

APPARITION

Literary Magazine



ISSUE 21:
DREAD

Guest Editors:
Nelly Geraldine Garcia-Rosas
and Eugenia Triantafyllou

Rachel Lastra
Joshua Jones Lofflin
Wess Mongo Jolley
Sylvia Heike
Gemma Cooper-Novack
Tiffany Morris
Katie R. Yen
Olumide Manuel
Jeané Ridges

COVER ART
EDITH SILVA

Apparition Lit

Issue 21: Dread, January 2023

Gemma Cooper-Novack

Sylvia Heike

Wess Mongo Jolley

Rachel Lastra

Joshua Jones Lofflin

Olumide Manuel

Tiffany Morris

Jeané D. Ridges

Katie R. Yen

Guest Editors: Nelly Geraldine García-
Rosas and Eugenia Triantafyllou

Cover Art by Edith Silva

Edited by

Nelly Geraldine García-Rosas and Eugenia

Triantafyllou, Guest Editors

Tacoma Tomilson, Owner/Senior Editor

Rebecca Bennett, Owner/Senior Editor and Cover Art Director

Clarke Doty, Owner/Senior Editor

Amy Henry Robinson, Owner/Senior Editor,

Poetry Editor and Webmaster

Marie Baca Villa, Assistant Editor, Marketing,

Blogger, Submissions Reader

Maria Schrater, Assistant Poetry & Fiction

Editor, Submissions Reader

Copyright © 2023 by Apparition Literary Magazine

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may

not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever

without the express written permission of the publisher

except for the use of brief quotations in a review.

Fonts used: ITC Avant Garde, Merriweather,

Skullphabet <http://www.skulladay.com>

<https://www.apparitionlit.com/>

Contents

A Certain Kind of Dread in Two (or more) Voices by Nelly Geraldine García-Rosas and Eugenia Triantafyllou	1
Soulbirds by Sylvia Heike.....	6
CONSENT FOR FACIAL RECONSTRUCTION	
by Katie R. Yen.....	12
Oh Jackie by Wess Mongo Jolley	16
Ghostboy Kills Our Mother With Trauma by Olumide Manuel	27
The Bones Are Hungry by Joshua Jones Lofflin.....	29
Shut Mouths Sing Melodious by Tiffany Morris.....	37
Luis, the Last Time by Rachel Lastra.....	40
The Marriages: The dybbuk by Gemma Cooper-Novack	56
[inhale\exhale\inhale\exhale\inhale\exhale] by Jeané D. Ridges	58
Dread is Being Trapped in a Curiosity Shop by Maria Schrater	63
Thank You to Our Subscribers and Patrons	66
Past Issues	

A Certain Kind of Dread in Two (or more) Voices

by Nelly Geraldine García-Rosas
and Eugenia Triantafyllou

We recommend you to read this editorial in a quiet place. A dimly lit room with a cold draft that caresses the back of your neck, though you're not sure where it comes from. A closed door.

Now listen.

Murmurs. Two voices approaching. One is musical, waves dancing in the Mediterranean Sea, turning louder, dangerous, a storm. The other is echo, a distant gust of wind, rumble under your feet, an earthquake.

Let us tell you a story about something that happened and something that is to come.

[Eugenia]

It was in 2019 I met my co-editor for this issue, Nelly, during Clarion West Writers Workshop. It was a strange time—in a good way—that would become even stranger in hindsight. Nelly and I shared an affinity for horror, for dark things that go bump in the night (or day) but

that unexpected trip to Seattle was anything but. I met some amazing people; classmates, teachers, and members of the broader community. I experienced so many new things and felt for the first time that I was a part of something bigger. Something that would soon bloom into a better, brighter future.

And then the real dread happened.

COVID-19 and the subsequent isolation and uncertainty it brought upon us, shifted this outlook into something smaller, more stifling. Something spiky and, at the same time, slippery had settled in my mind. It was fear and anxiety. It was a certain kind of dread. Writing out versions of this dread during the pandemic helped me get some of it out of my system. Reading other peoples' horror stories helped me realize I wasn't alone in this.

[Nelly]

Many of us had personal losses. We shared collective pain and uncertainty because the idea of life, as we knew it, had been subverted. Reality became dread incarnated all day, everyday. We were left to cross a liminal space between the familiar and the unknown. While taking those first steps into that strange country named fear, we knew we were—we are—together. And when those steps became strides, we created art to keep the darkness away. Even if the result depicted the same shadows that haunted us, what better way to confront our fears than sharing them?

The eight short stories and poems we share with you may not have necessarily been created as a way to keep real-life dread at bay, but they certainly present us with anticipation, a certain appeal for discovering what the unknown voices around us are saying.

[Eugenia]

In this issue we bring you different flavors of dread, both in fiction and poetry so you can descend to the murky depths of fear and come back victorious, bringing with you whatever lesson you believe each story has to offer:

[Intermission: a polyphony]

- An unknown, yet familiar voice is calling for you in “Oh Jackie.” This story offers the dread of being haunted both inside and out.
- Listen to the one possessing you in “The Marriages: The dybbuk,” a poem that offers the dread of being one and many, and a multiplicity of meanings.
- “The Bones are Hungry” offers the dread of not being able to trust your own family, or your own eyes. What is the sound coming from that well?
- That nagging voice that keeps on interrupting in your “CONSENT FOR FACIAL RECONSTRUCTION WITH THE SHELLEY CONCEPTS INC CUSTOM PATIENT-FITTED RECONSTRUCTION PROSTHESIS” offers the dread of never being comfortable in your own skin.
- “Luis, the Last Time” offers the dread of having to decide between keeping your loved ones safe and yourself whole. Because you’ll never forget the sound of their names.
- Laughter that becomes crying is all you hear in “Ghostboy Kills Our Mother With Trauma”, a poem where dread of one’s secret past comes back to bitterly haunt them.
- Chirps and warbles from beyond engulf the air in “Soulbirds.” This story offers the dread of finding

out just how much of yourself you are willing to give to please your family.

- “Shut Mouths Sing Melodious” offers the dread of the mortal world and the world that lurks in the shadows bleeding into each other. Your voice, our voices sing in unison.

[Eugenia]

The role of the fictional dread isn't just about the jump scares (although those are fun too!) Fictional dread helps people face their own fears and anxieties in the controlled environment of a page or a book, and come back unscathed when the book is closed, when the page is turned. Even if the characters don't make it out. They still teach us about ourselves. We come back stronger and certain that we can face real life dread for another day.

[Nelly]

It is in the possibilities of art that we find ourselves. In the safety of literary dread we have learned how to deal with the horrors of reality and how to enjoy the light that's always present where there are shadows. We are together in this. Our voices reach each other's ears even in the darkest places. Let's keep writing beautiful words to share our dread.

The voices of a roaring sea and of a rumbling earthquake have gone silent. That cold draft now feels like warm fingers on your back, goosebumps. The once dim light is a spotlight on the closed door. Behind it, sounds, terrifying yet appealing voices calling for you.

We recommend you to open that door and let those voices in.

Now read.



Nelly Geraldine García-Rosas was born and raised in Mexico but emigrated to the U.S. several years ago. She is a graduate of the Clarion West class of 2019. Her short fiction has appeared in *Lightspeed*, *Nightmare*, *Strange Horizons*, the World Fantasy Award-winning anthology *She Walks in Shadows*, and elsewhere. She can be found online at nellygeraldine.com and on Twitter as [@kitsune_ng](https://twitter.com/kitsune_ng).

Eugenia Triantafyllou is a Greek author and artist with a flair for dark things. Her work has been nominated for the Ignyte, Nebula, and World Fantasy Awards, and she is a graduate of Clarion West Writers Workshop. You can find her stories in *Uncanny*, *Tor.com*, *Strange Horizons*, and other venues. She currently lives in Athens with a boy and a dog. Find her on Twitter or Mastodon [@foxesandroses](https://twitter.com/foxesandroses) or her website <https://eugeniatriantafyllou.wordpress.com>

Soulbirds

by Sylvia Heike

The flock lands in my garden on a frozen winter morning, a solemn cloud of sharp beaks and grey feathers. They haunt the branches of the apple tree and congregate like sparrows waiting for seeds. But the birds are not of this land or sky. They are special guests—family—and they have travelled a long way.

I slip into my boots and sheepskin coat, grab a bucket of feed, and step into the cold. Their obsidian eyes follow my every movement. I fill the feeders with dried mealworms, crushed peanuts, and black-oil sunflower seeds.

“Go ahead,” I say, my breath painting ghosts in the air.

The birds need no encouragement. The winter feast is why they’ve come. An ancient tradition. They each find a morsel and peck, peck, peck. Most winter birds faced with a meal like this would be happily chirping and fluttering, but the soulbirds dine as they did in life, in revered silence. My aunts, uncles, cousins—their feathers a soft pale grey akin to mourning doves. My tiny sisters—their storm-dark feathers not yet

worn light and translucent by eternity and long travel between realms. Heaven and earth.

Oh, Ida and Edda! How I hated leaving you behind. The hardest thing I've ever done. But no matter how much I wanted, I couldn't take you with me when I escaped the Blessed Village. You were too small, the journey too long and arduous. Deep down, I hoped one day you'd find me. Yet I could never have imagined a reunion crueller than this.

When I heard the news, I didn't want to believe it. Everyone at the Village dead. Nothing and no one survived the fire. The flames swallowed every building, including the church. I have a feeling I'd be dead, too, had I stayed.

