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FOREWORD

The following words are not a proper foreword but only words of acknowledgement and dedication. It would have been pathetically obvious to write here some predictable thoughts about the *Ebenezer Scrooge syndrome*, which every year affects almost everybody in the western world during the run-up to Christmas. In other words, the so easily credible cliché that makes everybody think that this period of the year can work wonders on cold western hearts. No disrespect to Charles Dickens, but unfortunately his long artful claw is still trying to catch us! That's why the only possible Christmas greetings which such a restless publication as Locust Magazine can send worldwide are the following:

You, hordes of enlightened politicians that fill our parliaments all over the world, be warned! Christmas is here once again, but we, 21st-century people, are not gullible. We can easily see through whatever type of rhetoric—Religious rhetoric... Social rhetoric... political rhetoric...

Many thanks to all the authors who have sent their work to Locust Magazine and have made it possible for this issue to appear, with new voices and new themes.

* * *

This issue is dedicated to the memory of my father, who passed away on October 25, 2012. He was a pure-hearted man, and he always saw the good side in everything.

This issue is also dedicated to all the innocent victims of human folly worldwide, which may be either individual/social or dictated by affairs of state.

* * *

December 2012

CRIME OF THE CENTURY
~ A Poem by Austin McCarron ~

All through the fighting
and weeping
I sit with innocence and
it is my destroyer more
harmful than
forests of uneaten snow.

Gladly I survive the destiny
of love with
corpses of tongueless trees
with suns of empty flames
with voices of perfect wire
with ghosts of unwanted air.

Beyond crimson lawns I survive
the moon of glass but I am past
seeing. Mystical of blood
I survive the fate
of stars but my vision is impaired.

In the loneliness of cities I survive
the music of fires
but the strength of my water is lost.
At the destruction of time I survive
the thirst of justice
but the sentence I draw is not well.
Look at the humanity of water and
share me in spring with broken words.

AFTERSHOCKS**~ A Poem by Christopher Barnes ~**

The presumption is—knockout’s crisis
Is a crunch in a second. There’s tell-aparts
From mug shot to passing time.
Specters undertake to materialize.
The pew of conviction’s wired up
To the repugnance of The City.
This is, frankly, “hasta la vista!”

(From the *Electric Chair* poems)

HOME**~ A Poem by Richard J. Shelton ~**

Into an empty living room
Then through the kitchen
Then down the hall
He,
All two hundred pounds,
Ropes his way toward the den
To greet his wife
And three over active kids.
He,
Home from a busy day at the office
Tired, frustrated,
Through to his gassy bowels
Maneuvers into that chair
Where he always sits,
Angles down his two hundred pounds
To drown out the sounds of life
Lost to the air
Between that chair
And the television
Six feet distant.

DEAD SWING
~ A Poem by Ross Leese ~

there is a dead swing
in the garden.

used only twice last
summer

our little girl just
didn't take
to it.

now it stands
there

dead/dying/
docile

and

just as bored
with
us

as we are
with
it.

HER FATHER WAS AN ALCOHOLIC
~ A Poem by Mitch Grabois ~

Her dad was an alkie
so she's spent her life
feeling sorry for herself

She is a woman who drives men off
with her neediness,
then spends insomniac nights writing poetry

The only bad poetry is that which rhymes,
she tells her classes in the junior college
where she is an adjunct

None of hers does

B. C.
~ A Poem by Holly Day ~

millions of years from now
the descendants of laboratory rats
will drive vehicles powered by what's left
of humanity, crude pumped from Arlington Cemetery
Cathedral Hill.

compared to the oil the dinosaurs left behind
the fuel created by the end of Man
will seem limitless
even to the rodent
environmentalists.

MIRO'S COLLAGE
~ A Poem by B.Z. Niditch ~

Spherical green and brown
to every entombed child
of consolation
smarting from a century
of unveiled death
leaking its gas arteries
in two world wars
on fields of poppies
in poisoned pulp
fertilized by dappled red
steam in hollow shadows
losing a feast of flowers
in your arms
of benumbed shock
amid a thousand ashes.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
~ A Prose Piece by Jeff B. Willey ~

I was going up the stairwell and happened to look down to witness a handjob occurring four stories below me. I watched in silence. They finished and walked off so I went down, not sure at first of what I had seen. An aftermath of crumpled napkin wet on the dusty floor. The smell of old books and cum and expectations of morning. That was years ago.

