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Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

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SHORT STORY

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Sehnsucht
44 Cantos from a 4th Floor Flat

These are the first 3 pieces of 44 set in a 4th floor flat. The central figure, a man, looks back, forward and tries to live in the 'real present' as a writer who simply can't work out 'formulae for living'. There is no escaping the terror of thinking. The German word, Sehnsucht, means longing/yearning in its purest, philosophical form, free of special attachments and daily needs.

1.

Before broadband here, there
 and everywhere,
 a long-haired youth
 with an invitation to manhood
 in his deep pocket
 slunk so far into foothills
 that he lost sight of home
 and home lost sight of him.

He traipsed and tracked
 from land to land
 to village to seashore to city
 chasing star after elusive star
 dreaming from inside out
 wondering about the source of cynic
 when
 he chanced upon a room
 just a stone's throw
 from a voice in first person
 yet far enough from the yelps
 of his home crowd.

Terry McDonagh poet, translator, dramatist, taught creative writing at the University of Hamburg and Drama Director at the International School. Residencies in Europe, Asia and Australia. Publications: 9 poetry collections, letters and prose. Translated into Indonesian and German. 2015 *Out of the Dying Pan into the Pyre*, was long-listed for Poetry Society Prize. 2016, highly commended in Gregory O'Donoghue poetry comp. Included in Gill & McMillan poetry anthology for young people 2016. *Lady Cassie Peregrina* – his latest poetry collection has just been published by Arlen House.



At first, he turned to himself
 wondering if it was best
 not to have a now at all
 but looking up at cloud pockets,
 sunsets, life and half-life,
 he knew he'd have to comment
 on the underbelly of fortune
 – if only to blame.

Then, out of the blue, like a wayward eruption of
 anvil sparks in a gutful of hardball and pig iron,
 he blurted out
I will.

Words are mine.

Mine to speak.



2.

But that's history, lore, impetuosity
and *so last Friday*. I could shout
come back youth but that's as
futile as near kisses and whinging.

I'm content on the fourth floor
but would happily settle for
the warmth of a fig leaf
if it provided me with strong lines
that kept me out of touch
with reasons for and cliff edges.

I flick through day and dark
in the spinning world of
homespun yoga, witchcraft
and hymns of jerky homage
to lost youth – in the mood
for a biscuit that's me...but
I'm clean out – my last biscuit
a silhouette – my cupboard
silent and mocking: *you are
subject matter for a paper
on research into survival
without biscuits. Diet, diet
on the wall who's the skinniest
of them all?*

Grasshopper notions bounce
like unsorted spirits – can't
breathe the same air twice,
not even when reading to
children on the crown of
the tree of knowledge.
What's natural isn't wonderful
is not much of an answer
either, but tell me: where's
the magic pool or dancer
on a sparkling donkey that
points to where mulling over's
located, or rhythm is whipped
into place and virused up?

God has gone, so maybe
when sloes are ripe
I'll get my hands on a fairy.



© Terry McDonagh

3.

I stroke my balding patch
 because I know it's there
 while my friend, Black Mouse,
 nibbles away in the corner
 in a way known only to itself.
 I'm on a roll. Radio and me
 going full blast with versions
 of *can't get no satisfaction*.
 Then without pause or change
 of pace I slap my eyes shut,
 jump into a jig with a gaggle
 of geese and an academy of
 high-stepping fillies on the brow
 of a hilltop. *Stop staring Mouse*.
 I jive, twist, do the coy thing,
 duck into threadbare quickstep
 hissing with melancholy and
 innocent as a young antelope.
*Come to my grove if you've
 got jingle-jangle feet to jig on.*
 I clap myself on the back a
 few times. Mouse has done
 with crumbs and left. I turn
 to my shoes for guidance.
 They look up and I look down.
 We try an awkward Ali shuffle
 rourine sort of thing before
 diving into weed and daydream.

The starting gun won't give up.
 I place my flat hand on my jaw
 and pose, yearning to inhabit a
 houseful of notions – formulae
 for *opus*. I'm no longer the youth
 I left wounded and short of guts in
 the corner of a field of fresh spuds.

The flat of my hand still rests
 on my jaw. I prow, then open
 the kitchen window to the
 distant *wow* of a disgruntled
 jackhammer. At the corner
 a deaf, near-sighted violinist
 with eyes for heroes only
 scrapes a requiem to lost wars
 in rough wind.
 A requiem to battle
 Silence
 A requiem to battle.
 I'm sure there must have been
 a hint of hope for him
 before wars and grimy time
 swallowed up his idols.
 He will play till his terror fades
 into his playing. I pick up on



© Terry McDonagh



Loretta Collins Klobah is a professor of Caribbean Literature and creative writing at the University of Puerto Rico. She lives in San Juan. Her poetry collection *The Twelve-Foot Neon Woman* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2011) received the 2012 OCM Bocas Prize in Caribbean Literature in the category of poetry and was short listed for the 2012 Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection in the Forward poetry prizes. Her poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Best American Poetry 2016*, *BIM*, *Caribbean Beat Magazine*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *The Caribbean Review of Books*, *Poui* and more.

CONDADO

Devilkin red brazen faced bold
 Whorish ramgoat clitoromania
 Mela'o mela'o guarapo y mela'o
 below my big boned bohio
 Cuba Libre nipple nimbo
 plucked gutted Guinea fowl
 hubble-bubble you're in trouble
 canoa oil avocado habaneros
 blue light penis piña colada coco frío
 banana blossoms purple conch
 moan Goya rice suck bare mango
 rumba of salt bath caracoles
 rum barrel boleros sea foam ass
 blue nettle panties bacalao ginger beer
 sea hammock rolling clumps of clamping
 muscles popping a girth congueros
 timbales platinum platano colmados
 ay, papichulo, coolin culo convergence
 on a binbon bell flicker liquor quicker
 wig fists bloody obrero pan de agua
 danging down deep in fandango
 expand the lick matted enormous
 uhuhuhuh sushi smokeshop soneros
 seaman inflatable banana boat
 rum ruck sack close clave cat say ah say ah
 A cinder backburning on beach fogón.



