

# HORRIPILATION

*by icarus and westwind*





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# H O R R I P I L A T I O N

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## A H O R R O R Z I N E

from *Icarus* and *Westwind*

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# HALLOWE'EN USED TO BE MY FAVOURITE HOLIDAY

Aoibh Anna

Sweet rubber taste  
of saliva pooling  
in the cavities  
of fake vampire teeth  
in my adolescent mouth.

Even with their cheap plastic  
digging into my gums, sharp  
in all the wrong places,  
I remember them better

than any of the sweets  
I begged for,  
crawling from door  
to door, desperate  
for just one bite.

# Fifteen Minutes Past Midnight

Rafael Aroustamian

## I

*Tick, Tick, Click, Tick...*

I despised that damned clock to eternity and back. Whoever put up the old thing in the campaign office should be hunted down and shot. When the room was no longer filled with grassroot activists and shoddy businessmen, it clicked and ticked and tocked until the sound resonated in my brain. It had seen fit to fill my work space with its obnoxious ticks, and I could not shake the feeling it had imposed on my soul, no matter how hard I looked at graphs of starvation or statistics of squalor.

A knock on the door was heard, a momentary sound of relief from the clock's chimes. Hahn, a campaign manager of middling quality, had seen fit to ruin my careful analysis of the current presidential campaign, *my presidential campaign*. Rocking on his left foot to his right as he tried to inform me of things out of my control, yet again.

“Sir Groves, Perplexistan has been invaded once more, sir-”

I immediately looked down at my watch, mumbling what I had memorized long ago when countries came begging for recognition.

“The US is deeply concerned...The US is deeply concerned...”

“Sir?”

“I said, the US is deeply concerned. That is my statement.”

“One more thing sir, Hannah has called again. She wonders when you will be back home?”

Damn that woman to hell and back. She was more defiant than

Texas, more of a swing state than Arizona.

“Tell her to open the 2003 dry red. It will keep her busy, that’s for certain.”

“Yes sir.”

The tiny man scuttled away, closing the door. Immediately getting up from my chair, I rushed over to the television propped in the corner, next to the bookshelf housing manifestos. Turning on the bright display to see news reports of the Perplexistan conflict. Gore and violence filled the display immediately, live news reports teaming with visceral carnage.

How I enjoyed the freedom of the press.

My eyes wandered from the screen up towards the clock that drove me mad, its digits addictive. Processing the time as the big hand stood on the six and the little hand in between the 11 and the 12. Continuously hearing the ticking, slowly being enveloped by its trance once more. The guttural TV screams were drowned out by the loud noises made from the small clock, as the elfin third hand traversed the white background.

*Tick, Tick, Tick...*

And it was 30 minutes to Midnight.

## II

“I’m home.”

I said with no great enthusiasm, entering my residence in Washington suburbia. Noticing that the garden was unmowed, which was no surprise. Hannah must’ve drank all the red by now.

Just my luck, Hannah was asleep on the white ceramic tile, her blonde hair strewn about as the red lined her face and wrists. Quiet and

peaceful. Even with the jagged bottle of dry red mixing with the other red on the floor, she looked like a Goya painting. Tapping her cold head with my foot before realizing that it was ungentlemanly to wake a sleeping woman.

My momentary comfort in seeing my wife's frame was interrupted by the ticking of the clock in the inner dining room. The sound had followed its way into my home and had made itself my mistress! I stared at it with deep contempt, as its ticking pervasively invaded my thoughts and explored my deepest recesses of corruption. I had half a mind to smash it all to pieces, were it not for a phone call that stopped the momentary ticking. Fumbling with my phone, I answered it to none other than the jester himself.

"Congratulations Mister Groves, you won. The Traditionalist Progressives lost Texas. You are the most powerful man in the country."

I stared in disbelief towards the object of all my misery, and all my pride. Whispering back to the blithering idiot.

"I want NNDP activated, now."

"Sir? But you haven't been-"

"Now. For the US is deeply concerned."

"Y-yes sir."

The call ended as quickly as it began. And the ticking resumed as quickly as it had started, causing me to throw my phone in animalistic fury towards the timepiece. Shattering the glass, yet the hands still moved. Moving to rush out of the place I called home as a foreigner, yet consistently and thoroughly hearing the ticks. Again and again. Not even needing to look. I knew.

I knew it was 15 minutes to Midnight.

### III

A cold bunker never felt so warm before. I stood amongst a large array of screens with a pleasing smirk on my face, contrasted only by the half of a man sitting next to me, Hahn, with his quivering lip. Pacing back and forth, biting my lip as I rubbed my hand over my coarse beard, staring at the tiny screen that showed footage from the Perplexistan war.

“That’s right...take the bait bastards...”

Whispering slowly to myself, gleefully watching troops goose step across destroyed highways and obliterated churches. The clock had still followed me to the bunker in the Ozarks, but I now accepted its fateful calling. Its everlasting tick, tick, tick.

Suddenly, Hahn perked up as he received a message in morse code, glancing over to me with tears in his eyes.

“They hit San Francisco, sir...”

“Atom Bomb?”

“Yes sir...”

“Thank God. Now the US is **truly** concerned. Hit them back.”

“Where sir?”

“Everywhere.”

A silence enveloped the room, as Hahn nodded while breaking down into fitful tears. I continued to stare at the meaningless death on the screen. The baptism by fire was here. The ticking never stopped, but now it courageously spurred me forward. Smiling for the first time since my wedding day, I watched the screen sputter as the world above lost power.

In a dash of surprise, the ticking stopped. My cheerful visage changed to one of unadulterated dismay, as I glanced upon the clock

sitting on the metal bench.

One last time.

And it was 15 minutes past Midnight.

# My Strawberry Summer

Amelia Boeh

Image of the past. How I would eat my childhood. Pitchfork into the playground, where a little girl with red hair tells her friends what to do. I can hear her warbling like the cardinals up north, the state bird. “I see something!” Down-slurred, protective, I can’t tell if it is girl or bird who speaks. It is both in my fractured vision. There’s a crack in it. She cradles my memories like a shard of glass in her little girl hands. “Poor friend,” she whispers. “Broken friend.” She turns to her real friends, who are bruised and big-mouthed—big gaping lips like salmon watching some alien treat dip into their riverbed—and she is stern. “This could cut you guys up. I’m telling the monitor.” *Bruises are not breaks*, she thinks, and she wishes everyone healed.

The girl has many bruises. Ruddy and tender, like the sticky remains of a cherry popsicle, dried and painted on a chin. She knows her bruises are more special than the bruises of her real friends because she did them herself. Fleeting, tactile, maroon. They remind her of strawberries. She dreams of becoming a strawberry, something unfeeling and mortal, and wakes up sweating and screaming and crying.

