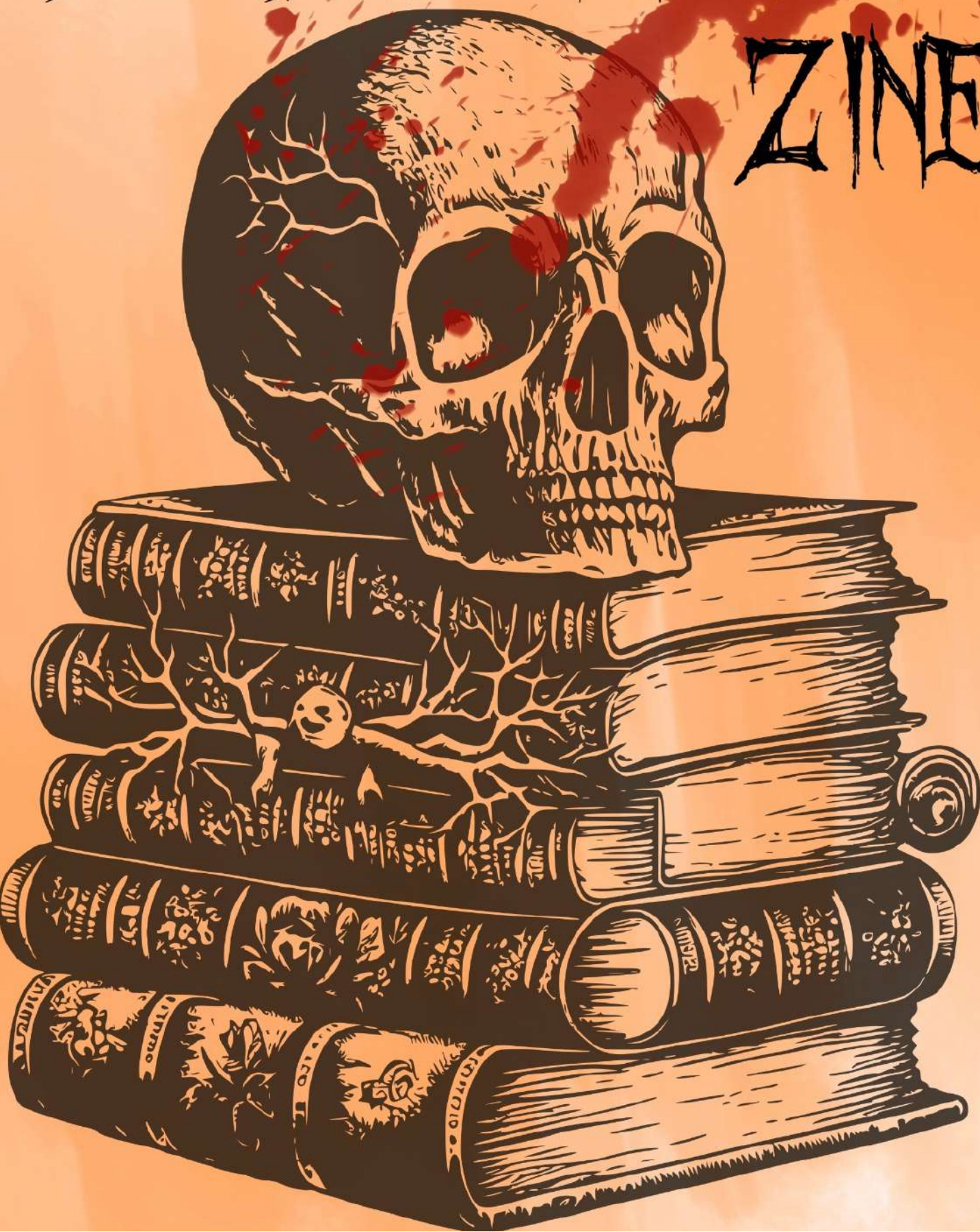


# DEAD-ISH POET'S ZINE





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# the mirror-man

lulu tacconelli (they/them)

cw: mild body horror, burying alive

He was back again last night,  
crouched spider-like at the end  
of my bed, reflected in my old,  
cracked mirror; there is nowhere else  
for my Mirror-Man to hide.

But there is no

mirror in my room, and yet  
his eyes are there, lush and eager,  
and I bask in their attention as I might bask  
in soil if I were to be buried alive.

The sickly moon catches delicately  
on his indelicate edges, all lopsided  
and limp like a marionette  
with its strings cut clean.