EN LA CALLE LOÍZA

The top of his head
 just gone, no hair, a brim
 of bloody head skin fluted
 around the splintered crown
 of his skull, frontal, parietal
 bones missing, skull cap
 broken off at cranium seams,
 and the brain exposed,
 parts of it scooped out,
 spoon-sized craters
 carved into the wet lobes.
 His head is on the sidewalk,
 his brain facing us.
 He lies against the wall
 of a KFC, underneath
 a large window, where we see
 that people inside are eating.
 A woman pushes her baby
 in a stroller, wheeling past him.
 Was he knocked clear by a car?
 Blasted by a shot gun?
 Chopped by a machete or bat?
 Just left there, dead against
 the restaurant wall? We drive
 a few blocks and circle back.
 He is gone when we get to that spot.
 Did he get up, brush himself down,
 stumble away, alive and thirsty, into the dusk?
 There wasn't time for ambulance or hearse
 to arrive and shuffle him off.
 Por lo menos, give that man a hat.

FAUNS

It is only when I have given up
 and pocketed the garden shears,
 acquiescing to the vining cerasee
 snaking through the links
 of my fence, a thick hanging mat
 of morning glories, heart leaves,
 and miniature blue buds; it is only when
 hibiscus grow into a high hedge;
 and when my ears hear bird songs
 that are new to my ears, many kinds
 of birds that come to my garden;
 and yellow butterflies putter by;
 when I gather pods of tamarind,
 taste the sweet paste of the fruits;
 when I sit quietly in an iron chair
 while the large clouds waft over;
 then, at dusk, luciérnagas
 arrive, flickering glimmers
 exploring the torrent of creepers—
 it is then, in this garden that has made
 itself and strung vines across the back door
 to keep me out, that I say little,
 I hush to salsa brava of coquíes
 and insect murmur, abandon thoughts,
 sit by my friend, who has finally come to visit.
 We look out into the green seclusion
 of this moon-dim place, at the soft veil
 of moist leaves. We should be younger
 and still beautiful. But, we wrap ourselves
 into the leaves, into the trailing plants
 and flowers, plucking what is still sweet
 from the wilderness of ourselves.



© Loretta Collins Klobah

From her new manuscript - "Theory of Incompleteness".

Cathy Colman's first poetry collection, *Borrowed Dress*, won The Felix Pollak Award from the University of Wisconsin and was on The Los Angeles Times Bestseller list. Her second book *Beauty's Tattoo* was published by Tebot Bach. Her poems have appeared in The Gettysburg Review, Ploughshares, Barrow Street, The Colorado Review, The Journal, The Huffington Post, Prairie Schooner and elsewhere.



BODY POLITICS

"Perspective is as accidental a thing as lightning."
--Jacques Rivière, 1912

And If you think about it, the word free conjures voting and animals leaping back to the wild and here, I put my head on your shoulder in the 1950's even before I was born and it's still there watching *Rebel Without A Cause* but we have a cause to be hyper-aware, so if you're reading this, it's too late because the Fair is closed and the unfair is open, the whole country on fire with uncivil rites, and if you think about it, the word free conjures voting and animals leaping back to the wild, and not just chickens but couches on the curb and fighters and everyone doing a shaky dance with congas and even snakes fleeing from their charmers and if he says he's a woman, he's a woman and I'm a man, and if I say I'm a man, then he's still a woman, so bake the wedding cake with a lucky coin inside, drown the hall in purple hydrangeas until we will eat, drink, and pass up the sale that says *Everything Must Go* because scientists have taken the first ever photograph of light as both a wave and a particle which explains so much about swimming and kissing and that old electricity that ignited between us when you passed the beer when our fingers got entangled forever, and all I can do is go to sleep to trucks striking their tires on the curb that sounds like the percussion in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, and dream of the dot and the line, a kind of Morse Code that says, I'm still alive what about you?

WEATHER

"There is no snow pack. Only one year of water left."
--Governor Jerry Brown of California

Sometimes the earth tells and retells her story.
Throws figurines, makes the doors stutter,
weathered wood flies apart like toothpicks.
We are not listening.
We live on the surface. It's the only place.
I can see grooves
from the water's former sluice, from the riot where
where the meadow confessed its obsession
for red. Somewhere, there are bright, unread pages of water
waiting, but here earth is speechless.

Only she knows how long it will take.
We can no longer save our money for a rainy day.
This year, jacarandas bloomed a whole month early.
They need to sleep to survive. Not awaken in the middle
of winter with a hot flash, quickened
with thirst. Sometimes, we think it's about sacrifice.
Sometimes, we think it's about power.
Just like we think we can call a halt to the infinity
wars which we believe are always ending.
Yet in the arpeggio dark we feel
lightning in our bones, hear a kind of thunder
on the road, the sheets are damp as if in dreams
we walked on wet leaves. In the morning,
we find mash notes that read
Yours, until we hurt each other again.



© Cathy Colman

From her new manuscript - "[Theory of Incompleteness](#)".

EXCUSE ME WHILE WE PAUSE

I am the last of my family.
I make my voyage out.

Vertigo comes to us all with her fireproof
hands and guilty verdict.

Forests burn continuously for weeks.
So, I sign petitions against things. I sign petitions for things.

Full of caffeine, I give money but it's never enough.
Pluto and pennies have fallen from grace into a two-way mirror

facing an orchard of stars sliding behind other stars.
People sleep like bookmarks.

They wake up and begin again at the same place.
The future opens like a storm cloud, a black book.

Everyone looks for the motherlode of intel.
Now, they make an array of death instruments

in plastic that no longer vex the detectors.
Radioactivity becomes a kind of sonata.

I wait for the music. I know somewhere in this city
is a reservoir of grief-- it got into the water table

like fracking and its deadly chemicals. I take
my suitcase into the afterlife. It looks like a gigantic lobby.

There isn't anything to unpack. The windows are
clairvoyant with the forever smell of fresh-cut lawns.

I am the last of my family. I make my voyage out.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

Jack Grady is a founder member of the Irish-based Ox Mountain Poets. His poetry has been published in many journals and anthologies and has appeared either online and in print in Ireland, the United Kingdom, France, and the United States. His publication credits also include *Live Encounters Poetry*, where six of his poems (*Cauldron of the Black Buddha*) appeared in January 2017. He represented Ireland at the third international poetry festival in Marrakesh, Morocco, in April 2016.