I reach out my hand. Ida lands on my fingers, weighing no more than a psalm. She grabs a sunflower seed, spooks off, and chips away at it on a snowy branch. Edda observes me longer before braving the same. She stays for a moment. Sunlight catches her feathers. I hold my breath, resisting the urge to close my fingers around her and bring her indoors, where it's cosy and warm. But to trap and keep her in a cage? I could never do it to her soul.

I breathe in. Out. A phantom summer scents the air, as if somewhere under the snow, wildflowers are blooming. Above, citrus trees, which do not grow here.

For the rest of the day, I make myself quiet, useful, needed, as if I were still serving the church and the village. It feels natural, almost frighteningly easy, unlike the life I've tried so hard to build here, but never quite feeling like I belong. With family, at least, I always knew my place and what to do, how to give.

Keeping my head down, I refill the feeders, over and over, hoping it's enough.

It's the least I can do for my sisters.



I can't help but wonder... If I didn't feed the flock, where would they go? No one to feed them at the Village anymore.

Last winter, a mob of chickadees slipped into my neighbour's barn and attacked his sheep. The birds pecked the sheep's backs bloody to reach the fat under the skin. Another year, the same happened to the udders of his cows. Both times, the animals were so badly injured they had to be put down.

Would chickadees really do that?

My neighbour no longer keeps animals, but I hear they have a new baby in the house. A little girl.



The weary winter sun sinks below the horizon, leaving behind a thickening blue dusk. The flock swirls in the air, assembling into the shape of a giant cross, before disappearing into the night. It's my turn to be the one left behind.

A flock of one.



I wake to the sound of scratching—on the roof, in the walls. The flock should be long gone, but I hear it, the scratching and the digging, the skin of the house crawling around me. I pull the bed covers over my head. It could be rats.

Or chickadees.

I hope it's rats.

It happens with small birds all the time, once the

temperatures start dropping—they get curious about houses. Some say the birds are looking for hibernating insects within gaps and air vents, that's how they get stuck inside the walls. They burrow deeper and deeper into woolly insulation, and with no light to guide them, they never find their way out. Others say they're just seeking warmth.

An old house like this has many holes. Not that it matters. The dead always find a way in.

Something flutters across the room.

I click the bedside lamp on. Batlike shadows slash the walls, the visitors perched at the foot of my bed, winged and waiting.

The rest of the flock has arrived late, the majority of them more distant relatives and ancestors, perhaps, but family nonetheless. Those who had farther to go. All the way from hell. It takes me a moment to recognise my parents and the elders among them. Their wicked feathers look dull and frayed. The air smells faintly of tar, sulphur, smoke.

I push away the covers and slip out of bed, bare feet landing on the cold pine floor. The birds follow me to the kitchen. I open the fridge, assessing its contents, only to close it soon after—the birds won't accept processed food. Back in the Village, we led a simple life, only ate what we traded or grew. The birds cock their heads, watching me with dead, glassy eyes.

I find the near-empty bucket and throw a handful of sunflower hearts in the air. They rain against the floorboards. The birds swoop down and peck, but it's not enough. I feel a sickening twist in my stomach. Of shame, failure, regret. I should've prepared better, should've known the rest of my family would find

me too. Instead, I've spent the morning being far too generous.

"I'm sorry. It's all I've got."

The birds glare at me, quiet judgement in their stare.

I know hunger when I see it.

In my mind, I see my father giving sermons and working the fields; my mother sweeping, cooking, and sacrificing so much. Both my parents dedicated their whole lives to family, discipline, and God—and raised me to do the same. Or the house would hum with the sacred hymn of holy whip and divine belt. My escape was the only time I ever stood up to them, the only way I knew how, and now they're here. And hungry.

I hear their voices in my head. *Ungrateful girl*. Haven't I always had soup in my bowl, a clean dress, and a roof over my head? Haven't I? Haven't I? Even now my fridge is full. *Of brand foods and forbidden delights*.

I take a step backwards. The birds knit closer. Older generations always were well-mannered, although less so behind closed doors where God couldn't see.

Greedy girl. Selfish girl. The voices in my head drown out my own. If I ever had one. To not share of my lot would be a sin. The guests are my family. My flesh, blood, and feathers. My community. And I am theirs.

I pull my nightgown over my head, baring my breasts, stomach, soft thighs. I climb the chair and lay myself down on the kitchen table. I think of the neighbour's baby girl sleeping in her cot, so safe and so loved. Her whole life ahead of her. I bite my tongue, hoping not to wake her. I close my eyes, but even through shut eyelids, I see the torn wings gathering above. The ravenous beaks.

Family should not go hungry, not when I have so much to give.



Sylvia Heike (she/her) is a speculative fiction writer from Finland. Her stories have appeared in Flash Fiction Online, PodCastle, Nature Futures, and more. When not writing, she likes to go hiking and looking for birds. Find her online at sylviaheike.com or on Twitter @sylviaheike.

CONSENT FOR FACIAL RECONSTRUCTION

WITH THE SHELLEY CONCEPTS INC CUSTOM PATIENT-FITTED RECONSTRUCTION PROSTHESIS

by Katie R. Yen

(Form 666)

You [PATIENT NAME], have the
right to be informed about

your condition(s), heretofore
referenced as THE CONDITION

(circle the below as appropriate):

- A. Leprosy
- B. Fantasmagoria
- C. Galvanism
- D. Idiopathic Nosophobia

E. Other: _____

and the recommended treatment so that
you can make an informed decision
whether or not to
undergo [THE PROCEDURE]

This disclosure is ~~not~~ meant to

~~Alarm you but is rather an~~
~~effort to properly inform you~~

We will make every effort to assure that you
are fully informed and fully waylaid

Although the

Shelley Concepts Inc custom patient-
fitted reconstruction prosthesis

has undergone preliminary ~~in-vivo in mortuus~~
testing (and improved results are anticipated!)

I, [PATIENT NAME],

am aware that results also depend
upon my adherence to

the post-operative rehabilitation program
which includes (but is not limited to):

A. Change in Diet: Strict liquid diet of Ecto-Coolers
and Whole Organic [Human] Bone Broth.

B. Physical Therapy/Exercise: Avoid moving Facial
Muscles, especially those expressing Emotion(s).

C. Avoiding: Reflective Surfaces, Radio Frequency
Emitting Devices, Human Contact, Snow, Air
Travel, Smoking, Alchemy and its Practitioners,
Fire and Virtual Fireplaces, Love, etc.

D. Social Distancing: Restricting movement to Tree Hollows, Stone Cellars, Castle Ruins, Granite Fissures, Abandoned Mine Shafts, Volcanic Vents, AOL Chat Rooms, Enchanted Wells to the Underworld.

am also aware that it may not be entirely possible to eliminate

side effects which include but are not limited to

allergic reaction to the prosthesis bruising objectionable scarring adhesions ankylosis general hideousness stifling discoloration of the eyes jaw ear inflammation of the canal perforation of the permanent numbness conjunctivitis ringing in the brain equilibrium continued dysfunction decreased derange of motion nausea difficulty breathing cramping tingling diarrhoea spontaneous birth contractions rash of the extremities internal bleeding possibly requiring later revision

and that the underlying causes that necessitate a complete facial reconstruction with *Shelley Concepts Inc!*

custom FACIAL patient-fitted FACIAL reconstruction FACIAL prosthesis

your hideous face hideous face hideous face hideous hideous face hideous hideous hideous

will not can not won't not be fully addressed by

THE PROCEDURE

and agree to hold harmless-not sue for any reason in perpetuity for all of time ever ever ever

Shelley Concepts Inc. and their

employees, employee's spouses, international holding company, investors, social media intern

I, [PATIENT NAME], out of wantonness, do authorize Dr. [NAME] and *Shelley Concepts Inc.* (*do not deny me my request!*) to assuredly perform THE PROCEDURE (that I so ardently desire) in order to gain a small portion of the happiness (*advancement of the night! most abhorred task!*) which I believe I am owed.

[PATIENT'S SIGNATURE HERE – G O D S P E E D !]



Katie R. Yen writes fiction and poetry through a multicultural lens. Her work has been published in *Edible East Bay*, *Fathom Magazine*, *Third Coast*, *America* and *Snarl*, and she is the winner of the 2022 International Sijo Competition hosted by the Sejong Cultural Society. She studied linguistics and foreign languages at Swarthmore College, and you can find her muttering in Spanglish and Chingrish while battling aphids on her roses. For more of her work, visit www.katiewen.com and follow her @katiedowrite.

Oh Jackie

by Wess Mongo Jolley

In the spring she calls to me.

“Oh Jackie? Dear Jackie?” she calls.

She doesn't call me Jackie all the time. But always in the spring.

In the spring she calls. “Oh Jackie? Dear Jackie?”

And immediately I answer back. “Yes, Mommy. I'm here, Mommy.”

She isn't my mother. But when she calls, I answer. “I'm here, Mommy.”

The house becomes quiet, as it always is now, and I go back to whatever it was I was doing. Cleaning, usually. She seems to like to call when I'm cleaning. This spring, I was dusting the delicate hands of the grandfather clock. The hands and the pendulum, and the inside of the great oak case with the tiny little gears that click and spin and shine when they are polished.

“Oh Jackie? Dear Jackie?” she calls, her voice old and cracked in the empty parlor.

My name isn't Jackie. I've lived in this house alone for many years. I don't know who Mommy is, or where

she is. The first time I heard her call was when I was just twenty-three.

Back then, the house was not empty. Back then there was my wife, and there was my baby, and there was always laughter in the hallways—not quiet, the way it is now. There was laughter, and music, and making love in the parlor as the baby slept upstairs. We had guests who would stay, and guests who would not. The old house loved guests, so we dedicated two rooms for them on the third floor, looking out over the rolling hills. They would come, and they would stay, and we would all laugh while eating savory meats and delicious cheeses, delivered fresh from all over the world.

