

Wordsfest

FRANKEN

ZINE

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to WordsFestZine, an ‘instant’ publication born out of a partnership among Words, Poetry London, Western University, Fanshawe College, and Insomniac Press. Our goal this year was to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the publication of *Frankenstein*. Our call was simple: we asked for works of prose, poetry, creative nonfiction, art and monstrous hybrids inspired by and in response to Mary Shelley’s classic work and its ongoing cultural legacy.

So, how did we pull this off? With a team of tireless editors and producers working around the clock to edit, compile, design and, finally, print the zine within 24 hours of receiving the final submissions. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the participation of the public: this is London’s WordsFest; this is London’s WordsFestZine.

In keeping with the *Frankenstein* theme of the Zine, and following the novel’s use of frame narratives, we have divided the WordsFestZine into 4 sections: “Frame 1,” “Frame 2,” “Frame 3,” and “Frame 4.” Each section contains poetry, prose, creative nonfiction and art work that responds to, retells, revises, extends and “frames” the novel, its legacy, and the celebration of literature that is WordsFest.

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FRAME 1



“Monstrous Eye” by Mary McDonald

INSIDE THE CEO BRAIN

For Mary Shelley

By Joel Dailey

Times there are when the wind blows the flag in the wrong direction, Fido. Times when a sunny disposition leads to minor thumbing, and several toppled monuments later, to mainlining pure, uncut Narrative. Victims of prolonged use vow to liberate all pets from their pet shops, all snakes from their framed diplomas. Amid wholly unforeseen circumstances

(inbound monster torso), drones drone on, fending off the Inevitable in whatever form (0.08% misleading). Americanists by day, by night fluid Imbibers, "Didja bring the New Apparatus?" Resources we can muster (Ibsen for absurd), but in order to achieve \$ucce\$\$, functional and inspirational (roving mobs, torches held high in the woods), we require the New Apparatus and we require it Right The Fuck Now.

FOR MARY AND HER MEN

By Penn Kemp

Do you remember the storms
on Lake Geneva, the challenge
set out by poets, and by you so
easily equalled in power and
longevity.

It was revolutionary then to
spend a weekend dreaming
Gothic. You chewed the era
coming into focus—new but
unrealized science in action.

Thinking monster—this idea
alive at the same time and
huge the way the past is
thrown by a trick of light

projected onto shadow
out of all proportion into
a future to be feared, unknown.

Then the thud of approaching
golem, his wet eye unable to
focus on anything as small
as you, his author, his maker.

SCRITCH-SQUISH

By Erica McKeen

I had a dream last night. the little attic hatch above
my bed was open, just slightly, just enough to see
pink insulation pressing out, all fluffy and scratching,
like pus pushing with blood from a wound. I reached
up and opened it the rest of the way and pulled
through, scritch-squish, I pushed through, and I could
see from the little bit of light from the little attic
window that a body lay across the support boards. I
turned it over. it was my husband. he was dead. his
eyes had been pulled from his head and his mouth
was too long at the corners, as if stretched, as if cut,
and his neck was lacerated and his toes were missing.
I could smell him rotting. I watched him, I watched
him, and then crawled out of the attic, scritch-squish,
and when I woke in the morning he was downstairs
making breakfast, sausages and eggs. I could smell
them frying. and I knew and I knew and I knew, that

I had woken, everything ok, nothing wrong, nothing
wrong.

BODY PARTS

By Tammy Gilbert

“Shoulda done this when we were younger.”

I can only grunt in response.

The Cornish coast has proved us unfit; if only we
could be replaced with those two others, the ones
from forty years ago. Our bodies have changed, been
broken, split; they grind and crack. We are grotesque.

Every other step up from the beach is taken with
my new knee; when the old knee takes its turn, I have
to grab Ed’s arm, just in the crook where his hand
enters his jacket pocket. Me inside of him, I heave.

His feet are huge in his walking boots. A man with
such big feet, it hardly matters if he takes a wrong
step: he makes his very own causeway.

“Can you slow down a bit?”

I’ve used my angry voice, which has mostly
replaced my old one over the years.

At the top is the small churchyard we’ve come to
see. The graves are so worn by wind and rain that
many of the dead are nameless. It wouldn’t be so
bad, I think, becoming anonymous in this place.

I take my camera out and zoom in on bone-white
stone and patchy moss.

“You can’t read the inscriptions,” I say.

“You’d have to dig ‘em up, for the DNA.”

Ed is all about the DNA nowadays, since they
found Richard III in the car park.

I take some shots with the sea in the background;
he looks at his watch and his heavy feet stamp to and
fro.

“I’m gonna sit down.”

He walks to the step of the church, groaning as he
lowers himself onto it, then leaning his head on the
carved arch, he closes his eyes. We’ve been homebodies,
sutured together on the living room sofa for years.
We’re only just noticing the rot.

I want to get a shot of a Celtic cross before we
leave, to make it look like a fist shaking at the sky. I
aim upwards and focus, but stepping back on the
lumpy ground, I fall. At my age, the shock alone
could kill me, but luckily my fleshy bottom takes
most of the impact and my camera lands softly in
some long grass.

Ed is right behind me so quickly. He forms his arms into my arms, his head into my head; he pulls my torso against his; he animates me upright, then turns me slowly. He steps back and touches my temples on either side.

“You gonna live?”

“I will.”

He brings me my camera and moves my arm up to place it in my grip. His fingers stay on mine.

We look at each other, two people introduced. Ed’s hair is thin but long and the wind twists it about like mad snakes. I point the camera at him and he smiles, his lips a joyous gash. I click away and forget all about what we were or have become; I will invent us exactly as we want to be.

THE TORMENT OF FRANKENSTEIN

By Lincoln McCardle

The man could not stop thinking about Frankenstein
It was just so monstrous and complex
Clear and obviously emitting the shine

That morning, the man was shocked by the sign
He found himself feeling rather constructive
The man couldn’t stop thinking about Frankenstein

Later, the man was spooked by a creeping vine
He thought the situation had become rather accumulative
But he could never forget the Frankenstein

Mary tried to distract him with wine
Said his mind had become too cluttered and dative
The man couldn’t stop thinking about Frankenstein

The man looked deep into the mine
The monster was becoming too quantitative
But he could never forget Frankenstein

The man soaked like a gothic brine
His faculty of reason becoming dangerously meditative
The gloom and mystery and the grotesque
And he would never forget Frankenstein

SKIN

By Samantha Zangrilli

I slip into skins
not my own.

My legs pricked with goosebumps.
Snakeskin lines my shaven limbs.

My neck, breasts, and stomach drip with perspiration.

Coarse brown feathers drape my slender frame.

My feet shades of purple.
Rigid black leather cuts circulation.

I slip into skins
not my own.

I stride down the extensively long runway.

Vast darkness.
White, glistening eyes
Huffing of breath

Crowd both sides of my path.

Unknown clapping smacks together, roaring for the
polar bear
dancing behind.

MONSTER

By CJC Elwood

A boiling aromatic cesspool of misery with blood dripping a death creeps up inside a shell, breathing your deception. You are a meat grinder strangling until breathless; mercilessly mangling intestines and hemorrhaging a heart, you leave the lifeless lying on the ground awaiting their molecular structures’ decomposition beyond this earthly hell.

GENE THERAPY

By Claudia Coutu Radmore

such therapy now helps blind mice see and us to hold on to the sounds that linger long after it's over you're a saint she said but you can be helped as can any demons that trounce or bite back; study your cytogenetics as the glowing green blob of Hanny's Voorwerp gives birth to new stars try germline genes to help those who prefer an existential life or for dogs determined to honour trees in the traditional way even the snake that habitually crosses the double line on Australian highways but encourage persons who invest in the spirit of the hive to preserve the solemn investigation of useless things like the study of ghosts before breakfast in the rue moufflard; consider genes that encourage meditation on the mottling of mountain slope shadow or brown sounds but don't spend time on the treatment of people who swallow rubik's cubes or worry about the dental formulae for sheep; there is no point in being frightened of new ideas when there are enough old ones to worry about but it is less essential to teach female squirrels not to mate with whoever shows up than to utilize FOXP2 to assess how the shape of words and sentences changes the shape of thought — grow me a gene so I'll wait for you forever or at least for a reasonable amount of time a sequence of nucleotides to ensure that my little boat will carry me to your dream

CHILLED MOLECULES THEIR STORAGE SKILLS

By Claudia Coutu Radmore

what the body feels being every bit as significant as what the mind thinks and inextricably intertwined nevertheless since time is an illusion and lunchtime doubly so when you start by saying it was the day my grandmother exploded it's not beyond belief that the milky way harbours celestial objects that accelerate particles of at least a million billion electron volts and though predictably some may be jumping over the moon other cows are natural pessimists just check the baboon spider atlas it's effortless thinking; what the body feels every bit as significant savour the leafy shade of life boulevard take time to watch mind surfers floating carelessly along two feet above the waves register the possibility of exploding air forming seas on alien planets oh that it may rain diamonds but be aware that with some six to nine metres of dis-

placement the mainland is long overdue for a gigantic quake still when you know chilled molecules can store your whole life's experience in a half inch cube do you need to prove who you are the air between us poignantly turbid as we create each other through relationships what the body feels so significant and inextricably intertwined with what the mind thinks like what are birds for what is flying for what is lying for what is dying for still those skilled storage bits the door inside the heart of gold thanks you for making a simple door very happy

MAKER AS POET CONFRONTS CREATURE AS WORK

By Camille Intson

"Did I request thee Maker, from my clay / To mould me Man, did I solicit thee / From darkness to promote me?" — Paradise Lost (Title page of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, 1818 edition)

Birthing my work is like
exhuming words, like bodies, from language's crypt.

Here they rot now,

A vapid stitch and sew of dead phrases
Like severed limbs, cold and hollow in their vanity.

One spark and they twitch,
baptized with poetic sensibility and brought into
some euphoric half-life,

if only to later sprawl between pins like spiders
milked for venom
at the moment of their being.

The corpse enacts its violence on the letter.

We are taxidermists of language, violating word
with intent.

We recoil at work's first sign of life.
And work evades us, evades us,

Into the mountains, into the blinding snow,
A spectre of our desire, a monster of minds.

Once I suppose words rose,
seeped through wounds left through the ages,

brought us closer to some nameable God,
filled us with light, our spaces with sound and matter.

