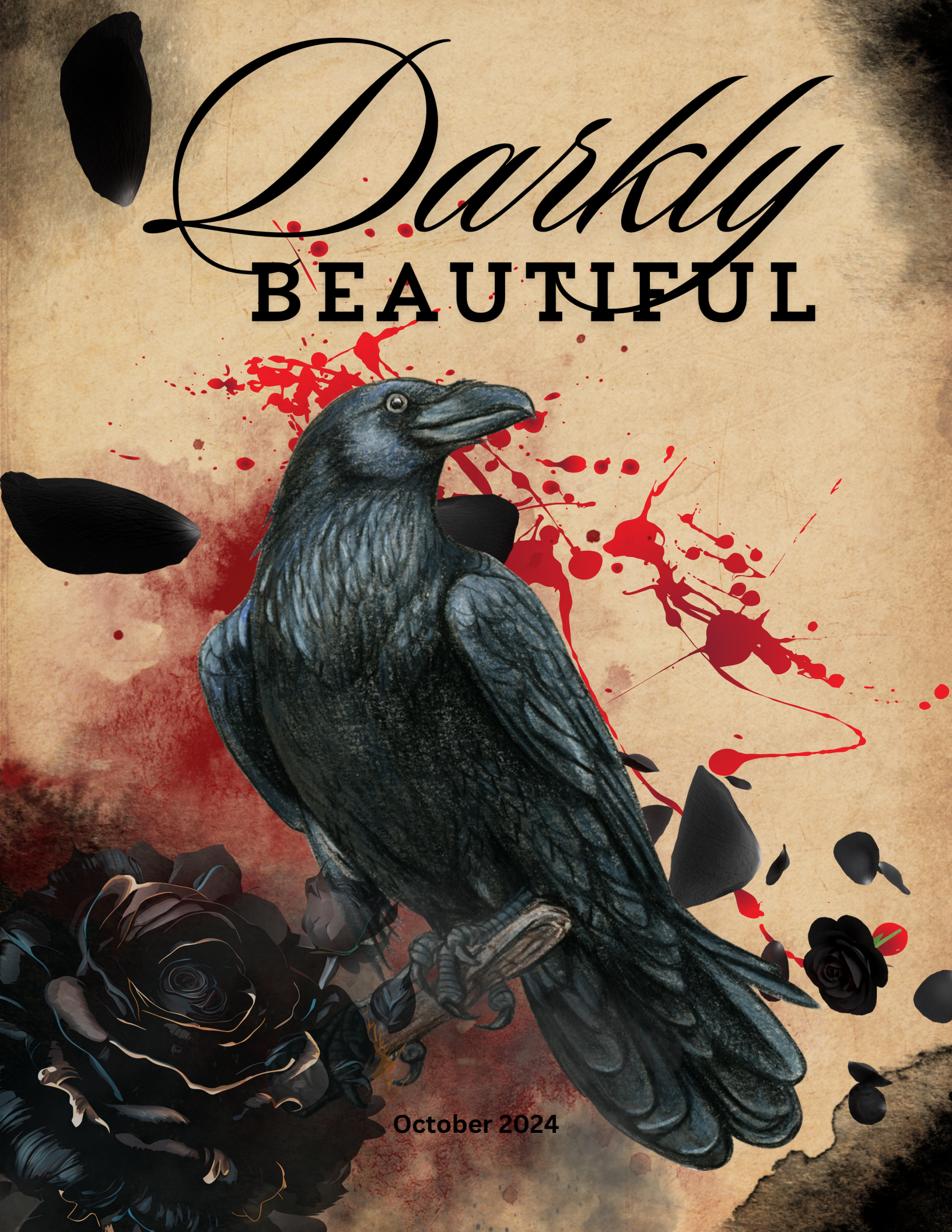
Darkly BEAUTIFUL



October 2024

Darkly BEAUTIFUL

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Letter from the Editor

Well hello there!

In this first edition of Darkly Beautiful, we venture into the darkness by the means of art. Everyone has their own reason to venture into the darkness. Some are seekers, searching for meaning, wisdom, reason, and immeasurable things. Others are voyeurs, titillated by the darkness. Still others are wandering aimlessly, just ambling on in and taking a look around, not particularly sure what brought them here.

Whatever your reasons for venturing into the dark, I hope that you find something of worth, something precious. I hope you carry this within you and that it enriches your life, brings fruit to wisdom, and guides you.

The darkness can allow us to see the light by offering contrast. To face the darkness can offer strength, knowledge, and even, somehow, give hope and a sense of life's beauty. There is a mystery to darkness, as it is visible yet unseen as we shy away from looking at it due to its nature. If we are to grow from it, however, we must face the darkness fully to whatever capacity we are able to.

it is my hope that this magazine will allow for one to do so safely, within the realms of art and particularly within the realm of written expression.

So venture forth. Face the darkness within these pages, and start on a fresh adventure within the shadows.



Artificial

by K.G. Miceli

Hide the demons...
Face the dark.
Hide the creatures...
crush the spark.

What kind of a world do we live in... when being evil is the only way to the top?
What kind of place is this... when all we've known, is an artificial realm?

Hide the pain...
Force away the screams.
Hide the torture...
Hold it back.

We wish for peace, in a sleepless world.
We hope for safety, in a place of violence.
We want for better days, where each and every one is a waking nightmare.
We try to be better, in a society that's built to break us.

We were never meant for all this artificial sorrow.



Home Free

by K.G. Miceli

Dark and mysterious forces can exist, even where we feel the safest. The whistling of the wind, the darkness in the night; the calming in the chirping of the crickets during the moonlight. A mere example of the places they will hide. A whisper in the silence, a scream behind the door - they wait and watch for you to arrive, just so they can feast upon your tortured soul.

I face my way down the sidewalk; the streetlights so dimly lit that they barely scrape away at the darkness of the asphalt. If I close my eyes and listen, I can practically hear them scream; the voices in my head, or the victims of the black. Questions remain unanswered. The road is dark and quiet, owls hoot within the treacherous silence - and I wonder if they're trying to tell me something.

I find myself looking back, double and even triple checking; searching for the cause of that feeling of foreboding. I can feel someone - or something - watching me, threatening me. Nothing but the dark emptiness exists behind me, in front of me, only darkness and a sense of home. I know I'll be there soon - I'm going to make it.

The tapping of my shoes against cement seems to follow me, and sometimes sounds as though there are multiple sets of feet. Again, I check my surroundings, and visually, there is nothing else there.

Off into the distance, beyond the nearest street bench, past the trees and spring gardens, I can see a yellow pasty door that was once white. A hue I'd grown familiar to, an old shade that reminded me of comfort. But I can't calm my nerves.

Goosebumps and hairs on end replace the softness that was present only a short time before. I graze my hands along my arms - hoping that will bring a sense of relief. But, relief exists no more.

I climb the stone steps to the porch of my home, and reach my hand up to the yellow door. It's unlocked, and swings open with ease.

A pressure drops itself upon my head, an energy I wish I could throw away. It's heavy, it's so heavy that I feel as though I might faint. I can feel it forcing me to the ground, pressing its existence into my shoulders.

I want to scream, I want to yell and call for help, but my mouth is like an abandoned tunnel; forgotten and strange. Sounds refuse to appear.

Burning; I can feel the sensation of daggers ripping into my neck. I can feel the claws piercing into me, warm liquid trickles down my skin - and I know it came from my veins.

I'm home now. I'm safe...

Is what I wish I could say.

But, the talons of the spirits, or maybe myself in general refuse to let me be. They won't let me be free... they're never going to let me go.

I close my eyes, as the darkness pulls me away - into the nothing, the darkness of the abyss.



About the Author



Author K.G. Miceli

I'm a local author of many genres from Ontario, Canada! My favorite & most successful work has been my thrillers - one of which being an award winning novel!

All of my books are available for purchase through Amazon, and you can follow me on almost all social media platforms!

FB - Author K.G Miceli
Instagram - k.g.miceli
TikTok - authorkgmiceli

Moments in Eternity

by Julie Dron

The mulchy aroma of cedar and cypress reminded her of home. A damp forest smell of mushrooms, moss and woody bark; decay and rebirth. Home being three hundred years ago, a time of fear and persecution. They thought they had destroyed her spirit through fire, but they were ignorant and she had waited patiently like the kestrel she now observed soaring through the sky, swooping silently, searching for its prey.

Time had wrought many changes, she was aware, but it was of no consequence. She dipped her toes into the cool river as she had done all those centuries ago, when they had lived in the forest cottage. The stone walls had been thick and secure, their days calm and serene. Alone apart from the animals that rested nearby and villagers who overcame their fear when driven by desire or need. Locals who had crept through forest paths, feet scrunching the pine needles, scurrying like rodents, fearful yet excited by the gloom of the unknown, tempted by promises of potions for love, for beauty and for virility.

Memories of this past life, of her father, cut deep into her godless soul like cold sleet that falls hard and sharp on exposed flesh. Of her mother she had no recollection apart from the images created when she was young. Her father would sit by her bed when the sun sank low, telling stories, and while he spun his tales he would be busy, carving a block of wood or preparing a concoction of herbs. Stories combined with the rhythm of activity would lull her into a natural sleep.

“She wasn't one of us,” he would murmour in his low soothing voice. “She died in a faraway land, and we had to escape. I carried you on my back, and walked for miles and miles, until we found this cottage. But they discovered us eventually,” he would sigh, deeply, “asking for potions, for spells. Demanding.”

Life had flowed undramatically until her sixteenth year when the premonitions began. Warnings. Sleep became impossible because of the nightmares and she would awaken in the darkness gripped by fear. During the last few days and hours, even the birds in the nearby trees stopped singing.

Recalling that day, when the mob arrived to drag them from their house, she thought of her proud father standing in the doorway, staring into their eyes; the men who had begged for the rain to fall on their crops when they were starving. Their cries and pleas now forgotten. Cowards.



She had screamed obscenities through the agony as the flames engulfed her, cursing her accusers, their children and children's children for all time, aware that her father was already dead. Tried, found guilty, and hung from a gibbet. A great thunder storm had erupted over the village that day, with angry flashes of lightening raining down upon the cottages and crops. Her father's doing, she knew, and the villagers had trembled knowing that they were cursed for all eternity.

Cold pebbles tickled her feet. Standing with her soles on the river bed, she was aware of a rustling wind that swept across the surface of the water, the falling of the leaves, the clamour of the animals hurrying to store food, icy flakes tumbling; the swift change of seasons and even years, because in her existence earthly time was meaningless. Gazing across the river she saw a large wolf emerging from the shadows, pacing, slowly, purposely, reaching the tall reeds at the river's edge. He spoke her name as a lonely howl across a great chasm that echoes with whispers.

“Ellen, come with me.”