I never worked in those days, and I never cleaned. We had people for that, and they would arrive at nine every morning, and depart every day at five. I never knew their names.

Except for Chester.

Chester stayed in the servants' quarters down the hill, and he never left the property. I'm sure Chester knew all the servants' names, but that wasn't my concern. My concern was only our guests, and they usually arrived at six-thirty.

Chester never worked after five pm. After all, we weren't monsters. Not back then.

So, there was my wife, and our baby. And our guests.

We first met the French couple in August of 1912, and they came to stay with us the following year. They had corresponded with us for months. "Come to the country," we would write on perfumed stationery. "Stay! We'd love to have you! You can have the blue guest room at the top of the stairs. From there, you can see the spires of the city, past the green rolling hills. It's lovely..."

Like many others, the French couple came. Like many others, they stayed. All that summer, we would laugh and play cards in the evening, and during the day we would wander the grounds and play music on the phonograph.

I would dally with the French wife in the garden, my hands exploring beneath her many layers of petticoats and lace. And my wife would take the lady's husband on long walks in the woods. And all four of us would come back with leaves in our hair.

At night, my wife and I would laugh and tell stories in our bedchamber, and I'd smell him on her, where he touched her. And she would smell the French wife on me, on my fingers, and on my loins. And we would laugh and make love again with the baby sleeping soundly in her crib in the nursery nearby, and the sounds of the French couple whispering and twittering behind their locked door upstairs.

In the morning, Chester would discreetly launder any undergarments left outdoors, and return them to the enormous wardrobes that graced every room, with their sweeping filigree and cherubs adorning the crowns.

Despite the rising tensions across the Channel, the French couple returned the following summer. It was the great year of 1914. And it would be that summer when I would first hear Mommy calling to me.

I will never forget that first time. I had risen early, and none of the servants had yet arrived for the day. Chester was out in the garden, pruning roses in the morning mist, and the house was quiet as I measured out the imported Ceylon tea and put the water to boil.

“Oh Jackie? Dear Jackie?” she called.

“Yes, Mommy. I’m here, Mommy,” I said instantly. My hand was frozen on the silver tea scoop and the morning sun was arching through the window. Minute particles of dust danced in its light.

I don’t recall how long I stood there, frozen. I knew at once that it was not the voice of my wife. I knew at once it wasn’t the voice of our French lady friend. This voice was old and cracked and seemed out of place in our gay and happy home.

“Oh Jackie? Dear Jackie?” it had said.

“Yes, Mommy. I’m here, Mommy.” I had replied.

My name is not Jackie. She is not my mother.

The scoop had trembled, tea leaves scattering across the white marble counter like black stars. Constellations of stars. My eyes watered, looking at them.

“Yes, Mommy. I’m here, Mommy,” I had replied. But I am not Jackie. She is not my mother. And I do not know her.

And then I heard the Frenchman upstairs screaming.

Even then, I remained frozen for several seconds, straining my ears for that crackling old voice, before finally dropping the scoop of tea in the sink and rushing for the stairs.

Chester was coming through the door at almost the same instant, and we nearly collided in a heap on the landing. Neither of us spoke as we bolted up the stairs. I passed the master bedroom and saw my wife sitting up, clutching the bedclothes to her throat. The shrieking continued, resonant with terror and despair, until the house seemed to overflow with it. Every room filled with the screaming, pouring out of the open windows, and running through the yards and gardens in rivulets. In the nursery, our baby began to cry.

I rounded the corner and launched myself up the second set of stairs, with their hand-carved balusters and ivy.

The Frenchman stood on the guest bed, naked as the dawn. His wife cowered in the corner, terrified, but apparently unharmed. The veins stood out in the Frenchman's neck, and his eyes were wild and terrible. His arms reached out and clawed at something invisible in the air in front of him, and he screamed. And he screamed, and he screamed.

I caught one arm, Chester caught the other, and the screaming stopped. The Frenchman collapsed onto the bed. He laid silent for a moment, and then the weeping started.

It was their last visit.

The French couple left that afternoon. Nobody could say what had happened. But they left, and from that day, the house felt less gay. The silences, no longer comforting. The guests, fewer and farther between. The lights in the windows, no longer inviting us all to dance. The music, muted and distorted. Shadows seemed darker, and we could not dispel them, no matter how many lamps we used, or how many electric lights we installed.

The servants came, did their work, and left wringing their hands.

They came and worked. Until they stopped coming, and Chester had to hire new ones.

Our baby, our dear Mollie Bee, died later that year. Just as the leaves were beginning to fall from the trees.

There were no guests in our home the day Mollie Bee died. We had tried to entertain guests earlier in the summer, in those days after the French couple

departed. But our home always seemed darker and damper than we liked, and no matter how the servants beat the curtains, or washed the shimmering glass in the vaulted ceilings, the gloom could not be dispelled. We had guests, but they didn't stay. They would suffer through a day in the dreary and damp rooms, and then suddenly receive a telegram that they had an emergency at home, or a forgotten appointment for a malady they had never thought to mention.

By the time little Mollie Bee died, the guests no longer came at all. And by then, of course, the war had started, and letters from the continent dwindled and finally stopped.

But poor Mollie Bee, who had not yet turned two, seemed to feel the house's affliction more than even the guests or the servants. And as the summer stumbled and came to its knees, her little heart could no longer bear the dank sadness that had invaded our lives.

Chester wrapped her in her favorite pink blanket, the one with the elephants dancing to and fro. He buried her on the hillside above the orchard, under a beautiful oak that we had visited with her often. He buried her alone. The gardener had left in the night the week prior, and no one had answered our ad for a new one. He buried her alone, because we could not bear to watch.

"Oh Jackie? Dear Jackie?" the voice called to me, as I sat in the parlor that evening, listening to the distant sounds of my wife sobbing.

"Yes, Mommy. I'm here, Mommy," I said, the hum of my own voice unfamiliar to my ears. The fire shimmered, with sounds so muted and colors so dull, it seemed like a silent picture show in our fireplace. My wife was standing in the doorway, I recall. I believe I recall. And I know she was speaking. But I couldn't hear

her voice, and she looked unfamiliar to me, like one of the guests that used to wander the hallways after dark, but who had now forgotten their way back to their room.

I heard my voice, but couldn't make out the words. And Chester placed a warm blanket on my lap.

The next morning, my wife had gone. There was no note, but the master wardrobe was open and some of our best linen was missing. For the first few days, I thought perhaps she had gone to visit her mother, or just gone to town for some champagne and chocolates. More than once, in those first days, I thought of asking Chester if he knew where she had gone. But each time I thought of it, I no longer felt it was important enough to mention. After all, he had newly washed napkins to fold, and he always polished the silverware each year before the winters came.

I don't know when I first noticed that Chester was no longer in our employ. Or, perhaps, in my employ. I had left his wages on the kitchen table one day in the midwinter. But the next Tuesday, I noticed the little stack of bills was still there. I left another week's wages next to it, in its own tidy stack. But those too were still there the following week. And as the snows deepened, I marveled at the unbroken whiteness of the landscape. Each day, I'd look for tracks of the squirrels in the freshly fallen snow, but they too seem to have fled.

"Oh Jackie? Dear Jackie?" Mommy called again, early in the spring, before the last snow was off the ground. I was making another neat pile of bills on the crowded kitchen table when I heard her voice.

"Yes, Mommy. I'm here, Mommy," I said, and finished stacking the last of the banknotes.

Standing in the window of the Blue Room, I wondered

how the war was going. I seemed to recall there was a war. But perhaps I was mistaken.

By the following fall, I had counted out the last of the money from the safe upstairs. Chester's weekly wages now covered the table from one end to the other, in over fifty small piles, each with a scrap of paper on top, giving the amount and the dates. The piles for the new year each had an extra bill, since I'd promised Chester a raise. And there was a special pile I had made next to his wages for Christmas week. The note on top said, "Buy something special for your mother, who I know you love dearly."

"Oh Jackie? Dear Jackie?"

"Yes, Mommy. I'm here, Mommy."

That was the year I started cleaning. I didn't want the place to be a mess when Chester came back. And I knew Mommy liked things to be clean and tidy. So I would dust the dishes in the hutch, and then dust the hutch. I would sweep the carpets and polish the silverware again, even though it wasn't yet the fall. I would mend the tears in the drapes, then wash them by hand in the sink, and dry them over the balconies on sunny days. And yet the more I cleaned, the mustier the house smelled. I blamed it on the war. Grandfather had been in the Boer war, and he told me nothing ever smelled right to him afterward.

Maybe one day this new war would be over, and the house would smell better. Maybe then my wife would return, and Chester would be back to pick up his wages, and refold all the linens, since he knew how to do it so much better than I.

It had been more than two years since dear Mollie Bee had died, and I couldn't remember where Chester had buried her. I was sure he had found a special place. Chester was always kind and thoughtful that

way. Wherever she was, I knew that she was resting peacefully, surrounded by nature's beauty. But the harder I thought, the less I could remember.

Chester knew. I'd just ask Chester.

I walked about the house for a day, calling to him, before I remembered that he had been gone for well over a year.

But perhaps he had just overslept. It would be unlike Chester to do that. He was always so punctual. He always showed up at exactly 9:00, coming up the path from the servants' quarters to the main house. And he always left at precisely 5:00, to give us privacy with our guests. Chester was always so thoughtful. And we didn't want him to work past five. After all, we weren't monsters.

As I left the front door of the house, I realized I hadn't been outside in quite some time. The wooden stairs to the porch had rotted away over the winter, and with my first step they gave way, depositing me roughly on the overgrown lawn.

