

SCAB

ISSUE #13

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EDITOR'S NOTE



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D.

maggotf/gg0t

Likers will like

what is the discount code:

maggotfilledmange

to fart to blood to come out

spitting up the questionable history of hobo chic

my surgical resurrections are green yellow purple pink red

that is, my fucking tits

I cannot mouth I piss on you

miss you

I cannot belly that truth

itty bitty titty committee euphoriana

Them is the New York Times for faggots

I was going to look up something

oh my god what was I going to look up

Debasery (they/them) is a very nice writer from South Florida living in Brooklyn. Some of their work can be found in *Maudlin House*, *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *Dire Need Zine*, and forthcoming in *Moral Crema*. You can find them irl hosting a monthly reading series named Intrusive Thoughts at a venue called TV Eye.

Daniel

We decide to meet, after having pizza and baby corn for lunch, in the bathroom on the second floor of the eighth-grade science wing. I break out of my homeroom line to meet you. The bathroom has gold walls and black stalls, our school colors. You are some white trash of a boy with bucked teeth and bad body odor. We have gym together. I get horny and hard watching all those boys prance around in socks, pert asses snug in tight white underwear. We hate Coach Marshall for making us run laps. We're always the last two chosen to play flag football.

We have never messed around until now. We stand in front of the urinals that smell of stale piss, your jeans sagging past your ass. A wall of cinders hides us. We pull our dicks out of dirty denim and strawberry-red corduroys. The heads of our dicks kiss as we do. We couldn't be more nervous. You say it's safe. "No one uses this bathroom," you tell me. I'm scared of getting caught by a teacher or a bully I despise. We would be persecuted. They would call us names, spit the word "fag" in our faces, expelled for being gay because two teenage boys shouldn't touch each other that way.

I whisper in your ear to suck me. Your fingers tickle as you reach past copper and corduroy. Your lips tickle as you take me into your mouth. You feel warm on me, giving good head as if you've done this before. I hold onto your back for leverage as you take me. I can hear the blare of car horns from the open window, kids our age hollering and cursing. I pull myself from your mouth. It's my turn. I want to know what a hick's dick tastes like. You smell of crotch musk and Right Guard. I apply pressure to your love. You tell me to hurry, that the bell is going to ring soon. I have Mr. White for typing, fifth period. Your hands are warm against my face as you move into me and out again. You take too long to come, so we watch each other jack off instead. We don't take our eyes off each other's dicks. I lift my flannel shirt out of the way to give you a better look. I love you watching me. "Are you about to come?" you ask. "Almost." My heart is untamed; my breathing is heavy. I come in pissy urinal water. We don't come together, but damn near. We quickly shove our spent dicks back into our pants.

“You go first in case someone’s outside,” I tell you. The sun burns my eyes when I push open the door that smells of fresh paint. You’re out of sight, but I can hear you making your way down concrete steps. I take the long way back to my homeroom. I check myself before I enter. Ms. Study looks at me as if she knows where I’ve been, what I’ve been up to. The bell rings. I grab my backpack and run out into the crowded halls with another deep secret under my tongue.

Shane Allison is the author of four collections of poetry: *I Remember* (Future Tense Books), *Slut Machine* (Queer Mojo Press), *Sweet Sweat* (Hysterical Books), and his most recent *I Want to Eat Chinese Food Off Your Ass* (Dumpster Fire Press). His new collection, *Turbulent*, is forthcoming from Hysterical Books. When he's not writing, he's making collages.

Errands: Cash Check

I go to the mailbox and open it. The mail's arrived. I grab it and close the mailbox. I sort through it as I walk back to my house.

Boy oh boy, I'm pre-approved for a credit card. Crack addicts can get a card with a better APR than this. The letter's got my alma mater's logo on it.

I find my check and put the rest of the mail down on the coffee table.

I get dressed.

Grab my list of errands: Cash check. Get groceries. Return library book.

And lock the door.

I get in my car and turn onto the highway.

It's uneventful until I get close to town. Traffic's stopped. Up ahead there's flashing lights. A deputy directs traffic.

On the side of the road's a motorcycle.

And a long red smear leading to a pile of guts wrapped in a leather jacket.

This poor bastard's gonna be in the newspapers tomorrow. Front page if he was important.

I grab a stick of peppermint gum from the center console. They were out of spearmint.

Looks like the roadrash's still breathing. That warm spring air sure is refreshing.

Those teeth? Wonder what the tooth fairy'll give for those. Reckon a quarter each.

I get through traffic and continue to the credit union.

Inside, the line's somewhat long.

As I wait, I endorse my check.

The credit union's raising money for the hospital. Someone has to. God won't.

They really gone all out on the poster.

Calming blue background with their own *Faces of Death* collage.

Kids with cancer. Grandparents on oxygen embracing a grandchild. Organ donor recipients.

All smiling.

Guess they couldn't find no one photogenic enough in the burn unit.

Wonder what that pile of guts is up to. He's probably at the hospital waiting to get carved up. Some lucky people on the transplant list are gonna have their prayers answered. God truly works in mysterious ways.

Hello, how may I help you?

Hi there, I'd like to cash this check.

Alright. May I see your ID? Okay, and where would you like to deposit this?

All in savings, please.

Okay. Done. May I help you with anything else?

No, thanks. That's all.

Alright, well you have a great rest of your day.

You too.

I put a hundred dollars in the donation box.

Exiting, I check my list of errands. Next up is grocery shopping. Guess I'll do that.

An ambulance blares by.

Damn, I don't think I brought my grocery list.

the man with three legs

i'm being fucked in the ass by a landmine wearing a name tag
she's called life and she's bearing a purple 6 incher
if i try too hard i'll kill myself, if i don't try hard enough i'll get myself killed
the man with three legs asks me if i don't like sex because i was raped but i tell him i
prefer not to be fucked by two entities at once
life fucks me in the ass and it's unspoken of
but i fuck life in the ass and i'm a case study
the man with three legs psychoanalyses me, does horribly well
i tell him not to quit his day job
he is a very good therapist
i "forget" to take my sertraline
wake up and tell everyone i encounter
just to remind them i'm cool because i'm depressed
who the fuck am i kidding
i'm not a poet
i haven't even read silver path
i'm under pressure to eat but under pressure to douche
sounds counterintuitive to flush out my insides
i'm skinny enough
soci- ology
psych- ology
sof- ology
too many ologys
the man with three legs reads my thoughts, files a restraining order

Mig Da Rocha (they/them) is a Graphic Design student and twink studying at Camberwell College of Arts. They've written one poem in their entire life and you're looking at it.

Script for a Film Called Love Is the Devil

Everyone is at a house party where they're "clowning," which is this inexplicable thing where everyone applies exaggerated face paint. Someone stands at the front of the party, made up, and sings. A torch shines on them as a makeshift spotlight but we don't hear their music. Instead, a baroque score plays while credits roll over frames that move too slow, jittering at the pace they progress.

Z and E sit in the back of a car that heads home, faces clown-painted. D is there, home, watching porn, distorted in close-up, laptop screen harsh-lighting his motionless face. Z and E arrive, walking past D's room. They go straight to E's which is directly above D's. They close the door and D sneaks up, peeks through the keyhole. As Z and E kiss, they smear each other's paint.

It's over, and D glides back downstairs to his room. E is asleep, and Z sneaks out of her bed, walking across and entering his own room down the hall.

E wakes up, alone, and her room is light. She picks up a small perspex box on her shelf, filled with shredded paper. Staring into it, she shakes it like a snow globe. The holl

ow box fits perfectly in her palm.

D sits in his studio and makes a papier-mâché hand full of fake blood. He takes out a digital camera and videos himself cutting his fingers off with a meat cleaver, unleashing the blood in spurts.

Z is in his red-lit room and holds a candle which is in the shape of a hand, each finger with its own wick. Two fingers are melted down to the knuckle. Z places the hand-candle on his desk and leaves the room.

E stands in front of a stone monument, then wanders through the surrounding park. The trail is beside a busy road and crosses an elevated bridge. From here, she observes several ibis.

D is at a gig where a man plays saxophone non-stop. The venue is a small, strange and over-decorated jazz bar with tables lumped at the edges, moved out of the way to create standing space for the crowd. D sees Z amongst them. There's a TV that live-feeds the performances on a screen hung beside the stage.

E wakes up during the night, gets dressed and walks with a bag of bird seeds. She sits in a small park against a giant stone wall and old, cobbled stairs. E limply throws bird seeds, even though there are no birds around to eat them.

Z leans against a wall outside a club, under a sign that says TOOL SHED. He vapes and holds unshaking eye contact with any person who comes past. Fade-out as Z begins walking away from TOOL SHED with a man. Z's room sits empty amongst red light.

D and E go to the beach on an overcast day. They are quiet, D curled into himself, reading, while E placed at the edge of the waves looking.

Returning home to Z's empty room, E lies in his bed and D tries on some of his clothes. Their damp beach hair leaves patches on the pillowcase, bedding, and clothing.

E and D fall asleep on Z's bed, red light. The door cracks open and a Z shape appears between the sleeping figures.

E calls her dad from her room, discussing a dream she had where she was friends with a white horse, then pulled stems of rosemary.

ry from her throat. The conversation devolves into a talk about religion, though there is unaddressed tension in their words.

