

SCAB

ISSUE #1

CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE.....	1
AN EXCERPT FROM A ZINE ON MY ELECTRO-CONVULSIVE TREATMENT (BY FISHSPIT).....	2
THE THING ABOUT PANIC (BY SYLVIA BEATO).....	5
IN THE DUST OF THIS PLANET (BY HOWIE GOOD).....	8
JANUARY (BY DÓRA GRÓBER).....	10
PAWS (BY GALE ACUFF).....	12
I THINK OF HIM FUCKING YOU AND I WANT TO DIE (BY THOMAS KEARNES).....	15
HOW I DO ROMANCE (A SHORT PLAY IN THREE ACTS) (BY MEENI LEVI).....	18
MONSTERS IN THE CLOSET (BY MARK WARD).....	21
LUSH LIFE (BY SHANE ALLISON).....	22
YOU DON'T WANT THIS (BY KRISTIN GARTH).....	26
BAD LUCK (BY JOAN DE BONA).....	30
MERIDIAN (AN EXCERPT) (BY JOSH IVEY).....	31
THE OLDEST BOY (BY NATALIE CRICK).....	33
TOUCH THE WHITE ROOSTER: A TESTIMONY ON NESCIENCE (BY NICHOLAS ALEXANDER HAYES).....	35
CALUMNY FROM A QUEER PERSON (BY GERARD SARNAT).....	40
MOUTHWASH GESTAPO (BY RAYMOND LUCZAK).....	41
MOTEL (BY MICK ROSE).....	42
MY NAME WOULD SLIDE OFF MY FACE (BY OMER ZAMIR).....	45
THE FORESKIN OF FINITUDE (BY ROBERT S. COSTIC).....	46
AFTERWORD & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	49

EDITOR'S NOTE

I want to keep this short - as short as possible because you should be exploring what you're really here for instead. All that comes after this note.

I found immense joy in editing this first issue and am looking forward to working on the second one now.

What you're about to read, what SCAB really is (and has been ever since the idea was born in my head) is more of an atmosphere, the essence of an atmosphere than a journal of well-defined literary efforts. I was and continue to be thoroughly thrilled to have been able to read and publish the works of people who seem to inherently understand and craft this feeling or aesthetic.

I have to admit: when I started SCAB, I didn't expect half the amount of the submissions I ended up with. I had the vague anxiety that I will have to fill the first issue up with my own writing under different pseudonyms just to show what I'm really looking for, what SCAB really is about. This is not what happened and it never ceases to fill me with both amazement and utter gratitude. Looks like I'm not alone with my vision.

And this is all I have to say, really. I hope everyone who decides to give SCAB a go, finds what they came for and possibly even more. I hope they can connect and resonate. I hope they become a part of the vision, one way or another.

Thank you, all.

Dóra Gróber
September 2017

An Excerpt From a Zine on My Electro-Convulsive Treatment

The people that were in the cubicles . . . all around me . . . how can I put it gently . . . ah hell

. . . let's just say it . . . they were fucked up man . . . over the rainbow . . . toodly whooped . . . deranged . . . damaged . . . or just plain worn out. The last house on the block. I watched . . . I listened . . . and I thought, "Holy cats! Am I that fucked up? Do I look like them?"

Befuddled

. . . mixed up . . . nobody home . . . can't make friends with the brain. Shock! Shock! Let's shock 'em back into shape! Get rolling! Keep them doggies moving! Rolling! Rolling! Rolling! The shock mill! They were sizing up our situation . . . asking the necessary questions. They were nice nurses . . . a lot of compassion. One of them put her hand on my shoulder as they put the electrodes on that first time . . . it's a strange thing . . . all so strange. Pardon me dear reader if I bounce around like a ping pong ball . . . it's part of the program right now . . . a side effect. Being flumdidled! "It'll go away," they say. I don't care if it doesn't . . . I'll be a total simpleton! I'll be the slobbering screwball of the century . . . just get that fucking beast depression out of my soul! Shock the shit out of it! Zip! Zip Zoom! Zap! Give it to me! Double doses! No . . . hell! Quadruple doses . . . make me a dingus! Destroy my reason! I want to play again! Shock! Zip! Whammo! When you come out of it . . . Oh god! The first time . . . a terrifying vision! I can't remember the details . . . I don't want to . . . I just remember the fear

. . . I weighed it all in the balance . . . do I want to experience that again? I decided it was worth it . . . but what a bitch! Misery upon misery! Would I do it again? I decided, "Yes!" But why so much misery?

The second time? It was worse . . . I couldn't breathe . . . I was conscious . . . I couldn't move! I couldn't speak! It's hard to remember details . . . I was shocked you know. Most people have no memory of the whole process . . . this would become true of me . . . but this time . . . Jesus . . . I could hear them talk . . . their laughter . . . but I couldn't move . . . I couldn't speak . . . it's hard to remember it all! I'm digging deeply here for you dear reader . . . visiting memories I'd rather forget . . . for you! The anesthesia . . . the shock! Most people have no memory of the whole process . . . I did. I was awake. That first time

. . . that terrible vision . . . told you that . . . my passion for repeating myself. . . can't remember the vision . . . only the fear

. . . that I got . . . I tried to hold on to it . . . that vision . . . but I couldn't. After the treatment you are totally . . . what? Whammo! A dead donkey has more sense than a person coming out of the induced seizure. That's what they do . . . induce a seizure. Crazy! I take an anti-seizure med . . . but no I don't. They told me to nix that baby . . . it'd fuck with their little seizure.

I don't ask questions. No . . . I'm beyond all that. I don't give a good goddamned anymore. Just shut up! Shock me! Let me become a human again. I haven't been a human for so long . . . a jabbering idiot? Yes! Yes indeed. I've stumbled through somehow . . . ended on that table. Table? It's not really, dear reader . . . added that for effect . . . drama . . . a slab of meat . . . on the table . . . wicked scientists . . . no! They show the utmost compassion. It's soft . . . my little table . . . plenty of cushion . . . don't you worry my peruser. The machinery . . . high tech! Beeps . . . boops . . . tweets . . . twinkles . . . all sorts of beeps going on . . . no use trying to separate them out.

My anesthesiologist (hey she's kinda cute!) gives me her routine, "Yeah, yeah . . . don't care

. . . put me to sleep baby. If I don't wake up . . . well . . . it was a rough life. Put me to sleep! Shock me! Whammo! Zip! Zip! I want to be normal . . . I want that." I'm going to bounce around on you again . . . my ping pong writing . . . but . . . oh yes . . . this was a wonderful thing

. . . after the second treatment . . . I had gone home and was sitting on the couch watching my dear, old cat try to play . . . but . . . the little angel has got some arthritis . . . 19 years old. She's still a kitten at heart. Yes . . . but those back legs . . . especially them. Oh but woe! My reader! Left you with the cat . . . hope you gave her a few pets . . . she's precious, but we must get back

. . . yes . . . my moment . . . it only lasted for . . . well . . . I'd say a half an hour. I sat on the couch . . . like I told you . . . looking at my cat . . . I realized . . . there was no depression! Absolutely none. I have depression on me at all times . . . unless I drink liquor or take drugs, and I have . . . enormous quantities . . . stifling the blues . . . to make a long story short, I ended up homeless . . . sitting on a bench . . . with my cat . . . swilling Potters 100 proof . . . Catholic Family Services coming down to my bench once a day . . . bringing me a sandwich and my cat a can of food. Those days were done! No more liquor . . . no more

drugs . . . I was left with a constant depression . . . I can feel it some as I write . . . sometimes it's a mosquito . . . a small pestering depression . . . a tiny dark spot on the soul, but then! Oh my! It can become a gorilla! Consuming me absolutely! Then I become bed bound . . . and sometimes even have to be fed . . . by another . . . by hand . . . one spoonful of soup at a time. I become so consumed by darkness I cannot lift my head. I piss in the bed. No getting up! They roll me over and change the sheets. It's a hideous thing! Oh god! It's black! But I'm losing you again . . . I can hear you, "Grow some balls! Get out of bed! Or if you can't do that . . . finish the goddamned story!"