"Oh Jackie? Dear Jackie?"

"Yes, Mommy. I'm here, Mommy."

I walked down the path to the servants' quarters. There was a question I wanted to ask Chester, but I couldn't recall what it was. Perhaps I would remember when I got there.

The servants' quarters were dark and musty, even darker and mustier than the house. I promised myself I'd bring my cleaning supplies down later in the day and give it a good going over. The door hung open on its hinges, and the room beyond was so dark, and so cold. I recalled that there was a reason I had come down here, but I couldn't remember what it was now. I stepped into the small room, and my eyes adjusted to the gloom.

Yes, much mustier here. This place could certainly use a good cleaning.

Chester was curled up on the couch, pools of blood on the fabric and the floor, long since ripened from red to black.

I didn't realize he had such a nice couch, I thought. In fact, I couldn't recall ever visiting him here in the servants' quarters. He had been dead for a very long time. I only recognized him by his carefully starched shirt and blue bow tie. In his lap was a medal in a dusty frame, with a card underneath. The words were barely visible through all the blood as I leaned close.

"For exemplary valor and bravery in the Boer War," the inscription read, "His Majesty awards Jack Chester Stevens this, the Victoria Cross."

Chester, I thought. *Jack Chester Stevens. Jackie.*

On the floor at his feet were three bundles, wrapped in dank and stained blankets. One was tiny, and something about the pink elephants looked familiar, but I couldn't place it. The second bundle was larger, and a delicate hand with a familiar ring had slipped between the folds of what looked like some of our best linen.

"That's a shame," I said. "I'll never get that clean."

The third bundle was lumpy and misshapen and looked very old. The blanket was moldy and rotted away in places. And unlike the others, there were feet sticking out of one end. The shoes were shiny and bright. Orthopedic shoes. *Old woman shoes*, I thought.

"Oh Jackie? Dear Jackie?" a voice said.

"Yes, Mommy," I said to the bundles on the floor.

"I'm here, Mommy," I said to the fetid room.

And went back to the house to get my mop.



Wess Mongo Jolley is a Montreal novelist, editor, podcaster, poet, and poetry promoter; and is best-known for hosting the IndieFeed Performance Poetry Channel for more than ten years. His work has appeared in journals such as *Off the Coast*, *PANK*, *Danse Macabre*, *The Chamber Magazine*, *Dressing Room Poetry Journal*, *RFD*, and in collections such as the Write Bloody Press book *The Good Things About America*. His supernatural horror trilogy, *The Last Handful of Clover*, is currently being released serially on Patreon, Wattpad, QSaltLake, and as an audiobook podcast. Check him out at <http://wessmongojolley.com>.

Ghostboy Kills Our Mother With Trauma

by Olumide Manuel

The only thing that Ghostboy wears is the night
—except for his body which slacks at the neck
& knees that he looks like one of the nocturnal
flowers climbing out of the lichen-ridden swamp.
Ghostboy would brag that no dawn can undress him.
The pride stills the air and light everytime, we do not
breathe we do not argue, we leave Ghostboy in the
drunkenness of smoke and ego. He once hid in the cracks
of a wall and sired a joy that made ears bleed.
Our lady Amanda became frantic, she searched the whole
wretched whorehouse in vain for a wailing baby.
Her ear bled and her breasts cried a delta of matern lament
even though the only baby she ever had was parcelled
in a black polythene and dumped in some wild garden
because she was too young and too poor to have a baby.

Her regrets had groomed us instead, but we are not one baby enough. For days, she looked into the mirror that blocked the sun from reaching the cracks and asked, God, am I crazy? We sighed behind her, whispering among ourselves, *aren't we all are?* She laughed loud —*did she hear us?* Soon the laughter choked itself into tears. She put on a black night gown and a makeup, the tears ruined it. A gramophone played a funny song, a distinct mix of blues and rock. She set the door on fire and arranged for herself a stool and a rope. We grooved with the fire and tautened with the rope. When the smoke and the day is gone, Ghostboy came out —unscathed, wearing the blackest of night with a slanting smile on his drooping neck— to play pokers with the charred flowers and shadows. The shadows won, we always do.



Olumide Manuel, NGP IX, is a writer, a biology teacher and an environmentalist. He is a nominee of Pushcart Prize, and the winner of Aké Climate Change Poetry Prize 2022. His works have been published on Hex Literary, Magma Poetry, Trampset, Uncanny Magazine, Agbowó Magazine, Up The Staircase Quarterly, Frontier Poetry, and elsewhere.

The Bones Are Hungry

by Joshua Jones Lofflin

Father's searching the house again. He clomps across the floor, flinging open cupboards and wardrobes then slamming them shut. You're in the cellar, searching also, though he says there's nothing there. Just oil-soaked rags, empty paint canisters, the skeletal frame of a sofa, its fabric long since eaten away, shelves and shelves of dusty cans, and half-empty boxes of strychnine beside small bottles of chloroform. And in the corner, under a stack of old canvases, a lid of damp plywood with a circular ring of rot where it meets an old well. The well's stone lips are cracked at the edges. In the right light—not that the light is ever right in the cellar—it might look like it's smiling. It's all mouth and throat and stench of decay, not unlike your great aunt with her teeth out.

She sits with you in her old bedroom, grabs your arm with a withered hand and tells you about the well, how the houseboys can no longer draw water from it. *There's a girl who drowned*, she says, forgetting that there haven't been houseboys in decades, forgetting the name of the girl, or that she only pretended to drown, that she didn't come out from her hiding spot until after a mob killed the one boy who used to play with her.

It's only later that she says, *She was hiding in the attic the whole time. Came out skinny as a rake with those big fishy eyes, looking just like you.* She pulls your arm closer, leans close and whispers, *But the well, the well. There are bones in the well.*

Your father avoids your great aunt as he rummages through closets and pantries. He still hasn't forgiven her for forgetting where she hid her jewels, the gold bars she used to talk about, her rare coin collection. Hidden, all hidden, she once said, waving her hand airily about the kitchen, as if they might suddenly appear behind the chipped and dusty china. Now she only smiles secretly whenever he blusters about, pulling out drawers and taking a hammer to them, searching for false bottoms. When he finds nothing, he stalks from room to room, muttering, cursing your great aunt, turning off lights she's left on, then more cursing about the cost of electricity and how the house costs so much to heat. Already, October winds blow through gaps in the siding, claw at the shingles, leave the windows fogged over, leave you shivering in the Salvation Army sleeping bag your father unfurled atop your great aunt's old bed.

Your father says he'll take you someplace warm. As soon as he gets enough money for a boat, you'll sail up and down the Caribbean, just the two of you: fishing, looking for old shipwrecks, discovering new islands. He, the captain, and you, his first mate. *But what about pirates,* you ask, and he touches his nose and says you and he will be the pirates, afeared across the seven seas. Then he tells you to keep searching and sends you into the attic. You climb in and out of the lattice of beams, your father at the ladder holding an oil lantern aloft. Strange shadows stencil the sloping roof, catch on bony shards that are nothing more than broken chair slats. There are dead mice and rotting wicker baskets; a

wire-framed bird cage and a stack of window shutters; a rocking horse with a missing eye; a single ice skate, leather, with missing laces. You find a shoebox covered in dust, but there are no coins inside, no treasure maps or jewels. Instead, yellowing photos, too hard to make out in the lantern's dim glow.

You spread the photos across the bed. *I don't remember any of these*, your great aunt says and squints at the pictures of men and women in stately dress, in fur coats and sequined gowns. A pony in a gleaming saddle. A line of uniformed staff, all white gloves and aprons. In each photo the house stands proud and sentinel, sometimes beneath an almost black sky, other times the sky as silvered as the faces beneath it. Wait, she says, and her eyes linger on a photo of two girls: one with hair pulled back, the other narrow-chinned with large serious eyes have the same broad foreheads, the same furrowed brows. The tall one's left eye droops like your great aunt's does now as she says, *See, she looks just like you*, and she traces her finger across the smaller girl's taut smile.

Pale winter light streams into the kitchen as your father hunches over the kitchen sink, opening a tin of beans for you. You show him the photo of the girls. He frowns at it, lets out a grunt, then turns his attention back to the can opener. His hands work slowly; his knuckles are still bloodied from where he punched a wall. But that was at night. Now he's showered, shaved, his eyes small and lucid. *Your grandmother*, he finally says. *As batty as her sister*. You ask him if she really pretended to drown in the old well. *What do you know about that?* he asks, his eyes narrowing. He passes you the opened tin and a spoon. *You forget about it, it's dangerous. You hear?* You eat and mumble, *yessir*. Your great aunt sits in the corner, not eating. When you ask your father if there

are bones down the well, he says he told you to forget about it, and he better not catch you playing down there again. His hands shake, his shoulders too, as he picks up his hammer and turns to leave. Your great aunt watches him, humming tunelessly, her lips stretched into a wide, toothless smile.

You lay on your belly by the well's mouth, wondering about what—or whose—bones are below. Your great aunt says they're hungry, that they sometimes climb out searching for something to eat. You searched also, but the cellar shelves were bare but for some canned peaches tucked away beside an open sack of lye. You ate them greedily, drinking their syrup and savoring the sticky sweetness. Father promised he'd walk to the store soon, but that was three days ago. You hang your head over the edge, feel a breath blow against your cheek, a whisper curling into the whorls of your ear. *I'm hungry too*, you whisper back.

