

superfront



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FALL 2021

SPOOKY FROOT.

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Cover by Daren Colbert.

Please see pages 5-6 for relevant
content warnings.



photo by caitlin roth

dear readers,

WELCOME TO SPOOKYFROOT!

and welcome to our very first mini pop-up. we wanted to celebrate halloween the best way we know how: with the spookiest works of writing and art we could find! in this issue, you'll find a mix of horror, blood, skulls, the grotesque, the campy, the creepy, the disturbed, and more. there are no restrictions when it comes to the kind of halloween we want to have.

thank you for joining us on this unexpected and wild ride, as usual. this may not be our second official issue, but it is our second official release, and we couldn't be more excited to celebrate with you all and our eighteen contributors. please enjoy the poetry, prose, photography, and artwork by these amazing creatives.

most importantly: happy halloween!

love,

SUPERFROOT

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content warnings

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VIOLENCE & GORE

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CANNIBALISM

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ANIMAL DEATH

25-27

BODY HORROR

7, 13-16,

photo by ellie lopez

When we are born into your world, we are
born invulnerable, horrifying, are born

ugly; our beak a screech of hairy black,
our fingers raspberry-sharp, our faces

already covered in soot – yet our mothers
love us, feed us into larger monstrosities.

It would not be possible without magic,
and dark. You have calculated: we must

consume the flesh of twenty innocents
of your children to build one of ours.

Oh how we cook, your legs, your heads,
in our black pots, something wicked. When

I was five, I had already reached the size
of five of you packed front to back – it is

criminal how large we are, larger than
a lumberjack, and ravenous, and always

stealing your children, and poisoning
the ones we cannot steal. In the clearing,

I sit all day singing the strangest songs –
your mother was correct: you must keep
to yourself, walk on, beware the Lorelei,
the witch, the *dévil* made a *mademoiselle*.

We smear soot on our face for that very
reason: to keep you out of our daughters'

velvet. Listen again: no black smoke
without a red, red, red fire.



THE MONSTER BABY

Isaie
Bacht

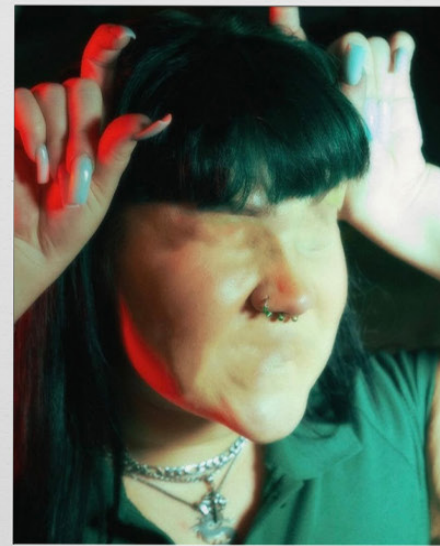


photo by peyton gilbert

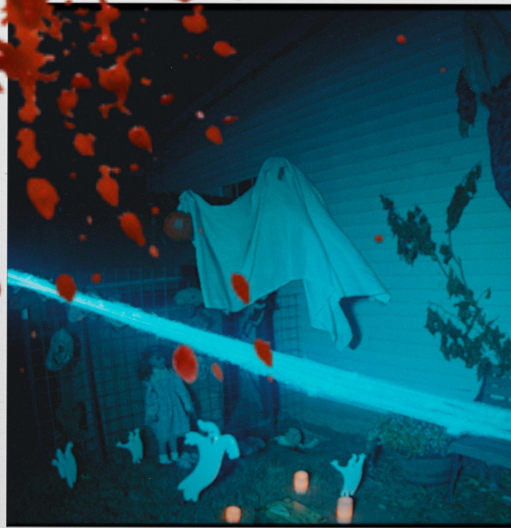


photo by peyton gilbert

BECOMING A SKELETON

by Matthew McGuirk

My bones didn't always click together as I walked down empty streets, at least in my mind they were hidden by scraps of flesh that still clung to my body at that point. Memory is something that isn't appreciated, but I recall a time when people couldn't see between my ribs or through the sockets where my eyes and nose belonged; those were times when I was whole still.