D's room is emptied out for an exhibition. The work is a TV which leans against the wall in a pile of dirt, displaying the video of the fake hand being mutilated. Opposite is an A0 drawing of a face that resembles Z. Some people walk around looking at the art. An older man goes up to D who leans on the windowsill – *WHAT'S IT ABOUT?*
D says *GOD... NOTHING, REALLY.*

Z is in his room, nighttime, wearing latex gloves that go just past the wrist.

E reads a book that explains that mysticism is a contemporary attempt to give meaning and power to people who can't imagine a world without capital, a world where people have agency and control. This can't be narrativised, so all that is seen is E reading a book about Mark Fisher and meme culture.

Everyone is gone, his room is dark again, so D takes the Z-like drawing off his wall and into the backyard where he burns it. He drags his mattress back into the room and

falls asleep next to the dirt TV which continues to display hand violence. A latex hand opens his mouth and examines his teeth without disturbing his rest.

E watches a bird on her windowsill in the night, a candle providing light. She doesn't notice as a latex hand opens her mouth and pulls a stem of rosemary from it.

It feels like, seems to be, a repeated gesture. Like a movie they'd all already seen, and drained. Z burns a hole through the film reel.

Angus McGrath is a writer and artist based in Sydney, Australia. His work circulates around excess, subculture, the limits of meaning, and the cinematic. Angus has just completed a Masters of Fine Arts blending fiction and theory as a malevolently bad map.

pond scum

he stays out of the house every day that he can. from waking until it's gone dark. try to wake up before dad does. don't be seen or heard. three-bed house, big garden, but too small for two people when egos are swollen and skin bruises easily, going wet like plums.

go behind the house. through the field. there's a path when he jumps the stye: to the village or into the woods. don't go into the village. unattended types look suspicious around there. go into the woods. people walk their dogs there. muddy welly boots and off-lead. they've all got those coats with the kind of waxy waterproof surface, all look like people who own horses. he doesn't own a horse, even though the field he walked through to get here has horses in it. it's someone else's field, it just backs onto his house. but the field and the woods are the world.

in another life he moved out of this house years ago. in another life he's someone else, a different name, a girl, something regarded fondly instead of as a growth. school is a memory. he doesn't contribute to the house or anything in it. dirt clinging to windowsills, scum on the edge of the bathtub, days old. in the summer, tempers rise with temperature. why don't you have a job? and then some offhand comment about queers on tv and then the atmosphere gets too close to his skin. a feeling like being stuck in a toilet cubicle.

he just can't talk. about any of it. about the thing in him that is a half-tree trunk, how he feels severed in half to ward off disease or felling on another person. rooted but listless. weird little wannabe faggot hours.

he goes off the path and hikes up into the tree line, over a mossy dirty ridge, into something like wild. makes quick work of it 'cause he has adult's legs to match his adult's body, all ropey from spending so much time outside. his hands are adult's hands, callused as he grasps rocks and trees for leverage until the ground evens out again. he can't marry his adult body to adult behaviours. can't quite commit to anything. doesn't know how to bond with anyone. he roams like a stray dog.

he goes to the pond. it is the pond, not a pond. it's the only one he knows around here, buried a long walk into the woods. it had less algae when he was a child. it's

overgrown and filthy and doesn't look like anything is alive in it. there's an unpleasant fetid stink rolling off it.

he comes here to jerk off. stands by the overgrown edge where it starts to turn into mud before off-green water. hand shoved down the front of his shorts, inside panties in turn, a furious rubbing until something happens. he can't do this in the house, at night. too still, fabric around his knees too loud, even through doors and walls. too much of a sense like something is listening. he came on a pillow once and was so fucking scared of the consequences, though he'd never done it before to have proof that there would be any.

in the winter when he comes here and does this steam rolls off his shoulders, sweat pouring through clothes, between his thighs, makes him look like a cinematic ghost. in summer he imagines someone else might want to come to the pond. maybe catch him. at home, it's a threat, out here, it's a possibility. come on, come on, appear through the brush, maybe one of them, maybe three of them. men, he thinks about. someone trying to cum in private-public.

(once he spent an afternoon googling if it was illegal to do this and came to the conclusion of 'only if you get caught'.)

is obviously ripe for the taking, asking for it in a way that nobody else does. it's not the way he's dressed, it's not walking home alone at night, it's making an invitation of himself. how can they help it? the right thing is to fight back, so he does, only until he's pressed down in the mulch and earth with the stink of algae and pond scum like rot filling up his mouth. they'll yank his pants down and find out he's not even a real man, which is even better, easier to deal with, since he already wants it, since he's already wet.

that way it's not his fault for wanting it. they were going to fuck him anyway. and maybe when one of them's inside him he grabs at his hips and that makes him cum, and all of them – assailants.

too cowardly to call them rapists, but at the same time, he does it every time he thinks he's too scared to call them that.

so rapists, they make fun of him for cumming. they brutalise him for that. kick him, fuck him again. make his head ache from the pressure of being held down. mark him over

and over and over and over and over and over and over. maybe for hours. it's not personal. when they're done they leave him there. in the fantasy sometimes he's half-ruined and expires later, sometimes already dead, but either way, complete. finally touched and no longer lonely. discarded, but well-used. like a dog's chew toy. you only throw it out once it's been loved enough.

there is something to the taste of earth. something familiar and alien. a place to go from and return to. you get to know it through roaming. it would be wonderful to dissolve here, body heating up and skin blistering and muscles stiffening and then breaking down. it's not that he doesn't need to go home but rather he already is home. he would reduce here. foxes would gnaw at him whilst he was still fresh. there would be flies laying eggs in the warm crevices of his body, his mouth, his nostrils, his ass, his cunt. from the eggs would burst forth squirming white new life. every maggot would have a name, and it would be his.

he bears down against his hand, hips rolling, stifles noise by biting down into his cheek. he shudders. when he brings his hand out of his underwear his fingers are slick and he wipes them hastily, shamefully, on his jeans. release always comes with that – shame. not sure if it's the need or what he thinks about.

but

nobody appears in the trees.

nobody ever does

and

thinking just stay another minute whilst it's light and then the gloaming is suddenly there, all over.

try again tomorrow.

Taliesin Neith is a writer of horror whose work is described as greasy, grimy and transgressive. He longs for warm dark places and the scent of wet leaves and rot under the moon. [cadavertrial.com]

Cunt Boy God

When I saw him, I knew
I saw it in the curves of his body
The sparse facial hairs, too few
And the silent fear coiled around him

Tight, tighter, tighter
I knew it by his walk, shy beat of
Soles on pavement, lighter
Whisper of soft gentle tread

But most of all it was his eyes
That proved his divinity
And told me of his demigod insides
He was metamorphosis in progress,

As rare and precious as ancient things go.
I should fear a god in the flesh
But how can I when that flesh is so
Inviting?

He's always welcoming me, pulling me in
Hands on my wrists, drawing them closer;
To the round apple-glow cheeks, original sin
Over his shoulders, down his arms

The slip of waist, flare of hips, meat of thighs
To the core of him
He opens for me with man-made sighs
Traces me with blood-tipped fingers

Opens wide and consumes me
I fall to him, worship his loaned legs
And kiss the starry swell of his knee
I breathe the prayer of his name into

Red lips, parted and wet.
I am prostrate at his altar,
Anointed by his sweat,
Priest of a new religion

And every night I fuck him to sleep
I wake up singing
God would weep, God would weep
And he does.

Mel is currently a uni student in Sydney, Australia. A lover of reading, writing, and all things queer, they have had work published in Spineless Wonders' *Travel Anthology* and regularly perform poetry readings for their family and their cat, Mika. They write about queer love and joy in the face of all the rest of this shit.

I Imagine God

is a man who chews tobacco
in a trailer park, toothless,
he strokes the long shaft

of his shotgun. At midnight,
when he fingerbangs his wife
because he can't get it up

he gnaws the tongue
that slurped seed from my ass.
Mmm—he's every man

I've fallen for.

Iron-jawed masculine
with a doughy belly, tongue
like a leather-studded whip.

For him, my knees swallow
woodchips and August dirt,
redden and singe

the roots of an afternoon willow.
I tell him to watch me
when I ash

his hunger to smoke,
wither my jaw to bloom
his rot-ripe seed,

an explosion.

Michael Russell (he/they) is coauthor of chapbook *Split Jawed* with Elena Bentley (forthcoming from Collusion Books) and mother monster to chapbook *Grindr Opera* (Frog Hollow Press). They are queer, mad, and overflowing with anxiety. Currently, he has a craving for chocolate chip pancakes with bananas and thinks you're fantabulous. Insta: [@michael.russell.poet](https://www.instagram.com/michael.russell.poet)

Contact Buzz

Side by side, the two photos resembled the before-and-after of an extreme and disappointing life. Curtis had pulled them from thousands, hidden on dust-caked hard drives that lined the slim shelves barely hanging on the server room's dank drywall. It was easier to keep his records and transcripts here at work where he could make use of unused space. He stretched back. The black office chair sang beneath his buoying. On screen, a young boy's portrait he'd taken almost eight years ago at a regional mall's Christmas village nudged the grainy paused camera feed of a gaunt man, late fifties, looking sallow and unsure of himself. Knife deep in his chest, Curtis felt everything between them. It played out in ways he found difficult to describe in words, even to himself. That's what drew him to photography as a kid – the non-verbal stimulation. Images unable to be emptied of reaction.