“When I’m angry, I’m supposed to write down my thoughts,” says Purple Knees. He’s the one who pulled out his own tooth last year. “I don’t actually do that, though. So boring.” The girl, because she is a much better person than Purple Knees, writes down her thoughts when she is angry.

*Me, my closet door, its ugly brown wood. I was hitting the door the door was hitting me. Right one two three left one two three, we were hitting. My head. Hurt. I cupped it and fell through my bed. I fell into strawberry land, where the grass was azaleas and the squirrels were flamingos and the trees were rubies. But when I lifted my face from my bed I was back in my room. I felt them fill. I was still angry. A cup could not hold all the filling I was making with my eyes. I want to be a strawberry, but I'm just a girl. I'm only what I see.*

*I have a request for Santa or God. Please give me someone who will always be my friend. Understand me, console me, and stay by my side. I ask that they watch me do my hitting and let me have my way. Don't stop me, don't get help, just watch me and listen to me and ask me about my summer.*

*But turning me into a strawberry is probably easier, so that will do instead.*

The girl lied. She did not tell the monitor about the glass. What a jerk, to tattle on such a sad, severed item. I understand you, she thinks. She is just a girl with crimson hair. Her palms are just what they carry. Fissured. Transparent. Strawberry glass. The cardinals eat the worms. The salmon swim in the groggy sunrise. The piece of glass stays on the playground because it is a rose-tinted memory and nothing more.

“Did she say something was going to cut us?” asks Purple Knees, later.

“It’s probably part of her game,” another one, Frog Boy, says. He’s missing a lot of teeth, but he would never pull out his own.

“Oh,” says Purple Knees. “Let’s play Red Rover at bigfoot.”

The girl coined that name, *bigfoot*, for the tree stump rooted at the end of Lincoln field. Its jagged cracks resembled a paw, a very giant paw, and she saw stories in everything. “There’s a crack in it,” Frog Boy, or maybe some other kid, had said. “That’s because bigfoot was here,” she explained. Nobody believed her but me.

The little girl with red hair is my childhood. Her anger is a fleshy thing, skin then no-skin then skin again, and it is hers. What must it be like, to own some emotion? To be possessed by a feeling? It must be lovely! Lovelier than a patch of red cardinals in Illinois cornfields. Lovelier than the laughter of happy children. Lovelier than memory, because it is whole and alive and happening. This memory is about me. The fragment of glass is my grotesque past. I am the little girl. I wish I was kinder to her. “Your hair reminds me of strawberries,” I wish I had told her. Strawberry hair is better than strawberry bruises, and it would still be her own. “Tell me a story about your strawberry summer.”

# WINTER

Giorgia Carli

It's raining tonight, my love  
oceans of droplets  
pour down  
from the kitchen's  
ghosts  
I lit a candle  
vanilla scented, my love  
to set the atmosphere  
I placed it  
on the mantelpiece  
and watched it  
slowly  
devour itself

The tiny flame crackled  
a bit  
it must have heard  
you in your sleep

Tonight it's raining, my love  
I trace the droplets  
from the windowpane  
to your back

my fingers draw paths  
on the moorland  
of your skin  
freezing tundra  
at times  
it feels

Ribcage shows  
from the pale door of your winter

It's raining, my love just like you asked  
the sky heard  
you moan  
when the blade  
turned off  
your eyes

and now  
all that I'm left  
with is blood  
on your knife

# shivering to death

Cory Chen

shivering to death

I am abandoned

far off— a cottage in the distance

an orange glow melts the frost from its windows

hours of walking and the torment of frostbite

my skin takes on the imagery of a snowflake

looking behind me, I dissolve into the theory of my footsteps

a thud. An expiring body flush in knitted garments

enacting a snow angel in a summer solstice

melting,

I emerge from a corpse

I emerge from a corpse

melting,

enacting a snow angel in a summer solstice

a thud. An expiring body flush in knitted garments

looking behind me, I dissolve into the theory of my footsteps

my skin takes on the imagery of a snowflake

hours of walking and the torment of frostbite

an orange glow melts the frost from its windows

far off— a cottage in the distance

I am abandoned

shivering to death

# Belladonna Rose

Lauren Kogelman

There was a siren maiden  
who lived upon the moors.  
She danced barefoot beneath the stars  
upon the earthen floor.

She knew just how to glance, to flirt,  
to draw you in, to pose;  
So countless lovers would give chase  
to wed this perfect Rose.

But Rose was Belladonna;  
her kiss was poison sure.  
Her nectar was a sleeping draught  
for which there was no cure.

Yet I drink freely, raise my cup;  
my fate I read'ly chose.  
Eternal sleep I'll gladly take,  
to be with my sweet Rose.

# Pastor John

Megan Kohanarieh

Silence slithered into the closet and wrapped Poppy like a blanket of needles. The sobs began fighting their way up her esophagus as her small hands fumbled to cover her mouth.

She waited for the screaming to follow, wincing at every floorboard creak in anticipation of the overwhelming anger. Toes curling, eyes glued shut, she braced herself.

Like a sforzando, the forte was tucked around the corner, eagerly awaiting the correct time to strike.

It started with a

*Thud.*

In the dead of summer, Poppy's body shook as her heartbeat picked up. Her fingers grabbed at the frills on her pink dress as she shrunk herself, trying to disappear between the thick of the coats hanging above her.

*Footsteps.*

She jumped. For a moment, her emotions broke the thick barrier of her lips, allowing a soft whimper to escape.

*Footsteps stopped. Silence.*

*Footsteps approached the closet. Slowly, at first.*

Poppy writhed, kicking her feet aimlessly in an effort to pick herself off the ground. The tears gathered in holy matrimony before spilling onto her round cheeks, and subsequently on the floor below. She fumbled for the wall, taking a coat down with her.

The footsteps had ears.

*Step*

*Step...step...*

*Stepstepstepstepstepstep*

Her lungs drew knives of breath, piercing her throat, before being pushed out and pulled in again. She tried to step back, but her back was against the wall.

Slow...

Creaking...

Door...

Darkness spilled into the closet, engulfing the girl. Toes curled, eyes shut, she braced herself.

# The Curling Iron

Catherine Lange

The humming bathroom fan sucks up the rising smoke. Caroline twists her fine, flat hair into bronze swirls with the curling iron. With the other hand, she scrolls through ten second videos of golden retrievers rolling over and bible quotes set to music.

Caroline first appeared to me through the barbershop window, this svelte hairdresser with endless blonde waves adjusting her scissors with the idle meticulousness of a school girl arranging her pens before a final. I went immediately to her station, where she had hung her two month old license in the mirror, and let her drape the black cloth over my shoulders. She caught me staring at the cheap silver cross swinging between her breasts as she reached across me for the hair clippers. I held her gaze. She giggled.