“Not yet father. I've not forgotten and I've not forgiven.”

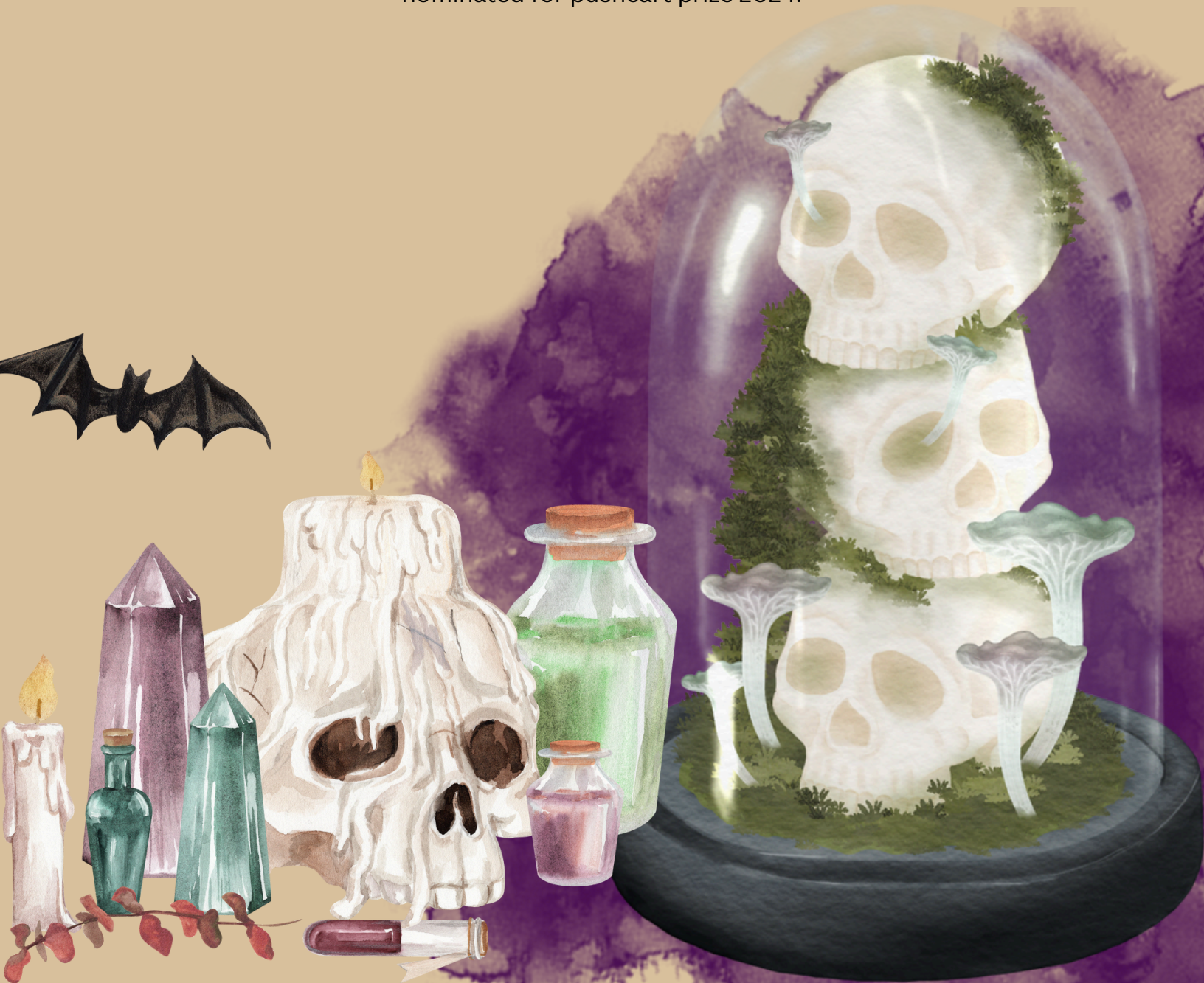
The wolf shook his fur, his muscular neck rippling, his breath misty in the coolness of the evening. He watched his daughter turning in the water, wading back to the grassy shore as the sky turned to white, lifting her skirts that were forever scorched with ash, her long black hair flowing down her back and spreading like tree roots into the water.

He also remembered that time: the shouting, the physical blows, the rope around his neck rough and tight. The mob watching him suffer and die with morbid fascination, not believing that he would pass through many lives, that the physical body was only a temporary resting place. Yet, as powerful as he was, he didn't know the magic to bring his daughter home. What spells did he possess to set her free from the inner force that was driving her, keeping her in this perpetual hell? He could only watch over her, and wait, no matter how many years it took, until she released her own spirit from its cycle of hate and desire for vengeance.



About the Author

Julie began writing in her sixties and has since been published in a variety of on line journals and printed anthologies. most recent being Syncopations Literary Journal, Dark Moon rising publications, Maticadores Taiwan,West Avenue Press, Twice nominated for pushcart prize 2024.



House

by Lynn White

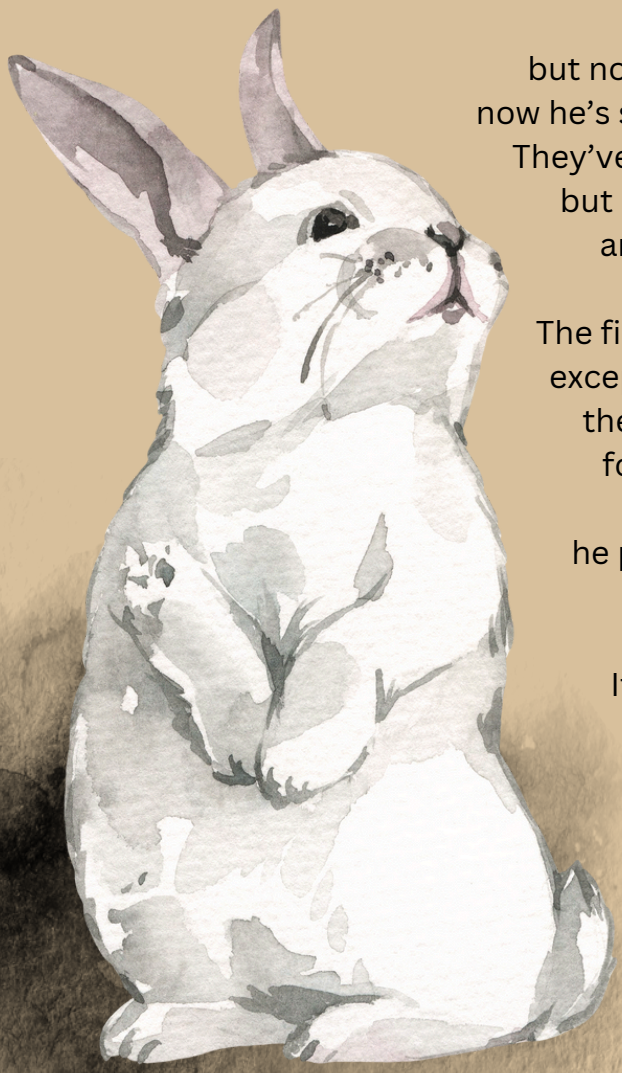
It was hardly a gingerbread house.
Only the roof was gingerbread colour.
We thought the old woman living there was a witch.
Later we didn't believe in witches
and we knew she was no more a witch
than the raindrops
hanging from the trees
were really diamonds,
though she said that they were.
Now the house stands empty and derelict
and we know no one has lived there for centuries.
Only the raindrops remain
frozen in time
hard as diamonds
just as she said they were



First published in parABnormal,
September 2023

I was Always Afraid Of Rabbits

by Lynn White



“I was always afraid of rabbits”
said the purple dragon.
I knew it to be true.
I’d known him for a long time,
long before I became a witch
and took to the water
to watch over him.
It’s the white ones he fears most
and they are mostly white ones
down here.
He won’t eat them.
He used to eat fish
but now he is afraid to eat them
now he’s seen them eating the rabbits.
They’ve eaten the fur off this one,
but he believes it was white
and believing is seeing
after all.
The fish have eaten everything
except for the head and eyes
the most fearsome parts
for the purple dragon.
It’s found him now,
he pushes it away in panic
but it won’t go,
it won’t go.
It’s covering his face,
taking it over
and getting ready
for the rest.
It won’t go,

not unless I can grasp it,
and hold it
peel it off
take it away,
then bewitch them both.

First published in With Painted Words, October 2018



About the Author



Lynn White lives in north Wales. Her work is influenced by issues of social justice and events, places and people she has known or imagined. She is especially interested in exploring the boundaries of dream, fantasy and reality. She has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net and a Rhysling Award. I heard about you from facebook and your magazine looks rather wondrous!
https://lynnwhitepoetry.blogspot.com and https://www.facebook.com/Lynn-White-Poetry-1603675983213077/

The Hospital Corridor

by Sukanya Majumdar

I gazed up and down from my watch, pacing hurriedly along the hospital corridor. Tonight's the dreadful night. The doctors are telling me to hurry, if I don't find a blood donor on time, I won't be able to save my mother from imminent death. It's 8:30 at night. I start to panic.

The Junior doctor comes and tells me, "I'm sorry but we can't wait much longer. Have you found a donor yet?" I've asked our friends and family, and put advertisements on Facebook but nothing seems to be working. I hear my phone vibrating. Someone just called me from my sister's number, she's been in a car accident. I rush out with my car keys.

Tomorrow, it will be the same dreadful night again. I'll be waiting for a blood donor to save my mother, pacing in the corridor. I'll rush out with my car keys again.

I got into a car accident on that fateful night too. I didn't return alive.