The first recollection I have of life after death was the velvet lining of the coffin, the thinness of the air in the smallness of the space in the harshness of the coldness of that fall ground. I remember using my elbows and knees to break through that velvet and pine and in poured brown soil. Through effort for fall air I worked against wood and dirt, rocks and roots and then my fingers broke through the soil and felt the tinge of a chill, a beacon of something that wasn't mine for so long, a memory that whispered from long ago. Then an arm and that elbow and I was prying myself out of the ground.

There was really no point in dusting myself off and watching flecks of flesh fall away like snakeskin, but I did. There was no need to ruffle what remained of my hair and watch it come out in clumps clinging to rooted flesh, but I did. Walking was innate to me still and the streaks of brown grass were withered, and the tree branches were bare and the night wind whipped with a force I recalled but didn't fully remember. The earth was harsh, but I worked hard to be a part of that harshness again.

The pang of hunger was the first real emotion I felt. I knew I needed something, but I no longer craved the dripping juices of burgers, the melted cheese of pizzas or the crunch of double fried french fries. No, my mind drifted towards flesh and bone, not just flesh and bone but the inner workings of minds. I needed others' minds, needed to consume their knowledge to feed my hunger or at least that's what I told myself. I walked down empty streets and pushed against hard locked doors, but they didn't budge. I used elbows and knees, hands and feet and nothing allowed me entrance to homes where lights were no longer lit in living rooms, knowing I prowled the streets waiting for their flesh.

My body ached and my stomach was already tearing itself to shreds inside out. I knew if I didn't get some sort of flesh soon, I wouldn't be able to sustain myself. I'd pushed on countless doors and chased after small animals, but with no success, so I pulled a shred of skin from my leg and dangled it in front of my face. It was repulsive, disgusting, sickening and ugly because it was me. I closed my eyes and opened my mouth and soon it was gone with a rough gulp. My stomach's pangs abated a little and I felt better.

art by chip hudson





I continued to move, I needed to find a better sustenance than myself. How did they all know I was coming? Were my footsteps too loud; my groans too audible; my body too visible? The hunger resurfaced again and this time I pulled a longer strip from an arm. I didn't bother dangling it or thinking much about it and gulped it down to quiet my stomach. Soon houses became sparse and those that weren't were locked down carefully against my advances. I began picking at my skin like careful slices of string cheese and flesh peeled away revealing tendons and white bones against black night sky.

I didn't really like the taste of myself and that was my tongue's fault, so it had to go. I found a sharp rock and took care of sawing that off and dropping it down my throat in a couple bites. Taste was no longer a problem and I could go about my business of consuming myself bit by bit. One night an eye popped out of its socket and wouldn't fit back in quite right. I yanked it out, not worrying about connections and how light used to hit it just right to create this world or any of that and popped it right in my mouth like a gumball. I got sick of screams when I saw anyone or listening to my own teeth work against the meat I'd pulled from my body and took care of my ears next. The same sharp rock would do and within a few slices and a few bites my world was silent. My nose was already peeled a bit and it didn't take much effort to cut that off with it being mostly cartilage and not worry about the smell of my rotting flesh that remained. The hunger continued and I came back again and again to shred myself to nothing.

Now, I don't worry too much about knocking and the sounds that move down the street are bones touching as one leg moves in front of the next but are silent to me. I imagine myself in the moonlight as ivory against black with no more scraps of flesh clinging like they belong or hanging like shabby clothes off my bones. Scraps of me went here and then others and eventually I began picking at my lungs and heart because they hadn't been filled with air and it hadn't been beating for some time. Soon I got to my brain and it only took stirring it around a little with a stick up my nose to let it slide out. The last things I went after were my stomach and esophagus and when those were gone there was really no need to be hungry anymore and I wasn't. I don't feel much like myself though. I don't have that drive to pull myself from a grave and find something to fill my days, only to walk. Maybe no feeling at all is better than the longing I felt in those days, but I'm not really sure. I just keep slinking along the empty streets.

