

# VerseVarmint: a Literary Zine



**First Verses  
Issue 1**



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Issue 1  
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"Cup of Souls"

## **Please Drink Responsibly**

From the Cup of Souls  
And remember that it is not safe for dishwashers,  
Prolonged contemplation, or bare-skin contact.  
Microwaves are fine.

Recall that Igor is here for lightning, not laundry  
Excepting perhaps those garments crafted to rise again  
Resurrected from base material as beast or bubbling oil, according  
To the manufacturer's guidelines.

And if you dine nightly on the hearts of your enemies,  
Are you choosing sustainable cuts? Foes,  
Though renewable, are resource-intensive to prepare.

Note that the witching hour follows daylight savings time  
Except in the state of Arizona, and those portions  
Of Western Indiana most recently annexed by Hell.

(Contracts signed at Hoosier crossroads may count down  
Unpredictably; this does not constitute  
An opportunity to harvest the same soul twice.)

Investigate any creeping sense of dread felt  
Before or after the appointed hour, as supernatural causes  
Must be carefully distinguished from mere awareness  
Of current events.

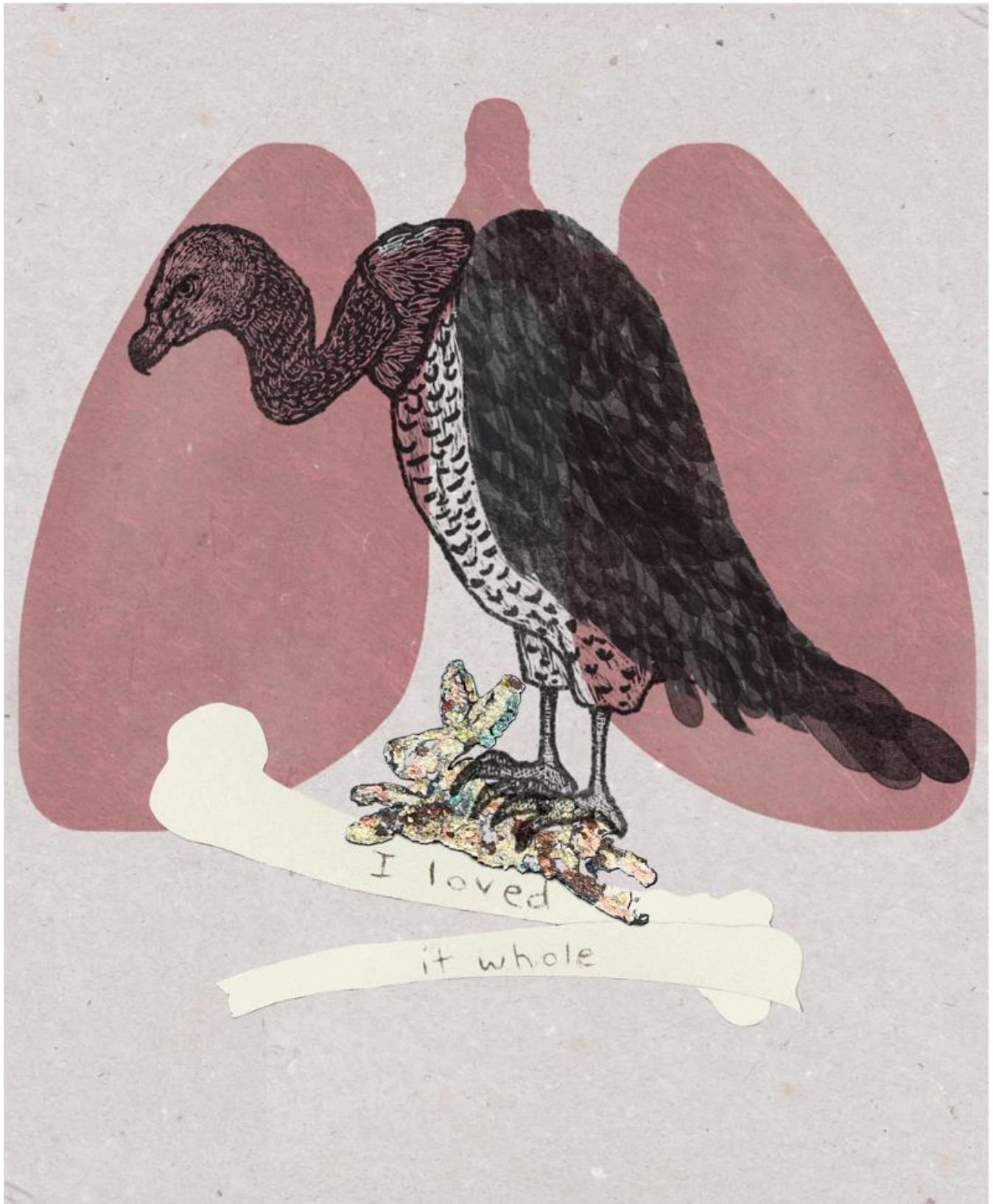
Consult the DST bulletin for recent fluctuations  
And cross-check with the nights you drank alone, or gazed  
Irresponsibly  
For too long into the Cup of Souls.