In the evenings, Father sweats and sips his medicine. He squats by the fireplace and prods the flames with an iron poker. Sparks fly up from the burning remains of your great aunt's chifforobe. You sit by the hearth trying to rub warmth back into your hands now that the November frosts have come. Your father paces and drinks and asks you to list all the places you looked again, asks if you checked inside the toilet tanks, then yells at you when you hesitate. He slashes the air with the poker before letting it clatter to the floor, his body following, as if his bones gave way all at once. He moans, says, *We'll find it, won't we*, and you squeeze his hand, feel how hot he is, and tell him you'll find everything.

It's past midnight when your great aunt shows you the secret cache, a small box hidden behind a loose piece of moulding your father hadn't yet taken a hammer to. Inside, a coin so dull it doesn't reflect the moonlight.

It's probably worthless, and besides, she makes you promise to keep it safe, keep it secret. *Save it for just the right wish*, she says. You hold the coin to your ear, try to listen to the hum of its metal, but you only hear your father's ragged breathing from the room next door.

Above you, the wallboards are pocked with fist-sized holes or are gone altogether, leaving only rib-like beams and skeletal plumbing behind. And there's the incessant clomp of your father's boots, the smashing of hammer through wood and plaster, the splintering of bed frames, of cabinets. Each night more furniture goes up the chimney, and your father smells of smoke and sweat—a sour, metallic stench that coats the back of your throat. The air is cleaner down here, by the well, where you lie on your stomach, fingering the coin, feeling its weight. You peer over the edge of the well's lips, ask it what you should wish for, but the well holds its breath and says nothing.

Your father stares into the fireplace and shakes as you finger the coin in your pocket. Your great aunt leans next to you, perhaps reading your mind. *It's your wish and not for him*, she tells you. *He won't be able to use it. Look at him, he'd just ruin it like everything else*, she says, and you wonder if your father is right, maybe she is an evil, old bat. Crazy and senile. *Sir*, you say, your hand out, the coin catching the light of the fire and holding it. Your father looks up with a start and notices your reflection in the soot-streaked mirror above the fireplace. He straightens his shoulders and wipes spittle from his mouth and shouts at you to stop your staring. He doesn't see your outstretched hand or your great aunt's malevolent smile. Instead, he takes a swig of his medicine and kicks at a bedpost—your bedpost—that's half out of the fireplace, and you know you'll have to sleep on the damp, warped floorboards tonight. *I said,*

stop your staring, he snarls before slumping back to the floor, his fist loose about the throat of his bottle. Behind him, his shadow flickers, chased by other shadows, and your great aunt is gone.

When the ice storms come, there's no more furniture to burn, and the house shivers with cold. Your father no longer shaves. His hair's grown lank and oily. He fries stale bread in a pat of lard for you, but he eats nothing, says he only needs coffee and holds a mug in a trembling hand. Your great aunt clucks her tongue as coffee sloshes over the cup's rim. *Stay away from her*, your father murmurs, and you can't tell if he's talking to you or your great aunt. He tries to take a sip, but he can barely hold his cup, and he looks so, so tired. When you rise to help him, he shouts at you to keep away and grabs for his hammer, shaking it up and down until your great aunt tells you to come, to leave him be, and you follow her into the destroyed remnants of her bedroom.

You move your sleeping bag to the cellar, lay it on a bed of rumpled oil cloths. It's cold, but not as icy as the rooms upstairs. Your great aunt watches the well with you and tells you more about the sleeping bones, how they miss their body, how when they wake, they'll clamber hand over hand up the well and grant your wish. *Save your coin; it won't be long now*, she says, and from the well there's the faintest stirring, a damp breath of air that smells of peat and lye. You say you only wish Father would get better, and your great aunt smiles her terrible smile and says, *Oh, child, he was never well, don't you know that?*

Father's searching the house again, this time for you or your great aunt or for the hungry bones, you can't be sure. His bare feet slap down the cellar stairs. His hammer scrapes the bricked-over wall. He's shirtless and thin; his ribs are shadowed beneath his sagging

chest. In the light of the cellar's bare bulb, he looks translucent, like a burned down candle. *Here you are*, he says and leans heavily against a shelf, almost knocking over its boxes and bottles. When he sees the glint of metal in your hand, he totters forward, renews his grip on the hammer, and half-whispers *where, where, where..*

Then he squats, the mouth of the well between you and him. He rubs a hand across his jaw, opens his mouth and cries out like some poisoned animal, gums at the words until you make out *give it to me*, but you clamp your fist shut and tell him you can't, you can't, it's for a wish, and he shakes his head, lolls it back and forth as if maybe he hears them coming, the boney fingers clawing at the sides of the well.

And now he's raising his hammer, it's so heavy in his hand, and maybe he wants to throw it at you, or toss it down the well, or smash the bones climbing upward, or swing it through your great aunt who sits almost touching him, who nods to you that it's time to make your wish, that the bones will make it come true. So you shutter your eyes and throw the coin and make your wish, even though you know your great aunt's a liar, that wishes never come true, and you dare not look. You hear the coin spin, hear the hammer clatter to the floor, hear the hollow whisper of bones. And you dare not look.



Joshua Jones Lofflin's writing has appeared in *The Best Microfictions 2020*, *The Best Small Fictions 2019*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *CRAFT*, *Fractured Lit*, *SmokeLong*

Quarterly, Split Lip Magazine, and elsewhere. He lives in Maryland. Find him on Twitter @jjlofflin or visit his website: jjlofflin.com

Shut Mouths Sing Melodious

by Tiffany Morris

What web captures shadow?

I dream the dead and they
dream me
in the clean linen of longing,
the tear of a marital sheet,
the burial shroud of hours,
and the pain of return.

A spirit appears and disappears
at my house, in faces in the
wood-knots,
hands outstretched
in doorways. The tap spits hair
and unspools thread. Stitched-shut

mouths sing melodious
in another room.

The forest bleeds against the
window: my voice—our voices
are a burning smoke in the leaves.
The trickster spirits harvest
sound, their eyeless bodies
peer inside from eaves
and shutters.

Our voices are
their voices. Our voices
are heard singing. We open
our eyes and open the door
to the emptiness:

I fade in and out.
They fade in and out.
We fade in and out.



Tiffany Morris is a Mi'kmaw/settler writer of speculative fiction and poetry from Kjipuktuk (Halifax), Nova Scotia. She is the author of the horror poetry collection *Elegies of Rotting Stars* (Nictitating Books, 2022). Her work has previously appeared in *Apparition Lit*, *Uncanny Magazine*, and *Nightmare Magazine*, among others. Find her on twitter @tiffmorris or at tiffmorris.com.

Luis, the Last Time

by Rachel Lastra

“Can’t you give me another extension? Please. My kid’s sick. Medicine isn’t cheap.” Angel tried her best to soften her voice, to plead with her eyes, to remove all traces of the hard edges people saw when they looked at her.

The woman behind the counter had a hardness of her own. Something in her eyes said she’d been at this job long enough to hear every excuse. Time—and perhaps the reckoning with her own powerlessness—had left her calloused. “No more extensions, Ms. Arroyo,” the woman said blandly. “Pay your bill by the end of the week or we’re shutting it down.”

Angel looked into the clerk’s tired eyes. Like recognized like; it would be pointless to argue further. “Fine.” She snatched her purse up from the counter and turned away.

She emerged from the building to find the warm afternoon drizzle had shifted to heavy sheets of rain. Cursing, Angel tented her denim jacket over her head and ran toward the parking lot. When she got to her car, she placed one hand on the bio-lock, awkwardly trying to keep the jacket aloft with the other.

The lock beeped once and blinked red.

“Come on, not today.”

She wiped her palm on her shirt and used the hem to wipe down the lock.

Beep. Red. “Fuck.”

Angel repeated the process three times before the light flashed green and the door opened with a shuddering screech, the hydraulics showing their age. She collapsed into the car with a sigh, flinging her jacket into the back where it landed with a wet plop. For a moment she just sat, cradling her purse in her lap, listening to the rain hammer the windshield, watching the droplets make tiny rivers down toward the hood. She dropped her head into her hands and gave herself a moment to feel the weight, though she couldn’t afford to feel it for too long. Being sad didn’t change anything.

The car’s autodrive was on the fritz, so Angel called up the manual controls and pulled out into the buzzing traffic, instinctively weaving around other cars, occasionally catching the flash of screens in her periphery. She squinted against the glare of the billboards blazing their offerings in an unbroken line on each side of the road. But she barely registered any of it, her mind too focused on other survival calculations.

Angel hadn’t been lying to the clerk. She pictured her daughter’s face—the gap in Luna’s smile where she’d lost another tooth, the cheeks that looked hollower every day.

The comm pinged, and the car’s canned voice began reading the incoming message. “Angel Arroyo: You missed your scheduled MRI. It is important that you contact us as soon—”

“Comm off.”

As if the message had conjured it, she felt another headache unfurling. At her last visit, Dr. Wright had used words like *lasting effects* and *find other means* and *slow down*. And as he spoke, Angel thought about all the bills that needed to be paid. All the decisions that were now only hers to make.

Luna was slipping away. Angel could feel it. No matter how many transfusions her daughter underwent, how many different drugs the doctors pumped into her small body, nothing seemed to help. The treatments were slowly bleeding their meager savings dry; soon there would be nothing left. But what was the alternative? As long as there was a chance, Angel had to take it. She'd already lost too much, but she'd lose everything before she lost her daughter.

She needed money and she needed time, and both were in short supply. Headache or no, lasting effects or no, there was nothing for it: she'd have to hit Echo again. Third time this month.



When Angel let herself into the apartment, her mother was wrapped in a blanket in the sweltering living room watching a K-drama Angel didn't recognize.

"Where's Luna?"

"Taking a nap." Her mother's gaze didn't leave the screen. "Rough one today."

Angel closed her eyes against more feelings she didn't have time for. "What's this one about?"

