

HOWLER daily



FOUR FRESH STORIES
FOR YOUR WEEK

laine derr
buttons I keep – poetry

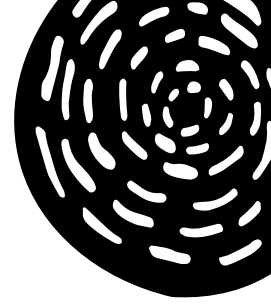
rachel coyne
untitled – art
+ cover art

steve gerson
alone together – experimental

kory vance
today – poetry

volume 1 . issue 1

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buttons I keep

laine derr

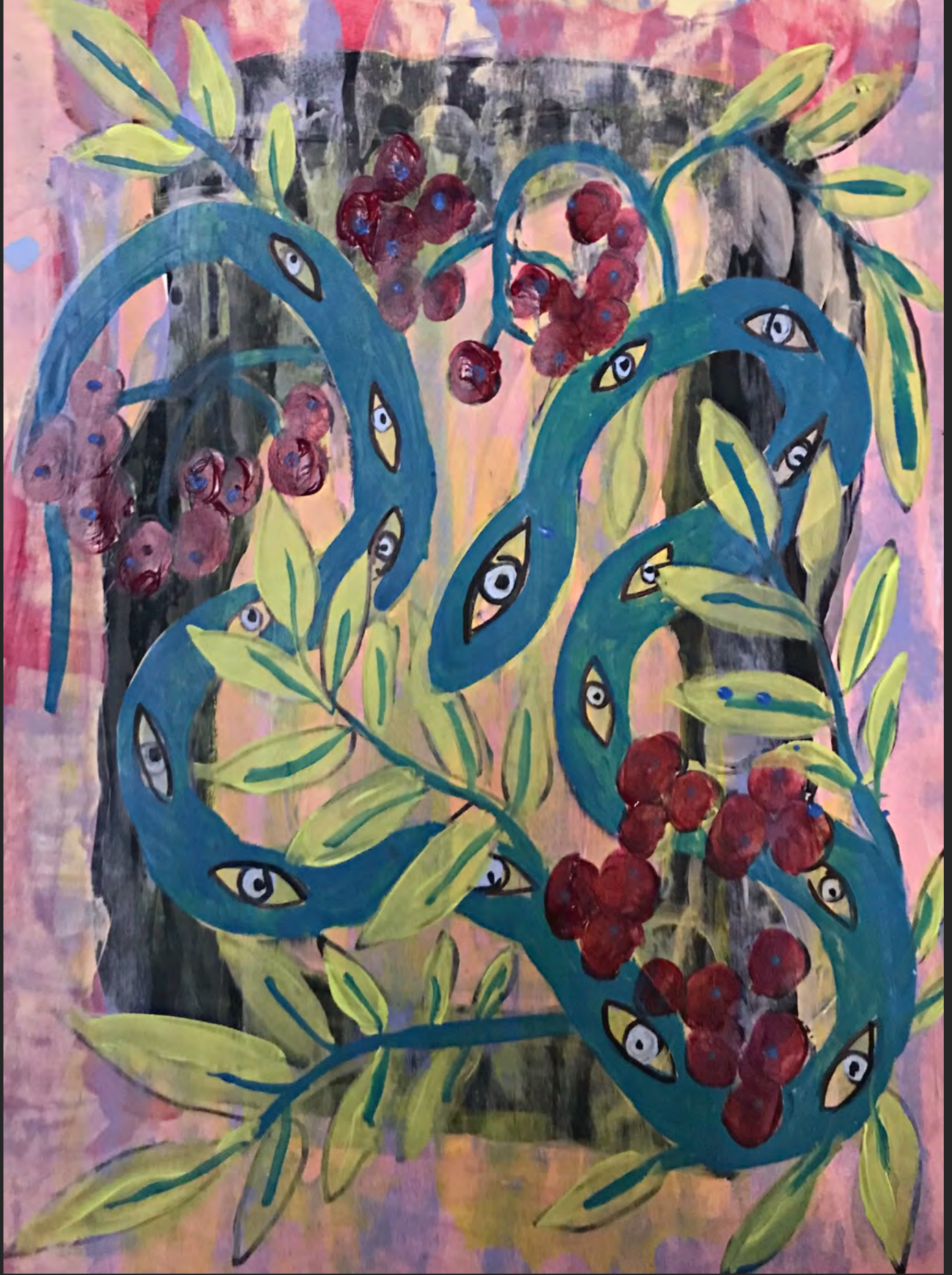
I still have
glimpses of her –
mouth wiped
on a soiled sleeve,
snow falling
on a February day,
trees etched
on a blouse of blue

buttons
I keep
like a lost
eye – a jar
next to a jar
filled w/ white.

■ Laine Derr lives in a landscape, free and quiet.

untitled

rachel coyne





■ Rachel Coyne is a writer and painter from Lindstrom, MN.

alone together

steve gerson

Act 1 - Some Guy

The Hole, Greenwich Village coffee house, folk music venue, underground, private, personal, pure escape. I'd go there, 1964, my pre-hippie days, maybe before I even knew what a hippie was, but I was sure on the path to hippiedom, trying to be cool, or at least out there, somewhere, remote, aloof, odd. I'd walk to The Hole and smell the java, as deep dark as an orc's home in a primeval forest, the underbrush dense with my caffeinated dreams. I'd hear the music drifting from the door like a mystic's incantation, enticing me to solace.

