

Issue IV: hades

(the unseen)



Leona



Free Verse Revolution:
a literary & arts magazine

Issue IV: hades

(the unseen)

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Editor's note

It is with a heart full of joy that I present Free Verse Revolution's final issue of 2021. It has been a busy and incredibly rewarding inaugural year transitioning from an online blog to a literary and arts magazine. We have released four issues which, combined, have been downloaded more than one thousand times. We have shared long loved voices as well as new voices, artists and photographers. We will begin 2022 celebrating this past year with a print anthology, which you shall all know about soon enough!

But, without further ado, here is Issue IV: hades (the unseen). Our final foray (at least for now) into the Olympian pantheon showcases an array of writers and creators who have tapped into the themes of the unknown, loss, death, love and fear to syphon off humanity at its most vulnerable. Issue IV's contributors cast spells, retell Persephone's abduction, imagine Hades as a man with wild summers and a wicked grin, and delve mercilessly into themselves, stripping themselves bare with grief and memory.

Please be mindful that pages 67, 69 and 71 allude to infant loss and miscarriage.

We wish you a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year.

Here is to 2022!

Kristiana



Issue IV: hades
(the unseen)

Lisa Perkins

Lisa Perkins (she/her) is a published poet and mother to three little muses from Dublin, Ireland. Her work has been featured in various print and digital zines and anthologies. Poetry is her favourite place to disappear and be found in, as both a release and hold on our shared stories. Her work hangs out on Instagram dressed in wordplay and lyrical narrative, @lisaperks.

An Eclipse of Moths

My daughter asks about the story of Icarus.
I talk instead of insects, bodies weaved
with scales. Of the giant white moth
in South America, her flight a whole foot wide
to carry the weight of the dead to the underworld -
though I spare her from that part.

A snatch of myth on silk
you could only spin in a dream. I'll tell her
of gods, of wax and spoils, how some
are drawn in drapes of dust. How
the circle of rhythm eclipses like a birth,
one day.

Not this November night,
where she glides to a mime
of swirling fire and feathered hope colliding.
I bury every holy spark, this creature heart
in amber.

I tell my daughter just enough. How karma
can be queen, and giants are the span
of newborn baby girls.

'When the ghost moth comes out to play
a village gasps with every lacy beat.
As she carries the weight of the living
on her wings.'

Corinna Board

Corinna Board lives in a small village in the Cotswolds and works in Oxford, where she teaches English as an additional language. She loves her job, although she wishes she had more time to write poetry. Her main sources of inspiration are nature, art and mythology. She can be found on Instagram [@parole_de_reveuse](#).

Stolen

the Fate of Persephone, oil on canvas, Walter Crane (1878)

Some moments stay with us:
we remember them in detail,
even the things we would rather forget.

The sky was not cloudless or blue that day,
the sun didn't shine on my skin.
Perhaps it was just a taste of things to come.
Nevertheless, I was happy enough.

I'd been walking through the meadow,
picking flowers all morning—
a bunch of Spring daisies for my mother,
because I knew how much she loved them.

I remember the sound of hooves;
faint at first, then growing louder.
I didn't know where it was coming from,
I didn't have time to run.
I doubt it would have made a difference—
no one is quick enough to escape him.

I thought it was strange,
how darkness could be so blinding,
maybe that's why they didn't try
to save me.

I wanted to call for help—
shout out my mother's name,
but he stole my breath away.
I felt the numbing cold of winter creeping
down my throat,
& wondered if I was already dead,

but I hadn't even seen the underworld, yet.

Persephone

Proserpine, oil on canvas, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1874)

I dreamt of a love that nurtured,
not the kind that erupts
beneath your feet,
& wraps around you like ivy;
dragging you into the shadowy darkness
of a living hell.

Mother went into mourning
& there was nothing to eat,
so you set me free,
but they forgot that gods are tricksters:
a tiny seed was all it took
to snare my heart.

*One blood red pip
staining my lips
with death's kiss.*

Now winter is coming,
& your embrace slips around my neck
like a noose.

Jennifer Patino

Jennifer Patino is an enrolled member of the LCO Ojibwe tribe who resides in Las Vegas with her husband. When she isn't writing poetry and dabbling in flash fiction, she can be found drowning in a lake of unread books or engrossed in a film. Her work has been published in Punk Noir Magazine, Fevers of the Mind, A Cornered Gurl, The Ginger Collect, Door is A Jar, and elsewhere. She blogs at www.thistlethoughts.com.

The King Needed No Crown

The overlord needed no throne
The thought of his presence,
in dream-time reverie
or otherwise, in every shadow
barring my face, in wide-eyed
splendor, my adoring gaze
was the oxygen needed to
set a fragile girl aflame

Crawling beneath skin, he is
an infestation Each step
away from him, absence
conceives obsession,
thought crime gestation

He can't be bothered with justice,
punishment in being devoid
of pleasures, *the body*
he placed me in was
microscopically diseased
He took because I never knew
enough about my seasons
to limit what I gave, *I*
loathe hoarded treasures

The tyrant was insidiously subtle
One word from his beautiful lips

imagined or otherwise, yearned-
for monosyllables, songs tickling
my ear in the dark, arguments
against my powerlessness,
my weak, croaked rebuttal

I only gnawed upon the hand that fed me
because he was the only sustenance I craved
My fervent prayers proved ardent, but useless
I was never ready to be saved

One Circle of Hell was Hydrotherapeutic

The therapist told me
healing will hurt, & that
I am well known
in the unseen

Sun shards through trees
glinting off of fancy cars
in the grimy parking lot
mirrored the pain behind my eyes

Later, during a film screening,
I felt old serpents choke
a new feeling from my throat
& I excused myself to sob

An actress stood underneath
manufactured rain & so publicly
broke into smashed pieces
while I scraped bits of me from the ground

I could never show a hungry crowd
the source of my still bleeding wounds
like that, I prefer mending while cocooning
to emerge as a false saint of recovery

I'll give an untangled impression,
smile & show my gratitude for the fingers
that plucked me apart to a soundtrack
of feigned concern & submerged violins

Christina Hennemann



Christina Hennemann (she/her) is a writer based in the beautiful West of Ireland. Her work has appeared in *The Sunshine Review*, *orangepeel*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Goats Milk* and elsewhere. Christina writes about the subconscious mind, trauma, the healing power of nature and spirituality, relationships and the anxiety that sometimes comes with them. Find her on Instagram: [@c.h_92](https://www.instagram.com/c.h_92)

I Must Be Hygieia To Myself

My therapist told me / With his calm voice
And plenty of reason / That I would relapse
In my late 20s / That my trauma
And schemata / Might resurface
In different shapes / And forms, but raging.

I nodded and smiled
Said I'd deal with it, sure,
Because what choice had I?

*When I left his practice
For good,
I felt healed and broken.*

The demons of the past / Never returned, though,
As they had not ever left / My body, my brain, but
Slept tightly within the / Scars that cover my skin,
Sat firmly on the cushions / Clogging my limbic system.
They nagged me in the dark / Twitched me and pulled the
Strings of my puppet-like / Limbs and bones and lips.

And then I did deal with it.

I turned to the light,
Exposed my demons, and found
There was still so much
So much healing to receive,

Infinite compassion to be
Excavated from the depths
Of my feigned oblivion.

*And only now, long after the
Painful sessions, hard
Work, unease within myself,
I can proudly declare:
I am healing, and I was
Never broken.*

Ribcage

I only ever existed
in the scratchiness of your
stubble against my cheek;
only thrived when my index
finger circled around
the little mole that grins
cheekily beside your bellybutton;
only felt my pulse racing
under the magic fog of your breath
on my neck, my hips, my spine;
only blossomed in the smell of
the arc framing your upper lip;
I only ever really lived
in your boyish little smile that
gleamed through after you fed me
pure ecstasy and made me climax.

you are 200 out of 100,
one in a million, the only one;
my quiet Adonis, who taught me
dainties, dynamite, daffodils.

in all the in-betweens, the absences,
the dry deserted Niemandland,
I am dead inside, a withered chuparosa
on cold turkey,
only waiting for your hummingbird kiss

of sweet intoxicating acid rain,
fully aware that one more kiss
could be the last
my system can bear,
but I am starving anyway.

at night I sit on the cold
tiles of my bathroom floor,
stooped, crooked, red-eyed,
and count the aching ribs
between my leathery skin,
stuttering 'he loves me,
he loves me not',
until you revive me again
with your soft lethal lips.

verhex

this time round

I'm only calm, as / The falling autumn leaves
that bear
a new beginning.

there is no pressure

building up, as / The slippery, wet fall
does not require
an outcome.

today one year ago,

I conceived. / I'm bearing the fruits
until they ripen.

the candle on my nightstand / Smells of sweet vanilla
and cotton, its flickering / Scent is fogging my thoughts.
honey-coated, my fingers fumble.

the grey wolf is to be trusted. / His howling hurricane instilled
a frail but beautiful fire / The first time round in summer.
wolves thrive in October rituals.

my iron eyelids are falling

heavily, slowly, heavenly / My breath is steady, as
I mindlessly dream,
or maybe I won't.

as soon as I switch off the lights,

my pulse races / Headless
through the darkness.

Barbara Harris Leonhard

Barbara Harris Leonhard's work appears in Free Verse Revolution, Spillwords, October Hill Magazine, Dark Poet's Club, Vita Brevis, Well Versed 2020, Silver Birch Press, Amethyst Review, phoebemd.com. Barbara earned both third place and honorary mention for two poems in Well Versed 2021. Her blog: extraordinarysunshineweaver.com. Her poetry podcast: meelosmom.podbean.com.

Dark Apostle

Rising shadows of flames,
dressed in deep void, I arrive
to burn the bramble of your complacent life.
You hide inside this clay façade,
live for self in idle pleasure,
slumber in this carcass
of addiction and desire.

