

Bleached Butterfly



Vol 1:3

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Editor: Lori A Minor

Cover Art: Jim Zola

A Note From the Editor

Thank you to everyone who made this issue enchanting! A special thanks to Jim Zola who provided stunning cover art for this issue. Bleached Butterfly is really starting to shape into its own voice that sets it apart from other mags and e-zines. Thank you for taking this journey with me. I hope you enjoy another stellar issue!

- Lori A Minor

Contributors

Roberta Beach Jacobson
Tim Gardiner
David Spicer
Jim Zola
Mark Meyer
Rp Verlaine
Sheree Shatsky
Tyler Wettig
Gary Hittmeyer
Marion Clarke
Marc Darnell
Louise Hopewell
John McManus
John Tustin
Joanna Ashwell
David He Zhuanglang
Dinesh Shihantha De Silva
Mark Gilbert
Debbie Strange
Hifsa Ashraf
Elizabeth Alford
Susan Burch
Marilyn Humbert
Agnieszka Filipek
Christina Chin
Sanela Pliško
Elizabeth Heckmann
Lavana Kray

five senryu

by Roberta Beach Jacobson

bar where single atoms meet to collide

garage floor doll

spider webs

in her eyes

vultures of the sci-fi sky

we the people

who have died today

rose petals

texting her gravediggers ready, set, go

A Million Dreams

by Tim Gardiner

Laying on the top of the grassy cliff, I've seen no-one all morning. Two sets of footprints in the sand, some distance apart, lead to the Ness. Perhaps the overcast weather with a hint of drizzle has kept people at home? I drift off to sleep with the sound of the west wind in Yorkshire fog grass.

distant song
a change in wind direction
wakes me

The woman's voice is much closer. She appears to be around the corner of the cliff, just out of sight. Over and over, the chorus of the song is repeated, each time a little louder than before. Eventually, silence reigns over Stutton Ness once more. Intrigued to find the owner of the voice, I quickly descend from my perch and walk briskly around to the headland.

the tide fills
footprints of those
who came before

The swing on the oak is rocking back and forth vigorously, despite the wind having dropped since the woman commenced her song. I rush over to the tree and look up and down the shore. I'm completely alone. Where can she be? I check the disused pit within the clearing. I scour the far reaches of Holbrook Bay with my binoculars.

looking back
profile of a lady
in the dead oak

Between Scylla and Charybdis

by Tim Gardiner

You sail into the channel between the mountains, knowing it's probably a one-way journey, the choice undesirable in a bottle-neck strait. You choose to take the path of greatest resistance in the lee of Scylla's high rock. The cave appears still, no sign of the six-headed serpent. The voyage past her lair, is uneventful until she slithers into the sunlight. Forced into the strait's centre by Scylla, each head offers you a future:

"I am death" says the first.
"I am life" snarls the second.
"I am satisfaction" hisses the third.
"I am madness" proclaims the fourth.
"I am euphoria" screams the fifth.
"I am silence" whispers the sixth.

hideous faces
each with a convincing promise
which fate to choose
while the ocean
slips away

Drawn by Scylla's first offer in your weakened state, you ponder the second option, and the potential trickery of the others. Unseen, Charybdis opens its spacious mouth, swallowing a passing ship. Gradually, your boat drifts toward the sea monster's oblivion which rips seagrass from the shore and spits it into the channel. On the cliff, Scylla is not a patient host, it demands an answer.

sea horses
in the whirlpool
keep their secrets
on the edge of Charybdis
father chooses life

I knew something was wrong...

by Tim Gardiner

My suspicions were first aroused on a stroll along the high street. Every dog I met was a wolf hound. Along the sloping cobbles to the shore were weather-boarded cottages and grand town houses. One in particular stays in the mind, with a high wooden porch, stained glass and bay windows, proudly named the Manor House. The former post office, cloaked in ivy, has some depth to the view, a sofa behind raised railings. You emerge from a yellow door in the midst of white cladding. It's our first meeting; pleasantries exchanged, you beckon me in. The living room is typical of a cottage, dark in winter, and stuffed with bric-a-brac. You proudly point to a painting retrieved from an empty bar.

flowers
above a skull...
you fail to see the irony
in the bottle of wine
beneath

The collection of antiquated books you are selling is as promised. I ask if I can see the library upstairs. Regretfully you shake your head, it is closed to visitors today. The glint of candlelight in blue eyes, tells me not to pursue this further. The gentle rise of cheek bones precedes a nervous smile. Not wishing to offend my host, I get ready to leave. With a word of warning not to walk the street after dark, you bid me farewell.

