



# Cauldron

A WCC Anthology  
Edited by Tom Zimmerman

# Acknowledgments

This *Cauldron* anthology is a production of the Bailey Library, the English/College Readiness Department, the WCC Poetry Club, and the Writing Center at Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

It features work written by WCC students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends that was posted on the WCC Poetry Club website, October-November 2021.

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[www.wccnet.edu/library](http://www.wccnet.edu/library)  
[wccpoetryclub.wordpress.com](http://wccpoetryclub.wordpress.com)  
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# Katlyn Symansic

## An Artist and His Art

I stand admiring the finished product. This is my best work yet. It really puts my other pieces to shame. I guess what they say is true: practice makes perfect. Knowing what it took to get to this moment, a cunning smile makes its way onto my face.

The way everything comes together is beautiful. When the light hits this piece just right, I think it looks just magnificent. How the color scheme bleeds together and makes it all flow. My other pieces were amazing, but this is something else entirely. I have no idea how my other work will compare when I move on to the next. So far, it is a four piece installation, with hope of more.

I have made quite the mess in my studio. I show a sly smile, thinking back to how things had gotten spilled and knocked over in the heat of things. When I'm in the zone, I just can't stop. I let nothing and no one get in the way of my work. When I turn my head slightly, I notice there are some splatters on the floor. Tiny drops clustered together, they must have dripped off my tools. I look down to see it has seeped into my clothes as well. I got quite out of hand it, seems.

I think I have found my new favorite color. I have never seen anything like it before. This crimson color that takes over the whole piece. The way it spreads and soaks everything around it. It really is a sight to behold. Who knew that this gory color would become the main focus? I let out a humorous laugh; alright maybe I did, but did you? All of my artwork has the same style to it, that's what makes this collection.

I have captured my muse, Dylan, just right. Just like the three before him. This is how I always wanted to see him. Lying there still, wordless and his face etched with misery and horror. This is where he belongs, frozen in my

work. It is what he deserved, it's what they all deserved. Every last one of them had it coming. This is what happens when you wrong me. Maybe the next model will be more careful.

Then I hear them—from a distance, but getting louder—the sirens. It was only a matter of time. The red and blues illuminating the windows. As the deafening sounds of the sirens come, I take one last look. There he is strung up and carved by my knives. The intricate designs I sketched into his skin. I let out a demonic laugh, as I hear the pounding footsteps approach. The police burst through the door, “Ryan Storm, you are under arrest for the murders of four people.” I chuckle darkly. “Step away from the body, put your hands in the air and get on the ground.” I do as they say and all with a wicked grin on my face. People can finally see what I have done; now, they will know my name.



# Grace Musielewicz

## Be Home Before Sundown

Autumn leaves fall silently, but you can hear the ring of fall. Something warm and cozy about the day, but chilling and fearful in the night. The wind is gentle, but serves as a harsh reminder to hurry home before the sun slips away. The howling wind begging you to run home causes the hairs on the back of your neck to shoot up, alert. Ghosts love coming out in the cold light of the moon. They appear in empty fields, over dreary bridges, in dreams, or nightmares. People line their doorways with the soft glow of jack o'lanterns in hopes of scaring the horrid ghosts away. Autumn's soothing, kind voice beckons everyone to be a little extra scared of the dark. Is there a reason everything is a bit more frightful? I do not know, but I don't wish to find out.

# KD Williams

## Bloodthirsty

I stopped killing spiders  
I started trapping them instead  
Encasing each beneath a clear plastic cup  
I rinse later and use to drink sparkling water  
I let them die a slow death  
I watch  
Am I evil?  
I mull this over while the coffee brews



# Amy Higgins

## Broken Fairy Ring



# Ryan Tauer

## Camping

The tent is set up,  
the ground is level.  
No rain in a month,  
too dry for a fire.  
The sun has gone down,  
no moon tonight.  
The wind picks up,  
the leaves rustle.  
A noise in the distance,  
squirrel gathering, deer grazing,  
bear walking, or wolf hunting.  
Mind is racing.  
Tree branch cracks,  
then a twig snaps.  
Flashlight quit working,  
cell phone is dying.  
Pacing outside the tent.  
Panic is inside.  
Scratching on the canvas.  
Pushing on the wall.  
To run, to flee, to fight,  
which one is right?  
Fling open the door.  
Our dog jumps in.  
The children scream,  
I chuckle and laugh.  
Camping in the backyard.