memory attic

i.

all the rooms are different paintings. man
nooses a tie, peers through invisible
curtain. front and centre: a girl
nibbling on filet o' fish, car seat
confettied with crumb.

ii.

a woman prepares to go outside. three
children fixate on her dress, wafting
across brick. girl, fish patty soft,
hugs woman like daughter to mom & asks to see
the kitchen. woman holds up styrofoam
in response. the walls are coated in milk.
girl starts to plead.

iii.

girl buys coffee & sees the balcony
missing. old bathroom tiles
leak into a long corridor. girl
sits on her bed and forgets what relief
feels like and pees into the sheets.

iv.

the furniture levels to the height
of a shallow pool. man & woman build
their own living room & sit & drink.
girl hears soft moaning, thinks
they have knelt to pray.
the dead cockroaches
tumble off her palms & form
a pathway to a storeroom.
in it: a bicycle without wheels,
found too late.

v.

girl wakes to feel four sides of solid
brick. blanket kneads heavy into
shin, clamps around an ankle. there is no
bed. she screams at the idea of weight-
lessness. the door falls cleanly
into its arch, fusing to the wall. her hands
are frantic for the hangman's knot.

Pamela Seong Koon



photo by caitlin roth

photos by caitlin roth



poppet

GALEN DAVID BUNTING

(an apotropaic object)

"The tradition of placing magico-religious objects and symbols in and around buildings for spiritual protection and good luck has been documented throughout the world."

— M. Chris Manning, "The Material Culture of Ritual Concealments in the United States"

mother spun and wove
my cloth, and made it square
daughter sewed my shape
and formed my arms and legs
brother shot the hare
tanned it, and made my buttons.
grandmother bought my eyes
from the market: two beads
(they stare at the wall)
my head is full of seeds
left from father's fall crop.
perfect poppet, they called me.
and in the dark, they left me
in the house's warm between
day and night, i hear their bodies
move in their cottage
waking and sleeping, groaning with love,
making life and death.
i do not sleep.
i have legs like you, but don't walk
and my red lips are redder
than yours, even when you smear them
with raspberries and pinch them
with ochre. I'll never die.
walled into darkness, I keep the house
and the house keeps me
as one of its secrets, nestled
behind kitchen bricks and straw
If you move into my house
i'll keep you too
after all, I love my family.

