

Difficult Friends

A Writing Anthology

by

Anglia Ruskin University
Creative Writing Graduates 2026



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JAZMINE BRETT writes poetry and short fiction inspired by mythology and folklore. As a teenager, she was a two-time runner-up in The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award. She currently lives in Royston, Hertfordshire with her family, and in her spare time she enjoys reading, baking, and walking her dog, Bailey.

Last Rites Performed by a Lizard Monster

A gravedigger stands with one foot in the grave.
They are in the business of dying.
Yesterday you hugged me and I rubbed circles
into your shoulder blades as your claws
shredded my skin to the bone.
My flesh split apart like an overripe plum,
sticky juices seeping out.
In the morning you read romance
bare-chested like the model on the cover.
You finish it in the afternoon
and slip it into your back pocket for safekeeping.
I am the model on the cover.

You tell me I am turning into a monster
and tonight we will pretend that you don't have scales
peeking out from beneath that pinstriped suit.
The rain stings the gashes on my back
that I refuse to let close.
When I tell you they are becoming infected,
you hug me with claws to apologise
and we play tic-tac-toe in the carnage.
I always let you win.
Afterwards, I cut a hole in your trousers
so your new tail can slide through.
This is not the job of a gravedigger.

Tomorrow you will burn a hole
through the back pocket of your trousers
where you have placed me for safekeeping.
I will drift away, ash-cremains on the wind.
In the mourning you will read a book about rainclouds
and I will be the model on the cover.
I am made of petrichor because I mist you.
You breath me in, hand outstretched and I fall
into your palms, drip through your fingers,
elusive. We are rain-reunited, and I realise
you have filed down your claws.
A gravedigger can't dig their own grave.

Pandora

will be the name of my daughter.
The first woman to be a Woman,
a pantheon of a person,
she will contain multitudes.

Beneath her lip my hope remains.

WILL HARDY is a versatile writer with a distinctive voice. A Creative Writing graduate of Anglia Ruskin University, he has a passion for crime and dystopian fiction. He explores themes of failure, resilience and loss across projects. He has been published in Norwich's National Centre for Writing *A Life Written*.

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Quite a Welcome

SCENE TWO

Two Days later. Afternoon.

Lights up on C.

BILLY stands behind the front desk, downing his second espresso and casually flicking through a newspaper. The office behind the desk has been tidied since Scene One.

MR SIMONSON enters through the front door. He tips his fedora to BILLY, who nods back. MR SIMONSON heads upstairs without a word.

Moments later, ALAN, a short and lively man, bursts in with PATRICIA, his quiet girlfriend. Both are smiling, carrying luggage.

ALAN: Hello there, kind sir!

BILLY: Yes, hello! How— *(he hastily sweeps the newspaper, logbook and empty mug off the desk)* —how can I help you? *(noticing PATRICIA)* Both of you!

ALAN: *(puts his arm around PATRICIA)* We're Alan and Patricia! I'm Patricia!

BILLY blinks at him.

Not fond of comedy, are you?

PATRICIA waves meekly.

Now, my good man — I make it half past two and require aid to the nearest water closet. *(laughs heartily)* We have been traveling for nigh on five hours! What's your name?

BILLY: *(confused)* What's that?

ALAN: *(laughing louder)* Good one! Maybe I was wrong! Down the hall I take it?

BILLY: I'm completely lost, sir.

ALAN's grin drops.

ALAN: The toilet, bud.

BILLY: *(eyes widen)* Right! *(points across the room)* Just over there!

ALAN: *(beaming again)* Never fret, sir! No simpleton could understand such a term!

(leans on the desk)

There should be a reservation under the name of Tinkle, by the by!

ALAN exits in the direction indicated.

BILLY lunges to grab the logbook, but slips on the mug, landing hard on the floor.

BILLY: *(in pain)* Okay...

He hauls himself up, grimacing, and fishes a key from under the desk.

PATRICIA: Soon to be Mrs Tinkle!

BILLY: *(limping, handing over the key)* There you are.
Enjoy your stay.

Enter MR SHARP, a broad man with parted hair and a thick moustache. He stares down at BILLY.

MR SHARP: I must speak with Mr Cavendish.

BILLY: *(tiredly)* He's away. Can I help?

MR SHARP: Be serious, man. Don't slouch.

BILLY: *(irritated)* What?

ALAN re-enters, rubbing his hands together.

ALAN: Our room, sir? Also, I never caught your name!

BILLY: It's Billy, sir.

ALAN: *(squinting at the key)* It's either an upside down seven or a four.

PATRICIA squints at the key.

PATRICIA: *(peering in)* Looks like a three.

MR SHARP: *(leans over their shoulders)* Then you need glasses! That's definitely a four.
(to Billy) Come on, cleaner! Don't you understand basic arithmetic?

BILLY hurriedly flips through the logbook.

BILLY: Never mind – pass it over!

He snatches the key from ALAN. Everyone freezes.

(A short, awkward pause.)

BILLY: Oh — this is the bathroom key! I was looking for that.
Everyone sighs.

MR SHARP: *(puffing his chest)* I could do your job with my eyes closed!

BILLY clenches his jaw.

ALAN: Ah, I beg to differ, sir!

MR SHARP: Really?

ALAN: Rightly so!

MR SHARP: Bring Cavendish out here this instant!

BILLY clenches his fists.

ALAN: Who is this Cavendish?

MR SHARP: Someone with more dignity than you! *(points at ALAN's unzipped trousers)* Am I going to have to repeat myself?

ALAN glances down. BILLY glares at MR SHARP, about to snap, but ALAN grabs a pair of scissors from the counter.

ALAN: Not to worry!

He cuts three strips of paper and carefully sticks them over his flies. Everyone watches in disbelief.

Good as new! What do you think, honey?

PATRICIA: *(nodding earnestly)* Lovely.

MR SHARP: Now I've seen everything.

BILLY: *(explodes)* Right!

He slams both fists on the desk. ALAN drops the scissors. MR SHARP jolts backwards as they land on his foot. Everyone stares at BILLY.

(he snaps his fingers) Sharp! Cavendish would tell you to bugger off!

MR SIMONSON, who has been quietly observing from the stairs, tips his fedora once more and discreetly exits.

The phone rings. BILLY picks it up.

Hello! (pause) Answer! (pause) Oh – Mr Cavendish! Yes, yes. I didn't mean – Definitely not. Yes, he's here. (pause) No, not anymore. (pause) Sorry? Oh, you meant alive. Right (pause) Understood.