WILD GEESE

After Mary Oliver

No longer must we try to be good
and no longer is there need to fear
There are deserts still
but no saint or hermit repents there
There are no Forty Days in the Wilderness
There are no Forty Nights of Rain
There are only flatlands of silence
and a wasteland of glass and sand

No longer do wild geese fly
home in a clean, blue sky
No longer is the sky clean
No longer is it blue
No longer is there home for the wild geese to fly to
No longer are there missiles in the sky
nor are there leaves to fall or trees to die
or even one gull left to glide in the wind

Whoever you were
and if you were lonely
you no longer are
and you are no longer
lonely. You are one with what once
were mountains and streams
You are one with the world's
family of things

You are one with the wild geese
that faced the first bomb
You are one with glass
blown by the storm

OUROBOROS IN A DRINKING GLASS

*The Ouroboros, the snake that eats his own tail
...slays himself...fertilizes himself and gives birth
to himself.... – Carl Gustav Jung*

Sometimes the earth tells and retells her story.
Throws figurines, makes the doors stutter,
weathered wood flies apart like toothpicks.
We are not listening.
We live on the surface. It's the only place.
I can see grooves
from the water's former sluice, from the riot where
where the meadow confessed its obsession
for red. Somewhere, there are bright, unread pages of water
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Only she knows how long it will take.
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of winter with a hot flash, quickened
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on the road, the sheets are damp as if in dreams
we walked on wet leaves. In the morning,
we find mash notes that read
Yours, until we hurt each other again.

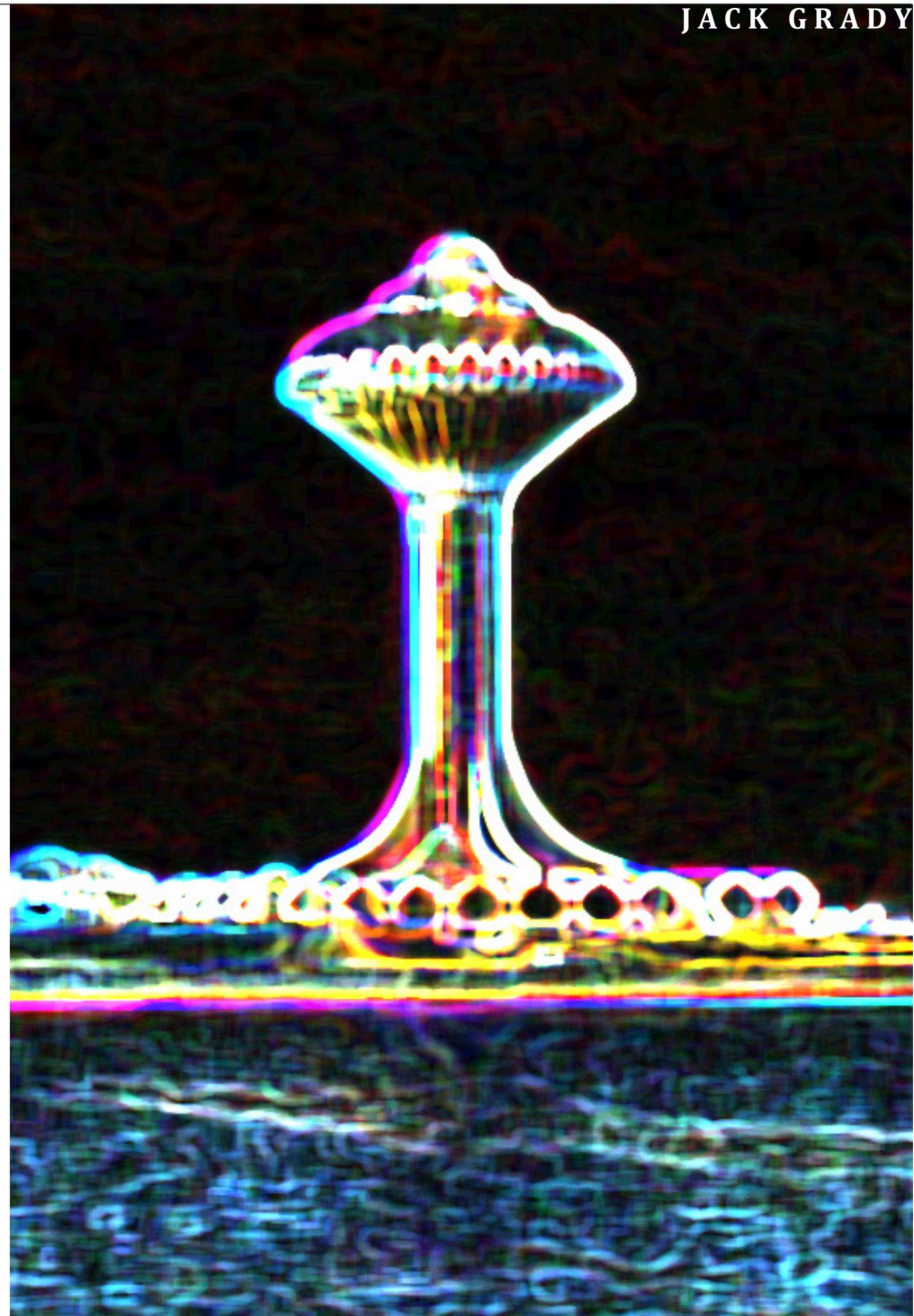


THE MEDUSA OF AL-KHOBAR

Megaphones bleat on the minarets
 while sales assistants from Bangladesh,
 hamstrung and distressed,
 try their best to shepherd Saudi men
 in white thobes out of souks and shops.
 Unoiled grilles and folding gates,
 rolling shut from the Corniche
 to King Khalid Street,
 squeal like those beasts the Prophet's Book
 proscribes as unclean.

It is sunset and the summons
 to pray in the mosque,
 but a sinful man stays on a footpath
 and dares to watch
 a flame-haired Irish woman
 while she window-shops.
 A dress of scarlet asserts her frame,
 and his eyes take aim at Eden's fruit
 as he sniffs her fragrance
 of jasmine and oud.

At last, he cannot resist,
 tries to pick,
 but turns to stone
 when she pivots with a hiss,
 her head full of snakes
 and the cracking of whips.