Oh my! OK . . . I'll take you back . . . I'm on the couch . . . watching my precious, and I realize . . . the depression is gone! Absolutely, totally gone! I thought, "Holy dipshits! This is how other people feel! This is how normal people feel." It was then I understood how people navigated life so easily . . . I felt like others must feel . . . what it felt like to be a normal person. I could do this life thing! It was a breeze! Feeling like that . . . the weight off the brain and the soul . . . the horrors lifted . . . I . . . I was like, "I can do this shit. This shit's easy!" Man! It blew me away! No wonder people mortgaged their soul . . . buying these suburban homes. No wonder they popped out babies to an overpopulated world. That shit, I realized, is easy! For normal people. Oh man . . . I could kick ass in this world . . . I was on top of it! Ha ha . . . I'd be running this place. God, life was easy without the black dog. It went away though . . . I lost it . . . the depression returned . . . the grey and the brown sunk in . . . I sat . . . bewildered . . .

When fishspit isn't getting shock treatments he's spinning rockabilly 45s on his little record player.

You can contact him here: fuzzybunnyflatbunny@gmail.com

The thing about panic

It may be common belief that addressing it as a "conflict" downplays the seriousness of the effects.

The incident mentioned here is observable and repetitive.

At least, it has proven to be in the past.

-

A well-known doctor from Vienna began his career researching aphasia before specializing in "nervous people". He traveled to Paris where he is quoted as having said something ironic about a cigar, but mostly he is known for diagnosing the fear of vulnerability as a desire to fuck yourself.

-

Bodies, like maps, carry the coordinates of ancient eruptions, eroded teeth marks, center line - a vertical equator dividing left from right.

to extract her voice,
to avoid eye contact,
to imagine a substitute:
stacks of flesh
lifting, making space.

-

Earth has four layers.

- 1) The Crust, all ridges and water.
- 2) Below is the mesosphere, also called the Mantle.
- 3) Then the searing outer liquid Core.
- 4) And (we come to it) the deep inner Core.

What is that elemental?

Nails scraping skin, lips vehicles for sound,
tectonic plates of limbs shifting, and these hot tears
must mean do they mean don't be mean something.

-

My sisters and I text jokes, pictures, most recently -

updates on our mother.
This is our bond, our equalizer.
Enemies have this bond, too,
a link unquestioning enough
to eradicate hesitation.
They know how the body,
like a bomb,
is no friend of time.

-

When my friend J is lost,
he uses a trick he learned in the Army:
arms fan out gently to his sides,
eyes close and ears deafen to the city,
before fingers swirl to a pointed direction
as if the space around him were a grid:
each street, each building
obliterated.

-

You are standing under the trees, again.
Someone who is invisible now
taught you that need is not that different
from despair. Sun on your face like a pillow
muffling both ears, you exist again,
for a moment not asking why.

A phone number to dial.

A body to sleep beside.

A target in the landscape.

This all means you are something
imagined. Then imagined to be forgotten,
which means you belong somewhere else.
Which means if you press the button,
you will be placing your mouth
on her mouth, and she will be laughing

despite herself, everything in technicolor.

Fear comes later.

For now, watch the timer.

-

The thing about panic

is that it whittles abilities down: explosion or flight

"I'm in a hurry, I don't know what to do."

But war does not consider hesitations.

The bombs in the suitcases are already ticking.

Soon, they will detonate and kill 31 civilians,

injuring dozens more in the name

of what, exactly?

Sylvia Mercedes Beato is a recipient of the Hoyt Jacobs Memorial Poetry Award and a candidate for an M.F.A. in Poetry & Translation at Queens College CUNY. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Split This Rock*, *CALYX Journal*, *Bridge Eight*, *Bowery Poetry Journal*, and *FEM LIT MAG*. She lives in Brooklyn where she teaches high school and laughs with her dog.

Follow her on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/Sassprila>

In the Dust of This Planet

The bandleader has found his glasses! I can see everything — Central Park all the way down to the World Trade Center. I prefer to look at people working in the office than me working in the office. My face shows nothing of what I'm feeling. I have never had a day when someone doesn't look at me with an openly questioning gaze. I call it a cross between archaeology and surgery. Draw as many different lines as you can. This will be a terrifying time for the 100,000 people still trapped.

*

Are you fucking kidding me? A fly can't land on a fruit tree without permission first from the Mafia. Time is burning. It isn't really me doing it. That's the new thing. Don't you think NASA should hide this? Behind the bookcase, there's a wall and after that, a door. A woman shouts, and dozens of us hear her and ask her questions, but she can only use a stone to tap in response. I just keep thinking that it's so easy to run in a dream without getting out of breath.

*

So much is coming at us that we jump, turn clockwise, and cut with the kitchen knife through the beer belly of the Republic. My daughter could be in there bleeding. This place is very dangerous. There are countless dead rabbits. There might be someone with a gun. People send us their children to get healthy but they leave in ambulances and body bags. One accidental martyr screams, "Open that door and let me out! Right now! It's a travesty! Open that door!" You suddenly become the protagonist of crime scene photos. Why cry about it? We have always lived with fire.

*

A man's dead. The gunmen got on the bus and shot people point-blank. What else could you have expected? They autopsied him as you would an ordinary body, took out his

intestines, said, “Yup, it’s all there,” and put it back. We were standing outside, staring, just trying to see. I prayed so hard my knuckles were white. Today we go about things entirely differently. But the process, we can’t control it. There’s a silver Audi in the parking lot with the lights left on, and the tracks of gulls on beaches, and somebody who’s going to jump out of the ambulance, and we feel like it’s all in our heads.

Howie Good is the author of *The Loser’s Guide to Street Fighting*, winner of the 2017 Lorien Prize for Poetry from Thoughtcrime Press, and *Dangerous Acts Starring Unstable Elements*, winner of the 2015 Press Americana Prize for Poetry. He co-edits White Knuckle Press with Dale Wisely.

January

Sitting on stairs // melting. You're about to pass out. A bloody nose. Did you hit your head? It must have hurt real bad. Shit // it's a bad day.

A white dog // the resemblance is remarkable // I seem to like cold and short-lasting things // maybe I can feel sorry for them when they're gone. She shows you: WILD CHILD and you're not jealous. Touching, where it's safe. Your hands are bruised, I barely dare to hold them // let me see // now I'm here but it's not a promise. I'm already anxious, looking for excuses. Always the same. Engagement // claws. One // close // I think I know you // no, please, fuck you. I just want to watch. Hesitation // ugly GIRLFRIENDS // red MAN // ugly mouth // I don't want to see your dick. Here // nothing works like this // he doesn't have a face. Self-explanatory // brute // long navel // there's nothing between my thighs // wear diapers instead. He would do this anywhere // I can't breathe. I'm going away from here // I wish I were somewhere else. I don't believe you anymore.

Don't touch me, don't touch me, don't touch me, ever, ever, ever.

If you still hate yourself:

Smile // heart // tiny teeth // black hair.