"That one's a ghost." One thin, blue-veined hand emerged from the blanket to point at the screen. "Other's a cyborg. Families won't let them be together, like Romeo and Juliet." This last with a sigh.

Angel smiled, just a little. "I have to go back out."

"You get the bill taken care of?" Her mother finally looked over.

"Yeah," Angel said, turning down the hall, so she wouldn't have to look her mother in the eye.

She cracked the door to her daughter's room and peeked inside. The light from the hall bathed the girl's pale face. That morning, they'd played Go Fish and told each other knock-knock jokes until Angel had to leave for work. Luna had been upbeat, laughing even as her energy waned. *Knock, knock. Who's there? You. You who? You hoo, anybody home?* She hadn't wanted to stop even when her nose started bleeding.

Angel approached the bed quietly and checked Luna's vitals. The bruising around her mouth looked more pronounced. The sight made Angel want to cry, but her eyes stayed dry. She placed a hand on Luna's forehead: sleep-warm but not hot. That was good. Luna looked so peaceful in sleep, the pain temporarily gone. Angel held on to the moment, cataloging it, remembering to remember.

In the bedroom she shared with her mother, Angel hung her sodden jacket on the back of the door, stripped off her damp black t-shirt, and pulled an identical one from the closet. Her hair had puffed up in the humidity, so she scraped it up into a bun as she sat down heavily on the edge of the bed. She pulled the tablet from the bedside drawer and hunted around for the power cord. Found it sticking out from under the bed like the tail of a hiding cat. The tablet was an old model and didn't hold much of a charge, but it worked alright if you plugged it in. She powered it on and opened the file, running her eyes over the familiar words.

Luis, the first time

Luis and Luna at the beach

Luna's first steps

She stopped reading after a few. Looking at this list was like looking into a mirror and not recognizing her own face. She should know these things. All she knew now was that she'd lost them.

She closed the file and pulled up another, bracing herself as the first photo appeared onscreen. Luis with Luna in his arms, his head bent toward her, a fingertip touching her tiny, perfect nose. Luna in the bath, smiling, bubbles piled atop her head in a lopsided crown. The three of them on the boardwalk on an overcast day, hair whipped by the wind off the ocean, arms around each other, happy.

The pain was crowding in, so Angel turned to the safety of anger. She powered the tablet down and slipped it back into the drawer, closing it with a snap. She would focus on what needed to be done. As she grabbed a dry jacket from the closet and shrugged it on, she considered what she would give up this time. Mentally added *Luis, the last time* to the list. She'd thought about giving it up before but had always balked, even though she knew it would sell. Sex always sold, and she and Luis had had a lot of it, some of it memorable. That one just made her sad now, anyway. Maybe it would ease some if she could let that moment go.

In the living room, her mother was exactly where Angel had left her.

The ghost on the screen was weeping.



Angel's boot heels *click-clacked* across the white marble floor, echoing in the cavernous entryway of EchoBank.

There were a few different memory banks out there, but Echo paid the most. They'd cultivated a wide client base of people who couldn't just enjoy a sim like everyone else. Who had too much disposable income and wanted to spend it taking a ride in someone else's life. The experience had to be authentic. Rich people were obsessed with authenticity.

Danny sat at the chest-high front desk, playing a handheld. Two holograms rose up from the device: a humanoid lizard fighting some kind of rock giant. They circled each other, jabbing and feinting. Angel could just make out Danny's face, fuzzy and distorted, behind the two figures.

"Hey."

The rock giant landed a punch, and an arc of digital blood spurted from the lizard man's snout.

"Damn," Danny said, setting the game down. "You made me lose my concentration."

"Sorry."

"Angel." He drew her name out in a way that made her teeth clench. "Back again."

Danny was harmless enough—a slight man with spindly arms and a mustache that so badly wanted to be worthy of the word but just couldn't manage it. Still, there was something about him that put Angel's back up. Maybe it was the way he spoke to her, and maybe it was that he'd seen her come back here so many times. That he knew too much of her business.

"Can't stay away. I need to make a deposit."

"You know the drill." Danny pushed a tablet toward her along with a waft of his cologne.

Angel scrolled to the bottom of the waiver without

reading it and signed with the tip of one finger. She already knew its contents by heart. *EchoBank is not responsible for...*

“Level 3, Room 5 is open. Go on back and I’ll let someone know you’re here.”

Angel began to turn away from the desk, hitching her purse higher on her shoulder.

“Hey.” Danny looked her up and down, clearly appreciating the view. “You wanna go somewhere after? I’m off in an hour. Know a little spot around the corner. Good drinks, good music. Give you something good to remember.”

Angel was too tired to be annoyed at this escalation. “Can’t. Have to get home to my kid.”

Danny reared back in his chair, holding both palms up in a defensive posture. “I don’t date mothers,” he said. The fluff above his lip twisted as he grimaced.

Unbidden, Angel’s mind flashed to the summer Luis had grown a mustache. How she had teased him and refused to kiss him until he shaved it off in a huff. She blinked the memory away. “My loss,” she said, after a short pause, and headed toward the elevators.



In the narrow corridor on Level 3, Angel spotted an older woman with a patterned headscarf tied under her chin coming from the other direction. She was bent over a walker, moving slowly, and Angel had to press her back against the wall to let her pass. As she did, she looked up with a blank, milky-eyed stare. Angel watched until the woman disappeared into the elevator. She brought a hand up and pressed it to her temple. She hadn’t liked that hollow look reflecting back at her.

Room 5, like all the other rooms Angel had been assigned to in this place, was a spartan affair. A large reclining chair like the kind in dentists' offices. A couple of screens built into the wall. Gray cabinets and a sink. A rolling stool. A single box of tissues.

Angel hung her purse on the wall hook and settled herself in the chair. She crossed her legs at the ankle. Shifted and crossed them the other way. Tilted her head back against the headrest, staring up into the little circles of LEDs spaced at intervals across the ceiling, a man-made constellation.

Angel sometimes wondered about the people who bought her memories. She figured some did it for the thrill, the novelty. And some because they could—like adding gold plating to a toilet. She knew some people were just born takers, and this was one more thing they could take from someone else. She'd even heard that some people did it to “gain empathy” or however they wanted to spin it. Experiencing someone else's memory was, she supposed, the closest you could get to walking a mile in their shoes. But memory walking wasn't that much different from playing a sim. Visceral and immersive, perhaps, but fleeting. It didn't change the rest of your life. Angel wondered how much empathy could really be gained from something like that. And if the people paying for the privilege didn't see the irony, didn't think about what it cost someone else...well. Angel wouldn't make a fuss. She needed the money.

She felt a vibration beneath her left buttock and shifted to retrieve the phone from her back pocket. Another med app alert, a message from Luna's doctor this time. *Ms. Arroyo, We've run the additional—*

A quick rap on the door made Angel jolt. She slipped the phone back into her pocket with a shaking hand, mind spinning.

A young woman in pink scrubs, her hair a bright, joyful orange, pushed the door open without waiting for an answer. Her eyes, when she raised them from the tablet in her hands, were half-hidden behind the round yellow lenses of her glasses. "I see you've deposited with us before," she said. Her smile was small but warm, and Angel had the sudden, whimsical thought that the woman looked like a walking sunset.

She decided it would be best to cut to the chase. "I was hoping to get an advance."

The woman's smile faltered. "Ms. Arroyo—"

"Angel."

"...Angel. I'm sure you know our policy. We only pay when the memory sells."

Angel looked down at the pink laces threaded through the woman's otherwise sensible white tennis shoes. "Look," she said, glancing at the woman's name tag: Patricia. Angel forced herself to soften, pasting a smile on her face, trying for a shade or two lighter than desperate. "Patricia, you seem nice."

"I don't have the authority to give you an advance." The words were slightly clipped at the edges, the tablet now hugged to Patricia's chest as though for protection.

Angel pressed her palms against her thighs, hard. Her control of the situation was slipping away, the helplessness clogging her throat threatening to choke her. She refocused, tried a different tack. "What if I deposit a few right now, then? Good ones."

"There can be side effects." Patricia looked unsure. "We generally don't like to take more than one at a time."

"I know. I've signed the waiver." Angel could feel the other woman's discomfort but pressed on. "Do you have children?"

A double blink. “No.”

“I have a daughter. She’s...unwell. I really need the money. Can you help me out?”

“Well...” Patricia bit her lip, softening. “I suppose... maybe...we could allow it this one time. But we couldn’t make it a habit.”

“Thank you.”

“And I can’t give you any money up front.”

“I understand.” Angel closed her eyes. She would call Martha after this. Try to pick up some extra hours.

Her earlier cheer now diminished, Patricia set down her tablet and got to business, opening cabinets and pulling out supplies in silence. She placed sterile pads on the electrodes and attached them along Angel’s hairline, leaning close and pressing each one gently with her fingertips, making sure they were secure. Angel could smell something sweet on the other woman’s breath and wondered if she’d ever banked a memory herself.

“Do those feel okay?”

Angel nodded.

Patricia handed Angel a glass of water and a small, sealed packet of pills. The standard cocktail, to help things along. She secured a bracelet on Angel’s wrist to monitor her pulse and heart rate, then picked up the tablet again. A few taps, and the screens on the wall came to life.

“All set,” she said after Angel swallowed the pills. “Press the button on the left between each banking and wait for the screens to clear. Then the one on the right when you’re finished.” She moved toward the door but stopped abruptly and blurted out: “I have a nephew.”

Angel took this offering graciously. “That’s nice,” she said.

Patricia gave Angel one last, subdued smile.

The door closed, and Angel was alone.