photo by brittney stroud

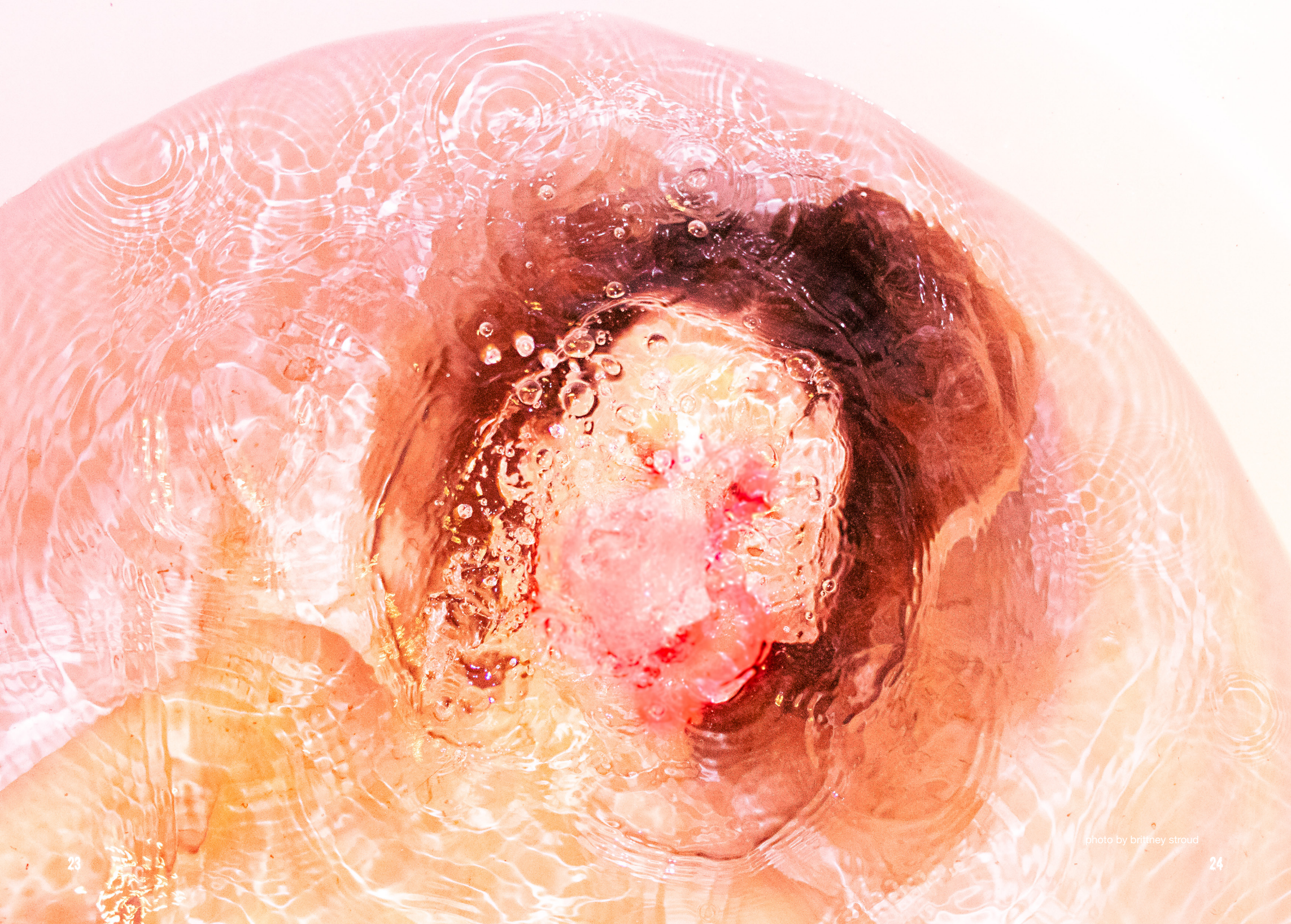


photo by britney stroud

SCOUTS IN THE WOODS

1. Girl Scouts Make Snacks

Girl Scouts sitting around a campfire spear oversized marshmallows and roast them until their beloved treats are entirely consumed by flames. After they blow out the embers, they lay the carcasses to rest on honeyed graham crackers. Chocolate squares melted in sticky palms are lain over the deceased like lilies and chrysanthemums. The Scouts do not know that even this ritual is preparation for their future.

2. Girl Scouts Go for a Walk

Girl Scouts in red bandanas march into the misty forest. The half-moon hangs above. From up here, they are a line of scuttling red ants waiting to be crushed.

3. Girl Scouts Encounter Death

One Scout trips and falls to the leaf-matted ground with a grunt and a thud. While there, she finds that only the legs of the deer can be seen from under the brush. The legs are tangled in one another. They are loose and limp, like they never had bones. The Scouts huddle around to get a better look. This is their first inkling that we may not be their friend.

4. Girl Scouts Whisper

"There are rumors about these woods, you know," one scout whispers to another. "What do you mean?" The other scout whispers back. Acorns crunch under their feet.

"You're new, so you don't know. But I've heard my older brothers talking about these woods. They say weird things happen here." Branches sway and twigs snap.

"What kinds of weird things?"

"Murderers and pedophiles and werewolves."

"You're trying to scare me." Squirrels run spirals up and down trees. Owls hoot and wind rustles dried leaves.

"I'm not. Teenagers come up here at night to look for the weird stuff."

"They wouldn't take us here for the Woodland Ranger Badge if it was actually dangerous."