"How many?" The hostess at the door asked, her hair plaited and dangling over her left shoulder, her right cheek decorated with a hand-painted sunflower, she standing there in her mini dress, all legs and allure. I was in love.

One, just me," of course, alone, again. "Unless you'd like to spend the rest of your life with me," I said with what I hoped was a cool, new, never-heard-before come on.

Act 2 - Shirl

I hate this place. Dreary music, too much smoke in the air, coffee fumes, yuck. And loner losers. That's all we ever get in The Hole, dud dudes who listen to downer music, folk songs about depression, though I do dig Dylan's "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll" and, man, to hear Townes Van Zandt singing "Marie," well God damn. When he croons with that Marlboro voice all soaked in bourbon, saying, "maybe me and Marie could find a burned out van and do a little settlin' down," that hits you man. You can feel his pain. I'd get it on with him, but he's always in some kind of world all to himself up there on the stage,

the smoke from his ciggie swirling around his head like a curtain, him alone in a fog, part smoke, part dope, part isolato. Still, one kickin' dude. I hope he makes it big in the business. Still, I can't believe I left South Carolina for this, standing in the cold, warming my hands of lukewarm wishes.

Act 3 - Townes

"Hey, Bob, you got a D string? I damn busted mine, and I'm 'bout to go on in 5 minutes."

"Sure 'nough, Townes," he said, reaching into his guitar case.

"Take this," so I did, spooled the string through the 4 hole, tightened it a few twists, and asked Bob to give me a low E to tune.

"Alrighty Dighty. I'm set. Thanks, my man," and I shined my Nocona boots on the back of my jeans, tilted my Stetson down low on my

head, and hit the stage, looking left to see if Shirl was still at the door.

Applause

“Howdy, brothers and sisters. Great seeing you tonight. I brought my best friend,” I said, patting my guitar on its pickguard, “‘cuz I sure as hell got no one else.”

Polite laughter

“Any requests,” I asked, hoping no one would suggest a song.

“Can you play your Shrimp song, dude?”

Oh no, not him again. The same lame guy who comes here every week, sitting by himself over by the dying Ficus tree. Always asks me to sing the dumbest song I ever wrote.

“You got it, my man,” and I set off, strumming my chords, hearing myself sing, “Goodbye mama shrimp, papa shake my hand. Here comes the shrimper for to take me to Louisian.” And the crowd howls, no telling why, ‘cuz, come on, it’s a song about some poor baby shrimp getting caught and heading for the shrimp boil. Damn, poor little sucker, all alone in the turgid surf of the Gulf of Mexico.

Epilogue - The Hole

It sagged a bit. That’s what you get when a roof leaks and pipes burst from time to time, streaming green gunk down the walls like lichen on the dark sides of dying trees.

The Hole was north of Houston, south of Bleeker, brownstones lined like tombstones, like shark’s teeth, like druid’s talons stained in blood. Pitiful trees fought for life in cobbled streets,

each tree getting at least 2 feet of dirt to struggle in.

To the left of The Hole was an empty lot, strangling weeds growing next to broken bottles and used syringes. To the right was a dilapidated flop house for hobos and has-beens, most of the second-floor windows broken out, a few light bulbs flickering dimly, dots and dashes for hope.

To enter The Hole, you had to walk/trip down one and a half flights of broken cement, each step darkening, one of the lightbulbs burned out, one light bulb flickering semaphores, dots/dashes.

People lined up outside The Hole, individuals, no twosome lovers, no groups of groupies, loners seeking music to steal their souls.

■ Steve Gerson writes poetry and flash about life's dissonance. He has published in *CafeLit*, *Panoplyzine*, *Crack the Spine*, *Vermilion*, *In Parentheses*, and more, plus his chapbooks, *Once Planed Straight*, *Viral*; and the soon to be published, *The 13th Floor: Step into Anxiety* from Spartan Press.

today

kory vance

we grow old between two bosoms like vines
climbing through crumbling bricks
and mortar to salt the earth
with rubble

i wrote that when i was twenty
or maybe twenty-one

they were the first good lines i ever composed;
the rest of the poem
sucked

today, i am twenty-nine,
alone, and living
in a van

today, i tried to impress strange women on
tinder with facts about
hummingbirds

it did not work

today, i am unemployed for the sake of bitter rest, sat at
a bar drinking my savings, considering the chattering
through my spine that might happen
if i place a blue lily in someone's

hair, the woman who is still
my secret

today i am very aware of how vulnerable
my wafer heart has become
to falling in love

this time, i should not
run

as i have done so many times across state lines
or over oceans in search of gold
from a different
dandelion

but i still see the rubble with a crystal ball eye
i do remember a childhood
fighting back the vines
from green beans

today, i wonder about a life lived alone hovering
on aladdin's flying carpet
just watching, just
watching

as the little humans clean their water, and cure the illnesses,
and find love, and reduce carbon, and eliminate
borders, and tell the truth, and stop death,
and then the sun
still flares

our god can't stop it and my gin and tonic

disintegrates the paper straw

and mom and dad are still so sad
that i drink alcohol

- Kory Vance is a poet and his career can be followed on IG: [@strength_and_poetry](https://www.instagram.com/strength_and_poetry).

HOWL[er]

the howler project is a CREATIVE COLLECTIVE
and outreach organization, making space for
human connection through STORYTELLING.