~ by Jess Wilbarger ~



When the tree starts to bloom,  
The dead leaves still loom.  
For nothing alive is forever,  
But for the people we love we will  
endeavor.  
Everytime you feel like a hopeless leaf,  
Know it is not too late to leave.  
Leave the ones that make you feel  
broken,  
And bloom along with the ones that  
make you complete.  
You must find the right one,  
The one that doesn't make you  
compete.  
So take this advice with care,  
And soon you will notice the leaves every  
where.

~ by Emily Jankowski ~



“Consume”

### **the feast**

i knew his skin how vultures know remains; the cry of air in children's open lungs.

that knowledge rasps, it's clawing at my veins; the croak and crick—its only known tongue.

i knew his body, knew his every mark—the rabbit reeks of blood if you're a kite; his heart contracts and flutters like a lark, and hunger shrieks and carves at me inside.

i knew him well—my god, i knew him well. the hum of bones, the trembling of his fists, the knell of blood inside his every cell—i loved it whole.

and now i'll have a feast.

~ by Margalit ~



"Snapping Adam's Rib"

## **Cunt**

I am a child of Eve  
I am a sibling of her Monologues  
We have reclaimed her word and we laugh  
It was once your weapon, but no longer  
It is our sword and fisticuff  
It is our bed and our blanket  
It is our bloody Magna Carta  
    trial and error superseding the intention of fairness  
A pair of side eyes condemning our “betters”  
It is a very fine thread upon which we dance  
through a narrow, unforgiving eye  
but this needle is sharp and we have never been taught anything but how to use it

~ by Anonymous ~

## **The Road**

When mine years were few  
and smooth visage yet bare  
of scars etched by Chronos' hand,  
my boots stepped upon Adventure's road.

Unsure at first  
onto Realms beyond my own  
with sword and shield, cloak and pack,  
and timid gait,  
I sought lands long Forgotten.

Hrakainen I was thus named,  
inspired by the thanes of old.  
I summoned death for coin.  
Outcast from Waterdeep in whispers  
"One of the winged folk."

T'was true!  
Black feathers fell upon my spine,  
a remnant Avariel.

I sojourned on through the night  
until I reached the quiet vale.  
Within lay sleepy Haptooth  
where all was dark and still,  
save the tavern's fire.

"Hail! And well met!"  
A company of heroes around the hearth.

Noble Ash of phoenix birth,  
cursed to never die.  
Gregor sworn to a holy oath  
and full of righteous fury.  
Sarah born of infernal blood  
winged, horned, and lawless.  
And last a vagabond creature, nameless,  
of living ink, marking whom he will.

To these I pledged my honor  
and for years explored the world unknown.  
To me,  
a clan of great pride.

Demons.  
Giants.  
Dragons.  
Trolls.

All fell before us.

But evil long sleeping stirred  
and drained color from the world,  
leaving only dark and failing light.

The sickly pallor  
begat sickly beings.  
Demons darker.  
Giants stronger.  
Dragons fouler.  
And trolls more vile.

Our valiant company stood tall.  
Twenty leagues above mere men!  
At long last we found corruption's source,  
a tome.

A simple tome.  
A book from nether regions  
never meant to open,  
lest by sacrifice.

To bind its pages  
required the highest cost,  
and Gregor fell upon his sword.

The darkness fell away.  
Reds and greens and blues  
once more.

But Victory hid her face.  
For Sarah's cursed parentage,  
from realms we do not speak,  
attuned her to dark whispers  
of the cursed book!

Consumed.  
Our friend no more.

First to fall,  
our nameless companion.  
May his deeds never be forgotten.  
Brave Ash called fire from above.  
All to no avail.

May he arise from the embers  
and one day take his vengeance.

Alone.

I had but a moment,  
a single moment,  
to land a mortal blow  
upon the embodied tome.

By One hair's breadth  
I failed the world.

Alone.

I watched her cock her head.  
Her finger touched her thumb  
with an impish grin.

When mine eyes first bore creases  
above course hair about my face.  
My boots took up the road again.  
Beside my familiar steps came another,  
small of stride and timid gait.  
I donned him with  
sword and shield, cloak and pack.

Vin I was thus called.  
Short of stature,  
slender of body,  
and mine ears pointed  
as the arrows slung upon my back.

With my sire, of like countenance,  
armed with whip and sword  
and astride his mighty steed,  
Malgasha,  
wooly and tusked and strong,  
we set ourselves toward Cold Lands.

Long had the snowy vale  
stilled the hearts of travelers.  
For those who wandered  
into its depths, oft never seen again.

Into its web of spruce and fir  
and still white slopes,  
we ventured, he and I,  
until we spied,  
in the spur's craggy face,  
a cave.

