

SUCKER



04

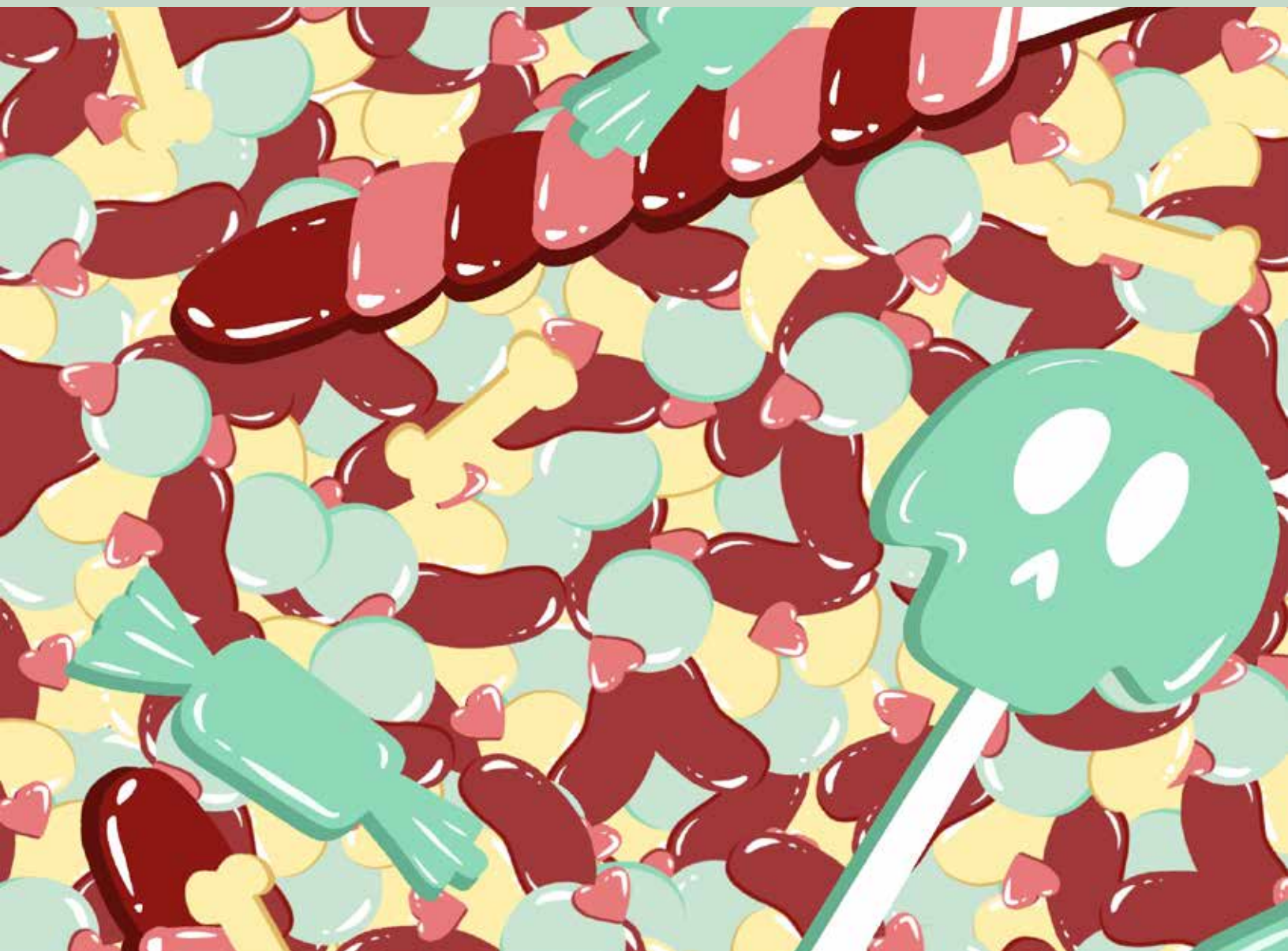
WINTER 2023

ISSUE 04

ISSUE 04: SUCKER

Confessions from total losers and lots of
lollipop euphemisms.

This is how we suck.



CONTRIBUTORS

Emma Schuster
Affrica Spence
Madeleine Silva
Claire Beeli
Milly Aburrow
Samuel Strathman
ryan fitzpatrick
Veronica Clements
Salena Casha
Andrés Murillo
Karla Linn Merrifield
Genevieve Dalby
KIRBY
Kenneth Pobo
Victoria Butler
Kelly Stohr
Matt Gulley
Nina Tokhtaman Valetova
Jaden Pound
Roméo Desmarais III
Andrea Vasile
Zeke Jarvis
Katie Klimacek
Jude Armstrong
Simon Alderwick
Bisma Jay
Irina Tall
Shawn Roberts

TOO TIRED FOR TOOTHPASTE

Emma Schuster

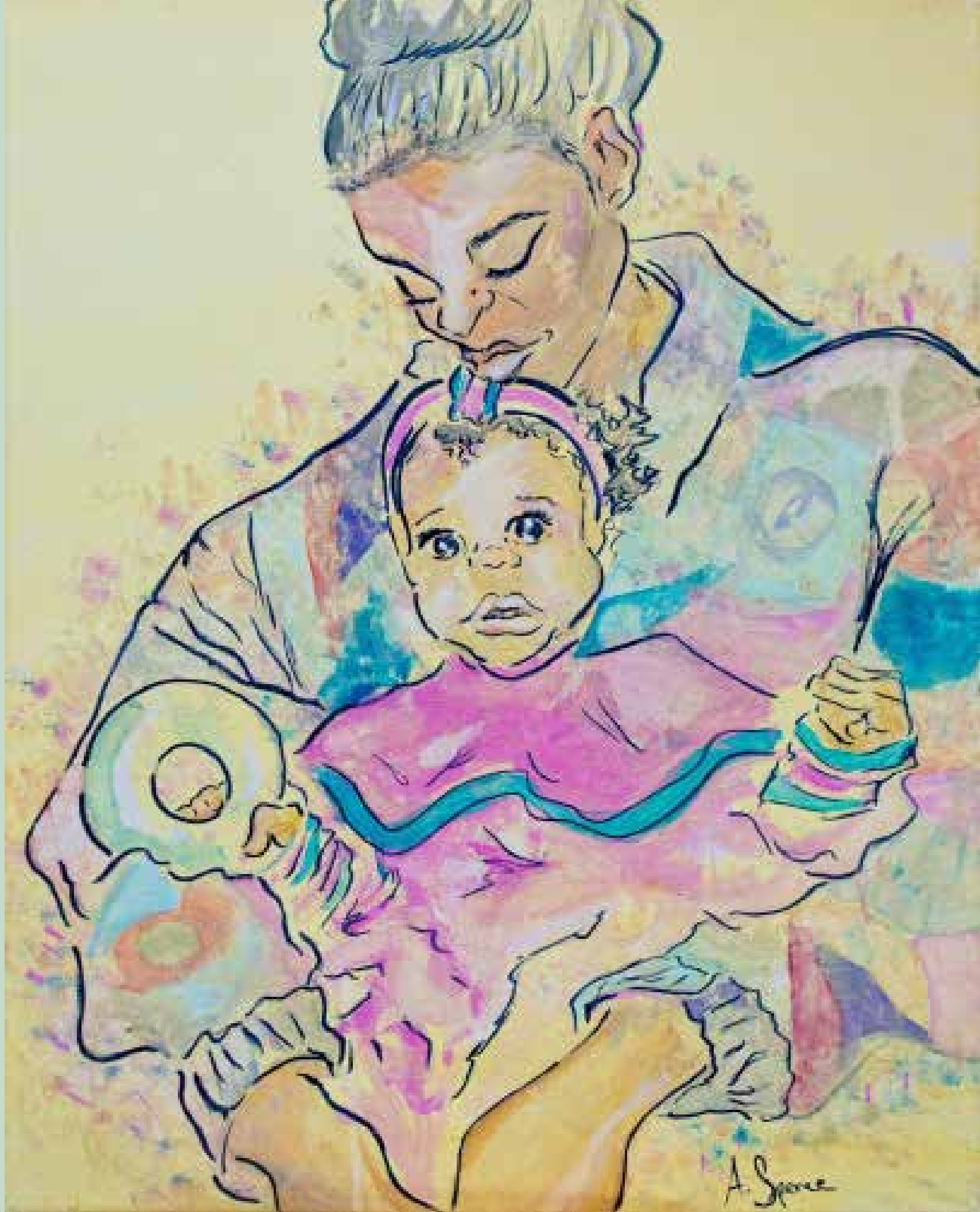
Lost the last at twelve,
But shedding parts of them
For years ever since.
Stereotypically straightened
Through insurance company coffers
At fifteen,
My teeth tightened in my mouth
As my age
Started to poke spaces
Between my heart
And my head.