Nothing bad ever happens here.

Only rage.

My hands are in fists, forever, and I can't let them rest // that's okay, you're okay, baby, maybe you should go home now.

Never to be found again // remove later.

Dóra Gróber is the editor of SCAB magazine. Her work has previously appeared at Hobart.

Paws

Bigger than jellybeans are the worm pills
I give my dog. I force his mouth open
and throw one down his craw and he swallows
whether he wants to or not. I feel cruel
but I'm trying to be kind. How to put
that across to him? As if he'd swallow
even when he knew the truth. The doctor

gives me a shot for measles and mumps and
whooping cough and Hippocrates-knows-
what-else--I'm five or six and my mother
sits here in the examination room
and reminds me that it's for my own good.
I drop my drawers with the elastic waist
because I fumble with belts and can't tie
my shoes nor blow bubble gum, and await
the needle that will puncture my buttock
like a nail into a tire. And I know
that my bottom will be sore for three days
but also that Jesus rose after then.

My elbows are on the steel-cool table
and my hands are folded like a prayer
and I've shut my eyes so tightly I doubt
they'll ever open again. Then the nurse
rubs me on the left side of my butt with
alcohol--gosh, it smells like Father's
breath on a Friday night, when they make me
stay up late but I want to go to bed
--and, *grunt*, I take it like a man and cry

only on the inside of me. But when
we're leaving and I'm in the back seat of
our second-hand Rambler American
I weep the inside tears to the outside.
I see Father looking at me as if
he's really checking traffic behind us.
Stop that damned whining, he orders. Mother
says, *He's only a little boy*. Father
says, *Hell, the child is Father to the man*,

whatever that means. Later in college
I'll read Wordsworth and think of Father and
know that he took him out of context but,
what the hell, maybe he corrected him.
So my dog won't come near me now, at least
for a few more minutes, when he'll forget
--he's just five months old, with big paws,
which means that he'll grow into them, and teeth
sharp enough to draw blood when he gnaws me,
my arm, my hand, my fingers. I put
a bone or stick or old shoe in his mouth
and let him chew on that. A little pain
will do him good, I tell myself. I mean,
look at me--I didn't turn out so bad
and I've never been seriously ill
but I've never been seriously well, either.
The worst is the flu shot--I get the bug
for days after that and my rear's so sore
I can barely sit down, but my parents
love me and don't want me to die. At least
not until I'm older and know better.

Gale Acuff had many poems published and has authored three books of poetry. He has taught university English in the US, China, and Palestine.

I Think of Him Fucking You and I Want to Die

The board of the community theatre wants to cancel our production of “The Laramie Project,” so we’re lined up on the pavement across the boulevard from the lobby, EAST TEXAS GAYS signs and LARAMIE OR BUST posters held high. Just minutes after I arrive, shake hands with the media-whore head of our gay group, Paula calls my name and motions me to follow her back into the parking lot. Timothy promised me online he’d attend this shithole rally. I’m worried this big bother with the angel bullshit will keep me from spotting him when he arrives. In the lot, Paula hauls out a crude harness comprised of connected plastic pipes. Sprouting from the harness are two straight lengths of pipe angled high and wide. As I suit up, the crowd twenty yards away begins to sing “Amazing Grace.” No fucking lie. After I slip into the gear, Paula and a pert little lesbian slide brilliant white bolts of fabric over the outstretched piping. Hanging from these pipes, the sheets resemble wings.

Find a spot, Paula instructs me. Before I can ask where I should go, she saddles up some other bastard from the cast. My scrawny shoulders already aching from the pipe harness, I settle on the outskirts of the sprawling mass of people collected on the sidewalk. Still no sign of Timothy. I wonder what he’ll think of me in this fucking get-up. The protestors cut me a wide berth. Every time I so much as twitch a shoulder, a whole wing sweeps the few feet of free air beside me. I keep apologizing to any poor bastard protestor who can’t watch his step. My shoulders now throbbing, I finally hoist up one side of the harness with my fist and hold it aloft. Some Mexican chick zips out in front of me and clicks my picture. Shit, now I’ll be on Facebook.

After a few minutes of trying to stand still, I blurt a warning to those gathered near me, and I slowly march back to the parking lot. Still there, Paula and the lesbian fit the last angel costume on some slim-chested kid I’ve never met. She asks me if I need anything. Yeah, I say, my shoulders are killing me. She promises to find someone else and I remind her to make sure the guy has broad enough shoulders. Because I do not. While I wait for her to return, I finally see Timothy drive that clunky old Cherokee into the lot. I used to suck his cock from the passenger seat as he drove us around town. He’s still fucking hot, a few days’ whiskers on his face, an impish smile, a quick and high voice that sounds so merry even when he’s talking dirty shit.

He parks not far from where that angel shit got started, and that's when I notice a boy I've never met in the passenger seat. I know right then that I hate his bony ass. He's no older than Timothy, and Timothy himself is still in junior college. Still obscured by my sad, sad mondo-wings, I shout out his name until he spins around and finds me. The new guy hasn't left Timothy's side. They stand close, too close to be just friends. The new guy keeps gazing at Timothy, as if waiting for fucking God to speak. I knew this would happen, from the moment Timothy stopped fucking around with me after his choir practice. I goddamn knew he'd find someone his own age. I've been chasing dick since I was fourteen. Some days, I just can't run anymore. Timothy says hello, asks me what I'm wearing. I give him the short answer. And finally, Paula returns with a stocky guy with hair all spiked and white-blond. He and Paula assist me out of the contraption. In the time it takes me to shed that nonsense, Timothy and the new guy settle on the lawn, not far from the sidewalk. The new guy leans over as Timothy whispers in his ear. The intimacy between them that makes me sick, makes me recall the times Timothy stopped by my apartment and teased me into the bedroom, our clothes shucked off as we fell atop the mattress.

The crowd, there's at least one hundred of the bastards now, starts another chant: Laramie or Bust! It's a direct quote from one of the faggots in the cast. He's young like Timothy, like the new guy. I'm too goddamn old to feel this way. I wander away from Paula's angel depot, drift toward the chanting crowd. As I pass them, Timothy and his little pal are still deep in chat. Fuck these assholes with their signs and their songs, I just wanna watch Timothy blow this new kid against a brick wall while I webcam the whole fucking thing. I'd watch that shit again and again, I'd carry a homemade sign demanding my right to torture myself with footage of gorgeous Timothy getting fucked by a man who isn't me.

Silent, I watch the protestors whip themselves into a deeper frenzy. I'm fucking embarrassed for them. It's just a goddamn play. Who really cares? Just then, I hear Timothy call my name. He asks me, with that killer high voice, if I'm in the cast. You bet your ass, I tell him. I'm the goddamn star. We stare at each other. There's nothing to fucking say. It's goddamn over, whatever it was, and I know it. So the crowd shouts *hallelujah* and we shout *hallelujah*, and then they start over with that "Amazing Grace" bullshit. Before I know what I'm doing, I'm singing. God saved a wretch like me and all

that. My God, he's beautiful. I keep singing and soon Timothy and his new friend join in. The three of us are singing—we're singing our fucking hearts out.

Thomas Kearnes studied at The University of Texas at Austin, just not fiction. His work has been published in Gertrude, the Best Gay Stories series, Wilde Magazine, the gay issues of The Citron Review and PANK, Jonathan, Collateral Fallout and dozens of mainstream indie-lit venues. Originally from the small East Texan town of Whitehouse, he now lives outside Houston. You can find him on Facebook. His odd last name makes it a cinch. He turned 41 last July.