Curtis shut down for the night. He stood up as the chair whined back. Shutting the lights, he listened to his footsteps bounce down the cement-walled sub-basement corridor. At the elevator, he thought about his awaiting dinner – leftover meatloaf and this morning's pancakes for Dad – and whom luck would draw online in the early hours. Pictures were better than nothing, but nothing beat new connections.

Them: So how old are you?

You: idk if i'm supposed to say

Them: Okay. Are you in school?

You: yeah. What do you do?

Them: I'm a dentist. Do you see a dentist?

You: yeah i hate that prick

Them: Lol me too. But it's important to go. He helps you, right?

You: i guess. I wouldn't wanna look in people's gross mouths all day.

Them: Lol where would you prefer to look?

You: where do you think?

Curtis stubbed his cigarette out in the ashtray among the garden of smouldering others. He waited as the latest man (if that's what he was) typed out his next message under a cloak of pulsating dots. He chugged the rest of his soda and wiped his sticky lips.

Them: Probably a man's crotch, so you can watch his cock get hard. I get it. I know what it's like being young and pent up.

Hands slick with Pepsi condensation made rapid keystrokes. Curtis' screen flashed with harsh cuts to the running footage of his monitor's glow. On the desktop, he renamed the newborn files by copy-pasted date and dragged them to a flash drive he trusted to travel between work and home.

You: lol yeah. I can get pretty horny sometimes.

Them: I bet. Are you horny now?

You: yup. You have a pic?

Curtis lit a new cigarette. It calmed him. While he waited for a reply, he surfed his increasing heart rate which pounded through the bones his ears grew out of. He wasn't hard, as most of his blood was preoccupied with his brain. Such a degree of pretending required that he continually toggle his awareness between his body and the lie he was telling. This seasick rocking only elevated the experience. At times Curtis believed it was the key missing ingredient when jerking off to memories. Down the hall, he heard porcelain smash and his father cursing. Curtis intercepted him in the kitchen, on the way back to his rented home-care bed in the adjoining living room.

- You're not supposed to be getting up. What did you need that couldn't wait?

- I got thirsty, okay? Besides, I'm fine getting up.

- You are *not* fine getting up and now there's glass in the sink to prove it. Next time yell and I'll come get you your water.

- Yeah, sure, that's what I'll do. And you'll come running? Or grunt? Or just ignore me 'cause you're so busy doing whatever it is you do in there all night.

Weak, Curtis' father lowered himself onto the foot of the bed as though he didn't know when it would materialize under him. In pain-limited slow-motion, he leaned back until he was lying flat on the meekly raised pillows, his head haloed by digital readouts and rising green lines.

Curtis crouched by his father's head.

- What else do you need? I promise I'll be there if you call.

His father kept his eyes closed.

For most of his career, Curtis was a commercial photographer. His parents purchased his first camera as the necessary “cost of materials” for a high school art credit, and Curtis turned their self-proclaimed generosity into an expectation. Without permission, he converted their basement into a red-lit darkroom. Soon he insisted they pay for *real* cameras, better ones, with additional zoom lenses and hoods, tripods and accessories off which he could profit. His first few clients were nearby local businesses: a banh mi house, an abandoned plaza’s hair salon, a gluten-free bakery. Back then none of them knew how to establish an online presence, so Curtis charged them good money for a student’s half-assed effort. He’d shoot the owner, storefront, and product, then upload it to Facebook or wherever the client wanted it. With a half day’s work he could make \$500. It was obvious to Curtis how to convert his camera into business.

It wasn’t until later that he grew fond of taking photographs. On rides home from client shoots he would detour to the lake, lock his bike, and wander, capturing families and their children inconspicuously. With his hustle’s proceeds he bought newer, more discreet cameras, special software, more powerful lenses. From far away he could zoom in clearly on a toddler’s face and steal its most candid, perfect smile mid-air on a swing set. PNGs and JPGs piled up on his flash drives. He invested in a desktop, some externals, contemplated the ongoing costs of a local server. Around this time his mother died.

Curtis’ father, a hereditary drunk, got worse. He lost his job and took it out on Curtis, beating him most nights before passing out on his last few clumsy follow-throughs. Numb to the routine and knowing he deserved it, Curtis began working gigs as an excuse to get out of the house. An agency hired him for on-call jobs – portraits at pet stores, class photos, insurance investigations. When he timed it right he was only home while his father was knocked out in dreamless alcoholic sleep.

For a decade they lived like this, passing notes written in unmade beds and over sloppy dishes. Then Curtis’ father’s liver failed and there was no more avoiding home. He needed someone to insert his catheter and empty his bedpan – that was the expectation. Curtis pivoted to IT,

naturally hating the brick-like idiocy involved in troubleshooting but relishing the solitude and remote opportunities. Now he was discovering ways to appreciate his circumstances again.

Them: can I see a picture of you?

You: umm okayyy what do u want to see?

Them: your face, whatever you want to show me

You: okay one sec

You: *09032018.jpg*

You: *09122018.jpg*

Them: wow

You: what?

Them: nothing just...

You: you hate me?

Them: no the opposite

You: oh cool

Them: I'm kinda speechless right now

You: that's fine, as long as you don't think i'm a total monster

Them: impossible. never

Curtis saved some screenshots then stood up abruptly. He had to piss. On his way to the toilet, he thought about the boy whose photos he'd just sent to the faceless nobody he was currently chatting with. He'd seen the boy on only three occasions, at the beginning of the school year, before his parents must have snatched him up and moved away. Each encounter was from a distance, during recess, so Curtis had a hard time getting shots of the boy's face alone, undisturbed by windblown curls and the uncroppable foreheads of other children. The two he'd sent off were pure chance, secret minor miracles.

In the kitchen he refilled his soda, taking ice trays from the freezer. He flinched as he tried to crack out cubes quietly, not wanting to wake his father. He held still, anticipating his groans. Nothing except the unnatural enthusiasm of late-night infomercials. Curtis sipped at the ice bobbing near the rim and snuck over to his father's bed.

Curtis' father was rolled over on his side, his back to his son. Tubes trailed up from his hands to drained bags on metal hangers above him. Curtis couldn't tell if it was shallow breathing or the varying light from the TV making his father's ribs quake. The monitor's numbers were normal for a dying person.

- Dad?

- Mmhm?

- I'm just gonna be in my room, Dad, okay? Call me if you need anything.

- Hmm.

Tiptoeing his way there, Curtis pulled the door shut, minus a crack. He settled back in his chair, the air fizzing from his cup goading his upsurge of unstable tension. The screen showed new messages:

Them: do you have any more photos? maybe ones that show your whole body?

Them: it's okay if you don't. I'm fine just talking too. I like getting to know you.

Them: I'm sorry if my question bothered you, I didn't mean to. just forget about it.

Them: are you still there?

You: hi I'm here. went to get a snack

Them: sweet :) what did you get?

You: creamsicle! my favourite

Them: mine too. Any pics of you eating one?

Alex Bucik is a writer and zine maker from Toronto. His poems have appeared in *Prolit* and *Protean Magazine*. He is currently working on a novel about searching for sex with God online. Find his sporadic posts on Instagram [@etcetc.etc.](#)

Naked in the Morning

Sometimes I wish I had a God's eye view
 so I could see myself lying naked in the morning
 sprawled out, face down on the black sheets,
 the glistening trail of cum as it trickles
 over my balls on its way down from my ass.
 As above, so below; I'd imagine myself
 as a white cloud floating in the sky,
 a dark, stormy bottom spitting rain on humanity.

If I was God, the world could felch my ass;
 that'd be the one-stop way to salvation.

But it's not God watching me sleep, it's whispers;
 ghosts of the past wishing for what they had,
 and mumbled words plotting massacres that hands
 caressing pillows want for throats to choke out life.
 What would be sexier than this cum-filled trash?
 Another body spread out in a similar position,
 dead eyes staring at gravel whilst their blood pools,
 dark bruises around the neck by fingers, not lips.

If I could see them sleeping in the gutter,
 it would be the last dream of their life.

Fold me up and destroy me, physically, mentally.
 Let me be the letter that is never sent or read.
 Open me up and disregard the contents;
 it's just empty space. That's all that is left in the end.
 Rooms, beds, feelings, bodies reduced to skeletons.

I am that ghost watching myself sleep,
 dreaming of justice against a foe of smoke.

A pendulum once swung and prophesized,
 so when I was a boy I used to cum in the cum
 of the condoms I found on dirt tracks.

Am I damaged, or just vibrating at a higher level?
A different setting of the vibrator getting you off.
DNA data dump regurgitating memories as stories
in an attempt to make sense of the bloodied corpses
I've eviscerated with my teeth and gut-fucked,
stretched open with my fingers and searched their bones,
looking for answers to a past that's now been rewritten.

I lived in a shadow, now I am shadow.

I would crack open their jaw, and with pliers
pull each tooth like a petal.

If I was God, that light at the end of the tunnel
would be the cum glistening before it trickles
out of my naked ass in the morning.

Dominic Lyne is a London-based writer. Drawing from his personal experiences, his work aims to shine a light upon the darker sides of humanity and society. His work has been published by Rebel Satori Press and HarperCollins.