But in spite of this

my Mirror-Man  
is never still. His muscles are taut  
like rope, and he frays as if  
he might snap at any moment,  
and lunge at my throat  
from behind the sharpened glass  
bars of his prison.

cw: mild body horror, burying alive

My limbs ache, and my eyes glisten  
as though whatever rots in those damp,  
hollow sockets were my own eyes,  
because I know  
that he fears what I fear.  
To be real.

He knows that I want nothing  
more than to shut my eyes and retreat  
into a sleeping mind where  
he cannot shadow me, where I might  
lie as corpses do,  
until morning banishes him once more..

But he's there too, his gaze infected  
with thick, bitter malice that oozes  
into my open mouth like tears.

But again, there is

no mirror in my room.  
There has never been. There is nowhere else  
for my Mirror-Man to hide...is there?  
But surely then, he is no reflection, is he?  
There is nobody else here.  
There is nowhere else for me to hide.

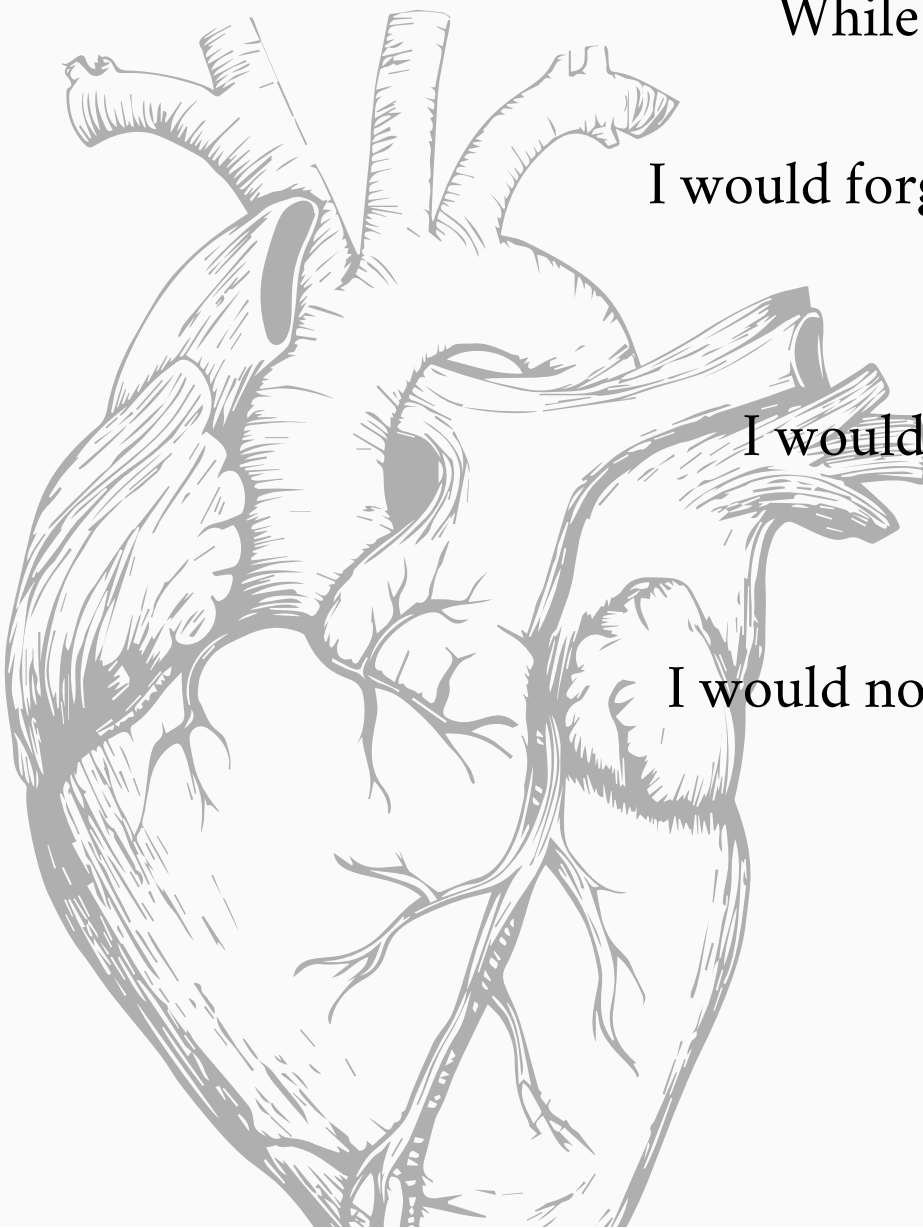
# do vampires feel love? (& other useless questions)