How I Do Romance

A short play in three acts

ACT ONE

ME has a hand between ME's legs
is trying not to breathe
is hesitating between the waterfall of hormones
& a vague yet potent sense of guilt

ME chooses to fall in love
instead.

ME puts fingertips to ME's mouth
*(the fingertips can be ME's or YOU's,
at the director's discretion)*

ME's eyes glaze over
The music is that of a pink elephant
screaming
The air tastes like cotton candy
INSISTENTLY

ME : I LOVE YOU

ME falls to the ground.

One last elephant scream echoes,
fade to black.

ACT TWO

ME, on the ground, holding YOU's hand.

YOU is standing.

ME : WHY DO YOU LOVE ME ?

YOU crouches down to ME's level,
takes both ME's hands.

ME pushes YOU away
stands up
screams
turns away from YOU

ME : if i breathe in your direction
the image of me is gonna shatter
and what will I be left with
except for you of course
I mean what will i be left with
that's really me you know
I mean what will I be left with
more solid than a shattered breath ?

ME : my heart aches

YOU stands up,
ME falls to the floor
looks up at YOU above one shoulder

ME : don't give me that look

YOU : WHY DO YOU LOVE ME ?

There is so much light that the audience is blinded.

DISAPPEARING ACT

ME is running in comically slow motion

Not running away.

Just running.

A waft of air brings in the smell of sex.

ME puts a hand between ME's legs

then a finger in ME's mouth

then starts crying

ME : WHY CAN'T I LOVE YOU ANY MORE ?

Fade to black.

The smell hangs behind for a long time.

Meeni Levi is agender, Belgian, a poet, a zinester, a jellyfish enthusiast and trying to survive the world.

Zir poetry can be found at <http://astrangershandwriting.tumblr.com>

Monsters in the Closet*September 1940*

Saturdays are spent in the dark;
a creature double feature, Mike's hand
clasped in mine, or trailing tickles
down forearms. In almost darkness
heads can find shoulders, heartbeats
slow to satiated symmetry.

Back with Boris Karloff, this week
he wears the fur of a skinned ape;
the bloody pelt slathered on him,
a roar escapes his mouth, he doesn't
recognise the pile of pale pink skin
he forgets himself and flees to freedom.

A boy-girl couple tilt-a-whirl after him
whilst we kiss through the exposition,
losing interest when the good guys close in
preferring skin to resolution; the monster
ruined by the hero's fist, the viewer's gaze
complicit, we exit before the end, unaccredited.

Mark Ward is a poet from Dublin, Ireland. He was the 2015 Poet Laureate for *Glitterwolf* and his work has appeared in *Assaracus*, *Tincture*, *The Good Men Project*, *HIV Here + Now*, *Storm Cellar* and many more. He was featured in the 2016 Lingo Festival. He founded *Impossible Archetype*, a journal of LGBTQ+ poetry. He has recently finished two books, a chapbook called *Circumference* and a full-length collection called *How to Live When Life Subtracts*. <http://astintinyourspotlight.wordpress.com>

Lush Life

Mama doesn't know about the feather boas
or dreams of stepping in snake skin stiletto heels.
She doesn't know I'm a heart breaking homo
some sugar daddy's lover
in a public park after dark.

I'm a lipstick queen with a dick for a brain.
She doesn't know I was six years old
when a boy kissed me
in a first grade bathroom.

She doesn't know about
the underwear I've seen
or the magazines tucked
beneath my mattress.
She has no idea of the
shafts that have circled the tip
of my lips,

tongues that have committed to love me
slither into the mouths of wives,
tearing out their eyes with lies.

Honey I love you.

Mama doesn't know
about the fuck buddy
in a bathroom of
a recreational park.
The blowjobs
in apartments

of guys who never
give out their last name,

who never offered
me anything to drink
but instead pushed my head
into their denim laps,

who came in my mouth
and I nearly puked my
breakfast on their
alligator shoes
that poked from beneath
a turquoise stall.

She doesn't know about the men
who have peeled off my pants,
men with tongues like swords that circle
my belly button,
that explore the remnants
of a black man's ass.

Mama doesn't know
about the toll-free calls
to a health clinic,
the twenty dollars I forked out
for an HIV test,
the blood from veins to a nurse's needle.

She doesn't know about the agony of waiting
2 weeks for the results.
Weigh the what if's like grapefruit.
What if I have AIDS?

What do I tell my parents?
Who's to blame?
What was his name?
I can't remember the number he left
on the wall of a convenience store bathroom.

Mama doesn't know about
the men who jerked me off
in front of urinals
in a shopping mall
on Saturdays when I was only seventeen.

Or the naked Cuban
in the front seat
of a forest green Ford
until the windows fogged
from body heat.

She thinks karate kicks are fluttering in my eyes
at a Jackie Chan movie.

I'm every mother's son, who longs for lipstick,
who wishes for wonder bras from Victoria's secret.

Someday I'll explain it all to her
Ten thousand miles away in a 16 page letter
or tell her on the phone 3 in the morning
when she hardly knows her name.

Shane Allison was bit by the writing bug at the age of fourteen. He spent a majority of his high school life shying away in the library behind desk cubicles writing bad love poems about boys he had crushes on including one substitute teacher. He has since gone on to

publish seven chapbook collections with titles like *Ceiling of Mirrors*, *I Want to Fuck a Redneck*, *Cock and Balls*, *I Want to Eat Chinese Food Off Your Ass*, *Remembered Men* and *Black Fag*. His two notable collections include *I Remember* (Future Tense Books,) and *Slut Machine* (Queer Mojo Press.) Shane's poems and short stories have graced the pages of online joints, and a plethora of anthologies. He has edited over a dozen erotic anthologies. His longer stories have been published by JMS Books and Resplendence. His first novel, *You're The One I Want* is out from Strebtor Books, as well as his sophomore novel, *Harm Done*. Shane is at work on a new book, and a new collection of poems.

You Don't Want This

"I don't want this."

Your first words to me, smug in your suit, snarky sigh, fickle flourish in the direction of my braids, a dismissal. You're why I hate roll call. 8:00, beginning of shift, cattle call of bikini blondes off stage and onto the floor to ask for lap dances. These other strippers tall, tan, toned, all tailored to make men like you feel good -- about yourself.

I'm the schoolgirl, the only one. Pale, small, dark hair, real breasts, I'm 18, but I look younger. I'm not the one who will make you feel good about yourself. I'm just the one that makes you feel good. You don't want this.

No time to pout. A Marine is putting \$20 in my hand, buying me for his quiet friend who can't look me in the eye. He empties the rest of his wallet on me for the next hour. Too shy to ask, once he got me, he did not let go. He knows he wants this.

On the way to the dressing room, I spy you in the far corner of lap dance alley. Least lit, most sequestered part of the club besides the VIP. Men go there who want to touch, to get away with something.

You're alone at a table, drink in hand, relaxed, smiling. My newly honed hustler eyes notice you, eager to be entertained. I smile back. Then I remember: he doesn't want this.

I start to turn. Just before you're out of my peripheral vision, I notice your head go erect and your eyebrows follow as you slide what is clearly a bill across the table in my direction. This confuses me. I make a gesture at myself. Me?

You nod almost imperceptibly, arrogant and coy. Even though your behavior earlier annoys the shit out of me, the \$20 makes me hurry. I hold out my garter to collect it. I want this.

Your dark eyes twinkle with mischief and lust. You down the rest of your drink. On your lap, in my tiny plaid skirt and five-inch platform patent leather babydoll stilettos, I grind

slow circles on your hard cock. It grows quickly. When I lean back against your shoulder, I feel your hot breath on my neck. It warms me everywhere. Do I want this?