Nightclub in an Abandoned Church

Church bells ring in the background
Intricate glass stains in compromising positions
Glitter and sweat baptize ecstasy-filled congregants
Hands reach out in prayer
Blaring gospel to the converted

Men crowd into confessional bathrooms
Told to kneel on the sticky floor
Suck you off to the sound of the choir
Use my tongue for reciting a prayer,
A hymn
Confess my sins
My hopes and dreams
Shove the Holy Spirit down my throat
Powerful hands scraping verses
onto tear-stained cheeks
Baptize my mouth with new life,
Drip down my chin,
Rub the good word into my aching jaw

Deliver a sermon to my body
Whisper psalms in the shell of my ear.
Make me ache with scorching pleasure
Use me until I scream
Cry out the name of the Holy Father in vain
Pull my hair back to see salvation
Wrap rosaries around my neck
Choke me with righteousness
Until I release my sin
On the hard tile floor.

I worship that sacred space,
A relationship between me and the creator
Preachers of the good word of taking dick
Let me be your disciple
An apostle for carnal desires
Fall to your feet in devotion,
Servicing only
For you.

Finnialla (Finn-all-uh) is a screenwriter, poet, and artist whose work can only be described as the best trash that can be found for miles around. They have been published in *Musing Publications*, *Messy Misfits Club Zine*, *The Creative Zine*, *The Incognito Press*, *Anachronism Magazine*, and *Rat World Magazine*. If you like this, find even more garbage at finn-all-uh.org or check out their Twitter for weird hyperfixations and 2 am shitty ramblings [@finn all uh](https://twitter.com/finn_all_uh).

Virgin

here is the slick longing of a heart,
held between the thighs for safekeeping.
the virgin wears a sweater for safety:
the soft chainmail of anxiety, the war-paint
of horror-skin oozing.
the infant organs list like offal,
bald and raw. the heart roams
the body and causes hysterical disturbances.
the virgin tears at her tapestry,
at her hair, at her gash
through which aborted girlhood drops.
she abhors the reek of dead rot. when
I press my cheek against her: her skin
smells of cemeteries, of cenotaphs,
of stormwater drains and drowned women.
the dead body drops like a stone,
down through the sweet pink gullet, all the way
down and into my waiting mouth.

Emmanuelle Christie (they/them) has been featured in *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *On the Run*, and other publications. They hold a degree in English literature and are working towards their second master's degree in theology. They live in Toronto.

A Friend

Had a wife.

Had three kids, all boys.

Had two male lovers.

Had been asked to be their boyfriend.

Had raw sex only, no strings attached.

Had passed chlamydia to his wife.

Had tried to grind pills in her food.

Had been caught.

Had confessed to sleeping with a man.

Had lied about it being a one-time thing.

Had seen him again.

Had continued seeing the other lover.

Had no idea who gave him the STI.

Had announced to his friends, "Gays are sluts."

Had problems with one of his sons.

Had been asked if he could drop out of college.

Had said no, instructing the boy to pray on it.

Had invoked Jesus.

Had privately prayed to be rid of lust.

Had no patience when some of us suggested divorce.

Had claimed if only his wife was more attentive.

Had claimed she loved work more than him.

Had loved work more than love.

Had stayed for the sake of their boys.

Had fights with another son over his love for death metal.

Had one boy left scoring good grades in school.

Had confessed he was glad none of them turned out queer.

Had dismissed his friends' ensuing silence.

Had dinners with fewer of us.

Had long stopped being intimate with his wife.

Had sons who grew up still staying at home.

Had a house noisy from their friends coming and going.

Had gone to Bangkok with one of his lovers.

Had taken Ice and Ecstasy.

Had come back and tested HIV-positive.

Had not informed the family.

Had been secretly taking antivirals.

Had been dumped by one of his lovers.

Had friends who suspected when he lost weight.

Had lost more friends.

Had spent long evenings at saunas.

Had met younger lovers.

Had the double life he always wanted.

Had the men he always wanted.

Had caught a flu and persistent cough.

Had refused to see any doctor.

Had collapsed in a hotel in Chiang Mai.

Had been “alone” when he died.

Had been diagnosed as having post-Covid complications.

Had a weak heart, the hospital reported.

Had his body flown back for a church funeral.

Had a wife who wept between hymns.

Had three grown sons who played with their phones.

Had friends who stole glances across the pews.

Had friends who said nothing.

Had friends who said less than nothing.

A Portrait of Brotherhood as Two Boys from Space

Johnny smiles at me, not a thought in his head. I feel the lopsided curve of his mouth spread into my own goofy expression, and we giggle low, the tightness in my chest replaced by thrill. This isn't scary. *It's good.* As long as we're part of a team, we can do anything—even go to Planet Earth. The mission parameters are explained, and my mind wanders to the thin stack of half-torn labels tucked somewhere in our bunks, from beans, from soups, and canned veggies, each depicting fresh knowledge of our birthworld, of which Johnny has no memories, and I few.

Dad goes on these runs for weeks, and it's a special time, our drills and training go lax, no more moralized morning wake-ups, no activities for activity's sake, or control's, and save for those life-sustaining responsibilities which cannot be ignored, we cuddle back to back, imaginations free to run wild listening to the galaxy's echoes all around us, like roots and voles—known to us only through second-hand account—brushing against the steely box, our home, as it orbits through space. Johnny always says the first thing he wants to see on Planet Earth is—"a dog," *a lie meant to please.*

"Tell us about the time with the dog," I plead, making myself an accessory to the lie while we wait for our pre-landing Quaaludes to kick in.

Dad's happy to oblige, showing us the back of his head from where he sits at the mysterious control panel. "When I was a boy," on Planet Earth, remember, "one of my chores was walking the neighbor's dog. Mean little thing. Hated me, and bit me all the time, until one day we were on the outskirts of town exploring this abandoned bomb shelter. We found some flowers growing, but when we went to smell 'em, this great big spider jumped out! It scared us so bad we ran all the way home together. I didn't even have to hold the leash." We listen dreamily, the sedatives belaying the usual onslaught of questions about towns, flowers, leashes. I've never seen a flower, but I've seen a picture of some cornstalks on a can, and rather than cling to consciousness and experience our descent to Planet Earth, I cling to the pale greenness of those sharp cornstalk leaves in the hopes they might resemble petals.

When I wake, nausea lingers as do other signs of a rough landing. Items are out of place as if having fallen, but nothing's broken, and I don't throw up. We're made to wear bulky black-out sunglasses to protect us from ultraviolet radiation and apply special

lotion, stifling more low laughter at the white streaks it leaves on our faces and arms. But between these moments of joy, I know Johnny feels it, too—the pressure of Planet Earth's gravity makes it hard to take full breaths—as Dad muscles open the dense air-lock door, and spokes of light crest over his silhouette.

The first thing I see is grass, and its softening beneath me makes me want to cry, but I hiccup that impulse back, pretending instead that I still might puke. We don't look at each other. The impact was so great that our ship is now densely entrenched in the ground, like someone just shoved it there, all of it now surrounded by natural overgrowth. Only the entrance is visible, weathered from the hardships of galactic travel, framed by a spray of worse-for-wear tulips, yellow, not green—"What are you looking at? C'mon."

Dad has us pull back a tarp from over a tan vehicle, and its cool-to-the-touch exterior isn't a stranger to me. He has us crouch down in the back, and Johnny makes sounds at the novelty of the ugly safety belts, which we don't use.

We don't drive far, but each shift in speed or direction sends a new jolt of adrenaline through me. Planet Earth is a blur that we drive past, and I only register the texture of the seat cushions and the stuffiness of the air. Johnny hisses—"Look!"—as the smoother road turns to gravel and our raiding party pulls up behind a house, blue-turned-gray, isolated but for a copse of trees, curtains drawn.

"*This is how people live,*" Johnny wonders aloud as I burst in behind him. The back door opens to a kitchen which we quickly take to looting while Dad seeks out resources elsewhere. I yank open the largest, most advanced-looking cabinet and cry out at the burst of coolness that greets me, and Johnny's there in a fraction of a second, pulling open crisper drawers, liberating them of their contents, until I spot four crisp ears still in their husks and pressed to a Styrofoam tray by a sheet of clear plastic, and he must see this too, because the frenzy stops, briefly, out of respect for this mythic discovery, before it begins again.

"*Move, move, move!*" Dad bursts in from another room, his shoulders ricocheting off the doorframe, and though we're forced to drop much, we shove a great deal into the trunk before we're pursued. I leap in the back without question, the pre-packaged container of corn pressed to my chest to protect me. The car door nearest remains open as Dad begins to roll us away, and this produces a woosh of air carrying with it a woman's voice, sweet, with the slightest pang of growing maternal panic, too distant to make out the meaning of her words, though the syllables do follow the familiar beat of my name, all

of which I register because—the door nearest remains open. I twist my whole body, press both palms open against the rear windshield, and watch as my brother begins to grow smaller, and he watches me grow smaller, too, from where he stands frozen on the gravel, guilt swelling from his eyes.