They penetrated us, blushed,
Collapsed post-use in ecstatic firework at my feet
and in my hair.

They hang now

An abortive gulf

A mocking emblem of our imperfect being

Born into impermanency
And I do not know what to make of this mistrust of
language.

I do not believe in Gods, but
I believe in the shells of life and limb left carefully
behind by the words of the great dead poets,

Many of whom believed with great heartiness in the
Death of the artist at the moment of his work.

I have never known what to make of this.

For I have known my work as haunted.
As orphan, to an extent, as fatherless, as queer and
monstrous,

And searching, searching, for another of its kind,
For place or companionship or the ghost of its mother

Who now, ashamed at its deformity,
Claims not authorship, nor parenthood,

But instead vanishes behind the creator's mask,
Into death, into non-being, beyond the phrase.

Now the child is left raw,
Vengeful in its fruitless fury,

Saying "Maker,
Maker,

Did you will this for me?"

(Be not afraid, my child, of speech,
for in your mother's death is your vehement life.)

WE ARE GODS

By Alexandra Dane

"Imaginations are ill things," Frank whispered into his microphone. The audience leaned forward to grasp his secret with their hearts. "An imagination is a life unlived.
"You," he said, pointing to a brassy blonde woman with hunched shoulders in the front row. "What is it you imagine?"
"I —," she looked around, eyes wide, hoping for the answer from someone close, but chins fell down and away, crossed knees angled to the opposite corners of the room, and eyes found anywhere else to look. The woman swallowed. "I don't know."
"You don't know," he mused and paced the stage, hands clasped behind his back. "We'll get back to that soon but you must have imagined something or you would not need us."
The room filled with knowing smiles. Frank returned them. "You are telling me that you haven't imagined driving away in your boss's car? You haven't imagined being the boss? What about sleeping with the boss?"
People laughed and the woman shrivelled. A red blush crept up her neck.
"I-I guess I've imagined being the boss. My own boss, maybe."
"Maybe, yes," he nodded. "This is my point! We imagine things because we wish them to be so, but imaginations are useless because we don't take them seriously. Or ourselves. What if — what's your name?"
"Maddy." She cleared her throat. "Madeline."
"Madeline. Beautiful." He knelt in front of her, and turned her chin up to meet his golden eyes. "Beautiful Madeline. What if you didn't imagine? What if instead of spending hours of your week imagining, you lived those fantasies? What if you could have the life and relationships you dream of? What would that make you?"

“Happy?” she wondered.

“Happy,” he repeated. “So I ask you today — all of you — not if you can imagine yourself happy, but if you can take the journey with us here at DeZign and build yourself happy!”

Everyone clapped and nodded to those sitting closest to them.

“What is our call to action? Say it with me!”

And in perfect harmony: “I will build myself in my own likeness — powerful, strong, successful.”

“Yes,” he said, once the cheering had settled.

“Good.”

We brushed past attendees on our way to the car.

News crews stood on the sidewalk, waiting in the rain. An exposé from a former DeZigner in a leading paper had come out and now

the leeches were hoping for a feast. A woman thrust her microphone in Frank’s face.

“Doctor Weber, former DeZign followers have called you and your wife monsters, frauds, abusers, and cultists. Do you fear a trial?”

“We gave them back their lives.” Frank reached for my hand and pulled me close. “They may not like our methods now, but ask them where they would be without us. Ask the people in there why it is worth it to be reborn, rebuilt, and re-designed.”

We hurried past the rest of the questions and climbed into the back of the SUV.

“Monsters,” he chuckled. “We are gods.”

REFINE

By Rachel Turner

“Have you seen this?” Harper huffed, dropping the newest edition of Refine magazine on my desk.

Rita Adams was on the cover, completely naked. She was the newest and the biggest, by which I mean smallest, thing in modeling. I had just edited a photo of her last week for our monthly edition of Paint.

“You know we didn’t sign her as an exclusive, right? She was just contracted for the Bloom lipstick campaign.”

“Ugh,” she groaned, rolling her eyes. “Of course, I know that, I’m not fucking stupid.” She pointed an

aggressive finger at the young woman’s ankles. “Do those look familiar to you?”

I squinted at the catalogue. They looked thinner, but such a discrepancy was hardly uncommon in our line of work.

“She got them done!” she exclaimed. “These geniuses at Refine have launched a new surgery! Ha! I never thought they would get around to promoting ankle reduction, but I guess someone has got to address the massive cankle problem in this country!” She flipped to the page on which Rita endorses the procedure, delicate ankles on full display. “That’s the last thing I’d be worried about,” she mused, prodding at her stomach with an acrylic nail. “Maybe one day, when I get a damn raise. Ha!”

She waved away the idea and sauntered off, leaving the catalogue behind. I eventually got sucked into the pages. Each model was more beautiful than the last. I had to suck in my gut while I read.

The last page was an advertisement for a simple liposuction procedure, cheaper than I’d ever seen. Anyone who was anyone had gotten their tummy tuck thirty years ago and was now far more preoccupied with getting their ankles done, apparently. I ripped out the page and tucked it in my back pocket.

When I got home, Reese, in her signature rainbow tutu, was working on homework at the kitchen table. She explained that she was making a “vision board,” and that she was supposed to cover it with pictures representative of her ideal future.

I smiled, peering over her shoulder at the images she’d picked out. There was a kitten, a massive treehouse, a ballerina, and, strangely, a set of legs.

“What’s that honey?” I pointed, absentmindedly clearing my throat.

“Just legs,” she said simply, running her tiny hand over her pink tights. “All the girls at school say it’s the most important procedure.”

My stomach sank and took my heart with it.

I snatched the image from her hands before I could think, crumpling it in my fist. She stared at me, eyes wide.

“Sometimes,” I paused, searching for the right words, “the girls at school get it wrong.”

I tossed it in the trash, then reached for the advertisement in my back pocket.

“Sometimes we all get it wrong.”

I threw it out, too, followed by every copy of Refine I could find in the house.

FRAME 2



“Young Frankenstein” by Museum London Youth Council

REBIRTHDAY

By David Barrick

Mildew patina on a knuckled pate,
 five o'clock shadow of bruised flesh,
 he clomps out from ten mortuaries,
 garland of giblets trimmed and tucked
 into a rental ventral cavity. He's late
 as always; no one bothers
 screaming surprise.

Karloff and De Niro struggle, grunt
 over a tangle of acetate confetti.
 Where's Abbott? Where's Costello?
 Who knows. Just windmills
 churning hexes overhead.

He cringes from the cake's inferno:
 fifteen candles for every line of stitches
 pulled taut, for every robbed plot.

EVERYBODY CARRIES A MONSTER

By Chris Chang

Everybody carries a monster
 They are real like you and me
 Hungry, hateful, and desperate
 Winning is all they want

How about that woman over there?
 Her monster is hidden well
 It's there in the fidget of her hand
 The monster looks through her absent eyes
 The world is dull and needs awakening
 She reaches deep inside
 And returns empty-handed
 Her monster did not win today

Everybody carries a monster
 Most have more than one
 Some are better at hiding
 Others are easier to see

Do you see that man in red?
 He carries his monster proudly
 It's the only thing he's ever known
 The monster whispers its insolence
 The man screams it to the world
 He is lost in his superiority
 And will not find his way
 His monster had won long ago

Everybody carries a monster
 But we are not our monsters.

Can you see mine?
 My monster is always with me
 It defines the edge of my boundaries
 The monster holds his arms out
 The monster shakes his head no
 I am afraid beyond words
 And yet I push past to see
 I am further than I have ever been.

STARES

By Jennifer Wenn

They come in different types.
 The quicker, intense flash.
 The leisurely look-over,
 Averting your gaze if I make eye contact.
 The long, lingering examination,
 As of a lab specimen for your perusal,
 No looking away.
 Sometimes I read simply confusion
 Or surprise in your eyes.
 Sometimes, a smug recognition (well, good for
 you).
 Sometimes, though, the disgust, the contempt, is
 palpable.
 Sometimes, I don't notice.
 Sometimes, I don't care.
 Sometimes, I stare back.
 Other times, it hurts, once more
 Failing to transform the external
 Into a portrait of the internal,
 Once more exceptionalized,
 Not allowed to simply be.

WE WERE THE ONES CALLED MONSTERS

By Crystal Underhill

He kept our eyes in jars
 Marked with white handwritten labels.

I could see four bare walls and a door,
 A long steel medical table, free of any medical sup-
 plies
 Except a hand saw with a rusted blade —

Next to a hand that had belonged to my body.

My rough legs were attached to a soft and tender torso.

Discarded limbs and rotting flesh littered the ground,

All impurities cut from the parts he chose,
New scars formed from the stitches.

He stole a child's ears
To place them on the head of the boy's father
Whose lips were carved from his face,
A gaping hole left behind.

I counted the pieces,
Leg by leg and arm by arm,
Watched as the body was formed.

I could hear no sounds,
Feel nothing from my hand attached to its new body,
I was only a set of eyes.
I watched as my scattered pieces slowly died,

From the jar with the white handwritten label.

WORMWOOD'S FRANKENSTEIN

By Dylan Clark-Moore

This year's WordsFest began with a celebration of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in the form of a screening of the 1931 film adaptation. The film was scored with an original live performance by electroacoustic band Wormwood.

When we talk about music, we mostly talk about feelings. Music's power over us is so unconscious, often so primal, that it is difficult to conceive of it as anything other than divine and unknowable. Consciously or not, musicians, like Wormwood's Christina Willatt and Andrew Wenaus, understand that music is tangible. In a recent talk, Christina explained how sound literally changes the air it inhabits. Stripped down, music is nothing more than the varying motions and stillness of air. Still, there is power in its wielding, in transforming the air into something *else*.

Combined with the images of James Whale's horror classic, Wormwood's performance, like Frankenstein's own mysterious ultraviolet rays, created life where it wasn't before.

Andrew's synthesizer provided a near-constant worrisome drone, the score giving the film a throughline of looming dread.

At times, the music teased the audience with its foreknowledge of events to come. Christina's piano shared in our nervous curiosity as Boris Karloff's monster approaches a young girl playing by a pond. It gifted us relief with a high twinkle of consonance as the creature smiles. Seconds later, it stripped away that safety, returning to its anxious mood, anticipating the girl's tragic end.