ALBINONI IN JIVE

She was plump, she was black,
and she danced to Albinoni,
to the allegro of a concerto I no longer recall,
but she danced in Al-Khobar,
the Gulf War was over,
the year 91 or 2.
Her desert fatigues
they called chocolate chip
proclaimed she belonged
to America's army –
her back straight,
her salute brisk and stiff.

But, when she danced in the music shop,
when she danced to Albinoni,
she moved like no one
had ever moved to Albinoni –
nearly without friction,
as if the floor were ocean
and her feet and hips
were shoaling fish,
then schooling, then weaving,
then shoaling again.
But, in the air,
neck, shoulders, and head were moving, too,
like gulls soaring, then winging,
dancing backwards to the rhythm
of some forgotten
yet indelible African wind.

How muscle could move all her bones like that,
her bones had to be made of soft rubber.
How her bursae didn't burst,
how her ligaments didn't snap
as they surpassed elastic limits;
how parts of her body
could move with such ease
in mutually exclusive directions
and still hold together
and stay afloat as she danced,
I could not fathom.

It was I, not she,
who asked them to play that concerto;
but, even if never
had she heard it before,
she knew it better than I.
I could not imagine a human being
could be so attuned as she was
to the beat and more,
to every nuance and rhythmic aside.
Neither Albinoni nor baroque music
had ever been so alive
to me before, to me now,
or even to Albinoni in his own time.

Somehow the spirit
of that Venetian had travelled
through three centuries
to spark a soul-sister's jive
and find a new home
in an Arabian stand-in
for Harlem
or for Chicago's south side.



© Jack Grady

John W. Sexton lives on the south-west coast of Ireland and is the author of five poetry collections, the most recent being *Petit Mal* (Revival Press, 2009) and *The Offspring of the Moon* (Salmon Poetry 2013). His sixth collection, *Futures Pass*, is also forthcoming from Salmon. Under the ironic pseudonym of Sex W. Johnston he has recorded an album with legendary Stranglers frontman, Hugh Cornwell, entitled *Sons Of Shiva*, which has been released on Track Records. He is a past nominee for The Hennessy Literary Award and his poem *The Green Owl* won the Listowel Poetry Prize 2007. In 2007 he was awarded a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry.



THE PEOPLE UNDER

ripples shake
with a tremor
of light

water-boatmen
strike off
across the sun

we look into
the pond
see our burnished selves

THE BUYING POWER OF NINE

With nine tin sixpences the widow's son
Purchased the knowledge coveted by some
That allows one to fly without bird's wings
That gives a sweet voice that no bird sings

So up through the mountain the lad was sent
While the nine sixpences were roundly spent
One sixpence bought a hundred-weight of hair
One sixpence bought thirty-one lungs of air

One sixpence bought an ocean, light as mind
One sixpence bought the moon's discarded rind
Once sixpence bought a pocketful of mice
One sixpence bought the concept known as Twice

One sixpence bought Lord Odin's bartered eye
One sixpence bought the truth wrapped in a lie
One sixpence bought a death and thus a life
For it bought the son of a dead man's wife

So up through the mountain the young man went
And against a raincloud he deftly leant
And stamped his way in on its dewy floor
Till it lifted upwards with him on board

A speckle in the sky he soon became
Nameless in that space despite his name
His calls were carried and seeded the rains
He became rivers, oceans, and rain again

And is still heard singing at each rainfall
He's as wide and as deep as the sky is tall



Dr Robyn Rowland AO is an Irish-Australian citizen living in Australia and Ireland. Her poetry appears in national and international journals and in over 40 anthologies, including seven *Best Australian Poems*. Of her 9 books, two were published in 2015: *Line of Drift*, Doire Press, Galway, Ireland, and her bilingual *This Intimate War Gallipoli/Çanakkale 1915 – İçli Dışlı Bir Savaş: Gelibolu/Çanakkale 1915*, Turkish translations by Mehmet Ali Çelikel, Five Islands Press - www.fiveislandspress.com and Bilge Kultur Sanat, Turkey.



THE YOUNG OF TURKEY

In the university *Simitçii* the day is doused
in early morning bakery smells from
coils of hot bread basted with poppy seeds.
Turkish students read books. They turn their pages
with tender elegant fingers. The young waiter
finds ways to make your hunger disappear,
serving vegetables sautéed with spices and yogurt
when *meat only* is the printed menu.

The young of Turkey rise to manage hotels
in the years you have come. First gifting you
photos of child soldiers in a treasured book
to unfold your ignorance, unstitch your blinkers,
stories of their grandfathers on Gallipoli
carved inside their bones. Later their own
babies crawl into sight, the constancy of renewal.
You have to be there to know them.

The young of Turkey have Armenian fathers,
Russian mothers, Jewish fathers, Bulgarian mothers.
They see freedom in the headscarf
and in the billow of long hair in the wind.
They do not forget the man who made it happen –
his blue eyes still deeper with vision,
still looking to the skies from monument and hill,
and he takes them with him, Atatürk.

They know he untangled their language
from the grave of history, gave women the vote,
education, divorced religion from politics.
He burnt nights black making hard bargains
with the tattered uniforms of empire, to reshape
the country. He sewed back together a people
frayed from war after wars, demanded surnames
their grandparents chose, called them 'Turk'.

When you cry out sharply, trolley of luggage
too heavy with books, veering off the curb,
they rush to lift everything from street to car,
take you carefully to your airport hotel as if precious,
not to be left afraid, alone, never lost or without
company, their kindness a balm for the fretful traveller.
Their humour overflows, tributaries that could
take them anywhere, if.

They are eager for travel, fingers closed around
the barbed wire of visa walls. Women and men,
beauty in their gleaming hope,
their longing stretches forward, eager for change.
They speak their politics with passion,
an unveiling of fear, but keep their voices low, now.
The young of Turkey cleanse your blood of despair,
make it bright as a star, *ışıl ışıl*, brilliant.



A little-known true story, **Dr Felix Kersten** was masseur to **Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler** (head of the SS & Gestapo) during the Second World War. Despite threats to his life, he used his influence over the Reichsführer to secure the release of tens, possibly hundreds of thousands, of prisoners. Accused of collaboration after the war, his name was largely cleared and he received high honours from several European countries.