Johnny doesn't get in the car—

Johnny Doesn't Get In The Car—

JOHNNY DOESN'T GET IN THE CAR—

Stephen Brown (he/him) is a Philadelphia-based writer, editor, and activist. A grad student in YA literature with a background in LGBT+ Studies, Stephen spends his spare time doing advocacy work with InReach (fka AsylumConnect). His writing has appeared in *Beneath the Soil: Queer Survivors Zine*, *Wicked Gay Ways*, *Querencia Press*, and others. Instagram: [@scarletwitchy](https://www.instagram.com/scarletwitchy)

The Scene in the Horror Movie Where the Child Draws Disturbing Pictures Over and Over

An emptied lung, a constricted throat.
 The old familiar feeling.
 To be -
 To make myself sick.
 To opt out of all of this.
 Look, I am coughing,
 retching. My body
 protecting me.
 It understands the world is
 beyond my sphere of control.
 I can obliterate it
 with sleep.
 I can hold on
 to myself.
 see the deep black lines
 gouging the page almost entirely
 black
 some killer's vision seeping
 the clues there if you look if you can
 look at what's there
 yourself as a scribble
 you stifling the hacking
 that leads to the wretch
 that begets the last-minute twist
 that you don't survive
 the clues all right in front of you the child
 not yours minded is
 laughing mimicking your cough

Mark Ward is the author of *Nightlight* (Salmon Poetry 2023) and four chapbooks: *Circumference* (FLP, 2018), *Carcass* (7KP, 2020), *HIKE* (Bear Creek, 2022) and the Choose Your Own Adventure sonnet *Faultlines* (voidspace, online 2022/print late 2023). He has also published short stories in *Misery Tourism*, *Expat* and *The Honest Ulsterman*. He is the founding editor of *Impossible Archetype*, an international journal of LGBTQ+ poetry, now in its seventh year.

Sex Drugs Synthpop

I fell in love with you quietly across the floor of Dalston Superstore while I was deciding whether or not to drink tonight. The air was thick with Soft Cell. It wasn't quite so hard to see you as it was to see anyone else; something about how you caught the light. Or maybe it was pattern recognition and I know how you move. I saw you, anyway. I was neither expecting to see you nor expecting not to; neither anticipation nor anxiety sat with me on the Overground. Maybe you were, a little, on my mind. I put on the same septum ring I wore on our first date. Chance, that, not choice, I realised after the fact, when I was checking myself over. The thought occurred that you might be here tonight, and with refrains of admiration and affectionate barbs, I noted the ring. But what about you? You must have known, surely – sodding cheek. Were you scanning the crowd for me when you got here? Scrubbing for my outline at the bar, like brass rubbing? You look great. You look sensational. Who you showing off for? Skin-tight turtleneck over your stocky, small frame. You were proud of those shoulders earlier this evening, weren't you? Broader than I'd remembered – actually broader, probably, than last time I had my hands on them. And those flared jeans, fake retro shit from some market and the trader saw you coming. Did they tell you they'd fit just right on your steadily narrowing hips? And your hair. Foam and waterfalls. Unstyled curls, loose and ragged, rolling over your shoulders like a 70s metalhead. You'd look right at home in some boy's dad's garage with blisters on your fingertips. Sweat under stage lights. Except I'd put you in the rose-tinted TV recreation – grease perfectly touched up, authentic but marketable. Actual cherry-red arse. You knew people were going to be looking at you, or for you, and this polished vision of you worked, didn't it?

No, actually, I lied. I fell in love with you in bed. I tracked the progress of your small cock under my fingers across our few months, noticed the change against my tongue. You were a quiet fuck and to make you come was to wring it out of you like a sopping dishcloth. It wasn't that I fell in love the first time you tightened around my dick, groaning, so sudden that I got caught up in it too. I didn't fall in love with you when all we could think to do was lose our names in each other's mouths. I learnt your body, ink, skirted over the tape on your chest, noticed the hair on your navel getting thicker and darker, and on your thighs, got hard thinking about the sound of the sweat trapped between your back and my belly. I tangled my hand in your curls and pulled 'til you had tears in your eyes. You

laughed at me. Bare-arsed on my bed, two fingers knuckle-deep in your cunt, and you laughed at me. I bit your shoulder so hard I think I nearly drew blood. I fell in love when you laughed mid-fuck and I laughed too. Who laughs mid-fuck? I had your vibrator pinched between my fingers and hovered it just above your twitchy tiny t-dick 'til you bucked your hips and whined like a kicked dog, the animal of the man stinking and desperate, and I laughed at you without thinking and I was in love with you. Okay, call me a ponce, but I actually fell in love with you when you looked at me, knelt between your legs and asking for guidance, and confessed something I hadn't understood: no one had ever done this for you before. As much as I loved to feel you shaking, I really think I could have spent years of my life kissing you and doing nothing else at all.

I fell in love with you in the window of time between our last meeting and seeing you across the floor at Dalston, a window looking out on cherry blossoms as April thaws. Absence and the heart – it's not an idiom I ever put stock in, not until it happened to me. There's a story played on repeat, 'not until it happened to me'. I never in my life loved anyone more for their departure. But I missed you like dysphoria, like a fish learning of water; it's not until I saw you at Dalston that I noticed. I took a deep breath last time I saw you, and I only just came up for air. Missing you was so constant that it wasn't worth registering. Else every moment would have run thus: I'm brushing my teeth while missing you, I'm pouring milk on my cereal while missing you, I'm wedging myself in the Jubilee line while missing you, I'm telling my mum about my work's insane new social media campaign while missing you. You get the idea. And all this missing you was loving you. All this absence was fondness, this distance was yearning. I cut a great big hole in my coat and stayed silently freezing until the moment I saw you in those cherry flares. Soft Cell and your toothache grin, smudged in the club-light gloaming like visions on the edges of sleep. I think I've been seeing you every night.

I fell in love with you when you contradicted me at breakfast, brow hard, something about judgement without prejudice. You put me on edge on our first date with the dilation of your pupils. I took your breath away. Right then I knew there wasn't a long run for us. You were falling too fast while I held back; you'd hit the ground alone at terminal velocity, and then what? You even blinked like you wanted me. I could just see you debriefing your little group of pals, dissecting what I said and how I said it. You can be a bit much, you know? A bit full-on. And you were not holding back when those goofy cartoon stars were creeping into your eyes and I nearly called it quits, but I wanted to give you a chance.

You're a ride, anyway. Maybe you'd relax after we fucked, I don't know. I didn't know. You didn't. Ease up, relax, you didn't, you remained intense and unnavigable, and it was with that unblushing heart that you told me your mind on what I termed realistic. I fell in love with your soft round belly, your uncalcified compassion as you picked apart my cynicism over granola. You ranked me among Minerva and Diana and told me not to be such a dickhead. I think I'm actually smarter than you and I fell in love with you when you sold yourself short. Your anxiety wrangled my nerves. You built yourself a cosy little nest with your close-knit chums and you had grown so used to being supported. Worse, you had reinforced your bones. You stood firm and solid and supportive. It's not that I couldn't see the strength in your frame; I had felt the power in your legs, in your core. But I didn't ask for scaffolding, I asked for a date. You were ready for all of me – good God. So I griped about your inability to piss in public. People weren't as offended by you as you thought. You had all this heavy muscle, even distribution of mass so you and your buddies all stay standing, well that's great and all but what about a spine? Fuck your clit-cum-cock, did you ever grow any balls of your own? Or did you need a prescription? You full-voiced called me a fag on the Northern line and I nearly committed an act of public indecency.

I don't know when I fell in love with you, but I was in love with you when I saw you across the floor of Dalston Superstore two minutes ago and I am in love with you. You are dancing with some prick with a homebrew mullet. I never danced like that, all hips and hands, all conjoined. Their fingers keep playing round your waistband, and you let them, they toy with your hair and you let them. Between Depeche Mode and Human League I think about taking your little dick between my teeth. I wonder if they have. I wonder if they know about your bullet and how to get you to make a noise around it. I am quiet and I am waiting. I wait until Mullet screams in your ear over *right round baby right round like a record baby right round round* and you reply – I can almost hear your toffee tenor, you'll be a baritone in two years, I'd put money on it – and Mullet squeezes through the sweat-jammed room. I am in love with you and I cut through bodies with assassin precision.

You are surprised but not shocked. You were, I think, expecting me. I'm smiling and I mean it. Around us, tight and dank and dense, one mass body of queers loses itself to Eurythmics in exactly the same way as it did in the 80s. It's almost enough to beg an eye roll. We're still. I'm mapping the changes of your body. There should be a Velcro-stubble next time I hold your jaw. Tape's given way to scar tissue. I don't want to ask about tattoos, I want to ferret through you, pick off these flares and find whatever else you've done to

yourself. I don't think I can hear the music anymore. And I am in love with you, so I tilt down and press my lips to your ear and say, in precisely the voice you remember, 'Smoke?'

And you are in love with me, so you turn your head as I lean back to catch my breath on the hinge of your jaw. You have not stopped thinking about me. You dressed for me this evening, and every other evening you thought we might cross paths – you've spent hours groping through your wardrobe to craft yourself for me. You dreamt of me in your post-surgery haze. You spotted me half an hour ago but you couldn't come over, couldn't dare be the one to approach. I had to choose you. Nobody's rolled you a cigarette that tastes as good as mine do. No mouth can compare. You're obsessed. Your heart is wedged in your throat. You're not even breathing.

I don't think I'm breathing.

Kit McGuire is a writer and actor based in London. As a gay trans creative, they're compelled by how visibly queer bodies navigate and are navigated in public spaces, and the idiosyncrasies of queer time. His work includes fiction, poetry, and essays and has been published and produced by *Queerlings* magazine, CultureClash Theatre, and elsewhere.

Süchtig Werden

We haven't had sex in months,
but that's okay
since I don't feel anymore.

I'd rather jerk off,
alone,
to German torture porn.

Porn proves romance takes refuge:
violence as
intimacy's last resort.

Like maybe I'd burn myself
the fuck alive
just to kiss your spineless dick.