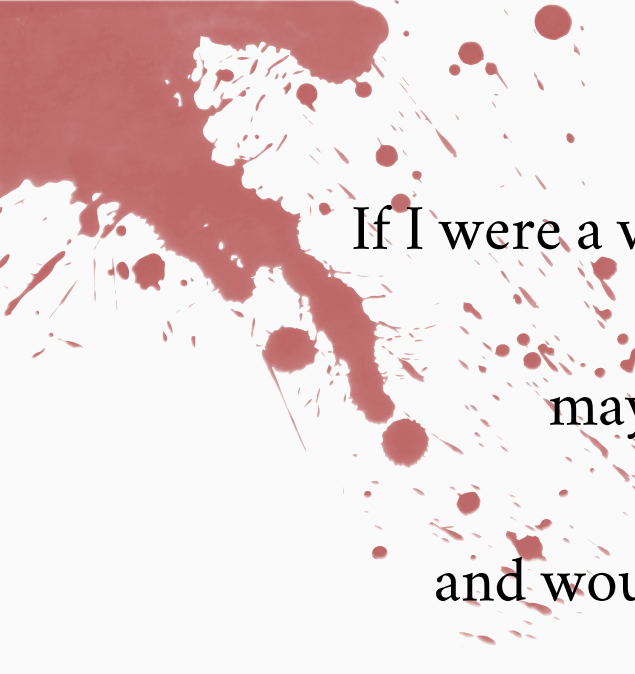
erin (she/they)

If I were a vampire, maybe I would not see your  
permanence.

In comparison, your momentous life would seem  
fleeting and  
inconsequential, perhaps.

While I - careful in sunlight -  
fiddle with mortality,  
I would forget to cook you dinner,  
or hold your hand,  
or ask about your day.  
I would not tell you goodnight  
as I fly out the door,  
aching for freedom.  
I would not treasure those words.





If I were a vampire, maybe I would not see your  
brilliance.  
maybe I knew other people of historical  
significance,  
and would have become far too aloof to care  
about so-called "nobodies",  
other than the blood in your veins.  
Maybe I would not love you as you deserve.

Or, maybe.  
Maybe I still hang on your beautiful words,  
and hold each sentence carefully as it passes by.  
Maybe I still grab your hand, just to hold,  
and tell you goodnight,  
maybe I still love you fiercely,  
because a light like yours is unique,  
and draws me like a moth to flame.

Maybe your radiance transcends such petty  
things  
as mortality, and the lack thereof.

# pumpkin mush

libby (she/her)

Th e y'r e convinced the bookshelves are h a un te d, carved from a hanging tree

Or h oi st e d from the witch's moat, t en d e d into prongs by t h e cutting gnats

Slathered in th ic k impenetrable tar and p o wd e r coated with cr u s h e d skull fragments:

F in is h e d with a slick of flightless, br e a t h le ss, limbless insects.

What else could it contain but evil r i n g i n g every growth circle? R o t between the layers, damp underneath and mould within.

S me ar e d in centuries' worth of misdeeds and still lo v i n g ly inherited by us –

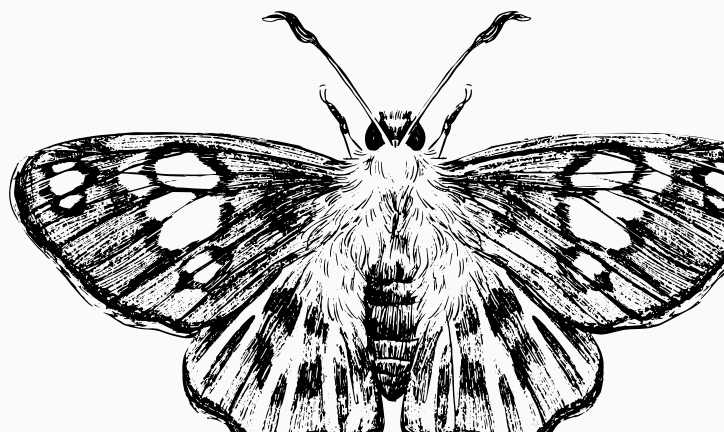
To them, t h o s e mistakes are covered over with g il d e d gold and fragile w e bs:

They f o r g e t the specimens in jars steeped in r ig o r, the petrified conkers in the corners,

Our collections of dust-covered fabric a nd antique papers in the drawers.