I pull up the half shirt, and my hard nipples pop out. I slyly look over at you, feeling, beneath me, your own pop of desire rubbing against me through your pants. You look so buttoned up, but your smell -- the cologne and something underneath it is of woods and savagery and dirt. You've been mean to me. I don't want to want this, but I want this.

Below, I'm grinding as hard as your teeth I hear in my ear. Above, my fingers slowly touch my breasts. I push them together, tweak my nipples. My fingers slowly wander over my stomach towards the center of my soaking wet, bubblegum pink panties. I touch until my moan is in unison with your moan, and it drowns out even the relentless rap.

And now that I mean it, my pussy grinds on you slow, savoring every second of contact with that hard point inside your pants. Your cock feels like, at any moment, it will break through those pinstripes and tear its way inside my pink g-string and my pinker, tight hole.

In this moment, I want nothing more than to climb into this chair and bounce on your cock with abandon. I don't want to stop until I'm filled with cum and it's running down my perfect thighs. I really, really want this.

I've never been with a customer. Never wanted to. Only been a stripper for a month now, but I have learned a lot. I'm just 18, but I work with dancers, some professional whores. They're in my ears all night long, offering up stories and advice. I know so many things I want to try.

I've been waiting to meet that irresistible customer I'd follow back to a hotel and take his money, cock and the pleasure of release I never get in this place. Someone like you, handsome, successful, smart from out of town, far-away accent. Someone like you won't be here long. We won't get another chance.

I close my eyes; smell and feel the rough and gentle on you. I'm pretty sure you're older than my Daddy but way hotter. Your hands look like they could break me. My mouth is as wet as I am below with the thought of them all over my body, inside all my secret

places, teaching me lessons. I want you to take everything from me and redefine me. Fuck, I want to tell you how much I want this.

Instead, I do this. I stand on shaky legs and twirl, fingers delicately perched on your shoulders. I look you in those burning brown eyes, and I smile. Your mouth's hanging a little open then closes and twists into a wicked smile of angry lust so intense I'm terrified and even more wet. I can feel the heat off my skin as I lean in close to your ear. I know you can too.

I whisper, cherry Blowpop scented breath, in your ear, "Oh, that's right. You. don't. want. this." And then with a giggle and a bounce, I push myself up, erect as the cock that's made a tent in your pants my small body has been shielding. I walk away.

You'll be fine. I know some older girl in a bikini is probably already taking your money to replace me. She's closer to your age, knows things. She'll follow you back to your hotel if you want and has countless sexual techniques I've heard her describe in the dressing room. She says she can make men worship her.

I don't know how to do that. I don't know these things. You two are perfect for each other. She has power. I can see you're so smart and evolved. That's what you want. Being with me, barely even admissible by law and a child in all other ways, a girl you could lead around by the nose or a leash, design to your liking and construct, that would be so wrong. You don't want that. You're such a good man.

In the dressing room, I pull off my soaked panties and put on another pair, reapply my hooker red lipstick to lips which will have to wait another night to suck dick for money and education. I wish they would lose their cherry to that impressive cock out there I felt trying to climb inside my slick, tight hole. It was a mistake though, a misunderstanding. You don't want this.

I fix my braids and head out to find another you. I will be busy all night because you are everywhere. None of you want this. All of you are liars.

Kristin Garth is a writer from Pensacola, Florida. She has previously published poetry in Anti-Heroin Chic, Quail Bell Magazine, Mookychick, Infernal Ink and No Other Tribute: Erotic Tales of Women in Submission, an anthology.

Follow her on Twitter at twitter.com/lolaandjolie

Bad Luck

I will never fuck god in the ass

give me a hint

if not a sign, a burning bush - if not

the sun, switch the light on

3.33

I don't believe you - I never did

but praise lord praise heaven praise

four in the morning praise

narrow bathrooms and animal instinct

please stroke my hair

I wanna make him angry

I wanna make him cry

Joan De Bona

<https://joandebona.tumblr.com>

Meridian**(an excerpt)**

He was shaken from the grip of a hazy state of hallucination, what might be called sleep if he could ever manage to pull it off, and was now just aware enough to see his left hand wrapped around his dick; sliding, massaging. *Fuck me, Andrew. Fuck me.* The handsome nurse had slipped into his semi-conscious thoughts and Jared briefly allowed his mind to travel there – momentary bliss rather than the all too familiar ache – but Andrew faded from his mind with each second of painful awareness that followed. Now Jared realized that he was trembling, that he had sweated through his sheets again, and the consequences of lucidity dissolved the fantasy like a tablet's surrender under the tongue.

He tore the wet sheets from his bed in the bedroom that was once his as a child, but more recently it had been his grandmother's, until it was decided that she would be better off, if better off meant out of sight, in a nursing home. Of course, Jared was high, he was injecting another day away in his dirty south central Los Angeles studio when they took her away, but he knew instinctively that this was how his mother dealt with things. A problem is not a problem if it isn't visible, but the silent guilt had caused her to choose the private room. The "upgrade". So, perhaps to show that things really do come full circle, he was sent back here – her faggot, addict son had come home to recover, and for the first time, she had no choice. A mother will always be responsible for her children. Jared couldn't help but smirk at the idea, and then he remembered what she had said about how hard this was for her. But wasn't it also hard to send her mother away? The meaning struck him at once. It wasn't the sexuality that would not be spoken of or the visible marks down his arms that went ignored. The difficulty was that she had to see it. Held against her will, she was a captive witness. A hostage.

His grandmother's clothes still filled the small closet. He took a green & black striped scarf from its hangar and put it up to his nose. Oddly, as if she had worn it only yesterday, it smelled of her perfume. Sitting back down on his mattress, staring at the wad of sheets in the corner of the room, he took the scarf and tied it tight around his arm like he had tied off his arm so many times before. His body responded favorably. The

sweats stopped, the shaking subsided, and he knew what happened next – what always happened next. But there was no instrument in this room; there was no fix here. Jared grabbed his dick again. The simulation was enough. The makeshift tourniquet secure around his arm, he stroked only momentarily until the fury of the orgasm slammed the back of his head against the wall. Intoxicated by the intensity, come spattered across his chest, he swayed back and forth as he looked out the window, clutching onto its ledge just as tightly as the scarf remained around his arm.

Josh Ivey hails from Asheville, North Carolina, where he is rapidly approaching middle age. He is a writer, music junkie, coffee shop addict, tavern haunt, and a regular at the downtown art museum & indie film theatre. In short, he's a vagabond with a pencil & paper.

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The Oldest Boy

Part of me died here
So another could go on.
I want to know what it is
I have left,

Like draining blood from a limb.
I hate
Rainy days with their dark smell,
The black mountains falling away.

Winter bullies me.
My lips are a feast of blue.
I lock the door to keep it out,
Every curtain drawn.

His hands are small as coins.
My gaze lingered a little too long
On the oldest boy.
His body became a knot in my throat.

He smiled at me.
I know,
I know I'm not supposed to smile back.
My teeth sat in my mouth like gold.

All that had been severed shone.
I watch from the lane
The one lit room
Slowly going dark.

Natalie Crick, from the UK, has poetry published or forthcoming in a range of journals and magazines including *Ink in Thirds*, *The Penwood Review*, *Interpreters House*, *The Chiron Review* and *Rust and Moth*. This year her poem, 'Sunday School', was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Her first chapbook will be released by Bitterzoet Press this year.