Coleman Bomar is a writer from Middle Tennessee. He has a chapbook out with Gob Pile Press. Other work can be found in E.E.'s *Hobart*, *HAD*, *Misery Tourism*, *Expat*, *Forever Mag*, *Apocalypse Confidential*, *XRAY* and elsewhere.

Old hungers/new desires/and I find myself left wanting

I am rifling through the discards of my girlhood: ruined underwear stained bleached and hardened with dried fluids; old slimed condoms; empty tapentadol casings; the spores in my lungs from the black mould growing in my bathroom. Somewhere, not here, the discarded fat and tissues of my chest. This is another day when I daydream of the relief and the simplicity of it—to be finished with desire, to stop looking. I will leave the boundaries of the self and the other undisturbed, I will deny their violation.

But now I am sitting by him, someone else I have met here—a lean greyhound of a man. He folds himself forward over his legs, and I resist the impulse to run my hand down his spine. Fabric pulls up over the small of his back, exposing vertebrae pushing through skin. A pale expanse of thin skin pulled taut over fine bones. His back arched and rolling, like a fish released into water. I imagine turning its flesh around in my mouth, pulling it apart with my teeth, probing for bones. He looks back at me. I delicately spit.

And later, of course, there is the wetness of you, a smooth body writhing/wriggling in my hands, slick with the fluids of your own effort, mouth agape, panting. Your teeth snag on my skin and we catch each other's glance, eyes wide/gleaming/flashing. Trying to keep hold of you/keep you still with my palms and knees and elbows and all of this effort leaves me heaving. My eyes are stinging and I can taste you in my sweat. We grapple with each other like our kinds have been doing since the beginning of time, and we all know how this story ends. Maybe you can taste it on me. We all know who it is that is cleaved in half/who finishes in the belly of the other. I cum late and rushed like afterbirth; better luck next time.

Thomas/Tommy (he/him) is a twenty-one-year-old transmasculine living and writing out of Perth/Boorloo in WA. He writes as a compulsive act and would love to hear from you about it. Email him at pearce25061@gmail.com.

just another day

Antonia snorts speed off the top
of a broken dryer in the back of Laundroland,
two in the morning, no one around,
rail thin and dying, she sucks back her snort
and embraces the burn.

Joey Nobody trolls the men's changing
room at the Crunch gym across the parking lot,
searching for momentary redemption,
but there are no souls to save,
no cocks to suck, kid up front calls the cops,
but they won't show, too much paperwork

i sit in the passenger seat of a pick-up truck,
bobbing up and down on a guy i met online,
says *meet me in the Stater Brothers*
parking lot, and when he's done i watch
him drive away, and i light a cigarette, lean up
against my POS car, and a guy walks out of a 24-hour
gym, stops and says, *lookin to score* and i say
yeah, and we sit in the front seat of the POS, his head
bobbing up and down, and i'm hitting fat lines
off the back of a beat-up laptop, one
filled with gay porn and bad poems about drugs and
homosexuality and not wanting to exist but
having no choice, and after i finish in the back
of his throat, he gets out, leans in, says, *we should*
hook up sometime and i say, *i never top*, he shrugs,
turns away. a rail-thin woman walks up, asks for a ride,
and i say, *sure*. she gets in, leans into my crotch,
i say, *no thanks*, she says, *you a fag or something*,
and i say,

or something.

i leave her behind a Walmart down off 6th, watch her
crawl into some bushes, into a torn-up tent, into the
cold night, and i cruise Grindr for another excuse,
it doesn't take long until i park in front of Room 19
at the Motel Six on Smith Street, up next to Highway 91,
he answers on the first knock, he's naked, his fat cock
swinging; he says *Hey* and i walk in without looking. i cut fat
lines atop a chipped and scratched table, do not share,
he offers to pay, i say *okay*, we split the bag, and i
take off my pants so he can fuck me, and he fucks me.

and then it's morning with a slow-rising sun, i head east,
out into the desert, out past civilization, drive down a dirt
road, run out of gas, then start walking, just walking

just walking,

away.

jacklyn henry is a transfeminine genderqueer writer based in the high desert near Los Angeles. when not struggling with an authentic presentation and reality, jacklyn finds time to write ribald poems and short stories about sex, love, and high heel shoes. her work can be found at: *delicate friend*, *flying dodo*, *cream scene carnival* (where she is also a columnist), *wicked gay ways*, *fleas on the dog*, and elsewhere.

NORTH AMERICAN REINDEER

CHARACTERS

DAN

BILLY

PREACH

CLAUDE

SETTING

The family room in the Holcomb family's home.

TIME

Christmas Eve.

DAN is moving about in the semi-darkness, using a flashlight to examine presents under a Christmas tree. PREACH and BILLY enter, also shining flashlights.

DAN

They taken care of?

BILLY

Tied up tight.

PREACH

Not going anywhere.

BILLY

Used the duct tape. Won't be making any noise either.

DAN

Good. We get in, get the coin collection, get out.

PREACH

That one daughter is hot, though.

DAN

No fucking around. No one gets hurt. We find the coins, and that's it.

PREACH

Where's the fun in that? Looks like she could use some. Know what I mean?

DAN

No, we had a deal. Now, help me find the fucking coins.

PREACH

Can we trust the fucker? He cheated you.

DAN

Don't know if he cheated me. But he seemed too eager to buy 'em. I've just got a hunch about those coins.

BILLY

Said it was for his nephew. Jeremiah.

PREACH

That's what I mean. Who the fuck names a kid Jeremiah? And kids don't collect coins anymore. Too busy watching porn on their phones.

BILLY

Said it was for his nephew. Shit, presents all over the house. Piles everywhere. No wonder he didn't know where the package was.

PREACH

Piles. Fucking wife spending all that money. Got too much shit. That's what I'm talking about. We gotta play the fuckin' game. Do business. While these assholes are swimming in it. I'd do the wife, though.

DAN

Just look for a present for Jeremiah. (Picking up presents) Christine. Christine. Fuck Christine.

BILLY

This might be it. J... E... Jessica.

DAN

Fuck her, too.

PREACH

Just line 'em up for me.

(CLAUDE enters quietly. He wears an ill-fitting Santa suit and carries a bag of presents.)

CLAUDE

Who the fuck are you?

(Startled, DAN, PREACH, and BILLY face CLAUDE and shine their flashlights in CLAUDE's face.)

DAN

Who the fuck are you?

CLAUDE

I asked first, fuckhead. Turn off those goddamned flashlights.

(DAN, PREACH, and BILLY keep their flashlights on. PREACH and BILLY pull out guns. CLAUDE scoffs and snaps his fingers. The room is now brightly lit.)

DAN

What the...?

BILLY

How'd you do that?

CLAUDE

Haven't you heard of the magic of Christmas, assholes?

(CLAUDE wears a Bluetooth, which the others do not notice. Throughout the play, CLAUDE listens occasionally to the Bluetooth and nods his head. The others do not pick up on it.)

Yeah, we've got a situation here, all right. (Nods) You're definitely not the Holcomb family. Some sorry-assed criminals, huh? Seriously, you're going to rob a family on Christmas Eve? This is not going to end well. (Nods) Where are the Holcombs?

BILLY

They're kind of tied up right now.

DAN

Shut the fuck up. Don't need to tell him anything. Now, who are you?

CLAUDE

The name's Claude. Can't say it's a pleasure to meet you, douchebags. Tying up people. That's just the kind of Christmas spirit that burns my ass. So where are

they? (Scrutinizing them) Bedrooms? Garage? Basement? Ah, basement. (Nods) Yeah. OK, dickheads, you've really screwed up my schedule. All I wanted to do was drop off these goddamned presents. But no, now we gotta have a situation.

PREACH

Fucker thinks he's Santa Claus. You know what I'm saying?

CLAUDE

Do I look like Santa Claus, dumbass? Open your goddamned eyes. No long, white beard. No belly like a bowl full of jelly. He's my grandfather. Shit, bad enough I got roped into it this year. But they gave me two of the horniest elves to help deliver presents and a team of reindeer who don't like to be kept waiting. Now we're so frigging behind. Dingle kept getting hit on by horny moms staying up late to watch elf porn. Had to pull him before he started thinking with his dick. So I send Dangle in, figuring he's gay and immune to horny moms. That's fine until we get to a house with a horny gay dad watching elf porn. What's wrong with people? You'd think with all the holiday shit, they'd want to get some sleep. I'd much rather be in my bed right now instead of hauling around presents and having to deal with three worthless sacks of shit.

PREACH

Fucker won't shut up.

DAN

Tie him up already. Gag him like the others. Just wanna get what we came for and get outta here.

(PREACH and BILLY approach CLAUDE.)

CLAUDE

You don't want to get near me.

(PREACH and BILLY start gagging and retching.)

Told you. I was shoveling reindeer shit all day. Didn't even have time to shower. No, they told me I needed to go out on a sleigh. Pronto.

(PREACH and BILLY move away but keep their guns
on CLAUDE.)

Yeah, doesn't exactly smell like pine-scented candles, does it? The same magic that makes them fly also speeds up their metabolism. And makes their shit smell like, well, you know. Dingle and Dangle won't sit up in the front of the sleigh with me. Wussy elves. Told them they need to suck it up and get used to the smell. I think they just want to sit in the back and diddle themselves.

BILLY

Reindeer shit?

CLAUDE

Yeah, didn't know about that, huh? That never gets included in the stories about Gramps.

'Twas the night before Christmas,
And all through the sky,
The reindeer were crapping,
Their turds flying by.