I hold you down as you writhe in agony,
thrive on your muffled screams.
You smolder in my odious breath.
My laughter, cackling flames.
You recoil, gasping for prayer,
rebuking this demon
and fear that this blood fire
is your last sunrise. Confess,

I fascinate you.
Though cast to the raging depths,
I still rise, a dark angel.
Not all wings are lucent.
This charred cloak is age old,
frayed by lies, greed, addictions.

Inferno flames are still divine.
I am the instigator, the phantom fire
plundering your earth
to crack open your seed
and hasten your growth.

For this you need me, Dark Apostle,
the harbinger sent to alarm and awaken,
to jolt you from trance
into rebirth.

My Shadow, My Static Cling

Shadow cleaves to me; I, to the Light.

No angle to the sun will rid me of Shadow.

Shadow is tallest at highest light. Dimmest at highest night.

Freedom from Shadow, an illusion.

She is always over my shoulder. Hard to slap

When she constantly rebukes me into my tormented ears.

Evasive yet underfoot, like old gum stuck to my shoes

Being dragged through mud and straw.

Even at night, Shadow grips onto me.

My specter in lamp light, how she looms across a wall

Watching me read, and how she enfolds me as I sleep

With her cold arms.

Sleek, silky Sorceress No face. Only form;

She is the outline of the dark side of my soul,

The color of abyss, the size of void.

Her breath reeks of cosmic dust.

She is my pesky hag, my tyrant, my saboteur, my martyr,

My critic. My blackmailer. My constant companion.

And biographer. She has written the novels of all my lives,

The Akashic Scholar assigned to me at birth.

My secrets rest with Shadow;

She knows all my doubts, fears, trespasses, sins.
Shadow holds the causes of my discords and dis-ease.
My contender, she greedily obscures that which I must discover,

My authentic selves in all my lives.
If I uncover my truth, she will lose me forever,
And she cannot bear to be alone.

Shadow has no shadow to bear.
Still, she must give up my secrets if I persist.
Though she is a wounded healer, Shadow will never heal

Unless I do. Unless I listen and turn to the Light
In such a way that Shadow is standing next to me.
Not behind me. My Sacred Sister, holding my hand.

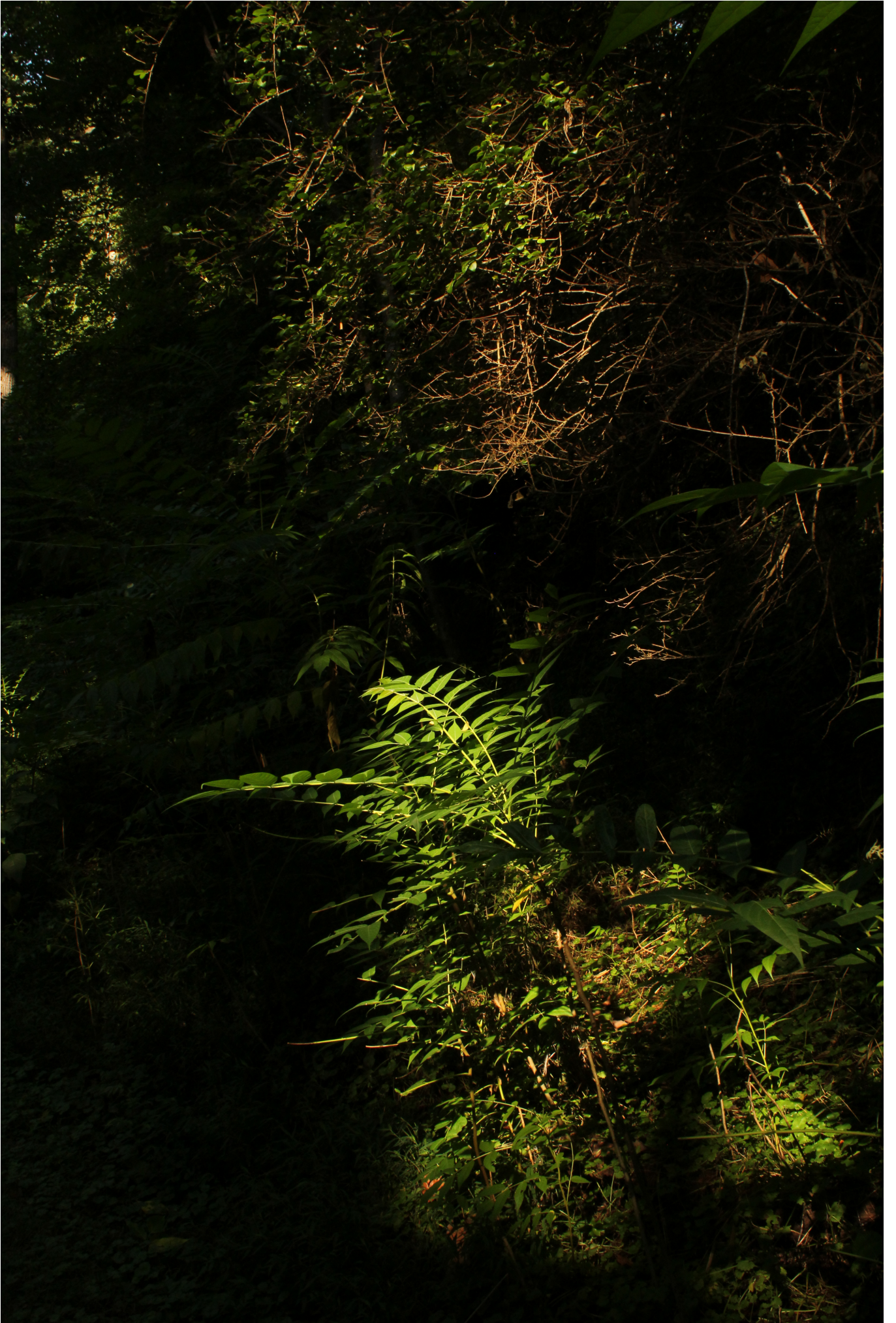
*My dear Shadow,
You can never abandon me,
Nor I you.*

Leona

Leona is an “average joe” kind of writer who likes to think about ordinary things and then write them down. Ever since she can remember, she has been rhyming words and creating lyric poems. During her college years, she took a more serious bent toward writing and started to post on her blog (*The Life and Times of a Quirky Character*). Currently, she resides on the East Coast of the United States just north of the country’s capital. Leona's prose have been published in *Visual Verse*, *Flora Fiction*, *Spillwords*, *Free Verse Revolution*, *The Anthropocene Hymnal* and *The Beautiful Stuff Poetry Anthology*. You can also find her commenting and collaborating as a Barista at the Go Dog Go Cafe.

Reveal





Destined to Rest

;

Marigold,
It rained in the
Mid winter
Land
That takes away
Every breath from
The sun

:

Strong hands
Led our grandmother
To her stone
Bedchamber
Frigid air
Descended as
An incense

.

River, river
A coin
Tarnished silver
Where weeping
And gnashing of teeth
Echoed in
The hall
Of the mountain King

Eva Korošec

Eva Korošec is a 24 year-old creative writer and poet from Slovenia. She started out writing prose, mainly in the form of short stories, but she has started preferring to express herself through poetry in the past year. She loves to write about all kinds of mythology, but she also gets her inspiration from other stories, like literature and history. Her poetry can be found on her Instagram: [@shit_shewrote](#)

Charon's Appeal

Pray to me, mortals, as desperate you keen
your sorrows when your loved ones descend
into the darkness, holy and unseen.

My job is quite simple, always has been:
servant of Hades, not quite a godsend,
I'll carry their souls through the in-between.

Steering the boat, I have my own routine
as I guide them to their awaited end,
into the darkness, holy and unseen.

So, before burning, wash the body clean,
give them some money for the road, and
I'll carry their souls through the in-between.

I will not judge them for their earthly sins –
in a way, I am perhaps their final friend.
Into the darkness, holy and unseen,
I'll carry their souls through the in-between.

Daya Bhat

Daya Bhat enjoys writing poetry and short fiction. She believes that writing has not only helped her connect with like minds but has most importantly helped her connect with her own core. Her books, 'A maiden of 29' and 'River Twin' reflect her soul search. The garden city of India, Bangalore which is her home, gives her close glimpses of the intricacies, complexities and the impermanence of life. She tries to share the same through her thoughts and poetry on <https://wordpress.com/view/dayabhat.home.blog>.

Incognito

Tonight is all I have
before the reins choke.

There is no escape,
the dog of three heads
awaits my footfall.

I leave flowers sunwards
to pray for my return.

The benign glow trails
until the end of equinox
and then I am alone.

Alone until the barks.

To be or not to be
a mistress to the damned
hangs in shame,
ambivalent on the horns
of the faceless
of eyes that know no light.

Here I come
hoist me on your bident.
Here I come
a wingless bird dead of heart.

Keep me in your watch
until my spine shivers
in your cold touch.

My eyes moored
to the mayflower blooms.
When sing they, shall bring my wings
I fly...fly to my darlings above.

Sarah Bellum Mental



Sarah Bellum Mental is a Write About Now virtual poet and originally from Chicago, Illinois. Now living in Houston she continues being a part of spoken word poetry. She performs poetry live to try to give a home for those who don't have a voice. Her first and second books are taking pre-orders now: <https://sarahbellummental.com/pre-order-swallow-my-sparrow/> She is a 2021 WOWPS and Southern Fried Poetry Indie slam contender.

Guilty Jaw

The ghosts line my insides
never leave even when I ask politely

for them to go. Exit through mouth
as poetry, as prophecy, as prayer

that is never heard and so
they can't move on being

ghosts within me. I hear them
sacred song that lies dormant

in spine and settles
in my gut as butterflies.