Touch the White Rooster: A Testimony on Nescience

The streets around Milk & Honey Convenience Store had been stripped and scarred. Their uneven and jagged cuts remind some of when there was still progress. Grotesque plaster jesters punctuate the store's white tile façade to simulate a dark age for those who could not imagine future dark ages. Chain link threaded with concertina wire encircles the condemned property. Empty hot chip packages and crushed beer cans litter the space between building and fence—this is our excreta or at least the excreta of our kind come here to challenge the cosmos as love withdraws. We are all condemned and know this is where we belong.

The night Thales died, we gather for his party: the oldest to commune with comrades; the youngest to grope beyond themselves in Milk & Honey's basement. Thales's presence is not needed; most do not notice his absence.

Entropy triumphs.

A single window remains unobscured by sheets of brown paper and streaks of white soap. The morning sun jaundices the darkness of the unfinished basement. A cooler full of beers had been brought to slake our eventual thirst. A tremor of aching legs and irregular coughs shake soft bellies. The number of sileni heaped together on second hand mattresses is not innumerable, but who has bothered to count bodies tacky with sweat, semen, saliva. Stickiness is not the only bond between us. Impulse forges chains that keep us turned towards our amatory rat king. Whispers rustle through our mass.

-Heard Thales fell down a well and drowned.

-Yep.

-Shit. What was he doing down there?

-Looking at the stars.

A sheet hangs across the frame of an unfinished wall. When one of our number passes behind the sheet to go to the bathroom, their shadows loom over us. The shade reminds us of their temporary absence. Gracious furies perch like gaunt putti above the screen, waiting to measure out justice. Our hot breath, our wretched nous, twists through raw wood and copper wiring. The water soaked pine perfumes the depth of the space. Tensing hands and gentle fingers anticipate the kindness of strangers. Tongues flow over sour thighs, knobby knees, aching feet.

Digits make us pliable.

The moronic things that beat in our chests displace the wisdom of our cocks. In the dark corner, we hear Dionysus sing a shameful phallic hymn, reminding us that he is but Hades raving. The guy underneath me reads a lean paragraph about distinguishing truth tellers from soothsayers. Our humid undulations have creased and crumpled his thin volume.

-Honey, what is the word?

-Shut up and bite my tongue.

Bristles press against my bristles. Such a small skull. Such warm lips. Eyes and ears are poor witnesses to the wealth we find between each other. Hardness melts, preventing us from moving into the same stream twice. Inexhaustible light trudges through void to our uncuttable streams. An irregular square mess of hair anticipates my stale breath on his face as his lips distorts the geometry of his plane.

Love is on the outside of our sphere.

The gracious ones clack their talons on the poison-treated wood. Holding tight to each other, some fear that our rat king orgy is pear shaped desire. Sharing water and pneuma, we might exhaust ourselves.

I do not fear for even strife and love were boundless aforetime. The fearful do not leave because (they reason) it is easier to wait out disaster in the mats of a stranger's chest hair.

Light and shadow move across the screen; we remember that thought is the only thing worthy of god.

-If oxen and lions had hands...

-They'd write orgies of their own.

The fruitful qualities of men and horses are wasted in our beds. Lithe thought abides anticipation of fairer things. But if they are not fair, they are at least things that come next in the sequence. Our bodies do not move in prayer but in absurd totality.

Stunned by heaven's arrhythmic pulse, the gracious one's flap. We have fallen into our current state just as Thales fell into the well. Submissive, we don't want to leave our haven even to explore the closest parts of the world. A freckled satyr joins us in our despondency. He cracks a handful of granola between his teeth. He smiles to reveal a gap between his incisors. Holes in his loose pants reveal his sagging genitals as he moves to join us from outside and difference.

-Does anyone know how the bus crashed near the agora?

-An atomic collision.

-How'd that happen?

-Clinamen.

Our frank and universal tongues chatter to fight the creeping dumbness that will leave us like a dog looking for a master. A beard nuzzles against my neck. Our heat becomes water, the primary element in the cylindrical earth. Turning in the void, the rotation reveals holes in heaven's bark. The sky remains motionless as the earth rolls drawing against the gaps. The tuned teeth of our observations fool us into perceiving harmonies. Condensation streaks down the cooler.

Goodly predecessors reveal that we are unskilled in navigating the material continuum. Before we can step into the stream, we are reduced to heads without necks, shoulders without arms. Our heads and breasts face different directions. Eyes stray from our heads. We are reduced to creatures shambling over foam. Ox nostrils flare, and goat legs tremble. Fingers pry and squeeze the pieces.

-I'm looking for a man.

-It's too late.

Countless throngs of our pieces continue to swarm around each other. Nothing will exist when we're through. Love exists outside our sphere, but it does not matter. The distant may be pure, but proximity mingles us. Our contingent unity precludes monotonous agape.

The sun bleeds through all the shadows of the screen.

Behind the screen, a rarefied elder draws a bath in the tub. Steam felts from the heat and wafts into cold. Each of us is displaced as we watch his shadow doctor the water. His mind transmits ideas, but the frictions of our disunited forms prevent them from being free.

-Do you miss your student since he moved to the colonies?

-Why? You misconstrue my lessons just as ably.

Desire and strife lead to the condensation and rarefaction of the worlds. We clumsily deny the return of strife as we move to lower levels of passions. A toothless mouth wages a war on my left armpit. The dumb tongue works its way through the nest of hairs until it hits skin. Lapping, it is disembodied action.

-Revere the shark before our next generation fully springs fully from it.

Behind the screen, the body slips into the steaming tub. A gasp, which is untethered from our pleasures and pains, punctuates the mass of bodies slapping against each other.

The feathered fiends coo as they find rest.

A continuum of hot and cold pulls our mass into miasmic unity. The commingling of all things reduces the difference between the quicksilver of our seed and Hermes's breath. The brushing of digits and tongues on bodies reduces the fire of our moist souls. I reach for a can of Bud Lite in the cooler by the bed. Drinking dampens our spirits but makes it possible to live. Sinew tightens as the mist from the tub billows from underneath the sheet. Lips, hips, cock tips assert themselves in the shadow like chum for the world-sharks that birthed us. Our bodies form the rugged celestial shoals where cosmos breaks against chaos.

-It is not good to understand language.

Stains on fingers and beer on tongues ostracize us from the impiety of the infinite mind. Our gapes and leaks betray our imperfections. All things that mingle separate out. Strife intrudes on our play as we search for new partners: heads without necks and men with the heads of oxen. Distinct but nameless, inner form insists on the flourishing plural.

The sable carapaces of roaches wind through the dense forests of our pubes. Pinprick feet jab our soft meats. They move across the expanse of our stomachs but find they first need to travel half the distance along our paradise trail, which at once leads both up and down. The motion is paradox for their tiny feet must scurry an eighth then a quarter way up the trail before they move halfway. Likewise, we are never through the cloying pleasures of our cave.

-Listen to what I'm saying.

-Look. I've got my own thoughts.

The oncoming day influences what remains of our last night. The extent of our mass is held in the temporary darkness of our minds. Shadows knot our logic. I no longer know if my tongue streaks across another or the same. Distinction might perish without light. But being finite pains us even as a beauty flips his long brown hair. The gracious ones start to flutter lest we try to deceive. We still attend the ecstasy of the pure word.

Brushing and sucking cloys. Our senses deaden. We cannot suffer grief or pain. Finger pads continue to beat against strangers to Dionysus's fading phallic hymn. Blood

foamed with nous and pneuma continues to leak from us. No one reaches across the room, but even stationary we roll like the counter earth. Always at odds with the clamor from the exterior, we wait to see if more will come. Addition or subtraction would not cause us pain.