That was OK in the old days. Plenty of wide-open spaces to fly over. But once the population kept growing, Gramps said they'd have to have scheduled bathroom breaks. They don't like it, but like we say at the North Pole, you don't fuck with the fat man.

BILLY

The fat man?

CLAUDE

Yeah, Gramps is proud of his big belly. Well, until Grandma started getting all over his ass after the double quadruple bypass surgery. I guess that's like what, an octuple bypass? Grandma gives him hell for eating every single cookie left out for him. "Can't you feed them to the reindeer?" "They crap enough as it is."

PREACH

He's fuckin' nuts. See what I'm saying? Should just shoot him.

DAN

I said no one gets hurt. Keep an eye on him while I look for the coins. Jeremiah's gotta be in here somewhere.

CLAUDE

Coins, huh? That's what you're after? Ah, and wrapped up as a present for someone named Jeremiah.

(CLAUDE snaps his fingers.)

DAN

(Looking at presents) What the...? Fuckin' labels are blank.

(CLAUDE snaps his fingers again.)

DAN

(Looking at presents) Now they all say Jeremiah.

CLAUDE

That's the magic of Christmas, dickhead.

BILLY

Maybe he really is Santa's grandson. (Thinking) Oh yeah, Claude Claus.

CLAUDE

Score one for the mouth breather.

PREACH

(To BILLY) Shut up. There is no Santa Claus. This fruitcake's just making shit up. (Scoffs) Claude Claus.

CLAUDE

Watch it, asshole. I happen to like my name.

PREACH

I ask you, how's there one man bringing presents to every child on earth? You tell me that. No sleigh big enough, not enough time. Doesn't add up, does it? That's what I'm saying.

CLAUDE

Gramps doesn't do it all, dumbass. He did when he first started out eons ago, but as the population grew, so did his family. You can use more than one sleigh, fuckwit. Over time, the kids joined in. Then their kids joined in, and their kids. And not just the men. Grandma made sure of that. Hell, she took out plenty of sleighs in her day. But the family's big enough now. We live longer than you do, so there's plenty of time for procreation, although I don't think you assholes are smart enough to know what that word means. Procreation. Fucking. Lots of it. Enough to take out more than one sleigh full of toys. And we've got plenty of reindeer for all the sleighs. Talk about procreation. Reindeer fuck like, well, rabbits don't even come close. Shit, Rudolph alone. Ever since that song came out, he thinks he's a rock star. Egotistical prick. At least, we've got plenty of red-nosed reindeer for the sleighs. His daughter Trudy's working with me tonight. She's actually sweet, not like her dick of a father.

BILLY

Oh, Trudy, the red-nosed reindeer.

PREACH

(To DAN) I don't think he's going to shut up. I say we shoot him.

DAN

I'm trying to think here.

CLAUDE

So, plenty of Clauses. Plenty of sleighs and reindeer. And toys. Usually runs smoothly. Gramps calls it the fat man's operation. They did fine without him a few years ago, when he threw his back out. But not this year. I don't know why everyone had their long johns in a twist. It got so fucked up, I got called from the stables and was told I needed to take out a sleigh. "Can I at least get a shower?" "No." Fuck me. And here we are. Up to my knees in reindeer shit all day and now up to my ears in fucking stupidity.

PREACH

Got quite a mouth on you for someone supposedly related to Santa Claus.

CLAUDE

People skills aren't my specialty, butthole. Shit, you should hear Gramps when he gets going. Sure, he's jolly as can be in December, but the rest of the year he can curse up a storm with the best of them. You should have heard him last spring. Caught some elves running an elf porn site in a shed near the stables. Even the reindeer stopped shitting when they heard Gramps carrying on. That was the easiest day in the stables I ever had. Every time he visits, I'm like, "Come on, Gramps, start cursing, and see if you can't constipate the reindeer again." He just laughs and goes into that bowl-full-of-jelly routine. Which the reindeer love. Which only makes them shit more. You'd think I'd learn. But I love working with them. That's my job. Like I said, not very good with people skills.

DAN

If he'd only shut up, I could figure out what to do. It's like he's hypnotizing us or something.

CLAUDE

Of course, I'd hardly call you lowlife assholes people. Crapping all over the Holcombs' Christmas like this. I'll take reindeer shit over yours any day. Speaking of which, it's time to wrap this up. I've got some pretty pissed off reindeer waiting for their bathroom break. (Nods) We ready? Good.

PREACH

Think he's talking to someone.

CLAUDE

Haven't you heard of the magic of Bluetooth, asshole? I thought you guys looked dumb as fuck when I walked in, but you're even stupider. Dingle and Dangle got the Holcombs out safely. Now, you dickheads just need to come along quietly. The sheriff's on the way.

DAN

Fuck it. Go ahead and shoot him.

(CLAUDE motions with his hand, and PREACH and BILLY turn their guns on each other.)

PREACH

He's fucking with us.

BILLY

It is the magic of Christmas!

(CLAUDE snaps his fingers. The lights flick off and on a few times, ending in darkness. CLAUDE exits. The sound of stomping hooves is heard, building in intensity.)

DAN

What the...?

PREACH

Shit, shit, shit.

BILLY

He really is Claude Claus.

(The men turn on their flashlights.)

CLAUDE (O/S)

(Heard from offstage, his voice amplified) I warned you. You don't fuck with the fat man's operation.

(The stomping sounds are more insistent.)

PREACH

Fucking reindeer.

BILLY

Claude Claus wasn't lying about them being pissed.

DAN

Fuck the coins. We've gotta get out of here. Kill the flashlights. We'll sneak out the back.

CLAUDE (O/S)

All right, Trudy, do your thing.

(Bright-red light bathes the stage. The stomping continues.)

We're waiting for you, assholes. Watch out for flying reindeer turds.

DAN

We're fucked. (Beat) Great.

PREACH

Great.

BILLY

Great.

(Blackout)

Peter Dakutis (he/him) lives in the Atlanta metro area and gets busy with his muse through playwriting. His work has appeared in numerous local productions, around the US, and in England, Canada, and Australia. He has been published in two Smith & Kraus Best Ten-Minute Plays anthologies and several journals, including *some scripts literary magazine*, *Havik*, *Synkroniciti*, and *Off the Rocks: An Anthology of GLBT Writing*.

You in Any Particular Scene

I caught your face in the mirror.
You were a hallucination, a misconception.
You were public pain worn as a grin.
As I stood watching,
you undressed.

Skin flying like clothes,
fabric sticking to the walls.
I fucked your pretty eyes
with my toothbrush,
and you bled white foam.
I even said I loved you and we kissed.

Could have been a dream after all.

Innocence

We arrive in coffins to the castle
Tie each other's shoelaces,
Teach each other how to speak and spin and
Sing and whimper
Travel through time through cigarette holes burnt on
Smelly sticky underwear
Escape from teachers and priests and gods and beasts
And end up back at the beginning, in deep, uneventful,
Morbid sleep

We were raised in a cabin in the woods
Inside an amusement park
A couple of miles away from Amsterdam
One day I was a prince
And you were a beggar
Then you were a giant
And I was an elf
Then we were flying, crying, turning into
Sea foam
I was a wooden doll
And you would swallow me
They'd pay tickets to see us,
Hear stories
That someone else'd written for us ages ago
Until that one cursed Christmas Eve,
When those drunken jocks climbed over the fence
Struck all our heads off,
Dug holes into our plastic,
Animatronic skins
With their nippy, rusty, piercing
Fateful bitter hockey sticks

We were waiting tables on the Sunset Strip
Hurting for some cash, trying to win
So we strolled to the mall one day
Bought each other pale matching sweaters
Then hitchhiked to some famous director's mansion
In some hidden gated neighborhood in the Valley
They said they paid you if you were weak enough
The youngest of us got shoved into hot tubs and pools
And the oldest strapped to beds in dimly lit,
Upstairs blood-stained Bluebeard rooms
Men would enter,
Beat us up
Then moan and grunt some
And come and leave
The sun would rise
They'd lock us out
We'd stow the gold,
Walk down the road
Sprint to the edge
Stare at each other
Smirk, giggle, sigh
In one fell swoop,
Let each other go
Leaping, dissolving
Into the clouds

We were young one day
Didn't know our names
But we knew by heart the faces men made
As they watched us dance and play and pray
We all knew eyes, passing hands
And talking reflections in the Magic Mirror

We all knew beauty and we all knew fear
More than ourselves,
Than we could truly glimpse
I knew you and you knew me
Dead from the start
Deaf, dumb
I guess blind, too
But we were always seen
Always knew,
Deep down inside
That it would end up like this
- The way it all started -
Just like you said it would be

Pedro Minet is a writer and visual artist from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where he just recently launched his first poetry collection. He's been published in *SCAB* before. Find and greet him on Instagram [@pedrominet](https://www.instagram.com/pedrominet).

The Body of Christ

Last night
I had a dream
about giving Jesus a blowjob.

No shit—
I was there
kneeling on the cloudy heavens.

My knees
were so happy they wouldn't
get bruised, it was so soft up there.

His cock
was ringed by a halo,
encircled in holy light.

I took him
into my mouth, and my
whole head lit up

like a
single lightbulb in the sky
trembling with incandescence.

He smelled
like any other man, but
there was also the scent of burnt flesh, and flowers.

He slid
his cock down my throat,
pulsing and throbbing in my mouth.

At last,
he burst, letting out
a roar fitting for the Lion of Judah.