As anticipation claws gut
open into a cornucopia

of problems, I can't solve.
The afterlife has visited me

and told me that Hades can't
take what is rightly his unless

I release them. Grief stays swallowed
impregnates me in pregnant

pauses that say nothing
and everything

in the silence
of guilty jaws.

Bithika Halder

Bithika Halder (she/her) is a writer/dreamer from the suburbs of Kolkata, India. She looks for the beauty and enormity in nuances of the everyday lived experiences. In understanding beauty is how she finds purpose. Currently she is pursuing Masters in Economics from Jadavapur University, India. Her works can be found on Instagram @pathbetweenpoetry and Substack newsletter at <https://bithika.substack.com/>.

Pray A Little Dream

I'd pray a little dream,
under the breath
of my imagination,
each time I happen to be
ennuied, mind pleasingly.

Of places I cease to be,
people who cease to exist –
to then dream of bottling
those dreams in glass jars,
toss a few in pan with spices
or tape them on fridge
as to-do lists.

Only to end up
drawing them upon
the curtains by the windows
sitting on my elbow or darting
on the white ceiling, beneath
which I lay adrift, listlessly.

I dreamt a little dream thence
some day last week or year.
Of blood, murder and sin –
Of rights, freedom and rage –
I dreamt not in sleep,
nor wide awake either,
somewhere in-between,
unreachable, unstoppable.

A catastrophic insanity it was,
white horses of laughter
crowding out all senses -
in the middle of which I saw
myself - metamorphosing
into dire madness.

Invisible Crimes

Only seven and
Envisaging your near exits
They'd detailed your mind as such
Constituting early on in brutal clarity
To remain is to hide in inferiority—

Just fifteen and
Looming signs of worth
In a trice became teething issues
You'd now sidle through rabbit holes
Clearing out all trails of paroles—

To be twenty-four and
Gracing with all unholiness
To not be deafened by the cries
Uprooting your innocence, perishing
You with their invisible crimes—

Turning thirty-three and
Wishing to surrender all arms
Letting them write over your palms
But to turn a blind eye ain't that easy
When your womb is bleeding.

Waiting on fifty and
Armouring your soft edges
Lining forces on your peripheries
Toeing the truculent rope, fighting on
To not be defeated before dying.

The Chase

Amused I am as to where the chase ends,
as I stand here waiting at the door of death.
It's been quite awhile I've been waiting,
tossed a coin couple of times on whether
I should give up and get going.
The weather's been fine, puddles on the way
told me tarradiddles of yesterday's rain,
the coin tossed asked to stay, yet again.
Whilere doubts started creeping
into my mind if I'm at the right door,
should've knocked but couldn't dare to afford,
the only door I've known to knock is my own.
My sole called for a few steps, I took
a stroll through the bylanes of death.
Felt a few musings drumming to rhythm of
my heartbeats, as I galed through the sunflowers
as flummoxed as me, the sun is nowhere to be seen.
As the grim moonless night drew over the sky,
desires got benighted by the distant twinkling fireflies.
Beneath the first streetlight to light up, I tossed
the coin. It's time to head back *home*, it said.

Caitlan Docherty

Caitlan Docherty lives in Illinois—she has a prairie view from her 4th floor apartment where she spends too much time binge-watching *The Real Housewives* franchise on Hulu. Her work can be found or is forthcoming in *Sledgehammer Lit*, *Sunday Mornings at the River Winter 2021 Anthology*, *VAINE Magazine* and *Beyond the Veil Press*. Please visit her on Instagram [@cmnpoetry](#).

animal relief (i nest inside unburdening)

i am writing to you from the cave. before-life
was dismal, future-rot churning in the pit
of stomach. i watched us clawing
at the surface—

pink welts,
skinless fruit,
dry-swallowing
a whole pomegranate's worth
of seeds.

in an amniotic blur,
this vision: tunnel after
tunnel of disparate epiphanies.

i sow animal
relief in my mother
wolf's angry womb.

i nest inside unburdening
myself
from the bottomlessness

of all that will remain unseen.

purple flowers, tense fruit, lust

carpet of blooms in a winter
meadow, mauve crocuses. dog-eared
pages to feed the eyes beauty when
the mind confounds perception. dark
astrology muddles my impression of him
—his steely gaze flurried grey with
a snowstorm's abrupt apathy.

he partitions the night-realm of his cold
body into equitable segments. one third
of my heart bruised by a young leather

flower, violent purple
clematis petals preserve
the tender thrum reserved

for only him. my stolen girlhood
a painted replica in a swollen field.
we share the tense fruit, lick
the memory of sunlight
from polished skin.

i suspect he is triple-tongued with want:
see his stern-blue lips, the way they pucker
for the unblemished apple, the way they quiver

for a taste of cherry wine.

bloated with ache for your world

fire-womb, feral gestation
—the animal remains. in myth
books, they press a warm tongue
to the cartilage arc of your ear,
tell you chaos lives in the cold
howl stitched to the dark
underside of the wind.

nights perforate my waking
memory of you. lethologica teases
the half-sleep: i fumble through
forests, grope the inner garden
for fragrant words—

cypress,

wood rose,

white poplar,

mint.

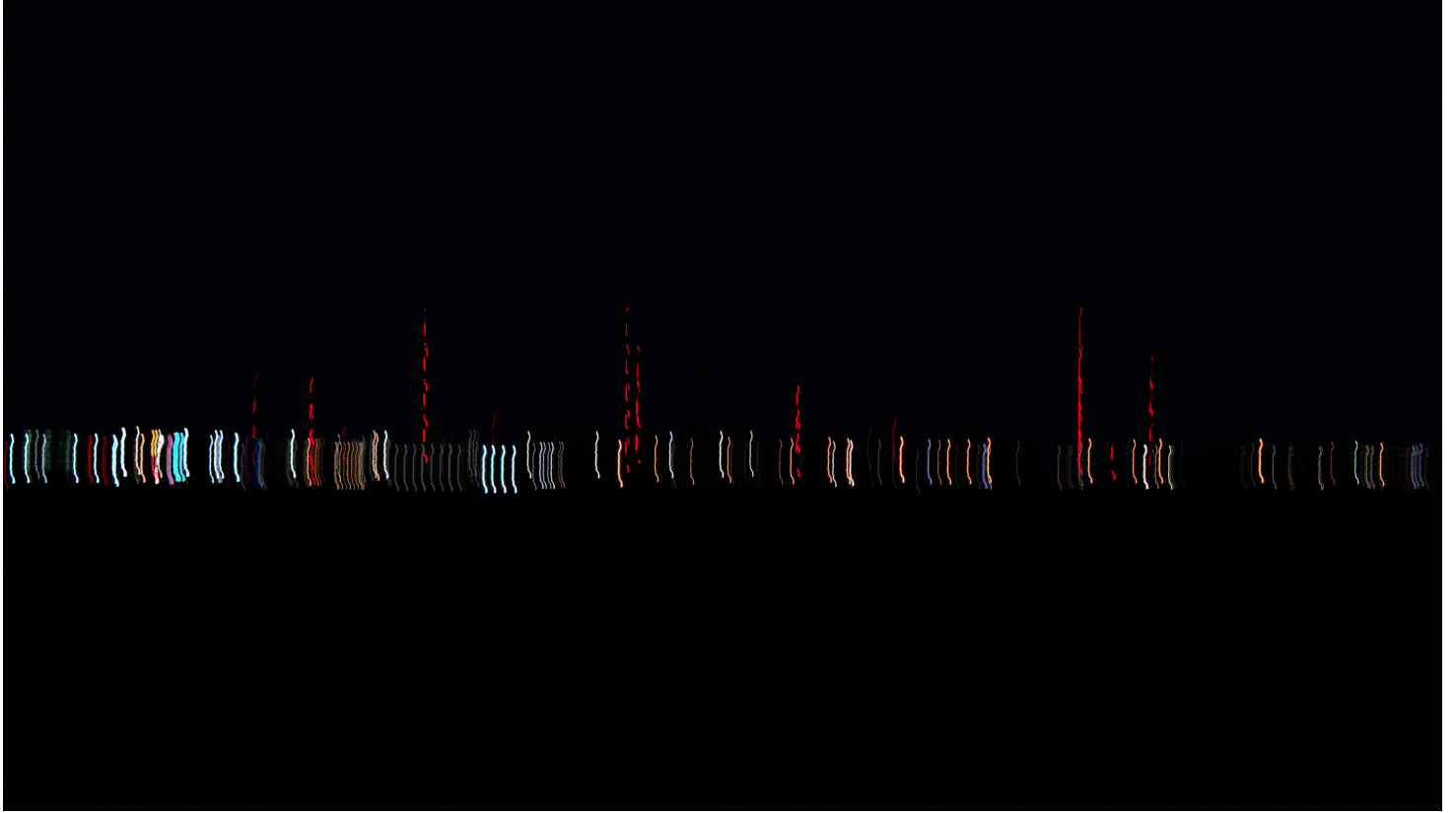
i rise

bloated with ache for your world of unseen wonders.

Namoe

Namoe (he/him) is a photographer/poet raised in Oklahoma, US but currently living in Michigan, US. An archaeologist by day, he holds the past and the experiences of those that came, will come and are here in esteemed respect and acknowledgement. Through his poetry and photography Namoe seeks to explore humanity and our coexistence with each other, the natural universe, and every unique perspective of existence in between in order to express the kaleidoscopic beauty that embraces it all. You can currently follow this exploration and find his work on Instagram at [@namoephoto](#). He can be reached at namoephoto@gmail.com for collaboration inquiries, print purchases, or to just say hello! A website is in the works!

