

SCAB

ISSUE #4

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Looks like the closer I get to my original, core vision of SCAB, the meaner I get - okay, not meaner but pickier, definitely. Despite the increasing amount (and it's astonishing, really, considering the magazine's godawful online presence - I urgently need to hire someone crazy who's friends with twitter et al.) - so despite the increasing amount of submissions, SCAB keeps growing smaller and smaller with each new issue. And with this one, I think we hit rock bottom. Not in the burnout-third-suicide-attempt sense but literally, in the sense that I can say now (*I know* I always say this but this time I mean it, really, truly) that THIS is SCAB. Sure, it can always get a little nastier, it can always get a little creepier. A lot longer and thicker, hopefully. But this is the absolute base I want to build every future issue on.

This is of course not to say that all the previous issues were bullshit. All four are parts of a process I love more than anything I'm currently working on - the process of translating the atmosphere of my mind into something you can see and read. Connecting with humans out there who carry something similar in their head. Every single piece I've ever published is right where it needs to be. And it all led here.

Look at this beauty.

Like... seriously. I have nothing else to say. Go and look at it. Read it. Enjoy it.

And maybe even be a part of it next time.

D.

March 2019



A Room that Isn't Mine

I take the TV remote and slap it against my face *slap! slap!* until the batteries pop out and then I slap my face with it some more *slap! slap!* into the small bridge of my nose, *slap! slap!* into the hard lines of my jaw *slap! slap!* the tender flesh of my temples *slap! slap!* the orbitals of my eyes *slap! slap!* my face with the remote until I see spots dance in front of my eyes red and blue and green.

When the urge to destroy things finally passes, I sit on the couch, forehead dripping sweat, panting, gaze hazy, face swelling, alone in a silent room, left eye black and a small cut bleeding from the bottom of my jaw.

Then, from somewhere upstairs, a baby.

I can hear the baby's guardian *clomp! clomp!* feet pacing back and forth *clomp! clomp!* voice shouting, "I'm coming, I'm coming!" telling the little baby bawling, "Don't cry! Don't cry!"

There is no one around but me. No one around to see; just me and the remote. The remote with more control. The remote with its universal authority, applicable to the stereo and the cable box and the satellite and the TV, but me? Nothing, nada *slap! slap!* fuck that. Just me and the remote. No legal guardian or partner here to wipe away my tears with a two-ply tissue from the bathroom or a soft-lipped kiss on the cheek.

Searching the room a liquid, crystalline scene, I start thinking about the night before; what my friend said happened a couple months back (the gun). He'd been depressed and snuck into his housemate's bedroom *clomp! clomp!* while his housemate was away at work (the gun). He'd gone into his roommate's closet and found a loaded 9mm *click! click!* black and silver with the safety off.

I think about (the gun). Not my gun, but a gun not too far. An easy way out, a quick trip down a short hall, first door on the right, through a turnstile asking no fare, resting in a shoebox, a handgun, a pistol, loaded, with the safety off, black and silver, 9mm, bullets, an easy way out *click! click!*

In a blind haze, I get up from the couch, remote still controlled by my hand, eyes trained on nothing, feeling nothing, feet going through the motions, no one and no thing commanding them to carry me on.

This is my life and I make the decisions I call the shots *slap! slap!* no one is going to tell me what to do!

I make the right turn toward the housemate's bedroom, the one with the shoebox, the one with the lid off, Ark of the Covenant, the power to change everything, Nike calling me...

Boom. Boom.

I get to the door and put my hand on the knob; a room that isn't mine.

"This is it," I hear a voice say, and it's mine. I'm still holding the remote and the voice is me and I can feel the hot flesh of my bruised face expanding and the warm blood seeping out through the cut on my chin.

I pass the remote from one hand to the other and open the door. Clothes and bedding, trinkets and photographs; a bong, a Bob Marley poster, an IKEA bedframe and dresser, an orange-crate nightstand; artifacts of a foreign life. Things that aren't mine, aren't anybody's on a long enough timeline, occupying a room where the control of the remote in my hand won't and can't reach.

I'm trespassing, the baby upstairs reminding me life isn't always comfortable, and wouldn't it be great to just exit stage right?

How easy easy easy it would be (the gun).

The voice inside my head keeps insisting, "This is it, this is it?" and the baby keeps crying and the feet of the guardian keep clomping and I can't get the sound of the *slap slap slapping* out of my ears, but I can't go inside, I can't move.

