. She is an unabashed extrovert surrounded by introverts. Follow her on twitter @frassy\_cassy

## **IRINA MOGA**

Irina Moga is a Canadian poet who writes poetry in English and French.

She is a member of The Writers' Union of Canada.

Irina's poems have appeared in literary magazines in Canada and the US such as "Canadian Literature", "dandelion", "carte blanche",

"Rockhurst Review" and "The Chaffin Journal."

She previously published two poetry books in Romanian.

## **PAB ROBERTS**

Pab Roberts is an author and voiceover personality from Scotland. He once worked as Frankenstein's Creation in New York for a Summer.

## **J.B. STONE**

J.B. Stone is an emerging poet/fiction writer originally from Brooklyn, NY, now residing in Buffalo, NY. Stone has a flash fiction piece on *121 Words.com's Summer Issue Vol. 2* and poetry featured and/or forthcoming in *The Occulum*, *Vending Machine Press*, *Ghost City Review*, and *Riggwelter Press*

## **TIMOTHY TARKELLY**

Timothy Tarkelly has an MA in Theatre from Kansas State University. His poetry has been featured by Cauldron Anthology, Lycan Valley Press, Paragon Journal, Aphelion, Whisper and the Roar, Fourth & Sycamore, GNU Journal, and Poets and War. When he is not writing, he works for a non-profit that serves survivors of domestic and sexual violence in western Kansas.

## **KAYCEE WILSON**

Kaycee Wilson is an avid writer in school and a devoted participant in *Nanowrimo*. She enjoys writing for the young adult genre where she has a combined total of a half million reads on *Wattpad*.

## **THOMAS L. WINTERS**

Thomas L. Winters is a writer from Ontario currently developing a chapbook of dark, surrealist poetry. He's always had a sharp interest in fringe subject matter, and hopes, in 2018, to publish multiple pieces of fiction and non-fiction that reflect his personal philosophy; and to begin writing his first novel in earnest. You can read his work in *Grotesque Quarterly*, *Occulum*, *Figroot Press*, and *The River*.

## **JIM ZOLA**

Jim Zola is a poet and photographer living in North Carolina