BILLY calmly places the phone in it's cradle. Everyone stares.

MR SHARP: Speak, man!

BILLY pokes him square in the eye.

BILLY: Compliments from Mr Cavendish.

MR SHARP lets out a strangled sound and collapses flat.

(A stunned pause.)

ALAN: That's quite a welcome!

BILLY: You can say that again.

ALAN: *(beaming)* That's – quite a welcome!

ALAN and PATRICIA stroll upstairs, dragging their luggage.

BILLY stares after them, bewildered, then turns back to the desk. He picks up his newspaper, shakes it open dramatically—

then notices the front-page headline: 'Local Manager Wanted for Assault.'

He freezes.

BILLY: ...Blimey. Guess I've been promoted.

Blackout.

SCENE THREE

The next morning.

Lights up on C.

BILLY is asleep in a chair. MR SHARP enters, wearing an eyepatch, confused and irritated.

MR SHARP: Wake up, man!

BILLY jolts awake, nearly falling off the chair.

BILLY: Sorry, sir — must've dozed off for a bit.

MR SHARP checks the clock.

MR SHARP: A bit? Good God, man — have you no sense of time?

BILLY: *(noticing the patch, smirking)* Ahoy, matey!
MR SHARP: Now look here! I didn't pay to be treated with such insolence!
BILLY: *(grinning)* Well... what did you pay for?
MR SHARP: That's neither here nor there!
BILLY: Okay, well, it is a little funny—
MR SHARP: What on earth do you take me for?!
BILLY: Honestly? I'm not entirely sure.
MR SHARP: If this was the last day of Rome, you'd be the first I'd throw into the fire.

Silence. BILLY stares.

BILLY: Right. Okay. Let's all calm down. I'm just messing with you. Is there something you need?
MR SHARP: Do you know when breakfast will be served?
BILLY: Breakfast? Well—it's through there, isn't it?
MR SHARP: Where?

BILLY points over MR SHARP's shoulder.

BILLY: *(pointing)* That door, the one with the handle on it.
MR SHARP: I want it sent to my room.
BILLY: *(muttering)* In pieces, I imagine.
MR SHARP: What was that?

ROBERT HARVEY lives in the village of Sutton-in-the-isle (or just Sutton) in Cambridgeshire. He has been fascinated by science-fiction concepts such as aliens, sapient machines, and interstellar societies from a young age. As such, his writing often contains these elements, usually through a comedic lens.

Battlefield at the End of Time

Garys couldn't see his right leg anymore. Unable to maintain equilibrium, he fell on his back, splattering mud everywhere across his grey combat armour, and losing his grip on his carbine.

"Oh f—" Jame started, holding the 'f' for as long as possible until she thought of something less profane. "Fudge!" She ran over to where Garys had fallen, her armour looking much more pristine by comparison, having been unscathed for the whole battle thus far. "Your leg!"

"Yeah."

Behind the visor of his helmet, Garys looked up at the sky, and tried to make out stars behind the endless black smoke that rose from all around them.

"Guess I won't be running in that marathon after all."

"I'll get you back to the med-centre," Jame was saying, her voice sounding muffled, like it was underwater. "We'll make it out of this!"

"Glad to hear," Garys responded, as if on instinct. Then he considered something. "Uh, did you get the guy that blasted me?"

The sound of metal whirring and clacking interrupted them. Their enemy had closed the distance between them. It was a dark, spider-like mechanical being with glowing red eyes and vicious-looking appendages.

"No," Jame admitted, sheepishly. "No I did not."

“Surrender, bipeds,” the mechanoid demanded, in a harsh, buzz of static sound.

Garys pointed an accusing finger at the monstrous engine of destruction that had mutilated him mere seconds ago: “Really messed up of them to program it to be prejudiced like that.”

Jame raised her own laser carbine to fire... and then didn't.

“Uh...”

She looked around, as if in search of an answer.

“Oh, here's an idea!” she said, dropping her weapon. “We'd like to join the Valkaramite Collective. How's that?”

“What?!” Garys looked at Jame like she had grown a second head.

“Sssh!” she hissed at him. “I'm doing a thing!”

The mechanoid seemed to consider this, but then dismissed it. “Resistance fighters would not join the Collective out of their own free will,” it concluded.

“Well, screw the Resistance!” Jame dropped the carbine and put her gloved hands on her hips. “What have they ever done for us? Recently?”

“OK, seriously, what are you on about?” Garys asked, some anger born of confusion entering his voice. “Isn't this, like, the opposite of what we're supposed to do?”

“Shush!”

That was all Jame had to say to him, before turning back to the machine. “What would you know about free will, anyway? You weren't programmed for it – ah, no offense.”

“I do not possess free will, yes,” the machine replied. “But I was also not programmed yesterday.”

“Oooh, it's got you there, Jame,” Garys snickered, before sighing: “So this is what we're doing now, huh? You know, I really don't think this is what they had in mind for –”

Jame cut him off, still speaking to the metallic arachnid. “But you see, we possess free will. Therefore, we have the

capacity for both good and evil, and thus can choose evil.”

“The Collective is not evil,” the enemy said. “We seek to prolong the lifespan of the universe.”

“Oh great, spoiler alert,” Garys threw up his hands, his leg – or lack thereof – no longer bothering him in the slightest. “Look, Jame, let's just give up and try again.”

“Look, I just want to see what happens,” Jame whispered to him. “I'm pretty sure we're already screwed. I want to see if they can accommodate this.”

Garys looked at her with amusement. “You want to betray the Resistance and doom the galaxy because you're curious?”

Jame scoffed. “Oh, like you actually care about that.”

“Silence!” the machine barked. “You will be taken to Conquest Point Alpha-Nine-Green. You will be subject to the mind probe.”

“No, not the mind probe,” Garys monotoned in boredom. “Please, anything but the mind probe.”

“The mind probe will extract all vital and relevant knowledge of Resistance operations. Should your psyche survive the process, you will then be interred in the work-camps of Sythus XII to extract mineral ore indefinitely.”

“That's not what ‘interred’ means,” Garys mumbled. “I mean, you don't expect high art from this sort of thing, but it should still make sense.” He groaned. “Jame, you're trying to join up with the guys who just mutilated me for life. You're choosing the bad path when there's supposed to be no choice at all! This isn't Subterra Story!”

“You know your leg isn't actually gone, right?” Jame looked at him, quizzically.

“Of course, I know my leg's not really gone,” Garys snarled. “I'm just saying –”

The words “WARNING: IMMERSION BROKEN” appeared around them in glowing red letters. ‘RESETTING NPC BEHAVIOUR.’

“Uh oh,” Garys muttered.

“See!?” Jame threw up her hands. “Now you’ve done it!”

The arachnid machine’s legs convulsed and shook.

“Destruction to the Resistance!” it proclaimed, and vaporised both Jame and Garys in a flash of red light.

Jame came back to reality, lying on one of the game’s berths.

“Good going, Garys,” Jame muttered, removing the AR helmet. “That might have been a secret path, or a bonus achievement, or something.” Her electronic eyes readjusted to the arcade’s dim lighting, and her audio sensors to the commotion of it.

“Whatever,” Garys snarled, removing his own helmet. “Game’s poorly written anyway. There’s no valuable ore on Sythus XII. And how come I HAVE to play as a biped?!”

He leapt off the berth, scuttling away on all eight of his arachnid legs.

“Spiders as the bad guys – yeah, that’s not stereotypical at all.”

Jame groaned as she followed him, her mechanical form groaning after sitting still for so long.

“Why is it that whenever we do this, we argue?”

Her vocalizer lit up with every syllable.

“I just feel like you should play the game as intended, or not at all. Now can we please do the claw game?”

“No. You have enough plushies already.”

“Aww.”

SARA IDDIR enjoys playing with old-fashioned language and rhythms in poetry, sometimes mixing quiet humour and thought. She likes gentle mischief and melancholy, discovering the odd and tender in ordinary moments, and trying to give these images character.

Follow her on Bluesky: [@sara-iddir.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/@sara-iddir.bsky.social)

The Men Who Wept

The Battle was a soft, unenthused Event:
A few Men from either Side,
No Hint of vigour or manly Pride,
Stumbled forward with passive jeers
Tepid expressions and languid sneers.
They drew their Swords and charged across.
They struck and missed without mind for loss
Nor heed for Victory.

Two looking most disconsolate, stumbled.
With Sleep still in their Eyes, they mumbled:
‘In the Name of ours who overslept’,
Then lunged, and slid and greatly misstepped,
Then light-hearted blows they threw,
Then wept. With Contagion did the others.
All fell to the Ground like sorrowful Brothers.

Raspberries of Wrath

Raspberries crushed
Have softened my book.
Like a fool did I haply convene
The punnets and the pages
Into my shoulder bag
And now look:
Raspberry juices,
A bloodied spine.
The book lays open now,
Murdered – benign.
Damp, pink, like petal pages
Limp with chatter,
Murdered and happy.

In the Ribs

Something heavy has settled here
In the place that remembers you.

Returned mangled, a burden sorely missed
Is welcomed back like a difficult friend

Thought lost forever,
Leaving this place free and hollow –

Has come back to me with sweet clutch
And will still be here tomorrow.

ROSA-MAYA KOEHLER is: a creature of various eccentricities; an author of fiction and 'non-fiction'; focused on exploring the uncanny and poking at the walls of reality and readers alike.

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Tamago No Uta (卵の歌)

My question remains unanswered, now setting sail
on intrepid adventures through boundless sea,
untouched by egg-wash.
Still carrying your soak in my dress
bundled together to allow
things to live inside, a tightness in the throat as I
look for my ripples' effect in the water.

There's a weight on my shoulders but I'm only kneeling.
It can't be too hard.
We're in this together,
water all falling into the same puddle,
turned lump,
turning pale white.

My eyes sting to cry but here I will never shed a tear.
Water above starts pouring, counting 5/4 in sharp silence.

It's taken on too much water.

Therefore
The poem is a shipwreck.
Therefore
The poet is a shipwreck.

Trust me
You'll know when it's too much water

I'm still waiting for you
to tell me something.
In the same kind of saccharine note that says
anata wa dare
not kimi wa dare
when it calls to me to care.
sick to your stomach as the words cut before
healing from my saline caress.

There's a call from the other side of the water.
A prayer for it all to be an ambiguous ending
interpretations of a frame that moves on
against the still and lifeless cell burning out.

Interpretations of the reader and the writer,
me vs you,
choking you with all this water,
as opposed to letting you drown.

Our flotation devices,
getting decompression sickness,
leave us behind.
A couple shipwrecks among many.

ELLIE LYNCH intertwines British wit with everything she writes. Her script was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day. She writes scripts and novels that confront contemporary issues and spark existential questions.

Follow her on Instagram/TikTok: @xellielynchx

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Extract from The Ringleader

Prologue:

7th June 2009: The Yorkshire Dales

Eight pairs of brogue shoes echoed on the stairs. The oak groaned beneath the children as they sprinted to his office. They could not be late. No, that would anger him. As they reached the top of the stairs, their little huffs filled the manor house. Molly examined them – as the eldest, it was her duty to make sure they were all dressed adequately. She tucked Barney’s shirt in, made sure Francessa’s Teflon gloves were tightly on and wiped the dirt off Vincent’s face with her thumb. In her peripherals, she saw Bambi peel away at the loose velvet dangling from her antlers. The sheddings dropped to the floor and fresh blood stained Bambi’s fingertips. Sobek put their arm around the crying girl although it was quite the struggle, considering their Rapunzelesque locks. Molly sighed as she silently strode towards the two. Bambi’s boba eyes glistened with tears and her sniffles were muted by fear.

‘She’s in pain,’ Sobek pleaded.

‘I know, but he’ll be mad if she does not look presentable.

Bambi look at me.’

Bambi raised her head and snot dribbled down to her

lips. Her mucus-coated mouth trembled, and her shoulders began to shake.

‘Bambi, I will ask him for balm, but please stop crying, it will only make it worse.’

Unable to speak, Bambi nodded and Molly pulled out a packet of tissues and dabbed at the droplets. The remaining two, Koffi and Esme, kept their gaze on the dark brown walls although Esme’s shadow seemed to go up to the door and extend its middle finger. Koffi stifled a laugh.

‘Esme please control your shadow,’ Molly begged.

‘You know I can’t! That thing has a mind of its own!’

Esme’s retaliation was cut off by the booming bell in the grandfather clock. It was twelve. The door creaked. Esme’s shadow darted back into place. Eight shoulders tensed. Eight little hearts boomed in anticipation.

‘Come in.’

Molly hesitantly turned the golden handle to reveal him and his salt and pepper beard. His spectacles were clearer than the windows behind him. Various books on human anatomy and the supernatural covered the walls. He was sat at his desk. He observed the children like a hawk. He then scribbled down notes in his leather-bound book. With a firm snap, the book was shut.

‘Molly, Vincent, Barney, Francesca, Koffi, Sobek, Esme and Bambi. I have called you in here to tell you the most wondrous news! The government has finally passed our E.S Regulations. I can now confirm that your training will commence. Isn’t that exciting?’

Silence.

Eight heads turned in confusion. What did this mean? Even Esme’s shadow shrugged in complete and utter bafflement. He chuckled as he stood to sit on the elongated desk.

‘Children, it means we can now hone your abilities and use them for justice. To persecute those who have violated

the law, to be moral arbiters for the United Kingdom.’

Molly raised her hand; he permitted her to speak.

‘How are we going to persecute criminals? We’re only five.’

He chuckled. He crouched in front of Molly. He stroked her cheek. Molly felt uncomfortable but she could not seem to turn away. His smile, a pristine white that didn’t quite meet his eyes.

‘Molly, you will persecute them with your powers. And I have no doubt that you will be perfect at it.’

Chapter 1

The weather was lovely which was strange for England. A picturesque sunset loomed over the E.S stadium. Energetic crowds swarmed towards the underground, eager to get home. Yet what the news failed to pick up was the small hoard of protestors, their cardboard signs wiggling in the wind. But the scribbled red words were clear for all to see:

EXECUTION IS NOT THE SOLUTION

THOU SHALL NOT KILL

KILLING FOR SPORT, WE SHALL NEVER SUPPORT

The consumers looked away, some even annoyed at the protestors’ audacity. The government had passed capital punishment, so why were people making a fuss? It was legal. Honestly, there was no pleasing people.

Amelie took a deep breath. Although her heart ached to interview the protesters, Ocean News would be less than pleased. They were a sports channel, only keen on engaging

the fans and making a profit off their bloodlust. Amelie shook off the uneasiness that pooled in her stomach. She would be back on air soon. She turned and faced the camera with a forced smile.



‘Honestly I would,’ Barney commented at the TV, a coy smirk plastered on his face. After eyeing up the television one last time, Barney sailed over to the fridge. He grabbed a beer, chugged it and then smashed the glass with his bare hands.

‘Overcompensating much?’ Bambi muttered from the rather long sofa. Her nails announced themselves as she tapped on her phone. Multiple E.S employees were covering Bambi’s elegant antlers in multiple warm towels.

‘I’m not having that from Rudolph the mummified reindeer,’ Barney retorted.

This sarcastic back and forth between Bambi and Barney was a beloved feature of the *E.S After Show*. After killing convicted rapists, paedophiles and murderers live on TV, the British public appreciated the sneak peek into The Experimental Spectacle’s lives. It made them more relatable. It made them more human.

The cameras filmed the famed eight in their extremely high-end lounge. A complimentary food and drink bar was being demolished by Esme. Although Esme’s shadow seemed more interested in the drinks side of things. Especially the conveniently placed whisky sponsor. Vincent was reading on his Kindle, although the volume from his headphones could only be described as concerning. But the cameras were focused on an agitated Francesca. She was pawing at the electromagnetic collar that entrapped her neck.

‘Dude you got to stop that. The Ringleader will be pissed

if he sees one mark on that thing.’

Sobek leaned over Francesca, their hair slapping her hands away from her neck. The collars kept their powers in check, even subdued them. The collar was studded with miniature prongs, concealing a fifteen-hundred-volt charge ready to reduce Francesca to a seizing mess.

‘Believe me I would, but being filmed isn’t exactly helping.’

Sobek smirked.

‘Sobek?’

Sobek winked as their long locks turned into vines. The foliage crawled up the wall and strangled the camera until a loud crack could be heard. The lens was now smashed. But Sobek didn’t care. In fact, they relished in moments like these. Any chance to piss off the production crew was always worth it. Property damage and all.

‘Oops.’

AVA MOYLAN is a scriptwriter who focuses on character-driven stories with complex relationships and themes of betrayal, obsession and resentment. She is passionate about the importance characters bring to a narrative, and how much more engaging a story is when the audience can connect with the characters and see the world through their eyes.

Extract from Ursula: The Musical

ACT 1, SCENE 1.

EXT. ST OSYTH TOWN CENTRE – DAY

There is a light wash across the stage, and an instrumental composed of harpsichords and lutes start to play.

There is a stone-brick fountain CS with steps around it. There is a market SR with a TOWNSMAN manning it, heckling people to buy his goods. There is a backdrop of Tudor-style houses with wooden beams.

The TOWNSPEOPLE walk around the stage limping, retching and looking very ill. The TOWNSWOMEN are wearing dresses in colours such as brown, beige, yellow, orange, green, grey and blue. The pigmentation is dull from years of wear. Some dresses are stained or tattered. They wear off-white aprons over their dresses. The TOWNSMEN wear tunics and trousers of the same colours. Some wear hats or caps.

‘Ursula, Help Me!’ begins to play. It starts with a slow, hymn-like sound.

TOWNSPEOPLE

O PLEASE DEAR LORD,
COULD YOU LISTEN TO MY PLEA?
I BELIEVE THERE IS SOMETHING
THAT IS WRONG WITH ME.

URSULA KEMP enters SR and walks to CS to stand on the steps of the fountain. The music picks up, people start to look better and they start to dance.

URSULA KEMP

PLEASE COME INTO MY HOUSE,
I'LL CURE YOU WITHOUT A DOUBT.
BUT IT'LL BE FOR A FEE.

A concerned-looking TOWNSMAN approaches URSULA KEMP.

TOWNSMAN

I HAVE BEEN HAVING A CRISIS,
BECAUSE MY BOWELS KEEP GIVING ME
SURPRISES.
I TRIED CHANGING WHAT I EAT,
I EVEN CUT DOWN ON SOME MEAT.

URSULA KEMP

MAYBE TRY SOME OF THESE SPICES.

TOWNSMAN

THANK YOU!

The TOWNSMAN looks happy and resumes singing and dancing.

TOWNSPEOPLE

O PLEASE DEAR LORD,
COULD YOU LISTEN TO MY PLEA?
I BELIEVE THERE IS SOMETHING
THAT IS WRONG WITH ME.

URSULA KEMP
PLEASE COME INTO MY HOUSE,
I'LL CURE YOU WITHOUT A DOUBT.
BUT IT'LL BE FOR A FEE.

A TOWNSWOMAN approaches URSULA KEMP.

TOWNSWOMAN

URSULA, PLEASE, CAN YOU FIX MY HUSBAND'S
HEART?
I THINK IT NEEDS TO RESTART.
HE DON'T KISS ME ANYMORE,
AND KEEPS ON SLEEPING WITH SOME WHORE.

URSULA KEMP

I'M AFRAID I CAN'T CURE THAT OLD FART!

TOWNSWOMAN

(Spoken)
Worth a try..

The TOWNSWOMAN shrugs and then joins back in with the TOWNSPEOPLE.

TOWNSPEOPLE

O PLEASE DEAR LORD,
COULD YOU LISTEN TO MY PLEA?
I BELIEVE THERE IS SOMETHING
THAT IS WRONG WITH ME.

URSULA KEMP

PLEASE COME INTO MY HOUSE,
I'LL CURE YOU WITHOUT A DOUBT.
BUT IT'LL BE FOR A FEE.

GRACE THURLOW approaches URSULA KEMP, slightly limping.

GRACE THURLOW

I AM IN A LOT OF PAIN
MY LEGS ARE NOT WORKING THE SAME,
I THINK I MIGHT NEED A CANE.
I'M STRUGGLING TO WALK,
IT'S LIKE MY JOINTS ARE MADE OF CHALK.

URSULA KEMP

I BELIEVE YOU HAVE FALLEN LAME.

URSULA KEMP puts her hand on GRACE THURLOW's shoulder, reassuringly.

URSULA KEMP (CONT'D)

DON'T YOU WORRY ANYMORE,
FOR THERE'S A VERY SIMPLE CURE.
JUST TAKE THIS REMEDY,
AND DO THESE EXERCISES DAILY,
AND YOU'LL BE AS FIT AS BEFORE!

The TOWNSPEOPLE create a line at the front of the stage to block the people changing the set in the background. URSULA and GRACE THURLOW stand in the middle of the line.

TOWNSPEOPLE

O PLEASE DEAR LORD,

COULD YOU LISTEN TO MY PLEA?
I THINK THERE IS SOMETHING
THAT IS WRONG WITH ME.

URSULA KEMP

PLEASE COME INTO MY HOUSE,
I'LL CURE YOU WITHOUT A DOUBT.
BUT IT'LL BE FOR A FEE.
IT'LL BE FOR A FEE.

The TOWNSPEOPLE start to leave the stage, revealing the new set. The lights change to a warm wash.

URSULA KEMP (CONT'D)

I DO NOT WORK FOR FREE.
PLEASE PAY ME MY FEE!

URSULA KEMP holds out her hand to GRACE THURLOW as if expecting payment. The song ends.

BENEDICT ODOBEATU is a writing and film student from Anglia Ruskin University. He has a very strong interest in supernatural horror, as it often deals with Christian themes which he finds valuable, as one can tell by his Instagram account: Danny “Freakin” Mobi (@danny_freaking_mobi_)

Extract from Sacrilegious Grounds

The Past

New Auburn, Wisconsin, 1845.

EXT. Church yard - Morning.

It's a bright sunny morning, in complete contrast to the somber atmosphere among the crowd who have gathered in the open forest clearing, behind the small catholic church. They are all dressed in black, as if for a funeral.

There's a stage in front of them and on this stage is a guillotine.

Just in front of the stage below, is a PRIEST and behind him are two NUNS.

The Priest, old with a receding hairline, has a stoic expression and so does the nun by his left. But the one by his right (RITA, middle-aged) seems uneasy. She looks around at the people who appear too relaxed for what is about to unfold.

She looks back at the priest who looks more than ready for what is coming. Then the sound

of some men cheering makes her quickly turn her head back to the gnarly sight of another nun (MARTHA) in a white gown, bound in chains. She is bloodied and led to the guillotine by TWO MEN double her size.

Some of the people yell insults at her.

MEMBER OF THE CROWD

HARLOT!

Martha cries as she is dragged by the chains to the stage.

RITA

Father, you have the power to stop thi...

PRIEST

On becoming a nun, you dedicate your life and body to Christ and his teachings, not sell it to any man on the street like some harlot. My mind is made up, sister.

RITA

Why not strip her off her title as nun? Must we go this far?

PRIEST

We need to set an example for the young who wish to walk down the path of brother or sisterhood.

RITA

With fear? I don't know what Bible you've been reading, but this is not what Jesus died for.

PRIEST

He died for our sins that we may be clean, and this woman is staining his sacrifice with her recent actions.

RITA

Are you not? We all here are sinners, everyone is, so what gives you the right to decide who should die and who shouldn't?

No reply.

The Nun at the left scoffs.

Rita briefly looks at her then back at the Priest.

RITA

Let he who is without sin cast the first st...

The Priest finally turns to face her, but this time with a slap to the face.

PRIEST

Don't tempt me, Sister.

The Men are now getting close to the stage, and the Priest leaves the Nuns to go up and join them.

On arrival, he begins his speech to the people in attendance which fades out as we hear Rita's thoughts.

RITA

It was on that day that it became evident the spirit of God was no longer with this Church.

The PRIEST gives the signal and time slows as the final drowned-out screams of Martha echo through the field.

Everyone cheers except Rita who has her eyes closed. A tear falls down her right cheek as she kisses her Rosary.

RITA

Father, forgive them, for they know not that they do.

TITLECARD: SACRILEGIOUS GROUNDS

**Present Day Chicago
Apartment Complex - afternoon**

A cloudy afternoon in South Cottage Grove Avenue, Chicago.

Among the rows of normal-sized and small buildings on the road is a huge apartment complex with most of the window lights on.

Only a few are in darkness, and one of these is a room on the fourth floor.

ROOM

Gareth's room is a small square, with a bed in-between the door and the window. There are some poster paintings of Mother Mary, the crucifix, and the New York Rangers crest on the wall. Across from the bed, nestled beside a desk where he now sits, stands a lone wardrobe.

GARETH himself is a skinny young man in his early twenties with light blonde hair and a pale skin tone that contrasts his dark room. The windows and curtains are closed, and the only sources of light available are from his laptop screen, his phone, and the tiny gaps uncovered by the curtains.

He is watching a comedic Instagram reel and laughs at the punchline.

Once the reel is done, Gareth shakes his head as if snapping out of a trance.

He turns off his phone and gets back on his laptop. The laptop screen is a blank Word document which Gareth stares at for a while before letting out a long groan and dropping his head on the desk.

INT. KITCHEN

Gareth stares out the window over the sink as water pours into his glass. He turns off the tap, and sips slowly from his glass, still

staring outside as if in a trance.

He shakes his head with a start when the doorbell rings.

INT. FRONT DOOR

Gareth opens the front door, to where his COUSIN stands waiting.

His cousin ELIN is sixteen years old, with light caramel skin and curly french-braid pigtails. Despite her bright school uniform, she manages to retain her gothic fashion style with a neck collar and black lipstick. Elin waves at her cousin unenthusiastically.

ELIN

Hey.

She walks past him.

Gareth looks disapprovingly at the vape clutched in her waving hand.

GARETH

I thought I told you to get rid of that.

He shakes his head and closes the door.

Elin replies out of frame.

ELIN

Well I'm not.

AVELINA PAVITHRAAH PRINCE has branched out into many mediums and styles throughout her course, including stagewriting, poetry, non-fiction and even acting. Through this, she's found she loves to write prose fiction and screenplays that focus on romance with an undercurrent of comedy.

Follow her on Instagram: @random_avelina_16

Life Support

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

MACK sits on a sofa opposite an armchair occupied by his therapist, NATALIE. He's 39 and covered in scars, from his face to his ankles. He wears a simple shirt and jeans with a bulky jacket. NATALIE writes in her pad while MACK stares out the window. Two mugs sit on the coffee table in front of them.

NATALIE

Moving on, it's been about a month since your last mission. How've you been adjusting to this change?

MACK

Bored. Just been sitting around my apartment or going to the bar.

NATALIE

What did I say about your drinking?

MACK

I'd drink less if you lot sent me out more.

NATALIE

We won't be doing that. Our policy is that once our agents reach 40, we let them go. Both for our sake and theirs. The only reason we still let you onto the field is because you're one of our most seasoned professionals.

MACK

Which clearly shows you guys still need me!

NATALIE

Not enough to keep you on. Yes, we call you on for dire situations, but that's a temporary measure. The agency still wants you to retire, Mack.

MACK

I don't see why I need to! I'm as fit as ever, I have no loose threads and I'm not under threat.

NATALIE

Do you really believe you're as fit as you were 20 years ago?

MACK

...Fair, but I'm still in good shape.

NATALIE takes a moment before looking down at her pad.

NATALIE

Plus, maybe you're not under threat,
you're...

She trails off and MACK catches on.

MACK

(harshly) Don't.

NATALIE puts a hand up as if to apologise.

NATALIE

Got it. Let's focus on something more
positive. Your 40th birthday is coming
up! How are you feeling about that?

MACK

Same old, really. Just a year older,
it's nothing special.

NATALIE

That's not true! A birthday is a
special occasion. You really don't
have anything planned?

MACK

I might have more drinks than usual.

*He chuckles as NATALIE sends him a disapproving
look.*

MACK (CONT'D)

I'm joking. But no, there's nothing
planned.

NATALIE

Not even with Harry?

MATCH CUT:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

*The same room on a different day, HARRY now
sitting on the sofa instead of MACK. HARRY is
a couple years younger than MACK and has a
slim yet built physique. He wears a buttondown
with the sleeves rolled up and slacks. He
also harbours many scars, but not nearly as
many as MACK. He fiddles with one of the
pillow's fraying hems.*

HARRY

How are you?

NATALIE

I'm doing well. How are you?

HARRY

Decent. The bar keeps me busy and it's
nice to see my friends regularly.

NATALIE

And other than the bar? What are you
doing to keep busy?

HARRY

Not much, really. I sometimes go for a
coffee with the other agents, but most
of the time I'm working or training.

NATALIE

(sighing) We've spoken about your training, Harry. You shouldn't overexert yourself.

HARRY

I'm not, don't worry. I have to anyway, the doctor said it's good for me to stay fit. Otherwise how else am I going to keep my amazing figure?

He flexes his bicep while NATALIE narrows her eyes at him.

NATALIE

We both know you don't care what your doctor says. And that's also not the reason you train.

HARRY thinks about rebuffing her, but sighs defeatedly.

HARRY

Fine, yes, I want to get back to active duty, but is that so bad?

NATALIE

Yes! You can't return to the field under any circumstance! What happened to your leg was too severe and you're still suffering the consequences.

HARRY

It's not even that bad! I can still do everything I used to-

He's interrupted by pain in his leg. He groans and rubs his thigh.

NATALIE

(gently) How's the pain been recently?

HARRY

Same as always. Some days, nothing. Other days... excruciating. Hurts like a bitch for something that isn't even real.

NATALIE

Persistent pain doesn't make your suffering any less important. You're allowed to feel upset by it.

HARRY

(sarcastically) Yeah, thanks, brain, for telling me I'm in pain when I'm not. It's so fun!

He holds a thumbs up.

NATALIE

Your body's just trying to protect you, even if a bit overkill. And so are we, which is why you can't go back to active duty. I know it's going to be hard, but just try and enjoy the quieter life from now on.

HARRY

Smooth.

NATALIE

Thank you. Anyway, you talked about your friends earlier. You spent time with Mackenzie recently?

MATCH CUT:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

MACK

Ugh, that guy! I thought you said a birthday was a special occasion. You want me to shoot myself on my birthday?

NATALIE

Well, for someone that claims he hates him, you sure spend a lot of time at that bar.

MACK

Yeah, because I like drinking! And it's just my luck that he runs the fucking place.

NATALIE

But if you really hated him, you would find another bar, no?

MACK

Not if I value my safety. The only reason I put up with that prick is because I can trust The Crossroads and the people in it, sadly including Harry.

NATALIE

(amused) Hmm, if you say so...

MATCH CUT:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HARRY

Mack?

He changes from a neutral expression to a happy one. He stops playing with the pillow and rests his hands in his lap, leaning forward a little.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Yeah, I see him all the time. He basically lives at The Crossroads.

NATALIE

And how do you feel about that?

HARRY

Quite concerned for his liver, to be honest.

NATALIE

I more meant how do you feel about seeing him often? But I have to agree with you there.

HARRY

Oh. I love seeing him! It always brightens my day a little.

MATCH CUT:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

MACK

Trust me, I can't stand that guy. He's always talking to me when it's obvious I want to be left alone. And even when I don't mind talking to him, he'll ruin it by doing that flirting shit he always does. Does he think it's working? Because...

He scoffs unconvincingly.

MACK (CONT'D)

It's not.

MATCH CUT:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HARRY

(chuckling) He's so fun to tease. All I have to do is come onto him a tiny bit and he's ten times more pissed off than he normally is, which already sits at about a 70%.

MATCH CUT:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

MACK

I hate him.

MATCH CUT:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HARRY

(jokingly) I love him.

KATELYN SMITH is a writer and literature student. She specialises in character-driven literature and draws inspiration from the people she spends her life alongside. Fueled by her reading, she is constantly producing, editing, and adapting her work, and wouldn't be caught dead without a novel somewhere on her person.

Follow on Instagram & Bluesky: @katesmiii

Extract from Wish You Were Here, Still

We swam for probably three hours. We went out a few feet deeper than we could stand, treading water, and the waves were colossal, crashing over our heads and sending us tumbling. The whole world was salt and green and the holding of breath, the water burning our eyes, the sky waving through the wash, beckoning us up to join it, our legs pushing off the floor to bring us back up towards the light. That three feet of travelling between the floor and the surface, I was a seal, smooth and strong, a natural in the water. When my head broke the water, my hair flying back, I knew how the humpback whale felt, thrashing the waves with its spine — ungovernable, eternal.

Leo and Amber had hung back on the sands during our swim. Leo's girlfriend wouldn't be okay with him swimming with us, and Amber was funny about the way her body looked. 'I'm all right angles,' she'd say, 'all bony.' In her red bikini, Amber looked like some sort of model, like you'd see her in a magazine at the hairdressers and quickly turn the page before it put you off your lunch. She was slender and tall, with light brown hair and big eyes like a doe. She did give off a deer-like, fickle quality, always ready to run at the first crack of a twig. But she was gentle and kind, and moved

with her long arms draped by her sides or folded in front of her, every movement graceful and intentional. She was one of the only true lesbians I knew. The rest of us just kissed who we liked — boys, girls, anyone — without being much fussed by labels. But Amber almost exclusively had a thing for blonde girls, a preference she'd put aside for a few nights earlier in the year when she'd slept with Amy May. It was my birthday party, and they'd gone into the bathroom together while everyone was asleep. It hadn't worked out between them — one's capriciousness and the other's stubbornness bringing it to an inevitable demise — and Amy May was more devastated by that than she'd verbally let on to anyone. But I was not stupid, and nor was Amber. After the shrug, they didn't speak to each other all night.

We sat on the dunes amongst empty bottles and screwed up wet clothes. Seawater had dried on my lips, and I licked off the crystals, tasting rum and sunscreen and salt. Music was blaring from Mack's phone as it sat in an empty cup. This rudimentary speaker didn't amplify it whatsoever, but he'd tried so hard to make it work that we all pretended it did. Our stomachs all had that hollow empty hunger you get after a busy day — the type where you're hungry but too tired to eat, and the craving for food is almost comforting. It's like the ache in your muscles after a workout. A gratifying pain, like you'd earned it. A pain that you didn't dislike because it reminded you that you were alive.

Wandering back to my house, Lydia and Leo were a few steps in front, and Amber and Amy May a few behind.

'They kind of look like siblings, don't they, those two?' Mack said, nodding at the duo ahead, his arm steadying me over the berms of beach grass.

I pondered upon Mack's words, before looking back to check whether they were in earshot. 'They'll end up together, I think.'

'Oh yeah.' Mack sounded definitive. 'Yeah, I think so.'

Lydia's boyfriend was in Bournemouth for uni, and (if you ask me, like Lydia often did) he wasn't the one for her anyway. He had a particular skill for making her cry whenever she exhibited an ounce of happiness that wasn't directly correlated to him. At a Halloween party last year he had done exactly that, got high and screamed at her in the garden, over his disdain for our budding friendship with Leo. Leo was false, her boyfriend had said, and was manipulating us with his feminist literature and French jazz. This was long before Leo had become encompassed in our antics and I'd branded him as Lydia's soulmate. Besides that, Miles had been decent, or as decent as a 19-year-old man could be. He'd even stayed with Lydia after she cheated the first time.

The sun was setting over to our left, coating the grass in shadows, and illuminating the sides of my friends up ahead. Lydia said something to make Leo laugh so hard he stopped in his tracks. She turned away from him, looked back, blew me a kiss.

FAITH TAYLOR-PARISH is an aspiring writer whose work explores atmosphere, emotion and memory. Often inspired by music, her writing blends reflective, gothic and psychological elements. She is interested in how sound, mood and personal experience shape identity, and enjoys creating immersive stories that capture quiet moments of feeling and thought.

Extract from What Happened on 1140

Royal Street

Then I smell it, sharp and wrong. Not rot. Not meat. Burning.

I rush to the hallway. A thin wisp of grey curls down from the ceiling. The air grows hotter, thicker, until it feels as if the whole house is holding its breath. Somewhere above, a voice cries out – not a whisper this time but a scream.

Smoke curls along the ceiling – soft at first, almost beautiful. I think it's the stove, so I throw water on the coals, but the smoke thickens, pouring down the stairwell.

Then the screaming starts.

Not one voice, but many. A chorus of agony spilling through the cracks.

Madame appears at the top of the stairs. Her white gown glows through the haze. For a moment, she looks like a vision, calm, unburned, but her hands tremble.

“Back to your stations,” she says. Her smile holds, though her voice shakes.

Someone shouts from outside: “Fire! The house is burning!” The cry spreads like a curse. I press a cloth to my mouth. The younger girls scatter. I try to follow them, but something stops me.

The sound again. A pounding from above.

The attic.

I climb the back stairs. The door, the door no one touches, bubbles with heat. Smoke leaks through the gaps. Something thuds against it, once, twice, then falls silent.

I reach for the handle. It burns straight through my skin. I cry out, kick the door with everything I have left. The wood cracks, then splits. Fire roars out from the gaps. It wraps its heat around me, dragging the breath from my lungs. Smoke swallows the corridor. I stagger into it, half-blind, choking.

Then I see them.

At first, they are only shapes in the blaze, ghosts of the missing; it cannot be. But they are. They twist, they strain, they pull against the chains hammered into the walls. Faces rise out of the smoke, eyes wide and shining with terror and pain.

All this time. All those nights. All those sounds. I was right.

Their screams burst over me, jagged and shattering, louder than the fire, louder than my heartbeat. I stumble forward, hands reaching for chains that sear my fingers. I try, I try so hard, but the metal scalds me and the smoke presses into my throat like a fist. A woman grabs my arm, nails digging in. Her wrist is torn and swollen, her mouth shredded from the gag.

She looks at me, and that look... it is every horror I ever feared, every truth I never dared to speak.

I could have helped them sooner. I should have. But now the fire is everywhere. Voices shout below. Men from the street, neighbours, anyone brave or foolish enough to come. The front doors crash open. More smoke surges upward. The world tilts. I stumble out of the attic, down the stairs, blinded, gasping, half-falling until the ground breaks beneath me and I land in the courtyard.

Air. Night. Rain. People.

Flames burst out of the upper windows, curling into the sky like they are trying to escape, too. The crowd screams, points, and backs away, their faces white in the firelight.

And then I see her.

Madame.

Standing untouched at the far end of the courtyard, her white gown glowing like moonlight against the smoke. Not a burn. Not a mark. Not a shred of guilt on her perfect face. She meets my eyes. Just for a heartbeat. Just long enough for me to know she sees everything: the truth, the fire, the bodies, my failure.

Then she turns her back on all of it. She steps into a waiting carriage. The horses rear, the wheels lurch, and she disappears into the smoke before anyone asks a single question. By the time the fire dies, the attic has collapsed. The chains are molten, the flesh heaps inside unrecognisable, swallowed by ash. By morning, nobody can say for certain what was up there. Nobody sees what I saw. Nobody wants to believe it.

The neighbours whisper rumours that she used young women's blood to stay young, that she starved them, tortured them, twisted their limbs into shapes no living thing should take. They speak in half-truths and guesses, never sure if the fire hid the evidence out of mercy or malice.

Sometimes I wonder if I imagined it all. The heat, the smoke, the screaming. Maybe the fire played tricks on my mind. Maybe there were no people at all, only shadows dancing in the flames, only illusions in the haze clawing at my lungs. Were they real? Spirits? Ghosts trapped in the rafters. Or did the smoke twist my fear into faces I needed to see? I cannot tell. Every time I close my eyes, I see them again, reaching, pleading, and I do not know whether they lived, or whether

they ever truly existed outside my own burning mind.

But I know.

I saw enough.

Saw too much.

And now it is far too late for justice, or revenge, or anything at all.

Madame is gone. The house is ruined. And I am the only witness left, drowning in the memory of screaming voices and the heat of the attic above my head. People claim she ran to Paris in the chaos, slipping away before anyone could see the truth. She escapes, as always, while we burn.

SAM WIGMORE is a writer of intensities and schizophrenic impulse.
He writes from a cursed edgeland at the Cambridgeshire-Hertfordshire
border (better known as Royston), with vaguely southern-Spanish desires
that never fully form, but haunt.

He enjoys life magnificently – and wishes you the best.

After ‘Ethereal Synthesis’ by Helena May Groom-Shorter

Secretly, behind the body
Into surreptition of the dead

You sleep, an architect of the hand
And we are two masteries rebounding off communication
Where the moon shakes;
And like I don’t see you now, I don’t see you again.

My shocked soul in the alcohols of breathing coil
The flesh I forget, the wit, the charisma
And your smallest finger

No, to have a soul
Is not enough to reap the red
From closed eyes and
Painting

To beg and dream, and empty live.

Antique Model Kit,

In the shape of a shovel stuck into earth
Only mammalian thudding
Breeds the smallest wound of the poem

Because you will find me small in the ground rain
cleaning gun barrels
Playing with the poem; sword swallowing
raconteur of amnesia

Terrible gift
Of Pieces, from emptied model kit:
Necrotic eaten keys:
Restorative-mute:
Literature –

Reconstructor

If I cry does the rain know me
Does the poem...
Walking night streets
Laced by a necklace of death
Fleeing from verbiage, always
Lacuna laying in the present
child

Removing
The underworld from my vowels
Restoring mute capacity

was it last year last day fog
I felt lenticular love: hourglass-dagger—

No Sign Transcends

Like the golden moon. And flesh and shit and water under the lamp. The world self-construction, dirge into libertango. And what forever succumbs to the sign's sublimity, and what forever ascends to the sign's sea fog and peak, what transcends the sign, but first kisses the heel or nose, no sign

Transcends.

(desire swells in mangers, like the golden moon. and flesh and shit and water under the lamp.)

HAFSAH ZAHOOR is a Cambridge-based writer working across multiple mediums, from fiction to editorial and cultural commentary. She balances creative projects with research and publishing experience, while developing her portfolio. Her work explores narrative depth and social themes, and she aims to pursue academia alongside a long-term career in writing and literary scholarship.

Find out more at <https://hafsahzahoor.journoportfolio.com>

Sacrifice

Run, oh elder women of the free land –
*Their white culture knows all
but burns when green is involved.*
Run your old bodies into their swords –
*They only allow change when the
illusion of freedom is sought.*
Run away, young girls from the colonial red broad.
Let them be warned.

I do too

Scroll and forget,
I do too,
bloody thighs detached from legs,
splattered arteries from tattered shreds. Scroll
and forget,
I do too,
cries from shapely bodies,
burning sheets of babies. Scroll
and forget,
I do too,
ripped labia stitched lovingly,
ripped apart carelessly. Scroll
and forget,
I do too,
small adolescent breasts being suckled from,
men and children gone numb. Scroll
and forget,
I do too,
tied to a tree in the hot sun,
oh the tales they spun. Scroll
and forget,
I do too,
reporting crowded streets in Cairo covered her screams,
women and soldiers came to her but,
the damage is done, 20 men dispersed etched into her skin,
Scroll and forget,
I do too.

It Was

Told, the Northern Wind blows
through sorrows.
Peaked, the tundra blew –
it howled.
Return, blistering cold,
baring gold.

Your voice is drowning,
oh, Northern Wind.
Your leaves flinchingly adrift,
oh, Northern Wind.
Cool, the sun-dried green,
oh, Northern Wind.
Call on us,
oh Northern Wind.