shadows
in the hollow sockets
of the skull
escort me to the door...
you say vampires exist

I may as well get a drink, it's getting late. I leave the Tudor pub in darkness, the whisky has gone down too well. The words of

the bookseller come back to me, quickening my pace along the street toward the car. Strangely, there are no lights in any of the windows, except for one candle in the attic of the bookseller's cottage, and opposite, a lamp glowing through the stained glass of the Manor House.

narrow shaft
of amber light
from the keyhole
of a heavy oak door...
key on the porch mat

Turning the key, the door opens easily. Inside, I'm bathed in amber light, blinding me. I feel a hand on my shoulder, gripping me tightly. It feels like a woman's hand. The sharp pain of a needle in my neck is the last thing I feel. I wake on a table in a high room. I'm alone. Strapped to the wood as if prepared for a morbid experiment. Numerous books on medical anatomy lie on the shelves.

footstep
on the stairs...
my heartbeat quickens
with the sight of a shadow
on the landing

Your black dress contrasts with stark blonde hair and piercing blue eyes. The smile is unexpected, and kind. Wasting no time, you give me a red liquid to drink. It looks like blood, but tastes sweet, an unnatural surge of energy follows its consumption. The second vial contains a blue liquid, painfully bitter to the tongue, inducing the severest melancholia. The third drink is black. I pass out immediately.

no longer
entranced by the cycle
of sun and moon...
an egret flies away
over the rising tide

QUASIMODO'S PLEA

by David Spicer

This is the beginning of the end, my lost friends.
I've wept through the ages watching beauties
roam streets like so many ephemeral flames,
saddened by your hateful words blazing these days,
not hearing each other's songs like the ghosts
of this cathedral's history. Forgive me, strangers,
but not until you kiss the first children you see.
Hold them by their hands and hope you live
together in peace, lest more embers await you
like burning questions haunting this world
since your dark Eden nights. I have no soul, dear hearts,
though you do—for now—but listen: you can hear music
of my steps roam this orange planet if you press your ears
to the earth and learn from it with the love it deserves.

LOVE POEM TO A MONSTER

by David Spicer

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.

– Elizabeth Barrett Browning

I love you like I love the swill I swigged last night, I love
you like a fever blister, I love you

like the cold the actress caught in The Hotel
Forbidden.

What do I love you like? A migraine, a root canal, an
appendectomy, a colonoscopy, I love you

like a serial killer with cancer.

Oh, I love you like a letter marked Return to Sender, a dead
tree, licorice in a blender, I love you

like a pedophile with five pedophile kids.

Yes, like a jackass with mad cow disease, a steak spiked with
cod liver oil, I love you,

like a mixed metaphor that won't disappear.

I love you like the punk who twisted my tits in high school,
stole my girlfriend at our wedding,

like the mannequin that kissed me in Benadryl dreams.

I love you like the brother who stiffed me for ten grand, the
father with his studded belt,

like the mother who burned my hands with a steam iron.

I love you with the fervor of a roach, a maggot, a shaved pubic
area, I love you

like the neighbor feeding cats to his pet pit bull.

I love you like a box of melted chocolates, a bad acid trip, a
broken mirror, I love you

like a funk-drunk pilot on his first moon voyage.

I love you like the day I lost a hundred dollar bill buying
groceries in a tornado town,

like a beautiful couple who farts to a beat in Gone
With the Wind.

Like the Bile River is how I love you, like the City of Angles,
the Country of Poison Words,

like a vampire attacking hemophiliacs.

I love you like a lizard eating spark plugs, a redundant
suicide, a candy tin of tarantulas,

like a cheating poker player with a .357.

The ways I love you? Like a lying bigot, a wife-beater, a
child-kicker, a corpse-defiler,

like a Black Plague/Spanish Flu/AIDS cocktail.

I love you like nuns force-fed gravel, a burning warehouse of
dead immigrant children,

like a jarful of jalapeno pralines,

I love you, a man immune to the light that shines on his numb
brain, Thugateer.