I used to spend a lot of time in the library. There's no one around now, classes are out. Coming in from bright summer light it's too dark to read so I end up just walking around. I approach a tarnished wooden table bending under the weight of texts. One archaic-looking tome catches my attention. It's an atlas, waiting to be opened again.

The atlas creaks open, land slides out.

The land is wrong, the boundaries are different and the coastlines are off. There was more ice then, less liquid water.

I leave the atlas and the library to its dust.

SHOES**~ A Prose Piece by Jack Hill ~**

Her brown boots climb over her knee caps, thigh skin rising out of the tops to the bottom of her black skirt. She smiles at me in line at the bank. I look at her boots again and decide: part time job, lives in a studio apartment, psychology student, subsidizing bills with student loans, tells people she likes giving blow jobs, she runs on treadmills, has had three serious boyfriends, tells people she will never get married because she has a lot of personal goals—she is too selfish.

IT WAS A WOMAN WHO MADE ME DRINK
~ A Prose Piece by Bradford Middleton ~

It had been a long time since Josh had actually done anything with his life—he'd decided to remain on the periphery of society since he had returned from college and it kind of suited him and his fragile mental state at that moment in his life. He'd grown to find his so-called friends, most of whom he had missed a great deal when he was away at college, had not moved on in the same way he had over the last year. He could not remember his friends having been like this when he left but so much had changed in his life that maybe it was just him that had and he had simply not realised what was happening. His year away had opened his mind and whilst he generally hated his time there it had been an overall experience which had improved him and given him belief in what he wanted to do with the remainder of his life—drink.

Every day had become similar to the previous one. He would wake early in the afternoon and would have a stinking hangover and, almost always, would find a stubbed out joint in his ashtray which he would feel compelled to smoke before getting out of bed and heading to the bar round the corner where he would sit until the suits starting turning up around five or six. He would then leave and pop to the local off licence where he would buy either a 70cl bottle of whiskey, never anything too fine but better than the gut-rot which they sold him down the bar, or a few bottles of red wine. He would get indoors and open the first bottle while Maggie made him dinner. She would always arrive home and cook Josh dinner before they both got drunk and the night's events would unravel. That night she was feeling incredibly feisty as Josh stumbled through the door. She screeched at him about spending too much time in that damn bar when he could be out looking for work and helping her keep a roof over their heads. He thought to himself that it would be best to avoid any confrontation that night as she had obviously had a bad day at the factory.

They sat down and ate the dinner that Maggie had prepared and Josh slowly worked his way through the first bottle of wine. It was obvious to him that Maggie

had had an awful day as she had been nipping at a bottle of Pernod whilst preparing their dinner and refused to drink any of what she described as his wine. She chose instead to nurse her large glass of Pernod and water and ignore him. When dinner had finished Josh decided that, in order to stay out of her way this night he might go back to the bar and see what was occurring and whether there were any good souls who may wish to buy him a drink or three.

“You’re off to that damn bar again ain’t ya!” she yelled as he put on his hat and coat and headed to the front door.

“I sure am,” Josh replied confidently, as he was quite close to the door, and therefore his escape, he thought he had every right to feel good for himself. “Well that’s it... you leave now and I ain’t going to let you in when you come home drunk tonight you lazy bum.”

This little exchange had rattled him. If there was one thing which he hated being described as it was a *bum*. He thought to himself “well to hell with her, I ain’t gonna let some stupid drunk bitch ruin my life.” With this in his mind as he stumbled into the bar a few minutes later he pulled up a stool next to the best looking woman there and ordered a round of drinks.

“Hey, care for a drink?” he enquired of the ravishing woman sat next to him.

“Sure,” she replied as he took in the glorious image of her in a tight little skirt barely covering her fabulous looking legs clad in black nylon and equally tight t-shirt.

“So honey, what brings you here tonight?” With this he was off onto the next part of his life. A couple of hours later they both staggered out of the bar back to her flat. Within a couple of days he had moved in and Maggie was nothing more than a bad memory.

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