About the Author

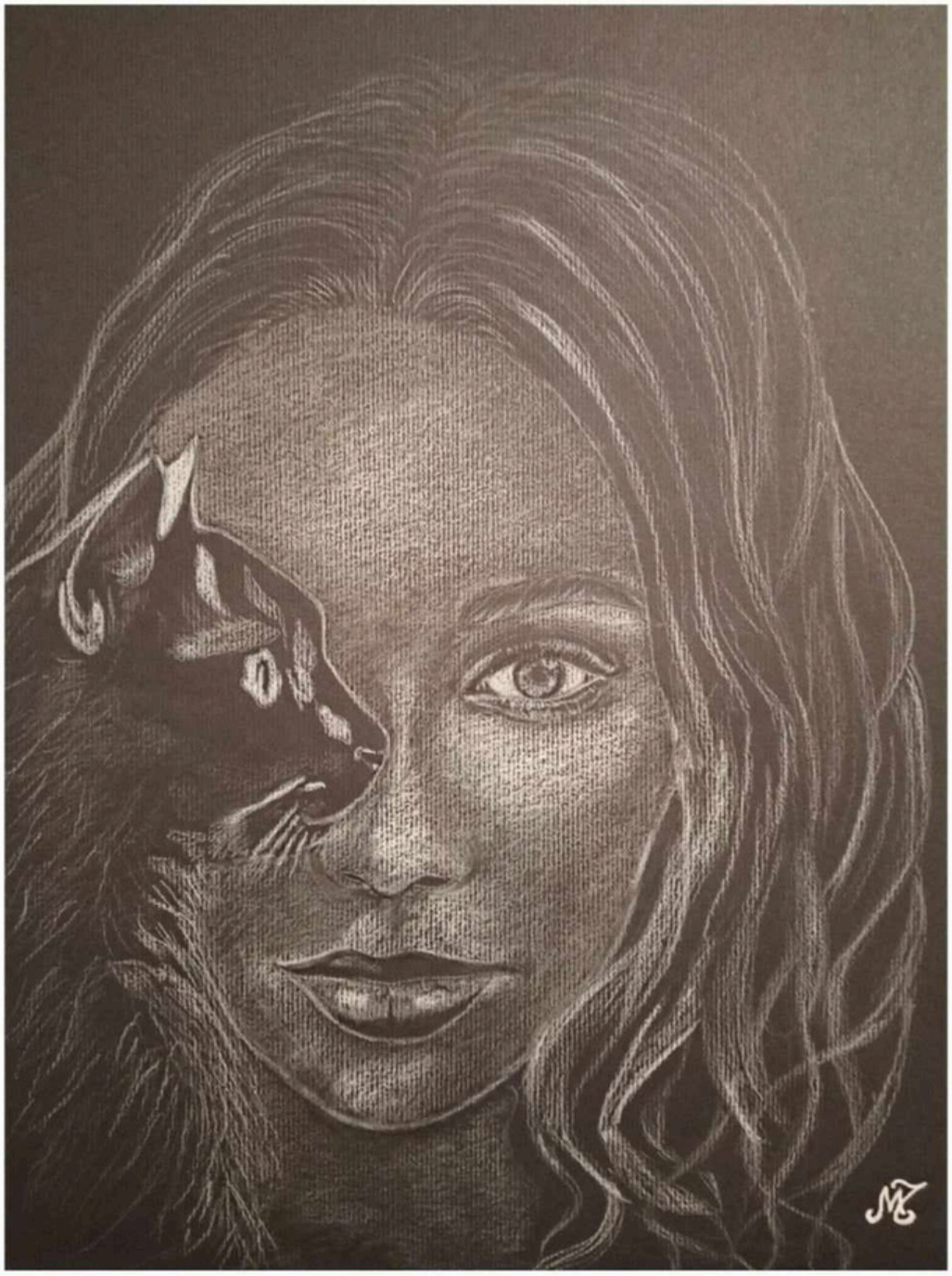


The name is Sukanya Majumdar. Writing since early childhood, she dreamed of becoming a published author. She is a literature, art, movie and music connoisseur. She has worked as a professional copywriter and content writer.
Previous published works:
https://www.bonobology.com/author/sukanya-majumdar/

https://unravelbrainpower.com/author/sukanyamajumder/

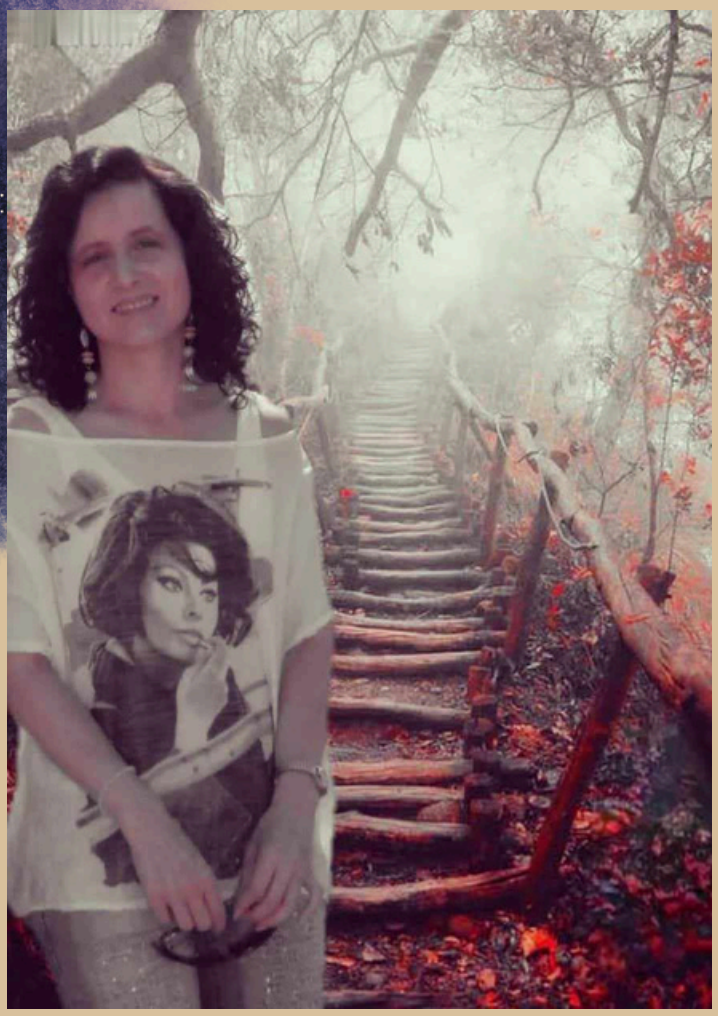
https://sarbajayapatrika.blogspot.com/2023/03/blog-post_59.html

Art & Poem by Maria Tosti



insomnia night -
the foundling kitten
skulks around me

About the Author



Maria Tosti is an Italian author from Perugia.
Her literary debut was with a multilingual poetry book in 2014.
She likes various forms of poetry but she's particularly interested in short poems, in Japanese style, and also likes creating visual poems thanks to her passion for Photography and Drawing. Many of her literary and artistic works have appeared in various national and international literary journals, magazines, blogs, websites and anthologies around the world.
For more info:
https://mariatosti.wixsite.com/mariatosti

poem number one

by Don Elfvin

Frustrating
Exasperating
Pleading
For reason
Take your pills

I need you to live
To love
I need you to die nobly
In the arms of your beloved
Not tormented in sodden diapers
Sweating
Seeking
Calling out
To those only you can see

Come back
What's my name
Chamber of death



poem number two

by Don Elfvin



There is a foreboding sense of doom
Shading the suburbs of my soul
Expected and unwelcome

The days of darkness
Seem but a nightmare away
Tears wash over memories
But do not cleanse
I will be prepared
Steel my heart
Sandbag the levees
Tsunami of sad
No good, all bad

Lakes of tears unshed
I weep for me, not for the dead
Handkerchiefs by the bale
Left me here to weep and wail

poem number three

by Don Elfvin

Wander, winder to winder
Peering out the pulled back blinds
The spectres and prophets foretell
In the shades of the nearing hell

In a momentary flash
A smile long gone and sorely missed
You were here
For maybe a second
Do not taunt me with hope
Dreams of life past

My love leaves me
One neuron at a time
Stockpile wood for the pyre
Sleep now, prepare for eternity
Endless forever, no curved horizon



About the Author



Short biography of Don Elfvin:
Age 75
Residence- extreme rural Palisade MN
Writing -when inspired and through necessity
Emotions -wear them on my skin

The Last Dance

by Kelly Moyer

A carpet of dusty leaves crackled beneath the undertaker's feet as he walked the pavement on his way back to the funeral home with a grease-stained sack of sliders swinging from his left hand. As he turned the key and stepped inside, a wave of relief washed over him. He was a one-man show in this tiny southern town, and he meant to do his daddy proud. Not only had he taken the car in for a wash first thing in the morning, but he had tidied up after the afternoon's service before leaving to grab a late dinner. All that was left to do was eat and settle in with the beloved, Mr. & Mrs. McIntyre's dead son.

It was his practice to spend the night with the deceased before delivering the body to the crematorium. The only thing that was unusual was the family's decision to hold a funeral before turning the corpse to ash. He had to admit he had done quite a nice job preparing the body. Donovan looked natural, family and friends had commented. It was almost a shame to let the flames burn it all away.

Resting his weary bones in a hard-backed chair, the undertaker reached through the dimness for the stereo system's remote and, after a bit of fumbling, pressed "play." Mr. McIntyre had informed him that Donovan's favorite band had been the Grateful Dead when he had asked as the arrangements were being made, and he would make certain that was precisely how Donovan would be serenaded toward the afterlife.

Buoyant strains of "Touch of Grey" filled the room as he pulled the first slider from the bag and the cardboard pouch within which it was nestled. He let out an involuntary moan of pleasure as the onion-infused pressed-patty made contact with his tongue and caught himself moving with the music. He smiled to himself and shook his head in what would have been embarrassment had anyone been there to witness his unselfconscious display.

Composing himself, he drew a hand through his close-cropped hair and on down his face before pulling out his phone to respond to the couple of texts that had come in during his walk. One from Mr. McIntyre, expressing the family's gratitude, and another from Trevor. He decided to leave that one well enough alone.

With the swell of the opening bars of “Morning Dew,” the velvet curtains at the front window began to sway as if under the influence of an unseen breeze, making just enough space for the glow of moonlight. The undertaker finished tapping out his message to the McIntyres and set down his phone.

Loosening his tie, he glanced up toward the casket to find Donovan sitting up and watched, otherwise paralyzed, as the dead man brought his legs over the edge and lowered his feet to the floor. There he stood, awash in moonlight as he reached out an arm as if in invitation.

“One last dance?” Donovan asked in a dry and husky whisper.

The undertaker remained still, pin-drop silent for a long moment before stepping slowly into the patch of moonlight where the beloved patiently waited. And, at last, into his arms.

The Watcher

by Kelly Moyer

The French Quarter sleeps only in the last moments before dawn, just as you awaken amid shifting shadows and the scatter of crawfish shells. You stretch and brush a graying lock from your eyes before lifting your centuries-old bones to sitting against the bookstore's crumbling facade. The cobbled streets are still but for the river breeze as it amplifies the clatter of yet another empty beer can.

You pull a brown paper bag from the stench of your blanket and take a long draught. Absinthe, memory, regret. It all tastes the same, tinged with the curse of one woman's wrath. You knew she was unlike any other; yet, you underestimated her, didn't you?

With the passage of time, you see how it could have gone differently. You didn't have to mark her as prey. She sure as hell wasn't going to be your victim. Yet, you didn't know what to do with your desire other than what you've always done. Thing is, she wasn't yours for the taking.

She warned you.