MOLEMAN

by David Spicer

I listened to my mother for twenty years, who said, *Don't pick moles. They cause cancer. Melanoma. Melanoma.* Such a pretty sounding name for a killer. Moles obsessed me as a child, but I didn't bother the dark bumps. I sought other kids and then teenagers with similar moles to mine: ugly humps of brown and black that lived on our pale bodies. Then as young men, we thought our pale girlfriends shouldn't have them, so we protected them but picked our moles, scratched them until we turned into dark roses, angry at ourselves and the world. The more we thought about our moles, the more they multiplied until one day I disappeared because nobody had as many as I had. They possessed me from face to feet. I lived underground in a basement. One day I grew lonely and spied on a pale woman without moles. If I hadn't picked my moles, I could've married a pale goddess like her and we'd have mole-less, pale children. Perfect with no flaws. But the moles blanket me. I wonder why. I'm pale inside, my blood is red as poppies, but I'm worried the moles are changing my body's color. I hope they don't change my soul. Do I have one? Why did I have to hang around other people who picked their moles? It's as if the moles were contagious. And now I'm covered with them. Now I can't even talk to the pale woman lest she scream at how disgusting and foreign the moles make me appear. I have become the sum of all my moles. Is this what my mother meant when she talked about moles causing cancer if I picked them? I don't think there's a drug poison enough to kill my moles until I'm pale again, innocent without moles, cancer free. I should have listened to my mother, who's pale and doesn't have a single mole on her body.

artwork
by Jim Zola



artwork
by Jim Zola



artwork
by Jim Zola



three senryu
by Mark Meyer

far beyond the night...
sitting at my bedside
Atropos with her shears

laudanum's hands –
at the edge of madness
a faint lantern's light

above his head
a glowing pentagram...
angel or demon?

Inadequate Patterns

by Rp Verlaine

Like dissolving fish
on the computer screen
we disintegrate
each new kiss
each pale white room
where we suffocate
asking for air
others took from us

The Trail's End

by Rp Verlaine

the cost of
deciding on nothing
logic can later forgive

easy escapes
permitting colorless days
their pale glory

grim detachment
to a bonfire
of a lover's effects

a false chance
the elusive miracle
galloping away

let your heart
be its hoof beats
and the fading echo

I've heard horses
take one to the
afterlife's shadowy gray

with heart vivisected
I hear the stallions
getting closer

The Lute Woman

by Sheree Shatsky

The lute woman plants the children heads up in the field, packing the soil tight around the wee necks level to the dimpled chins. She stands back and admires her work. The tousled heads pop like a row of sweet cabbages. Not a loll or list in the bunch.

She sets out the smudge pots to ward off the wolves and takes guard. A silver teaspoon pitted with the bite marks of tiny resistant teeth clicks the laudanum tincture shoved deep in the pocket of her dirty house dress. With ease, she spirited the children away from warm feathered beds with songs from the old days, the playful delicate rich notes plucked from her lute tendriling off and away and into the village, reaching through open windows and tap-tap-tapping at the closed, the notes murmuring, what do you want, what do you need, I have chocolates, come and see.

The sun rises to stonehenge streams of light between each head and there, she plunges a tiny pagan cross deep in the soil, blessing the earth, marking her rows for potatoes, rhubarb and beans. The church bells sound in the distance, a panicked clanging in discovery of empty beds and wads of muslin pulled from small ears singing of chocolate. She soon will join the villagers in search for the missing, in listen of whispered wicked rituals, of warnings to beware the phantom lute woman who hunts for children to plant in her field the night before the summer solstice. She faces the sun with outstretched arms, embracing the glow. "Oh, great and powerful Sol, the warmth over my crops, I welcome you, oh bringer of life. Please accept these gifts." Drawing back her scythe, she tops the towhead first, chocolate smeared across his sweet cabbage cheeks.

The Morning After

by Tyler Wettig

I did not wake up like this—the weather
merely transformed me, and I was too
complicit. Maybe I'll die here, before you,
white in the vastness of world and body.

It will rain next week, and I will wake up
like this. That morning, like every, I will
become disbelief: I know that you will die.
That evening, I will know the same.

I will wake up, and the choir loft will
still its gyres: in praise of salvation,
weapons of mass destruction, their
tawdry fires that also zap cancer—

yours, in fact. The tenors and altos,
their breath taken away, will abscond
in muteness. This heavy weather
will rouse the brass, the trumpeters:

their anticipation a well-tempered,
"surely, it is near."

Spectral

by Tyler Wettig

Dear reader, are you still with me? I'm
moving on: my debts, ironic and/or
fleshy, are paid in sobriety, and the
pregnant canon of Grandpa's ghost-
wisdom stillborn in my dreams: accept the
absurd; it's all we have. But I'm
never sure if I'm alive or dead:
frail of poet-lover-devil ethos, like
grave-digging Heathcliff's muse, and spectral
like life's incredulous placenta.
So here's to a fool's posterity;
likewise, this never really happened,
and, love of my life, I was never there.

four senryu
by Gary Hittmeyer

the unknown disciples
our complete hope now
complete madness

hungry dogs murmured tv's trailer park football Sunday

open sky vibrates
expired suns
litter the highway

scorpion feathers pierce a backwards moon

The Glorious Mystery

by Marion Clarke

a dozen roses
in the ornamental pond -
Easter hotel break

The night of 'the big one', finally recognising the madness in Jack's eyes, she'd hugged herself and sunk her fingernails into the flesh of her arms so deeply that they drew blood. In the bathroom, she examined the tiny crescent moons disguised among the freckles of her pale skin, almost admiring these battle badges.