The water they douse it in runs right off, g o i n g in every divot,

Soaking the ghosts peering o u t from behind the Encyclopaedia.



# BLACK ICE, WHITE WOOL

((midnight train)) cw: gore

the sheep lie on frosted grass

- my fingertips would surely freeze black

white coats fused to their back

- my draughty jacket all too thin

they sing to each other; their voices

bounce across the field; empty,

like an alien planet of two life-forms:

nothing but the plants underfoot

preserved in the solid glass jar of winter.

their hooves are silent as they take

one-two-four steps and look at

- me lazily, amused. because i'm biding

my time out here, and they know it.

they will drink half-iced water from dirty troughs

- i will put the kettle on hot. sweet tea and milk.

and they will survive. day after day:

stretching into one eternal morning

before canine-snapping into the bluest night.

a time when the sun is never enough and the

trees have sloughed their baggage to swim in the

current of midwinter: rotted leaves and black ice.



cw: gore

- i slip. i look into the eye of a sheep. there is  
something  
there, so almost-mirrored in its farmer.  
i will never understand it enough to knead it  
into word:  
the cud it chews and the meat on it that will  
be chewed;  
and its brief, terrifying, glorious life -

from a bloody embryo sac in the grass to a  
plastic package.  
i wonder if its wool will be enough to block  
out the shiver  
i feel, looking out - so gravely unvacant -  
among its kin.



# my seasonal sweetheart

bethany short (any pronouns)

As the heat of summer fades  
and all the colours turn to grey

I sink back into my cocoon  
spiderwebs strewn about my room  
the autumn chill wraps my bones  
safe and sound I feel at home

I float away into the abyss  
my forbidden love blows me a kiss  
I knew all along she'd be back again  
my ol' reliable, my dearest friend

“Come now, rest, for a month or two”  
my seasonal sweetheart, how I missed you.

# 11th October

jack jackson (he/they)

This is the first day its smelt like autumn.

The wind bites and makes brittle things out of my fingers,

the grey of the sky ruins the reddening of the leaves

but complements the coats we dug out the wardrobe.

I sew a patch on my jacket in a light and listen to the angry cars outside.

For a breath, the oxygen is tangible.

It makes lungs heavy,

adds something words cannot define,

And when the familiar of forgetting is replaced by changing hearts,

perhaps I'll desire monotonous

conversations with unseasoned weather.



# BRIDE OF DRACULA

blake (he/him)      cw: blood, gore, abuse, sexual implication

Even a church as shabby as yours  
Looks luxurious beneath cruel heavens.  
With a boyish grin and whispered blasphemies,  
You hypnotised me; crucified yourself  
So my knees would bruise from worship.

The trail of faux tears led to a bedchamber  
Where your youth aged into a sharpened sneer.  
Your mesmerising eyes lured me into the bed  
That became the coffin of my innocence  
As your voluptuous teeth found my neck.

Black-veined and parched, I awoke —  
A phantom ring biting my finger.  
I kissed it, held the rusted band in my fangs  
While you slunk away from sunlight,  
Leaving my eyes to strain against the shadows.

cw: blood, gore, abuse, sexual implication

I thought of your other brides with envious  
glee:

The elegant dresses, the ruby necklaces, the silk  
veils,

And the rings that marked them yours —

More solid than my vaporous one —

Of how I'd do anything to be one of your girls.

Nightly, the ring exsanguinated me

Until the gem blushed with my blood.

You kissed my hand to suck from it,

Quenching your thirst while teasing me,

Dangling vials of your blood too far from my

lips.



cw: blood, gore, abuse, sexual implication

Amid transfusions, I realised your kiss is undead:  
Your brides are rotting Vegas weddings you cling  
to

So you can feed your insatiable appetite,  
Knowing we'd devour you like bread,  
Down you like wine — savage from  
malnourishment.

Now I flee through the withered woods  
In my ruined, moth-eaten wedding dress,  
Memories of your touch stalking me like bats.  
No more. The beast must be staked.  
I bite off my ring finger and fling it into the  
bushes.

Baptised in blood, my tears run red.



# untitled

rosie-mae reynolds (she/her)

cw: sexual abuse

I race home.

But my steps are far quicker than the ones I took early  
this  
morning.

The sun has gone down.

And every footstep from behind echos as it reaches my  
vicinity.

Keys clutched in hand so much so that my fingers have  
little indents  
on them.

Cars zoom past as I stay vigilant to see if there is any  
evidence of  
them slowing down.