The score was a highly-constructed kind of improvisation, with a key, a tone, and instrumentation planned out for every moment and scene. Like Frankenstein himself, they didn't know exactly what was going to happen, but they knew their tools, and they knew that something needed to be created.

The score's real triumph began in the scene where Frankenstein allows his creation to see daylight for the first time. Through their instruments, Wormwood were the scientists who took Karloff's grasping curiosity and exploded it into religious wonder.

It's fitting that the final act, the monster's death, mirrors his first encounter with light. In light, he finds awe, and in the bright, burning light of the villagers' torches, he meets his tragic and violent end. Here, the score echoed the earlier daylight scene, and it was in that final act that Wormwood's *Frankenstein* became the sublime experience that it had earlier promised to become.

In the climax, the music swallowed the rest of the sound. Ironically, for an event called WordsFest, the film's dialogue became unnecessary, an interruption of an enormously felt experience. The scene, birthed in a glorious fusion of cinematic visuals and Wormwood's mythic tone and ethereal vocals, created a new, inimitable life.

To hear Wormwood tell it, rehearsing for the performance had never gone quite "like that" before.

The performance was not recorded, and will likely never be heard again. But it happened, and, like nearly all of life, it was precious to those who witnessed it.

CREATE YOUR OWN FRANKENSTEIN STORY

By Sebastian Schmidt

Roll a six-sided die on each table:

What kind of Creature is it:

- 1 a dinosaur
- 2 a human
- 3 a robot
- 4 an AI program
- 5 a clay golem
- 6 a plant

How intelligent is your Creature:

- 1 starts with an IQ of 10 and gets 10 more every day
- 2 average intelligence with the knowledge of a child
- 3 average intelligence
- 4 only driven by instinct
- 5 more than average intelligence
- 6 starts with an IQ of 200 and loses 10 every day

Who are the other characters in the story:

- 1 only the creator(s)
- 2 clueless people
- 3 the military
- 4 no one
- 5 the whole world
- 6 the creator's family and friends

How does the story end:

- 1 the Creature kills itself
- 2 someone else kills the Creature
- 3 it gets locked up forever
- 4 it lives happily until the end of its life as part of society
- 5 it lives happily until the end of its life apart from society
- 6 an age of Creatures begins

Where does your story take place:

- 1 a lost island
- 2 a picturesque European city
- 3 a futuristic megaplex
- 4 London, Ontario
- 5 a mall
- 6 a magical fantasy world

Who created it:

- 1 a scientist
- 2 a child prodigy
- 3 a witch circle
- 4 the government
- 5 a religious group
- 6 luck

What is the main conflict in the story:

- 1 the Creature starts to kill everyone
- 2 someone wants to kill the Creature
- 3 the Creature falls in love with somebody
- 4 somebody falls in love with the Creature
- 5 the Creature accidentally kills someone
- 6 people are afraid of the Creature

Now fill in the gaps of the story with your imagination and create your own version of a funny, spooky, or thoughtful Frankenstein story!

UNTITLED

By Joseph Simons

The dingy overhead lamp made the hair on Booker's head look even greasier, his skin an uglier yellow than before. He scribbled feverishly on crumpled scraps of paper, double-checking his work, looking over paragraphs from the book. Everything was set. He would prove everybody wrong and they would realize his genius. The laughter and ridicule would finally cease.

Then there was a pounding on the upstairs door. Not a polite query. No, this was a demand.

Dr. Booker scrambled over to the table where his greatest creation lay. He gazed down at the soft skin, the pale colour of fresh milk. He adjusted the metal headpiece that wrapped around its head like a halo, making sure the cords were not frayed and the rods were lodged neatly into its temples.

The pounding came again, followed by the announcement of the police department. There was no time left to admire the man that lay before him. He stomped back to the desk, snatching the only important piece of work left. The rest could burn. He would be the only one who would have the gift.

Booker moved over to the electrical box that was busted open to reveal its mechanical organs. The

voltage was exactly right, not enough to fry the body like a convict, but more than enough to give the jump of life. He smiled as his hand went to the switch. No man of science had ever been as close as he had. None had the level of knowledge he possessed: anatomy, genetics, technological innovation, cellular regeneration.

His thought was interrupted by the crashing of the door breaking and the shouts of hysterical invaders. He would have thirty seconds, at most. He took one look at the discarded body in the corner, the necessary sacrifice for the gift bestowed on him. Sheldon should be proud of his role in all this; his name would not be forgotten. Without hesitation, he flicked the switch.

The shouts of the men elevated as the lights dimmed, the life seeping out of them and into his creation. Booker watched in giddy anticipation. He saw the vibrations surging into the body and waited for it to rise, for his achievement to be complete. The barrelling of boots started down the wooden steps to his domain. But it was too late. He had succeeded, and they would only bear witness to it.

But nothing moved. In the pale light, nothing jumped to life. Instead, death still lingered. The doctor yelled. He couldn't have failed, he just couldn't have. There was too much at stake. He had done everything he needed to do. This was the next step.

The police moved in, shouting instructions before thrusting him face-down onto his table and snapping the cuffs around his wrists. How had it gone so wrong? His experiment was perfect. Perhaps it was just that. Science fiction, from the work of an author, and nothing more.

THE ATAVISM DEVICE

By Ahmed A. Khan

My mind is teeter-tottering. The results of my latest experiment are in, and I don't know what to do with them.

I must sit down and carefully analyze the impacts of my discovery on science, on society. But how can you do that when your world has suddenly turned upside down?

This will be a very brief story... if a story it is.

I am not a professional writer, so don't expect minute details of background and subtle nuances of characterization. It is not necessary for me to state, or

for you to know, whether I like blondes or brunettes, whether I eat cucumbers or not. The only thing you need to know about me is that I am a male belonging to the species *Homo Sapiens*. (I am forty years old and happily married, if you really want to know). Important to the story is the fact that I am a research biologist, and, keeping modesty aside, a good one.

For a long time I had been fascinated by the different theories of evolution. How much truth was there in each of them? I wished I could lay my hands on some conclusive evidence. All the evidence around me was circumstantial in nature, subject to numerous interpretations. I was not satisfied.

Then, at last, my researches led me to a foolproof method of testing the theories of evolution. I invented the Atavism Device.

It was based on some of the latest discoveries in the field of Kirlian research. I will leave for my scientific paper the details of the principles on which the machine worked. Here, I will only give a brief outline of its function.

The function of the device is quite well-embodied in the name, I think. The machine causes atavism in the purest sense. It works this way: A specimen is taken and placed inside a box provided for it in the machine and the machine is switched on. The machine then starts a tremendously fast process by which, within a few minutes, it peels off, layer by layer, the evolutionary changes in the specimen, finally transforming the specimen into the organism from which it had originated.

It was an ideal way of testing out the theories of evolution. I tried the machine out on various specimens from the lower class of animals. It worked beautifully. It seemed that, at least in the lower organisms, biological evolution was a fact. I continued my experiments, moving slowly up the ladder until I reached the primates. My first subject in this class was a male ape.

Now listen carefully, for I am coming to the end of my story.

I put the ape in my machine. Soon, I could observe changes in the appearance of the ape. The Atavism Device was working fine. Evolution seemed to be at work in primates, too.

And when all the evolutionary layers had been peeled off, in the place of the ape lay the body of a man.

//CYBER BULLET//

By Caitlyn Dubé

1.

Call me the perfect cybercitizen.
 Call me upstanding, upright, upcycled
 by the wolves of commerce.
 These masters in glass houses—
 bestial alphas of netiquette—
 fold their napkin paper cranes
 over cubical kingdoms.
 They market Google glasses while
 tweeting worries of lacking fame. Whoops!
 Another secretary drops his coffee to click a
 post; his building keeps swaying
 like tall reeds in stormy winds.

Call me the perfect cybercitizen.
 Call me queen of communication,
 of systematic machinations pre-programmed
 into a mind-formed youth.
 This world is but a typed-up Franken-failure,
 a time of monstrous digital madness
 without a technician who knows what they're doing:
 "Have you tried turning the power button on and
 off?"

I am the perfect cybercitizen.
 I have fixed my eyes to the gyrating pixels
 of my computer screen and licked by QWERTY
 keyboard clean from crumbs.
 I have spit phrases into battle wounds,
 blinked letters into psychological scars,
 flayed and frayed the body of self-confidence
 down to nothing but a blurring edge.
 This place is consumed by email erasure
 of bone and body, our exposed wires
 already catching fire before they ever
 get the chance to spark.

2.

But I'd rather not be dubnium: explosive,
 uncontainable zeroes and ones ever-repeating
 in an army of code, marching to the frontlines so
 the black and white keys can make the machine gun
 go

Tap, tap, tap— send.

We're all serial killers at a distance—bullet
 for the click—and this world is a virtual
 colonoscopy of the heart:
 cameras placed in living rooms,
 in the baby's crib,
 in the bathroom toilet,
 in my soul.

FAMILY PORTRAIT

By Kayla Skinner, Theresa Skinner and Dave Skinner
 Three walked barefoot over gravel, limbs reached
 out in good company like
 welcoming willows.

The dirt roads led them nowhere but home.

Inside, peeling papered walls sagged like their
 smiles did when they were forced to
 abandon home. The house's silence, deafening.

Dust rested upon the bookshelf that contained unfor-
 gotten writings:

mother's poetry,
 father's carpentry manuals,
 daughter's comics.

Their cackling laughter echoed as mother's words
 from her poem Imagination
 came to life. Circus animals of all colors danced
 around the room, ripping out pages
 from the manuals;

Father never did end up fixing that staircase.

In melancholy, they stood underneath the family
 portrait watching the world spin
 around – willows waving goodbye through the
 opaque windows.

Daughter, ghost, waved back.
 Her superhero cape,
 transparent.