My hair went from shaggy to a close shave. When there was no more hair left to cut, I took her to dinner. She was graceful and mild. She was a beautiful cook. She wouldn't sleep with anyone unless she was married to them, so I married her. I brought her to Seattle and then she was mine.

She shouldn't have cut off that beautiful hair or let her dark roots grow untamed. I tell her this, but she either doesn't hear me or refuses to. She lets a front piece of her hair fall and waves the curling iron to the other side of her face. I flinch.

The doorbell rings. She needs to change. Her yellow dress has a plunging neckline which highlights the contours of her chest, clings to

her ribs, her waist, her hips, and ends before the knee. I never would have let her wear this outside the house while we were married.

The man at the door has more salt than pepper in his beard. He keeps his head low, almost as if he's bowing. He presents her with a bottle of bourbon and a small chapbook of love poetry written by some girl I have never heard of.

I gave Caroline better gifts, but after my death, all the cream colored negligees and mother of pearl chains and rhinestone bracelets and herbal fertility remedies and little vials of unused perfume tumbled into the garbage.

She guides him to the couch, where she has set out a bowl of microwave popcorn. As she tugs her dress down to sit, the intruder's eyes graze her legs before flicking up to her face. Caroline stopped working, of course, when we married to take care of the house and the eventual son. I came home every night to dinner in a spotless house. She understood my temper. Sometimes I wonder why she didn't kill me then, when she could have sprinkled foxglove in with the green spices of a boiling red sauce or wintry stew. Why did strychnine never dissolve on my tongue with the cinnamon sugar on a sour cream coffee cake? I think about all the times she prepared meat, notching the cutting board with the gleaming blade of a kitchen knife as she sliced across the bloody grain.

They watch When Harry Met Sally and she is bored. Her hands hover above the popcorn bowl. They land on his knee.

I can't stand to watch him kiss her but I can't look away either. He tentatively tangles his fingers in her hair. She sighs. It's like watching a train wreck.

I didn't understand why we could never conceive a child until the night I rolled over in bed and my head hit her pillow. I heard a metallic crinkle and a plastic crunch. I pulled her body off the bed before prying the pillow loose. She stilled. I shook the pillow case. A pack of twenty-eight little white pills landed on the bed. One by one, I flushed them down the toilet. When I returned her face was messy with tears. She blubbered. I slapped her.

When I awoke the next morning, Caroline was in the bathroom, curling her hair. She had already applied makeup over the bruises. I put my hands on her shoulders, kissed her on the cheek and told her I forgave her.

I cranked the handle of the faucet. Warm water spilled into the porcelain tub. I shedded my pajamas and stepped into the steaming water. Caroline moved to sit on the edge of the basin, holding the curling iron whose coiled tail still ended in the outlet. She lifted the iron. I watched a blonde wave fall and she dropped the curling iron into the tub.

Caroline's cheek rests on the man's chest. Her forehead scrunches, a quick, nervous tic. Her head lolls away from him, to me. If only she would open her eyes. I can almost see her eyeballs rolling in her head, straining to follow the shadows slinking through her nightmare. I pray for her to open her eyes, and then, like an incandescent bulb struggling to life, her eyelids lift.

I do not know if she is looking at me but I am looking into her. She twists herself to the edge of the bed, straining to open the bottom drawer of the nightstand, from which she removes the box her engagement ring arrived in.

Inside, my wedding ring rests on a velvet bed, the shriveled finger still attached. She cradles the ring in the hollow of her palm and brings the band to her lips.

I know then that I may worm into bed, crawl between her and the intruder, here to stay another night.

# Where do the angels go after midnight?

Liv O'Brien

In the midst of a dark and wretched city, an angel cries.

A crash of thunder reverberates through the cobblestoned square, the statue in its center looming large on a marble plinth.

Her stone wings hang suspended over bare shoulders but leave her head exposed to the sky, face tilted back as if pleading to the heavens. The indifferent rain pours over her eternally open eyes, water streaming down her rigid cheeks.

My hands are frozen numb; I clench and unclench them inside the pockets of my raincoat. I strain my ears for the sound of approaching footsteps, but all I can hear is the raindrops pattering hard and loud on the plasticky hood over my head.

My numb fingers search through my pocket until they grasp a slip of paper. I pull out the note and squint at it in the brief moments before it gets soaked, the ink blurring on the soggy wad before a gust of wind sweeps it out of my hand into the depths of the night. But the words don't escape me. *Midnight. By the angel in the square.*

The clang of a bell rings out from behind me, and I turn to watch it swing in the tower above the church. Twelve strikes.

As the final toll fades, I scan the edges of the square around me. There's nothing to be seen in the dark buildings and alleyways. Tugging my hood farther over my face, I try to curl in on myself against the biting wind, but it's useless. The cold seeps through the shoddy material of my

raincoat like it's nothing.

Another minute passes and still no one appears. My cheeks are ice cold and my whole body is tensed up, shivering uncontrollably. Torturous seconds tick on and on. No one is going to show. Starting off, my feet sloshing through puddles, I think about the cup of hot tea that I'll make when I get home—earl gray with a dash of milk, the way my gran always makes it for us—and the warm, overstuffed couch that awaits me.

Before I reach the edge of the square, I spot something moving out of the corner of my eye. A flash of white in the alley to my left – then it's gone.

It must have been a piece of trash, a plastic bag fluttering in the wind.

Yes, of course.

But that doesn't stop the tingling feeling from crawling up and down my spine.

Squinting through bitter, icy rain, the dark streets all blend together. Every way looks the same. For a second, I forget which one leads to home.

As soon as I hesitate, an odd feeling stirs in my gut.

I turn around.

Across the square, a leering face leaps out at me.

Hard jaw, bulbous brow bone, twisted mouth. A bright white mask, glowing against the dark.

Blood rushes through my head, the pounding of my heart drowns out the sound of the rain.

I want to run. But my limbs are numb, frozen, as the masked figure steps

closer and closer. Even my lungs feel stuck, like I've forgotten how to breathe.

The figure stops a foot away from me.

For a moment we stand there staring at each other, the masked figure unreadable, me still as a deer in headlights.

And then it lunges.