I choose the roads that are busy after being reminded  
to never go  
down quiet roads as the gender opposed to me cannot  
contain  
themselves.



cw: sexual abuse

The handbook suggests we need to 'Be safe' and 'be careful', what does that entail?

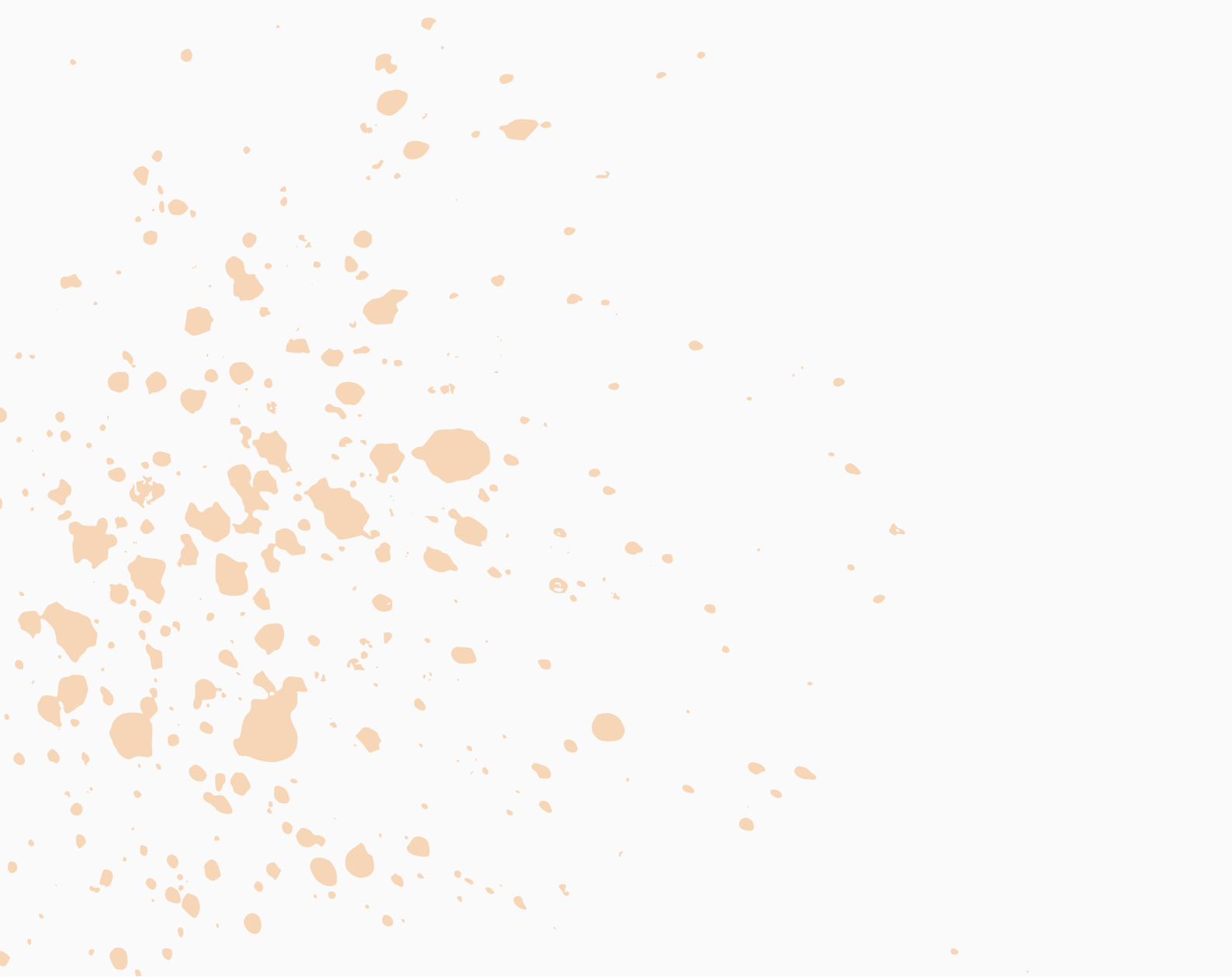
Every woman who has been made victim to men follow these rules.

Why am I special?

Why will being safe and careful shield me like it didn't protect them.

It won't.

And that's the harsh reality of being a woman.