# Natalie Stringham

## The Castle

The whole castle had a dark vibe. Not a bad thing, the castle was just tucked away in between the mountains, and not much light seemed to reach it. That and whoever had built it had really liked black marble and had a fascination with gothic architecture, the whole castle was covered in flying buttresses and gargoyles. It must have looked grand in its day but Iris thought it looked just as good covered in vines and moss, maybe even better. The road leading there was worn out but the castle itself was breathtaking and worth the hike that was needed to come up here.

Iris wasn't sure why she was there, exactly. It had seemed like a good Saturday activity and Iris wasn't sure she had been wrong. The doors were still locked but she had found a broken stained glass pane big enough to crawl through. The hallways were mostly lined with dust and various plants were peeking up through the black marble that made up the floor. The walls were cracked between the large wood columns that seemed to hold up the ceiling. Despite the dark walls and floors, the large stained glass windows that lined the corridors made the castle seem almost magical.

Trying doors as she walked through the halls, she found one open and peaked her head in. It appeared to be have been a bedroom once upon a time but more importantly, it looked as if Iris wasn't the only person who thought it would be cool to see a castle as the room looked almost liveable lacking the dust that the rest of the castle had, it was also lacking the windows making the whole room harder to see.

Iris perked up with the thought that someone might be there as well as her. With a renewed sense of adventure, she left the room and started back down the long hallways now on a mission. Looking in all the rooms, she quickly came to the castle's library. The tall stacks of books were disintegrating and some of them were wrapped in ivy but it was the person in the room that

caught her eye. Being as quiet as she could, Iris walked over before wrapping the woman in a hug. The woman jumped a little before turning and hugging right back. Maybe it wasn't conventional to date a vampire but they would make their home in a dark castle in the mountains.



# Derek Fleszar

## The Cat of All Hollows' Eve

White frost covers the fields—a prophecy that a merciless winter approaches. Breath trails upwards in clouds of steam from above my head like spirits.

The fire crackles its song, the flames a safe haven from stinging winds. The fragrance of ash and ember mingle together. I bask in the glow, the heat seeping through my shivering bones.

And like clockwork, she arrives.

She nudges against my side, calling to me through the vibrations of purrs. My fingers sink into the smoothness of ebony fur. She cannot be seen—her coat blends with the darkness so well that the illuminating flames cannot reveal her presence. Only the yellow of her eyes betrays her, glowing like a full moon's gaze. She's warm, despite this chilly Halloween night.

We recall a tale from my youth, one of a silly boy dressed as a skeleton. His feet thumped down leaf-covered streets. A pillowcase hung from his shoulder, filled with candies, pieces handed out by generous folk.

When night crept in, the darkness stole his sense of direction. He feared he would never find his way back home, but then she appeared. Meowing, she pranced out from the shadows. Her tail coiled around his ankle, and she led him back to worried parents. Before being thanked, she leapt back into the shadows.

Whether supernatural or a simple fluke, I know she is benevolent. Despite having met over seventy years ago, we reunite every Hollows' Eve. I am old and fading now, but she is just as spry as she was back then. I ask her to look after my grandchildren when I'm no more. She vows to do so with a coarse but warm lick upon my wrist.

# Luna Swiczkowski

## A Creature with a Human Face

A creature with a human face, eyes barely bulging out one side, the other one dangling by a thread, the face pale, hair gray and frayed like the ones a scarecrow would have under a straw hat. Her mouth twisted up in an unnatural way, always smiling, but sadness hid underneath.

Her torso wore an old timey looking dress, dirtied and torn, and her arms, her arms just a tad bit longer than the normal human, skinny and boney, twisting and contorting as she pulls herself along. She had many legs, 6 to be exact. Sometimes they were hands, sometimes scaley, sometimes furred, that dragged under her as she crawled. Barely supporting her weight it would seem . . .

Until she gave chase

# Maryam Barrie

## Fauna

was our hand-me-down, traumatized, gray toy poodle. We got her from a friend of my mother's, who couldn't care for her because she kept chewing on her own feet. Fauna had lived in a car with a woman who was homeless. Then the woman died in the car. Once I was walking with Fauna on our driveway, out of sight of the house, and the neighbor's dog bounded at her, began ripping her apart. The other dog's teeth were in her belly by the time I got there, saw the skin flapping loose, tried to pick her up. I started to learn about boundaries then. I knew she would live if she got back to the house on her own. Sometimes when people say no, they mean no.