"Sure they would. This is the only campsite and marked path through the woods around here."

"But other troops have done it before."

"My brothers said some of them didn't make it back."

5. Girl Scouts are Distracted (While Troop Leaders Recheck the Map Because they are Very Lost)

Under a canopy of Maple Trees, Girl Scouts chew winter-mint lifesavers. Their mouths flash in bursts of blue and green; their teeth sharply illuminated in the night as they smile. They giggle and shriek, loud animals in the quiet dark. Even if we weren't already listening, we could hear them from miles away.

6. Girl Scouts Encounter Death for a Second Time

Two raccoons piled in a heap on the forest floor. All four eyes are open. All eight paws are gone. Their thick striped tails have been knotted together crudely with a red bandana. It is a gift we have left for them. Fear scatters the Scouts like mice under brush; they run off in all directions and the fun begins.

7. Girl Scouts Panic (and Forget Everything they have Ever Learned from their Troop Leaders about Safety and Navigation)

Girl Scouts drop flashlights and run screaming into the blackness. Girl Scouts do not



check their compasses or refer to any kind of map. Girl Scouts do not look for signs of familiar plant life or weather-beaten trail makers. Girl Scouts do not come together or set up camp or stack kindling together to start fire. Girl Scouts wonder aloud where their mothers are, and question why they came camping in the first place. Girl Scouts give up hope. Girl Scouts pull their jackets closer to their bodies and shiver. Girl Scouts let blood from scratches and thorn pricks run down legs and stain their denim pants. Girl Scouts cry behind thick-trunked trees. Girl Scouts piss their pants. Girl Scouts keep their eyes to the sky for the first signs of light through the Maple Trees.

8. One Girl Scout Encounters Death for a Third Time

The Girl Scout who has come to us is fair-skinned with a freckled face. She is missing one of her front teeth. Her fingernails have been painted to sparkle and she wears bracelets of charms on her soft wrists. We did not accept her for these things. We accepted her because she was the smartest of all the little creatures. When they ran, she ran the fastest. When some ducked under bushes to catch their breath or rest beside rotten logs from exhaustion, she kept running. Her sneakered feet took her deeper into our woods and when she saw the shelter of our hut, she did not hesitate or look back. She did not let fear overtake her ability to think. This wonderful little girl understood self-preservation better than any of the other Scouts. We accepted her because she learned from the marshmallows and the deer and the raccoons. We accepted her because she saw what can happen in the woods at night, and she sought to save herself from it. We accepted the gift of her body for our meal because we respect her. Because we know that all her running will make her soft wrists that much more flavorful.

MICHELE ZIMMERMAN



photo by ellie lopez



art by jen chavez

Love / God / Death / Madlib / Summoning Chant

___ is a stack of cards
 ___ is a magic house
 ___ is a mile away
 you're underwater when you scream
 ___ is the distance between you and sand
 ___ is an empty picture frame
 ___ is a missing receipt
 how do you get that last bit of rice
 between two chopsticks?
 ___ is a glass candle
 ___ is a bag of rocks
 ___ is liquid wax
 ___ doesn't exist.
 You are ____.
 How does it feel
 to be half-way through
 doing the work
 of undoing.