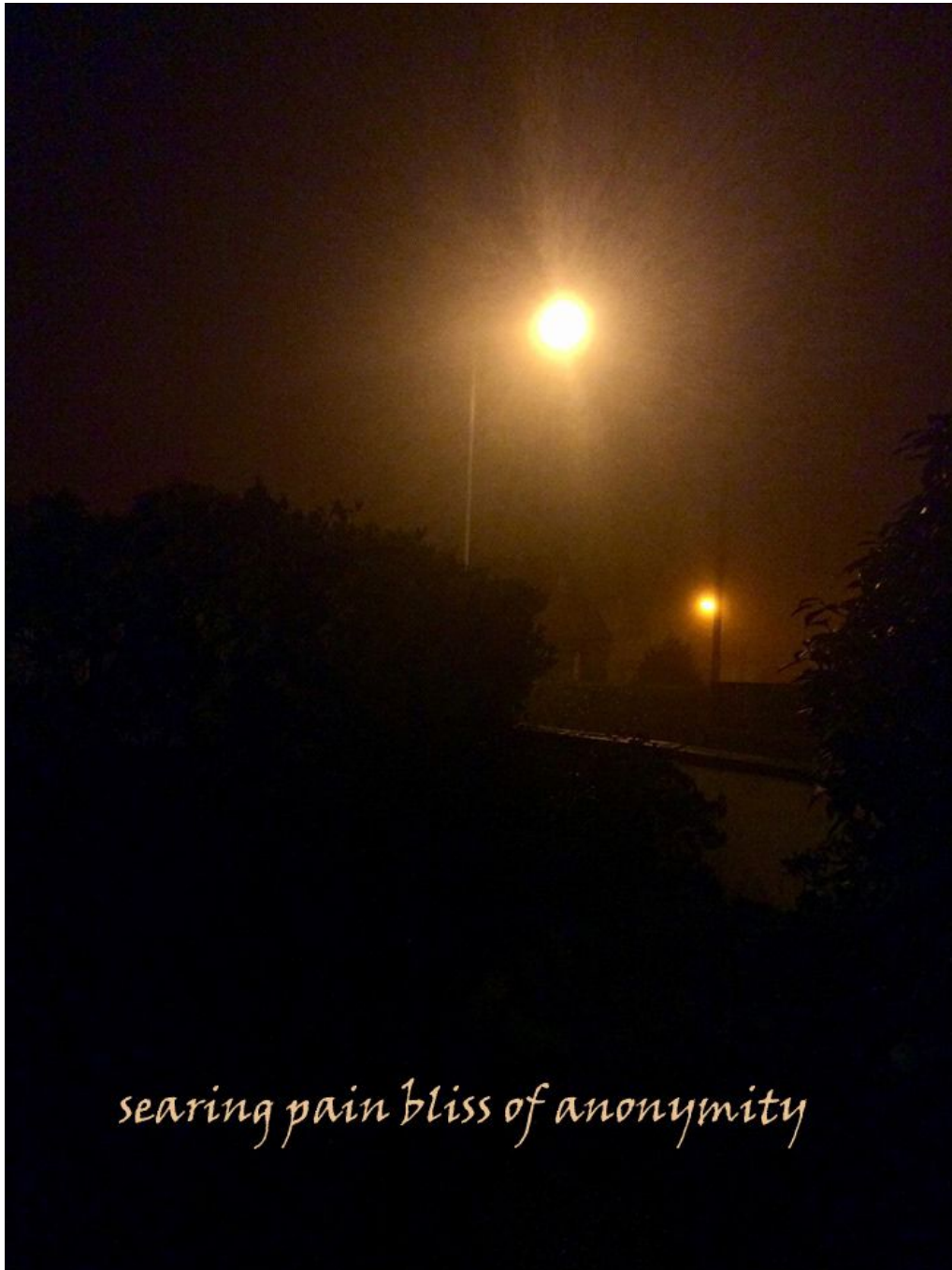
It was then that she understood the attraction of cutting and, some time later, decided to try other methods of escape.

a handful of seeds
and some imagination . . .
Jill and the Beanstalk

haiga
by Marion Clarke



haiga
by Marion Clarke



searing pain bliss of anonymity

I Was Just A Kid

by Marc Darnell

I married the night at twenty,
jumping right in, Vegas and all,
too young to know what I wanted,
the night older, more experienced,
but it hid a lot from me
behind its red neon irises
and black and blue promises.