The muscles in my limbs unfreeze too late. A pitiful flinch, and I'm caught. Arms squeeze tight around me. Pain singes on my ankles as my heels drag along the wet cobblestone. My brain screams at me to call for help, but no words come out. The next thing I see is shadowy arches, and now I know where we are heading. Above us, grotesques loom out of the darkness, bulging faces stretched in endless wails. We pass through the doors to the church, away from the pelting of the rain, and the grip on me slackens – I move to escape, but the masked figure shoves me back. Another shove, and I fall. The figure stalks me from above while I scramble on the floor of the aisle between pews. There's a sudden burst of pain in my scalp. My head is yanked back and I see the altar in front of me. In the absence of candlelight, it looks oddly grim – the statues are ghostly, the glorious oil paintings gray and flat. Even the gold of the cross is dulled in the darkness. An unfamiliar voice suddenly speaks from behind me. "Do you see the glory of the light?"

I don't say a word. My body feels like it's far away.

"Do you see it?" Harsher now. Another yank on my hair.

"Yes."

All I can think about is how stupid I was to follow the instructions of an anonymous note and not think to tell anyone where I was going.

"And now you will pay for your sins," the voice whispers.

High above the altar, the statue of an angel gazes down at me. I look into her face. *Help me*, I think. *Please don't let me die*. But her stone eyes are unseeing.

The glint of a knife.

I close my eyes.

A scene forms in my head.

Tomorrow morning, all the pious ladies in their dresses, all the men in their button-down shirts, will file in through the doors for Sunday service. They will find the horrified priest staring slack-jawed at the floor, where a waxen body lies in a stagnant pool of blood. The hands sticking out from the cheap raincoat sleeves will be limp, the fingertips blue. The face will be stark white, the skin like putty, the blank glassy eyes staring up at nothing.

The ladies and men will gasp and scream. Curses will drop from astounded tongues. Children will be shunted to the back of the crowd.

Peace be upon this poor soul, the priest will say.

But by that point, my soul will have already been long gone.

# The Bells

Eric Plotkin

Eddy glances up from his homework and squints. A light tap sounds through Eddy's and my dorm. "Did someone knock?" he asks. Then comes the rap. Quick, harsh, angry. Two girls stand in the doorway. They say they dorm directly below us and never get any peace or quiet. "Are we loud?" Eddy asks. "Do we stomp?" We catalog our deficiencies: on weekends, we drunkenly stumble in at two a.m.; I do bodyweight exercises in the dorm; whenever Eddy feels excited or nervous or anxious, he paces and waves his arms. "Whatever the problem is," Eddy says, "we'll fix it."

A week later, the girls knock again. Dark bags hang beneath their eyes. They say it's gotten worse. They barely sleep anymore. Have we stomped more out of spite? Eddy paces and waves his arms. We say we mean no harm and want to solve the problem, not escalate it. "What is the problem?" Eddy asks. The girls scoff, incredulous at our ignorance. They say we stomp and shake the ceiling with no regard for them. After they leave, Eddy shrugs on his winter coat and walks downtown, where he purchases two pairs of comfy, padded slippers. We tiptoe through the dorm. I do my workouts outside. Eddy quits his nervous, excited, anxious pacing. Instead, he chews his fingernails. The girls knock again.

Eddy carpets our dorm in bedsheets and pillows, thick enough that we wade through knee-high cotton. The dorm smells of fresh linen. One night, sunk in his mattress, unable to sleep, Eddy discovers his bedsprings squeak. He ditches his bed for his desk chair and decides it's

less of a hassle if he always remains there. I'm afraid his skin will mold with the chair.

The girls knock again. They're sunken versions of themselves. Bloodshot eyes, thinning hair. Eddy shouts to me, his voice muffled behind a mountain of pillows, "Head downstairs and get a sense of what they experience. That way, we'll know exactly how to solve the problem." Before I leave, I glimpse Eddy springing from his chair. I follow the girls downstairs. They fumble with their dorm's lock, too sleep-deprived to slot the key. From behind the door, a muffled bell sounds, as though we stand in the foggy yard of an abandoned church.

They unlock the door. Tolls flood the hallway. Hundreds of silver bells hang from their ceiling, all different sizes and hues. They twist and reflect the light. It sparkles. One girl catches my stare and says, "For decoration." The bells ring in a pattern. Forward and backward across the ceiling. It's Eddy as he paces. We crane our necks and follow the pattern for what feels like hours. We're transfixed.

# M A D L Y

Eloise Rodger

i wanted him and thick slabs of butter spread.  
i observed him, all school-girl, cheeks swelling, scarlet, bitter, red.  
he liked the other, snapping wish-boned, pretty-haired girls more,  
slinking, skulking, inviting, behind the classroom's splinter, hardwood,  
locking door.  
oh! how the tight-curled marionettes are slipping in, shyly tip-tapping  
that no one  
knows, at half-past four.

but i knew. and i liked it.  
worse, i craved to be one of his little girls. school-pudding,  
finger-stick-sticking, glass eyes, playground, pearls.  
we learn on mathematic blackboards to quantify, equate, but this thirst?  
heart rattle-clattering, roly poly legs, sweatily toiling, escapes.  
jammy-dodger thighs everywhere i look, to play flip-flopping fish on  
his coy and cutting hook.  
desk edges, damp and luncheon-stew, i knew the game and what to do.  
squeal, *smart little thing*, tongues, and throats, and what to say.  
mademoiselles kiss, but i would kill, for an A.  
waterbottle, watermelon-print, pointer-stick-of-wood. see it before bed,  
every night,  
gasp, writhe: yes, i was going to be very good.

morning after. the skin- crumpled, greying, new substitute pressed  
together a  
thousand knees,  
the whole school in assembly. distressing news. stale eulogy. hardly knew  
his grape  
vine, popping lips, bleached blue, in my head,  
sir is-, sir is-, sir is-  
dead.

a quarter past five, blu-tac, blueberry pie,  
my boots, the empty hallway,  
thud, thud, thud,  
i had left his room, proud of my  
little stain of blood.

# TEA FOR TWO

Eloise Rodger

My mother didn't like him. Which was fine, since I didn't particularly like my mother.

I'd heard that *the parent must first hate their child, if the child was to hate their parent*. I longed for the time when love looked like swaddled blankets and wet-mouthing squeals, shushing and swaying back and forth, back and forth. Now, it felt like a lost fumble in the dark. You had to milk it out of necessary cruelties. Rewire sterner mumblings in order to spell. Things that were said to be love didn't feel like love at all. And here was the terrible burden of needing someone who did not need you in return. That half the time, you hadn't a say in what happened – you were to suckle and grapple and ache anyway. That, even on the occasions it felt warm and sweet, love was only ever a rot setting in.

He seemed really lonely. So, I'd call up every few afternoons. There weren't many people by the seaside in winter and our conversations were good. Funny, even. Sometimes, I thought his house felt more like home than my own. Its exterior was falling apart, overgrown: this jagged, cobbled figure staring down at you from atop the hill – but inside, it was all wallpaper and mugs, flowerpots and biscuits. I'd walk up the path that never felt like it was headed the right way, and quietly remind my queasy body that we were going somewhere. Really, it was a place for two – and I felt bad about it. That there was only one.