If only you could have resisted the scent of her, the pulse thrumming deep within her neck. As remarkable as she was (and presumably still is) in life, you needed nothing more than to bring her to a bloodless end. And, in a flash of earthen power, she made you lament your immortality. One oh-so-simple spell and you're a shell of who you knew yourself to be.

As the sun rises, the spirits of the dead mock you, for in spite of your impotence, you still fancy yourself a minor deity, rising each morning from the cracks in the cobblestone with an eye trained on whomever, among the sleepless, might yet be so bold as to wander.

Black Rose

by Kelly Moyer



About the Author



Kelly Sauvage Moyer is an accomplished poet, photographer and fiber artist, who pursues her muse through the cobbled streets of New Orleans's French Quarter as well as the mountains of North Carolina. Hushpuppy, her collection of short-form poetry, was released last year by Nun Prophet Press. Notecards containing a handful of her most popular images are available at www.etsy.com/shop/theunfazedmoon. She is the editor of Failed Haiku.

Untitled

by Barbara Gaiardoni, Andrea Vanacore,



About the Author



Barbara Anna Gaiardoni received two nominations for The Touchstone Award and was recognized on the Haiku Euro Top 100 list and The Mainichi's Haiku in English Best list for 2023. Her works has been published in 210 international journals and translated into 12 languages.

Barbara collaborates with Andrea Vanacore, a photographer and videomaker, on haiga and shahai poetry. His extensive professional experience helps give concrete form to their shared passion for a versatile art without predetermined boundaries. American editor Douglas Pinson of "Spinozablue - An Eclectic Journal of the Arts" describes their work as "Fine art/poem."

Barbara and Andrea, known as gaia & vana, are life partners residing in Verona, Italy.

https://www.facebook.com/andreavanacorephotography
http://barbaragaiardoni.altervista.org/blog/haikuco-2/
https://www.facebook.com/barbara.gaiardoni/
https://www.instagram.com/barbaragaiardoni/

Untitled

by Irina Tall (Novikova)



Untitled

by Irina Tall (Novikova)



Untitled

by Irina Tall (Novikova)



About the Artist

Irina Tall (Novikova) is an artist, graphic artist, illustrator. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art, and also has a bachelor's degree in design.

The first personal exhibition "My soul is like a wild hawk" (2002) was held in the museum of Maxim Bagdanovich. In her works, she raises themes of ecology, in 2005 she devoted a series of works to the Chernobyl disaster, draws on anti-war topics. The first big series she drew was The Red Book, dedicated to rare and endangered species of animals and birds. Writes fairy tales and poems, illustrates short stories. She draws various fantastic creatures: unicorny the Exhibition is Irina s, animals with human faces, she especially likes the image of a man - a bird - Siren. In 2020, she took part in Poznań Art Week. Her work has been published in magazines: Gupsophila, Harpy Hybrid Review, Little Literary Living Room and others. In 2022, her short story was included in the collection "The 50 Best Short Stories", and her poem was published in the collection of poetry "The wonders of winter".

Links to my social networks:

https://www.instagram.com/irina.tall111?igsh=YWYwM2I1ZDdmOQ=...b

A Cat Looks at Me

by Ma Yongbo

A cat halts at the foot of the building,
gazing at me as if looking elsewhere.
Its ears float above the low bushes.
It maintains a walking posture, never sits down
It looks at me as if at an unnamed body,
as if I have no name, no clothes, no identity to be labeled.
My past deeds disappear in the waves at the end of the dam
and the future is just a gaze. I halt my steps
after all, this is a real cat, not a ghost,
A stray, not mine, nor anyone else's,
It belongs to itself, not a word.
The air between us seems to thicken and grow stale
When its existence on the brink of stepping out of fur
all changes halt along with subtle regrets.
It no longer converts to my standpoint,
but it feels more like a silent blessing and salvation.
It's just this ordinary and specific cat
quietly stepping out of the vast and blurry array.
It's not from the childhood libraries and corridors,
the fables of cats chased or followed by people.
In an instant, my existence is laid bare,
my memories and loves turn into shame.
I become ignorant of good and evil, history and labor
with a gentle flick of its ears, I disappear.
After all, this is a genuine cat looking at me
It turns me from an individual into humanity.
My hollow existence like a frozen posture,
one of us must first depart this place,
leaving the other in unnamed death.



As Zeno Said

by Ma Yongbo

I’m here again，however many times
I’m here only once
I can’t turn my flesh sweater inside out
Here,there,a shower of flashes
Here, separated by the vertex of Galaxy

If you want to continue life
You have to disguise as something else
Stones too big for hourglass,unpronounceable words,
a tree blooming by itself,hollow loop of the ring
Self renewed flowing water is falling through it from day to day

You are offered only one chance to free here completely
Here is a seat for travelling alone
An hour half bright half dim that betrayed the earth
Nothing is in shortage here but a name
You have only one chance to defend for it

Yet you are a dancer holding the daytime candle
With eager mean people crowding in your body

Silence at Nightfall

by Ma Yongbo

It’s already too late, to pursue the study of life,
but studying death is nothing more than listening
to a vague whisper through the bushes,
as if something is about to happen,
like a small glass jar of a streetlamp
rises on water, delicately
wavering with small fishes of flickering flame.

Words on the doormat in front of the door,
How do they resist the winter floods?
Talk about rainy days, heatwaves, or distant battlefields
can also bring about dangerous moments, truth
swings between a dependence on things and a dependence on people.

"You are to bring Harbin to Nanjing
instead of bringing Nanjing back to Harbin."
Deceased loved ones guide me in my dreams,
faith is a matter of geography.
Immersed in the unpredictable,
what you want to do is what others want you to do.

And if you act according to opinions, you will find yourself
in the terror and silence of a Pascalian universe,
where all opinions are nothing more than
your encounters with some people when walking alone at night,
exchanging unclear words with each other
before quickly disappearing into the darkness they came from.

Is it knowledgeable ignorance, or blissful ignorance?
Prometheus warned Sathiel to be careful of fire,
Plato said all writing is a public act,
while you say, writing is rhetoric, which turns people into citizens
and then turns citizens into mobs,
using games to gather thugs in the caves of Rome.

About the Author



Ma Yongbo was born in 1964,Ph.D,representative of Chinese avant-garde poetry,and a leading scholar in Anglo-American poetry.He has published over eighty original works and translations since 1986 included 7 poetry collections.He focused on translating and teaching Anglo-American poetry and prose including the work of Dickinson, Whitman, Stevens, Pound, Williams and Ashbery. He recently published a complete translation of Moby Dick, which has sold over half a million copies. He teaches at Nanjing University of Science and Technology. The Collected Poems of Ma Yongbo (four volumes, Eastern Publishing Centre, 2024) comprising 1178 poems, celebrate 40 years of writing poetry.

i'll let them feast

by Linda M. Crate

thought you were
a prince,
but you were a jester;

wanted to be a princess
but i've always been a witch—

i was your raven,
but you were
never
my wolf;

you were only lonely to yourself—

i thought that kiss we shared in
a song of autumn meant
something,
how the leaves danced around us
brought me bliss;

perhaps it was a warning instead
of how untrue you would be—

you mistook love for lust,
broke my heart and further fractured
my trust;

you said the letter i wrote you was nasty?

wait until the monsters of me
rearrange your name
in the forest of nightmares you
planted in my old heart;

i ripped it out and grew one
that didn't need you—

but they remember your arrogance,
your insincerity, and your lies;
and they'd like to have a word—

held them back before, now i'll let them feast.



wild witch

by Linda M. Crate

i am a spooky girl
year round,

i am ready for autumn and all
her tales and leaves
and changing;

you were a monster disguised
as a man—

your lies were a nasty
dark spell that sent me
into a spiral,

makes me laugh when i hear
you called my letter "nasty";

as if leaving me in nightmares wasn't—

karma isn't coming for you fast
enough,
so i'm sending the wrath of
my gods and goddesses afer you;

and i didn't send any hexes,
curses, or spiders with my letter
so i promise you it was tame;

a thing i'll never be.

more than a pretty face

by Linda M. Crate

you thought me
arm candy,
superficial and without
depth;

i've always been
more than a pretty face—

have depths that could
drown oceans,
and heights that even mountains
envy;

and every place between them—

you woke the love of a witch
with no intention to love
her back,

and so i return to your nightmares
with interest;

may insomnia gnaw on your
heart as she whispers
my name—

and may every orange leaf echo
of my face,
and every raven sing the mythology
of my bones so you can feel
every bit as trapped as i did when
your lust devoured me;

and when that's all done
let the monsters come for what's left.

About the Author



Linda M. Crate (she/her) is a Pennsylvanian writer whose poetry, short stories, articles, and reviews have been published in a myriad of magazines both online and in print. She has twelve published chapbooks: A Mermaid Crashing Into Dawn (Fowlpox Press - June 2013), Less Than A Man (The Camel Saloon - January 2014), If Tomorrow Never Comes (Scars Publications, August 2016), My Wings Were Made to Fly (Flutter Press, September 2017), splintered with terror (Scars Publications, January 2018), More Than Bone Music (Clare Songbirds Publishing House, March 2019), the samurai (Yellow Arrowing Publishing, October 2020), Follow the Black Raven (Alien Buddha Publishing, July 2021), Unleashing the Archers (Guerilla Genesis Press, August 2021), Hecate's Child (Alien Buddha Publishing, November 2021) fat & pretty (Dancing Girl Press, June 2022), and Searching Stained Glass Windows For An Answer (Alien Buddha Publishing, December 2022). Linda has four full length poetry collections and a photography collection book. Linda is also the author of the novellas Mates (Alien Buddha Publishing, March 2022), Managing Magic (Alien Buddha Press, September 2022), and The Queen's Son (Alien Buddha Publishing, December 2023). Her first short story collection King Quinlin (Alien Buddha Publishing, March 2024) was published this spring. Her debut haiku collection in these ancient veins was published recently (Alien Buddha Publishing, May 2024).

The Colony at Midnight

by Stewart Buxton

How right the modern precedent
Should govern social incident,
Through weeks and years of growing up
With spirit felt and drinking cup.

Youth is filled with greatness.
Through the door to evening's darkness
Unknown, the stage is bright,
Encircled by the pupil's light.

Upon a holy bed is learned
The mighty music, the heart's concern,
And if a prayer our thoughts betray,
We say, forgive us yet another day.

As the lessons of past decision
Fade before our dragon's passion,
Rest all of us anon and silly,
We have not lost eternity.



About the Author



I’m from a remote but populated small city on the East Coast of Canada called Halifax. Though raised and educated here (Dalhousie University, ’85,’90), I worked and lived in larger centers in Canada at various times. Otherwise, I am denizen of some 40 years. I began out of great desire and need to write poetry about 15 years ago. Having started late in life writing, I often wonder if I will be able to pursue poetry as a sideline or even as an occupation. Whatever happens, I love getting a good poem on the page. I hold degrees in Arts and Law. My nature though never really agreed with the profession of law in the sense that, though a fascinating field, I couldn’t find a niche I enjoyed, so I used my degree to work on with community groups and to do a little government lobbying. All the while, it was some form for of making art, I craved. Now, I can.