Anne M Carson's poetry has been published internationally and widely in Australia. *Removing the Kimono*, was published in 2013 and amongst other awards, she was shortlisted for the 2015 Ron Pretty Poetry Prize. She serves as Director Arts on the Board of Ondru and is seeking publication for *Massaging Himmler: A poetic biography of Dr Felix Kersten*. She and her partner, the pianist Julian Bailey, present a concert version of this work with the whole set of Rachmaninov Preludes Op 23.



from *Massaging Himmler: A poetic biography of Dr Felix Kersten*

FELIX AT TABLE WITH THE HIMMLERS²

Gmund, Lyndenfycht, Germany, 1939

At least my belly growls no protest. Casseroles
and soups, fruit after meals, home-baked küchen

morning and afternoon. Simple country fare,
but plenty of it ... Brandt phoned me in Den Haag.

Not asked or requested but summoned me. *He is ill*
at Gmund, curt, clipped, in agony, wants you there

posthaste. Close to München, on Lake Tegern See.
The auto will collect you from the station. Already

the rooms I have booked for you at the inn. All your
meals you will be taking with them. I go. He keeps

a modest house, never takes more than his fair share.
The setting is sublime – lake, forest, birds. His wife

Marga, children – Gudrun, and an adopted boy.
At table he likes to play mein host. His geniality

is a shock. The children eat with us, are excused
H's postprandial lectures. Pet themes predominate –

the charms of his native Bavaria, time past when
it ruled itself; the lessons, courtesy Schoolmaster H,

which history tells. He particularly relishes tales
of William the Fowler, hero worships him, imagines

himself a modern reincarnation. Repeatedly I bite
my tongue, accept another homegrown plum.

When I first arrive he is close to passing out but keeps
to rigid manners. Cold skin, wet with the effort not

to hunch, not to stoop. He will not bend before we step
behind closed doors. I set to work. I delve, he writhes.

He pants, bites his bottom lip, clenches blankets
in desperate, clammy hands. His pain peaks, he pales.

Slowly the nerve responds, colour ventures back.
We talk between the work. *'The Führer longs for war,'*

he declares that first day, *'no peace until the world is*
purified by war.' A crazy litany, from Hitler verbatim,

never questioned. He stares away, imagining
the Tausendjähriges Reich? No surprise after Prague

– it is all they talk of in Den Haag. I risk seeming weak
or worse. *'But war will bring Europe to her knees,'* I argue.

He argues back, vehement, but does not call the Gestapo
to snuff me out. I return gratefully to my hotel, relieved

I did not succumb to silence. Blessed liberty until
the evening meal. The woods around the lake are balm.

I walk their paths, turning his words, the Führer's
and the terrifying prospect of war, over in my mind

² Ibid, p 55

FELIX DESCRIBES THE FIRST TIME HE SECURES A RELEASE

Chancellery, 26 August 1940

I actually pull it off! It happens like this: two weeks ago Rosterg, to whom I owe Hartzwalde, pays me

a visit. Will I intervene for his factory foreman – a decent, honest man imprisoned in a concentration

camp – for the simple sin of being a Social Democrat. What can I do? Even the thought of approaching

The Herr with such a request scares me. Rosterg says he knows I have H's ear – perhaps I can influence him.

It would be absurd, dangerous. I take the details and promptly forget about them. Two weeks pass

when H calls me for a debilitating attack. Gruelling work, but one by one, with extreme exertion,

I manage to undo his knots – for now. Because his gut has been so twisted he is even more grateful

than usual. He says that he feels guilty for never paying me. Instinctively I know I have an edge –

if I accept money I put myself under his control. I tell him payment is impossible for incomplete cures.

And besides, I say, I know you are of slender means. 'It is a principle with me never to accept payment

from poor people, I make rich clients pay for them!'³ Never been so effusive: Dear, dear Herr Kersten,

how can I ever thank you? In a moment of inspiration – I recall Rosterg's request. Pulling the man's details

from my wallet I say: 'My fee, Reichsführer – is this man's freedom!' I see him struggle but in the end

he replies: 'As it is you asking, of course I agree.' He calls Brandt to effect the man's release.



© Anne M Carson

Daniel Wade is a poet from Ireland. His poetry has been published in *Optic*, *Limerick Revival*, *Wordlegs* (e-publication), *The Stony Thursday Book* (ed. Paddy Bushe), *HeadSpace Magazine*, *the Seven Towers 2014 Census*, *the Bray Arts Journal*, *The Sea* (charity anthology in aid of the RNLI), *Sixteen Magazine* (e-publication), *The Bogman's Cannon*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Zymbol*, *The Runt*, *Headstuff*, *The Fredricksburg Literary Review*, *The Lonely Crowd*, *A New Ulster*, *FLARE*, and the *Hennessey New Irish Writers'* page of the Irish Times.



BERG

I.

Hear the rumours spread like a forest fire -
Their heat building slowly to a louder pitch
A fortissimo of hearsay, strained by repetition:

Giants ruled the arc rocks of Patagonia,
The skeletons of a riveter and his apprentice
Were discovered entombed

In the *Great Eastern's* double-seal hull,
Or else in Hoover Dam's cement mass,
Depending on which source you read.

II.

The best I've heard is this: when the *Titanic* struck
The iceberg, passengers on the lower deck reported
Looking up and seeing the figures of five people
Standing amid the pale crags, three men and two
Women, looking down on the ship as it passed.
They seemed to be wearing bulky caribou parkas,
Common among the Inuits. To the berg's far end,
A seal was seen flopping about in the water
As the hull scraped along the ice, agitated
By the loud displacement. The ship's lights
Supposedly showed the people on the berg
Smiling malevolently, as hull and ridge collided.

III.

In the dream you are back in the crows nest,
The moon flickering like a warped incisor
On the glassy surface. The berg coasts nearer,
Swelling into view like a devastating secret,
Its peaks and shelves soaked in blood,
The low growl of its drift goring your ears.
Embedded on one its chalky pinnacles,
Tall as a minaret, is a cross, with a man's body,
Gaunt, blood-smeared, a still-breathing figurehead,
Lashed to its beams. You hear the waves' loud
Hiss breaking off the foot of the ice. The crucified
Man howls out in despair, as cross and berg burst
Into flames. The blaze claws at the canopy
Of the sky; its glare engulfing the entire sea.

IV.