-What are you looking for?

-Nothing.

-I've got that in spades.

The gracious ones stretch their wings and flutter in the dusty light. The screen billows. We remain entangled.

Pink tongues contract, pull to the impress at the bottom of our mouths. The dingy morning light allows us to see glossy gum between missing teeth. Our filthy microcosms reflect the universe: infinite voids and worlds suspended. Our sterile filaments form a galaxy below us.

-Strife whets eros.

-Shut up and slobber on my knob.

Drinking to a point we can no longer divide ourselves. Drops of beer diffuse throughout the whole with their own velocity. Desire sets in as I stare across the mass: sileni, satyrs, fauns and shepherds wrapped in each other. A beam of light strikes a golden thigh and a copper sole. I breathe our reek like a pythoness at Delphi.

Nicholas Alexander Hayes is the reviews editor at Your Impossible Voice. He is also the author of the poetry collection *NIV: 39 & 27* (BlazeVox) and the novel *Between* (Atropos).

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Calumny from a queer person

Last 24 hours
 B4
 Procedure 1
 2 Straighten
 Me
 Out
 Somehow
 Maybe,
 4 now
 I choose
 2 bask
 Among
 Waddle, hunch, pretzel, neutered
 Cripples
 We never took note of
 What the fuck was so lame with us?

Pushcart-nominated Gerard Sarnat MD's authored HOMELESS CHRONICLES (2010), Disputes, 17s, Melting The Ice King (2016) and been published in Gargoyle, Lowestoft, Tishman Review, New Verse News etc. "Amber Of Memory" was the single poem chosen for my 50th college reunion Dylan symposium; the Harvard Advocate accepted a second plus Oberlin, Brown and other universities accepted concurrent pieces. Mount Analogue selected KADDISH FOR THE COUNTRY for pamphlet distribution on Inauguration Day for the DC and nationwide Women's Marches. For HuffPo/other reviews, visit GerardSarnat.com. Harvard/Stanford educated, Gerry's worked in jails, built/staffed clinics for the marginalized, been a healthcare CEO and Stanford professor.

MOUTHWASH GESTAPO

We're clinically proven to have no feelings.

Our blue-green bodies clack awake

the second you slide open the mirror door.

We've been trained to rustle up

the germs hiding in the caves of your teeth,

but they won't come out. They've heard

stories of their relatives rinsed out

without warning. We break forth in song:

heartrending anthems of our fatherland

and the virtues of hygienic purity.

As one by one succumbs to our patriotism,

we round them up for the sink's drain and push

out in a big fall. You'll spit out the last of us,

and smile. Today will be a good one for America.

Raymond Luczak is the author and editor of 19 books. Titles include *THE KINDA FELLA I AM: STORIES* (forthcoming in November 2017), *THE KISS OF WALT WHITMAN STILL ON MY LIPS*, and *QDA: A QUEER DISABILITY ANTHOLOGY*. A playwright, he lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and can be found online at raymondluczak.com.

Motel

A movie was on TV when I woke, the sound so low I could barely hear it.

It was one of those old trucker comedies.

Burt Reynolds and Jerry Reed.

My lover was watching it from the only chair in the room, sitting ankle over knee.

I lay on the bed and watched him smoke. Without the wig and other paraphernalia he was just a round, slightly effeminate little man. Balding, a little out of shape, but not unattractive, really. Older than I'd originally thought. It was hard to tell through all the make-up.

Big hoops still dangled from his earlobes.

He caught me staring and held my gaze for a few long seconds.

"Regret," he said, summing me up in a word.

"I'm thinking about my wife," I told him. "I think I just changed my life forever."

"It doesn't have to be that way," he said. "She doesn't even have to know."

"It'll be hard to look her in the eye."

"It's up to you. I wouldn't say a word."

He stubbed his cigarette out and stood with a loud grunt. He was naked now except for a pair of stay-up nylons -- the kind with the elastic garters sewn in at the top -- both of which were sliding down his legs, bagging at the knees.

Comical.

He adjusted them, then removed the earrings and placed them on the nightstand.

Not much remained of the vivacious, sexed-up creature who had accosted me in the bar downstairs.

Cute. Funny.

Causing a stir, but keeping a pretty mascaraed eye on me.

Sending me drinks.

It can be the same with women, I thought. High heels and low light can make all the difference in the world.

A wig. A miniskirt.

Jewelry to add a little flash and sparkle.

A certain feminine effect achieved...how? Crossing the legs at the knee? A coy tilt of the head? "A wiggle in the walk and a giggle in the talk," like the song says.

Of course, we call 'em like we see 'em. All decked out in the twilight of the bar he looked like a she, and I wasn't the only one treating him as such. I was the only one, however, who took him up on the offer he'd been broadcasting all evening long -- who left my seat at the bar to slide into his booth.

To giggle and tease.

To flirt.

With a man in a skirt.

I had reminded myself of what I was sure of as we snuggled in the bar -- that the sexy thing who had my endorphins buzzing was actually a man in women's clothes. But either it didn't matter, or it mattered more than I wanted to admit.

Three scotches straight up hadn't hurt, either.

"I think we need another snort," he said. He padded to the bureau, switched the TV off, opened the top drawer, and took out a fifth. He unwrapped two plastic cups before he broke the seal and poured us each a drink.

"Here you are," he said. "Something to ease the pain."

He offered me a smoke, which I took.

Marlboro Light.

I'd quit a dozen years ago -- me and Marci, together. I knew I'd regret smoking, too. He found the plastic lighter on the nightstand and lit me up, then handed me an ashtray before he took his seat.

I sipped my drink.

"You enjoyed it," he said.

"It's been a long time," I told him, dizzy from the nicotine. "I dabbled a little before I got married. With men, I mean."

"I could tell." He snorted a laugh. "You knew what you were doing." Then, "Do you have sex with her? Your wife?"

"Yes," I answered. "But not like we used to. You know how it is."

"I guess," he said. "I've never had the pleasure."

"You've never been with a woman?"

"Oh, yeah." He snickered. "I've been with women. I just never tied the knot."

We sipped our drinks. I finished my smoke. I felt a little nauseous. He stubbed his out inside the waste basket and moved to the side of the bed, then took a seat as he set his drink on the nightstand.

"What are you going to do," he asked.

"I don't know."

"I can put the wig back on if it'd make you feel better." He smirked.

"That's okay," I told him.

"I'm glad you said that. It's hot. It makes me itch."

He was lying next to me now, on his side, head propped on hand, watching me.

"You're cute," he finally said. "I could eat you up." He fondled me through the sheet. "You can stay here tonight. So you won't be thinking about it so much."

"I don't know," I said. "I'm not sure."

"It's up to you. I'm up at seven. I've set the alarm. I've got to be in Atlanta by two. It's a long, boring drive."

I looked at the clock. It was only eleven. It would be a long night. I didn't want to be alone.

"Okay," I told him. I'd left my cell phone in my room. She'd probably called to say goodnight. She was worried now. I'd have to call her in the morning.

I wondered what I'd say.

I slid down in the bed and turned toward him, pulling the sheet away so that both of us were exposed. He pressed against me. I could feel his excitement and, despite everything, my own. I rolled onto my back, pulling him on top of me.

"Ooooh, that's my baby," he said, and he leaned in for a kiss.