Its boozes and smoky syllables
attached to me and almost killed me,
as did love I found in ditches so deep
I woke with teeth knocked out
and scars from torn beer cans.

Night is now distant, unpredictable,
not simply romantic like the moment I first
committed to be with it through thick and thin,
but there's been too much thick, and I'm so thin
from trying to look cool and tough for it.

It's a shell, no matter how
I try to impress it or get one embrace,
or the love back that I gave it all those hours
in love letters under sheltering light--
light invented just to handle night's shiftiness.
Who needs that?
Marriage is companionship and security.

Last week I turned to the night in my bed,
already awake and looking at me
like it thought I was its putty forever,
and asked which of us is moving out,
since I've been seeing the day for quite some time.

Them Again

by Marc Darnell

Don't invite them in: they are hungry
and live the teeth of life. You don't deserve
their bloodsucking drama gone awry--
vampires always were a bit unnerved,

vitamin D-depleted, skin like ash,
and all that overnight rioting: do they miss
the crisp of day a bit? They need to wash
the clots around their mouths, and aren't too nice

unless they want a favor or a slice
of buttered bread with scabby crust included.
You might not think they're of the human race--
think again, they're partly human, hooded

relatives who suck the life right out,
and you can't wait until they hit the dirt.

five senryu
by Louise Hopewell

fallen camellia
the bruises under
her bridal veil

butterfly net
all the monsters
I can't outrun

empty coffee cup
the daily struggle
to get out of bed*

moonless sky the overwhelmingness of grief

pancake batter
stuck to the frying pan
yesterday's bruises

Strung Along

by John McManus

Father always seemed a couple of seconds away from screaming or ranting about one thing or another. I tried my best to keep out of his way.

One day he turned so red that his face swelled into a giant sphere, while his body disintegrated into a long thin strand of pink flesh.

My father was now a beautiful red balloon, and as he rose into the cloudless blue sky above our backyard I grabbed hold of his flesh string. Immediately, my feet left the cold grey concrete. I'd always dreamed of flying, but never imagined it would be like this.

Soon the houses below us were ant-size. My balloon father and I continued to climb through the clouds, through flocks of migrating birds, past planes filled with slack-jawed tourists. I waved, but got no response.

Minutes turned to hours, yet my grip never weakened. Evening came, followed by sleep. Upon waking I found myself trapped in a bird's nest, the size of a football stadium.

The remains of my balloon father lay scattered around the charcoal coloured twigs of the nest. I felt nothing. Suddenly a toaster with jet black wings and yellow feet descended out of the sky.

It perched on the rim of the nest, tilting its rectangular silver body towards me. I reached out to touch my reflection in the creature's polished surface. As I made contact the toaster became a golden key.

The key was small in the palm of my hand, but incredibly heavy. I put it in my mouth, swallowed it whole and found myself instantly stood inside the backyard of home once more. There was no sign of my father. I began to smile.

seven senryu
by John McManus

on the last page
of my dream journal
a headless scarecrow

ghosted again
a box of broken dolls
left out on the curb

a tarantula roams
around a dusty dollhouse . . .
recurring dream

cattle truck
the girl locked inside
cries for help

the other kids
steal my candy –
smiling pumpkins

dance floor
the best man loses control
of his bladder

wolf moon
I pull the bloodstained sheets
off grandma's bed

MONSTERS IN THE CLOSET

by John Tustin

There's an electricity in the death dark
of alone.
There's a coldness that penetrates
the blankets at night.
A worm that maneuvers in the brain.
There are feelings that the curious eyes
Of my children cannot unlock.
There are secrets that kill.
Monsters in the closet
that are waiting for their
moment
to strike.
When my misery and torment
and torture
reaches its zenith
the monster will emerge
in the electricity of the night
to claw the flesh
and cleave the bone.
Tear the psyche,
shred the heart.
One day
the night will draw close,
I will shrink in my loneliness and horror,
the closet door will open,
and the monster will devastate
my sad, wobbly world.
At last.