I stand in the doorway and stare at the room that isn't mine, hand on the knob, fingers trembling, stomach crashing over like a wave, avoiding my reflection in the full-length body mirror on the wall opposite, bent like a tree in a weathered down storm. My legs are shaking, my vision blurring. I open my mouth to speak but nothing comes out; just a violent burst of air choked back by the shame of sounding like a baby, downstairs. A baby at thirty-two, unable to control its moods.

I think about my friend, the one who told me about (the gun). How he was away at work and told me to leave the key under the cooler on the front porch if I wanted to leave.

I stand in the doorway of a room that isn't mine and think about whether I should leave the key if I'm going to kill myself. My reasoning is that my friend won't be able to

get back in and he'll have to call the landlord, only to find his friend, smoking holes, lying in a heap on the floor in the corner of a room that isn't his instead; bleeding out on the hardwood floor but thanks for putting the key where you said you would after I told you where (the gun) was this isn't a coincidence at all.

Upstairs, the baby. Down here, the baby. Unable to make decisions. Unable to reel it in.

I think about my mother and father. I think about my brothers.

Overtaken with guilt, I run back to the couch *skif! skif!* my feet across the floor, my face in my hands, feeling the bumps and the bruises, the fresh festering craters, the pain of this life and lives I've never lived, and I cry. Until my stomach clenches and my throat shrivels. I cry until my voice goes hoarse and shaky. Crying. On the couch. Crying.

The baby upstairs.

Blinds drawn, blankets pulled over my eyes, I toss and turn, body restless, jerking in and out of an unfortunate consciousness. Minutes, an hour, thirty seconds; each moment like the last; not far enough ahead in the future, not old enough to be the past, listening to a parent's heavy footsteps clomping from one side of the apartment upstairs to the other, trying to comfort a baby whose mouth can only cry.

Awake with the remote, headache forming between my eyes, I get up for a glass of water only to find there aren't any cups clean. Standing there, bare, except for my underwear, the dishes *wash! wash* dirty, in the sink, sight partially gone in my left eye and bleeding, food mostly crusted, flaking, from dinner. I open the dishwasher and stack the plates, slide the silverware in their slacks, put the cups on top, pop a detergent cube in its cubby, and bring the dishwasher to a close with a *clack!*

The machine starts with a whir, and I stand back, scanning the kitchen. The stove a mess from the night before; baking tray with the remnants of roasted sweet potato fries stuck to the sheet metal, brown and greasy. Something else to clean. Another job. Another task. An endless cycle of clean-dirty-clean-dirty-clean-dirty-clean.

Upstairs, the baby keeps crying, and the footsteps, from one end of the apartment to the other *clomp! clomp!* "How do you feel now baby? How do I make it all better?" *Clomp! clomp!* "Is this what you want baby? Is this what you need?"

"I should be getting paid for this," I hear a voice say. The voice is mine. I'm holding the remote and the voice is mine and all I can think about is the whirring of the

dishwasher and the *chug! chug! chug!* of the drain as it cycles from main wash to rinse to plate warmer and OFF.

I think about the dishwasher and from somewhere can hear a baby and with my hands I feel a jerking motion, a scraping back and forth *scrubbing* I start *scrubbing* one greasy corner of the white Jen-Air oven. Then another. And another.

Ten minutes later, stovetop sparkling clean, I walk back to the couch *skif! skif!* and step on something hard. I look down, face in a frown, and find a battery. One of the batteries from the TV remote and I think to myself *die battery* as my foot erupts in pain *die explode* thinking no that's not right pissed because I'm thirty-two and still feel like I throw temper tantrums even though I know, medically, that isn't the case.

In a flash of red heat, I take off my watch and throw it at the giant flat-screen across the room, pick up my friend's headphones and chuck them into the garbage, launch my water bottle into the wall hoping it'll explode all over the \$2,000 speakers nearby.

One by one the table in front of me clears and the peripheries of the room pile up with random debris.

Then I pick up the remote control, see the blood on its buttons, see the sunlight streaming in through the sliding glass windows, put the battery back in its rightful place, and go for a run around the lake outside.

Chad W. Lutz is a human born in Akron, Ohio, in 1986, and raised in the neighboring suburb of Stow. Alumna of Kent State University's English program, Chad earned an MFA in Creative Writing at Mills College and currently serves as an associate editor for Pretty Owl Poetry. Their writing has been featured in KYSO Flash, Foliate Oak Literary Magazine, Gold Man Review, and Haunted Waters Press, was awarded the 2017 prize in literary fiction by Bacopa Review, and was a nominee for the 2017 Pushcart in poetry.

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Silver Tongue Scraper

A man calls me 'Erin'. I don't correct him because it's refreshing to be someone else for a change. I judge character based on superficial qualities. Flesh is poetic on the right people. On me, the urine of my youth seeps from pock marks.