Publications:
Holes: An Anthology About Depth, Darkness, and Desire
Visionary Magazine, Issue 2
Underbelly Press (UK)

Instagram #stewart_buxton

Full Moon

by JoJo Le Grove

The women gathered
circle around fire
chalice in hand
toast the goddess

circle around fire
flames forceful, vital
quarters called
circle open

earth, air, fire, water
elements represented
women wander widdershins
turning back time

elements hailed
elements welcomed
ritual commences
voices unite

moon summoned
chants generate energy
orb of night
smite negativity

voices unite
power potent
a cocophony of joy
fervent flow, lunar veneration

elements thanked
circle closes
ritual complete
bodies bare, beat, blessed be.

About the Author



JoJo Le Grove is a writer from Leeds in the UK. She is a mature student at Leeds Beckett University studying creative writing. She is queer and neurodivergent and feels these are two big parts of her identity as a writer. Recently JoJo has been published in a zine created by Livewire arts, in an edition of Writerly literary journal and will soon have a piece in an anthology created by Querencia Press.

JoJos work is predominantly poetry and it can be quite blunt in nature but the range is quite large from trauma related work to out comedy. She is also a keen amateur photographer, theatre goer and music appreciator.

Instagram

@jojolegrove

Hallow's Eve

by David Calhoun

Hallow's Eve comes but once a year,
To shroud the Earth in a mantle of fear.
Ghost, goblins, and witches abound,
Wailing in the sky above the dark ground.
Vampires rise, for a little snack,
Werewolves perhaps, run in their pack.
While the full moon shines so lovely and round,
Above the bloody, dark, killing ground.
It's cold bright light shines so clean,
On witches stirring their brews, so green,
Spirits frolicking, leaving their graves,
To go out and scream, rant and rave.
This one night of the year,
It is fun to feel fear.
To become like a child, fearing the dark,
Afraid to walk alone through the park.
We laugh and we joke about the old tales,
Of vampires, werewolves, ghost trains on the rails.
Go ahead, laugh at your silly fright,
So what, if it's a gloomy, cold night,
None of this is so, or...could the old tales be right?

About the Author



I have never written an author's bio before, but all I can say is I spent my youth and many many years walking through the woods and enjoying nature. It is very peaceful and I love being in it. I am retired and just enjoy spending time with my wife at our river house.

A splash of color in a black and white world



Photographer - Partha Mitra
Model- Sumita Bose

About the Artist(s)

Partha Mitra is a seasoned software professional with over 30 years of experience in real-time SCADA system implementation. He has worked in several countries like the USA, Korea and India with distinction. He has a strong affiliation to music and photography. Outside of work Partha enjoys spending time with family and watching sports.

Sumita Bose is a hobby artist and a photographer. She does not have any formal training in art. She uses her hobby to spread hope and joy by making encouragement cards for children suffering with life altering diseases. She also brings a smile to the senior citizens living in nursing homes by sending them handmade cards. She has participated in many international art exhibitions.

By profession she is a versatile writer. She has authored several popular mathematics books, the first autism book as per Indian socio cultural set up, mystery puzzle books and puberty education book for adolescent girls.

She is an educator with 25 years of teaching experience. She has won several awards for her contribution to education.

Ode to Divinity

by Vivian Oma

Shall I compare thee to the beauty of summer?
Nor to the aesthetic of nature's arts?
When the sun flaunts its beauty gracefully like a young bride,
The moon and shooting stars kiss the gloomy sky's linen.
Thou art more temperate.
Shall I compare thee to the radiance of sunset,
When the sun awakens to find the earth lost in darkness?
She spreads her rays in warm embraces, piercing through Venetian windows,
While flowery petals dance to a melodious rhyme of the summer breeze.
Thou art more gracious fairer.
Sometimes, too harshly does heaven’s gaze shine;
Oftentimes, too heavy its tears stream.
And even fair flowers sometimes fade,
At nature’s due call.
But thy faithfulness never fail nor fade.
Nor lose possession of thy eternal beauty;
Nor shall death claim that thou owest it a debt.
Nor shall its dark veil be drawn before thy light;
Nor shall it grave silence quiet thy shine;
For even death stands in awe of thee.
As long as men can breathe and eyes can see,
So long as my pen lives and ink still spills,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

About the Author



Vivian Oma is a budding poet, avid reader, literary enthusiast, and writer from Abia State, Nigeria. A personality with a natural flair for reading, teaching, writing and connecting with like minds. An alumnus of Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.



Sharp Teeth

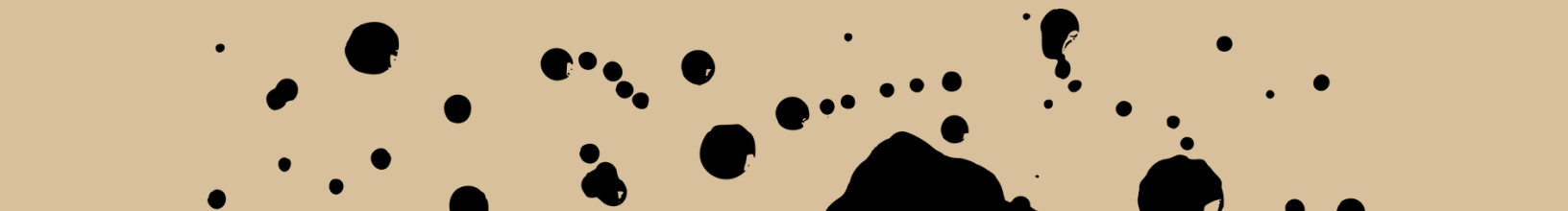
by Melissa Dennison

She had had a rough week. Her boss was a nightmare, always criticising, never pleased, no matter how hard she tried. Forget all that. It's the weekend she thought. She breathed deeply of the country air. What a gorgeous day. Early October, the leaves were tinged with orange and red. Luckily for her it was still pleasantly mild.

She had left the car in the tourist car park and was stood looking at the forest. She loved the forest. It was such a magical place. Many of her friends wouldn't go for a walk there by themselves. As women they didn’t feel safe in such a quiet, secluded place. Not her, she enjoyed the solitude, the escape. This was a place where she was free to be herself. No one to judge or give her a hard time.

Pine and fir trees towered above her and as she walked into the forest it got darker and darker. She imagined fairies, elves and goblins from the folk tales her grandma would read to her peering out from the pine needles or watching her from the forest floor. Perhaps an old crone like the famous Baga Yaga that had fascinated her as a kid could be around the next corner. Her favourite story as a child was Little Red Riding Hood. The wolf was her favourite character, by far. Wolves were also her favourite animal if she had to choose, ever since encountering one on a college trip. That was such a long time ago now.

She could feel the breeze tickling the hairs on her face, and every sinew in her body was slowly unwinding. Her breathing was shallower. She kicked her shoes off, to feel the earth below. There were so many scents in the forest it was exhilarating. She hadn’t felt this much excitement in a while. She could run for hours if she wanted. Climbing onto a rock she let out a long howl. No going back now she decided. No more dull working lunches. If only her boss could see how now. She bared her teeth into the approximation of a smile. After all these years her wild side was finally free.



About the Author

I have been published by Poetry Pea, Failed Haiku, the British Haiku Society, Five Fleas itchy poetry and my writing appears in a number of anthologies. I have been the judges' choice and nominated for a Touchstone Award.



Terrapin Station

by Tonny Kyule



In the meadow, the music swells,
Carried on the wind, the rhythm tells
A tale of wonder, of endless grace,
As we gather, our spirits to embrace.

The notes cascade, a tapestry woven,
Threads of gold, through the air have stroven,
Binding us tight, in this sacred space,
Transcending time, in this hallowed place.

The Dead, they play, their songs so true,
Unlocking doors to realms anew,
Where the mind expands, the soul takes flight,
Emboldened by the music's ancient might.

We dance and sway, lost in the trance,
Surrendering to the Grateful's grand expanse,
As visions kaleidoscope before our eyes,
Cosmic truths in every note arise.

On Terrapin's shore, we find our home,
Where the mind is free, and the spirit roams,
Carried away by the Dead's sweet spell,
In this enchanted, psychedelic swell.

About the Author

Tonny Kyule is a multi talented writer and a budding literacy luminary making waves in literary and academic circles. As a graced writer, he has authored a impressive body works, Short stories featured in various online journals;the Education Newspaper , Kitui Times News and the Teui magazine.His stories have been published/forthcoming in international anthologies.Poems published in literary magazines, Views and suggestions published in the commentaries and opinions section of The Standard Newspaper,insightful articles on education ,business policy and trends in the Daily Nation,investigative pieces on local government accountability in The Star and Business daily newspapers ,contributions that have earned him recognition budge as a top contributor in a public relations group.His academic pursuits complement his creative passions, allowing him to develop a well-rounded skill set. With a track record of achievement and a boundless enthusiasm for the written word, Kyule is poised to leave an indelible mark on Kenya's literary landscape. His ability to captivate audiences through fiction, poetry, and incisive journalism has positioned him as an emerging voice to watch in the country's cultural landscape His diverse talents and drive to succeed make him a rising public relations practitioner and more of a star to watch in the years to come.

Currently, pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication and Public Relations at Rongo University in Migori County,Kenya.

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Phone: (+254)706418044



Gaia Speaks

by Wendolyn Lee

I can offer you bags of enchanted gold
For I am a powerful witch,
Or else I can give you an exquisite flower
That blooms in this muddy ditch.

Of what good to you is enchanted gold?
It only evaporates.
It rises around you in putrid fumes
And corrodes your license plates.

Enchanted gold can purchase those things
That make you uneasy and sick;
It fuels the factories that produce
This toxic oil slick.

The sludge runs down the municipal ditch
To the place where the flower had been,
Where she scattered her seeds in the poison mud
Never to bloom again.

The consequences are looming,
Coming closer by the hour;
So leave it to me, my enchanted gold,
And do what you can for the flower.