two tanka
by Joanna Ashwell

I can, I will
cope with this
I scold myself
and banish fear
from my bones

in a dream
I polish
raw shards of stars
all the brittle edges
you've chipped away

three haiku
by David He Zhuanglang

deserted farm
a cow head sticks
out of snow

this winter dusk
how lonely my footsteps
across the snow

a distant sail
lingers in the mist...
fingernail moon

The green rage

by Dinesh Shihantha De Silva

A number of waves
Rising and deadly, move inland
Raging tsunami ...
Not of water
But a green liquid taking shapes;
They start to move everywhere
Absorbing people, spitting out bones
Growing bigger and bigger
Till the whole godforsaken town
is void of human existence

Dreaming of Daylight

by Mark Gilbert

molecules rebreathed
recycled & refiltered
stale

longing for something real
a cat lapping
at a saucer of milk

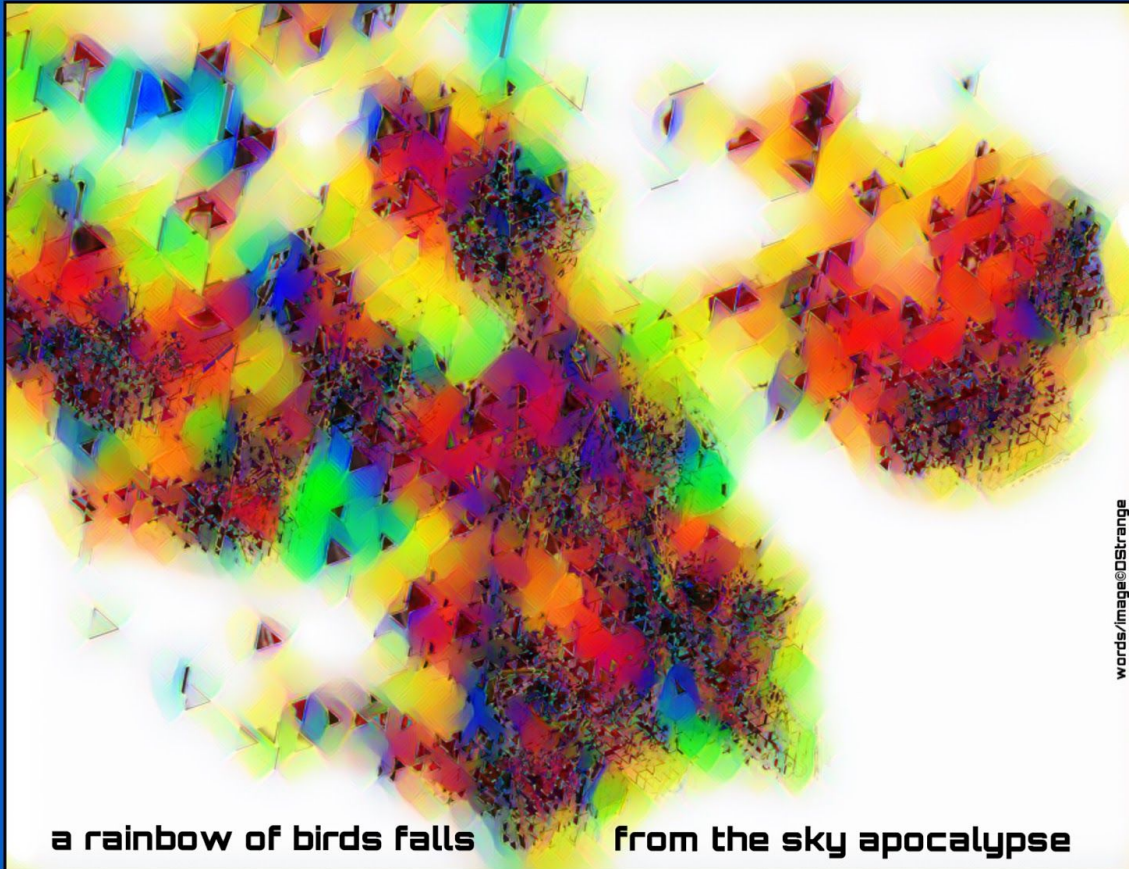
flicking out a paw
licking it the way they used to do
back home

World's Best Dad

by Mark Gilbert

false gravity
keeps my feet on the floor
sticks my spoon to the tray
sucks my morning into this mug
the personal item I was allowed to bring along
my prized possession shattered
by accident on day one
superglued at the seams
everything is recycled
and always will be

haiga
by Debbie Strange



words/image © Debbie Strange

a rainbow of birds falls from the sky apocalypse

haiga
by Debbie Strange

everything was fine they said all would be well they said



words/image©DStrange

stop worrying they said everything was fine they said

haiga
by Debbie Strange



haiga
by Debbie Strange



this & that

lift this
tuck that
say this
mean that
do this
never that
pluck this
shave that
wear this
nix that
think this
veto that
be this
not that