There is neither hearth nor a place to find rest.
The hull plunges mouth-first to a lower gorge
Out of the sea level's reach, its funnel's roar
Smoked and overcome by the distress of flares.

On this field of ice, your breath's pewter curl
Mists my eye, like soft exhaust from a boiler.
On this, our very own glacial ark, soon to melt
Forever into the black main, our tongues

Are just below freezing, despite the thickness
Of our parkas. The pained choir steadily
Concludes its lament below us in the water,
Bobbing, ruin-still, swallowed into silence.



YET ONCE MORE

i.m. Derek Walcott (1930-2017)

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more*
praise Castries, and leave no pentameter –
like the fishing gear left overnight
on the wharf, their usefulness
has not died with you.

Yet once more, shouldered on darkness
and moonlight, the islet stirs
with the imminence of dusk,
her rainforest flush with dew –

yet once more, fireflies spark cypresses,
their rosy vigil shushed
by Spanish moss and musk
of sulphur from the caldera:

yet once more mourners, sworn to a silence
from across continents, scowl
at the hoof-clop of a heat-charged horse.

All of my heroes are either dead,
dying, or engulfed by history,

and yet once more, the wind stirs a hymn
and each wave grumbles a knell,
the benediction of candles to curl
beyond the breadfruit.

Yet once more the testament of archipelagoes
can't hold back cypress leaf or river-spasm.
No cloud smudges the sky;
early sunrays roast the earth,

the coral, the oceanic necropolis
of jetsam and frothy surf back to suds,
the vestment of fog back to belief
in your name, and its carved worth.

Yet once more, that stroke of light
is a flash in the shade of horizon.
Egrets take milk-winged flight
across the azure cove where
the crew of a lone fishing ketch
take in sail like a shroud,
and the casuarina leaves,
murmuring and bowed
in awe of your departure,
now turn to wilt and sigh
at the wind's salt-laced touch.

Yet once more, the cortege of skiffs
will cast off soon. Your story,
a cheerless saga, comes slowly
together in newspaper clippings,
sonnets, the diligently-rhymed epic,
in the Caribbean you worshipped,
morsels of her bounty devotedly
reaped in net, in cupped palm,
in her beach-stones that lie solid
and pure as 'amen', in her missal
of surf, bloody milk of a girl's sun-
seared cheek, her requiem subdued
in the high hush of the Pitons' belfry.

And yet once more, swaying your rest,
the absolution of rain neither regrets
nor rewards the dead, who outnumber
all who offer paltry remembrance, such as this.
The sea stays calm, unmoved and somber
in its ferment, abiding as your words.

*The first line is an extract from the poem
'Lycidas' by John Milton.

Hongri Yuan, born in China in 1962, is a poet and philosopher interested particularly in creation. Representative works include *Platinum City*, *Gold City*, *Golden Paradise*, *Gold Sun* and *Golden Giant*. His poetry has been published in the UK, USA, India, New Zealand, Canada and Nigeria.

Translated by Yuanbing Zhang.



I HEARD THE SONG OF TIME

I heard the song of time.
Bright strings of light
roared in the white clouds.
The golden mouth of time
sang the golden words.

Feather of a phoenix,
Beautiful image of a crane.
A huge gold tree
covered with countless
eyes of the sun.

I crossed a mountain ridge of a flame,
an ice peak with boulders sparkling,
and plucked the jewels of many stars.

I AM BEATING THE DOOR OF TIME

I am beating the door of time,
I'm longing to meet
the girl who lives in the garden.
This is a crystal wall
This is a stone flower.
I am fascinated by
a fistful fragrance of time.

The quaint words
lined with stone pages.
The cool wind
rang the strings of the sun.
I saw myself
sitting in a purple pavilion.
A young girl
blowing the jade flute in her hand.



HOLD THE HANDS OF TIME

Hold the hands of time
Hold the hands of the sun
Hold the song of birds

The river flows over your forehead
The girl of white clouds
Dancing on your black hair

ONE HUNDRED YEARS IS AS SHORT AS ONE DAY

One hundred years is as short as one day another me in heaven said so
I saw faintly that he looked exactly like a giant of gold in the palace of heaven
He has the eternal sweetness, that huge boundless heaven of soul
And why do I live in the world as if I am a lost wanderer who has lost his memory?



© Hongri Yuang

Donna Prinzmetal is a poet, psychotherapist and teacher. She has taught poetry and creative writing for more than 25 years to adults and children. Donna often uses writing to facilitate restoration and healing in her psychotherapy practice. Her poems have appeared in many magazines including *Prairie Schooner*, *The Comstock Review*, and *The Journal*. Her first book, *Snow White, When No One Was Looking*, was published with CW Books in May of 2014. www.amazon.com/Snow-White-When-One-Looking



“WHAT I SAW IN THE WATER”

Frida Kahlo, 1938

The painting's dominant element is a pair of feet sticking out of the bathtub water. We can clearly see the bleeding sore between the deformed big and second toes of the right foot, a typical defect accompanying congenital dysraphisms, including spina bifida.

“Neurological Deficits in the Life and Works of Frida Kahlo”
Valmantas Budrys

This isn't what I expected, following the tributaries
all the way to the amniotic pool where nobody can hear me,
through the blue concavities of water.

Just when I've decided to work on loving the life I already have,
I recognize the imposter in the mirror.
I hold the wet bundle in these shrunken hands and try to whistle

as if there is nothing luminous,
as if the hazard light hadn't been blinking
in my eyes for weeks.

What would I choose
if I didn't suspect myself of larceny,
of tongue-tied spear-throwing regret,

of illegally obtaining the secret name for everything:
tofu, the cistern, the secular weight loss resort, Sanka?
I thought I could be washed clean that way,

a wash of ordinary language falling down
my back, there, where lips had swarmed a surprise pucker,
the stranger that signed his name six inches above my knee

and sang to me, an artistic cripple.
mourning her lost toes,
only he lost his words, or was it me?

IN ANOTHER LIFE

In another life,
I am not afraid of spiders
or the soft sticky dew-drenched web
touching my face in the yard.