We beheld a lair  
bestrewn with bone.  
What feral beast,  
made repose in such horror?

Lo! The birds and creeping things  
beyond the abode fell still.  
And at its gate  
our eyes did see  
the master of the cave.

Tall and gaunt  
astride bony legs,  
with antlers broad,  
and claws deadly, prepared.

We made long battle against the fiend.  
I, with bow in hand,  
sent arrows from the shadows.  
My sire, with sword and whip  
put the creature on its heels.

But not before its icy claws  
pierced my companion's armor  
and lay him with shallow breath  
upon the ground.

With all its fury bent upon me  
I drew it from the cave,  
where my sire's steed, loyal,  
sat in great wrath.

The beast fell before Malgasha's strength,  
and we lived to tell the tale.

For now the vale is open  
to those who recount the deeds  
of Vin and his stalwart sire.

Now mine eyes grow weary  
with craggy face and beard of grey.  
And yet my dusty boots  
still find the well trodden road.

My slowing gait carries on  
'til rust dost make me still.  
My sire marches beside me,  
now tall and strong,  
a sire no more.

"Come along," he says to me.  
"Let me don you thus,  
Sword and shield, cloak and pack."

Thalos Greenheart, I am called.  
To the Oath of the Ancients sworn,  
the tree of Sylvanus sits upon my breast  
below my antlered helm,  
The forest is my ward.

My companion  
leads me now  
to join his fellowship.

Three, they number,  
all known as Grung,  
froglike,  
with pates of  
blue and yellow and red.

Without armor they venture on,  
bravely and without fear,  
into a dungeon crypt.

Riches lie in its heart  
for trespassers who prevail  
against a slumbering guardian,  
half-bull and half-man.

Its blistering eye  
awakes as we break the chamber lintel,  
and the great beast,  
wielding a mighty axe,  
rises upon haunches  
thick as trees.

My companions,  
small and slight,  
raise spears  
simple and plain.  
A meager provocation.

I draw sword  
and affix my oaken shield.  
Like days of old

I shall deliver victory.

But before my divine blade  
can smite the mighty hide  
The monstrous bovine falls  
cold upon the stone.

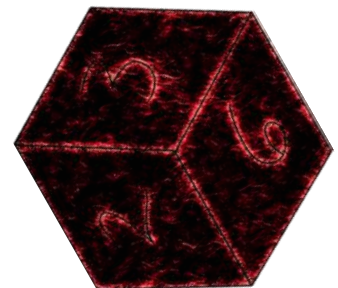
Blue and yellow and red,  
they strike with spears  
of ice,  
of storm,  
of fire.

A joyous cheer arises  
from the fore.  
My sword returns  
heavy to its sheath,  
and I in the rear  
look on.

This is the way of things.

My boots  
frayed and worn  
continue on  
what road remains.

~ by Kevin Moore ~



## About the Authors

**Jess Wilbarger** gardens and writes in Northwest Ohio.

**Margalit** (margalit.none of Instagram) “My work, including ‘The Feast’, explores the line between yearning and predation; love turning hostile.”

**Emily Jankowski** is a creative creature who explores storytelling through song, dance, and, of course, writing! She is our first Junior Varmint!

**Anonymous** Anonymous Anonymous Anonymous

**Kevin Moore** “[‘The Road’ is] kind of an ode to Dungeons and Dragons, getting older, and passing the baton to the next generation. I was inspired by learning how to play and going on these imaginary adventures when I was younger, teaching my son how to play, and now him going off on his own to have his own adventures with his friends...” More at [kevinmooreauthor.com](http://kevinmooreauthor.com)

# Varmint's Verse

One evening, when my children were still young enough for things like plastic picnic tables (though they never wanted to sit with the spiders and ants who never grow too old for such things), I met eyes with an opossum.

Our eternal porch light cast its sickly golden glow, turning pebbles and broken bits of concrete into precious stones.

The opossum waded through unraked leaf layers heaped around the picnic table, sweeping up and clutching leaves with their tail. Then, a glint of eyeshine.

We stared at one another until they skittered away, leaves and all.

This experience was so unlike our fraught rescue of a juvenile opossum from a trash bin, or the shotgun incident I witnessed years before, or the tragic tableaux of lifeless bodies scattered across our daily routines. It was one of those rare, quiet moments of shared existence. Mere seconds transfigured into minutes, hours, and beyond.

That is the essence of VerseVarmint: a Literary Zine.

Though born from a desire to help struggling writers find success, this zine's true purpose is to celebrate and facilitate more of those moments of shared existence through language and storytelling.

Thank You to everyone and anyone who supported VerseVarmint from conception! You know who you are!

Thank You to every author who trusted us (me) with their precious words!

We are still such a fledgling, joey, kit, cub... of a publication! I look forward to helping this varmint grow!

K. Mikolajek  
Founder  
Editor

**Th****ANK** you

for

Reading!

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