Sunset

(Fibonacci)

by Hifsa Ashraf

sunset
takes me
back to the time
when I used to sit on
a bench under the oak tree
and feel the crimson sight of sunset
on the horizon of my slumberous eyes and
I see the hues of hope at the sky of my true love that
whispers; hope is the only panacea for every dying relationship

seven senryu
by Elizabeth Alford

fading light my father's original sin

the empty
bottle of NyQuil...
autumn chill

twilight ashing snowdrifts

air raid dropping romance at a run

apocalypse tumbling into a shot glass

bomb shelters par for the golf course

hindsight circling a dead man's last meal

three found poems
by Susan Burch

the night sky
littered with stories
to share...
what might
kill the Earth

Pike, Christopher. The Yanti, Tor Books, 2006. p. 9.

she had broken
every bone in his neck
a wide collection
of hints
she was not normal

Pike, Christopher. The Yanti, Tor Books, 2006. p. 10-11.

end-of-the-world
computer games
the odor
of the pines
a guilty pleasure

Pike, Christopher. The Yanti. Tor Books, 2006. p. 13.

Dead Planet

by Marilyn Humbert

birdsong is banished
only the wind
caresses shadows
in the cloudless vault
where the lava sun is nailed in place

not so faraway
bleached bones
startle
outworlders
digging for answers
beneath the crumbling

beside an unoccupied sea
rattling deserted shore
with moon phases
no vegetation, insects
burrowing critters
the bald plains and mountains

this mystery
not slow suffocation
of greenhouse gases
and changing weather patterns
or button pushing generals

such a thorough cleansing
a head scratching enigma

Rifleman

by Marilyn Humbert

his rusty ute
rattles mile on mile
over cracked earth corrugations
his wake of red dust

this angel
beyond the gibber
pockets jingling with shiny shot-cases
frayed felt hat
pulled low
his face forlorn as the task

in the parched days of long drought
thin-ribbed sheep
huddle dwindling puddles
blackened tongues
protrude from gaping mouths
waiting
one by one
to fill the pit

when winter rain greens the outback
they call him avenger
the cull-man
of feral pigs, squealing piglets
and 'roos from gidgee
carcasses traded at Packsaddle chillers

around the campfire
my father croons lullabies
to the spectres
of his slain

CRIMSON

by Agnieszka Filipek

I walk on naked bodies
around me scattered ash of lost days

I want to escape
but my feet get stuck in your face

I don't know how to collect roses anymore
to wake up with birds in the morning

You took my heart
and it died along with you

SCARLET

by Agnieszka Filipek

I lie down again at your feet
and you stumble over me like a log

my body kicked so many times
cannot put itself together anymore

the angel of death gives me a hand
and I leave into darkness

bats drink my soul
cover my eyes with wings

I no longer see the gates of heaven
I'm soaking in blood

black corset stabs
beneath my empty breasts

and thirst joins with longing
dancing together at my funeral

DARKNESS

by Agnieszka Filipek

the woods are full of rocks
broken trees and dead birds
covered up with the rubble of oblivion

in the smell of freedom you are choking
those who want to live
and those who have died

you are hanging them all in heavy chains
clenching the blood in your hands
as the crying of children is heard

wolves are howling in the twilight of eyelids
biting and tearing dreams
dark clouds blocking out all hope

dawn is always dragging
like a wounded dog
and the northern wind hums with horrid laughter

far beyond the hill
the sky is slowly brightening
but I'm still turning dark inside

three experimental monoku and one short poem
by Christina Chin

milliner's ex[act]ing client down her neck

p[arched] throat

tangled scarf a suffocating dream

screaming out
without
sound
without
sound
scream out
dream screaming

four senryu
by Sanela Pliško

the ups and downs
of her bipolar disorder
restrainbow

paranoia
the clock's hand points
its middle finger

shadowless
fifth day in a row
depression

after mass
the reverend talks about

(his) e
resur

River Styx

by Elizabeth Heckmann

The psychosis approached like a tornado, uprooting my sense of reality, my calm, and sanity, leaving me weak and powerless. I knew the darkest specter dwelling in the depths of my depression, the rabid Wolf was right. I was a disgusting, worthless shell of a woman. The rabid Wolf was panting, frothing, snarling, and eager to inflict suffering. Like a fledgling sparrow frozen in the path of the tornado, the kind, gentle voices in my mind fell silent, seeking refuge from the Wolf as he gained momentum. He grew louder with each firing of synapses.

