

LOCUST NINE

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FOREWORD

p. 2

TICK, A Poem by Adam Moorad

p. 3

INFLAMED, A Poem Gary Beck

p. 4

SUBWAY BELOW, A Poem by John Grey

p. 5

THE UGLY ALIENS, A Poem by Holly Day

p. 6

THE KURSK WAS SUBMERGED IN MY BATHTUB, A Poem by Ryan Quinn Flanagan

p. 7

LOOKING FOR WORK, A Poem by Danol Mahoney

p. 8

A BREEZE, A Poem by Chris G. Vaillancourt

p. 9

TWO POEMS by Jim Bennett

p. 10

TWO POEMS by Colin L. Dieden

p. 12

GHOULS 1939, A Prose Piece by David Massengill

p. 14

Copyright Notice

p. 15

FOREWORD

Issue #9 is a *holiday* issue, but no *Greetings of the Season* are included. The most appropriate way to open this issue is a very brief and harsh meditation on birth and... death. In spite of Jesus Christ's *public* birth, in the past birth was a very private event, with the child delivered in the family bedroom, just the mother and a midwife. Today things are quite different. Everything takes place in the aseptic rooms of a hospital. That's better, of course, much better... but privacy and intimacy have gone. And this is more evident when we pass away, when we are lying in a hospital room, almost like weird creatures to be shown in a zoo cage. OK, we may be 85 or 90... or even older, and we can consider ourselves lucky to have lived to that age, as people in the past very rarely grew that old! But in this desperate attempt to become immortal, we are ultimately deprived of our privacy and intimacy. It's as if there were only four white walls to be born in, and four white walls to say goodbye.

And if Alfred Tennyson and Dylan Thomas were quoted here, their voices would be both appropriate...

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.
[...]

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
[...]

January 2010

TICK
~ A Poem by Adam Moorad ~

I walk across you
as if you are my personal planet.
I will find a moist place on your head
and I will sink into your brain
and wiggle my legs in slow prodding motions
along the inside of your skull
and a few days later
you will feel
like a piece of citrus fruit.

INFLAMED
~ A Poem by Gary Beck ~

Night time in the South Bronx
conceals war-torn scars,
gaping wounds of crumbling homes,
abandonment, decay, despair
that consumes the rotting streets.
Only arson seems to care.
Light from houses, offices, cafés,
electrocutes people
caught in the wrong night,
possessed by flickering dreams
that ebb at the gift of dawn.

SUBWAY BELOW
~ A Poem by John Grey ~

Steam hisses up through grids
to be lit by flecks of morning sun.

listen for the deep rumble beneath,
a hum like a needle in the groove

of a phonograph record,
the rhythm of wheel on track.

The city talks in undertones,
the grunt of a car or two atop

but down below, the real language,
spoken in clouds of clammy heat

and flourishes of steel.
“45th street,” it says.

45th street, that rattling rush
of departing sound.

THE UGLY ALIENS
~ A Poem by Holly Day ~

when the first ship landed
and the aliens stepped out
the world collectively retched
at their ugliness. We had all prepared ourselves

for tentacles, spider legs, glowing eyes, et cetera
but from the comfortable earth-perspective
that beauty can still be found
in the sinuous lines of a banana slug
in the colorful undulations of an octopus

we weren't prepared for
the mishmash of greasy fur and feathers
oozing, blister-encrusted skin, asymmetrical limbs
squashy features
and the awful body odor that greeted us
stooped over and slobbering
first contact.

it was only after we'd killed them
did we discover the true purpose of their visit:
to warn us of the ship right behind them
infantry scouts of a coming invasion.
Too late, we learned of their offer of protection
from those that would plant their flags on our planet
in proud conquest, our future masters—

they were so beautiful.

THE KURSK WAS SUBMERGED IN MY BATHTUB**~ A Poem by Ryan Quinn Flanagan ~**

and I wouldn't let anyone in
to rescue it
until I was done.
I soaped my body and cleaned behind my ears
and by the time I pulled the tub stop
and dried off

it was too late.

I hear there were men trapped inside
(which is unfortunate)
but I can't go making exceptions
every time something or someone
travels off the beaten path
and ends up in my bathwater.

If I didn't stop scrubbing
for Amelia Earhart
what chance did some Russian sailors
have?