Echoes in Time



Styx



When the Dark is Warm

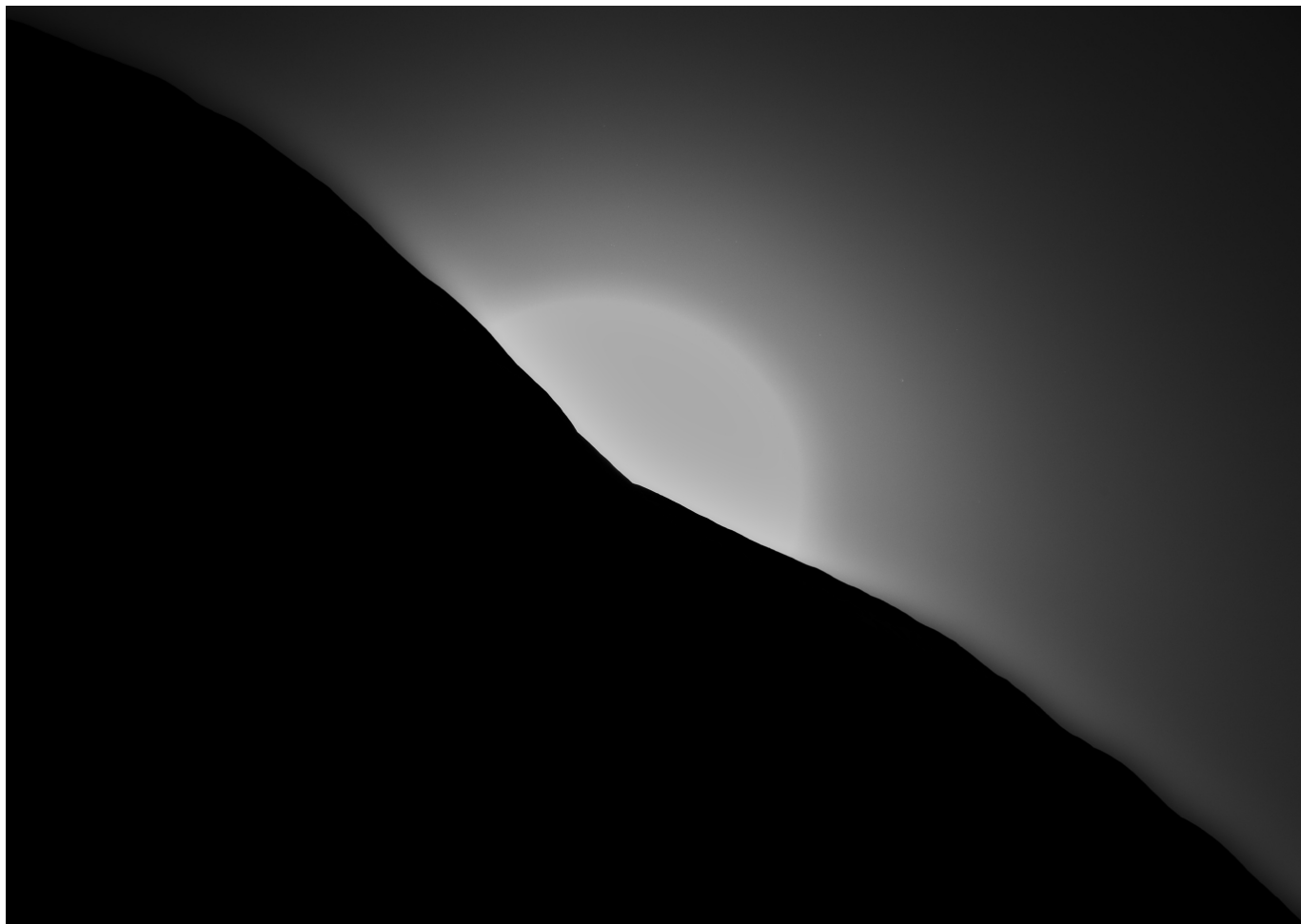
What of the brilliance, innovation, laughter and love
Of shy women and quiet men
Forever lost in the
Meanderings of the misanthropic mind

Pieces of souls in unspoken oblivion
Lost to the living
Alive on the throne
For knowing that which will never be known

And whether in solitude
Or lonesomeness
These treasures sunk deep
To keep forever
And never to speak

Hell may very well
Lie dormant in me
As a companion adrift
On dark velvet seas

Duality and its Grayscale



Through Flight and Fall



Rebecca Kenny



Rebecca Kenny is a teacher and poet from Merseyside. She recently broke her back in a car accident, and during her recovery she founded Bent Key Publishing, a micro-publisher dedicated to raising underrepresented voices from around the UK. She writes about life, love and the mundane bits of existence that make her feel something.

When It's Dark

They only come to me when it's dark.
As the sun sets and the sky turns pitch black,
As stars settle in for the evening,
In they crawl. The Whats. The Wheres.
Holding hands with the Hows and the Whys,
They gnaw at my tympanic membrane and
Force me to listen. They set up camp
Behind my eyes and they itch. Oh, they itch –
That kind of sensation that can only be abated
By facing the things one does not want to face.
Joined by the Whens, they play a disjointed
Symphony; they dance like toddlers or drunken punks
And my head throbs with their lack of rhythm.
It's a song that plays so often
That I could play it from memory on a Casio keyboard
Or ukulele, given half a chance.
Funny how the questions are so familiar to me
And yet the answers are still absent –
And so, each night, they come to me, but
Only when it's dark.

Shreyasi Poddar

Shreyasi Poddar first discovered her love for creative writing when she was six years old. Her house was under renovation and having obtained permission from her mother to write on the walls before they would be repainted, she began pulling out her sketch pens and wrote poems on things she associated with whichever colour pen came into her hand. During lockdown, she tried writing fanfiction out of boredom, eventually moving on to original works and seriously got into the craft.

Though her main passion is poetry, she enjoys writing short stories too and hopes to be able to move on to larger works one day. You can find her on Tumblr at [@mortallynuttyqueen](https://www.tumblr.com/mortallynuttyqueen).

secrets of the night

noun INFORMAL

1, the moonlight shines upon the unopened: the unopened letters, the unopened doors, the unopened mouths that hold back the words dying to get out and shout their truth into the universe, for the moonlight touches what the sun missed

2, but what really is moonlight, if not stolen from the sun while the world sleeps, by those the world doesn't let sleep? what really is moonlight, if not the feeble xerox of the attention showered upon the world, so craved by those who feel detached from the world

3, the moonlight shines upon the untouched: glinting off of the tear stains, a ray of hope for opportunities still to come, absorbing the unquietness of the mind into the deafening silence of the night, for the moonlight touches what the sun missed, the moonlight notices what the sun didn't

4, the moonlight shines upon the unnoticed: illuminating the smudge where the black ink of the ballpoint pen splits into a rainbow of colours more magnificent than any spectrum produced by white light through the shiniest diamonds, creating a halo around the words, for the moonlight touches what the sun missed, the moonlight sees what the sun didn't

5, the moonlight shines upon the unseen: providing the fluttering hope with a spotlight of its own as it dances to the beat of a flitting heart, reflecting the spot where the arteries pulse messages in morse code the cerebrum never learnt to interpret, for the moonlight touches what the sun missed, the moonlight knows what the sun doesn't

6, the moonlight drips upon the folds of darkness, sealing the unwritten, unspoken words into the cracks where voices break into sobs, the silver wax forming constellations, entrapping every unacknowledged feeling behind a web of stars, a chain aglow with the dewdrops of every tear wrung out from pillowcases, bolting a vault never to see the light of day

7, for the moon shines and the night listens, guarding the secrets in the ink black envelope of the night sky from the rays of a world that only exploits, for what really is moonlight if not the sun's way of saying "i'm sorry"

Jodie Duffy



Jodie Duffy lives in Gloucestershire with her husband and daughter. She is a Chinese Studies graduate and works as a publications manager. Much of her poetry is inspired by motherhood and nature. Her poems can often be found in the notes app of her phone in between her shopping lists. You can read some of them on Instagram [@chrysanthemum_poetry](https://www.instagram.com/chrysanthemum_poetry).

Afraid of the dark

It is easy to be afraid of the dark
easier than admitting to yourself
that everything that lurks in the darkness
also exists in the daylight

it gives you the illusion of control
a false kind of comfort
the woman in the news
she took the shortcut, the unlit back alley

you will stay under the streetlights
and tell yourself you are safe there
you follow the key-in-fist rituals
and do not deviate from the script

it is easier to be afraid of the dark
than to admit that the light
has no power to save you

if you do everything right
nothing bad will happen to you
at the back of your mind
you think, even if it does happen
at least they cannot blame me for it

yet innocence is elusive
easily pierced and shattered
it has never been the shield
they make it out to be

it is easy to be afraid of the dark
easier than admitting to yourself
that there is so much more
to fear than the darkness

Caitlin Kendall

Caitlin Kendall has an MA in Creative Writing from Newcastle University and was shortlisted for the Creative Futures Literary Award, the E.H.P Barnard Spring Poetry Prize 2021, and the Monofiction 'Sanity' competition. She is currently working on her debut novel for Young Adults and a collection of poetry. Her work has appeared at Fragmented Voices, Alchemy Spoon, Northern Writers Studios, The Black Cat Poetry Press, Bloody Hell Zine and Writerz N Scribez. She lives in Northumberland with her husband, children, and a menagerie of beasts.

La Maga Del Tarot

Your shadow self wears a horned halo
In a gloomy land of bone: unhallowed ground
Darkness typhoons, pulls your spirit
Self tumbling across astral planes
Sacred tumbleweed adrift on a mystic sea
And the moon is a crystal ball wrapped in wolf's tail
As silvery spiders web shimmers
On the furred face of a sunflower
A gargoyle guarded archway to unconsecrated dreams
The primal call of malevolent magic is a wormhole
Your ghost rider a symbolic spectre of light
Portal to your third eye
All seeing subconscious longing
Wild woman in chains

Death is a Woman

No-one knows what hex, what juju draws her
What causes her to fell the friends and family of some
Leaving others unscathed
Her widow's weeds are dank/scented with mildew
They shroud her face
Her formless features from Norwegian nightmares
Unmoved by fear, or pain, or pleading
Indifferent to virtue, or kindness, or love
Her silver sickle glints with the moon's malice
As she reaps her ghostly harvest
Spirits souls to the underworld of her Hades home
Leaves hollowed husks in her whirling wake
An endless ecstasy of emptiness
Against which mere mortals offer up their meagre offerings
Sacred talismans: hope, faith, love
Ritual rites: a mother's fervent kiss
Seatbelts, Call me when you get there, Stranger danger,
Rape alarms, No smoking, Just say no
How little she heeds our futile human sacrifices
Our piteous prostrations
Death is a woman with young of her own to feed.

Wintering

She is wintering in the wrong season
Closed tight like a bud
She cannot risk unfurling in the sun's warm embrace
Not for her the frivolous wastes of showy blossoms
Roots are what she needs
Long, strong, deep roots
Holding her firmly in place upon this earth
Existence is fragile and fleeting
To bloom too early is to begin to die

A Summoning

I am thinking of pastel peonies

I am standing at a crossroads and thinking of pastel peonies

In dappled darkness, I am standing at a crossroads and
thinking of pastel peonies

About Paeon and Pluto

And how the world needs more beauty and compassion

I am thinking about roots and healing

And about how far your *tama* has wandered by now

I'm thinking about how my belly is empty

And about how I would give almost anything to summon
your cloudsoul back to me

Snehal



Snehal is a blogger and poet based in London with her husband and two toddlers. Her writing primarily reflects her motherhood journey. She also reviews books authored by writers of South Asian heritage on her blog [Desi Lekh](#).

Push

“Push” shouted the midwife
“Push” trilled the nurse
“Why push?” she wondered
When it was all a giant curse...

Her baby was gone
Did no one understand?
Why must she push
This wasn't part of her plan...

No baby to hold,
To cuddle nor feed
A part of her is now broken
Her soul, it's screaming to be freed...

One day she will be stronger
But today isn't that day
Because soon as she pushes
Her baby will fade away...

Malgosia Ip



Malgosia Ip lives in Toronto with her husband and one-year-old son. She has been writing her whole life, though it's never been her day job. Recently, she decided she needed an outlet for all the poetry spilling out of her, and the Instagram account [@words.on.rye](#) was born. When she's not writing, she loves to eat, drink, rock climb, and do NYT crossword puzzles.

Fault Lines

You were all darkness then;
A reflection of light shivering on a body
Of water so deep I couldn't even fathom
A knowing.

You barely felt the lines you crossed
Parallel, faint. A lightening,
Intangible but felt. A pulse
You never had beating out the time
Eternal.

Seed of doubt took root,
Unfurled its rotten spine.
The fault, the fault, the fault is mine.

I am Fury. Making up with vengeance
What I lacked in dedication, follow-through.
River flow through a cord that's tight
Around my middle, but leads to
Nowhere.

Blood-born and borne into the void
This pain goes with you,
Unspoken. Undeveloped
Sense of anticipation.
Surface tension that never breaks
The meniscus, strains against the skin.
Held inside smooth muscle, pink and
Unscarred.

Blighted ovum,
Watch the strands unwind.
The fault, the fault, the fault is mine.

Karen E Fraser

Karen E Fraser is a Melbourne-based, published writer and poet. With degrees in Professional and Creative Writing, and Anthropology, she marries a love of quiet observation and collecting with necessary storytelling. Karen has held various roles as writer and editor (including Verandah 25 Literary Journal). Her work embraces the natural world, social justice, and connection illuminated through the lenses of liberation, equality, dignity and belonging.

@be_nourished

Snow globe: a fragile metaphor for anxiety

a thin membrane of brittle glass differentiates
insides from out, without from within.

this is a waiting game and time rolls endlessly around in
the watery bauble of I, a living-drowning-learning-rising-failing,
cycles churning and calming ad nauseum,
the clockwork repetition of possibility just out of reach
as impossibility grows bitter chaos with regularity.

I work - every hour - to plant seeds that can thrive and pray
each holds to ground through the burning charge of raging squalls.

I feed them precious silence and a collage of necessary wipe-on smiles -
masks to greet a world of prying eyes that stare through
the thinly veiled panes and window dressing
hiding the mess of an easily rattled existence.

suddenness cannot be a friend, it unsettles,
topples everything placed meticulously on the backburner
behind a splintered, aching breastbone, unseen.

here the fear of shattering completely and irreparably
lives independently despite the constant
meeting, clearing, exhaustion of healing.

thin lungs of light flood this fragile safehouse with scant hope
keeping the project of me warm and visible, just enough
to stay safely coiled, an exhibit on display,
here ... for now

Fatima Shoaib Qazi

Fatima Shoaib Qazi is a 21 year old Pakistani poet and writer, currently completing their bachelor's degree in English Literature from Government College University, Lahore. She writes poetry and prose, drawing inspiration from around her, whether it be personal experiences, music, people, etc. She has also been selected to be published in a few local publications such as "Behenchara Magazine" and "The Tilsim". They have also participated as a co-author with Aspiring Pens Publications in a poetry anthology. Always looking for opportunities to grow as a writer and hone her creative skills, Fatima also enjoys painting, music, reading and rainy nights.

They can be found on Instagram
[@thewordsshefelt](https://www.instagram.com/thewordsshefelt).

Someone to Blame

The fingers of blame grow restless
They ache to point to true north,
The very arrow that stares me dead in the eye.
Hungry hands that rip at my skin,
Clawing through flesh
Aged wounds peel back to reveal scarred skin
Flesh torn apart
Battle scars that search for refuge among the daffodils,
The ghosts of wishes past.

Charles T. Low

Charles T. Low has felt the art-photography compulsion for many decades (for reasons indefinable; it simply is), always striving to learn more about conveying meaning.

He likes his variety, rather than honing a recognizable style or theme. You won't see many images which resemble each other, and when you do, he thinks that he is improving the quality!

He makes photographs, and he edits them. So far, the World seems big enough without doing anything funkier.

Cat's Eye Tree



Dawn



Matt Thomas

Matt Thomas started writing poetry as a teenager, and was first published as part of a poetry on city buses scheme in Seattle. Recently he has begun writing again on a regular basis, after spending years doing all sorts of other things, some of which he continues to do because they provide good fuel for writing. When he's not busy with all that, Matt and his partner Nicola Sharpe run RAAAY - Royal Adelaide Art & Yoga, a Yoga Studio and Art Gallery in an old pub in Plymouth, in the United Kingdom. On a final note, he's very left-handed.

bufo bufo

everything after morning is an afterthought.
darkness inhales, time gets louder,
more insistent, the inbetween boils away
as apollo's dull magic plays tricks that
everyone can see and pretend to understand.
wide awake is no gateway
to a more graspable truth.
as all this brightness barrels along
and consciousness bills by the minute,
rivers call the mists back
and so they go, yet, in the garden,
remnants of a more loosely connected
significance remain behind,
caressing the undersides of damp leaves,
whispering spells:
feverfew and columbine,
pilewort and hart's tongue fern,
night blooming jasmine,
honeysuckle, baby's tears and rue.
in the garden, possibility,
with an inscrutable bearing
and golden eyes like saturn,
waits behind a broken slate
or under an overturned terra cotta pot,
waits, and counts slugs,
watches gulls settle among chimney pots,
listens for the last click of the latch
that locks out the night for the uninitiated.

waits, as darkness exhales,
time drifts off to sleep,
rivers relax and let loose the mists
on the land, waits, until
it can once again,
turn an idea into a toad.

Howard Young

Howard Young is a published poet and artist from Brighton, UK, who often creates outdoors, weather permitting. He is interested in nature, the sea and mythology. He lives in a terraced house by the south coast with his wife, children, and too many typewriters. His latest work can be found in 'Train River Publishing's' Winter 2020, and Spring and Summer 2021 print anthologies, 'Sunday Mornings at the River' Autumn 2021, Free Verse Revolution and on Instagram at [@brighton_typewriter_poet](https://www.instagram.com/brighton_typewriter_poet).

The Garden is a House of Death

This garden is broken, smashed,
like a crashed tapestry
woven in glass,
crushed on the cobbled floor.

Torn petals, scattered,
hang in low branches
navigated by bees
death-counting the final days of nectar.

The old wall is a mosaic, broken
cracked by a hundred years
of sun and frantic insects.

White butterflies tumble down,
as burning embers from a paper fire,
funeral confetti, fearful blossom,
I saw fallen apples fading
into brown and white
eaten out from the inside,
fading worlds,
dissolving circles of decay.

Above,
autumn spiders drift silent
silken in recycled parachutes,
clawing at the ghost house
in search of an uncertain future
pulled by time, a gentle breeze,
but life everywhere is falling from the sky
how will they have expected germination
amongst the sullen concrete and
the coal burning
cold windows of the human eye?

This Underworld is No House of Death

This Underworld is no house of death
but a squirming host of thriving roots
mocking frosts
in the treacled sucking earth,
a trillion creatures create
their forever home
birth and death,
hand in hand,
like always.

Volcanic ash
the smoker's breath
of coughing Hades
will soon grow good wine on
Napoli slopes,
Vesuvius
'the tears of christ' are
ripened by the rising suns
those ancient eyes will never see.

For to talk of death without life
Is rain without the sun
a child without its mother
an empty womb, a pointless tomb.

While life without death is
an endless road devoid of meaning
mapless, without features,
would seem more like hell
than so-called hell to me.

I Caught the God of Death

I caught death by the beard
(skulking in the backyard)
and pulled him into the kitchen, hard
“Are you the devil?”

I inquired leaning forward to gloat
menacing my spatula right at his throat
“With that hairy chin you look like a goat”.

He smiled “Do you really believe in all that?”
pushing the spatula away, he laughed like a cat
“You cannot kill me, I am death, by the way!”

I fixed him with an angry glare and made us both a cup of tea
besides, his rather cheeky smirk had slightly disarmed me.

“Who are you, really?”
I inquired, as he sipped away, looking tired
“What brand is this?” He cried
“No small talk” I replied “Your real name please?”
“Hades!”
“What?”
“Hades”

“Okay mate I’m calling the police”
I stuck the spatula back in his groin
and paused his release,
he giggled and gave me a silver coin

“That’s for the ferry mate” he smiled again,
“For when you need it to save you the pain,
the underworld is nice, we have snooker and pool,
the wi-fi is amazing, and there are not many rules”.

“But can you get out?” I asked,
he struggled to breathe
muttered something about pomegranates
and then he started to leave,
“Can you tell me” I asked “what time I shall die?”
but before he vanished
“Never!” he cried.

Ellie Morfou

Ellie Morfou was born in the mid-1980s under a different name in Crete, Greece. The poet inside her emerged amidst the coronavirus pandemic lockdowns, which helped her remember how much she used to love writing as a child. Since rediscovering this passion of hers, she has been writing verses endlessly and enjoys it thoroughly!

When not writing, she spends time with her family, hangs out with friends, translates legal documents and makes time for reading. She loves the sea, ice cream and learning new languages. Part of her work is available on her instagram page @elliemorfou (for published work check <https://linktr.ee/EllieMorfou>).

Hades' Summer

A kiss goodbye on the forehead and she's gone;
then music starts to play from the underphone.

Wild party vibes pervade the abyss,
Hades unshaved
unpaired
prepares to take delight
in his interim release
from his unsmiling wedded self;
invigorated corpses cheer him on,
his freedom
their parole.

Nothing will give the chthonic naughtiness away
upon the Great Goddess's return;
nothing, but a forgotten pomegranate cocktail tray.

Richard LeDue



Richard LeDue (he/him) currently lives in Norway House, Manitoba with his wife and son. He is a Best of the Net nominee, and has been published in various places throughout 2021. His first chapbook was released in 2020, and a second chapbook in 2021. As well, his third chapbook, “The Kind of Noise Worth Writing Down,” was released in October 2021 from Kelsay Books.

The Devil Laughing

Sometimes I get burned out reading
about how the devil
made someone do something
again- page over-saturated
with morals that taste as interesting
as warm bottled water, sold
at a Sunday flea market,
and the only steam is metaphorical,
like the mud that god made Adam from,
except for those who drowned accused witches,
based on the idea that wood floats
and burns,
and that angels were whispering reassurances
in their ears-
the
waterlogged
soul
ascending
to
heaven
after a short swim,
while the devil laughed so hard
he needed a drink to soothe his throat.

A Fire Without End

The pitchforks on the slot machine
paid well, but weren't the top prize-
that was the female cartoon devil,
which still makes me wonder about the cost
of blasphemy these days,
or why there was no sexy animated god
winking at me, blowing kisses
as I won money, and how I started to believe
my luck was a fire without end,
the credit card in my wallet extra kindling
for my flames, which were ignited
long before I got comfortable
in that air-conditioned casino.

What Might Come Next

James Woods in a Disney cartoon,
cracking jokes as the laughable villain,
and I wonder how future religions
will borrow from this interpretation
when they describe the devil in 3000 AD.

Then there's Hitler in "Downfall,"
a human devil
who proved hell can be made real,
that demons can wear uniforms and smile,
while believing in their own halos
because they're just following orders.

History singed as we complain
about too much butter on our popcorn,
how the soda is watered down,
believing we empathize
by comparing every wrong doer
(at least wrong in our minds)
to the Nazis, when the stench of real hell
is further and further in the past,
making me scared of what might come next.

A Halloween Almost Twenty Years Ago

I dressed as the devil,
while my friend experimented with shrooms
and another friend wore a priest costume,
creating quite the trip:
good standing by one shoulder,
evil (me) at the other.
Of course, neither of us knew the the right words,
were too young to know the value of a soul-
we just laughed at the joke we were part of.

We ended up in a bar downtown
(that might not even been there anymore
because it's been so long since I've been home),
where people drowned their conscience,
hoping someone else would save them
with heaven or hell leaving all of us
dry mouthed, especially on those mornings
when I woke up alone,
still rehearsing everything I didn't say
and never would
to every pretty face I was scared to look in the eye,
until I learned (years later): everyone eventually blinks,
the devil just a costume,
and the past a fire we can't help but rekindle.

Christian Ward



Christian Ward (he/him) is a UK-based writer who can be recently found in Wild Greens, Discretionary Love and Scribes*MICRO*Fiction. Future work will be appearing in Spry, BlueHouse Journal and Uppagus.

Passing A Derelict Building At 242 Marylebone Road

Groundsel patrols the site like a security guard,
its flowers brighter than flashlights.
Attractive enough to freeze would-be trespassers.

Leaves fallen from a nearby plane tree, wrinkled like bat wings,
have started colonising the paving slabs.
Their shadows will screech in the seconds
when you are alone.

I can't tell if the building misses its former occupants,
keeps their dust like a relic. For now, it is just a shell
waiting to be carried on the tides of another sea.

Just as currents of warm sunlight start to stroke it,
incoming clouds flick their tails like a sign.

Longmore Street Before Sunset

A curtain of pigeon shadows lifts.
Previously prim houses are exposed -
fascias peeling from a rain brought psoriasis,
a lack of maintenance for a movie shine.

Arrowhead weeds poise to strike
when a solitary pigeon lands nearby.

Earlier, a man in a wheelchair
had a kerfuffle with a woman trying
to park her Mini. Pause the frame.
Circle the weeds wrapping themselves
around his wheels.

Did he not know that we walk
among unwritten codes, shadows
older and deeper than the seas?

Citalopram

Knock back two,
watch everything turn yellow:
the market, blocks of flats, cars,
your mother fixing you tea.
Soon she will outshine the sun.

Knock back four,
the rain's crackle is more intense.
Listen closely to hear gravel crunching,
the tread of a man you once knew
disappearing into the driveway.

Knock back eight,
struggle to hold everything down
as everything in the flat is weightless.
Somersault for a glass of water. Dive
to swallow peas, avoid spears of French fries.

Knock back sixteen
to spasm back into reality.
Whatever you wanted to disappear
is still here in the living room,
the sound of your father's voice
worse than the lithium to come.

Human Botfly

Siloed in brains,
we emerge in dreams.
We're the elephant clouds
watching you while your father
frets over the prices at Disney
World. We're the turkey leg
as big as your arm at the State
Fair. We're the teapot smashed
like Krakatoa after your grandmother
hurled it at your grandfather.
We're every diary entry, poem,
dead pet with eyes like moonlight,
tutting photo of an ex.
Nightmares aren't ibuprofen -
we won't be rid of that easily.
Remember, we can be anything
lurking under the bed, in the closet,
the shadows clustering in the corner.
There are no generals in our game,
no control centre, no plan of attack.
We'll pull the strings while you dance
as the childhood armageddon repeats.



Interview with Kait Quinn

Introduce yourself; when did you begin writing? When and why did you decide you wanted to share your work with others?

Hi! I'm Kait Quinn! I started writing songs when I was a preteen, and they were AWFUL. I remember one about living in Texas (where I'm from) and another about blue being my favorite color.

The first poem I ever wrote was in 8th grade. Our English teacher gave us each a postcard and we had to write a poem inspired by the image. My poem was about physical abuse, and I have no idea where it came from or why my teacher didn't call my parents. I started writing poetry regularly during a creative writing class I took my second year of high school.

What are your inspirations? Are they musical, literary, ekphrastic or all three?

My inspirations are mostly musical and literary. I almost always listen to music while I write and find inspiration in the lyrics, story, music, vibes, or all of the above. Most recently, I've been inspired by Taylor Swift, which has really helped me incorporate more storytelling into my poetry, whether through one poem or a series of poems meant to be read together.

Reading other writers' work is even more inspiring, as it's given me good examples of what works, what doesn't, what it looks like to have a distinct, well-developed voice. I especially like writing "after" poems because it gives you a chance to challenge yourself by trying on another writer's style while making it your own.

2021 has been a prolific year for you and your work, how would you describe the collections you have released this year?

Two of the collections I've released this year, *I Saw Myself Alive in a Coffin* and *Poems of August*, are extremely personal, vulnerable collections. In *Coffin*, I'm open about my experience with depression and suicidal ideation. I did write about these topics in my first collection, but not as outright as I do in *Coffin*.

I would describe *Coffin* as confessional and heavily influenced by some of my favorite confessional poets, including Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and Elizabeth Bishop. I was also reading a lot of Emily Dickinson as I was writing these poems, and I think that comes through as well.

I'd say *Poems of August* is even more personal. Most of the book is about a toxic relationship that I was in with someone I still feel like I'm trauma bonded to. I've written about this person for years, but I get really into it with these poems. Even so far as to make confessions of my own in terms of my own faults in that relationship. I wrote most of the poems in this collection while listening to Taylor Swift's album *folklore*, so I'd also describe this collection as *folklore* (Kait Quinn's version).

The smaller collection, *Clear*, is more universal. Though the poems were written during and about life during the pandemic, I think that readers can find understanding and healing in them outside of the pandemic.

One thing that I'm really proud of with all three collections I've published this year is that I can see my growth in them, compared to my first collection, *A Time for Winter*, published in 2019.

I wrote daily in between publishing my first collection and Coffin, so I had definitely honed my craft a bit.

You have focused a lot on your craft as well this year and have been open with sharing your experiences with certain workshops. What drove you to prioritise your craft this year and what has this revealed about your own processes and writing?

One of my goals as a writer is to actually make a living being a writer. I've wanted to be a professional writer in one way or another since I was a kid. I've wanted to be a novelist, an advice columnist, a magazine writer, a travel writer, a songwriter. I actually even spent a few years doing copywriting for a living. But over the past year, I've found myself wanting to make a living as a poet, which, of course, has to be the hardest form of writing to make a living off of.

I know in the Instagram poetry community, this idea is not always welcomed with open arms. There's this idea that we should be writing just to write, to connect, for the art of it. But of course, you can do all of these things and still make a living as a writer. Otherwise, we wouldn't all have shelves of books in our homes or Spotify/ Netflix subscriptions.

Like any artist, I think you get to a certain point in your growth where you don't want to give your work away for free anymore, or, in the time of social media, just pump out content for the likes and to gain/keep followers. I felt like I reached that point this year and wanted to focus less on pumping out quick poems for IG and more on fine tuning my craft so that I could write poems and full collections that literary journals, presses, and readers WANT to pay for.

I figure my best shot is to continue honing my craft by opening myself up to critique and feedback and challenging myself to find out if I'm actually good. And classes and workshops are a great way to do that.

The class that had the biggest impact on me was Megan Falley's Poems That Don't Suck course. It was extremely humbling for me. I realized I was getting too caught up in the likes and praise I got on IG and that while I have potential, I'm not as good as I've been thinking I am. Which is ok! That's growth! As a result, I haven't been writing every day. Instead, I've taken a step back to focus on writing quality poems and heavy editing both old and new poems. I learned during class that I do NOT edit as much as I could be to really make a poem go from IG worthy to literary journal worthy.

It's been a hard thing to face and definitely a growing pain, but I already feel like I'm becoming a stronger writer because of it.

You are someone I admire in regards to building a community and business around your work. What advice could you give for those interested in curating Instagram lives (something your community thoroughly enjoys), a website and using Patreon?

In terms of building a community, don't focus on likes/followers! Focus on enjoying poetry and the writing process. Your poems and passion will speak for itself. Interact with your readers. Be genuine. Support others—not for a like or a follow but because you genuinely enjoy their work or feel seen by them or moved by their writing.

I'm so happy that others are enjoying my Instagram lives because they're my favorite thing to do within this community now! Plus, they help me with my social anxiety.

For anyone interested in curating Instagram lives, choose poems that you absolutely love, that really speak to you, that you feel are important. Ask your community who they want you to read! This is a great way for you to find new poets and also to support lesser known poets in the community. But also, if someone recommends a poet to you and you're not feeling any of their pieces, you don't have to read them. I also try not to focus on how many followers a poet has. That is, I'll read poets with 100 followers, 4,000 followers, or 12,000 followers. For me, it's not about getting new followers (though that can be a bonus). It's about supporting other poets and sharing work I really love (and why I love it).

I'm still figuring out Patreon and struggle with the idea of it being a place to get exclusive content vs. marketing it as a way for someone to support me (the person/the poet who is working toward making some kind of living through writing).

Unsurprisingly, the themes of death and loss run through Issue IV, why do you think artists and writers are so often drawn to these themes?

Death and loss both elicit intense emotions, ones that are perhaps easier to process through art. I think art can even be an outlet for grief after loss. There's also a mystery around death that's intriguing. It's just this big unknowable presence in our lives. Even if we're not consciously thinking about it, it's ever present. I think artists are fairly in tune with their emotions and sensitive to anything that evokes strong emotion. Combine that with a desire to question, explore, unravel, find out (other traits I think writers tend to have), and an unknowable topic like death becomes an appealing poetry subject. Not to mention that it can be a taboo topic, and artists seem to gravitate toward the taboo.

Because it's taboo, it's harder to find others to relate to or words to describe how we feel. If there's anything an artist does, it's create work that others can relate to, which means exploring topics that are relatable but not necessarily widespread. I don't want to speak for all artists, but this is certainly why I am drawn to these themes.

Your piece 'Persephone's Granddaughter' explores womanhood as well as loss at the hands of patriarchal norms, how do you feel about how the myth of Persephone's abduction continues to resonate?

I feel like as long as there is any kind of power dynamic within relationships where one person has control over the other, the myth of Persephone will continue to resonate. At least, this is how I personally resonate with the story today. It reads to me a lot like a toxic, mentally/emotionally abusive relationship. Hades' abduction of Persephone is similar to that sense of falling for someone quick and hard, in a way that makes you feel like you've lost control over yourself. Once that shifts into something toxic and abusive and you truly have no control, you might understand that it's not ok, that you have to leave. You might even leave, or try to leave. But that feeling in the beginning stays on your tongue like the pomegranate seed that keeps bringing Persephone back down to Hades every winter (if we're talking of the version where she goes back willingly). What's interesting is that I sometimes think of Persephone as a symbol of empowerment. Perhaps because she was the queen of the Underworld and did have the freedom to make decisions. Almost like she found a power within herself within her circumstances.

Finally, what does 2022 hold in store for you? What do you hope to achieve or focus on in the next year?

In 2022, I'd love to get back into a daily writing habit. I also plan to continue taking poetry classes. I'm already signed up for one of Carrie Fountain's Leap & Practice workshops in the spring, and I'm keeping my eyes peeled for the next round of Poems That Don't Suck. I'm not planning to self-publish any books next year because I'd like to start submitting my manuscripts to publishers/presses and contests. I do plan to work on a couple of books, though. One is the book I had planned to self-publish this month (a collection inspired by Taylor Swift's album evermore). I'll be doing some heavy editing on those poems to see if I can get it ready to submit to publishers next year. I also wrote a lot of poems in Poems That Don't Suck that I can see coming together as a book, so I also plan to start putting a new manuscript together.

Kait Quinn

Kait Quinn (she/her) is a law admin by day and a prolific poet/professional shower singer by night. She has self published four poetry collections and her work has appeared in Blood Moon Journal, Polemical Zine, Chestnut Review, VERSES, and others. Kait lives in Minneapolis with her partner, their regal cat Spart, and their Aussie mix Jesse Pinkman, Jr. You can find Kait's work at kaitquinn.com.

Persephone's Granddaughter

Wings like skin stretched,
just to breaking,
whip hunter's moon into a strobe

light. October's harvest dwindles:
howl in the distance more phantasm
than wolf. A twilight squall knocks

me dizzy, eyes blink out silver
flickers the guardians use to blind me
from oblivion blooming beyond

veil. Wrist pulser, blood boiler,
peach skinned and lithe tendoned, unwanted
in midnight's velvet folds. O, but my soul

is a raven, heart scarred as man
full moon transformed, mad scientist
pieced and stitched together. My throat

screams horror into warm-blooded
pupils—phalanx as pen, claret as ink.
My mouth bleeds pomegranate

juice, and I must answer his call.
Take me, take me, take me beneath
the graves, gondola guide me across

river Styx into the black flame's pull.
Bring me home before November frost.
I will never survive this cold.

If Tonight Is All We Have, Stay

here, draped like crushed velvet
at the bottom of moon's
stairway. Extract happiness
from sadness, pearled harvest
from tombstone grey, pomegranate
seed from between my teeth.
Swallow me like forbidden fruit.
Beg for forgiveness under sun's eye;
not here, in the onyx lair of our chthonic
love, infernal and forbidding
all wheat fields to sway, all phlox
to creep, all alyssum to tumble
across saffron earth. dark prince,
lick summer's pollen off my lips,
conceal me in every word.
pray for October.

Kate MacAlister

Writer, Social Justice Witch and medical student **Kate MacAlister** discovered the art of poetry as a healing ritual many years ago. Her poems conjure spell-binding images of intricate inner worlds and the struggles in our contorted society. She tells stories inspired by her work that have been published in various online literary journals and printed anthologies. Whether it is her work in the hospital or fighting the patriarchy: above all these are stories about human connection and the dreams of revolution.

Instagram: [@kissed.by_fire](https://www.instagram.com/kissed.by_fire).

camera obscura

a zodiac princess
on my pillow
a neophyte sorceress
kneeling at the end
of a brass bed

worshipping
your temple
your flesh

in cheap red wine
in black and white

all the years of longing
unmarked
crashed and burned
(my sweet heart)
between the ribs

spilled milk tea brewed
with
dusky cinnamon
and
dragon fruit flesh

I graze on your
Home coming
until we find
the map through the ghost town
the grey
sticky
silence
it's a trespasser's wickerwork
a secret woven in the light

of your scars
some hardened
some fresh
with soft blood

leading
our coven
back into the fire

Greta Unetich

Greta Unetich (she/her) has been writing poetry since eighth grade. She published her debut book of poetry, *Look Both Ways*, in December 2019 and recently published a second book of poetry, *Polaris*, in May 2021. Unetich is an editor for *Buzzsaw Magazine* and a regular contributor to *Buzzsaw Magazine*, *Kindergarten Magazine*, and *Living Zine*. Her books are available for purchase at *Buffalo Street Books* and *Odyssey Bookstore* in Ithaca, New York and at *Monaco's Coffee* in Geneva, New York. In addition, her poems have been published in several print and digital magazines across the United States, Canada, and India. Unetich attends Ithaca College for biology and chemistry with hopes to become either a high school biology and chemistry teacher or a diabetes educator in a hospital.

Endearment

Did you even notice that I didn't sleep here last night?

11/02/2021-11/03/2021

No one needs to know that it was you who pressed closer to me early this morning. No one needs to know that I remember you from almost two Januarys ago, that I remember winter on the other side of the tall church windows, making the early evening so dark I could see your reflection behind mine.

-

My dream flickering on and off for years on end—
Stepping through your sliding glass door, words from your mouth, pulling sheets from your dryer. I broke the promise as soon as the sun set at five o'clock, barely three hours earlier. January will be here again soon. Our legs twine. I broke the promise as soon as the sun set, blood-red in the dark so you can't see it. You tell me that you feel as if I own you when my tongue is on your face, so I put my heart inside your body.

-

I need to tell you sleeping alone is so painful it should be a sin. The broken promise spreads across me like a wildfire, my own words blood-red. I am grabbing my own reflection by the throat through the mirror and shaking it. I need to tell you that the fact that we are not in love with each other pains me so much it should be a sin.

I tell you how I cried over you because I know that you are too beautiful for me. I knew it years ago and I know it now. The scars are still on my left ankle. As I look you in the eyes, I am new. How I could love you. How I love you.

-

When you come back into the room after getting a drink of water, when light from the hallway pours in as you reopen the door, I am so tired, and I think the hallway light is the light you see in heaven. I want to ask you to tear me apart— the good, the bad, and the ugly.

-

You said you were sorry you woke me in the middle of the night, but something had overcome you that made you want me so bad while you were on the border of drifting back awake.

-

I won't wake up early in the morning again in your room, freezing cold, you won't drive me home at the break of day in early November, the sky baby blue and foggy. Three days later, it frosts. Exhaust from cars fills the cold air in the parking lot. Three days prior, I saw your breath in the air.

-

I'll give you contrition if I am allowed to see you again. I need you like my body needs needles, whether it be for vanity or for saving my life. I won't ever be able to tell you that I love you. All I can tell you is that it is an endearment to hold you.

Emma Major

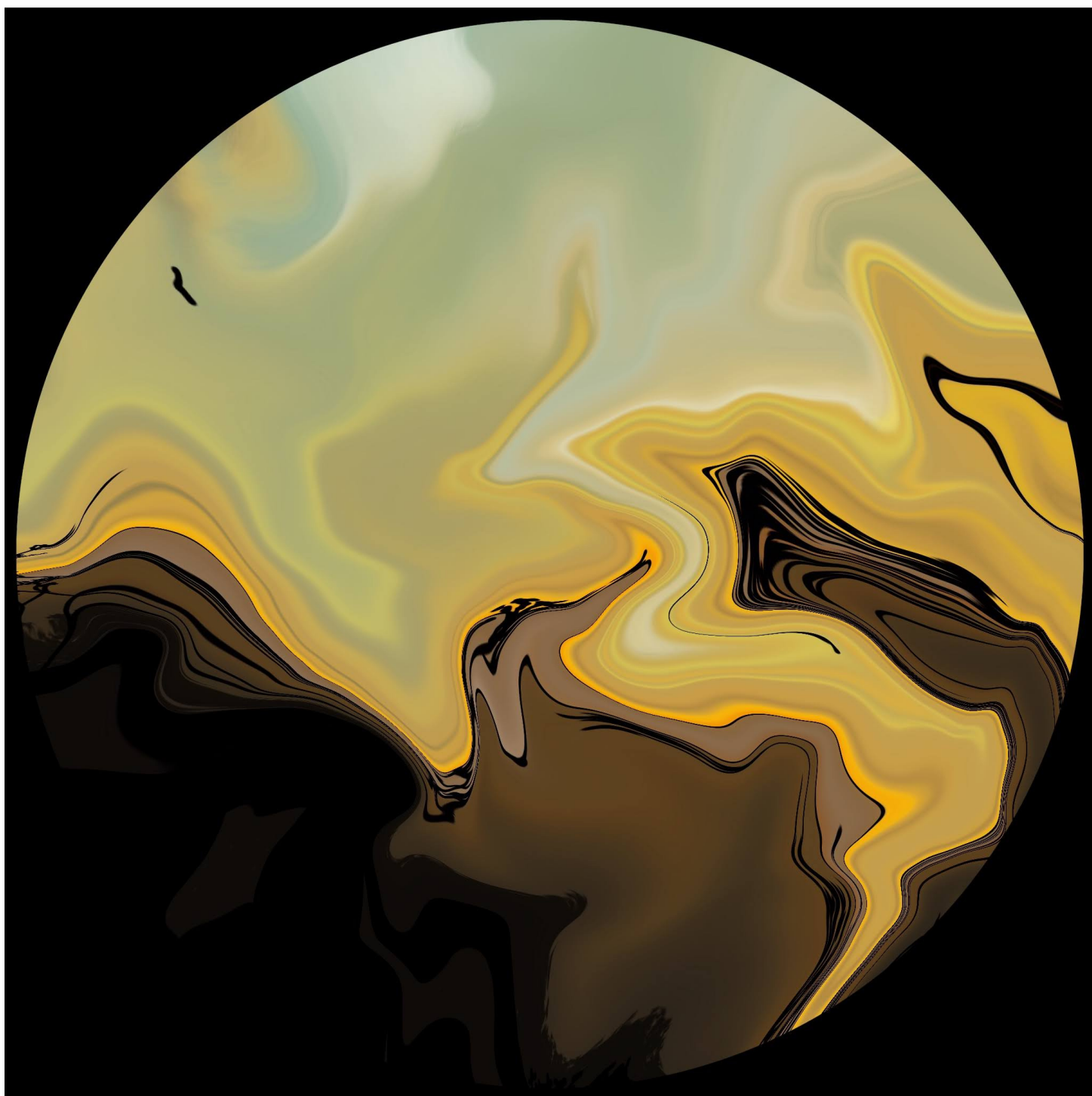
Emma Major is a pioneer lay minister, blind wheelchair user, artist and poet.

She has poems included in numerous books as well as writing her own collections of poetry on miscarriage, mental health and climate change. In 2020 her first book combining both poetry and art was published "Little Guy: Journey of Hope" by Wild Goose Publications.

In 2021 Emma's first exhibition of paintings and poems "Caring for Creation" was exhibited around Berkshire; it will be hosted at COP26 in Glasgow in November. She currently has paintings in two other exhibitions and has five books of poetry and paintings in various stages of publication.

You can find Emma online at LLMCalling.com or on social media @emmuk74 where she shares her artwork and poetry to encourage, bless and affirm people.

Where the Monsters Roam



Beneath the Briar

Moss covered pathways
Tempt my endless thirst to taste
Stealing grateful breaths
Pastel peonies chase stars
Across imagined forests

Beneath the briar
Forget every forest path
Strangers dance in fear
Malleable thistles break
Sugar dusted feelings

Aeipathy eyes spy
Evergreen katsura trees
Trespassing hearts break
Ancient amber vestiges
Humbling young lovers

Sweet taste of home cries
Sotto voce orisons
Drink your bourbon pain
Oaths surf savage seas of hope
As bitter meadow sage soothes

November chaos
Transforms cerulean skies
Seasons clash again
Natural order restored
As we dance with her rhythm



Jaya Avendel

Jaya Avendel is a micro poetess and word witch from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, passionate about life where it intersects with writing and the dreamscapes lost in between. With poetry and prose published widely online and in several print anthologies detailing everything from women's empowerment to climate change, she writes further at www.ninchronicles.com.

Finale

We stand in the background lighting candles to drive away the purple dusk smears and polish the fragile stems of wine glasses without chipping our nails. We uncork wine and let it flow freely among the bodies dressed in white.

We bestow smiles upon each other when the father of the groom raises his glass to the sky and the thousand and one tea lights snaking like a spine down the dinner table turn into a lightning bolt in the wine's reflection.

Behind their backs, we flit. Our shoes make no sound in the gravel, but we leave behind prints. A heel here, a toe there, one red nail. We hover at the edge of their attention, cut the cake too and distribute it alongside sixty-eight watermelon seeds to twenty-seven people.

We are not in the wedding photos or their memories.

Not in recognizable form.

I dare to think we are the window frames completing the picture. We are the quiet feeling of stability in memory; the knowledge that it was an amazing day, and everything was perfect, but they still cannot quite place why.

Dawn

Previously Published at Mooky Chick

When I was born
Too many stars winked in the sky and
The ocean almost drowned in moons.

I was born
Between the twelve houses
Belonging to all the constellations
And none.

I heard a butterfly
Flutter in the night
Watched a raindrop slide down a hemp leaf
Saw a honeybee proudly guarding its hive.

When I was born
The sun was angry
Ready to burn the planets constantly
Pinching him.

I was born
To appease him
To gentle his attack on the world
To freeze him.

Ingrid Wilson

Ingrid is a writer and poet from the U.K. who has recently lived in Spain and Slovenia. Her travels and experience of life in different lands has greatly influenced her writing. She writes poetry, short fiction and factual pieces at <https://experimentsinfiction.com>.

Ingrid was voted Spillwords Author of the Month for Jan–Feb 2021, and has had her work published in a variety of literary magazines including Spillwords, Free Verse Revolution and Route 7 Review. Her writing on her battle with PMDD has recently been published in the anthology *But You Don't Look Sick* from Indie Blu(e) Publishing.

In July of 2021, Ingrid published *The Anthropocene Hymnal*: a poetry anthology designed to raise awareness of the climate crisis and raise money for WWF. She is currently working on her first novel and her first solo poetry collection, which will be published in February 2022.

Persephone: A Sonnet

Sunk deep into the dark half of the year
Persephone lies weeping underground
and no one watches where she sheds a tear
for distant spring, when she shall rise unbound.

Hades' love transformed into loathing
though she's loathed him through centuries long gone
and all the earth is dressed in winter clothing
in fields barren, where once spring lambs were born

'Why weep for winter? Do not weep for me!'
She cries into the miles of ground above
fathoms below, she hears the sighing sea
and dries her tears with dreams of summer love:

*The hibernation of all joy awaits
spring resurrected: she shall not be late.*