The brick and mortar reflects neon blood bar lights down the alleyway. One of two tubes engorged through glassy vision. The man forces two fingernails that look like cockroach shells under my upper lip and tugs. I end up salivating backside down, sucking the fish hooks off his fingertips. He forces his cock between my lips. It looks like a gooseneck traffic cone and makes me sound like a pufferfish as it lurches.

My jaw flexes like the worn coils of a mattress spring. His thighs are iced in an aroma that's smoky like black vinegar. I keep track of the time based on the length of his clove cigarette. At home I keep a corkboard tacked with the cigarette stubs of jaded men that have used my dick as a quarter slot. I've received more pain where I should've expelled pleasure. Pain is recognizing that something is ugly and not doing anything about it.

My mouth becomes a marsh of bittersweet syrup, thick like whale oil, creaming in violence. My body swells like a soaked burlap sack and my lips smell like oysters. When he leaves, he holds my skin as collateral.

Ian Hudick is a queer horror writer from Tucson, Arizona.

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what i wanna be when i grow up

Not many would be turned on by that
man with the pot
belly smile and the hairy
tongue. Not many would want what he had
to give them, not if it would kill
them to take it from him like a curse.
Not many would stay up at night googling
what to do with a positive test result in a homo-
phobic family. Not many would pray for
the text saying "Kia Ora Josiah, all tests
sent from NZAF were positive, infections
found, please call to arrange another
appointment" but I'm not many I am
one who wants so much inside
me even people and things that will
kill me I want even someone who
hacks violent like a meat grinder at my
ends someone who can show me his pot
belly and his smiley feet someone who can
tell me he loves me for my hurting who can
cover my happiness all up in
routine and disarray who can
stuff my mouth with latex who can
bleed my belly dry who can
give me what I could take from him like a
curse what I can google like it's a positive
test result and imagine I'm in a homo-
phobic family who can help me get past the
text saying "Kia Ora Josiah" like it's
culturally sensitive. Who can be the many to
my not

Josiah Morgan lives in Christchurch, New Zealand. His first book, *Inside the Castle*, was published by Amphetamine Sulphate in February. When the world ends, you'll find Josiah dancing to Lou Reed in the natal ward of the nearest hospital.



Eromenos

Pan and Daphnis sit in the joint of an extended city bus. Daphnis muzzles his lean thigh against Pan's leg as the bus turns a corner. The gray articulated walls around them expand and contract. They brace against the momentum but fall against each other anyway. The bus jerks to a stop. The boys dismount and head in the direction of a strip club.

Pan drops his skate to the pavement and gently pushes off. "That bitch Echo don't want me," he mutters.

"Don't even know why we're going. Echo's a bitch. You don't need her." Daphnis lowers his eyes and hurries a little to keep up with his friend. "Besides, a lot of people want you."

"Nobody I want."

Pan shrugs his shoulders and guides them to the back of the club, trying to stay out of the sight of the bald bouncer who Pan knows from past experience hates his guts. Despite their slinking, the bouncer sees them and picks up the phone to call Pan's father, Hermes.

But the boys don't notice. They sit over by the dumpster near the rear entrance and split a smoke.

Fifteen minutes later, Ganymede walks out the back. "What up?" he yells to Pan and Daphnis. They extend their fists and give each other a warm and cordial tap.

"She in tonight?" Pan asks.

"Yep, but it won't do you any good. Never does. Why you even come?"

“She gives me crazy wood.”

“You should find another hole to chase,” Ganymede says feigning wisdom.

Pan nudges Daphnis, “Listen to the original butt boy, giving me advice on women.” Pan and Daphnis chuckle.

“You got to do what you got to do,” Ganymede says. He takes out a joint and lights it, then hands it to Daphnis. They pass it around. The good stink curls out over the rotten trash and piss. Pan crouches next to a blue dumpster heaped with black bags. The blonde busboy stands over him.

A bike speeds down the street. Hermes takes the corner with one leg raised and has already dismounted before the bike has even stopped. He moves swiftly and seizes Ganymede’s slender wrist before he can pass the joint to Daphnis.

Ganymede cannot break the grip. Hermes pries the joint from his fingers. “Get out,” he growls at the busboy, then lets him go. Ganymede darts up the street.

Hermes tokes and turns his attention to his son, “Listen, Pan, Echo’s not interested. I’m sick of getting these calls saying you’re lurking around outside.”

“But I love her.”

Hermes slaps him.

“I love her,” he says and tries to walk away.

Hermes grabs him by the shoulder and throws him to the ground. He places his knee against the boy’s throat. Daphnis tries to shove Hermes off. Without looking, Hermes

swings behind him and punches Daphnis in the face. Daphnis crouches to the doorway and watches his friend.