Untitled

by Maurizio Brancaleoni

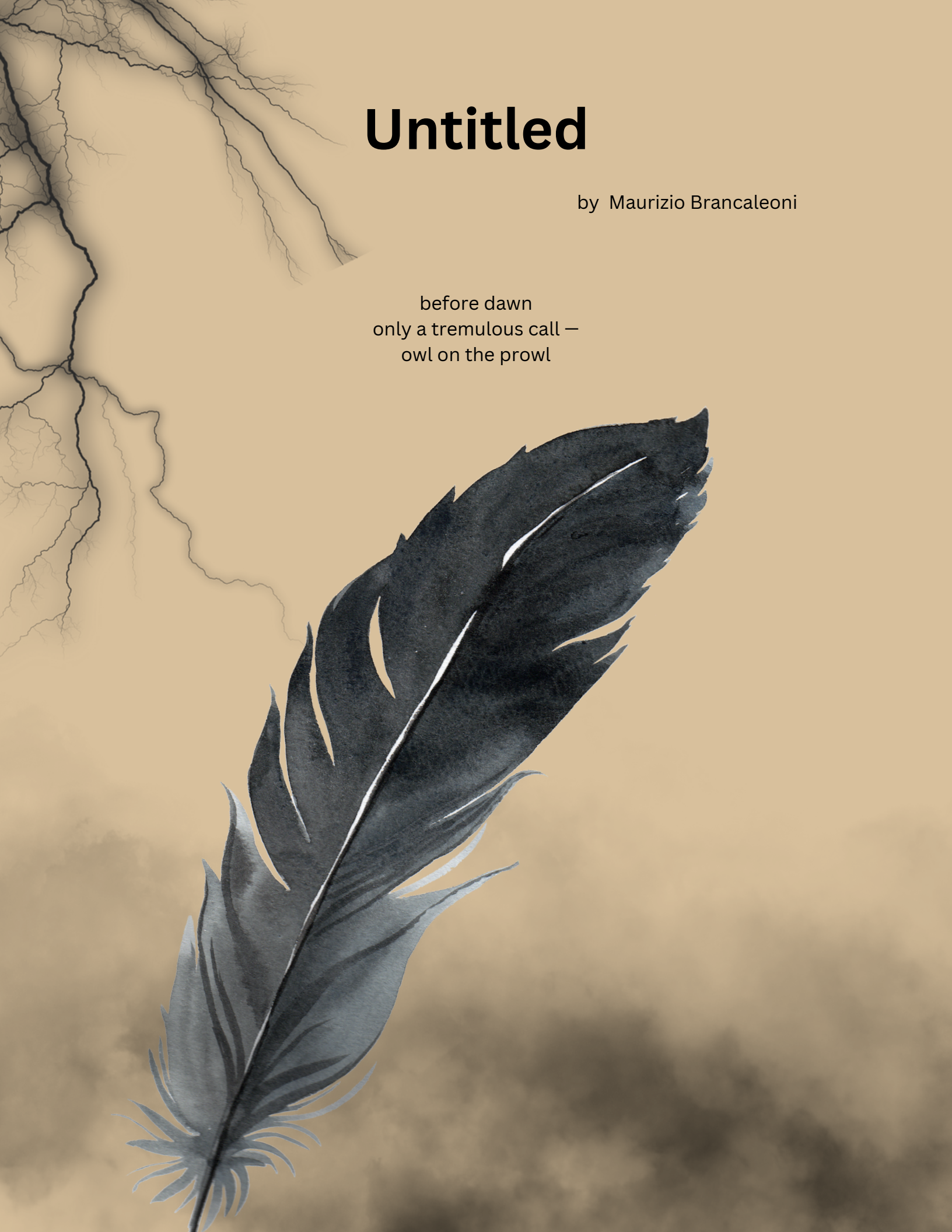
in the parking lot
illuminated in flashes
voices of specters



Untitled

by Maurizio Brancaleoni

before dawn
only a tremulous call —
owl on the prowl



About the Author



Maurizio Brancaleoni lives near Rome, Italy.
He holds a master's degree in Language and Translation Studies from Sapienza University. His haiku and senryu have appeared in English, Italian and Japanese in Dadakuku, Lothlorien Poetry Journal, Under The Bashō, Horror Senryu Journal, Cold Moon Journal, Scarlet Dragonfly, Memorie di una geisha, Rakuen, Haiku Corner, Pure Haiku, Five Fleas, Shadow Pond Journal, Haikuniverse, Asahi Haikuist, Plum Tree Tavern, Wales Haiku Journal, Kokako, Pan Haiku Review, The Wise Owl, Trash Panda, Haikukai, Password, Hedgerow, and Fireflies' Light. In 2023 one of his micropoems was nominated for a Touchstone Award, while a horror ku originally featured in the Halloween-themed issue of Scarlet Dragonfly was re-published in this year's Dwarf Stars anthology. Maurizio manages “Leisure Spot", a bilingual blog where he posts interviews, reviews and translations: https://leisurespotblog.blogspot.com/p/interviste-e-recensioni-interviews-and.html

Love’s Morbid Lust

by LJ Bechtel

Once upon a morbid existence,
While I pined for love's sweet bliss,
I chanced upon a nobleman dandy,
And knew in that moment's kiss,

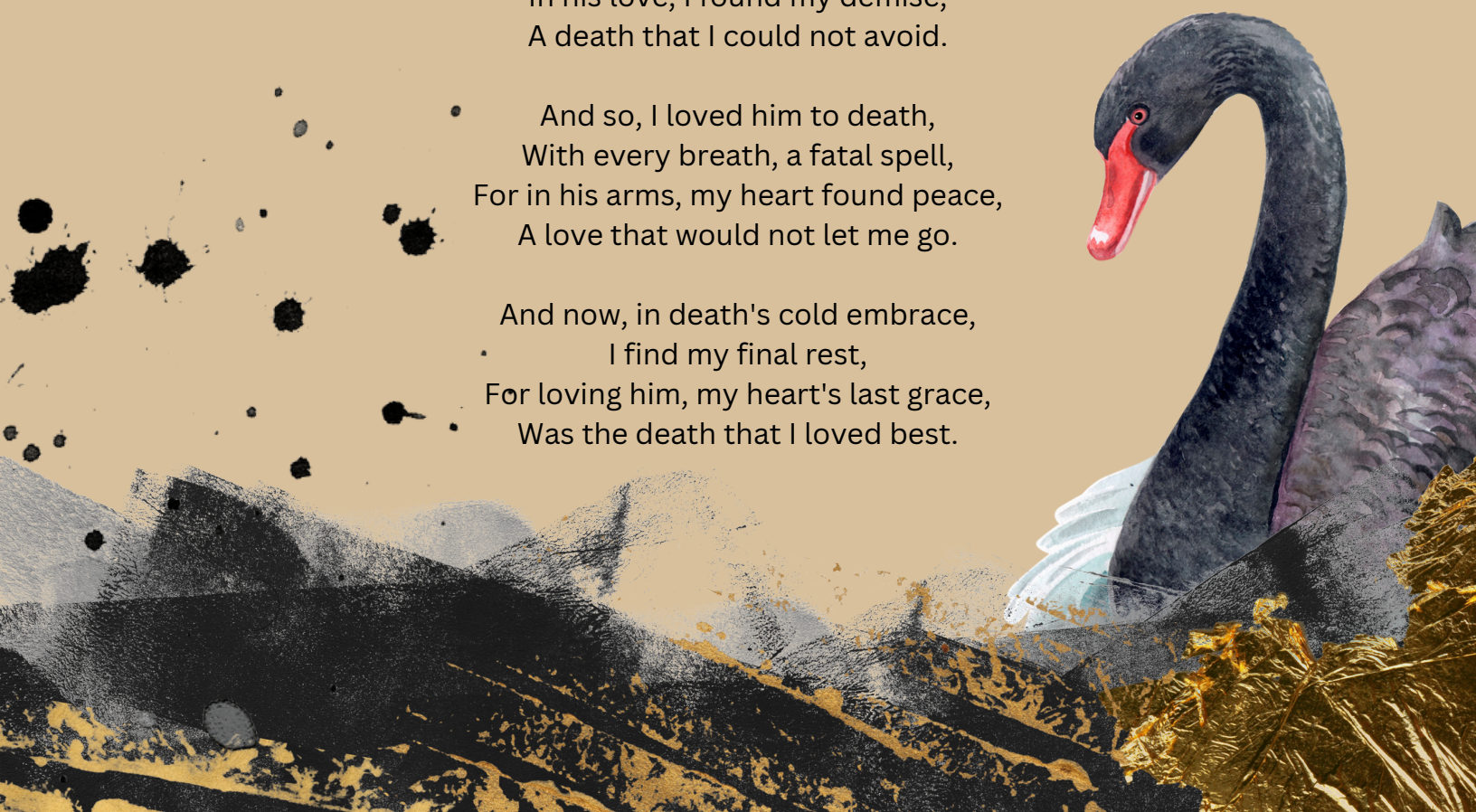
That he would be my death,
My heart's eternal reprisal,
For in their eyes, a fire burned,
A love that would not be deterred.

His touch, a spark of madness,
Ignited passions wild and free,
In his embrace, I found my doom,
A fate that was meant to be.

With every kiss, a poisoned chalice,
With every sigh, a deadly thrill,
In his love, I found my demise,
A death that I could not avoid.

And so, I loved him to death,
With every breath, a fatal spell,
For in his arms, my heart found peace,
A love that would not let me go.

And now, in death's cold embrace,
I find my final rest,
For loving him, my heart's last grace,
Was the death that I loved best.



About the Author



LJ Bechtel, an alumnus of the University of Saint Thomas in Houston, Texas, with a Master's in Education, has journeyed through life's ebbs and flows, finding solace and expression in the art of poetry. Though not yet published, his dedication to this form of art is unwavering, particularly evident in his affinity for Haikus, despite struggling with the unstructured nature of freestyle poetry. His creative endeavors span across genres, with no particular preference, allowing him to explore the depths of human emotion and experience through his verses.

Bechtel's inspiration springs from the relationships and encounters in his life, drawing upon the stories and insights of friends, family, colleagues, and professionals like his therapist or the manager at the medical clinic. These connections breathe life into his poetry, making each piece a reflection of personal interactions and emotional landscapes. Moreover, songs that have been beacons of hope and resilience for him, such as "You Ought to Know," "Seasons in the Sun," "The Dance," and "Shake It Off," have also found their echoes in his work. Phrases and quotes, rich with meaning and humor, often spark the themes of his poems, creating a tapestry of reflections on life's challenges and peculiarities.

At the core of Bechtel's poetic exploration are the mental health struggles faced by his partner, which provide a poignant and deeply personal dimension to his work. This focus sheds light on the complexities of emotional well-being, resilience, and the human condition, offering a therapeutic outlet and a source of connection for both Bechtel and his readers. Though his poems remain unpublished, their authenticity and the raw truth they convey speak volumes, underscoring the power of poetry as a means of expression and healing. Bechtel's journey underscores the transformative potential of poetry, not just as an art form, but as a vital means of navigating and making sense of life's myriad challenges.

Cornfield

by Emma Wells

Scurrying for undergrowth
away from the all-seeing world
I look to burrow,
digging deeply into timeless holes
that swallow me whole
as vintage wine.