My Name Would Slide Off My Face

My memories of you are like broken faucets
that bathe my days. I look in the mirror and find you.
I was the one who found you. I wonder who you were
before everything took place, took her, brought me,
breaking you. I wonder who you were. You dwelled
elsewhere, drowning the hours, the ride outs,
in your tower. My name would slide off my face,
and you asked me to remind you, and I did,
and you slid in and out of another world, a world
that permeated the air. I feel your thirst in me,
a potent propensity, the inheritance striving to surface,
full-throttle. I would hear you careen her name
from your stupors; I would hear the accent of your
footsteps talking with a slur, on your way for another.
I remember your blood shot eyes looked
like two fused solitudes, looking through shadows
that had no definite terminus.
The anodyne of the vine: the sea-constant thirst:
the escape to the edge of the cape. A suicide is its own note.
Your reasons stare at me. Our lives meet like familiar strangers,
insular in their own fires, their own geysers,
their stains of truth, all the ruth.

Omer Zamir is a young poet currently living in Israel. *Chrysopylae* is a book of his poems that came out this summer through Deerbrook Editions.

<http://www.deerbrookeditions.com/chrysopylae>

The Foreskin of Finitude

Bill tossed the newspaper in Kevin's direction on the dining room table. The headline read: GOD IS DEAD. "What happened?" Kevin asked. Bill sipped his coffee. "It says he was killed." "By whom?" Kevin asked. "Us, apparently," Bill said. "How? Was I blackout drunk that night?" "With knives, it says." Kevin did not recall ever meeting God. "Is someone taking his job?" Kevin asked. "No," Bill answered, "we're on our own now." "Well, that's a relief," Kevin said, "I have a novel to write. Without God, I can write it as an empirical epic of subjective meaning now." Bill looked at Kevin with shifty eyes and sipped his coffee.

Kevin stood up, unzipped his pants, and unfurled his penis. Kevin's penis unfurled like a banner at a parade. Bill looked at Kevin's penis. Kevin's penis was at Bill's eye level. "What do you think of it?" Kevin asked. "It's a philosophical problem," Bill responded. "May I try something?" Bill asked. Bill finished his coffee and stood up. Bill unzipped his pants and also unfurled his penis. Bill and Kevin's penises faced each other. Bill took the uncircumcised foreskin of Kevin's penis and covered the circumcised head of Bill's penis with it. This is called docking. "It did not work," Bill concluded. "What were you trying to do?" Kevin asked. "I was trying to overcome the distinction of *phenomena* and *noumena*, but it appears I'll never get to the thing-in-itself," Bill said. "Maybe if my penis were in your butt," Kevin suggested. Bill agreed to try as an experiment. Bill bent over the dining table and lowered his pants to bare his ass. Kevin stuck his penis inside Bill's butt. "No, it's much the same," Bill lamented.

"Remember," Kevin said, "that time at a bar I convinced several men to let me drink the alcohol of their nationalities from inside the foreskin of their penises?" "I think you must be thinking of Ralph," Bill said, "your former boyfriend." "Oh, Ralph, that's right," Kevin said, "it's so easy to forget. Anyway, they pulled down their trousers. I drank vodka out of a Russian's foreskin. I drank raki out of a Turk's. I drank cognac out of a Frenchman's. I drank Jägermeister out of a German's." "I see," Bill said. "Do you resent my lack of a foreskin? I have none out of which you can drink." "No," Kevin said. "What would I drink out of you if I could?" "You could drink whiskey. Bourbon." "I never drank bourbon out of a foreskin before," Kevin remarked with a sigh of newfound longing.

At God's burial Kevin met a whiskey distiller. The distiller's name was Jake. Kevin had not been invited to God's funeral, but Kevin surmised that if he had killed God he should at least pay his respects. The whiskey distiller named Jake asked Kevin if he knew God. "No, I didn't. I came because I killed him." "Me too," Jake said. They shared a bonding moment. "Do you have a foreskin?" Kevin asked. "I do," Jake said, "it's made by Gucci." "I'd love to taste some of your whiskey from it," Kevin said. "I have an appointment at 3 to have it cleaned," Jake said, "but you can come to the distillery after for a tasting." Jake's eyes twinkled. A date was set.

Near a couple of large copper stills Jake sat on an upright barrel with his pants down at his ankles so that his penis could move freely. Beside Jake sat four bottles of whiskey. "The first whiskey is a seven year-old made from 100% corn aged in oak barrels. It is light and smooth." Jake poured some in his foreskin. Kevin drank it out. "The second whiskey is made with rye. Also aged in oak barrels. It has a hint of spice." Kevin drank it out of Jake's foreskin as well. "The third is a bourbon made with corn and barley mash. Note the complex flavors. And the fourth is a German-style malt using traditional methods. To me it tastes a bit like a Toostie roll." Kevin drank and appreciated the variety of flavors. "You have done me a great service," Kevin said to Jake. After drinking, Kevin mashed his foreskin with Jake's, but neither overcame Kant's critique of pure reason.

When Kevin returned home, Bill tossed another newspaper in his direction on the dining room table. Bill sipped his wine. "What were you doing tonight?" Bill asked with shifty eyes. Kevin looked at the headline on the newspaper: MAN IS DEAD. "I didn't do it," Kevin said. "I know you didn't," Bill said, "the newspaper said so. You weren't doing anything." "Well I wouldn't say *anything*," Kevin said. "You didn't do *anything*," Bill continued, "because you were only bearing history. You're no longer the author of its acts." "It's not going to make writing my novel any easier," Kevin surmised, "knowing I'm just doing somebody else's work now." "Don't worry about it," Bill answered, "there's no you now anyway. It says so right here in the newspaper. They quoted a detective named Foucault. He said you were 'a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea.'" "That sounds like an insult," Kevin said. "At least I don't have to worry about the thing-in-itself anymore," Bill concluded. "Do you think we should go to the funeral?" Kevin asked. "I didn't go to God's!" Bill replied.

The two functions of history engaged in fornication in the bedroom of their house as was the custom of their civilization. Mere things with no intrinsic value, acting on behalf of unconscious determined agents that pre-existed them, they exercised in gay anal penetration until they emitted the secretions appropriate for their species. In the exercise of their biological necessities, these two creatures demonstrated their empirical finitude as expressed in preconditioned desire for two strong hot bodies grinding against each other.

No one attended man's burial.

Robert S. Costic is a writer living in Washington, D.C. Fascinated with fairy tales, he has translated tales written by Theodor Storm and Friedrich Hebbel from German to English and has written several original works, some of which have appeared in the literary publications *ImageOutWrite* and *Off the Rocks*. He is currently working on a collection of gay erotica.

AFTERWORD

The second issue of SCAB comes out in March 2018.

Though I'm entirely satisfied and happy with this first issue, I'd like to broaden the journal's contents in the future and turn SCAB into a literary *and* arts magazine. This means that along with all the literary pieces, I'd also love to publish photos (webcam selfies are one of my soft spots!) and drawings/paintings.

The "rules" remain. SCAB is interested in everything twisted, harsh, experimental, hard-to-define, pornographic and/or queer.

For more information please visit SCAB's homepage:
<https://scabmag.wordpress.com/>

Submissions are now open for the second issue. Guidelines are available on the homepage.

Please send every submission to this address: scabmag@outlook.com

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To all the writers, artists, people who submitted their amazing work to SCAB: thank you for showing interest in a new-born journal and supporting it with your submissions. It means the world.

To everyone who read the first issue: thank you for virtually picking up SCAB and reading it 'til this last page. Once again, your interest and support are what keeps the project going and growing.

Thank you all for making this possible.