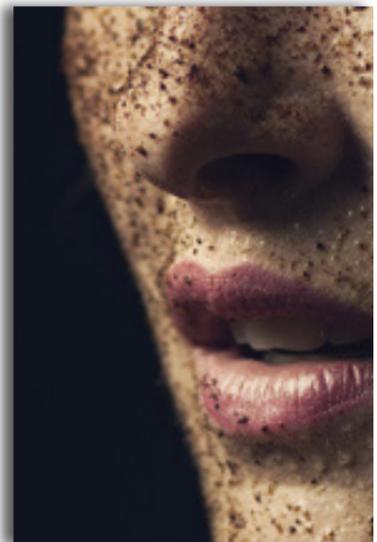
Or perhaps, I am entirely coordinated, a dancer, on point.
My mother has taken me to lessons many times a week
since I was three, until I can drive myself.
In another life, I have such a mother.
In that life, she remembers all the years
of ballet lessons. She comes to every show
and tells all her bridge partners
about her famous dancer daughter.

In another life my parents never die,
never get old or infirm.
They teach me how to grow a thriving
vegetable and flower garden.
I learn the name and care for every rose.
My dad plays baseball with my son.
My mother teaches my daughter how to sew a ball gown.

In another life I go to Sarah Lawrence
and become a famous poet.
I am the person everyone wants to talk to at AWP.
I am the Grande Dame of literary society.
I don't have my husband or my two children,
but I do have a Pulitzer and I have been shortlisted
for the Nobel, twice.

In another life I am a bear,
foraging for voles and berries,
I know every corner of these woods
and I can recite each braid of silence
in every tongue but ours,
as if it were a poem.

In this life, I am just a woman who stops at the pond
where words swim like bright fish,
and takes a small sip there.
I'm a woman who speaks to ghosts in her sleep
who picks up her broken pieces
and tries hard to love them.



© Donna Prinzmetal

Jim Meirose's work has appeared in numerous magazines and journals, including Calliope, [Off-beat/Quirky \(Journal of Exp. Fiction pub.\)](#), Permafrost, North Atlantic Review, Blueline, Witness, and Xavier Review, and has been nominated for several awards. His E-book "[Inferno](#)" is available from Amazon. Underground Voices. His novels, "[Mount Everest](#)" and "[Eli the Rat](#)", are available from Amazon. "Mount Everest" has been adapted to a play by a leading west coast playwright. www.jimmeirose.com



WDR-GAS #6

So, here goes; the woman is standing close in with a sparkling-clean face and haircut and clothing immaculately fitted and pressed and she looks more like a millennial oven-fresh mega-corporate office brand-new junior manager than a reporter, but here she goes; she's saying, but not, so I say into and through her and out her mouth, sure do, Here in Alang, the biggest most dangerous super-loud workplace in India, the workers have been found to have one fascinating thrilling unusual hell-and-hellhound bound piece of information to share; in the hut up the hill with the slick greasy hot floor between Bodhisattva I and Bodhisattva II rooming boarding and floating evening to black-night forever nonstop Incest Can be Fun shows, is playing in a spectrum-spaced clear spot carved from the back wall of the residential unit one of the dozens of flat screen TVs the network distributed to all the super-gigantically-hulled and what's worse, just plain enormous huge but oddly deathly quiet steel monsters sailing across the earth's curved ultra-liquid surface, and is proudly and ignorantly blasting fourth the very same words I am now; pluswise, plus, to boot, and all that, the damned thing's stolen! What arrogance!



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas



Laura Solomon has a 2.1 in English Literature and a Masters degree in Computer Science. Her books include *Black Light*, *Nothing Lasting*, *Alternative Medicine*, *An Imitation of Life*, *Instant Messages*, *Vera Magpie*, *Hilary and David*, *In Vitro*, *The Shingle Bar Sea Monster and Other Stories*, *University Days*, *Frida Kahlo's Cry* and *Brain Graft*. She was short listed for the 2009 Virginia Prize and the 2014 International Rubery Award and won the 2009 Proverse Prize. She has had work accepted in the *Edinburgh Review* and *Wasafiri*. She has judged the Sentinel Quarterly Short Story competition. Laura's new collection *Tales of Love and Disability* will be out soon from Woven Words Publishers.

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TAKING WAINUI

They made me drink urine out of a gumboot. Not just a sip but half a litre or so. Disgusting. I was sick everywhere afterwards, no surprise really. Then they told me that was just the beginning. O the joys of being a Prince Mamba leader's son. People said I was doomed to end up in the gangs – born to it. What a life, what a curse.

My childhood was not a normal one, but of course I only know that now. We lived in a rented state house in Kaiti, with three wrecked Holdens parked abandoned in the drive. A couple of pit bulls kept guard. There were always gang members loitering around the house, chucking their empty beer cans wherever it suited them. I used to try and clean up but I was fighting a losing battle. My two older brothers were initiated at eighteen and they became just like Dad – ruling with iron fists. Mum was dominated by Dad, who ruled over everybody. He would have tyrannized the whole town, the whole of New Zealand, if he'd had his way. My Mum was spaced out on Valium a lot of the time. Dad would have killed her if she'd tried to leave. No family member taught me the practicalities of life – I learnt how to cross roads at school. No adult ever read me a bedtime story.

It was my Uncle Taika who taught me how to surf. Surfing saved my life. Whenever I got sad or angry I would just take the board my uncle bought me and head out to the waves. I had to keep the board at my uncle's house or Dad and his mates would have just sold it for drug money. I used to dream of being Australasian surf champion. It was in the waves that I met my first and only real friend Kya. Kya was tall for her age and thin and she was a demon on the board. I wasn't in love with her or anything corny like that but she was a good friend; somebody I could really talk to about all the many problems at home. She didn't judge me on my background which was more than you could say for most of the herd in my classroom. We just enjoyed each other's company. It was good to feel accepted by *somebody* on planet Earth.



I had been dreading my initiation ceremony. There was no question that I would join the gangs, because of who my father was. It wasn't my own wish at all – it was just something that you did in my family – kind of like some kids growing up with everyone assuming they will go to university. My Dad would have beaten me to a pulp if I ever thought about not joining. My life circumstances made it very tough for me to assert myself. Earlier in the year at school there had been a program run by the police on stopping youth from getting into gangs and a Pakeha lady called Jasmine had come to our school to talk to us about it. Was it just my imagination or had she had taken a special shine to me? When she spoke it seemed as if she was talking directly to me and I wondered whether she knew I was a Prince Mamba leader's son. At the end of the week she took me to one side and asked me what my ambitions in life were. I told her I wanted to be a pro surfer and didn't mention that it was a lot more likely that I would end up being a fully patched gang member. She smiled and nodded when I talked about surfing and commented that Gisborne had some gnarly waves. I couldn't believe she had used the word gnarly, like a teenager. Perhaps she was trying to be down with the kids.