Pan struggles to get free. He mutters, "I love her, what else am I supposed to do?"

"Don't you know?" He presses his knee deeper into his son's throat. "Watch, little fucker, I'll show you what you're supposed to do." He pinches the joint between his lips.

Pan, unable to even gasp for breath, turns red beneath him.

Hermes forces his shorts over his hips and says, "You do this." His dick springs semi-erect. He grips it and starts to beat. "Do this, every time you think of her, do this." After a minute, he fires a wad and grunts.

The chunky wad hits Pan in the eye. Hermes stands and adjusts his pants. He mounts his bike. "Get your ass home." He launches a loogie at his son. "Who would want a creepy pussy like you?" He speeds off.

Pan digs the spooge from his eyes with his finger and flings it to the ground.

Daphnis emerges from the shadow and cradles Pan. He licks the blood, mucus and semen from his face. Pan moans. Daphnis reaches for Pan's crotch. He unzips his shorts and grips the semi-turgid rod. "I'd want a pussy like you," he whispers.

Alix Merritt is based in the Midwestern US. They are an aficionado of '60s pulp novels and '90s queer lit.

He had pistol eyes, fingers in pockets, excess saliva. His bruised, fizzy shadow like a rejection. It all goes downhill from here. It's so much easier than this.

Why are you so scared of being said no when it's not a punishment? Who hurt you so bad?

So let her be stubborn if she wants to be. Let her be stupid. He walked after him in cold, engaging indifference, his triangle mouth puffing the words WEAR 'EM OUT and he turned and snickered and now you're just - paying your respects - stealing what you can't do without him but he's not dead yet and maybe someone understands him better than you do. She let out a surprised gasp, breath speedy on cardboard tongue: she said yes, without much hesitation. You're still living on ground zero. She's sleeping it off.

When he returned, he reeked of persistent urgency, urine stains in bed. Purple nails and ratty hair. He practically floated out of school on the back of ever more elevating steps whistling a football song or a cartoon tune and Bobby with his braces was watching him through the window with quietly charged admiration. All the suicidal ideation bullshit only later.

So what happens if I swallow it? What happens? Her psychiatrist, a long-fingered stick with strict glasses used the words "oral fixation" but only in the safety of her almost-illegible notes.

Why does it bother you so much when someone's waiting for you? Don't you think they've got better things to do?

Sometimes I forget she's dead. It's all the same to me. But still, I mean, how do you think they do it?

He woke up covered in cold sweat, his dreams like giant insects like everybody else's. Half the day's gone already. You don't have to yell. He dreamed about Bess again, dead-alive and sweating, putrid and foaming and dogs with hard-eyed violence and boys in indecent dresses and his mother in a bad mood, complaining about the fat covering terrible belly-aches like I'M NEVER GOING TO BE ALONE AGAIN, AM I? He needs to drink her 6 days a week.

Is this still something you want, Bobby, he asks, surprisingly softly, mad charm under careful restraint, for now. How can you lose it so quickly, she wants to know, I want to close my fists around it forever, forever, I want to hold it between my teeth but if I break

the skin he said he's gonna kill me and I've no reason not to believe every word he says. If you go on a little longer you'll become hot pink, hot and pink, and a legitimate part of the feast. It goes without saying.

He has a Matthew Shepard daydream, irrevocably unfulfilled.

He's in turmoil and in pain, in and out of plastic chairs and all the doctors know his name. You're so scared of dying that you've never started living, etc. You must understand that it's a symptom of your anxiety disorder - the line on your palm doesn't mean shit.

Suddenly the door burst open or the window shattered or the sky opened and she thundered in there on jumpy wings. She was looking for him, most obviously. Bobby felt jealous, a queasy sneaky feeling swelling in the pit of his stomach. 'Sweetie, you can't find him empty-handed', he hoped. 'Even if I wanted to', she says, 'I can't stretch time.'

He was so sick before, listening to electric fire shrieks - he said his baby brother was the offspring of Satan or a saint and that's why he did what he did, as a test which only proved that his brain's crumbling and what a terrible thing, oh what a terrible thing and now he's got all those signs saying "forgiveness is utopian" and "guilt is fashionable" and his knuckles are purple and his throat is always raw but you can never see his eyes under the palms of his rickety hands.

'And please collect the bullets afterwards.'

Dominik is the editor of SCAB. He wanted to be a part of this issue because it's his favorite so far.