She sat back, feeling the drugs take effect, all the hairs on her body seeming to lift, her focus honing to a knifepoint. She let herself think about Luis. The memories had been waiting, always there right below the surface, they rose up inside her in a wave she didn’t try to control. She let them flood her, watched them materialize on the screens.

To bank a memory, it had to be a strong one. Something that had left a mark. Something that had worked its way right into that sweet spot in your neocortex. You couldn’t just give up Tuesday at the grocery store. Nothing so flimsy. Nothing that blended with all the other moments of your life.

On the screen, Luis had a hand on Angel’s throat, his lips at her breast. She tried to memorize every breath, every movement, some dim part of her wondering if maybe this time she could keep some piece of it for herself, though she knew it was futile.

If you wanted a memory to sell, it had to be something someone else would want to experience. Sex, love, and joy were always in demand, of course, but so were sadness and pain. The memories that left a mark usually had all these things.

The man on the screen kissed the woman’s mouth and pressed tenderly on her throat, sweetly stealing her breath. Angel watched and remembered. Until she didn’t.



Angel's older brother, Hector, home from college, brings Luis around for the holidays. The whole family is there. There are pasteles filled with savory pork and sweet raisins, potato salad drenched in cilantro-infused olive oil, music in the air, dancing in the living room. It is 46 days before Angel's father will be dead, and he and her mother are getting along. Her father is not drinking. Angel's aunts gently tease her mother about her accent and pronunciation. Her mother blushes and throws up her hands, swearing, as she always does at their corrections, that she will never try to speak their language again. Everyone knows it is an empty oath.

And here is Luis. He has no family of his own left, this boy balanced on the precipice of manhood, all wild, dark hair and eyes that take everything in, a soft half-smile on his lips.

They click immediately, slotting together at the edge of the party like the corner pieces of a puzzle. His voice is soft and low, and Angel has to lean in close to hear him. Close enough to feel the warmth of his breath on her cheek, her ear. He tells her about his plans to go to medical school and of his mother, who died of a rare blood disease for which he is determined to find a cure. He touches her arm once, and Angel feels it all over her body, a rightness that is as comforting as it is overwhelming. She finds herself confiding in him about her parents' volatile relationship, about her plans to open her own business and be her own boss, so she will never have to rely on anyone but herself.

They kiss.

They go to the seashore.

They go to the movies.

They go to the sim arcade.

They make love in the small bed in Luis's dormitory while his roommate is out, and once, very quietly, while his roommate is asleep.

They make plans.

They move in together and Angel works odd jobs—sommelier in an upscale tea shop, night auditor in a pleasure hotel, grocery runner—to help put Luis through medical school, putting her dreams on hold for his. Soon after he graduates, Luna is born, a sweet, squalling tornado with her father's straight black hair and her mother's stubbornness. Angel takes online business classes at night, holding the baby to her breast with one hand while she takes notes with the other. This path they have chosen is a lot of work, but they are happy.

The last time Angel and Luis make love, it is a celebration of the future and each other. He's found a position at a local hospital. Good pay, good benefits. He jokes, as he slowly removes her clothes, that she will finally have to rely on him for something. She smirks, says playfully, "You'll always need me more than I need you," before taking him into her mouth. Afterward, she watches lazily from the bed as he gets dressed. He leans down and kisses the tip of her breast, rests a warm hand on the curve of her throat, kisses her mouth. She keeps her eyes open and watches him straighten and walk away, out the door. It is the last time she sees him.

The next evening, he is late coming home. At first, Angel thinks nothing of it. She plays with Luna on the carpet, rolling a ball into the vee of the girl's chubby legs, reveling in the sound of her chortle. It is only after she has put Luna to bed that she starts to worry.

Later, she is able to piece together some of the details from the city's grainy camera footage: it happens fast.

Luis is four blocks from home. At a crosswalk. The light changes. He steps out into the street and, in a matter of seconds, is hit by an autobus with out-of-date sensors.

One moment he is there.

The next he is another casualty of a city that continues to ignore its infrastructure. Nothing is left but a paltry settlement from the city, student loans that eat up all the life insurance money and are still hungry for more, and memories Angel can no longer afford to keep.

Angel cannot forgive Luis for leaving her alone.

The anger is one memory she doesn't give up.



Angel always felt empty after a donation, but not like this. She'd never banked so much at once before. So strange. She had a vague recollection of the experience, but the memories at its center were completely gone. Like someone's face cropped out of a photo, just white space where it should have been.

Her head pounded, and her body ached all over. She fought the urge to vomit and wondered if maybe this was what giving birth felt like. She could no longer remember.

Giving up a memory wasn't like giving blood. Your body couldn't work overtime to replace it. You couldn't just rest and hydrate, drink a juice box, and get back what you'd given. Giving up memories changed you a little every time, though perhaps not the core of you. You were still who you were, she supposed, the grooves still dug deep in your riverbed. You'd just lost some of the why. The ability to explain yourself to yourself.

She remembered the message and dug out her phone. Luna's test results were inconclusive; they would need

to do more. And there was an experimental treatment they could try, but insurance wouldn't cover it. Of course. There was a second message from Dr. Wright. She hadn't felt the buzz. She saw "MRI" in the subject line and swiped her thumb to delete it.

Maybe she wasn't completely empty, Angel mused, as she slipped the phone back into her pocket. She did have a new memory in place of whatever she'd given up: the memory of it being taken, the memory of losing something that might have been important.

Outside, it had stopped raining. Angel had taken the bus, which she generally hated to do, though now she couldn't remember exactly why. She knew it was easier than trying to find parking in this part of town. She headed toward her stop, making an effort to ignore how shitty she felt.

She passed a bar in full swing, noise and light spilling out of the open doorway. Two women leaned against the side of the building. "I promise," she heard one of them say before pulling the other into a hard kiss. Angel turned the corner, leaving them behind. She looked back over her shoulder down the street, her vision blurring at the edges. The bus was nowhere in sight, but she sped up her pace anyway, willing her shaking legs to move faster. She thought again about calling Martha, and maybe she could sell some of her grandmother's old jewelry, not that it would be worth much. She thought briefly about calling Hector, but she hadn't spoken to him in years, not since his last stint in rehab. She wasn't even sure where he was living these days.

When Angel got to the bus shelter, she leaned her forehead against the cool plexiglass and closed her eyes. Sweat slicked between her shoulder blades. She licked her lips with a dry, rasping tongue and tried to remember, but she didn't know what she was trying to

remember. Knock, knock. Who's there? Luna? Yes, Luna. Always, Luna. And something else that slipped from her grasp whenever she reached for it. But whatever it was didn't matter anymore. Luna was all that mattered now.

If all else failed, she would just wait a couple weeks and go back to Echo. She would get the money together because she had to.

She still had something left to give.



Rachel Lastra is a writer and editor currently based in the Pacific Northwest. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Barrelhouse*, *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *Chestnut Review*, and *MoonPark Review*. She is a student in the MA in Writing program at Johns Hopkins University.

The Marriages: The dybbuk

by Gemma Cooper-Novack

Come out
of my throat
come out
of my chest
I want
to hear
my own voice
what is it
you want
from this shtetl
my bed
what is it
you want
from within me
please come out
I want to
touch
what I want
to touch
please
I need
to be
alone
again

now listen to the words
when I breathe—you couldn't
when I was before you—listen to the sounds
echoing in your ears
the pulse
the hollow of
singing
you remember
your knuckles darkened with potato dust
and now you'll remember
my darkness inside your neck
those nights
sweet dusky wood
and snow sifting through knotholes
like splinters
know I can reach everywhere now
your brain and your heart
everywhere
is ecstatic
keep me—hold me in your wet hollow chest
my earthly walk
redeemed
you're mine—my steps on the dirt
yours—I like it here



Gemma Cooper-Novack is the author of *We Might As Well Be Underwater* (Unsolicited Press, 2017). Her poetry and fiction have appeared in more than forty journals, including *Glass*, *Midway Journal*, and *Lambda's Poetry Spotlight*, and been nominated for multiple Pushcart Prizes and Best of the Net Awards. Published chapbooks include *Too Much Like a Landscape* (2015, with *Warren Tales*) and “*Bedside Manner*” (*The Head and the Hand*, 2020). Gemma’s plays have been produced in Chicago, Boston, and New York. She was a runner-up for the 2016 James Jones First Novel Fellowship, and has been awarded artist’s residencies from Catalonia to Virginia and a grant from the Barbara Deming Fund. Gemma is a Visiting Assistant Professor in Literacy Education at Hobart & William Smith Colleges.

[inhale\exhale\inhale\ exhale\inhale\exhale]

by Jeané D. Ridges

I am afraid.

Yep, that's it. Oh, you have questions? Oh, yikes, you're providing solutions and don't know what's what. Oh, you are afraid too.

I guess we could chat awhile. There is plenty contributing to fear and a total-sense-of-being dread. Substations shot up practically a county south of me. From systematic worker abuse to climate catastrophe but make it everyone else's responsibility except profuse corporate and overall state greed, extractive policies, and negligence. On the topic of neglect, barreling into year four of the COVID-19 pandemic, with other viruses vying for top spot, and the organizations and folks tasked with aiding mitigation instead encouraging us to throw in the mask and implementation of every preventative measure while undermining the ongoing and long-term consequences—

[inhale\exhale\inhale\exhale\inhale\exhale]

Okay, I'm done with my newsreel since I doubt I'm

delving entirely into either. I'm not fronting, promise. These things are disconcerting, straight up terrifying, and require transformative accountability—a whole nother essay. But, they must be felt, not merely articulated as if what they stir doesn't live with us.

Cause fear is when shit pops, and, even if you locate safety, your mindbody now understands its fluidity; thus, it is also dread's vindication. My gut trippin.