My mother said *he had a nastiness to him*. Which was one of those

completely groundless insults of hers. They'd never met. *You're meant to pop over and say hello if you're new somewhere*, she'd say, glaring out the window, watching his lights flick off, one by one. I hated that sour face of hers. The piggish fatness of her hips. The scrunch of her nose. *Maybe, ma, you should've gone over to him. He's got difficulty walking, you know.*

This was the first of many arguments. *Well, if he's fucking looking to take in strays, I'm sure you'd be more than welcome. But, you're not here, you hear me? You're not fucking welcome here.*

There were things at his that we didn't have at ours. He'd done the whole place up. All of it himself. The heating. The stove. Got blankets and books and backgammon. You could even take a bath. *Would you like to take a bath?*

I hadn't much comfort around men in these parts. I knew what they were thinking. Drooling, dim-witted creatures, slurring and leering. But, I'd wanted to, actually. He was much older, could've been my father. He'd let me be. So, we'd make supper, talk slowly, sometimes dry plates in silence. And that night, I lit a candle, locked the door. I stared down at the nakedness of my body, splayed out in the murky water. Ran fingers up thighs, wondering intently why they didn't feel at all like my own. Like if I spliced them open, there mighn't be any blood. And outside, I could feel him, breathing softly.

There weren't any towels. None hanging. None in the cupboard. I returned into my clothes anyway, acutely aware of the dampness of my skin, the hair clinging to my collarbones. And when I came out, he'd made hot drinks and set a fire.

*I'm sorry about your mother, love,* he'd smiled.

*That's alright. Thanks for having me over, anyway. She only needs to*

*cool off. I think I'll get out of your way and head home.*

*Nonsense. You know, I'd kill for the company. She wouldn't come looking, would she?*

*How'd you mean?*

*Only that she wouldn't. That nose of hers, all upturned, scrunched up.*

*But you haven't seen her nose.*

I'd suddenly felt very hot. Like the windows were too small and the air wasn't right. Like there was something in the house that had gone terribly off, that was overwhelmingly dead and had been there for weeks.

*She hasn't seen me, rather. But, you do, love. You see me.*

*Sorry, how'd you mean I see you?*

*Only that having you around is so good for me. Bringing a bit of life to the place.*

*Right. Well, I'm the lucky one, honestly. I really better get back. I'm sorry not to be staying on.*

*Oh, my dear, I wouldn't worry too much about that.*

I looked down at my empty cup of tea. Those little dried leaves stuck to the bottom. Love looked like all sorts of things.

# Visions in the Non-Dominant Hand

Jim Sazerack

“Consider time, consider nature.”

“No question,” she said, but stayed in bed.

They refunded her an hour of her time.

She hides a pain so personal, locked in her mess of a bedroom.

Decided to stay in, keep her secret company.

With friends she laughs and makes outrageous and delightful claims.

“The Sun is such a colossal bore,” and they all laugh on queue. She makes her mark and disappears behind the anonymous wall of a bathroom stall. Finally alone, she commences to cry. If not for the walls, she would see that, surrounded by a darkness unconquerable, the cracked crescent moon sheds no tears in October. But really, she’s locked by this secret, and all the leftover love is lost, and her eyes are so tired to search so far.

Statuesque.

Isolated head in a frozen frame of frustration, panic in the cold blank eyes. He won’t wipe the rain from his face.

The clouds conquered October’s end, and I’m at the end of my rope for what must be the millionth time. What a thick end the rope must have that I always get a grip at bottom. Don’t be afraid to rain, sky of sorrows. Just like those silent statues, of saints and sinners alike, in Glasnevin or in the centre, I promise I’ll remain still and listen to your

pitter patter wisdom. I've never taken the song of a storm for granted. I'm hesitant to believe in the promises of winter. It'll only get colder, necessitating someone to hold. Once again I'll walk up O'Connell in a stupor, at least there he has a whole body to hold onto.

You've only ever held the cool steel.

Terrified of potential. Terrified of both the law and a world without it. Some handsome devil takes the cold off your hands. "Allow me," and as he cocks it, your ears begin to ring. You can't hide a sick sense of anticipation. Pull it. Keep it with you.

I thought of your swim yesterday. Out at sea when you tried to drown. I don't know where I stand, but your memory fell into mine. Intertwined. I'd like to take a swim or be blown away by the wind or generally I would like—for a change—not to be—not to think—not to drink—not to stink—that dryer ate my money and spat out my still-soaked clothes. I feel sick. You'd understand my not knowing where who what I am supposed to do to shatter the old jar, not an easy task, and when we do another falls in. Infinite supply. How many birthdays can I take? I'd stick empty hand in coat pocket and take it out with coins palm-placed but don't feel like moving not even to toss the coins in fountain blues and wish—for once—with some wisdom—a happy birthday to another soul who suffered enclosed in mirrors.

# A Long Dry River

Joseph Shaw

This morning I woke up scared. I'm not sure why. There was nothing to be scared about. I felt anxious, like I was missing something, and the dream bled through the veil into reality.

"I'm showering," said Margaret, switching on the overhead light.

I went back to sleep listening to the roar of the shower. I had an anxious dream where I missed the train, then Margaret came out, dressed, and pulled open the curtains. There was light everywhere so that you couldn't turn away from it.

I rolled over.

"You've got to get up," said Margaret.

I groaned and pulled a white pillow over my head.

"John," she said, serious now.

I stretched and sat up, rubbing my eyes and blinking them until I could see the hotel room.

"We have to leave," she said, tossing clothes at me from the open suitcase by the wall. "Get dressed."

The walls were bluish-beige and the paint lumped up in places like clotted blood. All the lamps were on and the overhead light and the curtains wide open letting the daylight flood in. There was steam in the room from the shower and it all smelled wooden like an old rotting board.

"Okay," I yawned, but did not move yet.

Margaret turned away from me, knelt down, and started putting things in the suitcase. All our stuff was in a big pile by the wall. It looked like so much, like it wouldn't all fit in that tiny suitcase.

I got dressed watching her pack. I kept yawning as if the world wasn't quite real yet.

I used the bathroom and felt much better. I brushed my teeth then splashed cold water on my face and stared at it in the mirror, beads of cold water dripping down like tears.

"John," Margaret called me from the next room.

"What?"

"Will you come look at this a minute?"

"Yes," I said, toweling my face.

She was kneeling at the foot of the bed facing the open suitcase, turning the big clean kitchen knife over and over in her hands, all the lights shining off it in sharp slanting patterns.