I can only imagine how futile
they're last hours must have seemed.
Taking on water
deprived of air
and surrounded by giant rubber duckies.

LOOKING FOR WORK
~ A Poem by Donal Mahoney ~

Infinite feints
for a lane
to go driving.

Still there's
no opening.
Jump shot

pumped from afar
spits in the net,
sole sound.

The bucket is made,
but the ball
the ball is still bouncing.

A BREEZE
~ A Poem by Chris G. Vaillancourt ~

A breeze;
A drunken man stumbling past the shadow
of a decaying brick wall
He screams.
Walls bounce sound but do not listen.
Loneliness evident.

A song;
A voice from another planet that attacks
the illogic of his life.
His face;
Bloated skin, grey eyes.
Too many glasses of beer in a lifetime.

A soft rain.
A urinating dog with its leg up in defiance
against a tombstone.
He remembers
before he took to vomiting on his shoes.

A mystery.
A sledgehammer breaking apart the
brittle lies of his life.
He cries.
Trying to maintain his masculinity as his
tears hit the shambles of his world.

He'll die
Who will miss him?

TWO POEMS by Jim Bennett

*

OBITUARIES

I am reading the obituaries
lists of the dead
in the local paper
as it is spread out
across the kitchen table
I want to see if
the notice I placed
got in this week

the old jokes
like "Strange
how they all died
alphabetically."
and
"Just checking
making sure
I wasn't listed."
suddenly don't seem
very funny

right now
I hadn't been named
after my dad

*

THE FACE OF GOD

I saw the face of God
smiling at me
from the middle of a melon

a kind kinda face
covered in beard
smiling in the seeds

it was the face of God
or it could have been
Allen Ginsberg

TWO POEMS by Colin L. Dieden

*

I AM ALL BUT UNIVERSAL**1.**

Haven't thought about the liver in months
the doctor says I have done quite a number on her
Still I refuse the prescription
"I will not become your pharmaceutical zombie"
lied signed co-pay 10 dollars
find
my way down stairs of slated marble
marlboro already between lips anticipating inevitable exit
followed incessantly through Beverly Hills streets
diagnosis to paper statistic to office hard drive, South Carolina
lips to lips to lips to lips to lips to lips inherent and forever
soft

2.

I am all but Universal
as i. eyes down. pass the bleak. a swarm of bees.
rebuilt rebuilding reconstructing reconstruction refinancing on
every street i need to take home. fuck.
always.
that doctor had wolf eyes
he saw only in shades of red and green
I guess I don't feel bad anymore
Memory is inexplicably yours to file through
at your own convenience and discretion

3.

I am all but Universal
tangible connections a conduit of seeming non-sequiturs
push pens past paper to mark the earth
You might be a rock,
But baby. You're no fucking island.

*

TRANSGRESSION

The vitality I cough up
looks elegant
soaked in to rags
and spinning in the toilet
One
Two
Three
Four
Collide and Divide
creating a placid pink pacific
red ribbons affix my mouth to
my shirt
I laugh and choke

and spit and spray
the white wall blood red
"I am Jackson Pollock and I call
this piece L.A. Skyline."

GHOULS, 1939
~ A Prose Piece by David Massengill~

Passengers heard about the double-suicide soon after the SS guards boarded to conduct a security check. The train was passing through the German Alps toward Zürich when the cigarettes girl hollered that there was a pair of dead men sitting in one compartment.

While the stalled train developed a layer of ice in a dark mountain station, one SS guard opened a window to spit. “They should have swallowed my pistol instead of cyanide tablets,” he told his comrade. His comrade mentioned that the men had evaded authorities for years. They’d hopped from town to town, moving as soon as locals suspected the nature of their relationship.

“But were they wehr-wolves?” one old woman asked. “Those creatures have been known to murder in a village and then change dens.” “Or vampires,” her teenage granddaughter mused, fingering her neck with a grin. “Like in the films.”

“Most likely they were simple killers,” the businessman across the aisle said with certainty, and then lifted his Berlin newspaper back before his face.

Nein, not killers, thought the conductor, who brought the guards their requested beers. He was careful to smile as he handed over the glasses and napkins, though his furrowed brow betrayed unease. Other than the cigarettes girl—who was now smoking herself—he was the only person to see that the corpses had been holding hands.

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