His holy seed
flooded my mouth, filling
my body, like Earth in the time of Noah.

As I wiped my lips
he took my chin and smiled
at me, calling me “daughter”.

That was when I got up and left.

Jayne Crawford is a transsexual poet whose work deals with sex, religion, relationships, and being trans. She lives in the Deep South and works at a museum by day.

Super Mario Bootleg Collection Vol. 1*Somari*

1994.

Notes: Hack of *Sonic the Hedgehog*, with Mario palette-swapped into the main character role.

She left me for a guy I'd always hated. I'd known him from back in our high school days. He was popular, charming and friendly, but fairly dumb. He did nothing to earn my dislike back then other than to be liked by others, and I, angry and awkward during almost all of my teenage years, saw this as a personal attack. He'd developed a heroin addiction shortly after school, after his ma died. You'd see him around town looking increasingly worse for wear. More haunted. I guess I started to feel some sympathy towards him. But then he sorted himself out and appeared in the local newspaper telling his story about overcoming his struggles. He met my ex in the same night class they were taking. She'd flunked high school too.

Super Mario Sonic 2

1994.

Notes: Hack of *New Super Mario World*, itself a hack of *Squirrel King*, itself a hack of *Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers 2*.

Two guys contacted us through the app and invited us round to theirs. They were a bi couple, interested in fucking the pair of us. Jess was excited at the thought, especially when she saw photos of them. I was nervous about the prospect. I'd never been intimate with another guy before. When I'd initially started bringing up the idea of group sex, I must

admit I'd been thinking more about her trying to talk one of her female friends into joining us. It didn't really end up going that way. They talked me into all kinds of things in the end.

Kart Fighter

1994?

Notes: Primitive NES *Street Fighter II*-esque fighter, the roster made up of characters from *Super Mario Kart*.

We were on the bench by the edge of the park, passing a bottle of cider between us. We watched the traffic warden leave a ticket on the car parked opposite, just before the woman returned. She kicked off when she got there, flinging her carrier bags down in frustration and calling the retreating warden an absolute cunt. We watched her scream blue murder and began cracking up. She saw us laughing and began throwing abuse our way, too. It was entertaining at least. I needed something to cheer me up. I'd been out of work for nearly a year by that point. It was starting to get to me.

Super Bros. 6

1992?

Notes: Hack of *Tiny Toon Adventures*.

I did get quite attached to her kids. Three, all younger than seven. I'd go stay with their mother in the evening, tie her up and fuck her and film her and stuff, and then in the morning take the kids to the park or the cinema or somewhere whilst she slept in. I stopped doing quite as many drugs when I was around them. It did feel like a family, so when it all went wrong, I guess it was more painful than just a regular breakup. My ma

loved those kids: she thought me getting involved with them was a sign of me turning my life around, finally.

7 Grand Dad

1992.

Notes: Also known as *Primitive Mario VII*. A hack of *The Flintstones: The Rescue of Dino and Hoppy*.

My dad's an old-school, unapologetic racist. The first time I introduced him to my fiancé, he spent a good ten minutes ranting to us about foreign footballers, Turkish barbers, and Pakistani wholesalers. I'd warned Trevor about this beforehand, so he was able to bite his tongue. To his credit, dad calmed down a bit after that initial baptism of fire and began asking about us, and Trevor, and just being generally a bit more normal. He'd definitely been testing us, or maybe showing off. Who knows. It's why I don't go home that much anymore.

Jamie Giles is a writer and artist living in Norwich, England. His works have been published in *SCAB*, *Misery Tourism*, *Cinema Schism*, *Mother Rubber's Fun Dungeon*, and elsewhere. His (oft-deleted) Instagram is currently [@jamiegileroticartist](#), and he is on Twitter as [@scumbooks](#). His collage work is on IG as [@withcuts](#), and more writings are at [@textsyouwishyouhadntsent](#).



Eu te amo, mas

Higor Brunieri (b. 1997) is a Brazilian multi-media artist interested in the intersection of text and image. Author of a book of drawings, photographs and short stories edited in Brazil (*Aparições*, 2022), he is currently finishing writing his master's research on Georges Bataille and surrealist/fetish photography. He is into latex, Hilda Hilst and Angela Carter and can be found on Instagram as [@hbrunieri](https://www.instagram.com/hbrunieri).

Hole

The full condom swings from my hand in an inconsistent rhythm, cum slushing around in it. He tells me to place it in my mouth, to savor the rubber laced with the remains of my lubed, shitted bowels. There's nothing better than this feeling. To sit on your ankles underneath the random manlet you met in a dark gloryhole reserved to the most depraved users of the local adult bookstore, the ones that actually have the guts to act upon their desires, to fuck some cracked, anonymous, stretched mouth. Because they all have the same need. They are all the same. They come here, sit down in one of the booths and wish for a mouth. If they're lucky, there will be one on the other side begging for some cum. The teenager that is on lunchbreak from school, that told his girlfriend he was going to get something from the local weed dealer. The businessman whose only pleasure in life is degrading himself by kneeling in the thinning puddles of cum that cover the floor of the booth where he impatiently awaits another cock. The father that decided it wasn't worth fucking the loose hole at home, the whale that is repulsed by his fat, slobbering body. The AIDS-filled queer grandad that after the family comes to visit him for the weekend needs to suck something that reminds him of his own grandson who got too old to be permissible for grangran to peek at his naked body and infantile genitals. The tranny that thinks the only thing that will get her closer to whatever she imagines female to be is to swallow the cum that she is no longer capable of producing. The faggot that wants to be filled with any kind of disease, anything to shorten his lifespan, to limit his inescapable destiny of swallowed faggotry.

It normally stops there. The quick cum is followed by an even quicker exit on the part of the provider. The slow swallow is followed by a lingering taste of sweat and piss, the cum dissipating almost immediately, and a pained wait for the next piece of flesh to penetrate the hole. Every now and then, there's something that sticks out. With him, it was a mole on the side of his dick, which reminded me of my first boyfriend. I whispered from my hidden spot whether he wanted to meet in the back, expecting a no. They always say no. To see the cum-swallowing face of their wound is the scariest thing to them. It forces them to see the relationship as something other than transactional, anonymous, sexual. It makes it so that it stops being a hole and starts being their son, their father, their boss, their boyfriend, their just-born unfucked grandchild. They see themselves in you. It takes balls to do that. This manlet had them apparently. He lived nearby, so I went up to his room. How much time do you have? All afternoon. So he tied my naked body up and left me there. My cock got hard, not from the act in and of itself but from the thrill of death. I waited in anticipation for what he would do to me. He just left. The front door closed, and I lay there, tied up for more than five hours. When he came back, I was asleep. The cumshot on my lips woke me up, right before he untied me. He gave me his number and threw me out.

Whenever I need cum, I go to him. This time, he tells me he just got a positive HIV result, so a condom is used. It's horrible, for both of us. There's nothing worse than lying on your stomach in a shitty bed in a messy room smelling of old cum rags and used socks, ass spread open, lubed, ready to get fucked, ready for some feeling of intimacy, only to feel rubber. Wet, lubed, elastic rubber. The point of this relationship is skin-to-skin transaction. He no longer sees himself or anyone else in me—he, again, sees a hole, to be used, to be pumped full of cum. The moment of mirroring of the self is very short-lived. That's what most don't understand. It is scary to see yourself in the hole you just facefucked, but you will rapidly become blind to that mirror. Because, honestly, there's nothing of you in me. The purpose, the place, the feeling—everything is different. The comparison is superficial, and that superficiality is broken the moment you consensually and thoughtfully enter another sexual encounter. You revert to the booths and the gloryholes. The whole purpose of the separation in the gloryholes is to remove that initial mirroring, but once that mirroring is done with, the relationship returns to its transactional nature.

The AIDS only gives it another dimension of degradation. Am I willing to dedicate myself to a life of pain and misery and physical suffering simply for the momentary act of psychological submission?

When he asks me to pour the insides of the rubber nipple tip that contains his sick humanity into my mouth, I tell him no. He's too worthless for me to do that. I can find another one like him. Hairier, skinnier, taller, fatter, smoother, buffer, hotter, uglier. He means nothing to me. His cum does. And now his cum is too much of a risk—although I am curious whether AIDS-ridden cum tastes any different from regular two-hour-old beer-piss cum. I place the condom on the bed, and it spills onto his mattress, embedding itself forever into his sleep.

He looks dejected by my reaction and knees me in the face. I fall onto his seed, right before he flips me over and holds my head back. On the floor, there is a razorblade, which he picks up and slices his neck with while forcing my mouth open, filling me with his AIDS. He has marked me. My face, my neck, my torso and my cock are all red. His drained body collapses over me. I push it off and get into the shower. After a long bath, I get dressed and leave the apartment. He's lying on the floor of his room, dead, with the cum- filled condom next to his face.

Ai Feith is a twenty-year-old musician, filmmaker and writer based in Lisbon. They release music and have a blog (Substack) under the name [Feithling](#). Most of the focus of their work is power dynamics, normally flipped upside down and almost always sexual, as they find that is the best medium to explore said dynamics. Raised on Harsh Noise, Dennis Cooper, Peter Sotos, Bataille and experimental cinema, their work is a constant attempt to formally transgress the expectations of the medium while playing around with the limits of content. That balance is inherent to their work, form vs content, aesthetics vs ethics.

AFTERWORD

The 14th issue of SCAB comes out in March 2024.

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