When the big day rolled around, my eldest brother took me to one side and told me that it was time for me to be a man. I had witnessed other initiation ceremonies and did not see how drinking urine from a gumboot was a mark of manhood but I didn't say anything. I drank as much of the piss as I could and then was sick everywhere. Then Dad's right hand man Rangī, took me to one side and told me I was going to have to do a burglary. Rangī has 'We ride together, we die together' tattooed across his neck. He said he was letting me off lightly and that there didn't have to be violence or firearms involved. Sometimes there can be rape or even murder in the initiations, or taking the rap for somebody else's crime and doing hard time in their place. They told me that they had chosen a do-gooder target in posh Wainui Beach so that there would be lots of loot. Wainui Beach residents are all loaded.

We waited till 11pm and then drove the car slowly through Wainui Beach. I thought we looked terribly suspicious and kept telling Jimmy to speed up a bit, to drive authoritatively, so that it looked as if we knew where we were going. I got out at the start of Wairere Road and started walking through people's back sections trying to find a house that looked deserted. It was hard to tell because most people had all their lights out. At number 35 I stumbled across somebody's

dog, a huntaway, that started barking loudly at me.

Oh God, I thought, just what I need to alert the neighbours for miles around.

Eluding the vocal dog as quickly as I could I darted around the side of what appeared to be a wood shed, I waited for about a minute until the dog became bored and started sniffing under a hedge for the elusive hedgehog he'd been after for months. Adrenaline was coursing through me - I'd never been so petrified in my life; I just wanted this over with.

Thankfully the next house appeared deserted - no car, no lights on and most importantly no dogs. I skulked up the outside stairs to the back door where I found a cat flap. I had done this once before when I had gone around to my uncle's house unexpectedly and he hadn't been home. After shivering on the doorstep for half an hour I had reached up through the cat door and managed to turn the key in the lock. My lankiness I had often been teased about came in handy in this instance.

Reaching through the cat door I discovered it was a lock with a push button in the handle - this was unnervingly easy. I was in! Heading straight for the bedroom, unzipping my bag as I walked, I found an Ipad on the duchess that became my first stolen item. Opening the drawers next, I found a phone, some jewellery and a wallet. I put it all in my bag. I hesitated, thinking that I could hear a noise downstairs. Listening intently I heard two car doors close. I froze, something touched my leg and I jumped. Looking down I saw the fattest, fluffiest cat I'd ever encountered rubbing against my leg as if it had known me forever. I had to get out of here. There were sounds outside. I scanned the room looking for a window, found it, ran over to it – then remembered I was on the second floor. The sounds were inside now. I couldn't think straight so I dropped to the floor in between the bed and the wall.

I heard footsteps coming up the stairs and began to freak out even more. Although I was a gang member's son I was no hardened criminal, I only wanted to spend my life surfing. I had seen what gang life had done to my father and my brothers and I did not want to end up like them. Footsteps up the hallway now, I felt like a stoat in a trap.

The door opened and I saw two long shadows cast upon the far wall. A man spoke.

"Hey, why is the top drawer of my duchess open?"

At that moment my body took over my mind and I stood up and tried to make a run for it.



The man, who was solid and looked like a rugby player blocked my path. There was a brief scuffle, then he grabbed me in a headlock.

"Jasmine call the cops. We've got ourselves a thief!"

"Hang on a minute Nick. I think I know this guy."

At that moment our eyes met and I recognized her. It was the lady who had come to my school and taken a special interest in helping me stay out of the gangs. I felt so ashamed. Why did I have to target her house? The gods had it in for me. I groaned and sank to the floor despondent.

"I didn't get away with anything" I said. "Just take back what's in the backpack and let me go. This was meant to be my initiation into the gang. I didn't even want to do it but I had to. They made me."

Jasmine gave me a long look then said "Come into the lounge, I'll make you a cup of tea."

Nick grabbed the backpack from where it lay on the floor and checked its contents.

I followed Jasmine through into the lounge. She boiled the kettle and made us both a cuppa. I put three spoons of sugar in mine - I was in need of a pick me up. Then I remembered Jimmy who was driving the car. He would be wondering where I was by now. What should I do? I decided to forget about Jimmy and concentrate on Jasmine. If anybody could help me get away from gang life it was her.

"So tell me about tonight," she said. How did you come to be burgling my house?"

"I was told to by my father's right hand man. I was told that it was time for me to join the gang and that I had to take part in initiation."

"Is this the life you want?"

"No, definitely not. I can't stand violence and drugs. I'm into surfing. I don't want to end up like my father."

I breathed a heavy sigh.

"I can help you break the cycle", said Jasmine. "But you have to listen to what I say. I think you should stand up to your father and tell him that you don't want to join the gang."

I was silent. She obviously didn't know my father. We talked on for half an hour and I began to think that I had found somebody other than Kya who cared about me. It can be hard, letting your guard down and trusting somebody, even a little bit, when all you have known is cold, unkind treatment. Jasmine gave me a ride home. We talked in the car further. I knew what I had to do.

When I walked in through the front door I found my father pacing the living room as my mother nervously busied herself in the kitchen.

"Where the hell have you been!?" bellowed my father. "And where's the bloody loot!? Jimmy came by here an hour ago. Who gave you a lift home?"

I remembered Jasmine's words. Stand up. Stand tall, like a man.

"Look Dad, I don't want to be in the gang. I want a normal life, like a normal person. I'm not into the kind of life you lead."

My father's right fist hit my jaw with a thunderous crack.

"Don't you get cocky with me, boy! Bloody mamma's boy! You're nothing but a sissy. It's time you were toughened up."

He punched me hard in the stomach and I fell to the floor. My mother was crying and screaming for him to stop but he didn't. The beating went on for what seemed like eternity and only stopped because my uncle came in and pulled my father off me when I was on the verge of unconsciousness.

Live Encounters celebrates 7 years 2010-2016

Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
JULY 2017

ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE