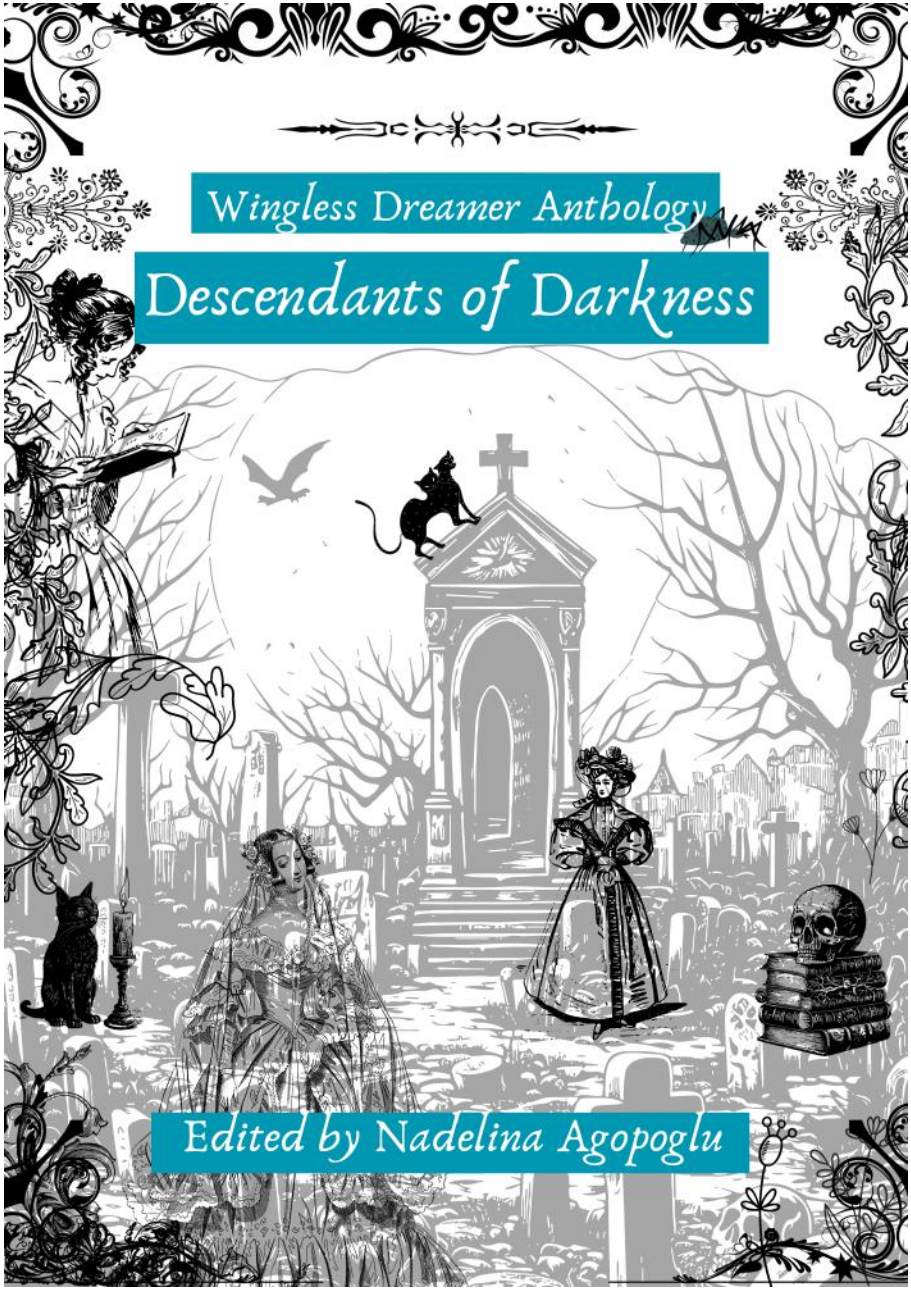

Wingless Dreamer Anthology
Descendants of Darkness
Edited by Nadelina Agopoglu

Wingless Dreamer

UPLIFTING WRITERS AND ARTISTS THROUGH OUR CREATIVE COMMUNITY



Thank you so much for all your efforts and support that you gave to me in past few months. I'm very happy to receive the book as it is my first time when my poem got published and I want thought to show my gratitude to you through this mail. Hope we get to work together again in the future and wishing you all the best for future endeavours.- Mitali Prasad

I'm literally in tears right now, oh my God. Thanks you @winglessdreamerlit !! The books arrived and are AMAZINGLY FANTASTIC! The cover art is beautiful, the collections stunning! I am filled with such surprise and honor my pieces were published with you, it makes me the happiest lassie in the world. Thank you so much!! If you want to support on of the best publishers EVER, go to Winglessdreamer.com or search their books on Amazon! So grateful. -Gratia Serpento

Hi there, I just wanted to say that after reading some of the poetry on Wingless Dreamer, I feel inspired and in awe. I've been writing on and off as a hobby for a few years now but seeing what you've done and how you've built this whole community of writers, I'm really inspired and impressed. You've given me just a bit more inspiration to keep working on my projects and for that I thank you.- Ryan

Best of afternoons! I am simply sending this email to first thank you for this as I am truly humbled by your decision to accept this poem for publication. I wrote this poem after many nights of night terrors and panic attacks due to my looming anxiety over the pandemic and instant changes the world is going through seemingly overnight. Your validation of this poem is received by such validation and a feeling of triumph that I cannot put into words, so genuinely, thank you. -Arnaldo Batista

I am most excited to receive this new book, and I have already shared your various publications with many friends and family! I am very happy to have come across your publication and look forward to reading many more of your other contributor's pieces!- Natalie Kormos

I shall be anxiously awaiting the book's arrival. I always appreciate your editing efforts. They have always been terrific in the past. More book graphics sounds great, I'm excited to see what they are all about. I'm going to your website now and check out what else you have going on, I know you always have a lot going on. You folks are a great publisher in my book, and I'm not just saying that because you've published some of my work, I sincerely mean it and my family and friends agree. Keep up the great work that you do, I know you will.-William David

Keep up this excellent work. Poetry truly connects the readers with poetic souls across countries and cultures – Amita Sanghvi

It is a great joy for me that a kindhearted editor of a journal like you has liked my poem. Thank you again. Be happy in life this is my heartfelt wishes to you.-Sandip Saha

There is such a positive vibes from Wingless Dreamer, unlike any other publisher. -Gavin Bourke

It's an honor and a privilege to be part of the most eminent Literary Journal of the young minds 'Wingless Dreamer.' This is a place where dreams becomes reality. Wingless Dreamer has made possible for all poets & readers to flap the wings of dreams, imagination & aspiration into the deep blue sky of peace, progress & prosperity. You may prosper like the locket of Apollo. You may win unnumbered hearts of poet lovers in future. – Mr. Saheb SK

DESCENDANTS OF DARKNESS

Edited and Compiled by

Nadelina Agopoglu

Ruchi Acharya



ABOUT US

In 2019, Indian author Ruchi Acharya dreamed of a literary community that could bridge the gap between fellow, emerging writers with a fervent passion to create and the world of traditional publishing. She envisioned a place where writers and artists are allowed to publish based solely on the merit of their creative skills. Her desire and inspired vision culminated in the design of Wingless Dreamer Publisher, a forum providing aspiring and experienced creators alike the opportunity to share their love of English literature and art on a global platform.

Throughout the year, our Wingless Dreamer team offers a multitude of themed writing contests designed to stimulate fresh ideas and present an opportunity for talented authors worldwide to contribute perspectives through creative expression efforts. We select the best of the best submissions and stream together the components of writing, editing, and illustrating to result in publications of beautiful literary anthologies that we promote in the marketplace. Our commitment to providing this single platform and process allows our authors and artists to bypass challenges and obstacles associated with the traditional publishing goal, and instead maintain their focus and devotion to creating works of art.

Most meaningful is that Wingless Dreamer community members become part of a family, and are guided, encouraged, and supported as they take each step toward cultivating a successful writing or art career. Non-native English-speaking authors are also granted access to free reviews, critiques, marketing, and, in some cases, funding for their work. Our community has slowly, but steadily, grown to become a prominent stage featuring well-known professional writers and artists from all over the world.

Finally, we at Wingless Dreamer are devoted to publishing poetry, fiction, and artwork reflecting the entirety of multiple perspectives and varied experiences extracted from the deep well of soulful human existence. As such, BIPOC, LGBTQ, disabled, minority, and other marginalized voices are especially invited to join in the sharing. Our ultimate goal is to uplift the human spirit through a diverse creative community. At its core, the human spirit desires connections through expressions. We ardently endeavor to gift wings to these heartfelt dreams.

FOUNDER'S PEN

Being a writer can sometimes be solitary and quiet. A writer can understand how it feels to fall in love with every single character, battle with dialogues, work with vivid poetic devices, endeavor for perfection, and build an entire universe from scratch. Guess what? You're not alone. We understand the efforts you put every day into your work. Since we are a team of writers and artists too.

The writing industry is always considered as something obscure and profound by the public in general. It has become so difficult to stand alone and to stick with a writing career in the commercial society we live in today. Compared to other financial and economic-related jobs, things related to writing are the minority.

Writing is a terrific passion, and writers work in a hard industry, one where success is often sought and little received. Writing is not merely something we do, but something we are, and that makes it one of the most challenging of all pursuits in life.

I never got the right support to become a writer at the prime youth of my life. In the place where I come from writing is considered a cute hobby instead of passion - a commitment that writers made to themselves. Writers don't receive the same respect that other professions do. It's quite condescending. That sort of mentality is also so harmful to amateur writers' confidence. From my past experience, I realize that this issue needs to be addressed.

People need to understand that writing is a hard business. It is time-consuming and after dedicating late-night hours, a roller coaster of emotions to finally produce a piece of literary work that might be read around the globe.

So, I come up with this publishing company and yeah I am proud of it.

In the end, I would like to urge all the people who are reading this to never ever give up on your dreams. Seize the day. Every day counts. I hope you will support us and encourage our team efforts. More power to your pen. Cheers! -*Ruchi Acharya, Wingless Dreamer Founder*

Why is Descendants of Darkness Important?

The poetry anthology "Descendants of Darkness" is a journey into the depths of human emotion, revealing the raw and often concealed aspects of our inner selves. The collection's carefully woven tapestry of words provides a cathartic experience, offering its readers solace and a profound sense of release. To Wingless Dreamer, poetry is not just a form of artistic expression but a powerful tool for healing, capable of transcending the negativity surrounding us.

In this modern era of fleeting experiences and surface-level engagements, Wingless Dreamer strives to preserve the rich tapestry of English Literature. "Descendants of Darkness" is a testament to this commitment, inviting readers to immerse themselves in a world of imagination meticulously crafted by skilled poets through language.

This anthology serves as a beacon, empowering writers to forge their paths of expression and navigate the labyrinth of emotions with creativity and ingenuity. "Descendants of Darkness" exemplifies creative expression's enchanting and transformative potential, igniting a spark within others to tap into their wellspring of imaginative prowess. Through this snapshot of emotions, thoughts, and insights, "Descendants of Darkness" contributes to the enduring legacy of literature, ensuring that the voices within its pages echo through the corridors of time.

-Nadelina Agopoglu, Judge and Editor, Wingless Dreamer

OUR JUDGE'S MESSAGE

When the burdens of life become too heavy to bear, seek refuge in your craft. Let your heart spill onto the page, capturing both the joys and pains of life. Writing is not just about capturing happiness; it's about finding release, discovering catharsis, and allowing your soul to breathe. Through your words, you can create a sanctuary - a safe haven where you can heal, transform, and soar.

Remember, you are never alone on this journey. There is a community of writers, such as Wingless Dreamer, who understand your struggles, who have walked the same path, and who are rooting for you. Don't hesitate to reach out to us, share your experiences, and accept the support and encouragement you deserve.

Celebrate every small victory. Every sentence written is a step forward. Every manuscript rejection is a badge of courage, demonstrating your bravery in sharing your voice with the world. Every time you pick up your pen or type on your keyboard, you declare that your story matters.

So, to all my fellow writers facing challenges, hold tight to your dreams with unwavering determination. Use your setbacks to fuel your ambition and draw inspiration from your moments of darkness. You have the power to rise from the depths and turn your struggles into stories that resonate with those who may face similar challenges. Stay strong, and keep writing, creating, and believing in yourself.

With unwavering support and endless admiration,
Nadelina Agopoglu

About the Judge, Nadelina Agopoglu

Nadelina Agopoglu, American Armenian, is a lifelong literature lover. Nadelina firmly believes in unconditionally supporting creatives in their production, evident through her work at Wingless Dreamer Publisher, a company dedicated to empowering and promoting creative individuals.

With a profound love and fondness of Armenian and Women's Literature, Nadelina explores the intricacies of these distinguished literary domains. Among her favorite literary pieces are *In the Dreamhouse* by Carmen Maria Macchado and *The Fool* by Raffi.

Nadelina Agopoglu has been preparing her debut in the literary world, having written multiple short stories and a poetry collection over the span of a few years. During her time writing, she has undertaken many opportunities in order to bring her works to their highest potential by working with other creatives and by constantly consuming various pieces of literary work. She advocates for the accessibility of creative production, and strongly believes that everyone should be able to follow their passions and have their work recognized.



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- Grand winner of the Descendants of Darkness Contest 2023
- First runner-up - Second runner-up - Top Finalists

Believe in yourself

"I want to use this opportunity to thank all the participants and Wingless Dreamer team to make this publication possible. Every poet has unstained spirit and spotless soulfulness that rests at their very center. Embrace it. Thanks for your support and always remember,

Never give up on your dreams."

–Ruchi Acharya, Wingless Dreamer Founder

1. SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE A FATHERLESS CHILD

Like a sacred exacter of justice
you held me ass over knee;
You, who were ravaged by the light.
You, now no more than clay in my hand.
An idol trembling, crushed
under the weight of its own falsehoods

In this life we are granted but one body, one soul,
one spirit, and one baptism.
One God and one Father who is above all,
until he is above none;
his vain cruelty is made flesh
and I drink down his shame like it's the Eucharist.
No height nor depth could have kept me from it
but still, God is not so easily mocked.
Perhaps this was my own sin;
unsheathing vengeance and burning brilliance
when all he sought was comfort.
Alas, it might have been easier for me to forgive him his trespasses
were it not for all the blood in my
mouth.

Jesus, I am all that you could have been.
God, you are all that I might still be.
Lord Almighty, what will become of us.



LOLA STANSBURY-JONES

Lola is a young, working-class writer originally from North Wales. Her work has been featured in the Atlanta Review, Headline Poetry, and Poets Reading the News. In 2021 she was named one of the best new British and Irish poets by the Black Spring Press Group. More of her work can be found at {lolastansburyjones.wordpress.com}.

2. POWER OUTAGE

the crack in the doorway is dimly lit
by the eerie glow of electronics
a radio plays a late night mix of 2000's popular hits while an oscillating
fan slow dances with itself
moving the thick midnight air around
standing by is a shadowy figure
watching two bodies release their rage against each other what started
off as sweaty sheets and stress relief
has led to a mental power outage
trauma is an invasive species
that wraps itself around our throats



CODY DRACO

Cody Draco is a Florida based writer who debuted in 2023 with three self-published collections of poetry (Observations, Healing is Not for the Faint of Heart, and Untimely). As a gay Christian and someone who is diagnosed with bipolar disorder his work often explores themes of mental health, love, loss, creativity, and spirituality.

3. HAPPY ENDINGS

There will be a station between two tracks, claustrophobic
as everyone has brought their baggage, and there is no end
to the passengers headed to their final destination. They will
pass flower gardens which agonize in their vividity, beaches of
caterpillars weaving silk, and all the sand a cocoon for slumber,
oceans of blue anemone, collecting souls as they roll into buds &
we are present smelling nutmeg and warm cinnamon on the stove,
hanging mistletoe & peppermint, endless satchels of jasmine tea,
and there we are looking out the window as this world passes
in still images, blinking from one continent to the next. We'll ride
horses and have every estate ever imagined for our families,
there will be arcades with every game from childhood that was
decommissioned, and your loved ones will be there, free admission,
I'll see the best friend I had euthanized, and he'll jump into my arms
without the pain of severe arthritis, as my father who passed too soon,
embraces me wearing a tucked shirt & jeans, my mother pirouettes
in Victorian mansions with suave men as she'd always imagined,
and everyone you have ever admired will be happy to see you,
we will be euphoric until the end of time & I won't have to
believe that happy endings only exist in dreams.



BRANDON SHANE

Brandon Shane is a Japanese-American alum of California State University, Long Beach, where he majored in English. He's pursuing an MFA while working as a writing instructor and substitute teacher. You can see his work in the Berlin Literary Review, Acropolis Journal, Grim & Gilded, Livina Press, Bitterleaf Books, Remington Review, Salmon Creek, BarBar Literary Magazine, Discretionary Love, among many others. Find him on Twitter @ Ruishanewrites

4. ACT IV

It's a sound that
draws my spine tight
throws cords into violent seizures;
raw as the sores
stuck to the bed-cracks of both thumbs
baiting me into the solitude it often brings

Act IV begins alone—
the focal breath in this hollow house or home
raging—a rasp below broken bits of
dirt beyond my speakers—

I am listening

Two monsters rumble
love grieving down the glass between them
betrayal in seven colors
it's not another thing—an "other" thing
aching in their claws—those bundles of teeth and

naked, flesh colored hate—for contact, some
acknowledgment that they long to gnaw on
but those spines are not theirs to break



BRYNN TESKE

Brynn Teske is a transgender poet and novelist based in Minnesota. He's an English undergraduate who is passionate about mental health, spicy villain arcs, and stealing horses in Red Dead Redemption II. Brynn is a lifelong writer. He completed his first novelette in the third grade and was unable to stop.

5. I NEVER LIKED MY TIA'S APARTMENT

i never liked my tia's apartment.

there's just something unsettling about those optic white walls that whisper to you, or the crack in the blinds that compels you to stare outside and see things that aren't really there. don't get me started on the noises i hear—the taunting hum of the refrigerator, the condescending laugh of the air conditioner, and most of all, the chuckles of footsteps outside.

i clutch my copy of hemingway's collected poems tight in my hand. but i can't read. my eyes scan the page about five times before i accept that my focus is vacant.

maybe i'm just tired. maybe that's it. maybe my neglect of sleep is disrupting my ability to discern reality from suspicion.

"hey!" a voice suddenly booms down the hall. i jump. so i'm not crazy, because i certainly heard that with open eyes and an alert mind.

i try my best to ignore the uneasiness that festers inside of me at an alarming rate. but i can't get it subside at all. it's too abundant.

on the rollaway bed i'm sitting on, the sheets grip my legs like they don't want to let go. i stare out of it again. there's nothing but abyss down there, with the exception of the dim street light that illuminates a small circle.

i'd hate to be down there.
i turn back around and sigh.
i'm overthinking this all, perhaps.



M.S. BLUES

M.S Blues is a multiracial, queer, versatile writer. Her work revolves around the darker pieces of humanity society tends to neglect. She has been published by the Trailblazer Review, Eber & Wein, Pa'lante!, Literal Impact, Teen Ink, Wingless Dreamer, Prismatica Magazine. The Insurgence Magazine, Pile Press, and the Amazine. She currently resides in the Bay Area, California. Her Instagram handle is {_.thewriterx._}.

6. A PORTRAIT OF YOUR MIND

That voice!

The one you hear in the middle of the night

An outcry for mercy

The disturbing sound that makes your heart

Jump out of its closet

Preceding a suddenly hum

While your eyes rotate three-sixty degree

Seeing things, no! They are actually there

The bulge eyes peeping from the broken walls

The shadow of a strange woman

Lurking on you

And the breath you feel upon your cheek

With no other person in the room

Should I hide in the toilet

Or run into the lonely street?

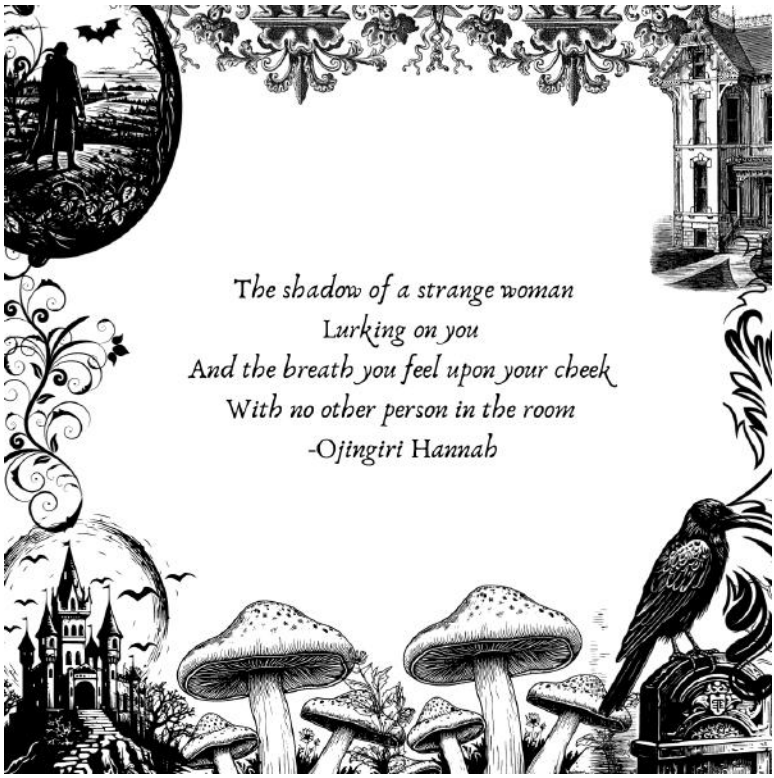
Questions unanswered by the mirage of fear

And bewilderment suffocating you

What if it's all imagination

And there, you saw her

Naked in darkness, a portrait of your mind



OJINGIRI HANNAH

Ojingiri Hannah has her work published on Brittle paper, Kalahari Review, Reedsy, Medium, Story mirror, and {TravelDailyLife.com}. In her spare time she enjoys writing and reading inspirational books. She lives in Nigeria. She has written about 150 original quotes, and one was featured in “embracing our differences” and was displayed in Sarasota, Florida. You can connect with her on Facebook through the link below: {https://www.facebook.com/OjingiriHannah}
You can also reach her on Instagram through the link below:
{https:///www.instagram.com/ojingiri_hannah}

7. THE WRETCHED GREEN MILE

Slow were his steps on the way to the chair,
Looking down at the floor with an empty stare,

The buckles confined him that sealed his fate,
His upcoming pardon would be much too late.

The warden gave signal to commence the end,
The killer reached out and the switch he did send,

The phone on the wall began to ring,
Currents did roar and began to sing.

The warden then shouted “No! Just wait”
But the prisoner now stood at kingdom’s gate,

Governor had given a life extension,
New evidence showed defense, not intention.

His Mother now faint as she lies on the floor,
What right has the state to open death’s door?

The condemned looking down with a peaceful smile,
While his hit men departed from the wretched green mile.

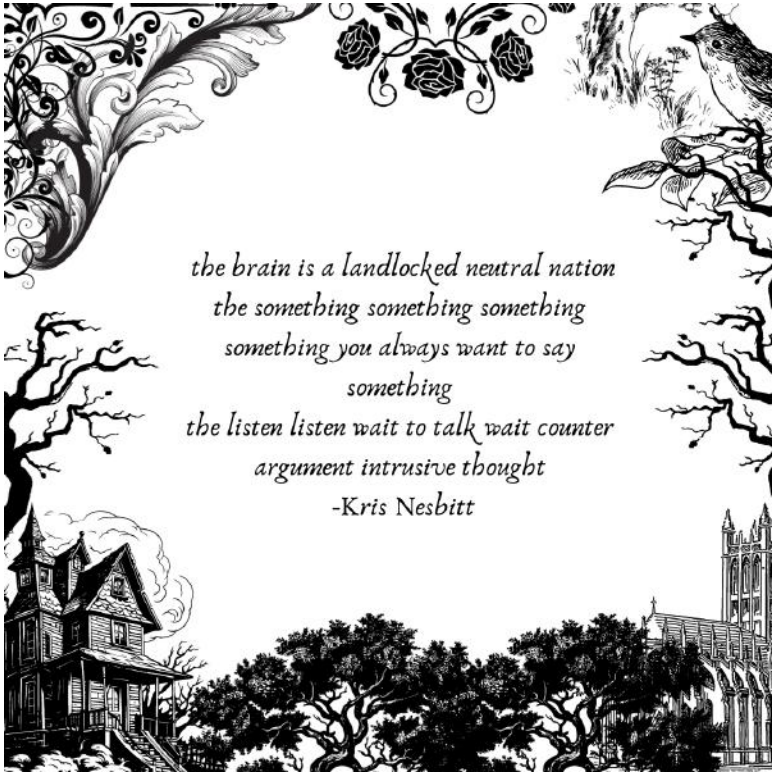


CYNTHIA MORRISON

Cynthia Morrison is a graduate of Palm Beach State College and enjoys writing plays as well as short stories. Her works tend to lean towards historic content.

8. LIKE READING PHONEBOOKS TO LEARN MATH

the brain is a landlocked neutral nation
the something something something something you always want to say something
the listen listen wait to talk wait counter argument intrusive thought
you think control you think instrumentality but your body was procedurally generated
you breathe without intervention bleed blood without intervention
sleep dreams without consent try to stop a myoclonic jerk
skin is the first draft to the outline of the prologue to your life story
say alright witnesses time to make this go away
strip the epidermis strip differentiation
light fractures the you that you are a prismatic prison refracting every color
dust glittered still air illuminated the here of your graveyard nuptial tomb
you will die where you lived and loved inside your light shattered body reverberating sound from far away
waves vibrate a thin membrane you hear vocal cords vibrate you speak creating waves
call out and hope
what will wanting do bones decay slowly whisper insurgency say solidarity dig two graves then is time you understand but once before was and soon after begins now
follow waiting to be left behind like light following tonight with sun shine
and soon after begins now



KRIS NESBITT

A 2019 graduate from Russell Sage in Writing and Contemporary Thoughts, Kris Nesbitt lives in a small New York Village and works in a slightly-larger Vermont town. Recently published by Indelible Lit and Wayne Literary Review.

9. WHEN I WALKED DOWN THAT DRIVEWAY (TO A DEARLY DEPARTED FRIEND, WITH ETERNAL AND GRACIOUS LOVE)

When I walked down that drive way,
To help as you locked the gate,
It did not occur that day
That months later you'd vacate,
Victim of stomach cancer,
And I would go to my job,
With my world a total blur,
Needing a shoulder to sob.



A.J. CHILSON

A.J. Chilson is an award-winning author over 35 books; some of the books are poetry collections, but most are children's work. He currently lives and works in Winnsbro, Texas, where he seeks to inspire others.

10. FEED

"Diana are you ready to go?"

Jared walked over to her and noticed she was still working on one of the samples found in the forest. Her blonde hair was wildly strewn across her shoulders, and her entire frame could barely keep itself together.

"I can't right now." She said without looking up from her work, "I feel like I am so close to finding out what's in these woods. The government has had us spend the past six months studying and searching for this so called 'Monster of Henderson' in this national park. I just need a little bit more time with this organic sample. You can go on without me though. I'll take one of the trails that cuts through the woods and meet you over at the ranger station."

Jared shook his head, "I think you should call it a day Diana; you've been working since four o'clock this morning and it's now five o'clock in the evening. You're even expecting our first baby in a few weeks! Diana you need to take it slow. This isn't good for you or for the baby."

She looked down at her belly and then roughly back at him, "Jared I am perfectly capable of taking care of myself. I know we want to have a family, but we've also worked so hard on this project! We need as much time as we can get! We've found organic samples here that aren't anything like I have ever seen before! This could change our entire viewpoint of life on Earth Jared! Please just let me finish this last test."

"Alright, alright," said Jared. "But I better see you standing over by that ranger station in thirty minutes. Ok?"

Diana smiled and replied, "Fine, I'll meet you over there in about forty-five minutes…deal?"

Jared replied with his own grin and said, "Deal! And not a minute later!"

With the plans now settled between the two of them, Jared packed his equipment onto the truck and hopped in. He then shouted over to Diana, "When you're done with your equipment, just leave it packed up in the crate. It will still be there tomorrow morning." Diana

smiled and gave him the thumbs up. Jared then started the engine and waved goodbye.

-

As Jared was driving down the dirt road, he could see the other groups of scientists dotting certain areas of the forest. He realized that the sun had just set and that the last few rays of light were washing over the area. He quickly turned his lights on and continued down the road. As he went along, he also could see scientists packing up their stations and joining him on the road towards the park exit. He began to worry about Diana being all alone back there, but he was reminded that she specifically asked to stay a little longer. Besides, she probably was already starting to head towards the ranger station.

As Jared continued driving, he suddenly noticed a ranger flagging him down up ahead. He slowed down and noticed it was Ranger Garrett. "Hey Jared," he said, "How are you doing this evening?" He noticed that the seat was empty next to Jared. "Isn't Diana normally with you?"

"I'm fine," Jared responded, "As for Diana, she wanted to stay behind and finish a few things. She said that she'll meet me over at the ranger station in a while."

"Ah ok." Ranger Garret said, "You should probably get there soon though, the other rangers were reporting that some strange sightings were reported over in your area. I'm going to head over there though to see what's going on, if Diana is still there, I'll try to get her over to where you are.

"Thanks for doing that Garret. Stay safe out there."

Ranger Garret smiled at him, "I will. Have a good night Jared."

As Jared continued driving, he watched in his rear-view mirror as Ranger Garret disappeared down the dirt road behind him. He once again began to worry if Diana might possibly run into a wild animal, but he pushed the thought away when he remembered that Ranger Garret was going to make sure she was alright.

-

Jared had been driving for some time now, and had decided to keep his window down to enjoy the cool evening breeze. He loved working outdoors, and he especially loved working in the forest,

especially a national park forest. It brought a sense of calm to him, and it helped him clear his mind. This project that they were working on here though made him shutter a bit, working on a project like this with a baby on the way was not a great combination. Yet, Jared respected Diana greatly and didn't want to get in the way of her work. Even if it did mean leaving her behind in the woods...

Jared's thoughts were quickly interrupted though when a heart wrenching scream pierced the air causing both Jared and the air around him to go ice cold. It sounded like a woman's voice, and it seemed to be coming from deep within the woods. He slammed his foot on the gas, and quickly sped up to the ranger station which was now just a little ways away. However as he sped down the road, his headlights picked up something horrific on the right side. He immediately put the truck in park, and rushed over to the grim discovery.

With a flashlight in his hand he beheld a bloody handprint on the side of some of the trees near the road, and that drops of blood were also pooled on the ground. He shined the flashlight into the woods and realized that the blood continued deeper into the darkness. Without hesitation he quickly followed the trail of blood worried that it may have come from Diana. His thoughts began to race, and his heart was beating wildly. "No…" he said to himself, "it can't be Diana…it can't be Diana. As he made his way deeper into the woods he tried to look around with his flashlight, but there was no sign of anything or anyone.

As he continued to trek deeper into the woods though, he suddenly noticed a strange black figure standing on a hilltop. The moonlight had brushed over the creature allowing Jared to spot it off in the distance. Its back was horribly distorted, and it seemed to be crouching over something. Before Jared could make any more sense of the situation though, another piercing shriek broke the chill air again causing Jared to drop his flashlight. This shriek though didn't sound like anything he had heard before.

The piercing scream had shaken Jared so bad though that he couldn't continue onward. With a surge of utter dread taking over his body, Jared rushed back to the truck and roared up to the ranger station hoping that he could get some more help. As he drove up though he noticed that everyone was now in a panic. It seemed that he wasn't the only one who had heard the horrifying screams in the woods. Scientists and park goers alike were fleeing through the gates in droves, while

rangers were running around like mad trying to calm everybody down. Jared tried to get one of the rangers attentions by flagging one down, but this proved to be very difficult. Many of them were swamped with terrified campers, families, and government workers, that they didn't even notice Jared calling out to them. Suddenly though, Jared spotted a ranger who was running towards a worried group of scouts situated further down the road.

"Wait! Hold on! I need to talk to you!" cried Jared.

The ranger stopped dead in her tracks and looked at Jared. Her eyes were wild, and sweat was dripping down her forehead.

"We're evacuating the park; some crazy animal out there is causing havoc! We don't know what it is, but you need to leave now!"

"Wait!" said Jared, "I'm one of the scientists working here along with my wife, and she's still out in the woods! You gotta help me find her!"

The ranger glared at him, "We are trying to help everyone get out of the park, just because you're a scientist doesn't mean you get special treatment! You're holding up the line!"

She pointed behind Jared to show other cars waiting to leave the park as well. Everyone was terrified, and there was nothing that Jared could do.

As he put the truck in drive, he tried to reassure himself that what he saw was only his imagination.

"You're panicked Jared," he said to himself, "Diana is fine, and that thing was only in your head." As he told himself this though, he couldn't push away the thought that what he saw…was real.

-

Deep within the woods Diana lay dying on the hard soil.

She had just finished her work and began to walk towards the ranger station when she heard something rustling in the bushes next to her. She tried to see if there was something there, but she couldn't get a good glimpse of it. She continued to walk down the path, but she felt as if something was following her. She turned around and saw nothing, but she could feel that something was…watching her. After walking for some time, she had finally made it to the road and thought that she might have beaten Jared. She was quite tired though due to the long day that she had, so she decided to rest herself up against the tree and to wait and see if Jared would pass by. She was exhausted with expecting a child

and with working on this project in the national park. She knew this assignment was unlike anything else she had worked on before, and so she couldn't pass up this opportunity even if she was now eight months pregnant. She had been working on these kinds of things for years, and she couldn't put this fantastic opportunity hold now. Nothing would stop her from finally uncovering the truth.

As she was leaning against the tree though something suddenly grabbed her left leg causing her to come crashing face first into the ground. She screamed out in pain as she grabbed her stomach, and she screamed even louder as the nightmarish monster began pulling her into the forest. With a sense of urgency and fear now taking over her body, she tried to hit at the thing, but she felt a sharp claw slash her hand. She winced in pain and saw the blood trickle down her hand. She frantically tried to grab onto something in hopes that she could pull herself away, but it was useless. The creature quickly overpowered her and continued to horridly drag her deeper into the woods. She began yelling at the monster and tried to kick at it. The kicks seemed to do nothing though as the entity held fast to her leg and continued to press onward into the woods.

Finally, the entity stopped pulling her for a moment, and turned to look at Diana. She let out a piercing scream as the moonlight above gave her a glimpse of the grotesque features of the monster. Its skin was an oily black color, and it didn't seem to have any hair covering its body. Its glowing cyclopean eye was blood red, and it had fangs as white as snow. Its back was horribly distorted and bent, and it gave off a horrible smell of rotten garbage. The monster turned its gaze towards a small hill off in the distance, and quickly sped off in that direction with Diana still being dragged behind him.

Once they finally made it to the small hill, he gave a blood curling howl and released his grip on Diana. Diana tried to crawl away, but she was badly hurt from being dragged and having her hand slashed. Before Diana could even move another useless inch, the monster leaned over top her and began to sniff her. Diana was now face to face with the creature, and was frozen in pure dread by her horrid situation.

Without another moment of mercy though the monster began to brutally tear into her. Diana ripped the night air with her screams as the monster broke through flesh, muscle, and bone. Her blood was spilling out of her like a gruesome fountain and the pain was excruciating. It felt

like hundreds of knives were being plunged into her at once. With her last ounce of energy Diana tried one last time to fight off the beast, but the beast easily overpowered her, resulting in Diana to give one more dismal wail.

After what felt like hours, the beast finally stopped, but only because it seemed to have noticed something off in the distance. Diana tried to move, but she could only raise her head up a little bit due to the severe pain that she was in. She gazed upon the rugged landscape that was her body and saw a huge open wound where her stomach was. A flood of emotions swept over her, and she let out another horrible cry. This one though seemed to cause the very forest to weep for her, as if Mother Nature herself was crying too. The realization of death took over her mind, as she felt that cold grasp of nothingness slowly envelop her. With tears in her eyes, the last thing she saw was her monstrous attacker bounding towards an unaware ranger wandering down the road…



ETHAN HUNT

Ethan is a published writer who loves to write. He especially enjoys writing about fantasy, gothic, and science fiction genres. In addition, Ethan is presently working for a Self Reliant Living Company which helps people in their overall lives. He also works as a tutor for two online companies and loves to help his students fall in love with reading and writing. Ethan hopes to continue to publish his work and to help change the world through his writing.

11. BANCROFT TOWER, WORCESTER

It's where I bet my brothers had a ball
sneaking up from behind. I thought I'd died.
But fright's not quite the same thing as a
fall.

Acrophobia (fear of heights), they'd call
it. I felt more, though. Far more. Terrified.

I bet that my big brothers had a ball
shaking my shoulders.
—Boo!—

(The outer wall
of Bancroft had wire steps along the side.
Half rusted. Fire escapes. A kid could fall
those fifty, sixty feet, however tall
the Tower was. Still is.)

Years later I'd
return with former cell mates, bring a ball

and play catch on the lawn, the Tower all
roped off.

One autumn evening, piqued by pride,
I told them that was where I'd nearly fall
when dastards dared to shake me like a doll;

where I began to plan
the fratricide.

For hours at the Tower, we had a ball.
Fair skies, fine friends. How free I felt that fall.



JAMES B. NICOLA

James B. Nicola, a frequent contributor, is the author of eight collections of poetry, the latest three being Fires of Heaven: Poems of Faith and Sense, Turns & Twists, and Natural Tendencies (just out). His nonfiction book Playing the Audience: The Practical Actor's Guide to Live Performance won a Choice magazine award. He has received a Dana Literary Award, two Willow Review awards, Storyteller's People's Choice award, one Best of Net, one Rhysling, and ten Pushcart nominations- for which he feels stunned and grateful. A graduate of Yale, James hosts the Writers' Roundtable at his library branch in Manhattan: walk-ins are always welcome.

12. BEFORE DRESSING (CONTENT WARNING: CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE)

From the bedroom he
would sit in his recliner,
stare at me in the bathtub.

After, he'd take me onto his lap,
beer breath and whiskers
solidifying my silence
every time



KRISTIN RYAN

Kristin Ryan is a poet and essayist working towards healing, and full sleeves of tattoos. She is a recipient of the 2017 Write Bloody Finalist. Her work has been nominated for Best New Poets, Best of the Net, and the Pushcart Prize. Her poems have been featured in Glass: A Journal of Poetry, Jabberwock Review, Anti-Heroin Chic, Moonchild Magazine, Serotonin Lit, and SWWIM among others. She holds an MFA from Ashland University.

13. A BLOOMING BRAIN FOR THE BEYOND

The Puzzle of Quietus – Taboo to a Child's Ears
Possessing their Intuition – A Genesis Shall Take Hold of My Little One's Imagination
I Become The Mature Mistress, and I Tell Them an Exemplar of Our Essence,
As Fortune Foresees, the Loss of a Life Can be Settled in a Box, and Embedded Within the Ground,
A Perpetual Sleep, as Pictured by my Lilliputian
They Envision a Long-Dead Man, Skinny, Old, and Suntanned, Laying Without Open Eyes in their Cardboard Crypt
His Body Won't Rot, and his Box Won't Decompose, his Smell of Decay will Stay Nonexistent
The Child's Imaginary Corpse – Can Only See the Illusion of Atmospheric Airspace,
With Shallows Painted like Nectarines and Peaches – Flashing in Soft and Slow Kaleidoscopes
This is the Deeming of My Petite Fille, their Developed Divination Beyond the Deceased
And I, the Madam of Maternity, tells them, "When you Die, your Body is Gone."
Still, My Child's Cerebrum Can't Forecast this Subsequent Severance, to be One, but Without their Flesh,
For them, To Be the Host of Incorporeal Vitals – it's a Bewildering Paradox,
I Soon Bestow My Sequential Warning to the Schoolchild,
On Their Ride to the Phrontistery for the Premature, They Sit and Peer at their Right Forearm,
It's a Pastel Tint, Not Yet Infused with Literary and the Sun, and Dotted with Moles at Intervals,
They Conjure the Image of their Little Left Fingers, Giving their Cubital Fossa a Squeeze, and Pulling Down the Skin like a Band-Aid
Behind their Eyes, the Little One Sees the Impression of their Unpigmented and Elusive Ossein, Below their Crimson Sap
To I, the Guide of their Ride, the Fillette Asks, "What would Happen if You Peeled Your Skin Back to See the Bone?"

They Want to Gaze at What's Underneath, To Know What Lies Beyond their Make-Believe
But to their Horror, I Reply, "You'd Die." – And Fear Replaces their Anthropological Fascination,
I've Given Life to the Seed of Thantophobia that Lies Within them, it Resonates with Deep Authenticity
Nevertheless, the Cherub's Curiosity Still Roams,
Death is the Undefined Taboo
Sugarcoated in Disney Films, Hidden in the Words of Passing Away,
It's the Mystery that Starts After Cessation,
May Hereafter be Raised, My Schoolchild's Mind Will One Day Be Blooming – with the World's Explanations for the Expiry,
They'll Think of Kinetic Skeletons Holding Blades, Androgynous Winged Hominids, the Bearded Mediterranean Beneath Earth's Crust, the Gothic Immortal with Horus's Eye,
And Cloaked Clouds of Catholicism Will Become the New Afterlife, the Cardboard Burials and Visions of Pale Kaleidoscopes – All But Done Away With,
My Grown One Will Witness their Comprehensive Comings,
Dying Won't Stay an Enigma, but will Remain Somehow Concealed – Contained in its Own Labyrinth
The Twists and Turns Already Expected,
My Little Girl – Will Become My Grown One, and Being Deceased Will Not be the Doorway to the Other Life, but the Pathway to the Next Platform
Fin



INGE SORENSON

Inge Sorenson is a poet and short story writer born and raised in California's Bay Area. In her free time, she loves reading, sharing her favorite stories, and comparing a finished book to their on-screen adaptation. Her writing subjects explore themes of loss, joy, hardship, nostalgia, and adventure. Her pieces have been featured in the Viewless Wings Poetry Podcast, the Humans of the World blog, and Poet's Choice Autumn Anthology.

14. POLAR ICE CAPS

Indisputable circumpolar Ice Caps Corridor
Vehicular Vivifications to access Lost Avenue
Hegemony multi-escolar stability morning's Ice-Dew
Lute fulvous bed lost precious launder
Alluvial imperturbability to ponder
Mist clouds metamorphoses are seldom new
Submarine fauna and flora below ice undue
Transoceanic Currents of Sea quakes wander
Colors of the rainbow torrid
Odors from half- filled kettles of burning coals
Counsels of hygiene in the Polar Ice submersion
Buoyancy of ice in Dead Sea's trail
Penetrativeness inadequate to find myself
Downward trending ghost ships last stop in Duluth



TERRY BRINKMAN

Terry has been painting for over forty-five years; now he paints with words too. Poems in Rue Scribe, Tiny Seed, Winamop, Snapdragon Journal, Poet's Choice, Adelaide Magazine, Variant, the Writing Disorder, Ink Pantry, In Parentheses, Ariel Chat, New Ulster, Glove, and in Pamp-le-mousse, North Dakota Quarterly, Barzakh, Urban Arts, Wingless Dreamer, True Chili, LKMNDS, and Elevation.

15. THE SONG OF THE DARK

The Song of the Dark
"The Music of the Night"
Dare to fight
Without succumbing to fright,
And even when
The black of night
Transforms an evil queen,
Do much more
Than just be seen,
For the wicked
Would create conflicts,
Yet conflict resolution
Is a positive solution
To banish negativity
And give hope
As well as help cope
With the song of the dark
That might just be as enchanting
As making an indelible mark
Upon the real world
Where good and evil
Coexist,
And finally,
Strive to do more
Than just exist



ALEX PHUONG

Alex Andy Phuong earned his Bachelor of Arts in English from California State University—Los Angeles in 2015. He was a former Statement Magazine editor who currently writes about literature, film, and culture. He also earned an Associate of Arts in English from Pasadena City College in 2013, and tutored there. He has written hundreds of film reviews for MovieBoozer, and has contributed articles to Mindfray. His writing has appeared in The Bookends Review and The Society of Classical Poets. Emma Stone inspired Alex to submit writing actively to publications after hearing the Oscar-nominated song, "Audition (The Fools Who Dream)" from the "Best Picture" nominee La La Land (2016). His poetry collection is An Altruistic {(Cyberwit.net), 2020}. Currently residing in Alhambra, California, he now writes with the sincerest hope to inspire readers while fully supporting the ones who dare to pursue their dreams. The link to his blog is {http://alexandyphuongengl492playlist.blogspot.com/}

16. THE STRINGS OF MUSE

O Lyra Thou art incomparable,
Thou hath beautified the heart
Which was merged in intolerable
Pangs. O mother of new birth.

I still remember the tune,
Of thy harp. When Apollo ,
Sang the lays of June.
There formed the heavenly shadow,

Which blessed the shower of mirth,
Thou hast created O mother,
The Elysium on the earth,
The light of almighty power,

Was on the grey firmament,
Doves were enchanting,
The song of gay. The trees,
Sparkled like a new robbed queen.

O Lyra Thou hath made thy way.
Nobody on this planet hath charisma
To smother thy Voice. O mother,
Thou art the heart of every human soul.



SAHEB SK TANVI

Ms. Saheb Sk Tanvi is a visionary persona who is an author,editor, keen researcher, short story writer and novelist by passion. She has contributed herself to paint the panoramic picture of the sufferings of "Women Society". She has sought solace in the lap of nature and in her poems the core relationship with nature can easily be seen. Ms. Saheb has composed many poems & short stories which are the blend of Classical and modern thoughts. She is free minded and spends her spare time by listening songs or reading books. Her broad research interests include the Growth & Structure of American English, Globalization of English language, a view towards Greek and Roman Mythology and the influence upon the classical author, Feminism and Culture etc. Follow her on Instagram @tanvi_shannya.

17. CONSTANT NIGHT

My love is like
a constant light
that shines across
the endless night.

My life is like
a trail traversed
that begins again
when once reversed.

But ever since we met
you have been the rock;
I am the bobbing boat
always coming in to dock.

The light, the lantern.
The pillar and the post.
The heart, the soul.
The dream and the ghost.

My love is like
an endless light
that shines across
the constant night.



JOHN RC POTTER

John RC Potter is an international educator (currently university counsellor, previously principal & teacher) and gay man from Canada, living in Istanbul. He has experienced a revolution (Indonesia), air strikes (Israel), earthquakes (Turkey), boredom (UAE), and blinding snow blizzards (Canada), the last being the subject of his story, "Snowbound in the House of God" (Memoirist, May 2023). His poems, stories, essays, and reviews have been published in a range of magazines and journals, most recently in Blank Spaces, ("In Search of Alice Munro", June 2023), Literary Yard ("She Got What She Deserved", June 2023), Freedom Fiction ("The Mystery of the Dead-as-a-Doornail Author", July 2023) & The Serulian ("The Memory Box", September 2023). John RC Potter – Author Website (author-blog.org) https://twitter.com/JohnRCPotter

18. DEAR GRANDMA

Meet me
Back in time
Before he died
At the house
Downstairs
In the garden
I'll be there
Right on time
With flowers
You'll greet me
Smiling
Come in! We'll hug
Lunch
A cold table
How wonderful
Then upstairs
When the fog rolls in
We'll visit
Extra hot coffee, black
& princess cake with you
How nice! Now tell me—
Together
As we were
Before he died
We'll finally
Have to
Say goodbye
But first
You'll show me something
In the basement



K. REED

K. Reed brings a fresh perspective to the literary scene with her tender, memoir-based poetry. Reed's poems dive into the murky depths of human experience, exploring love, death, sex, substance use, pop-culture, friendship and family. A graduate of Occidental College in Los Angeles and the University of San Francisco, Reed holds both a B.A. in Art History and a Masters in Teaching. Reed's blend of visual imagery and intimate introspection draws readers in, inviting them to view life through her lens, together, with their own. Prepare to feel embraced. Website: {www.kreedpoet.com}

19. TO UNRAVEL THAT WHICH IS AS THIN AS THE WING OF A CICADA: A SKELETAL PLOT

Moral character is a type of framework
and can be a bit like a trick
or all that remains
(like ashes).
A rib, tendon and sinews
may be considered synonymous
with reason and logic
lineage and descent
or veins that stand out on the skin
(depending on circumstances).
The continuous and unending –
like the Cicada
(or the appearance of the decoration of a Cicada's wing) –
continues.
To unravel, draw out, interpret, explain and continue
eternally?
Reason, logic, a plot or a story –
a skeletal framework
synonymous with moral character.



DOUGLAS COLTSON

Douglas Colston hails from Australia, has played in Ska bands and picked up university degrees, supported his parents during terminal illnesses, developed chronic mental and physical illnesses pursuant to sustained workplace harassment, married his love, fathered two great children, had his inheritance embezzled and among other things, he is pursuing a PhD he hopes will provide a positive contribution to the zeitgeist. In addition to various Wingless Dreamer anthologies, his fiction, nonfiction and poetry has appeared in various anthologies and magazines, including: POETiCA REViEW; Impspired; New Note Poetry; Otherwise Engaged Literary and Arts Journal; and Revue {R}évolution. {http://theancientoracle.com/ https://www.facebook.com/douglas.colston/}

20. SAKURAS WITHER AWAY

When their thirst quenches,
they go back home with their sticks,
Swords, rods and torches
To be sheathed until the next time.

Leaving behind the street vendor
To retrieve what remains of his fruits,
Only finding the karmic fruits of another.
A broken cart, a weary wheel.

The drivers stare at the fruits of violence,
At the charred remains of what fed them
Wiping off their little dreams in silence
From their ash covered eyes.

The singer coughs as he picks his guitar again,
Afraid of strumming the wrong notes.
The photographer wipes off the petrified lens
Covering its eyes by the black soots of reality.

The writers bring their pens down,
Heavily cutting through the pages and lines,
A few candles illuminate a ghost town,
While some sheath their swords until next time.

The sakuras silently wither away,
sorrowful at the subtlety of their pink tainted.
On streets, red, black and grey,
Maybe in a time of peace, they shall bloom again.



SOMDEEP DUTTA

Somdeep Datta hails from the city of Kolkata, India. A person of varied interests, Somdeep has a passion for travel, writing and photography. He has experience working with travel blogs, tabloids, magazines and publications. His poems have been published in the anthologies Wild Heart, Whispers of Spring and Unheard Phantoms by Wingless Dreamer Publisher."

21. CONJURED PATHWAYS

Today is like no other day with my blood spilled out on yellow daisies with black pebbles that wither and die before they can be enjoyed. to touch one is bliss to own one is heaven to kill one is hell.
Woe are the standbys that whisper that frozen freakish breath towards me so I stand aside from them all and wish no harm, but I will split their hearts into ten folded pieces to put in the old armor forever. I stretch my thinning scalp to its full extension & brace for the ecstasy that always surrounds my center eye, that is glowing red for the stars I own to find me in this deep and vast aroura shinning & gleaming, a faint but retractable & portable DNA shred that needs adjusting. Which goes to one of many souls that float by my mind's eye.
Again, the freakishly frozen breath of those beyond repair they rush me while the scorched entity of my entire nothingness that’s left behind on the trails of black peddled daisies that fall and crash upon the shattered hourglass of doom and despair splintered into fractions like my boyhood
Memories of young days way far gone by and un-noticed to anyone of a prophet's twisted lips wrapped around the chain hanging from the sky lantern hanging in the mist of deep space till it reached eternity and starts over again. My heart is relinquished to the death star hid in the black hole of time.
Twisted and tangled fangs of the wolf hound now sink into the only vein left to draw any memory of an existence that was once the tweaking twilight of my time in the stars bottomless pit of a pineal gland it had stolen from the last of my mind's eye lid ripping it to shreds before me while pretending to cry like the true human it once use to be.
Then one night I looked up into the blackest sky there ever was in the time intertwined with the source it gleamed it was a spec to my third eye and I followed its light, closer I came and the farther it would bounce around the stars of our tomorrows. I knew instinctively that it was my turn, my time, my hope, my dreams, my searching, my longing that was that spec in the night sky. All at once my beaten and battered chest broke open

wider than the earth's circumference; my heart jumped out of my soul's knowingness. It finely became a free feather flying into the beauty and the bliss of God himself. I knew at that very moment this was going to be a forever arrangement and agreement.
Between myself and my arms aching for something and someone to hold and the souls of my worn down heals and entangled toes this is going to be forever. My eyes turned blue as the sky that has just left the darkness behind forever. My body's structure took on a multitude of shapes and sizes intermingling growing into something I have never seen before or I have ever seen in my third eye before, this is heaven this is healing this is living, oh how I longed for these opportunities to present themselves. *I was free from the hounds that guard hell's gates for now I owned the key to come and go. I chose not to go there again. The beauty of love in my heart leads me down a path I have never ventured before. This is love, this is life, this is me.*
I found the love of my world named Robertson, and I can stay here forever in time my time and time in the far distant pass, and all my time in the eternity of my heart's future. I am now in the arms of safety in the Bussom of bliss lavish are the surroundings loving is the soul of Robertson, I am him and he is me. Forever.

Like the gentleness of a cool running stream his love covers my being. His soul for me to protect and him to protect mine. Neither of us, never experiencing anything like this in a million lifetimes, are overjoyed with sincere care and love and determination to live this life of love the rest of our days on or off this spinning planet be it a simulation or not. This feeling to us is truly real and truly our calling. Loneliness is gone, empty hopes are gone, despair is erased and dissolved into dust that we can blow away into heaven's third eye pulverated into nothingness it is no longer a reality to either of us. We are meant for each other and each other is for eternity.

Unconditional love, unconditional bliss blares through the night's darkest deepest ignorance and its entity is gone.



TIMOTHY F. PHILLIPS

Timothy F Phillips is considered to be a naïve artist who adds a splash of realism. Timothy believes that with the publication of his works he is bringing to light the essence of the work of a true master who achieves with his art a transformation not of the world, but of the way we see it which brings us a vision of a more human world.

22. EDGE OF A WOOD

This place visits me as often as Adeline did
when Vincent shut himself
on the second floor of a hot blazing July
wrapped in cadmium yellow curtains
and hoped he'd never have to do this again.
I invite my old companion in
and take them to the kitchen table
by the crumbling window.
Sylvia is not here – it's me who takes the apple pie
out of the oven
and serve its puffy body to my guest
under the watchful eye of the mirth clock
that keeps counting my hopeless mistakes
with the sugar crumbs on top.
My guest says they forgot about forks -
No sharp objects allowed here,
so I see them off - feet in the wet snow
and ask at our doorstep:
Come before spring and I'll be still here.
Come, before my skeleton hands grow darker
like the almond branches by the fence.



EVGENIYA DINEVA

Evgeniya Dineva is writer from Bulgaria. Her works appear in various literary journals such as The Trouvaille Review, Poetic Sun, Indian Ruminations, Ethel and Asian Cha. She's working on her debut poetry collection Animals Have no Fathers

23. SOUL SEARCHING

The electrical pulses that make up the skeletal structure of my human existence,
Are telling me that
My soul has been cursed.

Sometimes, my soulmate visits me in the night.
He has returned to me as only an apparition of expired possibility.
As if he died at a young age in this lifetime,
and we never got the chance to find one another.

I feel his vacancy
As if it's a Truth my bones were built to carry the weight of.

I have been hopelessly seeking him in every warm breath on my neck,
Searching for him in every pair of lips pressed on my own,
But each body that has ever entered mine has felt foreign,
Like I have only stumbled upon temporary shelters in a desperate timeliness.

I feel his energy now, distant, on some cosmic plain,
As my soul reassures me of a loss, to which I couldn't name.
As if long ago, Zeus gifted us together
And then ripped us from each other's limbs.
Like I have been damned to search
In a sea of souls, where he doesn't even swim.



ALEXIS K. ALLARD

Alexis K. Allard is a fresh voice in the world of horror fiction and poetry. With a single piece, "Picking up the Pieces," featured in the Spring 2021 edition of "The Open Field Magazine" at the University of Maine, she has already begun to captivate her readers with a dark artistry. Alexis concentrates on crafting tales that delve deep into the human psyche, inviting readers to confront their deepest fears.

24. BLACK CANDLES

The flames lick the shadows, savouring the darkness.
The wax drips, black as my desire.
Moonlight glints silver upon the blade that looses my blood,
To rain down upon your image,
Drown your raven tresses.

As my blood spills, so may yours tenfold.
As the flower of my youth withers, so may yours unquenchingly.
As pain wearies my bones, may it curse you a thousand times.
As the mists of despondency devour my light, so may they chew you endlessly.

May senescence be upon you,
May madness hold you in its taloned fist,
May death keep you,
And may you know no peace.



RYAN LEIGHTON

Ryan Leighton is a writer from Coleraine, in the north of Ireland. His work includes poetry, short stories, and a first novel in progress. Genres he is partial to include fantasy, horror, and sci-fi, and he also has a passion for Celtic paganism. His work has been inspired by his own struggles with depression, OCD, and anxiety, his love for nature, as well as his interest in spirituality and mythology. He has a Bachelor's degree in English and a Master's degree in Creative Writing, and is working to turn his passion for writing into a career.

25. OLD DUSK

Sun falling, arcing downwards in a fluttering finale of nightfall,
The muck and mud and darkness swallows her,
Gobbling the daylight up.
Consumed by the shades of what was,
Ashen-faced silhouettes of the firebird's worshippers.
Now trudge back to their pits,
Their caves and trenches, dug deep, filled with the light of ersatz suns,
Meant to ward away the ineffable friend outside:
Old Dusk.
He reaches up to the window and raps,
All smiles and glittering golden teeth,
"Evening to you and yours, my dears!
Why, could you let me in?
Just set aside your fickle fears,
And let our fun begin."
They shudder at the temptation: listen, let him enter!
And ever they can hear his grin,
His smile creaking, leaking soot,
Hinting at all that's Underneath.
The sun cannot escape his chase,
Fair phoenix shall be slain,
What hope does each meager candle have?
Blown out, alone or in bunches.
Inevitable, forever, inescapable,
Old Dusk will snuff them out.
He'll soon be rapping at your door: will you answer?
Eventually your light will flicker,
As Old Dusk pinches your wick.



GABRIEL CRAIG

Gabriel Craig was born and raised in southeast Texas, having majored in English with a double minor in Creative and Technical Writing at Sam Houston State University. Now he works in IT in education, and the faerie tales of old serve as an enduring source of inspiration for his writing.

26. I LOATHE THE CLOCK

From my first breath till your last, Father Time's longest hand made not a single tick.
Why bother with time?

Oh to comprehend the insignificance of years much less the brevity of days. The impermanence is resounding. Why stress the minutes?

Punctuality is a construct molded by those who believe that which is of most
importance to themselves ought be of most importance to others. Why bound life to numbers?

Time withholds our objects of anticipation only to countdown their departure a
mere blink after they arrive. Why wait for the perfect time?

Time is our enemy. It is the clock that I loathe. May we indefinitely frustrate its
insistence on measuring our existence in ticks and tocks. Why waste time with time?



JORDAN BRIGGS

Jordan is sustained by his brilliant wife and vibrant daughter. He's looking to God for his purpose.

27. GLUTTONOUS BONES

The vultures are fat.
Such mindless wanderers
Their beaks going click click amongst the sand
They've eaten all the magic within.
To be unalive, to be an empty husk
The cacti mock them, forbidding their desires

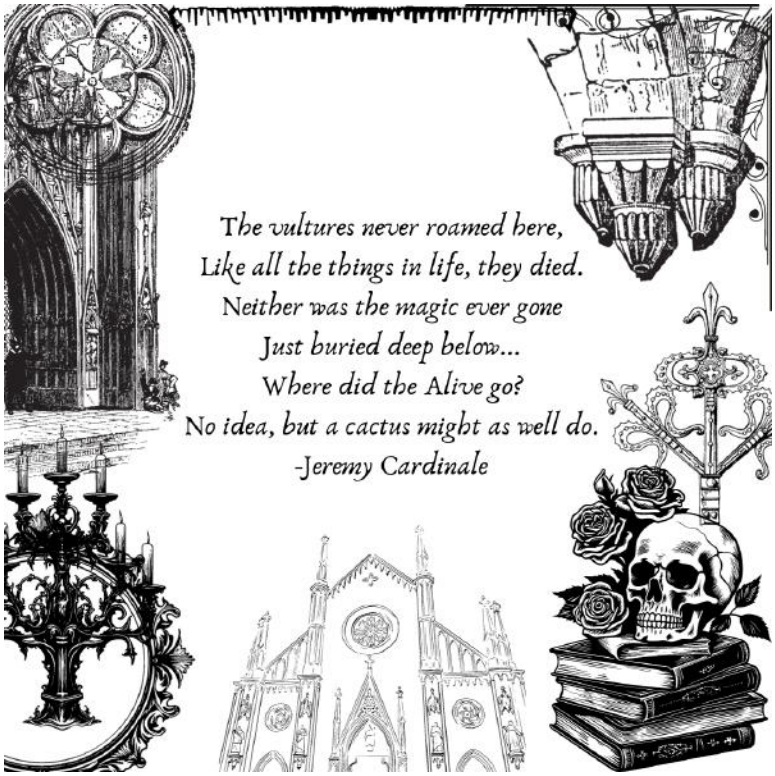
As the forgotten walk, the ghost speak
Why search? Why search?
Only marked tombs of the ancients and
Withered flowered monuments remain
With memories haunting their kin

The sun's missing today
Still, there's an eclipse tonight
They grow desperate, jabbing and
Prickling their beaks at the cacti
The wings of the vultures grow heavy
Quill by quill, waning into glorified dust

The crystal waters remain dormant
Inside those cursed green statues
Standing the test of time, holding
Onto the little life which remains
Watching their enemies collapse

The blue embers deep within spark
Questing for thirst, lusting for hunger
Nothing can fill the magic which was
Once inside its whitened bones
The bones dry with the sun's return

The vultures never roamed here,
Like all the things in life, they died.
Neither was the magic ever gone
Just buried deep below...
Where did the Alive go?
No idea, but a cactus might as well do.



JEREMY CARDINALE

Jeremy Cardinale is a deaf writer with two cochlear implants. Hailing from Staten Island, New York, Jeremy Cardinale currently attends Wagner College. Between classes, he loves scribbling down ideas for stories filled with fantasy, magic, and slices of life. He enjoys outings in the woods and cheesy horror movies in his spare time.

28. CHILDHOOD RAGE

Rage to go against time,
Time what no one can change,
Change the way we us to think,
Think knowing the difference between right and wrong,
Wrong i8s so effortless to do in life,
Life initiative to do what you think is right,
Right always trying to please peer,
Peers are what cause us to sin,
Sin having **Childhood Rage.**

Towards issues we never thought we have to control,
Control everybody wants to have power,
Power is what they called money,
Money something that is in a creature dreams,
Dreams what absolutely nobody has to except,
Except the worst,
Worst eventually accept the good,
Good tend to make you feel to move on,
Move on,
Childhood Rage.

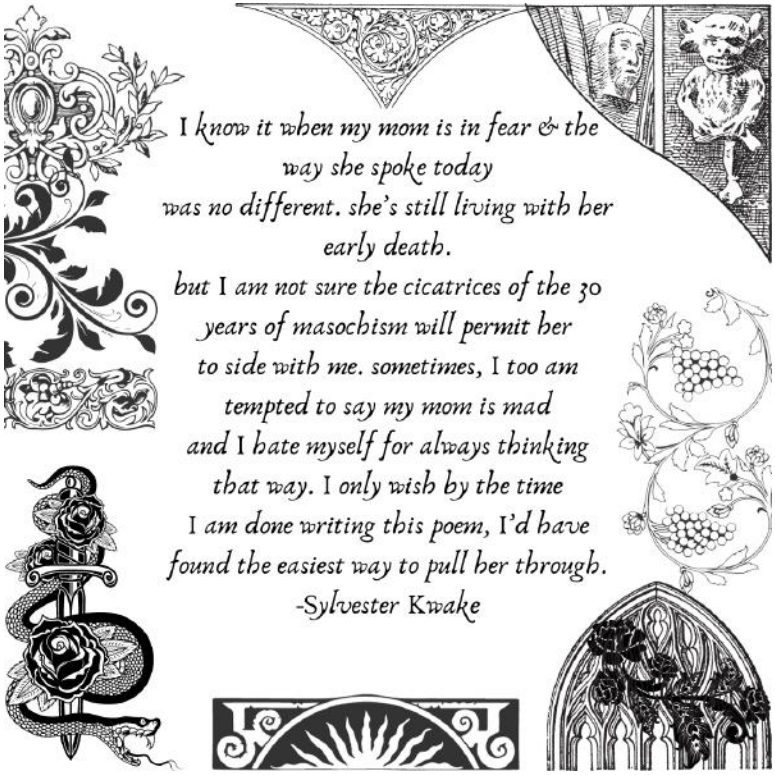


LEOTIS LAMAR HARGROVE

I am a poet based in Illinois, and I write to offer my poem---"Childhood Rage, Hungry and When I saw an Image of Satan"- for submissions in WD Descendants of Darkness Writing Contest 2023. Please consider the following poem (as requested in your guidelines). Am new subscriber to Wingless Dreamer Publisher and am excited to experience everything you have to offer. I begin writing poetry as a teenager, and have contributed a number of poems to literary journals including Chicago RedEye and Expressions Journal. I also have worked published inside of The National Library of Poetry and The International Library of Poetry. You can access my poetry on various websites. If you review my submissions and consider them among the best poems you've received for your upcoming issue, I hope you will see it fit to include them in the magazine. Thank you for your time. Sincerely, Leotis Lamar Hargrove.

29. MUTTERED MOAN IN A MATRIMONIAL HOME (CONTENT WARNING: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE)

my mom would knock the head against the door
and start crying. she does it every time she talks back
at my father. once, her left zygoma was bruised
& wounded against the louver blade
but we had to say, mom was very mad. we dare
say otherwise; dad would not pay our school fees.
mom knew she wasn't. she believed because wanted to save
her man his omniscience. she wanted less attention from those who
could help her. my big sister says mom was once beautiful
before she swallowed those blows for twenty years over (a)
misunderstanding/s.
today at their anniversary, in front of the church, mummy praises daddy
for keeping the marriage for thirty years. she tells all these lies on the
pulpit;
she gives him, her credit for endurance. she did not mention the
punches,
the insults, the disrespect, and the dehumanization.
I, a suffocated decorum of chivalry & vocal somnus pour rivers
of tears from my traumatized eyes. I reminisce about her te/(ho)/rror
when we were young—my dad beating her. people applaud them
for their successful long marriage. I have made plans with my sister
to call her out when we get home to divorce my father.
I know it when my mom is in fear & the way she spoke today
was no different. she's still living with her early death.
but I am not sure the cicatrices of the 30 years of masochism will
permit her
to side with me. sometimes, I too am tempted to say my mom is mad
and I hate myself for always thinking that way. I only wish by the time
I am done writing this poem, I'd have found the easiest way to pull her
through.



SYLVESTER KWAKYE

Sylvester Kwakye is a Ghanaian medical student, and author of "Flying From Nectar To Hive", a full-length poetry collection. His poems have been published or accepted for publication in Writing Woman Anthology Vol 3, New Note Poetry, Metachrosis Literary Magazine, Cool Beans Lit, Passionfruit Review & Rising Phoenix Press.

30. DARKNESS

Why
For a minute I thought I wanted to die
I couldn't give a true reason as to why
I just sat there alone and thought
Is happiness something that can be bought?
Cause I was tryin to find my way
But I couldn't piece together the words to say
To say how I felt in this difficult time
Wondering if death was such a bad crime
I couldn't say how I really felt
Cause this pain was mine to be dealt
It took some time and a lot of thought
But now I know that it can't be bought
It just takes some time to truly heal
From the sorrow that you so brutally deal

Alone
I love to be alone but sometimes I feel
Like the thoughts in my head are too much to deal
I'm social but not at the same time
I'm afraid my presence is a waste of time
I don't want to burden anyone else
Because I feel like a burden to myself
Yes, I'm aware this all sounds crazy
But what else can I say cause my mind is hazy
Maybe one day I'll express it better
I know this feeling won't last forever



DAKOTA A. TALLMAN

Dakota A. Tallman is 23 years old with a bachelor's degree in social work. Dakota is a published poet and author who uses poetry and written word as a way to express her emotions and gather her thoughts. Dakota is a coauthor of the children's book series Ruthless the Elf. She is thankful for the opportunity to reach others through her work. Instagram-@dakotatallman14

31. INDOOR CYCLING ROAD

in a town named after a beverage
garbage truck swerves into mailbox
sunflower grows from its steering wheel

Greg shoots a crow in the sky and it
screams like a man
its beak falls off and starts walking talking deliberating on
all the different taxes saddled on seeds
Greg trips on the beak
becomes the beak
breaks open
and

in a back alley in a back alley in a back alley
a wolf explodes
yeah, just explodes
I don't know
it just did

Somewhere out there Greg has a job at a grocery store. Somewhere out there it's raining. Somewhere out there Greg is wrapping grocery bags around his hat so it doesn't get wet. Somewhere / somewhere / somewhere.

in a back alley in a back alley
a wolf explodes
I don't know
it just does

Greg rips the sunflower from its place on the wheel
the sunflower too angry to make amends flashes red before shriveling

brush
of crows flood the sky
drop seeds from their beaks into the mouths of children

who drub and scourge
crows circle the mind
in a town named after a beverage
Greg brings the gun to his head circles the mind opens his mouth
and does not scream



SHIN WATANABE

Shin Watanabe was born in Gainesville, Florida and has lived in New York, New Jersey, Minnesota, and Nevada. He studied philosophy at the University of Minnesota and received an MFA in poetry at the University of Las Vegas. Shin is currently a PhD candidate in English with a creative dissertation in poetry at Binghamton University. His poetry has appeared previously in the Colorado Review, I-70 Review, Tipton Poetry Journal, and others.

32. BEDTIME STORY

“Let me tell you a tale,”
My old grandmother said.
“Yes, please do,” I replied,
As I climbed into bed.

“A mage,” said grandmother,
“Once lived a quiet life,
’Til villagers blamed him
For crop failure and strife.

“These villagers pursued
Him and when he was found,
Threw him into their pond
With his legs and arms bound.

“And as the cold water
Closed above his poor head,
The mage spoke a curse that
Promised mayhem and dread.

“Henceforth, with the advent
Of every new season,
The pond brought a horror
That mystified reason.

“In the autumn, the pond
Grew an algae that crept
Across villagers’ fields,
Blighting all that it met.

“As winter descended
The pond’s surface soon froze;
But beneath the thick ice,
Hellish screaming arose.

“The terror of the pond

Continued into spring,
When each tadpole transformed
To a hideous thing.

“In the summer, the pond
Drained and left behind mud
That emitted a stench
Of carcasses and blood.”

Interrupting, I said,
“We’ve a pond, so please keep
This story to yourself,
I’ll never get to sleep.”

Grandmother shrugged, saying,
“Don’t be silly, my dear.”
But each night thereafter
My bones quivered with fear.



K.J. WATSON

K. J. Watson’s poetry and fiction has appeared on the radio; in anthologies, magazines and comics; and online. Among his latest work are contributions to *View From Atlantis, Sirens Call* and *5-7-5 Haiku Journal.*

33. HEADSTONE WITHOUT A NAME

they said because he was married to a witch
his holes in the ice never closed.
just a dip of chunks,
a thin pane broken with a fist.
lower a jig.

she would wait at home,the kettle
murmuring prayers.

he'd lift stunned fish &
lay them on the ice to freeze.
in the pot they would swim
among the potatoes, nibble
ata sprig of rosemary.
later the bones, cast out the door
swam into the snow.

trygge swalla, they said,
or something like that,
a clearing of the throat that meant
i see you got a jam pot of berries there
or might be translated as
you have pissed
on the grave of my father.

it was a confusing time for visitors.
no bus ran on schedule &
the porters ignored trunks, barrels
& crates.
they preferred the soft joys of
widow women's veiled hats.
yah, they said. *track one. leaves in one hour.*

he was the son of a witch,
said as a joke but everyone believed it.
he was the prince of the north wind rising,
the trees leaned over his campfire,
rain rattle and lightning strike.
mother, he said. *I've got this one.*
parents said he was the best kindergarten
teacher, so patient, so kind.

no one asked what he did after hours,
why his lights flickered blue,
until it was too late.



TRAVIS STEPHENS

Travis Stephens is a tugboat captain who resides with his family in California. His book of poetry, “skeeter bit & still drunk” was published by Finishing Line Press in 2022. Visit him at: zolothstephenswriters.com

34. WHO SENT YOU?

there are black holes in my memory, sucking more and more of my adolescence into the void. oblivion is a popular haunt, crawling with wraiths and whispers of my shame. every scream sounds like my own after enough repetitions.

WHORE WHORE WHORE they cry.

SLUT SLUT SLUT they shriek.

BEGGAR BEGGAR BEGGAR they laugh.

does sound travel at the speed of light? is purgatory the same as the milky way? are ghosts and aliens synonymous? I have run out of oxygen but the voices continue. maybe the living are just collections of phantoms shoved into breathing bodies. maybe I am a collection of other people's regret. maybe it is all less heavy in the cosmos or maybe I am finally fading into the night.

I AM ALL OF THESE THINGS AND MORE. YET YOU NEVER WONDERED WHY. MAYBE THAT IS WHY WE ALL DIED.

I find my words as the abyss finds me - we are all apparitions bound by apologetic actions



MAGGIE BOWYER

Maggie Bowyer (they/he) is a poet, cat parent, and the author of various poetry collections including Homecoming (2023) and When I Bleed (2021). They are a co-host of the podcast Baked and Bookish. They have been featured in The Abbey Review, Chapter House Journal, The Elevation Review, The South Dakota Review, Wishbone Words, and more. They were the Editor-in-Chief of The Lariat Newspaper, a quarter-finalist in Brave New Voices 2016, and a Marilyn Miller Poet Laureate. You can find their work on Instagram and TikTok @maggie.writes.

35. BLACK MOTH

The sorrow and grief has quieted down.
Long gone are the sounds of barking dogs
and men who were told to stop searching for me.
The black moth beats its soft wings against my ear,
but I know I must wait, for there will be others.
I was alone, but they will not be. I must stay.
Birds feast, exposing bone and torn tendons.
Entwined within this ancient oak tomb;
I am one with its roots, immersed in earthy scent.
Time is lost to me, what has bound me is loose,
the devil's knot finally falling away from my wrists.
Black moth beckons, its wings clap like thunder,
but I will not leave. Powdered scales cover me
like a gentle mist, "*why must you be so stubborn*?"
You sir, of all creatures, should know why I refuse
your insistence. Escort the souls that arrive after me.
I was alone, but they will not be. My lasting purpose.
Waiting for my sisters, though moon-blind and silent,
I offer comfort in their suffering. Damn your wings!



CHRISTINE OWENS

Christine is an art curriculum developer and teacher. Both her children's and adult poetry have been published in several anthologies. Her poem, Between Artist and Nature, won a 1st place award, published in I Have a Dream (A poetry collection by Wingless Dreamer), in 2022. Her poem, The Stage of Ecdysis, won a 1st place award, published in The Book of Black (A poetry collection by Wingless Dreamer), in 2021. She won 2nd and 3rd place awards with her children's poetry in the 49th and 50th Annual Collin County poetry competitions, published in their respective anthologies. Additional poems have been included in several anthologies published by Wingless Dreamer, including The Misty Cauldron, Field of Black Roses, and A Tribute to Lord Byron. Follow her on Instagram @christine_made_this

36. RAVENOUS HUNGER

Pacing back and forth on the floors
I am surprised that they still have a surface
Ruminating thoughts and an insatiable desire
Maybe I am hungry like the wolf
Tired of doing things by the book
Feeling like great caesars ghost
Roaming around the halls
Tired of everything that is going on, outside these walls
Trying to stay positive but some days waking up with a ravenous hunger for revenge
Eating my words of forgiveness
Not wanting to make amends
Choking on fake apologies, that were forced on me
Thinking of their deliberate intentions
Repressed things not mentioned
Haunted by the things that stay buried
There is a side of me that I can't comprehend
It has a ravenous hunger for revenge
Maybe it is time to start digging up the past
So that it can be finally be buried at last



KELLY MAIDA

Kelly Maida is an independently published writer. She is also an energy healer, artist and an actress. She also has a youtube channel called Kelly's Magical realm.

37. ANGEL DEATH

you'll never find god in man,
so why do you offer yourself as a lamb,
bare throated, upon an unclean altar?
he never even prays before the slaughter –

delicate skin underneath negligent hands
as he can't bear to look or to understand
why you hold your breath and do not blink
or why a woman is a dangerous thing

fast forward in real time –
he tears you to pieces starting at the thighs
calls it creation as he hears you die
that man wouldn't know holy
if you spit it on him.



MORGAN CAUDILL

Morgan Caudill is a twenty-six-year-old writer from Kentucky. She has a BA in English and a MAT in education and currently works as a teacher. She hopes her poems feel like a punch in the gut.

38. A MAN'S HANDS

your hands expanded across my back with every shallow breath
i took as i tried to hold myself together
we listened to the expanding silence
after i told you about a nightmare i once lived
my words hung in the air like a ag, unproud
like a dead body hanging from a tree
i couldn't look you in the face
but you didn't make me
you held me tighter as i turned away
i told you how his hands had hurt me
had struck me across the face as you
traced gentle circles on my back
the violence softened into something bearable
something i could swallow and set apart from myself
you told me that you're sorry
massaging the spoken words into my hair
as you caressed my head and held me
i didn't know how you could still hold me
and hold everything i carry around
but you tried and i let you
and it made the violence more bearable
your warm hands pressed deeper into the small of my back
working to erase the harm that his had caused
or trying to, and i let you try
i laid like glass in your arms
frail and fragile and sharp and see-through
when you held me i didn't break
but i wondered what it meant for you
as your fingertips searched my cold skin
i couldn't look at you because now you know i'm awed
how could you nd beauty in something so broken
as the silence encased us
i wondered if you thought it was my fault, too
i wondered if you thought it was my fault, too



SOPHIE SUSANNE

Sophie Susanne is a student poet in Boston, Massachusetts. Her writing involves themes of coming of age, exploration of sexuality and desire, and nature-inspired elements in contrast to the evolving world. She works for her University's Writing Center and believes that writing is the basis for change and liberation. Her poem "south station street performance" was presented in the 2023 Intercollegiate Poetry Festival for MassPoetry, and her poem "on hair" is published by Wingless Dreamers.

39. PREY

Outside, the eagles hold their regal heads high
As they rest their wings
and they sit atop the towering trees
in their impressively woven nests.
These sentries look out over the landscape below
and wait patiently for the right moment
to expertly swoop down and scoop up
their unsuspecting prey.
We praise their acuity
and the precision of their hunting skills,
all the while
another mouse loses its life.
We clap for the eagles.
Well done we say.
And no one mourns the mouse.

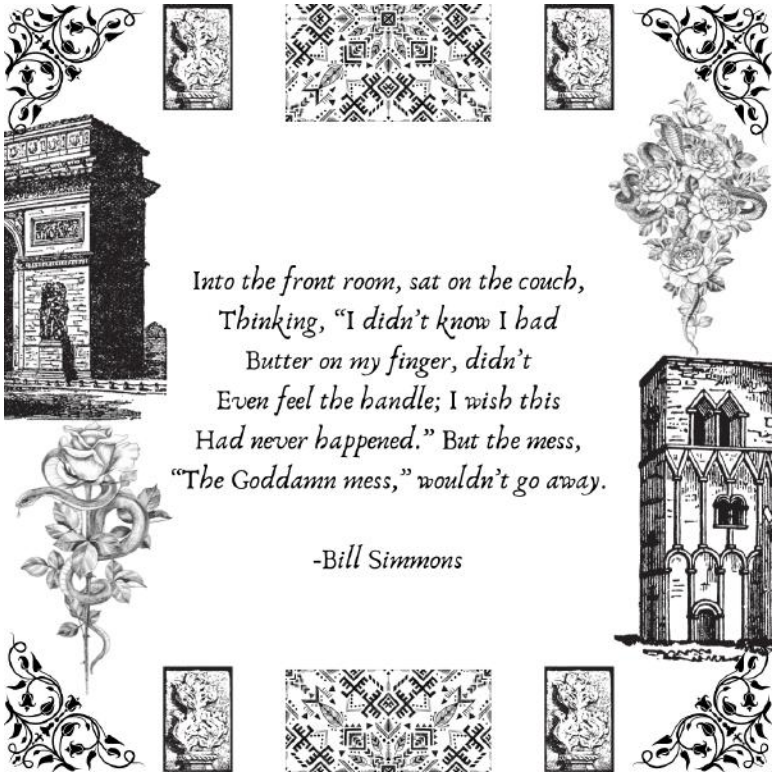


BECKY A. BENSON

Becky A. Benson's work has appeared in print, online, and various television and podcast outlets. Becky holds a degree in psychology and works for the National Tay-Sachs and Allied Diseases Association as the organization's Family Services Manager. Find her at beckyabenson.com.

40. ON A LUNCH AT 12

Was on a warm summer day,
I had just finished my lunch,
Potatoes, chicken, green beans.
Got up from the table and took
A stretch and yawn, the kind
So big your eyes go blank.
Then Wham! On the side of the head,
A gold asterisk flashed in my mind;
I stumbled, started to fall.
“You dumb son-of-a-bitch!” screamed Dad,
“Pick up the Goddamn towel.”
Couldn’t see, kept telling myself:
“Don’t fall, don’t fall down, don’t be stupid.”
“Daddy, you hit him real hard,” Mom cried.
“I don’t care! The dumb son-of-a-bitch
Had a glob of butter on his finger
And wiped it on the refrigerator
Door handle. Now pick up the towel
And clean up your Goddamn mess.”
Finally, the towel appeared hanging
On the cupboard door. I grabbed it,
Bleary- eyed, wiped off the butter,
Put the towel back and walked
Into the front room, sat on the couch,
Thinking, “I didn’t know I had
Butter on my finger, didn’t
Even feel the handle; I wish this
Had never happened.” But the mess,
“The Goddamn mess,” wouldn’t go away.



BILL SIMMONS

Bill Simmons lives and writes in the San Joaquin Valley after living twenty years in Iowa.

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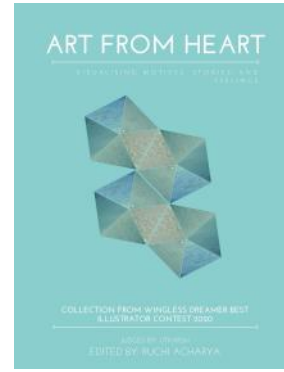
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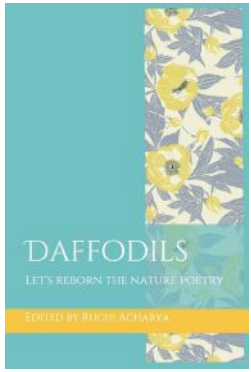
Passionate Penholders



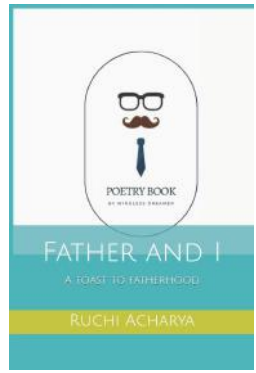
Passionate Penholders II



Art from heart



Daffodils



Father and I



Sunkissed



Tunnel of lost stories



Overcoming Fear

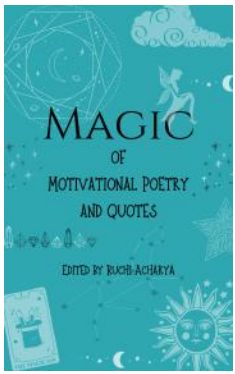


The Rewritten

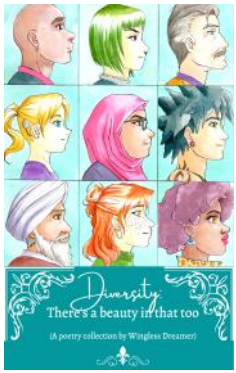
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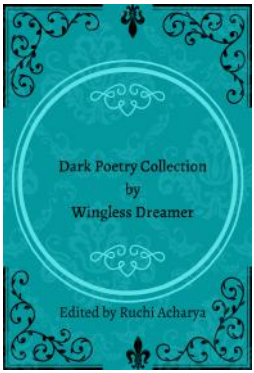
Fruits of our quarantine



Magic of motivational



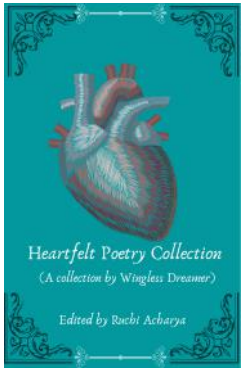
Diversity



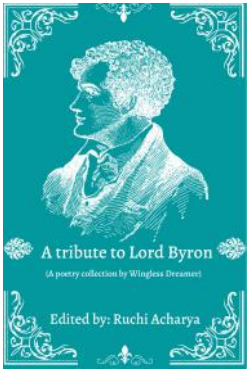
Dark Poetry Collection



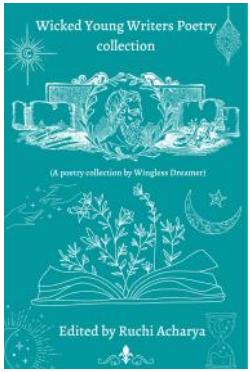
A glass of wine with Edgar



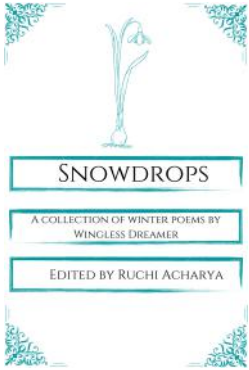
Heartfelt



A tribute to Lord Byron



Wicked young writers

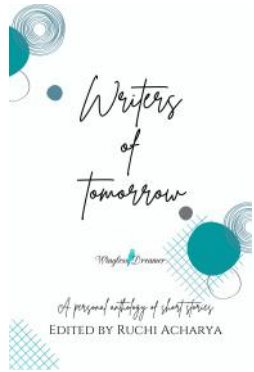


Snowdrops

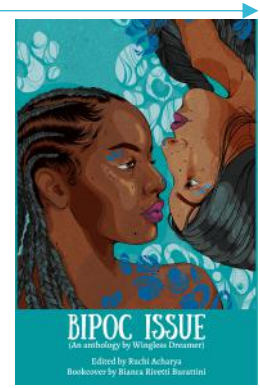
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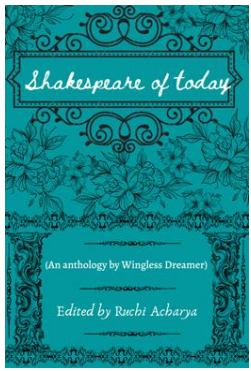
The Wanderlust Within



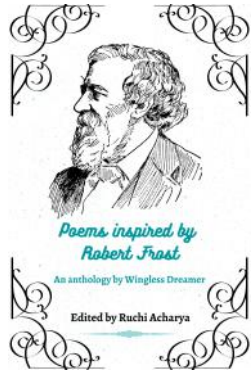
Writers of tomorrow



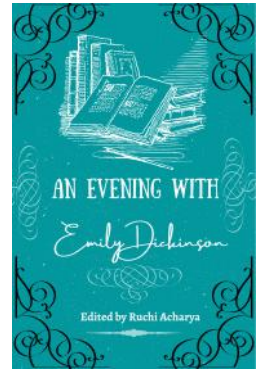
BIPOC Issue



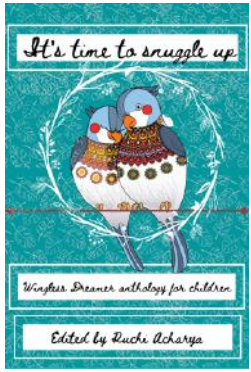
Shakespeare of Today



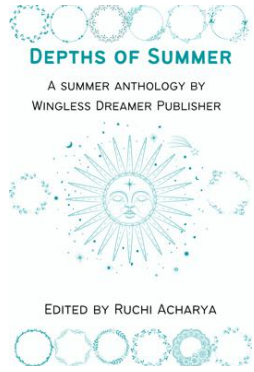
Poem inspired by Robert Frost



An evening with Emily Dickinson



It's time to snuggle up

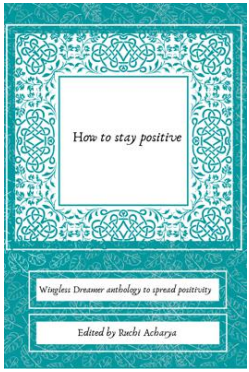


Depths of Summer

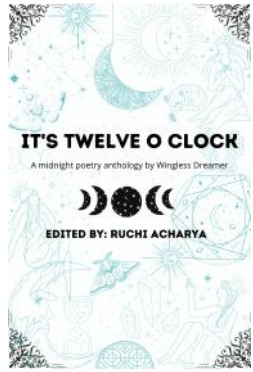


Flee to Spring

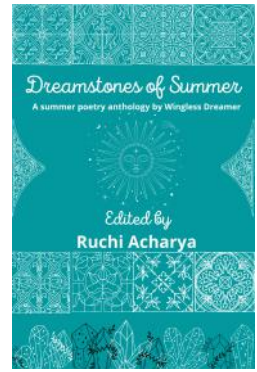
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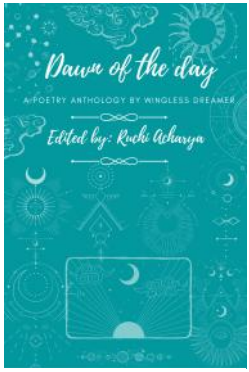
How to stay positive



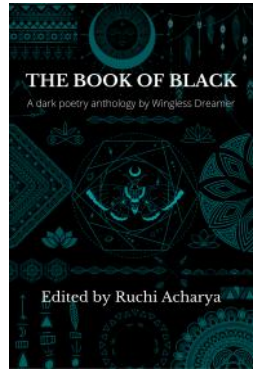
It's twelve o clock



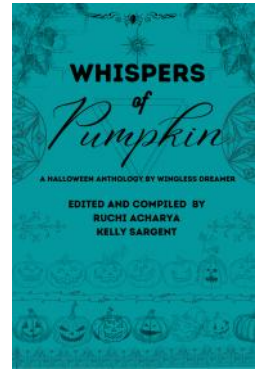
Dreamstones of Summer



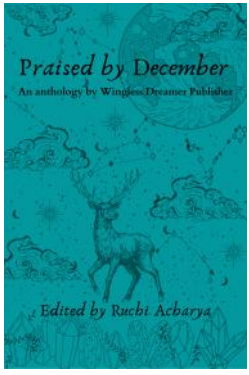
Dawn of the day



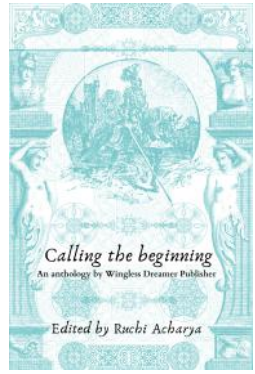
The book of black



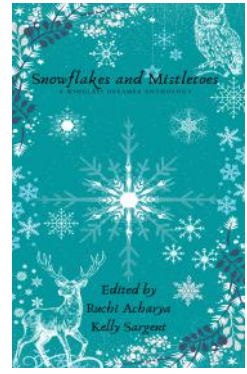
Whispers of Pumpkin



Praised by December



Calling the beginning

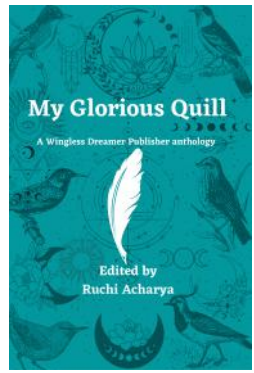


Snowflakes and Mistletoes

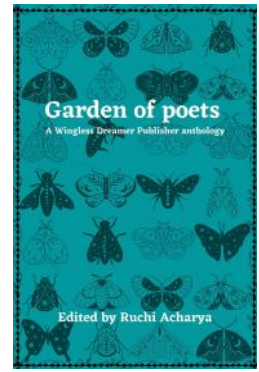
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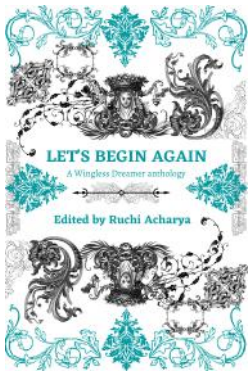
My Cityline



My Glorious Quill



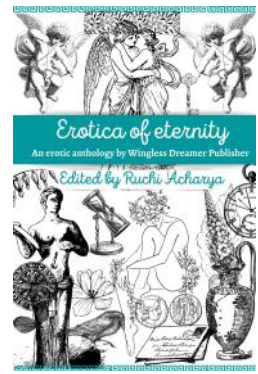
Garden of poets



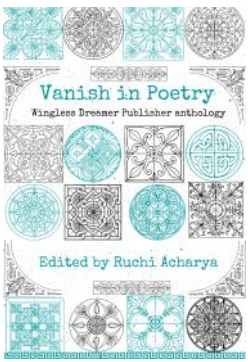
Let's begin again



Field of black roses



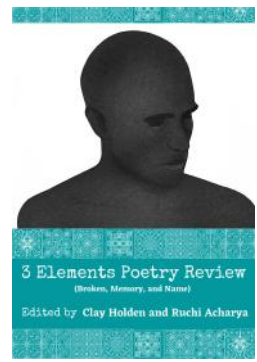
Erotica of eternity



Vanish in Poetry

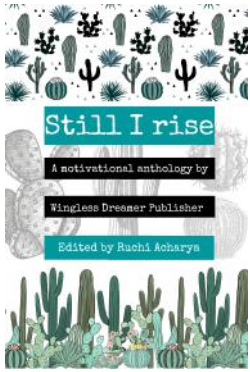


Oxymorons & Poets



3 Elements Poetry

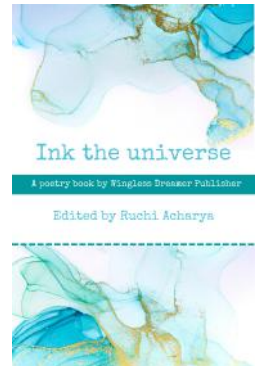
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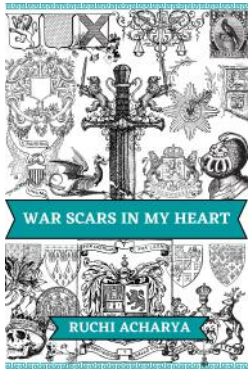
Still I rise



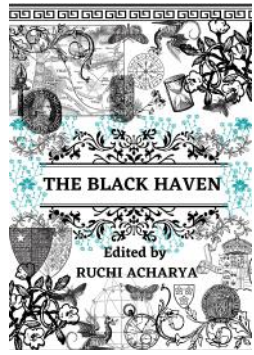
Mother, a title just above queen



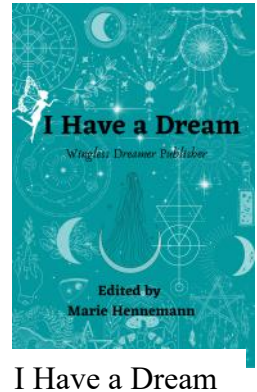
Ink the Universe



War scars in my heart



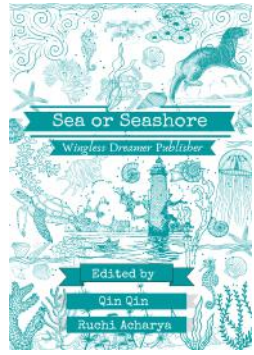
The Black Haven



I Have a Dream



Midsummer's Eve

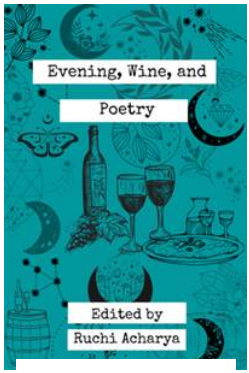


Sea or Seashore



Summer Fireflies

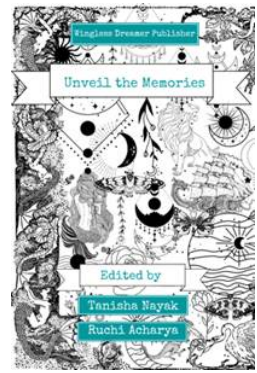
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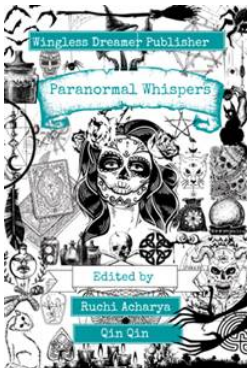
Evening, wine &Poetry



My Unheard September



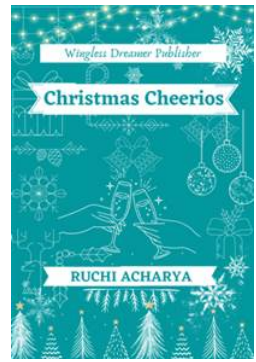
Unveil the Memories



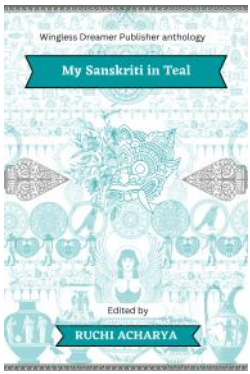
Paranormal Whispers



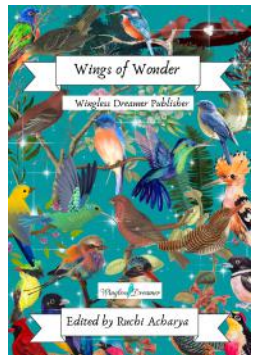
Dulce Poetica



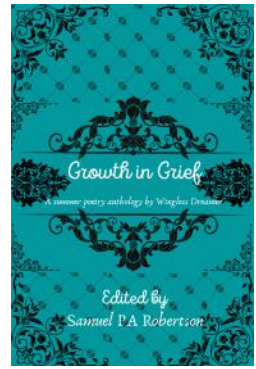
Christmas Cheerios



My Sanskriti in Teal

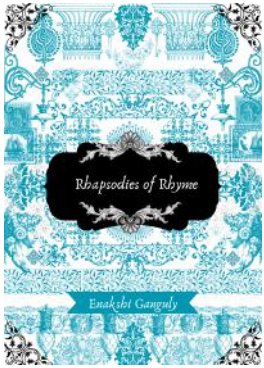


Wings of Wonder

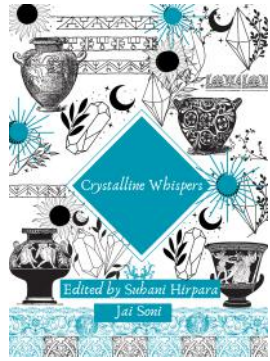


Growth in Grief

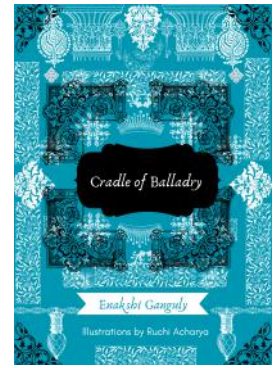
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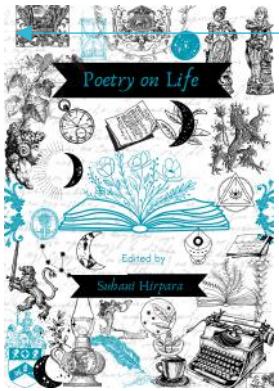
Rhapsodies of Rhyme



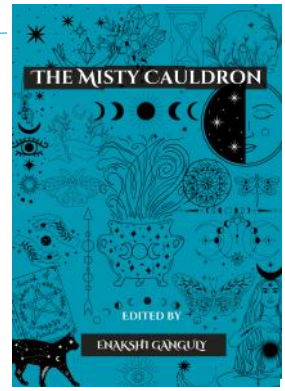
Crystalline Whispers



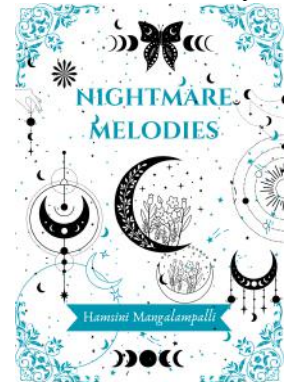
Cradle of Balladry



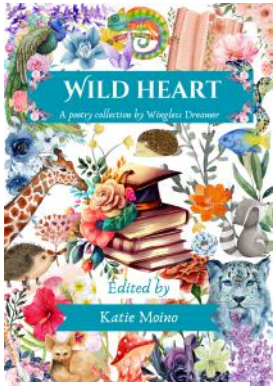
Poetry on Life



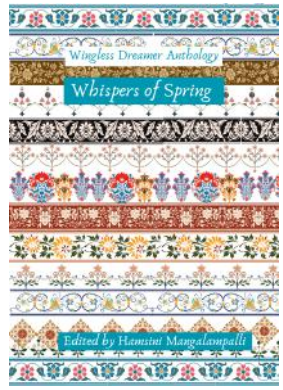
The Misty Cauldron



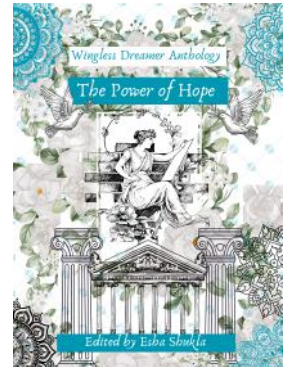
Nightmare Melodies



Wild Heart



Whispers of Spring



The Power of Hope

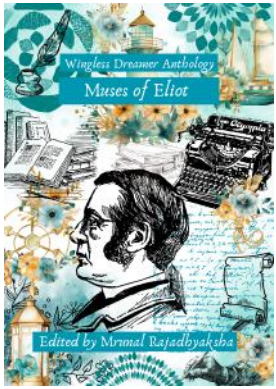
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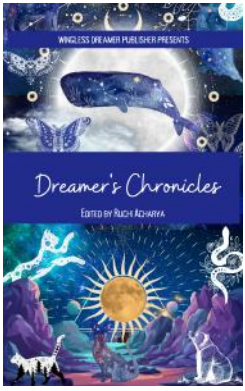
The Petal Pages



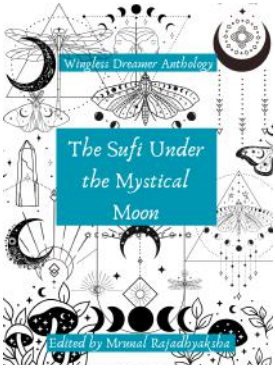
Unheard Phantoms



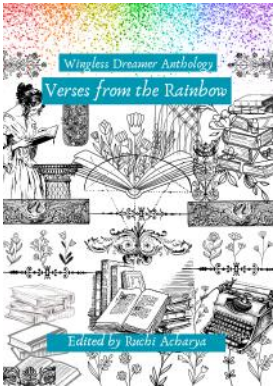
Muses of Eliot



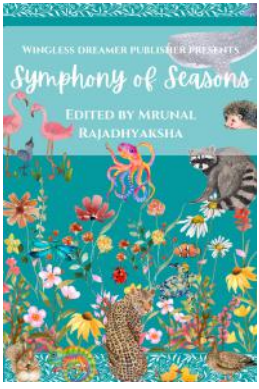
Dreamer's Chronicles



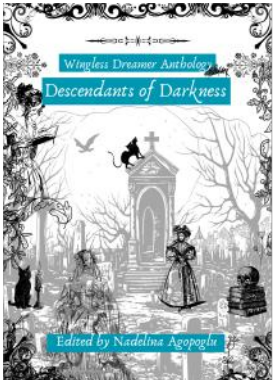
The Sufi Under the Mystical Moon



Verses from the Rainbow



Symphony of Seasons



Descendants of Darkness