The damage had been done.
A secret to no one,
The staining seeped
Through my brand-new mouth:
There's no going back,
Parts of my teeth rot black.

I think my dad still has
All of my baby teeth
In a box by his desk.
I wonder
If I can open my mouth wide enough
And put them back in.

MOTHER, SHUSH, AND BATH

Affrica Spence





COMMUNION

Madeleine Silva

I bought these dumb crotchless panties,
but was too shy to wear them around you.

Even though you've seen my crotch:
bristly, speckled with lumps of ingrown
hairs I can't escape, no matter how
much I rub myself raw, pink, and puckered.
Coarse hair and soft folds;
the way your eyes crinkle at the edges.
Each fault line a fragment of delight.
Shrieking glee swimming in your laughter,
you covered your mouth to contain it.

I was a woman who couldn't be impressed,
I am here on your bed and on my knees,
Prostrate with desire and riddled with remorse
for this neglected negligée.
A casualty of my capitalist consumerism.
Consume me with consummation.
That I may partake in this fleshly feast.
Like a fraught fever dream of fast fashion,
I want to be worked, worn, preened, and pressed.
I want to be tossed in a landfill of you.

Is it you? Or I? Or us? A mountain or a molehill?
It it cancerous or benign?
I stopped wondering a long time ago
when I stopped trying to devour myself
and started to subsist on you.

I still want to satiate you.
Look at me—engaged and engaging—
but in this moment your laughter is communion.

APOTHEKE

Madeleine Silva

the words came thick and slow
like toothpaste on my tongue
i relished that bitter refreshment
cleansing my irreverent mouth

that wasn't shame you saw
set in my soft stone jaw
furrowed in my brow,
but fear

i wish i'd watched your face
like he'd been afraid to do
but i may have betrayed
fear freckled grief

father's stolen stoicism
written in my sallow skin
hiding behind hard eyes
and a gummy girlish grin

a dissonant chord
in my fretting, fraught heart
delight sown in sorrow
resonant as a trilling timpani

so when I kissed you,
sloppy and sweet,
as though I was 15
(and equally unsure)

my fickle heart was relieved
thrilled as staccato static
squealing tires, and slick pavement:
the air after Angeles rain

CANDY GIRL

Claire Beeli

“The candy girl always has a lollipop,” I tell my mother, but she doesn’t believe me. The girl comes anyway, red sticky fingers, glazed blood lips. She comes to watch the sunset with me on the holiday island, more artificial strawberry and grape sunlight, and we play in the sand until we’re sunburnt and I really do have to go home and she really does have to go back to wherever she came from.

I see her one more time, right before I’m about to die, and she’s still so little. I didn’t realize we were both so little. She sticks her lollipop in my mouth, the same one she’s been sucking on since 1992 or whenever I was on that island and met her by the shore. It tastes like spit and plastic and a little like blood.



SOUR TONGUES, RAINBOWS, AND FIZZY SNAKES

Milly Aburrow

AN AWFUL TRUTH

Samuel Strathman

I knew it was love
when you offered
to share your leopard print tights

with me. I took them
for a spin along
the living room runway,

scandalizing the house pets
with my bony hips.
Those were the afternoons

when your eyes
filled with tears of laughter
instead of tears

while you were hunched
over the toilet,
purging. You said we'd become

too comfortable with each other.
The signs were everywhere,
but there are some things

a person ignores
when they're wearing
another person's underwear.

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE AN EXPERT IN A DYING FIELD?

ryan fitzpatrick

That two-packet
ramen affect.

I meant dupe
like duplication.

Erasure poetry
by bigots.

That half-stack
pancake affect.

I meant sucker
like cephalopod.

Paint-by-numbers
by conspiracists.

That sea-trench
treadmill affect.

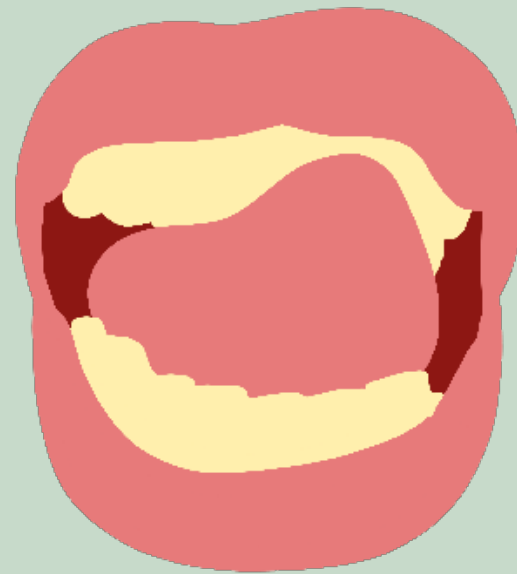
I meant mark
like market logic.

Mad Libs
by pushovers.

That mini-disc
mixtape affect.

I meant chump
like change.

Easy recipes
for sitting ducks.



VANTAS FILM STILL #2

Veronica Clements



ABOUT A DYSON

Salena Casha

There's been a browned maple seed for weeks in the right-hand corner of the kitchen and as many times as you run the V6 Dyson at full power over it, the seed will not disappear.

As far as you're concerned, the Dyson has one job unlike you who has two - in addition to the general job you've created for yourself which entails just getting out of bed in the morning. Unlike you, the Dyson is failing this job and, on principle, you will not bend your knees, hear them crack, and reach to pick up the aforementioned maple seed and bring it to the trash can that sits in the opposite corner. So you wait and just run the Dyson until its battery dies without ceremony twenty-three minutes later.

Over the course of these aforementioned weeks you notice that the seed has turned from a gentle mantis green to a crunched hazel. It has not aged well but it is still in your life. You hate to admit it but the Dyson is not what it used to be. You've had it now for three years, seven months and four days and its suction has gone elsewhere. At the beginning, it ate dirt and dust vociferously and with abandon. It sucked up Marlene's cookie crumbs from between the divots in the wood floor and completely eviscerated the small bundles of lint you found beside the Lego train set she'd gotten you for that Christmas after you'd first met.

Sometimes, you wonder if it's actually Marlene's leaving that caused this decay. As much as you hate thinking about it, the Dyson was hers before it was yours and you wonder, if when she'd left, it noticed how you handled it differently and it decided to retire or, worse, protest her abandonment by taking it out on you.

If you're really giving it all the thought you can, your knees didn't start cracking until a year ago so, you can't deny that time is passing, that both you and the Dyson with its purple chrome extension and electric blue digital display have aged. But at least, from what you know about Dysons (or at least what you've heard anecdotally) they, unlike you, are built to last.

You aren't sure what exactly makes you do it. (Kidding, you know exactly what makes you do it: Marlene's last words to you before she walked out and decided to crash on her best friend's couch rather than stay in the home you'd made together. She'd said: *You want to fix this? You'd have to take yourself apart first. And you don't have time for that.*) You know everything she said was bullshit, that when you met her you unhooked your joints and laid your gangly limbs out on the floor so she could decide where they all went and how they fit together and how they fit best with her well-hooked artfully made ones.