**grace**

james hay-barr (he/him)

Watching the rain  
Falling in determined torrents  
Intent on washing away

The graceful flowers drawn upon the pavement  
Spray, from passing feet joined

In the blending of hues  
To dance and shimmer within the fading watercolour,  
Ending in a tidal flush

Gutter-bound  
Few were the eyes that saw its passing  
Droplets bringing new shapes of muted yellow,  
mingled with the green and purple spring scene  
a stained glass memory of impressionist's dreams  
where meadows breathe in sunlight  
before fading in whispers

cw: religious trauma, death

## apostate

conor thew (he/him)

part monster, part martyr

i kneel to confess, all sins on the table

born from dirt, i grovel and writhe in the soil of my creator

begging to earn my patch of barren earth

i am told there is no place for me —

deny what i am and be looked upon proudly

(a thousand eyes, seraphim, pierce my troubled heart)

or fall, as lucifer did

unloved, unyielding, and yet fit for purpose

believing in god is no safe investment

as a child, i was shaped from clay with no glaze

pastors laughing in glee as i split in the kiln

soldiers of god have cracks bestowed on them

battle born, devoted follower

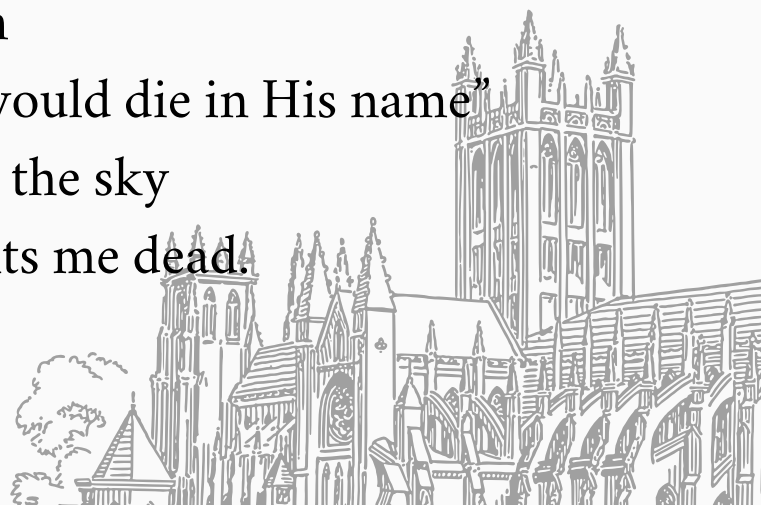
even his son made to suffer our ineptitude

the pastor says i may be forgiven

“we would not deny those that would die in His name”

like a tree in the sun i look up to the sky

and ask gently why our god wants me dead.



cw: blood, death

conor thew (he/him)

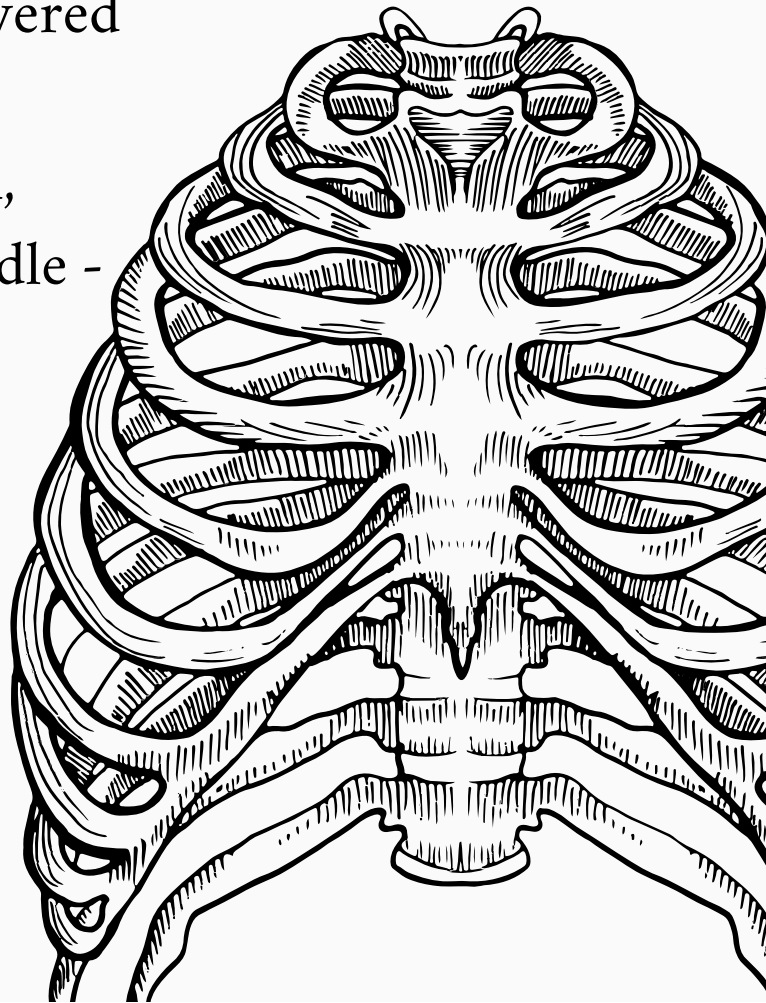
## whalefall (death of a god)