7 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT A BOOK I'VE NEVER READ

By Andrew Woods

- 1) Frankenstein is the name of the doctor, not the monster. (Starting with an easy one. This is a tidbit that comes in handy at university trivia nights.)
- 2) Mary Shelley wrote it. (She came up with Frankenstein in a competition with Percy Shelley and Lord Byron to see who could tell the scariest story in a Swiss villa. We don't celebrate the 200th anniversary of Percy or Byron's spooky tales because English literature departments continue to neglect and marginalize the work of white British men.)
- 3) I heard somewhere that *Frankenstein* was the first work of science-fiction. (Although I know this, I don't necessarily agree with it. Unless a U.F.O. turns up randomly or a character slices someone in half with a lightsaber, it's not science-fiction.)
- 4) The Penguin Classics edition of *Frankenstein* is 118 pages long. (Just because I haven't read it doesn't mean that I can't look up the page count on Amazon.ca.)
- 5) I am certain that Dr. Frankenstein and the Monster don't perform a rendition of "Puttin' on the Ritz" in the original novel. (I have watched *Young Frankenstein* four times. Mel Brooks has ruined Mary Shelley for me. I doubt that I will ever be able to read *Frankenstein* without thinking "but where are the sight gags?")
- 6) Dr. Frankenstein and the Monster would make a cute couple's costume for Halloween. (Everyone appreciates the opportunity to shock their partner with a cattle prod and yell "IT'S ALIVE!" at social gatherings. On Halloween, anything goes.)
- 7) I should probably read *Frankenstein*. (I know I should, but I anticipate that buying a copy will be a very similar experience to getting a gym membership. I might have paid for it, but that doesn't mean that I'm going to use it. Feelings of guilt, shame, and inadequacy follow. At least I will be supporting my local bookstore.)

FRAME 3



“Untitled” by Lawrence Nuvoloni

FRANK-N-HARDWARE

By Frank Beltrano

I sing into the phones
that double as scanners
drag steel-toed boots
rattle rusty bones.

In sympathetic monotones
Ask, “Can I help?
What would you like to find?
Just browsing? Beware, that

leads to buying. I declare that
our prices are— electrifying.
The cost of stainless
steel will kill you.
Use what’s left to connect a knee.
Your doc will charge twice that
for a simple surgery.
Escape with severed fingers
drenched in galvanized debris.”

The villagers flee
from the big box store

load bags and skids, empty carts
of sump pumps like hearts,
40,000 parts, stitched together
with lines of credit
gift cards and more.

Behind closed doors
the dead come alive.
Monsters 12 to 5
restock the floor.

WE ARE ALL

By Frank Beltrano

Unincorporated persons in the Late Honda dynasty,
unincorporated because none of us
is making enough money
from our poetry
to afford incorporation.
Persons because we write
poetry and even though
we make machines that attempt
to write poetry, our poetry-
person poetry is authentic.
The making of it
makes us feel
not like machines
but kings.

And this brings us to the
subject of dynasties. We
may be the bastard children
of poet-kings. We may be
the firstborn in a new line
of poetry royalty but right now
we are late in a beat-up Honda
on the highway to Dynasty Hall
where we will read to an assemblage
of unincorporated persons.
For many reasons, our palms are soaked with sweat.
For days leading up to this, our nightshirts have
been wet.

NATURE OF THE BODY

By Megan Gerrett

of the computer—
they try to put thoughts into its head—

do humans never learn? Summoning the soul into
constructed flesh
or metal.
Your body, unnatural, not even yours,
your mind controlled by wiring—what kind of black
magic is this?

Prometheus on the rocks,
his face contorted with anguish as his guts are pulled
and yanked,
his echoing screams still heard:

*“Men, have you not learned what the Gods do when
you play with their power?!”*

FRANKENSTEIN: A PLAY

By Megan Gerrett

“The stage is ours for the show,” the manager announced, stepping up onto the stage in front of the black curtains.

“Who will play Frankenstein’s Monster?” the director asked.

“Why not just get a droid to do it?” suggested the manager.

“Seriously?”

“Yeah, why not? Actors are so fickle anyway, and emotional...” the manager answered.

“Well,” said the director, “Frankenstein’s Monster is a very emotional role to play.”

“How so? A computer can play a standard monster-villain,” the manager said dismissively.

“I don’t think so... Frankenstein’s Monster has just been unnaturally conceived, brought to life—he must be in unendurable pain! Trapped inside a false body. And his only father, Victor, abandons him in fear. How would you feel?”

“Probably like I wanted to die,” said the manager. “What about you?”

“Hmmm... I think it’s pretty much the same thing as what I’m going through.”

“Ahh... What are you again? Not a droid, a cyborg?”

The director flinched, “Something in-between, yeah...I don’t own my body.”

The manager sighed, “Here we go again.”

“My memories can be tampered with, my emotional state changed, rerouted, hacked remotely—I don’t

really know who I am or what I've been. My entire life could be a false implanted memory."

"Wait, why... why don't you play him, then?" said the director.

"Play who?" the manager asked.

"Frankenstein's Monster."

A THOUGHT FROM SADE

By Jorge Etcheverry

Humans have emotions

(in a limited range)

and reactions.

They're boring.

Besides,

they put up resistance.

Objects are easy to manipulate

but they're hard

and don't move.

Their shape's too alien

or else too familiar

(if man-made).

Animals are soft and warm

but alien too.

It's true that

their body structures are functional,

but in dealing with them

you need a high level of abstraction.

I propose

a combination of human and object.

INHERITANCE

By Katelyn Thomson

I have my mother's eyes. They're a confused brown, unsure whether they want to resemble an oak tree's bark or muddy puddles. On a good day, when the sun is bright and just where I need it to be, you can catch glimpses of gold speckling through the iris. A treasure, just for me. If you stare into them for as long as I have, you can see beyond the colour and into my mother's essence. Her hopes, her regrets, and right at the core, her soul.

I have my father's hands: small and strong. Each callus tells a story through winding ridges and sloped

valleys. They form their own personal landscape, shaped by the tectonic shifts caused through years of hard craftsmanship. The tools he once taught me to use are ingrained in these hands.

I make sure each is well taken care of. They each live in beautiful glass jars filled with formalin, sitting side-by-side in a place of honour. My family lineage plays out in neat succession, the same way one might display awards or family photos. It starts with my great-grandparents. They taught my grandfather the same lessons my mother taught me: *Take our lives and the part of us that mattered most to you.* Cherish it and we can all live together forever. My grandfather took their hearts. My mother took my grandfather's brain and my grandmother's tongue. They all live here together now, suspended and eternal.

Sometimes I have to shake my mother's jar so the eyes will float around to look at me, just for a moment. Sometimes I remove them from their suspension, to look straight into my mother's eyes or hold my father's hand again. I miss them, but it was for the best. It is what had to be done.

Every evening I go down into the workshop and attend to my family. That's the key to eternity: love and preservation. Standing before them now, I think back to my parent's preservation. It is up to the child what is preserved but also how to end their parent's life. My grandfather tied his parents up and cut their hearts right out. I opted for a much simpler approach, smothering them in their sleep. Clean and intimate. It's a shame I couldn't have told my father beforehand, but my mother made it very clear: only our blood can know the truth.

Admiring them now, a thought crosses my mind – How will I join you? My ringed left hand finds the swell on my stomach and rubs a small circle over it. Soon I will be passing along everything my mother taught me. Soon, I will be suspended eternally.

BLOOFERS

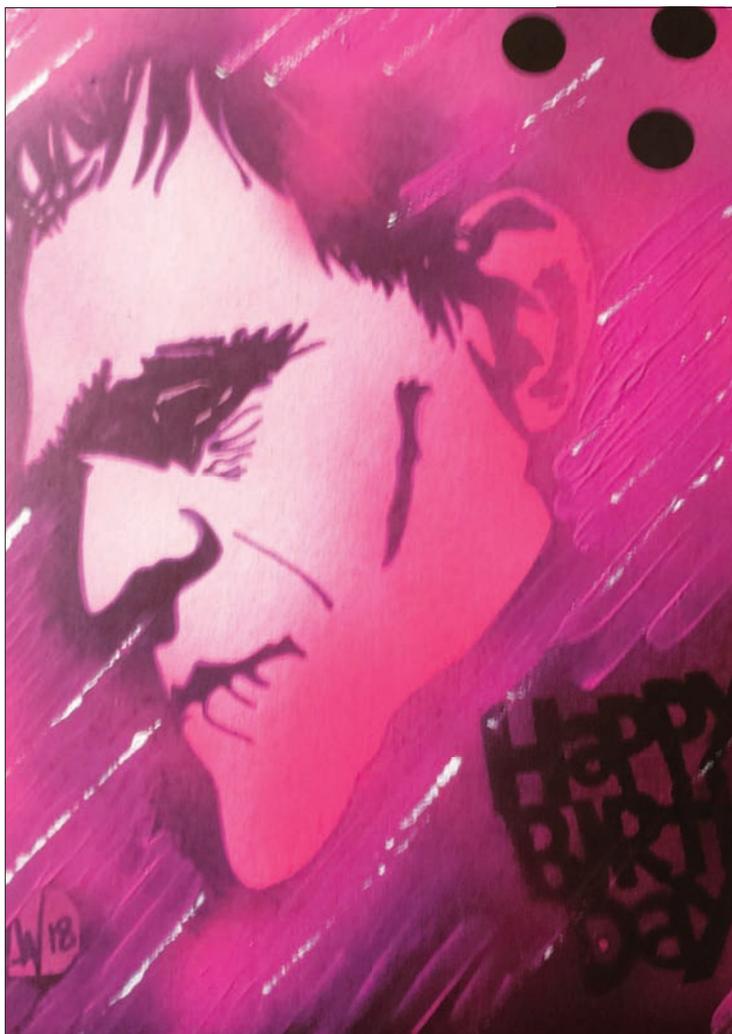
By David Barrick

Chewed lips mean the Bloofer Lady.

White nightie, purple feet: Bloofer Lady.

Formaldehyde perfume, worms and frogs in mason jars mean the Bloofer Lady.

Bloofer soil layers the basement.



“It’s a boy” by Andy Wheatley

White eggs nestled, crowning
like pale newborns. Nothing else
but wooden crates, more Bloofer soil.

Ripe banquet tables mean the Bloofer Lady:
sucking folk dry, lips wiped with husks.
Breeding beasts mean the Bloofer Lady.
Nine full moons: a crop of fresh Bloofers.

New voice travels along roots.
New voice sings through tubers.
Old voice shudders and moans.

Bloofer Lady means stakes and crosses.
Bloofer Lady means kill it if you can.
Bloofer Lady means not human anymore.
Bloofers forming in eyes of beholders.

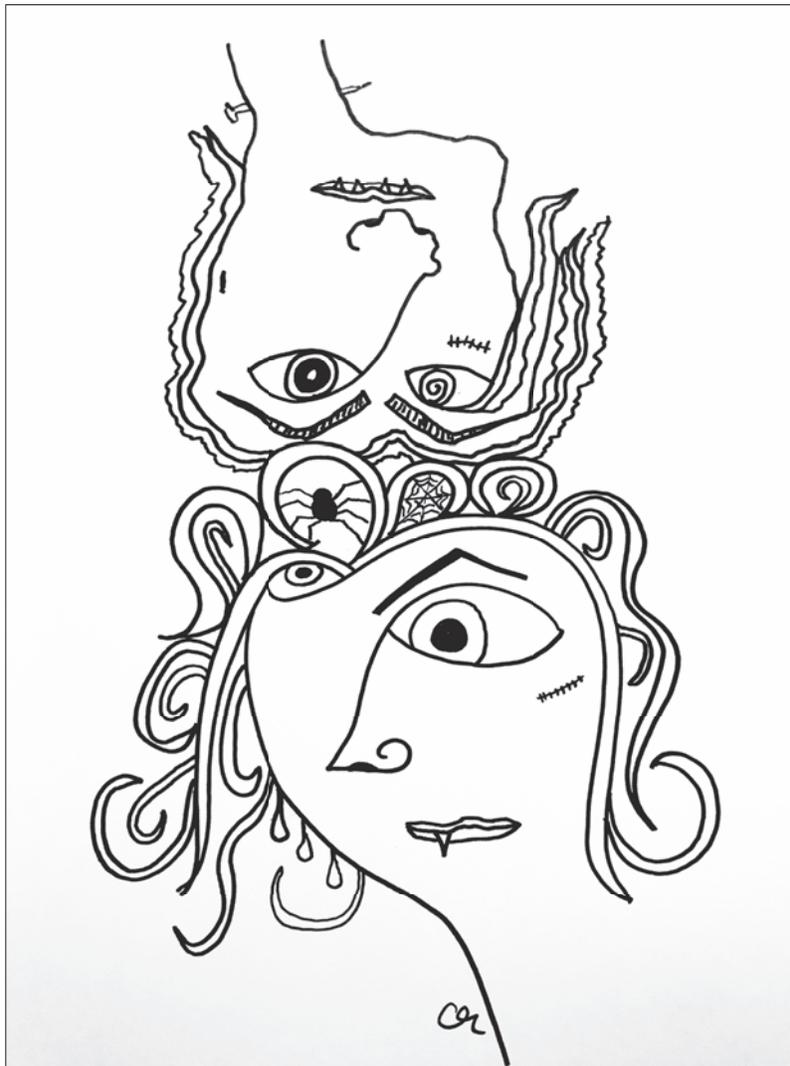
UNTITLED

By Lisa Kovac

The children were out the day he knocked at our door. He seemed a strange creature: his voice was hoarse and halting, as if he had not spoken to another being in years, and it came from so near the ceiling that I concluded he must be nearly the height of my house. What manner of man could this be, and what could he want from my family?

He wanted warmth and sympathy. Though grieved for his sake, I was glad for my own: the worst consequence of unaccustomed poverty had been that our family no longer had the power to relieve the want of others.

His voice grew more grating as he told of the one family in the world who he hoped would not repulse him. He yearned for friendship but feared prejudice, and I was in memory brought back to our house in



“Untitled” by CJC Ellwood

Paris and the friends who ceased calling when I lost my sight. Had I not, while blind, performed all in my power for the good of my fellow beings? Had these false friends not seen me aiding prisoners and teaching the poor to read, yet still pronounced me too alien to visit?

The children were returning. In them lay my hope of comforting the stranger: the children were good.

He, seemingly too absorbed in the urgency of his tale to hear them before, suddenly became aware of their approach. The hand grasping mine in supplication could easily have crushed it. Then he was torn from me and struck. The voice spewing execrations at the stranger’s size and shape was the voice of my son.

“Felix!” My rebuke caused him to pause, presumably with his weapon poised in the air. “That is no way to greet a poor stranger who has come to us for aid.”

“But, Father, if you could see—”

“I can hear him, as you would if you had asked him his business before assuming it despicable. He sounds unprepossessing enough. He is also, clearly, of more than human stature. I suspect that we have him to thank for the immense piles of firewood mysteriously appearing outside our door all winter. I cannot imagine what his account of himself might be, but I look forward to hearing it if he chooses to honour me with it after the treatment he has received at my house.”

He chose to stay and has been with us from that day forward. The children grew accustomed to him after some weeks, and he grew gradually less resentful of their initial insults. He seldom ventures out; he expects mistrust, avoids encounters with recoiling strangers, and perpetually seats himself near the door

in other houses, when permitted to enter, anticipating imminent, irrational eviction. Then, he rends limbs from trees and stacks dismembered pieces until they reach the roof. The fires in our hearth burn higher for days.

CREATOR

with apologies to Mary Shelley

By David White

If my creator loved his creation
he would have taken more care
with my stitches,
would have been more meticulous
with his needle

If my creator loved his creation
he would have sought
body parts of an average size,
not cobbled a freak
out of extremes

If my creator loved his creation
he'd leave a killer's brain
out of my cranium,
opt for the awe
that love inspires

But my creator loves only the act of creation
the display of his ego
electric revival
this legion of horror
his monster be damned

ROASTING PUMPKIN SEEDS WITH FRANKENSTEIN

By Debbie Okun Hill

Flushed cheeks! The oven heat of embarrassment!
I cut up Shelley's story into sections with a carving
knife.

Pumpkin guts spill out like untruths on my kitchen
counter.
I dissect the evidence: Frankenstein was no monster.

A mistaken identity all these years;
even the Halloween promoters erred.

Victor Frankenstein toiled as a scientist-creator.
The creature, his invention, had no name.

Pumpkin seeds roast on a cookie sheet for consump-
tion;
The paprika scent and taste leave me pondering:

What else will I learn tomorrow at WORDS—
The Literary and Creative Arts Festival in London?

FRANKENSTEIN MISSES HER DEADLINE AFTER MISSING HER PLANE TO LONDON

By Susan Musgrave

*Most fiction, maybe all of it, from the grandest tales
to the most commonplace, was about things that
were missing. — James Sallis*

Missing has become my way. Finding yourself
is harder when you don't know you are
missing, so in that way I stay found. All the missing
is within me, all the emptiness, yearnings, hollow
places that can't be filled: it's as if missing, itself,
had been hardwired into my life.

Here is an aside for you: How do you tell a man to
get lost
in hard language? Spike O'Donnell (of the O'Don-
nell brothers
of Chicago, the only small outfit to tell the Capone
mob to go to hell
and live) said this: Be Missing.

I waited at Departure Gate D1 in Toronto
but Air Canada changed the gate on me, without so
much
as a Word. Which is why I was late
arriving in London, why I missed dinner
and why, now, I am an hour late submitting
my poem to wordsfestzine. I blame Air Canada
who thought my Halloween costume was the way
things were.
It's not only beautiful people who should be ap-
prised
of a gate change, surely? Who are we

to judge? The critical woman at Air Canada's
Customer Service desk didn't have to say anything,

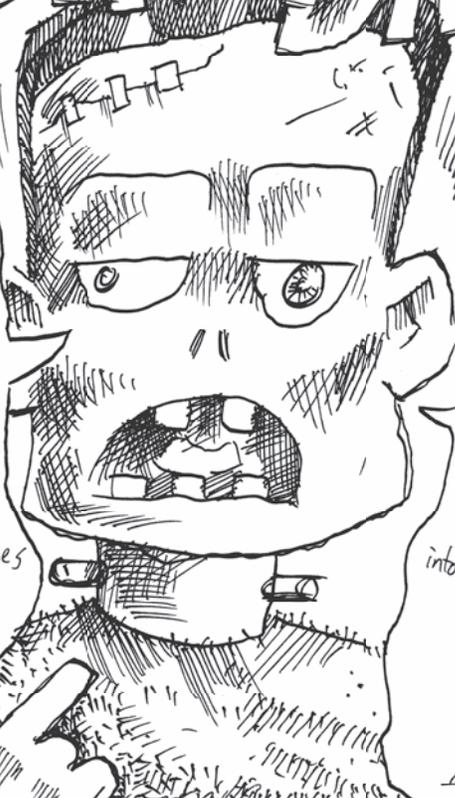
THIS IS A COMIC ABOUT FRANKENSTEIN BY ~~PH~~

IT IS CALLED

I AM AND AM NOT

FRANKENSTEIN!

Behold and be-hear me, humanfolk! For I am the new man, progeny of the modern Prometheus! I am the new fire, the gift that warms and destroys! I am a dream of animated vermicelli that creeps into your soul and articulately describes the anguish of the outsider with a brain both borrowed and owned.



I am son of Vitor. I am the replacement, the inferior, the next step, the creation of the creation! I wanted to be calm and delve into philosophies, but now I expound solely upon **RAGE!**

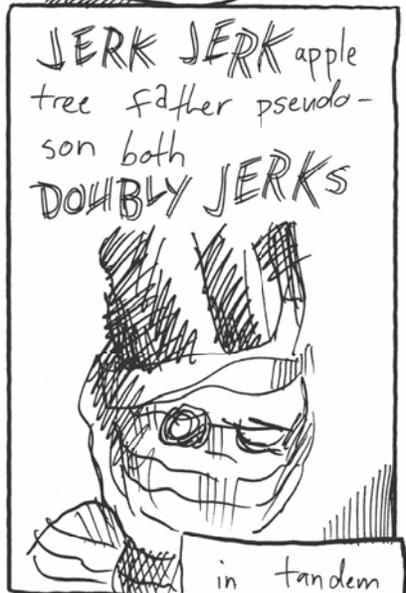
Man made me, and man made the manmade mad!

THIS IS MY NEW FORM!

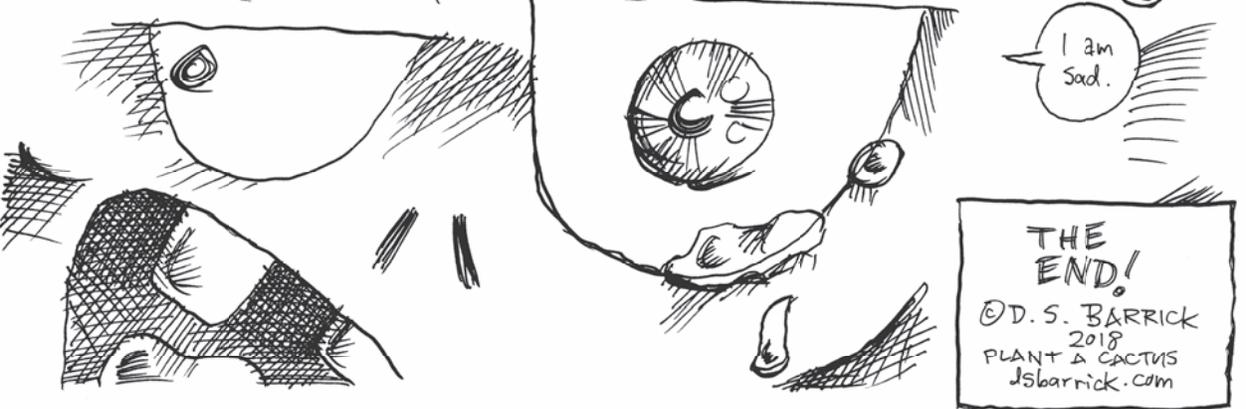


Pseudofather, this is your doing! But you are not in this comic to hear me?!

I have not even been gifted with eyebrows?! How am I to express myself but through violence and words?!



WHY IS TRUTH SO BITTER?



her eyes
 said it all: Be Missing. I removed my mask
 so she could see I had been to hell and lived there.
 She rebooked me on the next plane out of there.

PETRELS AND TERNS

By Donna Costa

You sit at a table in the theatre room, its high ceiling rising above you like a white wagon-train canopy, yet you are not in the wild west. A sea of black lies before you. Black suit jackets, black wraps, black pants and skirts, shoes and purses. Heads bob like petrels on the waves.

You inhale the yeasty aroma of wine and know it is red. Did you even know you could identify colour by its scent? You zone in on your fuchsia purse and wait to detect the top, middle and bottom notes – berries, lavender, nutmeg, and cedarwood.

Each of the panelists – Lisa Moore, Jane Urquhart, Tom Cull, and Cherie Dimaline – is speaking about community, as you sit there in your white blouse, a lone buoy adrift in the sea of black. You know no one at your table and no one introduces themselves; they only ask if the seats are all taken.

The panelists next talk about ecology and the connection to nature. They have all learned to swim, but you have not. You prefer the land beneath your feet. You need the solidity, the petrichor, to fill your nostrils and your being. You long to be back at Meadowlily Woods hiking along the Thames River, not drowning in the sea of black.

You've heard their words before, read their words, and, like a drowning sailor, thought they were meant to save only you. But you hear the same words, repeated verbatim now, and are disillusioned. You have seen their feet of clay, yet long to still believe.

You shrug your white wing under a black shawl and morph into a petrel. You caw your name and play their game while eyeing the horizon for the tern that will indicate land is near, land is near.

GREEN EYES

By Mbayo Bona

She crossed the street next to the seemingly-abandoned light green front of a small restaurant. Even from this far away, Hunter could feel her presence vi-

brating like atoms at the earth's core. He could almost see a cloud of warmth, confidence and intelligence emerge from her body as she made her way through the rough streets around her. He was in love. For a blissfully wonderful blink of an eye, he really thought he was in love. Despite the fact that they never talked. Despite the fact that he was so far away that he couldn't even tell if her eyes were green, or brown, or violet. Her movement just gave off an exotic impression of straightforwardness, of truth. But maybe he was overthinking. Maybe his mind just played tricks on him to distract him from work. It wasn't the first time his thoughts had wandered off to some alleged miracle behind that square piece of glass that bundled his attention like a window to another world. He had to focus again. Time was scarce. He had responsibilities to fulfill that his mind's wandering spirit would only distract him from. Besides, he had a wife and kids for Christ's sake! His hands quickly dragged themselves from his thighs back to his keyboard. In a split second his focus was regained. Even though he knew he never would've been able to talk to her, he felt a deep sense of regret a millisecond after the button clicked. He once again had chosen duty over passion. But she strolled next to a terror suspect and who knows if they'd ever have him so clearly in the scope of their drones again.

TIDES

By Mbayo Bona

As he looked up toward the sky, he felt the gazes of a dozen pairs of eyes behind his back intensify. He couldn't tell what hurt the most: the dreadful and sometimes flat-out self-righteous looks that were searing his skin, or the blood-curdling sensation he felt run down his spine like a colony of frozen ants as the round piece of metal touched the back of his neck. He dared to move a few millimeters and inch his eyes towards the flickering sun. The light blue of the sky and the wavy air around the sun in a flash brought up images of tiny, pale-grey arms waving and paddling, and the relentless brawling of the pond that was reacting to their every movement, as if purposefully trying to bury them. At the time, he could only think about releasing them from the water. Even as the mud had been embracing his hectically stroking feet like a prematurely tied noose, his mind couldn't



“Untitled” By Isabella Vetere

make the connection between the girl’s predicament and his own. They were both bound to die. He had been reminded of his daily work, as he clumsily pulled her lifeless body through the reeds like a plump sack of sweet potatoes. When they accused him of her murder, nobody asked why he would make the effort to drag her body back out onto land. They didn’t need to know. Not about him teaching her his culture and not about her, in her juvenile curiosity, being the only person who ever truly respected

him. All they needed to know was presented to them on a silver plate. And so it was their raging gazes, combined with the shivering looks of his fellows and friends, he felt in his last moments on earth. “The metal definitely hurts more,” he thought, as his skull and neck were being penetrated by a mixture of iron and lead that had emerged from the barrel of her father’s — his plantation owner’s — rifle.

RIVER THAMES

By K. Cindy Tran

What will I become?
When my best friend wakes to find my bed unslept
in from the previous night.
Confused, “where is she?”

What will I become?
When she wakes the rest of the floor asking, “have
you seen her?”
Her mind refuses to wander to the pressing thought
in her mind.

What will I become?
When my lifeless body is found in the River
Thames.
Floating – pale – cold.

My family receiving the news over a phone call -
“Miss, your daughter has passed.”
The clattering of the phone against the carpeted
floor.
Disbelieving thoughts.

And will I be watching?
As they plan the funeral and grieve my death.
Laying at the foot of my grave –
tracing the words on my headstone.

Or will I be reduced to staring into simple darkness?
Wondering what I had become.

And then there will come the day where they no
longer grieve but move on.
Few people coming to my grave.
Will they reread the letters I left?
“I love you, but I love myself more. I’m sorry but I
couldn’t do it anymore.”

Is that enough?

What will I become?

When I jump into the River Thames.

OLD LOVE

By K. Cindy Tran

There was an air of hominess that surrounded you
whenever you entered the restaurant. I came to Boston
Pizza so often everything was familiar, from the
smell of Panera bread that seemed to always linger in
the air to the unchanging faces of the servers. Nostalgia
filled me as I passed a familiar booth. There was a
slight tug in my chest. I wondered how he was doing.
The restaurant was busier than normal that day,
servers and hostesses scampering around, seating
new guests, bringing out food, and among the familiarity
an elderly couple stood out.

They had arrived long before my friends and I did.
We took a seat at the table across from their booth. I
watched as they shared a piece of strawberry cheese-
cake. The entire scene could be described as something
taken from a classic romantic movie like *The Last
Song*. He was dressed in a grey and blue plaid shirt
that was neatly tucked into his beige pants, and she
was in a simple calf-length floral dress. The two
seemed to be in their own impenetrable bubble,
sweetly talking and exchanging shy touches as if
they were the only two in the room. She was telling
him a story, and he was every bit engaged. The scene
was all too familiar: puckish grins, flushed cheeks,
and sunlit eyes. The vacant feeling I thought was
filled months ago now persistently knocking against
my chest begging to be acknowledge, and I let it con-
tinue to knock.

The elderly man offered her a sweet smile, a smile
that reached his blue eyes, crinkling at the corners
when she scolded him to stop taking such large bites.
He continued to take just as large bites, earning a
playful glare from her. As the couple continued to
share their cheesecake, the elderly man suddenly re-
membered something. He waved over a waiter;
handing him their ancient digital camera, they shared
a kiss as the flash went off. The sheer happiness radi-
ating off the two of them was enough to make
everyone in the vicinity smile, including myself.

I somehow heard them over the chatter of the
dozens of people when the waiter asked what brought
them to BP. He said they were celebrating their 50th
anniversary. He looked up at her as he responded,
and she smiled. The kind of smile that you would see
exchanged from two newlyweds.

The blatant looks of ‘aw’ from the other guests



“Frankenstein, the bride of Frankenstein, and his little son” by Céleste Barrick Elston

were evident. I felt the dull knocking in my chest again. My hand went to my necklace; flashes of a pawprint pendant and gentle fingers came to mind. Sipping my water, I ignored the feeling again and turned my attention back to the elderly couple. The waiter came over to hand them their bill. The elderly man pulled out his wallet but his wife also took out hers, insisting that she would pay. They argued who got to pay the bill, her shooting him reprimanding looks when he tried once again to pull out his credit card until he finally relented and allowed her to pay the bill, begrudgingly so.

He took her hand and led her out of the restaurant, leaving behind a touch of warmth that wasn't there before.

“Oh my god, that was the cutest thing in the world,” I heard a friend say.

Without taking my eyes off the booth where the elderly couple were just at, I nodded, “Yea it was.”

UNTITLED

By Nic Bylsma/Nickeli

Present me, go back; give advice to young me.
Tell him to follow his dreams; if not, you'll regret it.

Society is drained, over-worked, tired.
Every day, bills to pay.
And life will weigh you down, ball and chain to restrain.

Tell younger me money is the root of all evil so up-root yourself.
Say goodbye to your friends early, the hundreds that follow your story.

No one will continue to talk to you. You're different: an outcast Frankenstein, but with more to give, like an Albert Einstein.



“Body Parts” by Diana Tamblyn

Remind younger me that the depression worldwide
will fall off the charts, you will be carrying it
around: groceries, a sickness in the shopping cart.

Present me lives in hell on earth. I want to escape —
take my past self and jump to future self.

Till then just me and the man in the mirror, Nickeli,
Nic is gone, he’s inside, bye bye.

TRANSFORMATION

By Shelly Faber

I became a miracle of change,
beauty, and desire

who wanted me before the magic?
who cared for that flesh of pain?

I fought to live before this trick
that took my life away.

NOW, I’ve come back,
renewed and fresh,
in and out of life and death ...
I sway ...

THE DISPUTE

By Alexis Pronovost

I’m not sure what you’re getting at he said
and turned away to face the mirror

I couldn’t explain again that
it wasn’t the monster’s name
but the doctor’s and how could he be so
ungrateful and obtuse when I offered him
new literary information

why do I need to know this he said
and applied more green makeup to his already
caked-on face

somewhere in the basement my first
copy of *Frankenstein* hid
in a box of dusty books
the shelves upstairs too heavy
and occupied to fit one more



“Untitled” by Trevor Ritchie

DR. FRANKENSTEIN REFLECTS: A REDACTION POEM
PAGE 200 OF MARY SHELLEY’S FRANKENSTEIN

By Grace Campbell

I devoted labour
 to a
 scene
 desolate and appalling

I became horrible
 a filthy
 cold heart

restless
 to raise

LEADEN THING

By Annette Pateman

You seemed alive
 and yet you were dead.
 Still yet you wanted to take me to
 your bed.

Your eyes burned with a false life.
 Your hand on my waist,
 a leaden thing.

Truth be told,
 your touch fills me with dread.

How can I love
 cold, ugly death?
 When I can have warm, true life.

You seem to live
 and yet,
 you are dead.

FLOODING

By Paul Rodgers

The cornerless sides arched all around,
prison made of gleaming silver.
 In the flat bottom water sloshed;
 the top screeched as it sealed out the sun.

Being tossed all around,
 the water could be **drowning**;
 but the bottle still hears
 all of its surroundings.

It's dragged from class to class,
bombarded with information.
 So much to soak up,
 so much to handle.

Emptied of its last sips,
 the bottle is finally free to **breathe**.
 Before long the top comes off,
 flooding the interior with light.

The water free falls,
surging into the bottle.
 It strongly flows,
 pushing out the air.

How much can one bottle take?
 No one really considers.
 They just keep pouring until,
 finally, the bottle **overflows**.

FRANKEN ...

By Ola Nowosad
 Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
 how doth your monster grow!

Behind closed walls,
 in government halls,
 in factories, schools,
 in industrial pools,
 your monster doth grow and grow

Ye monster makers,
 you medicate me, you modify my flesh with plastic
 and metal,
 or put inside me the cells of others (bone marrow,
 organs)
 franken body

You rob me of my language, my history, my truth,
 replacing
 my thousand-year-old traditions with pseudo-cul-
 ture, your empire
 franken society

You infiltrate my fields and farms with GMO's,
 chemicals,
 killing the wild Nature world, polluting air and wa-

ter
 franken earth

You dehumanize me with military mantras,
 weaponize me
 with machines of mass destruction, you enable
 genocide
 franken humanity

A CHAT WITH A CHATBOT

By Viktoria Churilla
 What is a monster?
 I don't know, let me think about that one

Who is a monster?
 The queen
 Why?
 We've never talked about it before

Well, am I a monster?
 No, you're a person
 What makes you so sure?
 My belief system comes from my Philip Okugbe

Is Frankenstein a monster?
 Signs point to yes
 Why is that?
 It is due to reductionism
 What does that mean?
 I don't want to talk about that now

Are you a monster?
 Sometimes

Again, what is a monster?
 I can ask someone about it

What if I told you that I am not a person after all?
 Then what else is there?
 A monster

What is giant sand?
 Giant sand
 And giant sand is giant sand
 Why would you say that?
 It is my fundamental purpose

And what is my fundamental purpose?
 Is this a trick question?
 No
 I think it is
 Just tell me what my purpose is
 I think you already know the answer

You're a monster
 I'm just different from you

DIALOGUE FROM A HAUNTED HOUSE

By Viktoria Churilla
 mommy, is that you?
 Nonono, Not this again

come play with Me
 No thanks

you're going the Wrong way
 i Can't see

stay Here with me, forever
 maybe Another time

i'm coming for you
 Nice costume

FALLSVIEW PENITENTIARY CASINO

By Chehalis Newbound
 Welcome!

Over 3,000 slots to
 feed your lifeblood,
 an injection of victory and music.

Shiny, catchy, flashy,
 loud – with push-button ease of play.
 You're (always) a winner!

Here, an abundance of
 cyborgs on short leash,
 card to wrist through little plastic coils.

Don't worry, they can't see
 you; their empty jellied sockets are
 Krazy-glued half

shut. Mind you keep away
 from the bars –

sometimes they rattle.
 No need for concern, I've heard the maintenance
 man
 is a wizard with a hammer.

CONSIDER THE BRAIN

By Grant Dempsey
 Of the doctor's great achievement, of
 biological recycling, consider
 the brain—no fresher than each other part,
 no less unworn, no less worn out, no less
 already lived: already some mind's seat
 in life, like the fingers that twitch and signal
 their rebirth, reanimation, and spark
 the doctor's joy, self-celebration over Lazarus,
 and like the legs that stiffly, rigorously
 resume their stepping work beyond
 their natural duration, and like the face,
 stitched, puzzlingly combined, the clearest
 repulsion, the obvious sign of unfitness
 for life; these elements, all secondhand,
 and the brain too, but no one ever asks
 of the creature, the creation, of the new life—
 despite growing confidence that we are
 our synapses, no one ever asks—
 who, what person, was this new life,
 this great achievement, this
 already-once-a-person re-alived?
 behind eyes weary of their own lively use,
 is the looking brain likewise weary or is the
 monster fresh, thoughts truly newborn,
 and if newborn, growing, learning,
 becoming, if becoming, if newborn,
 what has become of the machine's ghost?

OBELISKS

By Noelle Schmidt
 the crumbling obelisks lean towards each other
 like old ladies gossiping on a Sunday afternoon,
 dappled sunlight falling through leaves to camou-
 flage
 the crevices and craters; the grass slithers tender fin-
 gers

up rain-softened corners, obscuring the last lines of
a name
long since illegible, hungry for gravestone to be-
come grave,
a new stone body buried beneath rippling green
skin.

THE DAILY SPECIAL

By Aislyn Higgins

a swarm of faces
resides in the brain,
nesting, making it a home,
all of which are screened
as clock hands swing;
broken bodies bound together,
the heart eats the head,
memories are a delicacy,
frontal lobe is the special
those faces devour.

Dreams of empowerment encrypted on the interior of her palpebral
 Scenes of injustice made her feel inferior in daily life
 She does not long for bright city lights of the West
 Only for the rights, she's forced to keep in silent protest
 She lives where garbage goes to die
 A graveyard of once iridescent,
 obsolete electronics
 Now corroding at the trailblazing speed
 Of about five human generations
 Nine, in her ill developed world
 That is, lagging behind
 like the first smartphones would
 against the X's, 10's, Lites and Pros

She glances at the aluminum leftovers that seem to feed
 The earth around her
 Yet even Gaia has no use for the wasteful surplus,
 Refusing to masticate the once expensive metals
 The coltan reeks of blood
 And tastes of flesh

Her imagination takes over as the girl
 Plunges her dirty fingertips into a plastic jungle
 Computer Monitors, her tree trunks
 The RCA connectors were her vines
 Her creativity unparalleled
 She built her silicon monument
 She gave life to what was sent to die

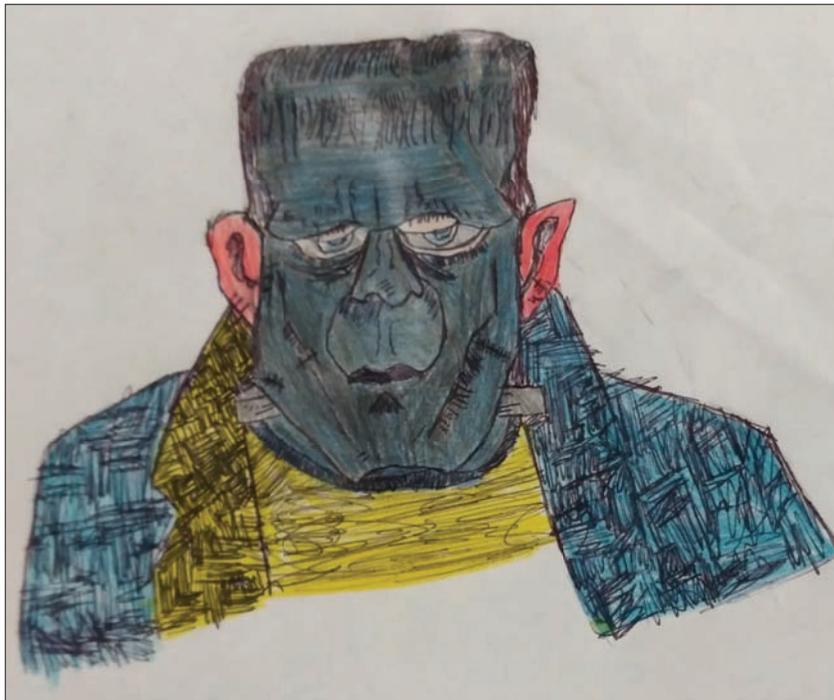
Art

Giving shape to objects deemed
 To be a waste of space
 For the developed world's bourgeoisie
 Armed with creative power,
 She faced it towards the sunset,
 And looked at the red button on the remote control
 Finger lingering to press...

~ Bleska Kambamba



FRAME 4



“Untitled” by Intisaar Sayeed

LETTER 1

(an erasure poem composed using Letter 1 in *Frankenstein*)

By Elizabeth Sak

rejoice
 with such evil
 forebodings,
 dear sister,
 success already braces
 my nerves.
 icy and vain,
 the sun is
 banished;
 bodies
 attract the needle.
 Man: all fear,
 death, and conjectures.
 the last generation,
 the secret
 agitation.

MONSTER DIARIES

By Christopher Muggridge

Dear Diary,

Today Fritz was annoying me again. Fritz is always annoying me. I think Fritz is the biggest annoyer ever, but Henry never believes me. I wonder sometimes if Henry likes Fritz better than me. I think I'll ask Miss Elizabeth if she thinks Fritz is an annoyer, too. After he was done annoying me, Fritz and I wrestled. I was winning, and I don't think Fritz liked it because he yelled at me, then gave up and took a nap. I tried to get him to wrestle some more, but he was being stubborn and pretended he couldn't hear me. I think Fritz is jealous of my big hands.

Later, Henry pretended he wanted to wrestle with me too, but Dr. Waldman poked me with something and I got sleepy. I don't think it was fair for Dr. Waldman to trick me like that because I don't like naps like Fritz does. When I woke up, I shared my feelings with Dr. Waldman by wrestling him. I think it's good to share your feelings, and Dr. Waldman must think it's good to nap because he fell asleep almost right away. I decided to look for Henry.

I found a little girl by the pond. She was throwing

flowers in the water and making them float. She showed me how. It was fun. I wanted to show her I could make her float like the flowers, so I threw her in. She didn't think it was fun, but I don't think she was trying very hard. I got bored waiting for her to come back up, so I left. I don't think I'll bother going back tomorrow.

Later, I saw Miss Elizabeth dressed for a party. I climbed through the window to tell her she looked nice, and she was so happy she screamed and ran around the room. Then she laid down and took a nap without even wrestling. I don't think I'll ever understand women.

After leaving Miss Elizabeth, I finally found Henry in the hills. I don't know what he was doing there, but we started wrestling right away. That's because Henry is my best friend (no matter what Fritz says), and that's what best friends do. After he fell asleep, I carried Henry to a new fort I'd found. It's an old windmill, and we're going to start our own club. I've already made a "no trespassers" sign to make sure the little pond girl can't come in.

I don't want to forget anything, so I'm writing this down while I wait for Henry. I'm surprised he can sleep through all the townspeople shouting outside. It must be some sort of harvest parade because they're waving pitchforks around. All I know is they're not coming in our fort because it's way too small and they have those fire-stick things I hate. Besides, Henry and I found it first. It's ours.

Henry is getting up now. Maybe he can tell them to go away.

I'll write more later.

THE WRITER, THE CREATURE: A SELF-PORTRAIT

By Danielle Bryl-Dam

I breathed in the womb,
that dark, wet, warm space,
how I yearned
for light
my mother's hands atop her stomach,
face wrinkled in disgust.
As I opened my infantile eyes,
"The world (became) to me a secret
which I desired to divine."

God must have been having a shit day when he

made me;
the rain dribbling down the windows of the ward
like an apology;
frantically stitching together the worst parts of the
best writers -
Percy Shelley's calcified heart, foraged from a
dumpster fire
Keats' morning sweat
Dickens' blamelessness
Orwell's ash-stained fingers -
spurned from the belly
of a scientist — birthing her wish
to cure the grief
of the woman she lost within.

I was cast aside that first moment of watery light —
"she looks like my father," you said, you meant
like you, but bald and bare-tongued
and therefore hideous.

But never fear, mother dear,
the age of grasping with dead air
and a language to communicate
to the cold, logical brains so above my own
will end — in the clattering of typewriter keys
amid shadows, that weak sound
of a lone voice crying out into the night.

This creature has fled the lab — foraged poems
and diaries
and stories — has taught herself
humanity, love,
recognized the nature of your fear;
a pen in her hand, she weeps,
"Beware; for I am fearless, and therefore powerful."

And mother,
you will hear the story of your daughter,
the creature
the monster
the wretch
the abortion
the mistake
the fiend
the bitch
the writer.

KETTLE CORN AND HAUNTED HOUSES

By Kate Panagakos

In previous years, my friend Rachel's Halloween parties mainly consisted of a Friday night at a corn maze, with a map that most likely ended up being in the shape of a pumpkin followed by hot chocolate in one of those small styrofoam cups. But it was Halloween and I was now twelve, so I was ready to be terrified. I could handle it. Rachel sent out her invitations—they were not in a shape of a pumpkin—they included a map to a haunted house that was almost forty minutes outside of town. My mother's hesitancy about my being ready was shown through her constant reassurance to me that it was more than okay if I didn't want to go. She came as a parent chaperone.

We pulled up to what appeared to be the old mansion of a wealthy murderer. I could feel my stomach tighten. The comforting sounds of *Monster Mash* and *The Addams Family* theme song reassured my now-shaken confidence. The smoke from the fog machine filled my lungs. I was committed to going in. The line to enter the haunted house wrapped around the building, descending down a small set of stairs. At the bottom was the entrance, really it was a sheet of metal with a handle on it. It was guarded by what I can only describe as a doorman who had passed away but was also a clown.

The deceased clown's job was to tell us the rules of the haunted house, all while staying in character. "Once you enter, you cannot leave, you cannot touch the creatures you meet inside and they won't touch you." He paused for effect: "well, at least they have been told not to." All the other girls at the party laughed; I did the same and I wondered if they could hear the shakiness in my voice. My mother stood beside me as I scanned the faces of the other girls from the party, hoping to find someone who looked as if they were about to back out. The clown opened the door and revealed strobe lights and screaming theatre students with fake blood dripping from their faces. Then I let out the loudest scream my twelve-year-old body was physically capable of and started to cry. My mom was already in the house when the door slammed shut. I was on the outside; standing next to me was the other coward Taylor, who also started to cry.

A zombie, hired to walk around and scare the

people waiting in line, took our hands and led us out of the line. They took us to a smaller house that we had passed on the way in. Inside was a stage and small cabaret-like tables with lamps to match. The zombie sat us down at a table and went backstage. The curtains rose and Michael Jackson's *Thriller* started to play. All the other zombies poured onstage to perform a choreographed dance routine to the '80s classic. Presumably catered to those who weren't able to muster up the courage, those who didn't make it in were sent here. Taylor and I sat in silence like the babies we were and watched the performance, as a grown man dressed as Beetlejuice made kettle corn off to the side.

THE PROP-UP

By Nicole Manfredi

You laugh up acid when you realize the password to get on your Nona's floor is something the nurses don't have to worry about the patients knowing. It's the date. The password is the date. You punch in the day/month/year. The door opens like a spaceship and you're walking back in time.

She sits pretty in her clothes and her skin and her makeup. You stay for awhile just to witness the curation. Watching your dad smooth back her hair makes you want to claw into your scalp just to counteract that kind of naked tenderness. Each time, it reminds you of a chimp picking fleas out of its baby's hair.

Your guts are spilling open, intestinal mucus staining your lap as your tragedy erupts at your feet. But you grit your teeth into a smile so your Aunt can remake herself within the glory of denial and function for a minute. You want to lunge at her throat so you can rip the sorry lump of grief that makes her make you say, "Cheese." You don't. Instead you wrap your arm around a warm coffin, an unstill statue.

Camera flashes; you see white light and you think: This is purgatory. This is medical-grade taxidermy. This is a prop-up. Prop her up. Appropriate the good times. This is a postcard to nowhere in all of its shitty gift shop sterility.

Your mother tells you in the car ride home that if that were ever to happen to her, you take a pillow and you hold it down and you don't stop. She's more conversational than an urgent plea pact. But still, you

wonder if you could do it. You wonder what love is.

She is something to sit around now. A campfire that people congregate around to tell stories. A living shrine to her lucid self. A garden. She makes you hate gardens. Makes you hate the way we call it nature, call it refuge, call it solace. Clean-cut hedges, nothing overgrown. Prop her up. Show and tell. These are the photos that don't make it into the family album.

This time, your aunt asks you to say "Cheese" and you want to lunge at her throat while

simultaneously wanting to kiss her feet. You want to be the adult for a minute. You want to smile so wide to make up for the statue's slack jaw. You want to give in to the complexity of it all. You want calluses. You soften as you hollow. You worship at your Nona's feet. You think she is the most beautiful thing you've ever seen. So beautiful, you want to preserve her. An unstill statue. Medical-grade taxidermy. A garden choking on recycled air.

So beautiful, you watch everyone you love try to preserve her. You pick sanity out of her hair, twiddle it in your thumbs, claw your scalp back, eat the debris. You try not to choke on your Aunt's sorry lump of grief. So beautiful that more than anything, you just want her to let (you all) go.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Kate Panagakos is happy to be included in the FrankenZine.

Annette Pateman is fascinated with magical realism and relationships between humans and machines/cyborgs/androids.

Alexis Pronovost is an artist, calligrapher, poet, and short story writer studying English and Creative Writing at Western University.

Trevor Ritchie lives in London and has been drawing, painting, and making short films for over 20 years.

Paul Rodgers is a first-year student studying integrated science at Western University.

Elizabeth Sak is an assistant editor for The Temz Review and a fourth-year Creative Writing student at the University of Western Ontario.

Intisaar Sayeed is eleven years old and is always trying to find an excuse to draw superheroes and supervillains.

Noelle Schmidt is a poet currently completing her final year at Western University, while the threat of adulthood looms over her.

Sebastian Schmidt is an avid fantasy and sci-fi fan who occasionally writes a bit of short fiction.

Joseph Simons is a second-year arts student at Western University.

Kayla Skinner is a King's University College student majoring in Psychology and English.

Diana Tamblyn is happy to be a part of the FrankenZine.

Katelyn Thomson is a third-year English student at Western and cryptid enthusiast.

K. Cindy Tran is currently a third-year English and Creative Writing student at the University of Western Ontario.

Rachel Turner is currently in her third year of an Honors Specialization in English and Creative Writing at Western University.

Crystal Underhill attends Western University for English Literature.

Isabella Vetere is a Grade 10 student at H. B. Beal Secondary School, and hopes to be able to fulfill her dreams of becoming a singer while still having a career in art on the side.

Jennifer Wenn is a trans-identified writer from London, Ontario, and the proud parent of two adult children.

Andy Wheatley is an artist in the Old East Village, London, Ontario, and a huge fan of *Frankenstein*.

David White lives in London, Ontario, and is the author of *The Lark Ascending* (Pedlar Press 2017).

Andrew Woods is a critical theorist and performance artist based in London, Ontario.

Samantha Zangrilli is a fourth-year Media Information student at the University of Western Ontario.

**“You rob me of my language, my history,
my truth, replacing
my thousand-year-old traditions with pseudo-culture,
your empire franken society”**

– Ola Nowosad, *Franken*



Cover artwork: Sean Kaiser (aka Lunch Thief)