Rupt, from *Death and*

beneath the covers two bodies and one of them i say is mine. i say Yr mine to the other body and the other body understands. sleeping together little deaths how i loathe them? but i'm misquoting the nightmare tonight four hours my voice rasps but earlier i said "speaking of radical destruction: break [all over] me" & "lay waste to meeeee" & the other body responded with a poem. a line from that poem "Once you blur the distinction between equal and equivocal, space is interrupted and disappears in subcutaneous shivers." all my metaphors for sex involve dissolution. u n i versal solvent. the other body gets so wet flooded my house my foundation melts. "im a puddle" the other body says in a text but i know they are an ocean (why else would i say break): "tonight let's practice erosion / it's finally my turn as the wind" but wind carries the sediment the soil the salt that does the work. the wind a vessel for other smaller bodies & these bodies get no nominal credit. i take credit for what?

my body does to this other body.
 call it a kink because the string was knotted already. *to bend at the knees* kick & kick like a hanging body. call the neck a curl in the rope. that paroxysm of DIE IN TH[E]Y LAP. in a 90's film the villain threatens *i can make you laugh* but we all know he because laughter means as close to Death as one can get & so does an orgasm Beaten Within an inch of our lives swimming melting makes a body [its limits] harder to define. measure the shoreline. measure a cloud. when it rains. measure the size of your mouth. without teeth now. sometimes i imagine silly things like the other body tearing open my side with their fingers. splitting me from hip to shoulder. silly because i orgasm from kissing the other body on the bed, then i orgasm until i push the other body from my body and say Fuck You sometimes. You have to stop touching me, but my body doesn't listen. the fan the blanket on my leg hair its cool the wet spots on the bed against every footstep outside the door creaking on the stairs there are cars outside with bodies in them and the lights on the window make me shake so i have to hold it. i learned to palm pain this way, a needle through my ear through pinched arm torture videos snuff films accidental deaths (one i remember: a body pushes

a tall metal lattice structure with wheels across a street then the body falls to the ground and does not move after. comments on the video say the structure touched an electrical wire. the body does not move but the tall lattice rolls away. this a .gif so it recurs: pushing the cart, falling to the ground, silent the whole time, but more silent when the body stops moving) & opening making with shaving-razorblades new mouths on my stomach n chest that breathed when i did tore horizons from the scabs messy sunsets in the skin giving myself too much of it. isopropanol poured into each gap. estuaries bringing my body outside itself when dams break i try to teach myself to take pleasure the same, small steady breaths each flex flux "fuck me up" of my core and legs too tightening but sometimes the ecstasy is too loud or bright n i lose my body n every sense. no light now. sparkles. glitter terrible world i lean into of the dark i was always scared of. n this height too. i look down inward n vertigo oh sweet one come back to me, terminal

velocity occurs because the wind resists the body. the body might erode completely if falling for long enough. the shape changes too quickly to mark. well. in dead space, this is no problem. no problem at all you can accelerate for infinity. or maybe until the speed of light when you become pure energy. tonight i do & i have left becoming ageless faceless when i return nothing is different except in the morning my hair lingers on my lips and i orgasm on the walk to the bus sometimes the shift of my bandana around my neck bruised sometimes it's the light reflecting off my hand my tongue caught between my teeth when the bus passes under a bridge potholes beneath the wheels specters of the other body of the other night rapping on my windows sometimes it's just the wind

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Kick My Ass

Take me out onto your apartment porch
and kick my ass.

Show me your tough side.
Expose gang colors,

give me a swift kick from your Nikes.

Pull me drunk, out of the night club
kicking and screaming behind a stank

rusty dumpster.
Drag me through half empty beer cans.

Show me how to act.
Break my nose, give me 69 stitches.

Cut my face with broken beer bottles.
Give me a black eye,

fat lip, cracked ribs.
I'm spitting floods of blood

on your tee shirt.
Here I am duct taped,

puking double cheeseburger
on the hood of some girl's *Honda Accord*.

Drag me down a table of mixed drinks,
across splinters of green glass

and kick my ass.

I can't get off on guns or knives.

Kick my ass with your
freckled fists.

Beat me black and blue,
won't you?

Make your threats with hot cigarettes.
If you need me I'll be in critical condition, lover.

Shane Allison has had poems published in over a dozen anthologies, lit mags and online jewels. His new collection, *Live Nude Guys* is out from Gimmick Press. His visual art can be seen on his Instagram page. He goes by [shaneallison2400](#).

AFTERWORD

The 5th issue of SCAB comes out in September 2019.

You know the motto: send along your best worst. You can submit here:

<https://scabmag.wordpress.com/submissions/>

For more overall information, please visit SCAB's homepage:

<https://scabmag.wordpress.com/>

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