"Doesn't it seem like there's something on it?" she asked, staring into its reflective surface.

I knelt beside her to look. "No. It's clean."

"I can still see... Doesn't it look like there's a stain of something. Right there, at the tip?"

"No," I said, getting up. "We scrubbed it in the sink."

"I can still see the stain," she said absently, but she wrapped the shining knife in a white towel from the bathroom and laid it in the suitcase across our clothes.

Margaret stood and looked at me for a minute and said, "Do we really have to return it?"

Her wet, dark hair fell around her face and she wasn't smiling. I

couldn't tell whether or not she was frightened.

"Yes," I said. Both her arms and my arms were hanging uselessly at our sides. 'It's an expensive knife. They'll miss it.'

"I wish we had a better bag. I wish we didn't have to lug this suitcase around. Do you need to shower?" she asked.

I shook my head. "I showered last night, remember?"

She looked at me blankly. "Oh, right. Last night." Then, after a pause, "What about our clothes? Where did you put our clothes?"

"In the plastic bag at the bottom of the suitcase. We'll sort them later."

Margaret nodded and gave me a little smile. "Are we ready, then?"

I was fully awake now. It was still very early and there was only the receptionist in the hotel lobby, but the bright lights didn't hurt so much and I could see that this was real life.

We walked right through the lobby and nodded at the receptionist, though he didn't seem to notice us, through to the dining area with all the blue plastic tables and the empty buffet standing timidly against the wall. And from there, dragging the suitcase behind us, through the tall, grey "STAFF ONLY" door to the kitchen. There was no one there and obviously no cameras. The body was in the corner no longer bleeding, though neither of us acknowledged it. It was strange, like having another person in the room, but I suppose that was only natural. It occurred to me again that it would have been easier to have done this before, but Margaret hadn't known not to take the knife, and anyway it would be cleaned up and fixed soon.

There was a long dry river of blood from where the body had fallen to where it lay in the corner, but we didn't have to clean that up. we stepped carefully over the blood and Margaret opened the suitcase halfway and returned the knife to the big wooden block with all the other knives and finally looked around once before shutting the suitcase again. The kitchen was very bright and all the surfaces were white and clean and shining except for the dark dry river of blood that took in the light in strange ways and the body clotted in the corner like a folded bit of cardboard.

We dropped our keys in the box at the front desk, but the receptionist was talking on the phone and he still didn't see us. I watched Margaret's hands very carefully as we left but they didn't shake, then I looked up and she was smiling at me. I gripped the suitcase tightly, blinking and breathing in the hotel lobby.

We were in the car and I was driving, the road spooling out before us, and I said, "We won't talk about it."

The sun was rising and Margaret said nothing, and I continued, "Remember what we decided last night? It'll be like we don't even know which one of us did it."

I reached out and grabbed her hand and squeezed it, and the road was still going, and going, and going.

# True Crime

Eve Smith

My big sister Orla always told me I was too sensitive for my own good. But when I watch my daughter Lou lie back on our white couch, fall asleep listening to podcasts about girls who hack their own mother's heads off with seven separate knives, I want to cry.

"Who even has that many knives? Why on earth would she keep cutting what was already dead?"

Lou shrugs like I'm asking her about who got with who last Friday.

"Not everything needs a reason, mom," She sticks a butter knife into a green apple and works it into slices. "There are some real crazies out there."

I go to bed, but the gore follows me. I see the blood splatter across the peeling linoleum, hear bones splinter and crack under the knife. The woman's eyes roll yellow into the back of her head.

If I were to tell you a story about a butt-fuck nowhere town and a spate of missing prostitutes in the eighties, it might unsettle you. If I painted a picture of a father who drank too much, said too little, and brought home women whose dark hair dangled just above the wet grass while he bashed their heads in with the RV door, you might get scared. I could tell you about the weight of their bodies. How their flesh caved in like hot mangoes when I dragged them out to the well at the bottom of the garden. How they smelt like nickels wedged in a drain.

But these stories are a dime a dozen. To really scare you, I'd show

you what it feels like to be called a liar.

The news is playing behind the shop girl's head. Her tanned arms reach back and forth to beep my groceries through. A glossy couple grins down the lens in cyan formal wear.

- *I'm Jeanette, this is Missouri news and we're here with a story today that is almost too good to believe.*
- *That's right, two women are at war in the courts over a spate of alleged murders that happened almost 45 years ago. The younger sister says she was forced to help her father, the now deceased William McDonaldson, to cover up violent attacks on local sex workers in their childhood home. While justice can no longer be served, she says she wants the murdered women's families to see closure.*
- *Yes Jim, and the older sister? She's disputing what she perceives as gross slander on their father's name.*

The shop girl looks up and smiles at me.

"That story is so damn crazy. It's like Shakespeare or something."

"Yes," I say, stuffing the boxes into two plastic bags until they're bulging full. "It's crazy what some people will do to cover up a simple truth."

"Oh, come on," she rolls her head with a grin around the wide neck of her blue polo shirt. "That woman is so clearly lying. It was like a lifetime ago. Why the hell would no one have investigated sooner?"

Heat rises in my cheeks.

"Well I think she's telling the truth. What reason would someone have to make up such a disgusting tale?"

After I gather my bags and bustle out I hear the girl call out an apology before she breaks into a giggle. I'm breathing fast, and the air above the concrete wobbles with heat.

I catch a glimpse of myself in the storefront window. The glass tints my skin grey. Curls jut out from my grease-matted head into the pane of blue sky behind me. My yellow Tiger's jersey hangs over my skinny legs like a sack. Lou tells me I dress like a tween still trying to find their sense of style. It stings.

As a kid, Lou broke out into shrieks if I left her alone for even a second. I'd have to waddle to the toilet with her little hands clawed onto my shin. The child psychologist told me to practice distancing myself so Lou could learn how to be alone. But her cries stirred the bottom of my soul. She always found her way back into my office, smiling and serene, as long as she was by my side. It was so much easier to compromise myself than to ever say no.

But then she went to middle school and my sensitive baby wrangled the popular girls into liking her, straightened her hair into peeling ribbons and laughed about how ugly the sneakers were their hated-girl-of-the-month had rocked up in to school that day. She started pleading with me to buy her beers, for late-night curfews and whole unsupervised evenings with good-for-nothing boys. She pushed and pushed and I gave in every time, but a part of me broke away with each transaction. Love, I understood, was a constant act of losing.

The gravel drive is blue with shadow as I pull up.

"Looloo," I drop my keys in the hallway dish using my pinkie finger, then struggle with the bags down the hall. "Great news. Kevin at the

sheriff's department told me there was a real positive result with the cadaver dogs today."

I step into the dark kitchen. "Lou?"

I can hear her outside on the porch speaking in a low tone.

"I'm just really worried about her. She's not been sleeping. All she does is talk about the past."

A perfectly coiffed blond head sits in front of her, nodding.

"We can find a good place to treat her." The woman's veined and navy-manicured hand reaches across the metal table to place it on Lou's. Lou starts to cry.

"Aw honey bun. She needs help."

The porch creaks as I step onto it. My chest is thumping.

"Mom," Lou says, her eyes wide and glassy. "Why do you look like that?"

"Eugene, sweetie?" Orla turns to face me with a polished grin.

"How are you, my sweet girl?"

The willow tree bristles in the wind. I finger the cold ridges of the butter knife in my pocket and speak under my breath.

"Never better."

# The Wake

Olivia Carla Smith

The last mourner shuffled out of the front door as the hallway clock chimed eleven o'clock, tightening both of his small, wrinkled hands around Sean's and muttering for the fourteenth time, "Jesus, such a terrible pity. She was some woman... such a pity." Sean nodded thoughtfully and impatiently closed the door behind the old man.

"Is that the lot of them?" Darren poked his head out of the kitchen doorway, a mouth full of one of the egg and cress sandwiches that Peggy Reilly from down the road had dropped off earlier that morning.

"Yeah, that's the last of them, thanks be to God. Jesus, what a long day," Sean rubbed his face, trying to wipe away the exhaustion of the day, "and we still have the night to contend with yet!" He walked into the bungalow's only bedroom and sat heavily on one of the hard, wooden chairs lining the wall.

"Are you coming or are you just going to sit in there stuffing your face all night, you greedy bastard?"

"I'll have you know, watching the dead is fierce hungry work," Darren retorted from the kitchen.

"Well, you may bring me one of those sandwiches as well, if there's anything left of them! And a can from the fridge on your way in."

Darren came into the room with a beer in each hand and a sandwich clenched between his teeth and threw himself into the armchair beside the bed.

"How may do you reckon came? Hundreds? Thousands?" He

handed over a can and the sandwich with a bite taken out of the middle.

“Hard to say,” Sean cracked open his beer, “she was a popular woman alright. I’d say half the parish trapsed through that door today to get a look at her.”

“Ah, good of them to come though, all the same.” The two men nodded, sipping at their cans.

“Where’s Uncle John?”

“In the sitting room on the pull-out couch. Don’t know how he can sleep on that thing at his age, but, sure, I suppose he must be done-in after today. I’d say he’s out for the count.”

“Awful pity... But she had a good life, to be fair.” Sean tapped the tin thoughtfully.

“Ay, she did indeed. A good, long life. Sure, what more can you ask for, really?”

The brothers drank in silence.

“She doesn’t look at all like herself, don’t you think?” Darren interjected after a minute, looking at the body in the bed. “I think it’s because she doesn’t have her glasses on, you know?”

Sean looked up at the corpse and nodded. Although, he thought it was more the fact that the blood had been drained from her face and her skin had peeled back and tightened around her nose and gums, creating sharp, hideous features that made their Auntie May unrecognisable.

“Funeral is at eleven tomorrow, right?”

Sean nodded solemnly in response.

“Jesus, only eleven hours to go so.” Darren laughed lightly, taking a swig from his can. “It’s going to be a long night.”

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“They made a lovely couple, didn’t they? Even when we were pups, they were always the fun aunt and uncle, bringing us sweets and toys from their travels. They were always happy.” Darren paced the room contemplatively, his arms behind his back, looking at each of the framed photos along the wall.

“They were, ay. That time I tried to run away from home—”

“I remember that! You packed your bags and all! Don’t know where you thought you were going, mind.”

“Ay, I did. I was coming straight to Uncle John and Auntie Mae’s. They let me stay the night and fed me til it was coming out me ears.”

“I know they did, sure I had to take over the milking with Daddy that night because you were off living the life of Riley.” Darren turned to face his brother now.

“Ay, I got a fierce beating when I came back though.” The two men laughed quietly.

Darren took his seat again and silence fell on the room.

“Do you find it creepy? Like, us having to do this? Stay up with the body the night before the funeral. Are they afraid she’s going somewhere?”

“Ah sure it is a bit odd alright, but it’s just what’s done, you know yourself. And if I’d do it for anyone, I’d do it for Auntie May.” Sean stretched out his legs, leaning back against the hard back of the kitchen chair.

They both looked at the body thoughtfully. Her white hair was pulled back neatly into a bun and her gaunt, wrinkled face had layers of yellow makeup and unnaturally red cheeks to give the appearance of life, but instead had the uncanny look of a wax figure. Her hands lay

folded across her chest with rosary beads weaved between her spindly fingers.

A creak came from outside the bedroom door and the two brothers shifted their gaze into the dark hallway. They sat in silence, listening. The faint sound of mumbled groaning crept into the room. They looked at one another and then back at the doorway. The clock in the hall ticked rhythmically with the beat of their hearts. Invisible footsteps padded through the shadows, closer to the door. Tick, tick, tick. Their breathing quickened and Sean could feel the blood pounding in his ears.

Out of the darkness, a figure walked through the door and turned towards the bed, bending over it. The brothers glanced at each other and laughed lightly at their foolish fear.

“Jesus, Uncle John, it’s only you. You fairly scared the shite out of us. Didn’t even see you coming.” Sean chuckled, finishing the dregs of his beer.

John didn’t turn round. He didn’t seem to hear them; he gazed down at his wife lovingly and stroked her cheek softly.

“Oh, my brave girl,” he whispered, cupping her face, “you were never scared of anything. Except me.”

# Haunted House Blues

Charlie Skyler/Stetson

This house is a ghost like you are a ghost  
But you are banging cabinets and tv static  
And all it has ever been is silent

Your mothers sewed her initials into your organs  
Before sending you off to college  
Showed you off to guests in the foyer of your chest.

Your front door clutched you like it was trying to kill  
Like a fist holds a knife  
You'll always be its favorite ghost.

Is there a part of your home that is more real than others?  
Maybe your childhood bedroom is a bad dream but you can put your ear  
up to it Listen: life with no escape

This place held love against your throat  
Like a threat  
And you could do nothing but flinch.

# Symbiosis

Miriam Treitinger

I started to like the rats again. I'm writing this for I don't know how else to express my infinite gratitude. It's nice watching them when they dance. I relax when they pick at my skin, take over control, occupy my mind, crawl out of my mouth and back into my ears. When I sleep, their steps tickle me. They feed me with their milk and live from my waste. I think one is stuck in my throat. Whenever I try to speak, I can't say a word. I don't like talking anyway. They're doing me so many favours. Often, they make me do things, sometimes they make me forget things. But they always want the best for me. They have multiplied over the years. Now they are finally enough to keep me warm at night.