she cannot rise  
the filth of her is too heavy to bear  
staining everything she touches with golden blood  
her crumpled, shrivelled form laid bare on the snow  
wrapped in broken scripture.

even as she lies, pierced by a thousand swords,  
her eyes bone-white and empty  
primitive death does not smother her  
oracles still listen for her voice in the dark  
prayers made, but never answered

- in the name of the godchild,  
the blood, and the empty cradle -

she lies dead.



# overcast

noreen hall (she/they)

My mind is clouded, I cannot see you  
Your faded shadow, gone into the blue  
I have only memories; I say they'll must do  
But sometimes it's not enough, I need to see you

I don't fear your absence, sometimes it must be  
I await your light, so I may yet see  
Take all the time you need; you are allowed to be free  
But please, remember that I am here; please don't forget  
me

The clouds will clear, of this I am sure  
But for now they are too thick, they are too obscure

So I'll wait

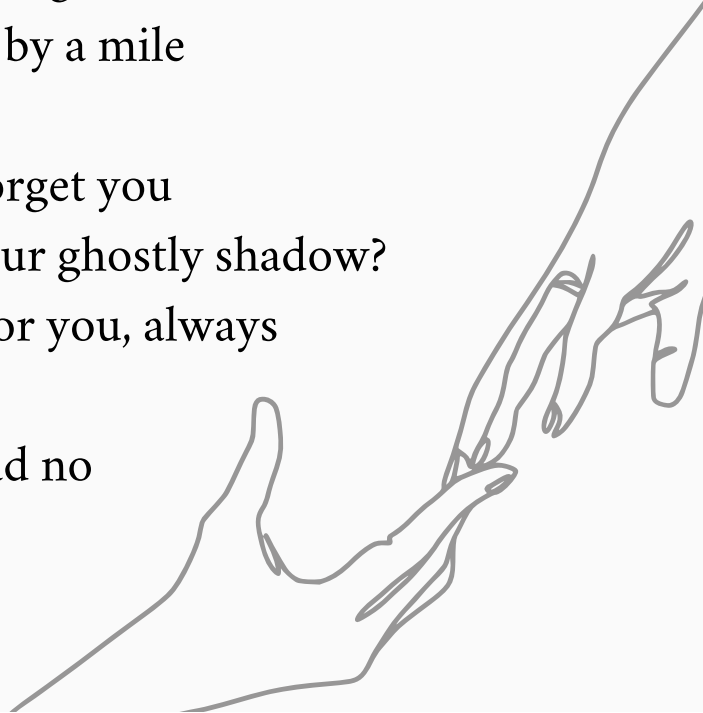
# outer souls

noreen hall (she/they)

Your ghostly shadow sweeps past me  
An incessant yearning for unfinished business  
I feel your outer soul crying  
A weighted wistfulness  
Screaming, screeching  
I wouldn't have known your ghostly shadow  
Had your pain not touched my soul  
But your outer soul looked just like you  
I could see how even life had taken its toll  
Trying, failing

But if not for your ghostly shadow passing by  
I would not have remembered all that matters  
Because your outer soul meant so much to me  
So much to me, so much  
How did it become such tatters?  
Nowhere, everywhere  
Trying to hold onto you  
But my hand graces the ghost  
Misses you by an inch, by a mile

Don't worry. I won't forget you  
Because how can I, when I feel your ghostly shadow?  
There's a time and a place for you, always  
I promise  
Even when you had no  
Outer  
Soul





cw: mentions of abuse, trauma, anxiety

# the head fuzz that predates misery

vern (they/them)

You could not imagine something as overwhelming or overpowering as fear. Fear permeates everything, eager to appease and fix things else there will be consequences. It doesn't matter if there was nothing that needed fixing, or something that cannot be fixed by mortal hands, the fear of things out of place, not as they were or should be- that would drive someone to madness.