Your right shoulder socket still clicks but most days, it works.

Perhaps, perhaps, this sort of dismantling is just what the Dyson needs. So you go to work.

You spend a Wednesday evening splitting the Dyson into its recommended pieces, unclipping the main nozzle, emancipating the motor, decommissioning the head, excavating the filter, unclipping the main joint. You lay them next to one another in the order you took them apart so they don't feel too much separation anxiety.

A soap bath and a good brush and you'll be just like new, you say. Just need someone to take care of you so you can take care of them.

It's around the inner vacuum roller that you find the culprit. The fibers of her hair are long and some are

blond, some are white. They tamp the bristles down. Suffocating the Dyson from inside. You just stare at them, so many of them. Before, her hair would get everywhere and, even after she left, you still found it woven through the pillowcases and stuck to the matting in the water glass cupboard. You had scrubbed the place clean, emptied the strands from hairbrushes and unstuck them from the drain.

You didn't think you'd see them again.

So you grab a pair of scissors and say to the poor vacuum, *hang in there, Dys, I'm Coming.*

But you're thinking about it now, how she smelled like clean linen and how she listened to the Daily on full blast from her phone at 6:00 am and your eyes are stinging so much you can barely see where you need to put the scissor in.

Somehow, though, you regain enough sight to cut and cut and cut. The hair falls away like golden thread. The bristles don't bounce back immediately so you hold the Dyson and say,

Maybe it's better this way, maybe we'll be better even if we're different because change is good and we can change and maybe not go back but go somewhere new.

It takes you time and you're as gentle as you can be but you put the Dyson back together, the accessories clicking definitively into place. You hazard it sounds like a car door closing, crisp and clean and tight.

You bring the Dyson back into the kitchen. The maple seed stares at you and your thumb hovers over the on button. But you hesitate because you can't be sure what you did was enough. You don't know what will happen to you if you press the max power and it fails to even turn on.

So you set it to the side and you get down on your hands and knees and pinch the maple seed, so dry and so wrinkled. All brittle veins. All hard edges.

You rise. Your knees crack and you let it go.

ARMED AND DANGEROUS, PROBABLY PSYCHOTIC

Karla Linn Merrifield

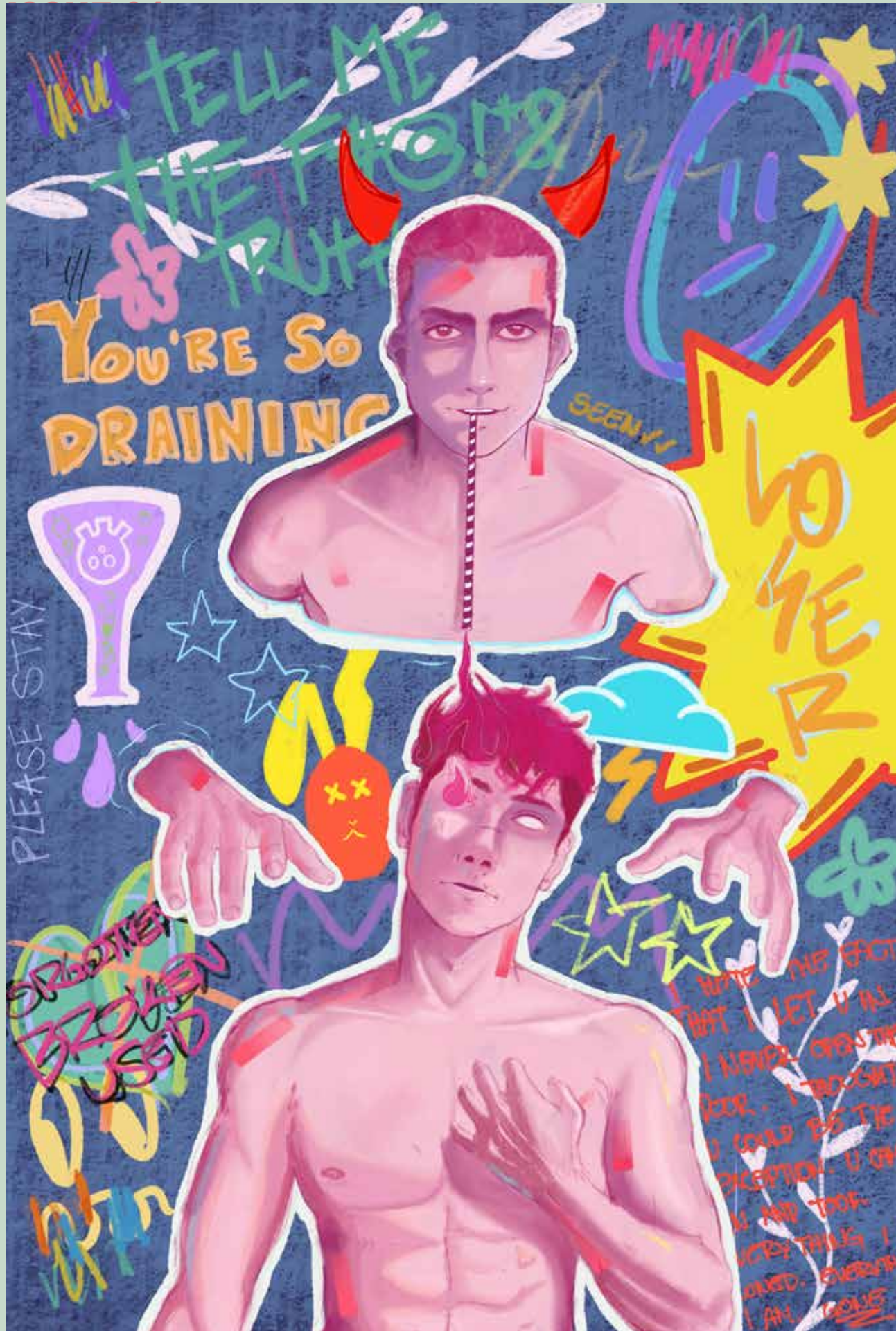
He was a low-gizmo kind of guy, didn't bother with public library 'Net access, had no pocket change for cable, no coin for anything remotely wi-fi-ish.

CDs, yes, but no DVDs.

Land line only. No dial-up modem. AM radio broken, black-and-white TV busted. His anti-techno strategy for isolation a success.

Just the paranoid demons strumming his Martin guitar, his future unplugged. His backdrop, a cabinet of drunken guns, spot-lit, they still work beautifully.

More wine, another loser's song for an audience of no one, not even me



JUST A SIP

Andrés Murillo

LETTER OF RESIGNATION

Genevieve Dalby

May 4th, 2022

Doug Simmons,
Supervisor, Accounting Department
CC: Janet Hall, Human Resources Manager
Levine, Schutzer, and Associates
95 Wellington West, Toronto

Dear Doug,

Please accept this letter as my official notice of my resignation from my position as Accountant, effective May 18th. Due to recent events, I am unable to continue working in Toronto.

My time at Levine, Schutzer, and Associates has provided me with invaluable experience for the last ten years of my employment. I appreciate the community and mentorship that I have found within the Accounting Department. I will miss working on such a strong team, but after talking with Janet Hall in HR, I think this is best.

I'm sure that HR has informed you of what has been happening, but I would like the opportunity to explain it myself.

I had another interaction with a pigeon this week.
Both humiliating,

(as I realized that we walked at the same pace and with the same cadence)
and terrifying,
as it immediately went for my face.
Again.

A crowd of university interns were watching me,
who,
after pointing out the physical similarities between the bird and myself,
(we were admittedly wearing the same colour palette and I was wearing the hat - you know the one)
began to record me,
which added to the above-mentioned humiliation.

I'm sure you're aware of the extensive record that HR holds,
(specifically Janet)

filled with similar incidents. Notably, mostly pigeon-associated.

(it should be noted that there was a heavily cardinal-related period last July and Janet said it would be unfair to blame this all on pigeons when it seems to occasionally extend to other bird species when I wear cologne and tuck in my shirt all the way)

They are incredibly smart, they can memorize a face.
My face.

It was previously recommended by HR only to go outside when arriving/leaving the office,
as it is clear that the pigeons
(and sometimes other birds)

wait
(in established groups)

for me to come outside.

In all honesty, I am not sure if they are attacks,
rooted in hatred of my essence,
or romantic attempts.

(The Ornithology Department at the university thinks it could be a little of both)

It is entirely possible that a flock of pigeons,
which mate for life,
have chosen me.

But after this pigeon incident,
(the sixteenth of this year)

and the dove incident last month,
(where the birds repeatedly dived into the window next to me in carefully timed hits in order to gain access to my body,)

I no longer think I am fit for city life, nor for Levine, Schutzer, and Associates.

Before my departure, I will do everything I can to support the team from the safety of my home, as per Janet's recommendation, since I have already maxed out my health benefits for the year after this week's attack.

Sincerely,
Robert Taube



Unsent Tweets

Everyone

I've sucked off more churchgoers than you've been to church in a year.

Everyone can reply

Tweet

- rob mclennan and 3 others liked your Tweet
Tax those fucking churches out of existence.
- Tanis MacDonald liked your Tweet
pic.twitter.com/t3XZqR0j8m
- Paola Ferrante and Rémi Forte liked your Tweet
Fail welcome. pic.twitter.com/5F6TfXHrfd
- David Lenna followed you
- Dean Garlick and 2 others liked your Tweet
"I want to send you a box of poetry."
An appetizer. A taste. A meal. A feast.
Let me cull from @knifeforkbook's remarkable catalogue/inventory.
#BabyImYours
Choose your own price point:
knifeforkbook.shop/store/p71/KFB_... pic.twitter.com/So2cAf4Xqh

Trending in Canada
Dale Hawerchuk

Los Ange... · September 30, 2022
Trevor Noah's exit won't just hurt 'The Daily Show.' Here's why it hurt all of late night TV.

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POLITICAL COCKSUCKERS

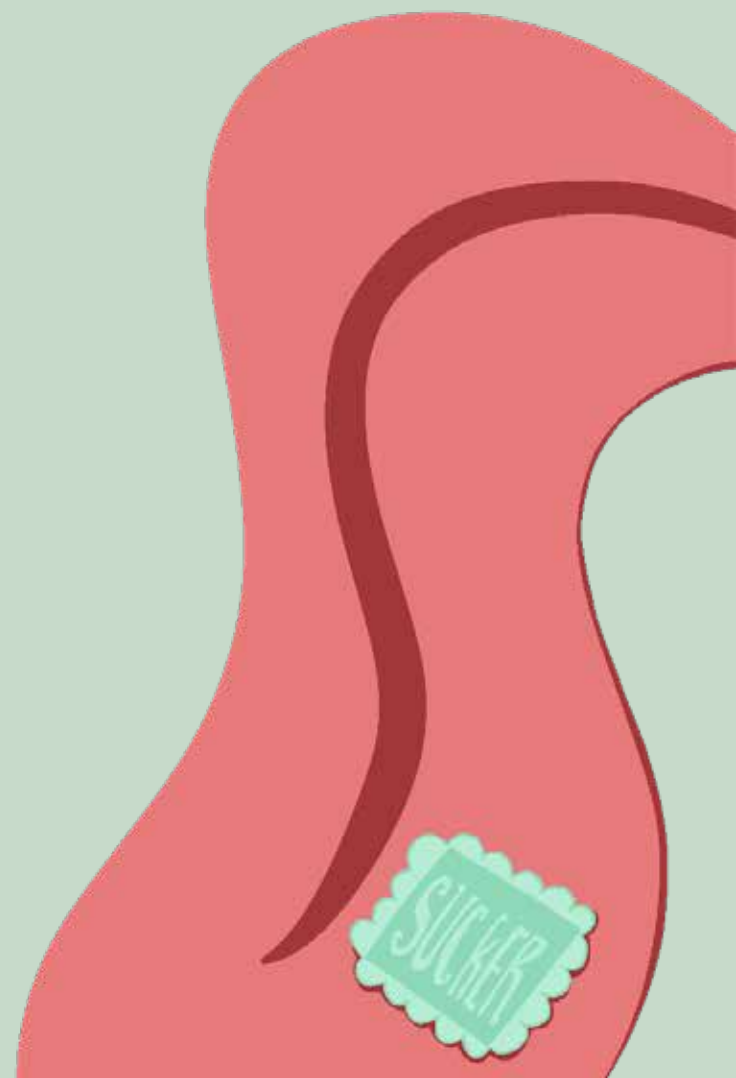
Kenneth Pobo

My oldest friend referred to a sickening politician as a cocksucker. Why is this bad? It could be a compliment. But it's usually said angrily.

It's hard to find a fitting name for a sickening politician—so many are. Whether they suck cock or not is beside the point. Unless they pass laws against decent cocksuckers.

UNSENT TWEETS

KIRBY



FREE APP

Victoria Butler

Little screen world
Pushing its fear into
My real life body

I can be hated
Inside the square
And the blood will drain
From my beating heart
All day long

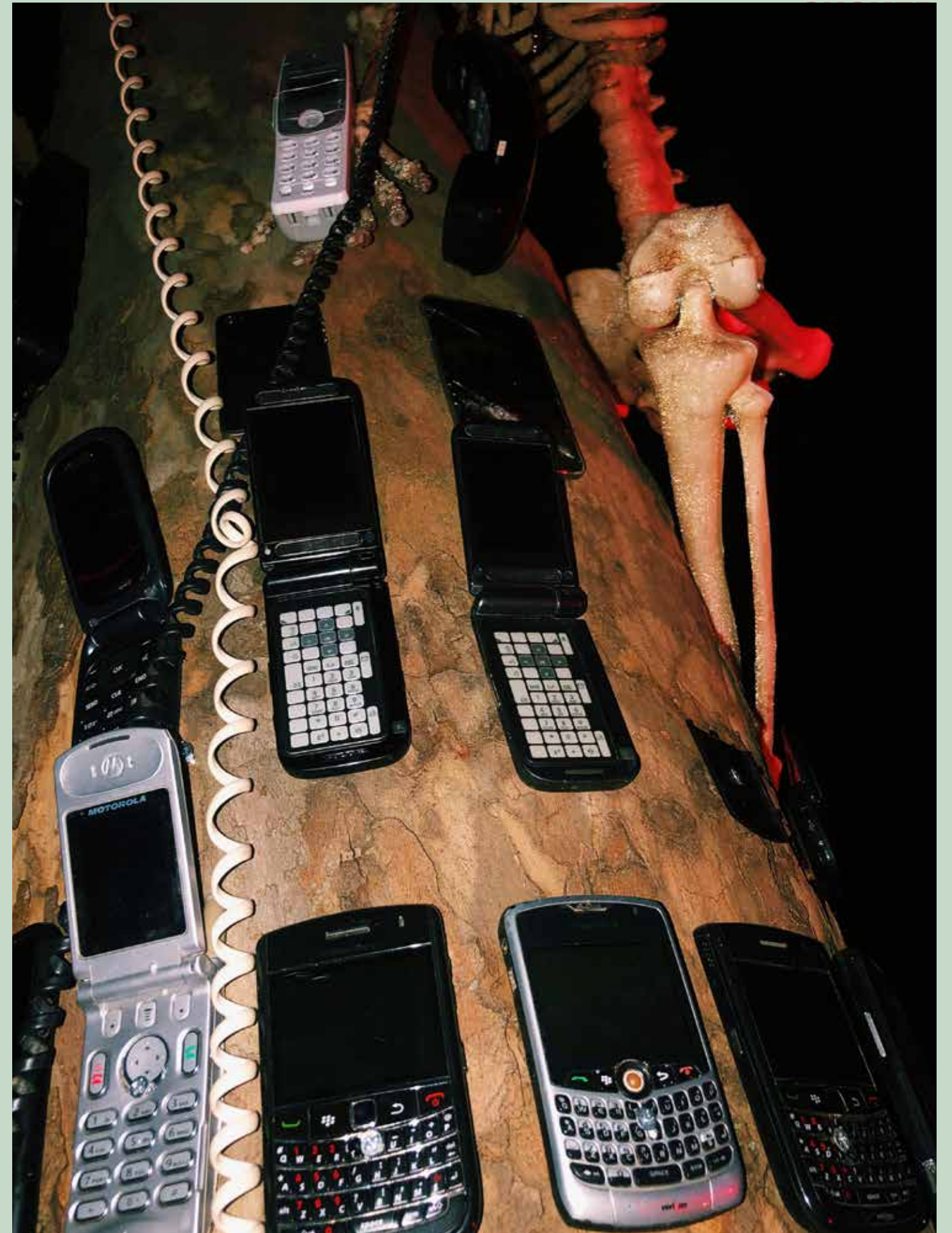
I'll pale
When someone
Doesn't see me anymore

Feel sick
When I'm surveilled
And miss it when I'm not

I love to be a stranger
Even to myself.

UNTITLED

Kelly Stohr



THE POKER GAME

Matt Gulley

imagine for a bit,
a high and arid head
of which four
surround a table

the cards are all face down
chips and thumbs
wander, searching
liquor heavy in the cup

and I'm there
cracking a joke
and bashing language
fixed fork in brashly crashing

and it gets so tight
and breathing brassy
steam pushing our big heads back
and laughing, laughing

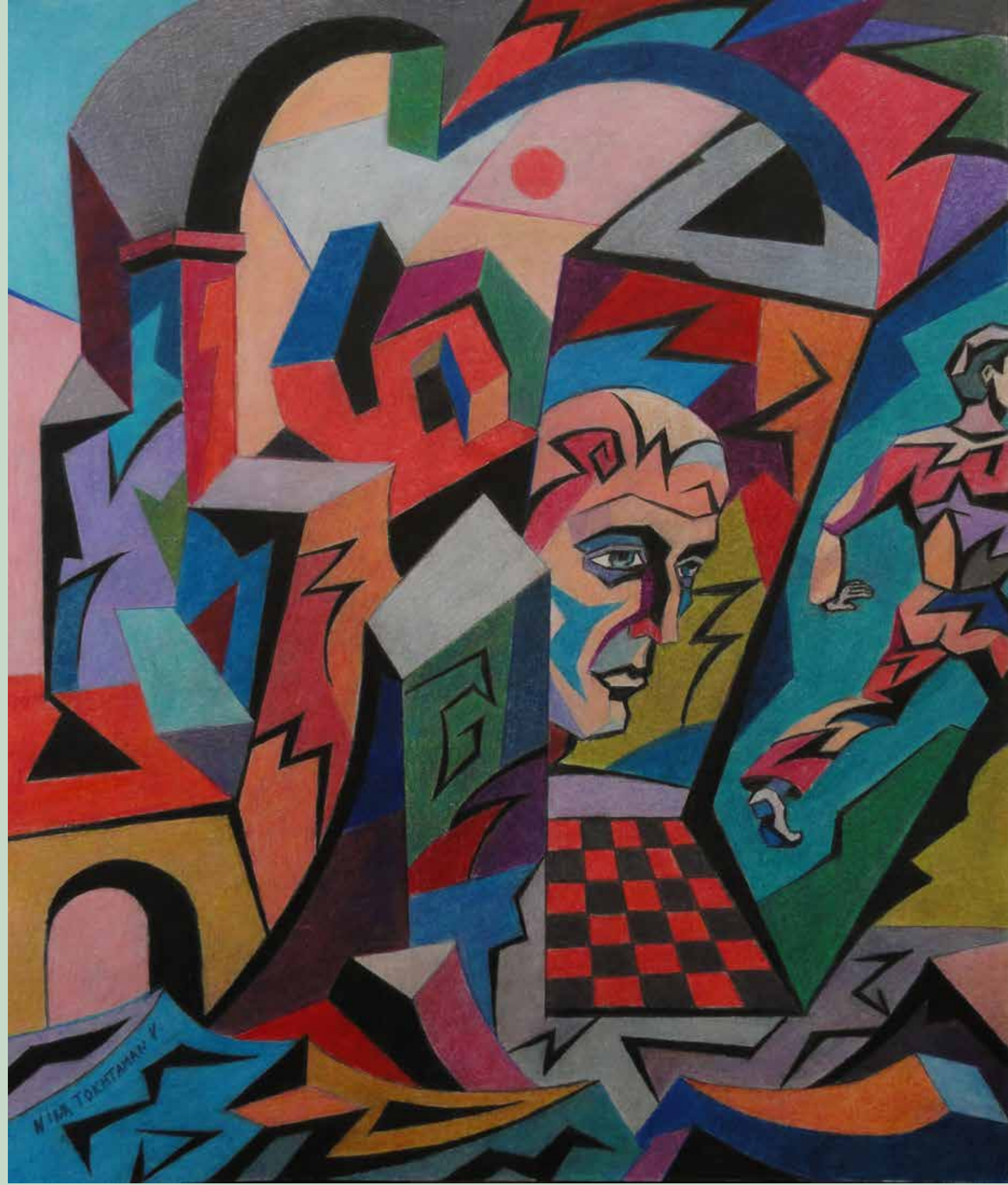
and the heads tilt back
and inflate until
not popping but becoming
permeable to the air

and big heads cross upon the plane
osmosis and then go between
until there is little difference
between head and room

head and room
now all the same
thing
still throwing back, still, still

CRACKED MIRROR

Nina Tokhtaman Valetova



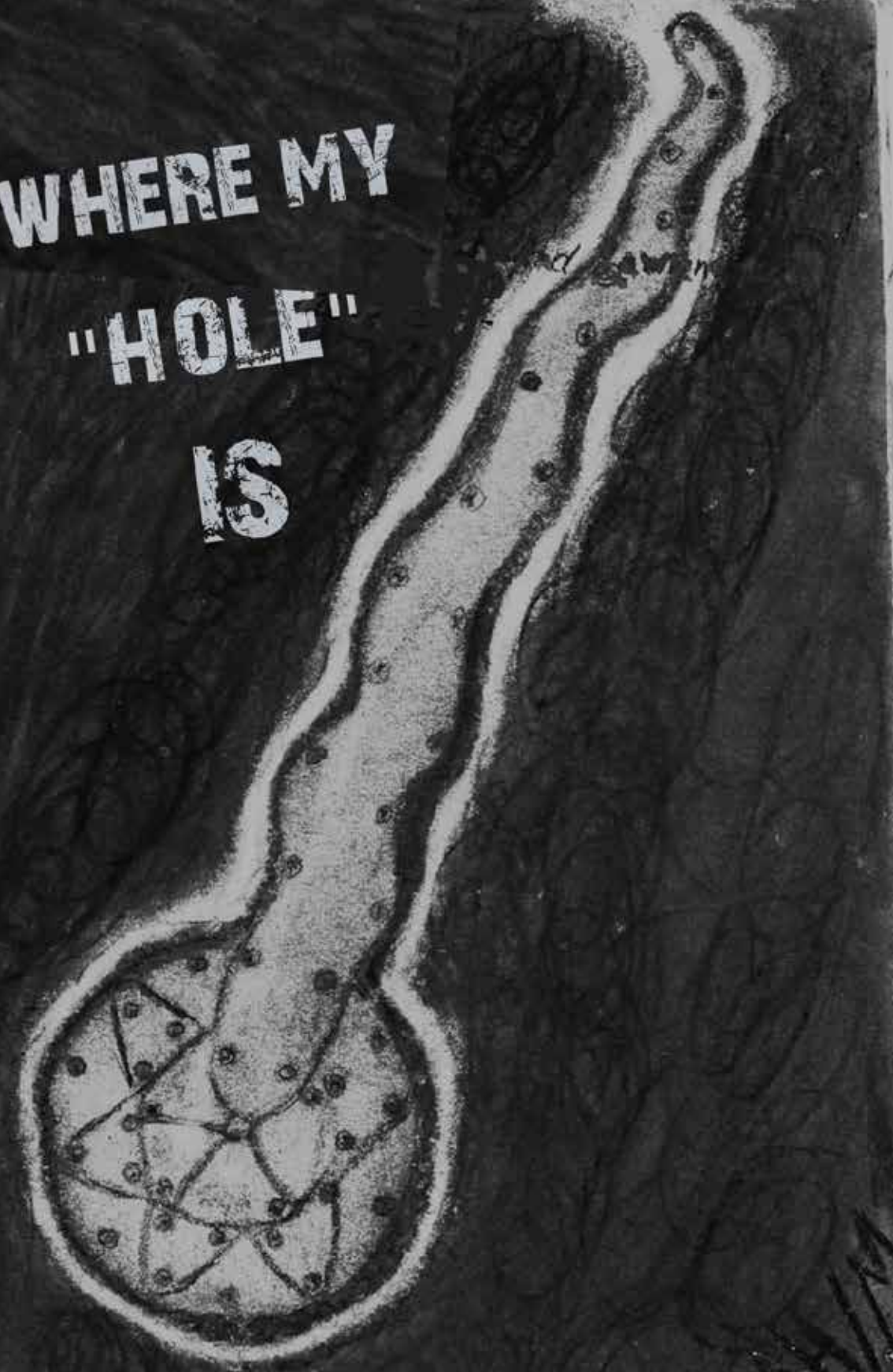


SUCKER

TRAMS PERIOD SEX MAGIC

Jaden Pound

WHERE MY
"HOLE"
IS



Party favours all
round - I dance, drink,
laugh, + meet
new peeps

they lovingly sit with me as I
lose a reel of film from
my life, after
stupidly (but accidentally) snorting
a whole
CAP
FUL

Who am I?
Where am I?
I CAN'T POSSIBLY
BE ANY HIGHER!

Who am I?
Where am I?
I CAN'T POSSIBLY
BE ANY HIGHER!

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BE ANY HIGHER!

Who am I?
Where am I?
I CAN'T POSSIBLY
BE ANY HIGHER!

I WOULD

I come and go... I am simultaneously here... and nowhere... I
I come and go... I am simultaneously here... and nowhere... I
I come and go... I am simultaneously here... and nowhere... I
I come and go... I am simultaneously here... and nowhere... I

realize a vivid dream (like a frantic film) in a dark
realize a vivid dream (like a frantic film) in a dark
realize a vivid dream (like a frantic film) in a dark

3 dimensional

Kalidoscope tunnel that constantly closes in to a single beam of liquid light.

I come and go... I am simultaneously here... and nowhere... I
realize a vivid dream (like a frantic film) in a dark
3 dimensional
Kalidoscope tunnel that constantly closes in to a single beam of liquid light.

THE SEDUCTION GAME

Andrea Vasile

Fig-sized croakers

awaken from

icy slumber

cacophony of

come-ons

most seductive

She's fair game

Including small sopranos

It's fate

They'll find

one big baritone daddy

Erasure from: The Frogs Melt when Mating Season Starts: Annie Roth: National Geographic

NOBODY'S PERFECT

Zeke Jarvis

Look, I've always said that, at some point, I'm going to make mistakes. I never said that I'd be perfect. I never said, for instance, that I would always use the right word at the right time. Sometimes, ideas are complicated, and you don't state them perfectly. And I never said that I would remember my loved ones' birthdays. There's such a hectic schedule, who can always get it right? And I never said that I wouldn't throw up three bean burritos with a total of eleven packets of fire sauce in a Taco Bell bathroom. I'd been drinking. It could happen to anyone. And I never promised anyone that, when I walked out of said Taco Bell bathroom, my pants might not have been on. Like I said from the outset, I'm going to make mistakes. And I never promised anyone that I wouldn't root through old people's things to collect the money that I might use on booze and/or Taco Bell. I'm not perfect, and I make mistakes like vomiting in a fast-food restaurant bathroom or stealing from people who don't deserve it. We're all human, and we need to accept each other's faults. Also, I never promised that I wouldn't partake in the consumption of human flesh. I totally get that this violates many of the most basic rules that people live by, and it's literally criminal. But do we really want to live in a world where we judge each other and don't let people be who they really are? Do we want to be stuck in some kind of hellscape where we act like secret police who are always looking at who's throwing up in Taco Bell bathrooms, stealing money from old people, and/or practicing cannibalism? I certainly don't want to, and I think that most of us want the forgiveness and protection of a "nobody's perfect" understanding of life. That's certainly necessary for me to keep in mind as I abduct homeless people, dress them in McDonaldsland-character costumes, and force them to fight for my amusement. I understand that doing that might seem "strange" or "unacceptable" to some folks, but there are two facts that you need to remember. First, while Taco Bell is definitely more satisfying to eat while drunk than McDonalds is, Taco Bell doesn't have the rich history of seriously disturbing characters like the Hamburglar or Grimace. Like, did you know that Grimace started out as an evil tastebud and, only after somebody figured out that this was such a fucked-up backstory that they actually retconned him to be Ronald's friend. But the Hamburglar, who the fuck is like "A convicted felon will make kids want to eat in our restaurant"? But, I'm not judging whoever the fuck created the Hamburglar and Grimace, because they're human. And that's the second thing that you should remember. Some people make the mistake of creating the Hamburglar, and others make the mistake of trying human flesh. Who can say which is worse? The thing to do is just to accept everyone's faults and not call the police. Because nobody's perfect.



**HOW MANY LICKS
DOES IT TAKE TO
GET TO THE CENTER
OF MY 'OH GOOD GOD
MAKE IT STOP!'**

Katie Klimacek





MY SUNLIGHT AND CHILDISH TONGUE

Jude Armstrong

I leaned down in the red, silvery sun
to reach for the branches
of that half-ripe lime tree.
The white veins of the
sour and teeth trapped fruit
have secretly hidden hormones and my future
inside them.

Giggles from the girl beside me
offers a kind of tenderness
in her palm,
leaving the waves of cruelty to the wind.
I know this kind of kinship gently,
in dirt and sticky fingers.

But when I rise to full height,
ribboned legs stretching into words,
I am a man named after men
and I barely know her anymore.

Yet the roughed up hem of her
still rests heavy on my tongue.
Like a kind of too-thick, too-sweet candy.
I cannot bear to feel her anymore.
I spell out how she needs to unlearn
the high of her voice and twist of her wrist.

Even after I drag my mouth
to dentist appointments where
they flush my chest out with prayers,
I can still feel her.

SKIM MY HEART

Simon Alderwick

An American soldier inside a Russian
doll inside a Nigerian prince, stationed
overseas, is ready to take our relationship
to the next level. Bank details, please.

High definition, caller waiting.
Would you take my name,
my father's name, if I gave you
my mother's maiden name?

I want to know everything about you.
The street you grew up in, the last
three digits on the back of your card.
I've never felt so close to someone,

never felt this way before,
even if you've stopped answering
my messages. Even if the fraud squad
are trying to poison me against you.

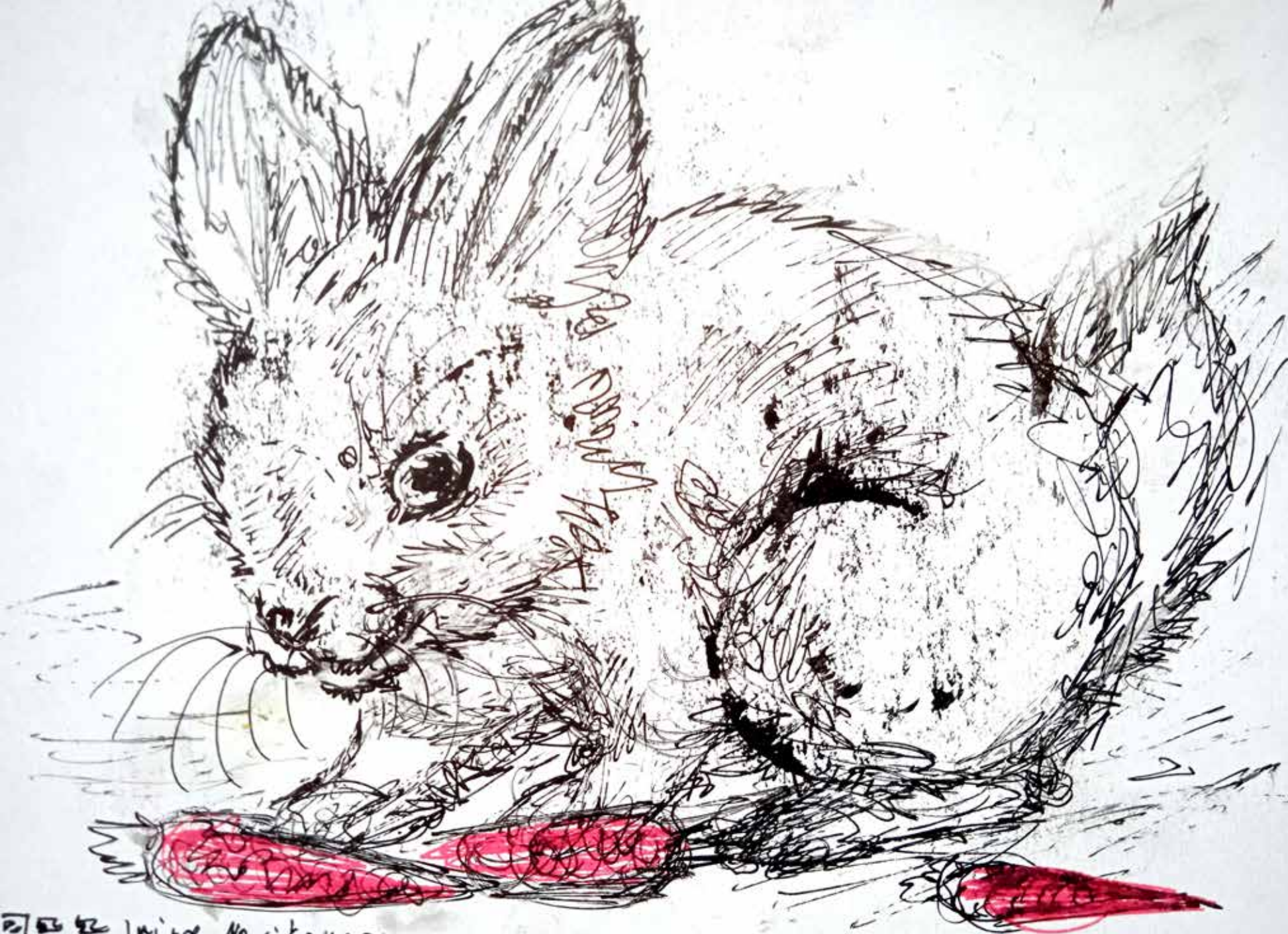


BIRTHDAY BLUES

Bisma Jay



-Lonely as fuck-



LITTLE RABBIT

Irina Tall

SUDSUCKER

Shawn Roberts

Sometimes its okay
wash your mouth out
get a little
soap on the tongue
soap on the tongue

Reconsider.

Spit it out.

Everything is gonna
be okay
its just a little
soap on the tongue
soap on the tongue

BIOGRAPHIES

Emma Schuster is twenty-one-year-old poet and Environment Studies student at the University of Waterloo. She is currently writing and working out of Ottawa. After discovering her love of poetry at eleven, she began to write and hasn't stopped since. Emma recently released a self-published poetry zine about her love for the city of Ottawa and is currently working on one about women and art.

Affrica Spence, is a proud second generation Jamaican Canadian. A lover of all things arts with a specialty in film creation, painting and spoken word poetry. They have completed both film production and film studies training at Concordia University and the NYFA. Affrica has also garnered notice as an official selection in several film festivals including but not limited to: the Caribbean Tales International Film Festival, Montreal Independent Film Festival, WebFest T.O and the NY International Arts Festival. As for painting and spoken word, this self taught artist has performed for organizations such as Toronto Artscape and been featured in galleries such as the BC Penticton Gallery. From 2016 to present day most of her attention has been building a passion project, Voetry, a docu-series that combines spoken word poetry and visual arts.

Madeleine (Maddie) Silva is a bi-racial writer who currently works as a motion picture coordinator at a Los Angeles-based management company. Maddie's poems have been featured in Kingdom of Pavement and through Meridian Exhibitions, an ArtCenter alumni collective. Her most recent work appears in Altadena Poetry Review. Maddie tried to escape the Inland Empire but only got as far as the San Gabriel Valley.

Claire Beeli is a student and writer from Long Beach, California. You can find her work featured in Seaglass Literary and forthcoming in Love Letters Magazine. Her dog is bigger than she is.

Milly Aburrow fabricates a transformative, encapsulating space, cluttered with materialistic objects and representations of food substances scrutinising the superfluous associations within our everyday sustenance. Within the essay 'Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption' by Roland Barthes he states: 'When he buys an item of food, consumes it, or serves it, modern man does not manipulate a simple object in a purely transitive fashion; this item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies.' Aburrow's work is a current investigation in whether food needs to be a vessel of communication which transcends into other contexts of visuals and linguistics. Exploring gender, sexuality and stereotypes associated with food, embedded within our society, which has occurred throughout history and still occurs today - the naive, tacky and flamboyant disposition of her sculptures proposes connotations of irony with these notions, challenging the overarching patriarchy of Western society and breaking down outdated stereotypes.

Samuel Strathman is a poet, visual artist, and author. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in Juniper, Pulp Literature, The Sprawl Mag, and other publications. His debut poetry collection, "Omnishambles" is forthcoming with Ice Floe Press.

ryan fitzpatrick is the author of four books of poetry, including Coast Mountain Foot (Talonbooks 2021) and Sunny Ways (Invisible 2023).

Veronica Clements is a Chicago based artist and graduate student at Northwestern University. Her realism oil paintings center around girlhood and symbols from vanitas still life paintings, which deal with impending death and fleeting beauty.

Salena Casha's work has appeared in over 50 publications in the last decade. Her most recent work can be found on Pithead Chapel, Scrawl Place, CLOVES, and trampset. She survives New England winters on good beer and black coffee. Follow her on twitter @salaylay_c.

Andrés Murillo (he/him) is an emerging illustrator and writer from Costa Rica, currently based in Dublin, Ireland. He's recent graduate from English Studies at Trinity College Dublin. He served as an illustrator, writer, and head of photography at Trinity News, the college newspaper, and its arts and culture magazine, TN2. With a passion for strong, vibrant colors and powerful storytelling, he aims to marry the narrative and the visual into his work while exploring a wide variety of styles and approaches.

Karla Linn Merrifield has had 1000+ poems appear in dozens of journals and anthologies. She has 16 books to her credit. Following her 2018 Psyche's Scroll (Poetry Box Select) is the full-length book Athabaskan Fractal: Poems of the Far North from Cirque Press. Her newest poetry collection, My Body the Guitar, nominated for the 2022 National Book Award, was inspired by famous guitarists and their guitars and published in December 2021 by Before Your Quiet Eyes Publications Holograph Series (Rochester, NY). She is a frequent contributor to The Songs of Eretz Poetry Review. Web site: <https://www.karlalinnmerrifield.org/>; blog at <https://karlalinnmerrifield.wordpress.com/>; Tweet @LinnMerrifield; <https://www.facebook.com/karlalinn.merrifield>.

Genevieve Lang Dalby (they/them) is a queer writer from Toronto. With an acting background and a Specialist Bachelor's in English from the University of Toronto, Genevieve loves to combine pre-established formats with comedic twists. They have been published in long con magazine and Issue 2 of Block Party.

KIRBY's work includes POETRY IS QUEER (Palimpsest Press, 2021) WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE CALLED? (Anstruther Press, 2020) THIS IS WHERE I GET OFF (Permanent Sleep Press, 2019) SHE'S HAVING A DORIS DAY (KFB, 2017) & editor NOT YOUR BEST No. 2, The Queer Ass Fuck Issue (KFB 2021). They are the publisher, purveyor of fine poetry at knife | fork | book poetryisqueer.com

Kenneth Pobo (he/him) is the author of twenty-one chapbooks and nine full-length collections. Recent books include Bend of Quiet (Blue Light Press), Loplop in a Red City (Circling Rivers), and Lilac And Sawdust (Meadowlark Press) and The Book of Micah (Moonstone Arts). His work has appeared in North Dakota Quarterly, Asheville Literary Review, Nimrod, Washington Square Review, Mudfish, Hawaii Review, and elsewhere.

Victoria Butler is a writer from Barrie, ON. She is the former Poet Laureate of said hometown and was the first woman to hold the title. Her debut poetry collection, "Little Miracles" was published with Black Moss Press in 2021. Butler lives with her two cats, Zelda and Navi. Find her at @victoriabutlerpoetry or victoriabutler.ca

Kelly Stohr is a Brooklyn-based writer who has gotten much more joy out of taking photos lately. She lives with her cat, Turtle. Her poetry + short fiction has been published in GLITCHWORDS, Fifth Wheel Press, Pile Press, Third Iris Zine, and Vagabond City Lit. Her photography has been featured in Re-Side Zine.

Matt Gulley is 35 years old. He attended Wayne State University in Detroit and the MFA program at Long Island University in Brooklyn. He currently resides in Brooklyn with his partner Jenna. Recently published poetry in The Madrigal, The Twin Bill, Blood Tree Literature, The London Reader, and Sunspot Literary Journal. @selfawareroomba on twitter dot com, www.matt-gulley.com.

Nina Tokhtaman Valetova is New York based artist. She established an early interest in art, which led her to art school and then to university BGPU in Ufa. Nina is award winner of Premio ALBA 2009, Certificate and Medal, Casa Editrice Alba, Ferrara, Italy in 2009. Nina is American Art Award winner in category “Cubism” in 2018. Using techniques such as oil, acrylic, and colored pencil, Nina addresses several aesthetic categories around ancient cultures, mythologies, fantasy, metaphysics and philosophy. The theme of science is also presented in artworks, like a homotopy and mobius strip. Nina Tokhtaman Valetova is an established artist in the current wave of bold, experimental artists. Exploration of synthesis different styles has been a recurring feature in her work. In general, Nina’s art does not fall into the one category and style. Often each piece is created in several styles. Searching new way in creating art, Nina establishes Synthesis Painting Style in contemporary art, that combines of suprematism, surrealism, cubism with abstract and figurative arts. Nina Tokhtaman Valetova has broadly exhibited her work internationally, mainly in Europe, China and USA. To learn more about Nina and her artwork visit her website <https://www.artvaletova.com>.

Jaden Pound (he/him) is a queer artist who graduated from OCAD University’s Drawing and Painting program. Jaden’s previous work has been inspired by his deep fear of climate change and it’s relationship to his personal battles with Bipolar Disorder and PTSD. His most recent works explore the themes of intimacy and the queer experience. No matter the subject matter, Jaden’s work is known for his use of vivid colours and sense of edge. Jaden has plans to become a tattoo artist and his work can be found at: @jaden_inks @jaden_paints.

Roméo Desmarais III (“he/them”) is proudly/loudly Queer/2Spirit, Francophone, & “Muskrat Métis* du Grand Lac Ste-Claire” (*Indigenous). His work is forthcoming in Great Lakes Review’s Special Indigenous Issue, MockingOwl Roost’s Special Edition “All the Colors”, and “back-going” in Synkroniciti Magazine’s “Intersections” Issue, Oddball (twice), The Church-Wellesley Review (twice) & more. Some other hats they wear: multimedia artist, singer-songwriter-pianist, social activist, travel enthusiast... London, Ontario is Homo Sweet Homo. Romeo is addicted to his bf, backgammon, their cats, caffeine, conversation, alliteration, and run-on-sentences. He BLASTS OFF his performances by bellowing: “I... AM... RoMeO-HoMeO ô€ tHę MâRtiÃñS >{:):!!!”—their pseudonym since 1991.

Andrea Vasile, who grew up in Ottawa and New Jersey, is inspired by nature and the ever-changing city. Andrea found success in Clevermag, Turbula, Jones Ave and Ascent Aspirations. Recently in The Basil O’Flaherty Feminist Voice, Event Horizon Literary Magazine Issue 9, Oddball Ezine, Mocking Owl Roost and receiving third prize from the poet laureate of Ottawa for I Am a Human Being. Work in Analogies & Allegories Literary Magazine and Panoplyzine as well as Ottawa’s newest publication Flo. She finds our world changing in puzzling and curious ways and feels the need to speak out.

Zeke Jarvis (he/him/his) is a Professor of English at Eureka College. His work has appeared in Moon City Review, Posit, and KNOCK, among other places. His books include, So Anyway..., In A Family Way, The Three of Them, and Antisocial Norms. His website is zekedotjarvis.wordpress.com

Katie Klimacek is a multidisciplinary artist based in Chicago, IL. Her artwork is a blend of her signature oddball humor partnered with her day-to-day observations and inner thoughts. Katie is known for her screaming faces and large, bulging eyes that have become the cornerstone of her work. Some people find them to be strange, Katie finds them rather delightful. Follow her on instagram @itajustkatie_chi.

Jude Armstrong, a young author and poet, is the founder of Verum Literary Press and a staff contributor at Cloudy Magazine. Their work has been published or is forthcoming in Healthline Zine, Corporeal Lit, Sage Cigarettes, Anti-Heroine Chic, Limelight Review and more. You can find them at <https://jude-armstrong.carrd.co/>.

Simon Alderwick lives between Wales and the Philippines. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in Magma, Broken Sleep, Pidgeonholes, Alchemy Spoon, Ink Sweat & Tears, Anthropocene, Poetry Salzburg, Acropolis, Poetry Lab Shanghai, London Grip, Eye Flash, the Telegraph, and elsewhere.

Bisma Jay is a queer and nonbinary multimedia artist who has recently graduated from OCAD University with a BFA in Photography. In their work, they seek to create more positive representation of queer and trans BIPOC folks living in the diaspora. In their spare time, they like to make videos for Instagram, design clothes, and take endless self-portraits.

Irina Novikova is an artist, graphic artist, illustrator. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art, and also has a bachelor’s degree in design. The first personal exhibition “My soul is like a wild hawk” (2002) was held in the museum of Maxim Bagdanovich. In her works, she raises themes of ecology, in 2005 she devoted a series of works to the Chernobyl disaster, draws on anti-war topics. The first big series she drew was The Red Book, dedicated to rare and endangered species of animals and birds. Writes fairy tales and poems, illustrates short stories. She draws various fantastic creatures: unicorns, animals with human faces, she especially likes the image of a man - a bird - Siren. In 2020, she took part in Poznań Art Week.

Shawn Roberts is a Canadian poet and photographer based in Ontario, where he tries to live an authentic life free of the influences of social media and the corporate world.



BLOCK PARTY

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