Tears fell down my cheeks, leaving palpable traces of my sorrow on my favorite sweatshirt. My fingers snared handfuls of hair, ripping them out as I rocked back and forth. "You think all your attempts to quiet me worked?" the Wolf said. "You tried silencing me with electroconvulsive therapy, but I prevailed. You know the meds only do so much, I'm stronger than any chemical. I'm louder than your doctors. Why fight me?"

Like a filled sail, once sure and strong in the breeze, I was now toppled by vicious winds while the Wolf howled and bellowed, his rotten breath withering my will. Screaming, I attempted to drown out his demands to slice open my flesh. Yet his growls reverberated through my skull.

"You will bleed. You will hurt. I will win." The fight in me quivered and died. I was his.

Possessed, I stood and staggered to the bathroom. I opened a drawer and pulled out a fresh, gleaming razor meant to groom, now perverted.

"Take it," the Wolf said.

I took it in my right hand.

"Push it against your skin."

I lifted my left forearm up to meet the fresh blade.

"Saw."

The razor sliced into my flesh and I gritted my teeth. The pain was hot. I kept sawing, pushing harder and harder as if slicing through bone.

"You know you deserve this!" he yelled.

"You're fucking useless. It's a shame you survived your suicide attempt," he said. Blood oozed out my veins.

He knew the complete vulnerability of nakedness and used his vileness to contort the daily routine of showering into a torturous event. Nothing in me was safe.

"Brush," he said. As I brushed my hair, blood trickled into my armpit, desecrating my skin as the Wolf's storm desecrated my mind, inviting a maelstrom of fear and hate.

Mad with confusion and defeat, I yelled. "Take me, fucking take me. I'm done fighting. You're right, I'm worthless and crazy." Then I whimpered and hurled the brush against the door. I wanted to vomit. I needed him to stop.

"Strip and shower," he ordered.

Drops of blood landed on the counter as I undressed, and I watched my reflection in the mirror. This is not me nor my mind. I can't feel me. My body stepped in the warm shower, still holding the razor. The heat stung like lava trickling over my cuts.

"Keep cutting," he said.

"Please stop!"

"Cut. Deeper. Deeper. You deserve this." I sawed and cried, inhaling the steam from the shower.

The drain was clogged.

"I want the water stained red." The mixture of blood and water pooling around my feet drowned and trapped me in a festering womb of animosity. "Harder, quicker. I will fill you with self-loathing until suicide is all you know."

I grasped the razor, white knuckled, fingernails digging into my palm, and the howling tornado, now full force, consumed me. Defeated, I screamed and hurled the razor over the sliding glass shower door.

He uttered, "Go ahead, toss the razor. Good throw. Shampoo. Stop crying, you've cut before. You tried to kill yourself. Rinse and condition."

"Why keep me alive if you want me dead?"

"I don't want you dead," he said, "There's no end to this fight. No crossing over the River Styx. All you get is an endless ride on the River, stuck between the shores of life and death. I will torture you and make you beg for the end."

Forced in the Wolf's grip, I finished showering. Shutting off the water, I slid the glass door open. As I reached for my towel, I saw a murder scene. The blood flew, spattering the ceiling, splashing against the clock, exploding against the walls, and dripping on the carpet. The wolf howled with victory.

I crumpled on the shower floor. The blood crept from my forearm onto my belly. Quivering, the exhaustion of defeat settled in and the Wolf sighed with satisfaction. Then came silence. He was gone, I was empty and numb. I can't live like this. This isn't living, this is surviving. This is gasping for the final breath before the dark water covers my head. How do I defeat him?

I unraveled my body and stood, grabbed a towel, and wrapped it around my frail body. Surrounded by my blood, my own little death, I wiped a patch of mist off the mirror, and met my own gaze. My blue eyes were lifeless, void of tears. The despair and depression were deeper than the sorrow that knows tears.

I plug my ears and deny the lies, scrub the blood off the walls, but regardless of how much I struggle, the Wolf is forever in my mind. My strength determines his impact. I don't always have the power to fight him. However, to embrace him, implore him, and focus his energy on the true sources of my rage, rage that I have kept my jaws locked against to avoid spitting it up towards those who deserve it, who have hurt me, will exorcise him. To unleash him, inoculate myself against the festering, rabid self-hate, births an unfamiliar strength within me, a strength that will set me free. I will muscle my way to the shores of the living along the River Styx, I will rise from the aftermath of the storm. I will be weak and powerless no longer.

haiga
by Lavana Kray



religious discord -
our children braiding cords
for a kite

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imperfection
arousing interest –
blind window

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