I long to eclipse my being,
forgetting my name,
leaving my name tag
on the brink of a field
where I forfeit humanity
for sumptuous, feral fields.

Here, animal licks
and lioness quirks
are normal, wanted,
absorbed like osmosis.

Flung far, to deepest reaches,
I womb myself in taller wheat,
erasing my humanness,
shadowed and immoral,
in the belly of a field
where innermost reaches
are internal organs.
Here. I'm a shrew or rat.
A bestial child
of God where I blaspheme,
writhe, blame, maim
in sharp, tall rushes that act as blades,
cutting myself loose
of society's control
bearing a crow's wing as a halo.



Here: lost, deprived,
hollowed out
of fleshy pulp
that lines someone else's heart,
I suffocate free,
stripping myself of bandages,
unwinding anxiety,
boasting noxious, tormenting threads,
until I'm reborn
with pink-kissed skin,
innocent as a fledgling,
aiming to take flight
upon wings of gold,
listening for a siren call
to a wheat-weighted heaven.

The Crucible

by Emma Wells

Metal-hot licks
stretch devilish hands
around a boiling cauldron,
a so-called witch's weapon
of bubbling broth;
flame-kissed tongues
wag, concoct, lie, blame,
pouring into the pot
whilst Massachusetts' maidens
stand heavily accused
drenched by poisonous claims,
blighted by witchcraft's messy stain,
leagues of sins
that were not theirs to bear.

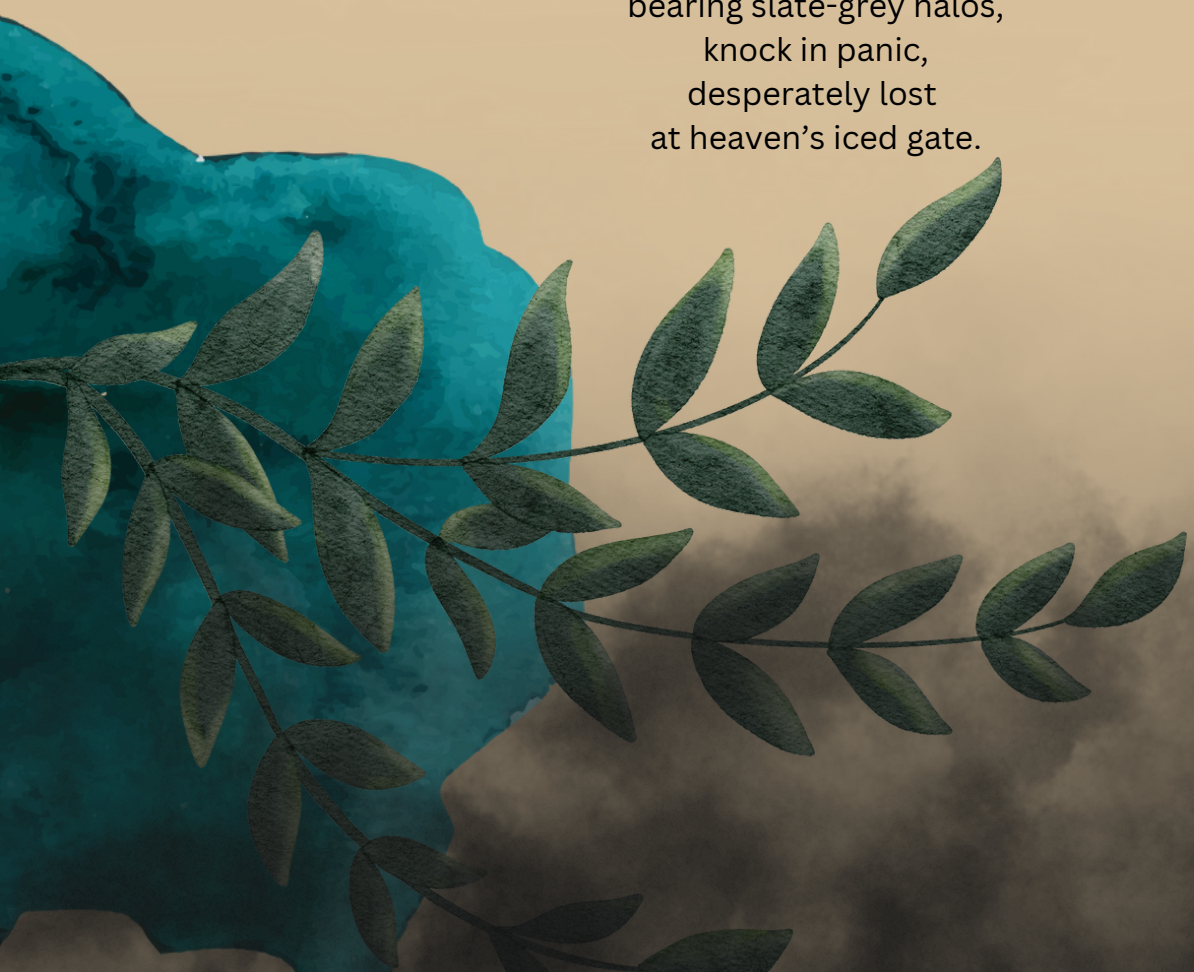
Tituba, the crux,
an easy target, scapegoat, slave:
believed to practise "black magic"
in a racist, sexist, misogynistic world
where men stride upon puritanical feet
claiming power, pride, pomp, land,
forgetting righteousness, morality, humanity,
blinded by lies of voodoo.

All too easily, Tituba is blamed,
seen as the natural witch leader,
a Barbados' "other"
forcing young girls to meet the Devil
in hidden forests
where they pray to inverted crosses
stoked hot by Lucifer's lascivious tongue.

All too soon, brittle necks
swing from ropes
due to hot-bed gossip:
flying exploits,
conjuring spirits;
childish fingers
fumble with poppets
whilst mass hysteria
ferments, bubbles to overspill.

Grey nooses curl to wedding crowns,
macabre, ghostly,
silhouetting a life not spent
as slips of girls accuse others
deflecting blame
choking them to heaven,
blameless, pure, wrongly accused.

Sinless virgins
bearing slate-grey halos,
knock in panic,
desperately lost
at heaven's iced gate.



Exposed

by Emma Wells

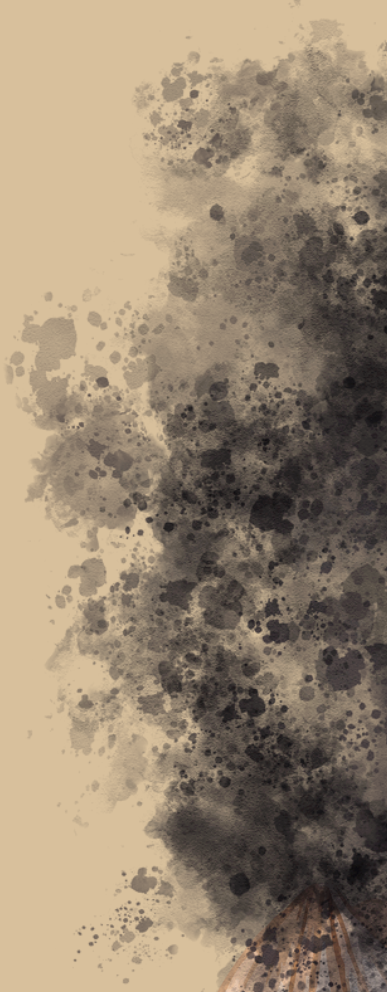
Short, ugly bristles
of stunted growth
are bent branches,
painted in shameful hues
fumbling for light
as a condemned witch
in a dark, dank cell.

I am ready to grow back
for I have picked clean
my scalp
with jittery, nervous fingers,
my spidery weapons
are sharp, honed, too alert.

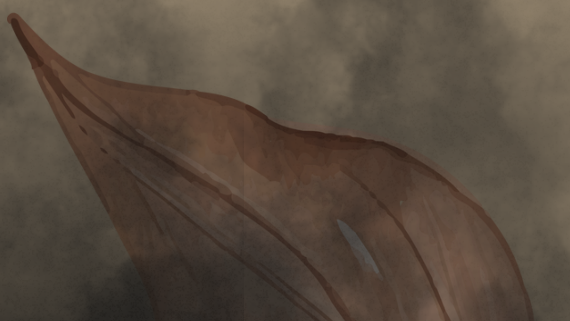
As I drive past
harvested cornfields,
I see endless exposed roots
of ploughed, barren land;
my own stunted growth
mimics these fields:
both of us donning
short, blunted tresses,
canvases of exposed, ugly roots.

We are shaved soldiers
awaiting battle,
blanching in the breeze.









Sometimes, blood flows,
when the wheat head
cuts apart from the wobbly sheath
quivering beneath
like condemned criminals.

We search for anchors,
scouring land and sea,
but rootless, we float...
...untethered,
wishing to be held,
hidden fast.



About the Author

Emma Wells is a mother and English teacher. She has poetry published with various literary journals and magazines. She writes flash fiction, short stories and novels. She is currently writing her sixth novel.

Emma won Wingless Dreamer's Bird Poetry Contest of 2022 with 'Carbonito de Sophie' and her short story entitled 'Virginia Creeper' was selected as a winning title by WriteFluence Singles Contest in 2021.

Recently, she won Dipity Literary Magazine's 2024 Best of the Net Nominations for Fiction with her short story entitled 'The Voice of a Wildling'.

Her poem 'Rose-Tainted was the winner of the poetry category, Discourse Literary Journal, February 2024 Issue.

She was shortlisted for her flash fiction writing, 'Agnes Richter', by Anthology.