A persistence at the back of my throat reconfiguring expressions.

A disorientation of breathing. A discernment mired by desensitization.

A hesitancy with my intentions.

Cause dread is a disquiet that's taken residency, forget "the facts" and keep them near; thus, it is also the well worn imprint of fear.

A panic rendering masterpieces out of mishaps. A constant meticulousness about exertion and rest from existing with systemic lupus in addition to the treatment-linked complication of avascular necrosis in my right hip.

An apprehensive internal voice keeping a ledger of every unnecessary moment—spoiler alert: they all are—spent in close proximity to others.

[inhale\exhale\inhale\exhale\inhale\exhale]

I am deeply afraid, and processing a heaping pile of kindred feels.

[inhale\exhale\inhale\exhale\inhale\exhale]

Would a story help? Huh?—And, isn't this already a story? Mmhm, but one incline at a time.

I ask because, when the pressure of my dread and fears

surge to numbing, I remind myself how the tales I cherish move me to engage and root fully in emotions through conjuring spaces of whole witnessing, truth telling imagination.

Meaning ain't none of this some foolishness fixated on overcoming, or naming without recognition that a good bit of the violence above is hitched to certain narratives' diffusion and suppression. I'm talkin bout parting pages, upping the volume, fiddling with a pen or my keys to meet and explore the shape of what scares me\us.

Being so, I commiserate with monsters, unwilling sacrifices for a false light, and learn the exterior origin of my unease with the vividness of my shadows.

| Airways reinvigorate, words transmogrify. |

Shook but glad at conclusions where haints resist exorcism,

in essence a dismissal of their pain. | I weep and don't surmount my aching,

permit it to crashland me onto the altar of the supplest available horizontal surface. |

Sampling care marinated yearnings and honoring realities otherwise, liberated from a petrified fatalism by recollections this miserable "progress" and brutality forward imitation of life is precisely that.

| Body twanging with sonorous perception. |

While worrying a hole in this dimension observing here-futures in which mythologies are programmed into technologies fabricated to erode and replace the protective encodings of our bonds to each other and our environs.

| I tap my intuition and reach irregardless. |

[inhale\exhale\inhale\exhale\inhale\exhale]

Hmm? You're wondering what we do with all this? Obviously I'd advocate for us to construct forever homes around and out of our fear(s) . . . I apologize for the sarcasm, specially assuming you're also holding so much.

Remember those kindred feels I mentioned?

One of mine is a searing anger I know to be the direct result of frequently pretending I'm not knee-knocking spooked, by the way everything seems the residue of decent, to stop supposed family from trivializing my concerns while claiming they're listening. Why I'm not bout to play you or myself by concocting simplified so-called productive answers.

However, from the immediate realm of leaving my house primarily for my j*b due to more than forced-socialization avoidance, I'm gonna extend something else to you. Whether you're currently crossing the textual finish line absolutely desperate for pause and connection—dreading what untended fear chokes off—or inundated by these feelings—dreading how they'll expand, ravel awareness, and feed other heaviness:

- ~ Be tender, appreciate its power.
- ~ Be mindful as well not to participate in harm out of true or designed hurt\dread\fear.

I am afraid, and trying to do the same. But, mostly, I'm just here whenever possible in the living of now and the different offerings opened for me to experience through this honest dedication to presence.

*settles palm on chest then lays
it on screen within a breath*



Jeané D. Ridges was born and raised in the southeast of the land the United States occupies, and it remains where they reside allowing themselves to be nourished by ecos appreciation, soul filling food, and of course any expansive tales they can procure or spin up. In 2022, they became a Voodoonauts Fellow—tending community while traversing the pluriverse—and honed their editing skills through Tessera Editorial’s mentorship program. You can discover their works at <https://jeanedridges.carrd.co/>.

Dread is Being Trapped in a Curiosity Shop by Your Terrible Sense of Direction

by Maria Schrater

What is dread? The hovering of the hand over the shoulder, the gust of wind on the back of the neck, the hairs prickling on your arms right before an eye opens in the darkness. A state of dread is limbo, liminal—it could break open into terror in the next breath, or the next, or the next—

Edith Silva, our 2023 cover artist, and I have been friends since college. I am so excited to be working with her this year, and our Dread cover shows off only a fraction of what she can do. This is my first time dipping my toes into art direction. Knowing the themes in Edith's work, which combine horror, fantasy, and nature with impeccable attention to detail and bold colorations, I was determined to think outside the box. Edith has

described herself as “drawn to the macabre” with her work focused on “both the beauty and unsettling sides of the natural world.”

One of the first classes I took in college was a philosophy class about morbid curiosity. Our professor assigned us several locations in the city to visit and experience. One cloudy day, I tagged along with my roommate and her camera to a curiosity shop. She was there to film a documentary on the shop. I was there because I didn't have a smartphone and was hopeless at navigating the trains alone. Unfortunately, this also meant that I was stuck there for the entire three hours she was filming, among the piles of rotting taxidermy (a warthog with skin sloughing off, weasels missing eyes, dead mice stuffed and posed for a tea party), jarred kidney stones, knickknacks, antique condoms, bullet casings, and human remains.

Yes, human remains. A full skeleton hung in pride of place, with a name tag attached. The clerk eagerly thrust a skull into my hands before I could protest. He claimed that the shop received them from universities who were finished with bodies donated to science. I couldn't help but think of Robert Louis Stevenson's story about grave robbers.

I also couldn't help but think about wunderkammerns, the cabinets of curiosities from around the 16th century. The dehumanization of crowding skulls in with all these other dead things, disintegrating tablecloths and grinning clown figurines. No matter where I turned, where I looked, in the hours I was in the shop, something new was looking back at me. A psychic weight, or my own paranoia, smothered me until I could barely breathe.

Edith used this feeling of claustrophobia and gave it texture. When talking about the colors and textures,

Edith describes her reference pictures:” I pictured vivid potions, flowers and textiles that I’d imagine a witch or a Baba Yaga character would hoard. I liked the parallel of earthy colors mixed with richer tones for the palette. A lot of my references were nature-claimed abandoned areas, cabinets of curiosities, and apothecaries.

So wunderkammerns was the pitch I gave Edith, with Rebecca adding Baba Yaga. We were thrilled with the detail and texture that was included in the final cover image. Both practical and technical effects were used to achieve this filtered look by using “a sheet of watercolor paper brought into the [Photoshop].” We’ll continue searching for something new in 2023 with Edith providing the texture.

You can find Edith on Instagram @bearenssembles – her gold leaf work is exquisite!



Edith Silva is our Artist-In-Residence for 2023.

Find the sketches from Edith on our website.

Thank You

to Our Subscribers and Patrons

Special thanks to our patrons and readers—without our barnacled friends, this issue wouldn't exist.

We'd also like to acknowledge the following efforts that made this issue truly shine:

Our staff for volunteering their time and effort:

- Moriam, Alexandra, Tehnuka, Ether, and Tamoha
- Marie
- Maria
- Seen Robinson, our designer and keeper of the guitars
- and Nelly Geraldine García-Rosas & Eugenia Triantafyllou

Please consider supporting us on Patreon and following us on Twitter. Additionally, if you liked this issue (or our previous issues) and would like to support us non-monetarily, a review online goes a long way and also lets the authors know you loved their work.

We want to extend a special 'Thank You' to our 2022 patrons who generously donated \$50USD or more:

- Esmeralda Languzzi
- Iain Davis
- Lauren Schellenbach

To our Patron's who are supporting us on a monthly basis, not only do these contributions help pay our writers but everything donated stays in Apparition Lit's bank account. You're helping us commission new artists, pay better rates, and slowly climb that ladder of success.

- Alan Mark Tong
- Alexander Langer
- Alyson Tait
- Amy Dusto
- Anna Madden
- Ashley Gloria
- Aurelius Raines II
- Brian Hugenbruch
- Casey Reinhardt
- Chelsea Cohen
- Chris
- Christine McCullough
- Clemence Deleuze
- Coby
- Connie
- Daniel Ryan
- dave ring
- Devon J.
- Drew Brooks

- Elizabeth R. McClellan
- Emily Randolph
- Isaac Lockheart
- JJ
- Jack
- Janeen
- Jeane'D. Ridges
- Jeffery Reynolds
- Jess Lewis
- Jordan Hirsch
- Julia August
- Kristina Saccone
- Laura DeHaan
- Leks Drakos
- Léon Othenin-Girard
- Lindsay Scarpitta
- Lynncee Faulk
- Maria Haskins
- Maria Schrater
- Marie Croke
- Marissa
- Matthew Bennardo
- Matthew Montgomery
- MBV
- Mushba Said
- Nate DeVillers
- Neal Swain

- Nettlewildfairy
- Rhian Bowley
- S. Kay Nash
- Sabrina Vourloulias
- Shannon Lamb
- Shawn Frazier
- Shelby Dollar
- Simone Cooper
- Wess Mongo Jolley
- Xan van Rooyen

Past Issues

Not subscribed for a full year of Apparition Lit? Pick up past issues online.

Year 5: Charm (January 2022); Wanderlust (April 2022); Omen (July 2022); Nostalgia (October 2022)



Year 4: Justice (January 2021); Chance (April 2021); Contamination (July 2021); Wonder (October 2021)



Year 3: Experimentation (January 2020); Transfiguration (April 2020); Redemption (July 2020); Satisfaction (October 2020)



**Year 2: Resistance (January 2019); Ambition (April 2019);
Retribution (July 2019); Euphoria (October 2019)**



**Year 1: Apparition (January 2018); Delusion (April 2018);
Vision (July 2018); Diversion (November 2018)**