Dean Boskovich




photo by daren colbert

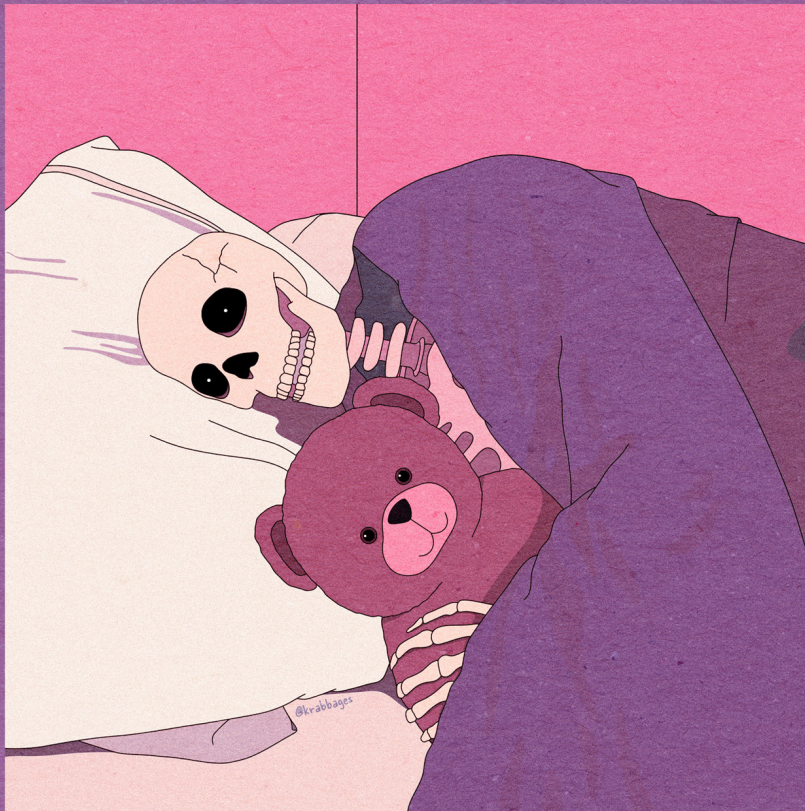
BIRDS DON'T HAVE TEETH


by Pascale Potvin

And for every time I touch a bird, I get the teeth they would've had in another world. One might wonder how there's room in my mouth, but my mouth has been growing and I imagine that my whole body might be mouth near the end. Because I can't stop hunting. And at one point I've even figured I don't need a gun. I have this mouth.

I used to feel the guilt, as if everything in my apartment were made of birdwing; I used to mourn the detergent cartridge on my laundry machine, because I'd feel I was just pulling on a full wing, and I would feel like a monster. One without any wings, obviously, because such a monster wouldn't understand.

But pressing down on a wing, or in a wing, after all—I think, isn't that just like making it fly?





Through the Keyhole-Shaped Shoulder Socket of the Forgotten Mannequin

Avra Margariti

photo by ellie lopez

Fast debris of fabric scraps and cicada molts
Carnivorous dust bunnies
And needles threaded
With the abandoned shop
Owner's necrotized dreams,

Inside the hollow plastic torso
Once clad in luxurious cloth,
Writhing and whispering:
A million miniature monsters
In their rotting lilliputian city.
Their lips eaten by their own devouring teeth
Their eyes poked out by each
Other's frantic movements.
Fervidly singing:

Please, stranger peeking
Through our keyhole.
See how horrible,
How hideous we can be;
Unleash us upon your wicked
World. Worship us always.

photo by ellie lopez



contributors

fiction

Matthew McGuirk

Matt McGuirk teaches and laughs at his puns by day and scribbles somewhat coherent words nightly. He lives with his family in New Hampshire. BOTN 2021 nominee with words in Bear Creek Gazette, Daily Drunk Magazine, Maudlin House, Purple Wall Stories, Sledgehammer Lit, Versification and others. Twitter: @McguirkMatthew Instagram: @mcguirk_matthew.

Michele Zimmerman

Michele Zimmerman (she/her) is a Queer writer and holds an MFA in fiction from Sarah Lawrence College. Her work appears in POST ROAD, Catapult's TINY NIGHTMARES: VERY SHORT TALES OF HORROR, and others. She is the winner of the BLOOD ORANGE REVIEW 2021 Literary Contest. In the past she has been a SUNDRESS PUBLICATIONS Best of the Net nominee & a two-time finalist for the GLIMMER TRAIN Short Story Award for New Writers. Find her on Twitter @m_l_zimmerman.

Pascale Potvin

Pascale Potvin is Editor-in-Chief of Wrongdoing Magazine. She is the author of EROTECAY (LUPERCALIA Press, 2021) and Folktales for the Diseased Individual (2021) and has placed work in Juked Magazine, Eclectica Magazine, Gingerbread House Magazine, and many others. She has a BAH from Queen's University. Find her at pascalepotvin.com or @pascalepalaces (Twitter).

poetry

Avra Margariti

Avra Margariti is a queer author, Greek sea monster, and Pushcart-nominated poet with a fondness for the dark and the darling. Avra's work haunts publications such as Vastarien, Asimov's, Liminality, Arsenika, The Future Fire, Space and Time, Eye to the Telescope, and Glittership. "The Saint of Witches", Avra's debut collection of horror poetry, is forthcoming from Weasel Press. You can find Avra on twitter (@avramargariti).

Dean Boskovich

Dean Boskovich is a 26 year old cook living in Asheville, NC. His work has previously appeared in T.G.I. Friday's, continental breakfasts, and various food delivery apps. Dean hopes your friends didn't think he was being too awkward the other day.

Galen Bunting

Galen David Bunting is a writer and doctoral candidate in literature at Northeastern University. He lives in Boston, where he enjoys apple cider doughnuts, hunting for odd mushrooms in public parks, and fumbling through thrift-store editions of Shirley Jackson novels. His poetry is forthcoming in the Minnesota Review, and you can read his critical essay on the Ploughshares Blog: follow him on Twitter @inratsalley and on Instagram @pip_istrellus.

Lorelei Bacht

Lorelei Bacht (they/she) is a person, a poet, queer, multi-, living in Asia. Their work has appeared / is forthcoming in Visitant, The Wondrous Real, Quail Bell, Fahmidan, Abridged Magazine, Odd Magazine, Postscript, PROEM, SWWIM, Strukturriss, The Inflectionist Review, Slouching Beast Journal, Hecate, and others. They are also on Instagram: @loirelei.bacht.writer and on Twitter @bachtlorelei.

Pamela Seong Koon

Pamela Seong Koon is a port worker and a multi-hobbyist. Their work has been published or forthcoming in Cordite Poetry Review, the tide rises, and lickety-split. They can be found at <http://pamelaseongkoon.me>.

photography

Brittney Stroud

Brittney Stroud is a 21 year old self portrait and originally self taught horror photographer from Dallas, Texas currently studying at the University of North Texas to amplify her skills. Her work is inspired by early horror films and hopes to capture "still like" images. All of her work is modeled, edited, and self directed. She hopes to connect with like minded horror lovers and connect her work to the struggles of mental illness through horror themes. Follow her on Instagram @brittneystroud.

Caitlin Roth

Caitlin is an artist located in Bethlehem, PA, mainly focusing on the photographic arts and combining it with mixed media pieces revolving around horror, folklore, and ghost stories. Recently, she graduated from Moravian University with a bachelor's degree in sociology, and hopes to return to academia to receive her degree in art sometime in the near future. For more art and other fun content, you can follow her on instagram at @fromdusktildarko/

Daren Colbert

daren colbert is a writer and filmmaker from missouri who's just trying to do his best. when he's not writing or making films, he's usually watching a movie or yearning for mango. his work has appeared or is forthcoming in Moon City Review, Puerto del Sol, Unvaeled, and elsewhere.

Ellie Lopez

Ellie Lopez (she/her) is a Latinx writer/creator from the 209. Her work has been featured in DRYLAND, Marias at Sampaguitas, Moonchild Mag's Moonlogs, and Resurrection Mag. When she's not ear hustling for the best chismes, you may find her on the socials: twitter & IG @missellilopez.

Peyton Gilbert

art

Ashley Gray

ashley gray is? an artist perhaps. for more, check out @ashgrayart on etsy and instagram.

Chip Hudson

Art as visual storytelling is the central intent of chip hudson's illustrative fine art. A self-taught artist, he uses mostly pen and ink combined with water-based paints such as watercolor, gouache, and acrylics on heavy-weight papers; Incorporating subjects such as ambiguous human figures, nature, and animals into surreal themes that viewers often describe as "personally nostalgic".

The artist has had a lifelong love of visual art, finding inspiration at a young age in the album covers of hard rock and heavy metal album covers and the graphic art and aesthetics of early 90's skateboard culture. His art making would abruptly switch during the first decade of the new millenium from simply a pastime into a cathartic coping mechanism, as he endured an almost overwhelming string of tragedies and loss.

In late 2018, chip began making art full time after publicly sharing his pieces for the first time at a small art fair and experiencing a more-than-anticipated amount of love and positivity for his work. He now creates each piece deliberately from contemplation of specific issues or stories, most often derived from his own life experiences, memories, and emotions; with the hope that his artwork will connect with viewers on a deeply personal level, and that they will find their own "stories" in the images to comfort, encourage and inspire them. What is Your Story?

Hayley Patterson

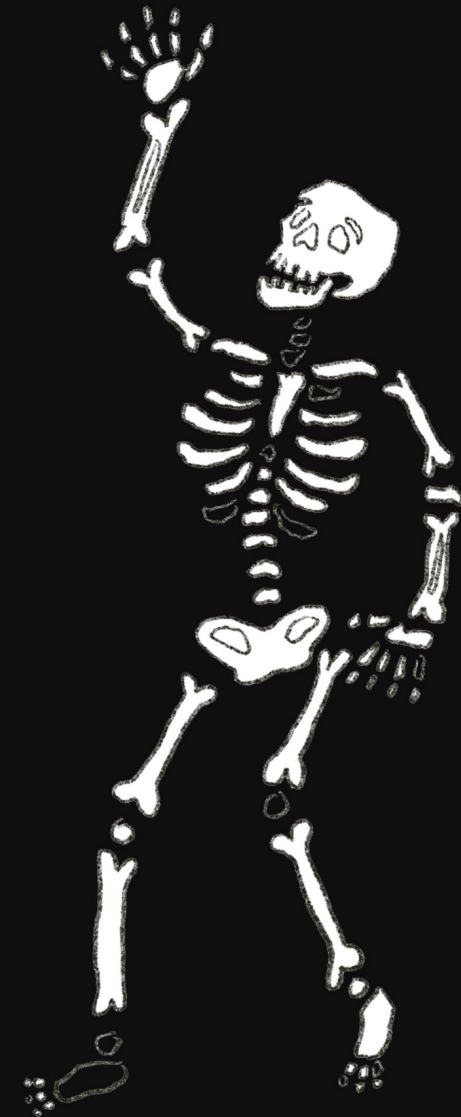
Hayley Patterson is a New York based illustrator specializing in all things weird, wacky and unique! Her favorite thing to do is take the strange characters that live in her brain and introduce them to the real world through her art. You can see more of her work at <https://www.hayleypatterson.squarespace.com> or follow her on Instagram @hapdoods.

Jen Chavez

Jen is a Chicago born Chicana illustrator who's primary focus is on comics and zines. Usually these stories range from ethereal worlds to personal narratives focused on mental health and complex emotions. She hopes to help normalize talking about the more stigmatized parts of mental health through a focus on vulnerability from both the fictional characters as well as her own lived experiences.

Kristen Kalicharan

kristen kalicharan (she/her) is a bi/biracial poet and artist living on unceded Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territory (Vancouver, Canada). her work centres on love, death, magic & mental health, and she hopes to inspire connection through a balance of softness, darkness, and humour. when she isn't drawing skeletons, she's the creative director at Horse Egg Literary Magazine and is currently completing a certificate in graphic design. find her on Instagram and Twitter @krabbages.



WE LOVE YOU!

CREATED BY...

for you, by you.

designed by:

shyla jones
juliana curtice
henley sandoval
kt kaminski

created & edited by:

shyla jones - editor-in-chief & fiction editor
juliana curtice - photography director & designer
henley sandoval - art & music director
kt kaminski - poetry director

superfroot magazine
twitter - @superfrootmag
instagram - @superfrootmag
tiktok - superfrootmag
superfrootmag@gmail.com



photo by cailin roth

HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

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