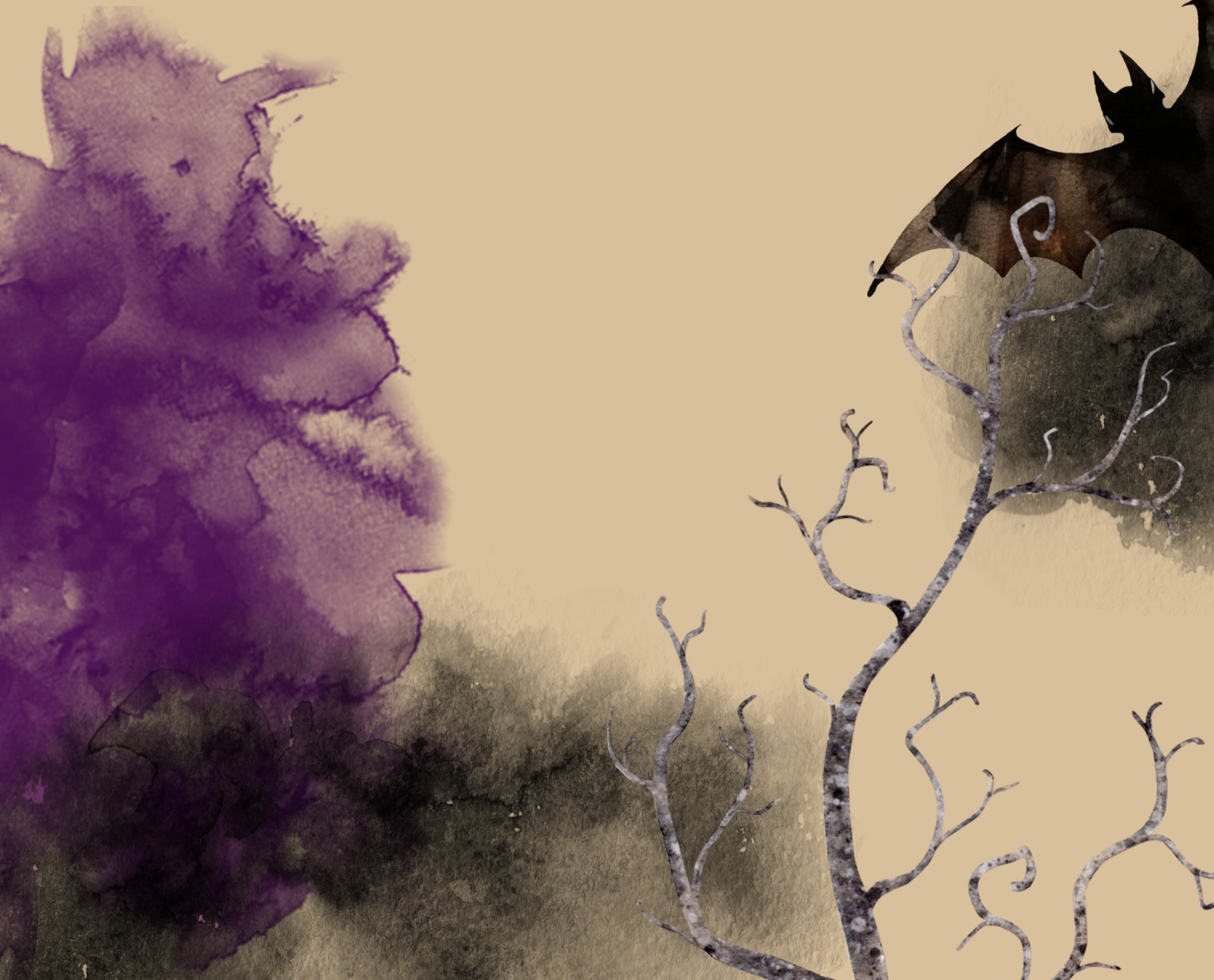
Her first poetry collection entitled 'Reasons to...Evolve' was published in April 2024.

Untitled

by Tuyet Van Do

halloween eve
a frankenstein costume
dancing
outside Domino's





Untitled

by Tuyet Van Do

carved pumpkins
the rattling sound of skeletons
in the neighborhood



Untitled

by Tuyet Van Do



About the Author

Tuyet Van Do lives in Australia. Her work has appeared in various publications both online and in print. She was nominated for the Touchstone Award for Individual Poems in 2022.

When the Temple Bells on the Page Died

by Olive Zhong

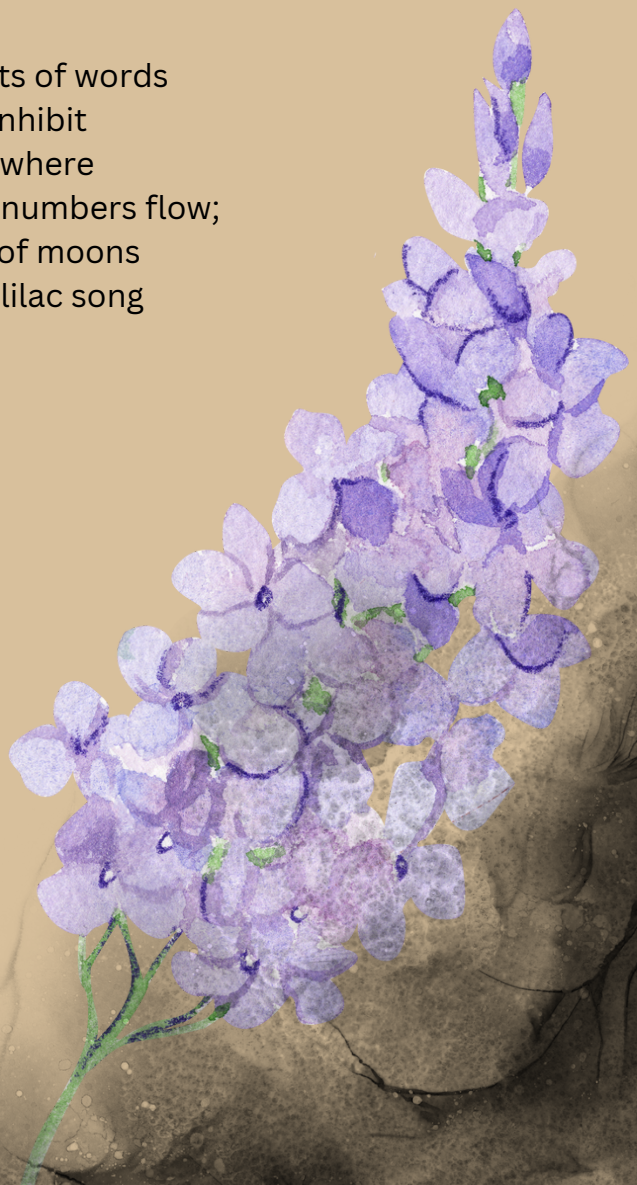
•

The green stanzas and stars
On silver branches
Fall like a kite, like fate
With the fullness of the void
Into the headless Haiku
Into the thickets of frozen shadow

•

The snuffed-outed scents of words
And its resonance inhibit
In disjointed water where
Only the shade of the page numbers flow;
Where tears are made of moons
And the reflection of a lilac song





DaRkNeSs in MotIoN

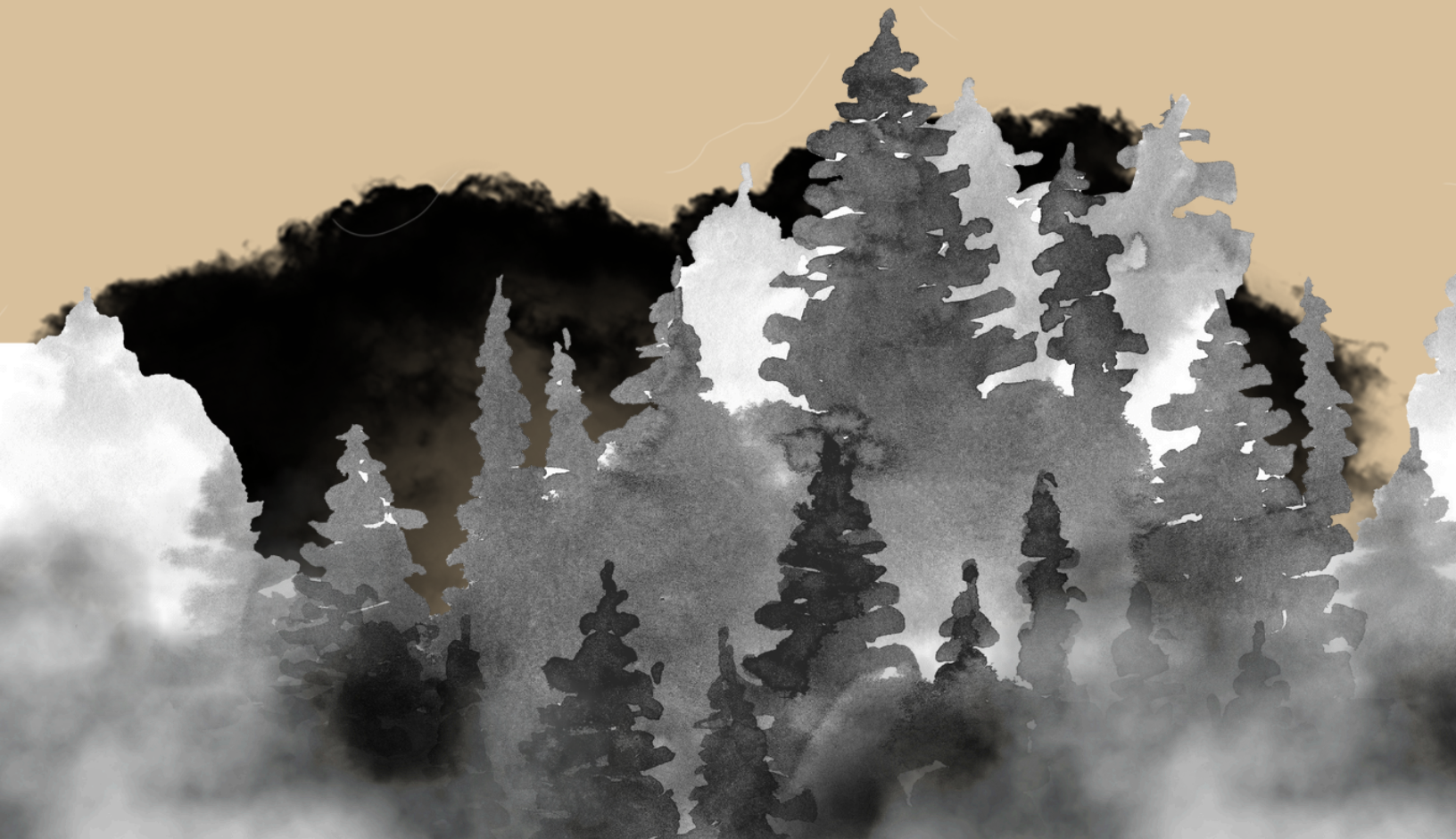
by Olive Zhong

in a plantain-coloured somnolence,
the rain clicks the vocal terrain
of the blue-scented past tense,

like the cadence dripping
through an off-centred storyline
to an unbreathable pause in shade

where the dead wisteria petals
and the capricious line of the present tense
fall on the lilac and fatigue teeth.

the cold feet of the homeless words in the future
rub against the dawn-hued whistle
like a blooming dream nudging a closed eye



About the Author



Olive Zhong is originally from China and lived in Thailand and New Zealand for over 7 years. She is currently based in Kent, England pursuing her PhD in Poetry: Text Practice as Research. She is very much into poetic imagery and passionate about the work of Frank O'Hara, Barbara Guest, Lyn Hejinian, Lorca, George oppen, etc.

Email: salmonzhong@gmail.com
Facebook: Olive Zhong


Thank for You
Reading!