# Memento Mori

Suki Seraphina Weckert

On foggy nights the souls are said  
To wonder earth and crowd your bed.  
So guard your thought and do withstand  
Our calls that lure you to our land.

So many tales that have been told,  
Have warned of what for soul is sold.  
So let me add another tale,  
Of my weak-minded, ancient fail.

One night the reaper came to me.  
I knew, although I couldn't see  
From where he came or where he stayed.  
He merely looked at me and said;

He didn't come to stay for long  
And – pardon him – he wasn't wrong  
In off'ring me one night of all  
I wished fulfilled, as prize, my fall.

I answered "Wrong is your attempt  
To try to get me to consent  
To sell my soul to my desir's

And to make conscious hidden fires

I tried not to be curious  
And looked at him but furious.  
“What could you offer me to match  
The prize you claim? There is a catch.”

“I grant, to heaven you won’t go,  
If you’ll accept, God will it so.  
But as your fate demands your death,  
Tonight you’ll draw your final breath.

I know it well, I saw you fall,  
That’s why I choose this night to call,  
And offer you one final night,  
To make up for your end in sight.”

As he forecast my fate I shivered.  
I knew my body, once delivered  
Of my soul would what away,  
But who knew where my soul would stay?

“Heaven I never hoped to see,  
But I would like to know where we,  
Those doubting souls go when we die  
And in meaningless graveyards lie.”

“You searching souls I know you well.  
No sacred place you choose to dwell.  
From place to place you roam around,  
But none of a home has found.

Your soul will haunt the earth from when  
Your eyes are closed. So until then  
You have the time to contemplate  
my offer and your promised fate.”

What time was there to think about  
His offer or even to doubt  
His cold sincerity, for I  
Knew well that this night I would die.

Of what we did I cannot tell,  
Because I know so very well  
How tempting it can be to flee  
Your fears in trying to be free.

As morning broke then my last breath  
I drew and felt the grasp of death.  
The reaper smiled at me and said;  
“I enjoyed myself in your bed.

Now you’ve got time to contemplate  
If it was worth your purchased fate.”

This is my curse, for I can't say  
Whether 't was worth to give him way.

I wander earth and to endure  
My solitariness I lure  
Such souls as yours when days are slain  
Into this otherworldly plain.

Just wait till I come visit you.  
I'll test if your soul 's brave and true,  
And if you doubt, you'll end up here  
In my cold, hopeless, lonely sphere.

**Aoibh Anna** is taking two steps forward, one step back. She's a scribble, a scrawl, a claw at the wall. She wants to take a bite out of you! If you fancy it, you can find old pieces of her hiding in the pages of Icarus.

**Rafael Aroustamian** is a current UCLA English student and writer residing in Glendale, California. Apart from writing, he enjoys acting and learning about law.

**Amelia Boeh** is a second-year student at UCLA. She loves sad novels, sci-fi films, and going on walks with her angel (her dog).

**Giorgia Carli** is an Italian twenty-year-old girl who sometimes writes lines. A friend of hers called her “morbid” once, and this really stuck with her.

**Cory Chen** is a plant. Probably a basil plant, but maybe a chrysanthemum. Not really sure. It could be either, or both, or neither, or something approximating an amalgam of the two, or a symbolic representation of a metaphysical reality transposed into a meaningless substrate through the ineffable dereliction of language. If the plant were a literary critic, it might be a deconstructionist--- but well, who knows.

**Lauren Kogelman** is a transfer student at the University of California, Los Angeles, majoring in English. She has previously earned an Associate in Arts Degree for Transfer in English and a Certificate of Achievement

## -Contributors-

in Creative Writing from San Diego Mesa College, where she graduated with Honors. Her interests include literature, writing, editing, public relations, communications, film, and theater.

**Megan Kohanarieh** is a 21-year-old writer living in Los Angeles, California. Her works have been published in several literary magazines, and her spoken-word has been previously showcased during her time on Brandeis University's slam poetry team. You can usually find her sipping on a London Fog or a Whiskey Ginger, while pouring her soul into her journal.

**Catherine Lange** is a writer whose previous work has appeared in Westwind. She's co-captain of the Sidekicks improv team, teaches math at the UCLA math circle, and studies Biophysics.

**Liv O'Brien** is a third-year English major at UCLA with a passion for literature, dance, and every kind of art that expresses human emotion. Born and raised in Los Angeles, she enjoys learning new languages, reading fantasy novels, and bike riding in Santa Monica.

**Eric Plotkin** is a writer and filmmaker who has written and directed a short film at UCLA where he studies English. When Eric is not logged into a word processor, he is curled up with a mug of hot cocoa and a murder mystery.

**Eloise Rodger** likes to make things up. In all her little stories and their very big lies – she occasionally, accidentally lets the truth slip. Her

mother calls her a lot and tells her to write less about fancying dead things; she is yet to comply. You can find her work on ‘eloiseiswriting’ on instagram, or in recent issues of Icarus.

**Jim Sazerack** is an observer always attempting to increase his understanding and appreciation for the world around him, though this goal often comes into conflict with the desire to hold a sense of naivete that he feels he should maintain as a writer. With these two shades constantly coming into contact with each other, Sazerack tries to capture the complex wonder of living every day.

**Joseph Shaw** is a writer and second year English student at TCD. He also happens to nurse a minor passion for gothic fiction, especially the works of Edgar Allan Poe.

**Eve Smith** is a languages student at TCD who would eat all things art whole if she could. She is an editor for Trinity Film Review and has been published in Bandit Fiction, as well as long listed for Arvon’s 2020 short story competition.

**Olivia Carla Smith** is a 23-year-old, final year English student at Trinity College, living in Dublin. Growing up in Ireland with a long-standing interest in the supernatural has greatly influenced her works. Writing has always been her passion and some of her favourite writers include Margaret Atwood, Sally Rooney & Stephen King.

**Charlie/Skyler Stetson** is a 4th year English major at UCLA studying

poetry, gender studies, and film. She is working to become a high school English teacher and a published poet, and hopes to inspire women to write about what makes them free.

**Miriam Treitinger** was born and raised in Munich, Germany. She is an undergraduate in Trinity College Dublin and is currently working on her first novel.

**Suki Seraphina Weckert** is from the big bad city Berlin and studies English Studies at Trinity College, because everybody loves a good story.

# Icarus

Trinity College Dublin

*Icarus* has published poetry, prose, drama, personal essays and visual art for over seventy years, longer than any other Irish literary magazine.

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