Change is an addictive fear, however. The adrenaline of doing new things, being in new situations, because they need doing, that Plato's cave needs leaving. Bask in the sun, and fear something else. There is always something that needs fearing, that needs punishment for that fear. How ridiculous it is to feel the bile rise at the back of the throat, to feel the heavy stone at the bottom of the stomach. Cower like a dog, like a scared child, when something happens, and it is not your fault. You are not responsible for the end of the world, for everyone still breathes, and the world carries on. And yet, and yet and yet and yet. Every day is a walking apocalypse, a nightmare plucked straight from the rib cage of hell. Lovingly handcrafted, every sound is against you, everyone can hear your thoughts, everyone is aware of how paper thin your persona is.

They can feel your heartbeat instead of their own. Don't let it rise.

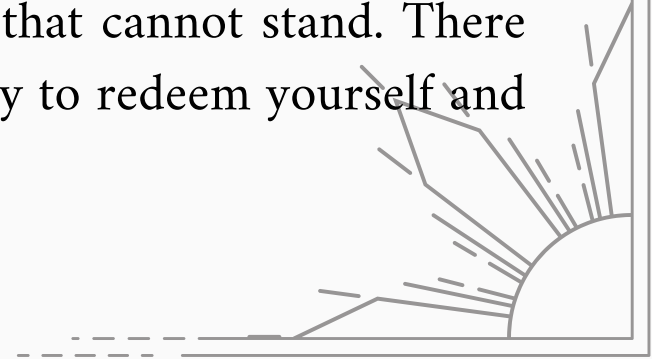
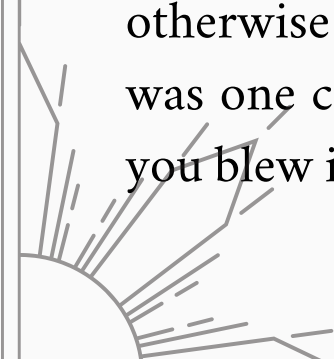


cw: mentions of abuse, trauma, anxiety

Logically, this is not true. Logically, you are unwell, and this is all made up and irrational. Decades of trauma, neglect, abuse, whatever you want to diagnose or armchair philosophise about. None of that particularly matters because they can still feel how rapidly your pulse is going, and how much you long to escape. They will track you down, and remind you of all the rules you've done wrong. How silly, how quaint, how trite. This person is scared of talking, of asking, of wanting common decency. Kick them, laugh at them, because it is all their fault. It's not your fault, but the thoughts are leaking out of your head, and they can hear your fucking thoughts.

It is simple: Behave exactly as expected (they won't tell you how), feel your tongue go numb and your head swim. Let it wash over you, the moment of disconnect. How freeing it could be, to peel yourself open, burn it all down, let the narrative fall out of your hands. This is the only solution, clearly.

It is not, it is not. There is so much going for you, there is so much out there. The bad will pass in time and it will fade, you just have to keep going. But you're tired, so tired to continue, and you don't want it to all be your fault. You cannot take criticism, cannot take blame. You have to be faultless, perfect, otherwise you're fucking useless, and that cannot stand. There was one chance, one single opportunity to redeem yourself and you blew it.






cw: mentions of abuse, trauma, anxiety


Well done, well done, well done. Everyone's going to feel your heart and how quickly it is going, how fast the pressure is rushing from vein to vein, artery to artery. What a waste of time, to fuel this train wreck of a human. Next stop, next stop, next stop.

Stop, it will be fine, there are no guarantees, only commas between, only the space of what is left. No throwing up, no vomiting, remain still, remain calm, do not thrash in the sea, it's what causes you to drown. Too many fucking metaphors, too many fucking words. What does any of it mean?

Fifty-fifty. Coin flip. Heads, tails, whatever.

A large fire consumed and destroyed an entire residential neighbourhood in XXXXXXXX last XXXXXXXXX evening. The blaze reportedly started after an explosion was heard around XXXXX, and raged until fire crews were able to get the damage under control. Only one victim, the suspected arsonist, died on site, whilst XX others suffered minor injuries.







cw: mentions of abuse, trauma, anxiety

The suspected arsonist, XXXX, aged only XX, was last seen by security footage leaving their residence in the morning, and returned whilst the house was empty to allegedly start the fire, police investigators say. XXXX family and friends dispute these claims, saying that XXXX was a kind, caring individual. However, it is possible that XXXX suffered from XXXXXXXX and XXXXXX, according to anonymous sources.

XXXXXX family and friends describe XXXX as happy the day the fire broke out, and showed no signs of ill intent, or mental instability.





# credits & acknowledgements

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