I walked back to the house slowly, come on, Fauna, come on, and she wobbily trotted after me. I ran inside to grab a blanket, yelled for everyone to get in the car, swooped her up into my arms while she snapped at me with her teeth. When we got home from the animal hospital, I told the neighbors. Their daughter told me their dog couldn't be left alone, had eaten through drywall to get out of locked rooms. The next morning, their dog vomited up chunks of gray fur. They destroyed their dog.

At the animal hospital, they stitched Fauna up. She ate the stiches. They stitched her up again, sent us home with the Elizabethan collar. We tried valium, but that just made her squat and pee in terror. One day I let her out as always—but when I went to call her in, she was gone. We searched the woods, talked to all the neighbors, made flyers. Some nights I hear the coyotes with their delirious yips and cringe.

I've searched every inch of this ten acres, found nothing.  
Every trauma ends eventually.





# Cornelius Fortune

## The Funniest Thing in the World

The Funniest Thing in the World walked on three legs down the noisy thoroughfare in a slow, self-absorbed gait, reminding it of how cold it really was to be half alive. Though no one ever laughed, it was still the Funniest Thing in the World.

It raised its eyes and tilted its head to see the little children playing. They waved at The Funniest Thing in the World, and it waved back with some difficulty.

The illusion was getting more difficult to sustain. Better to move along down the boulevard, to keep warm, to keep the illusion of a human body projected upon their minds. It was its father who said, “I really hope that you’re not like me. If you are, the world will be cruel to you, and you cannot eat them. Do you understand? No matter what they do – *do not eat them* – except, of course, on Halloween. You can be yourself once a year. No strings attached. You’ll see. You’ll be The Funniest Thing in the World.”

The following week, its father left *for-ever* (for cigarettes, for another woman, for whatever void was left in society to fill, for *dreams unfulfilled*), and by the age of eighteen, The Funniest Thing in the World had shed its human form quite suddenly: one day, the flesh simply slid off – like a pair of jeans (or a cheap bracelet), and it wouldn’t fit anymore, no matter the effort.

Its mother screamed – a blood-curdling B-movie scream – because she thought it was a snake in the shape of her progeny’s former body. First, she screamed; then, once recovered, she squinted at the corner of the room, making out its weird new three-legged form, coldly illuminated by the venetian blinds, slanted and segmented.

She threw her head back and laughed.

“Like father, like son,” she snidely mused. “Just as slippery. Guess my mother was right: I married a monster.”

The Funniest Thing in the World preferred human flesh, and didn't care much for animals, insects, or plants (they had feelings too, which few ever had the courage to acknowledge). Mainly, the Funniest Thing in the World would search online public databases to find the most nefarious offenders of the human race, take the shape most pleasing to them, enter their homes, and summarily devour them. It was a neighborhood community service. In fact, social media made it that much easier, whether in/call or out/call. Hit “Share my location” and the game was surely afoot.

When the doorbell rang, The Funniest Thing in the World remembered that it was Halloween.

“Trick or treat?” the man said, nervously twisting the heavy plastic bag in his hand.

“Take a guess,” said The Funniest Thing in the World, opening the door wide.

Satisfied that the profile matched the person standing in the door, the man walked in with utter confidence, and a smile that would soon disappear: The Funniest Thing in the World always laughed uncontrollably before eating dessert.

# Brendan Howard

## The Hallway

I stand at the end of a hall. Why I am there I can't say, and yet it is there, at the end of that abandoned, derelict hallway, that I find my feet shakily planted. Darkness ebbs and flows thick and inky, cut through in short, trepid moments when the moon can breach through the thick clouds that shackle it in their umbral grip. When the moon does overcome its captors, its light shines palely through the large, filthy windows and on the dust and detritus of a once proud hallway now left forlorn and anguished. The barren walls are covered in a flower-patterned wallpaper whose color has been lost to time and whose flowers seem to be trying to rid themselves of the very wall they've been stuck to. I do not remember this hallway. I do not remember it being in my house, yet it must be in my house, for I have no recollection of leaving. There is a door behind me. It is closed; the wood cracked and splintered, its red paint peeling and stained with decay, but it nevertheless will not open. The cold, rusted handle will not turn, the hinges will not budge, and, despite its dilapidated state, the wood will not break despite my many attempts to do so leaving my shoulder badly bruised. There is a man on the other side of the hallway. He stands there silently, but I cannot see him because there has never been a man there, and yet the man who is not there still stands, mocking me with his very non-existence. I cannot describe the man who does not exist simply because there is none of him to describe. Annoyed by the man that is not here, although I seem to have forgotten quite where here is, I walk down the hall. As I shuffle down the hall, I notice that the crudely constructed paintings on the wall seem to depict people, if barely, that I don't recognize, although they seem so very familiar. I can tell they don't recognize me either, and that thought fills me with a cold feeling of grief. The man at the end of the hall remembers me. I continue walking. I walk on and on; I walked for several minutes down this short but never-ending hallway. The paintings are no longer paintings, for they too were never there, but I can still see them, and I know what they portray but I can't remember his name, for I was never there. I look behind me, unsure if I've even made any progress with

my walking, and I see that same, weathered door right where I left it, as though I'd never moved at all. I stand at the end of a hall. There is a man on the other side.



# Mona Moorman

In passing today  
I saw an eye  
It looked back at me  
It was warm and kind  
It knew and understood  
It cared for me without a word  
I liked the eye  
It was plastic, lying in the gravel

# Aaron Fried

## Interrogation Room One

Detective Paul Johnson fidgeted with his wedding ring as he stared at the five monitors displaying five interrogation rooms holding five Ron Plomics.

The captain patted Johnson's shoulder. "I'm sorry, but I'm going to assign this to someone else."

Johnson glared at him. "The hell you are."

"There's just too much press coverage on this one," the captain said. "And, well, with your situation...."

Johnson slapped away the captain's hand and stormed toward the interrogation rooms. Everyone around him acted like they suffered from shellshock ever since one of Johnson's clones tried to kill him. Luckily, when the clone burst into his bedroom, Johnson grabbed his service pistol off the nightstand and fired first. After that scare, he and his wife made a password only they knew, so none of the other clones could try a repeat performance and get away with it.

Clones were becoming a real problem. Rapidly declining birth rates, coupled with the elimination of immigration, put the military in a bind. They needed soldiers. The ex-president won on a platform of instituting a ten-year draft where anyone could opt out by agreeing to the creation of five clones who would serve in the person's stead. Well, ten years had passed, and the surviving clones started to come home.

Johnson entered Interrogation Room One and winced at the smell of stale body odor. Plomic, sitting hunched and handcuffed, looked up as Johnson lowered himself into the opposite chair.

“So, why’d you kill your original?”

Plomic pulled at the restraints. “I didn’t do it! I was at the Roxy when it happened. There’s got to be videos.”

Of course there were videos, and Johnson had reviewed them all. The five clones, all wearing the same army fatigues, had entered the Roxy shooting range. An hour later one exited, drove to his original’s house and shot him when he answer the door. The murderer had the gall to wave at the camera affixed to a nearby light-post then returned to the Roxy. After a half-hour, the five clones left the shooting range, and each headed to his miserable government-provided housing.

Proving which one did it seemed an impossibility, especially a day later. Could he prove conspiracy to commit murder? Maybe, maybe not.

“I just need one of you to point the finger,” Johnson said. “I don’t care who does it first. Don’t wait until one of your clone-bros tells me you’re the murderer.”

Plomic stiffened but didn’t speak.

Johnson smiled. He just needed to apply enough pressure. He knew the threat of a conspiracy charge and the fear that someone else would talk first will cause one of the Plomics to eventually crack and take a deal.

They should’ve known better. Johnson did. Never rely on anyone else when murdering your original.

# Chris Aseltine

Into the darkness  
Unaware there is light  
If only for one night  
Are we capable to harness

The powers of evil  
To hold them in place  
To make scaring great  
To ignore fate

It is late  
Return to your home  
Stop wandering alone  
Return to the light

Forget the night  
You played the other team  
Encouraged with esteem  
For playing real mean



# Naveen Suresh

**It's Halloween everyday**

Bring out the geeks  
The freaks  
The nerds  
The meeks

Show your spooky personality  
For all to see  
For all to experience each other  
Let's embrace this 25alloween

Is that how you feel deep inside  
You feel like Jason masks with a knife?  
All for the fun and entertainment yet you see blood and knives

I put on a mask everyday  
This mask fools the entire world's perception of me  
I'm not the only one I see  
I see a continent and half who hides just like me

It's Halloween everyday  
Because we show what they accept to see  
It's Halloween everyday  
They will never see the real me

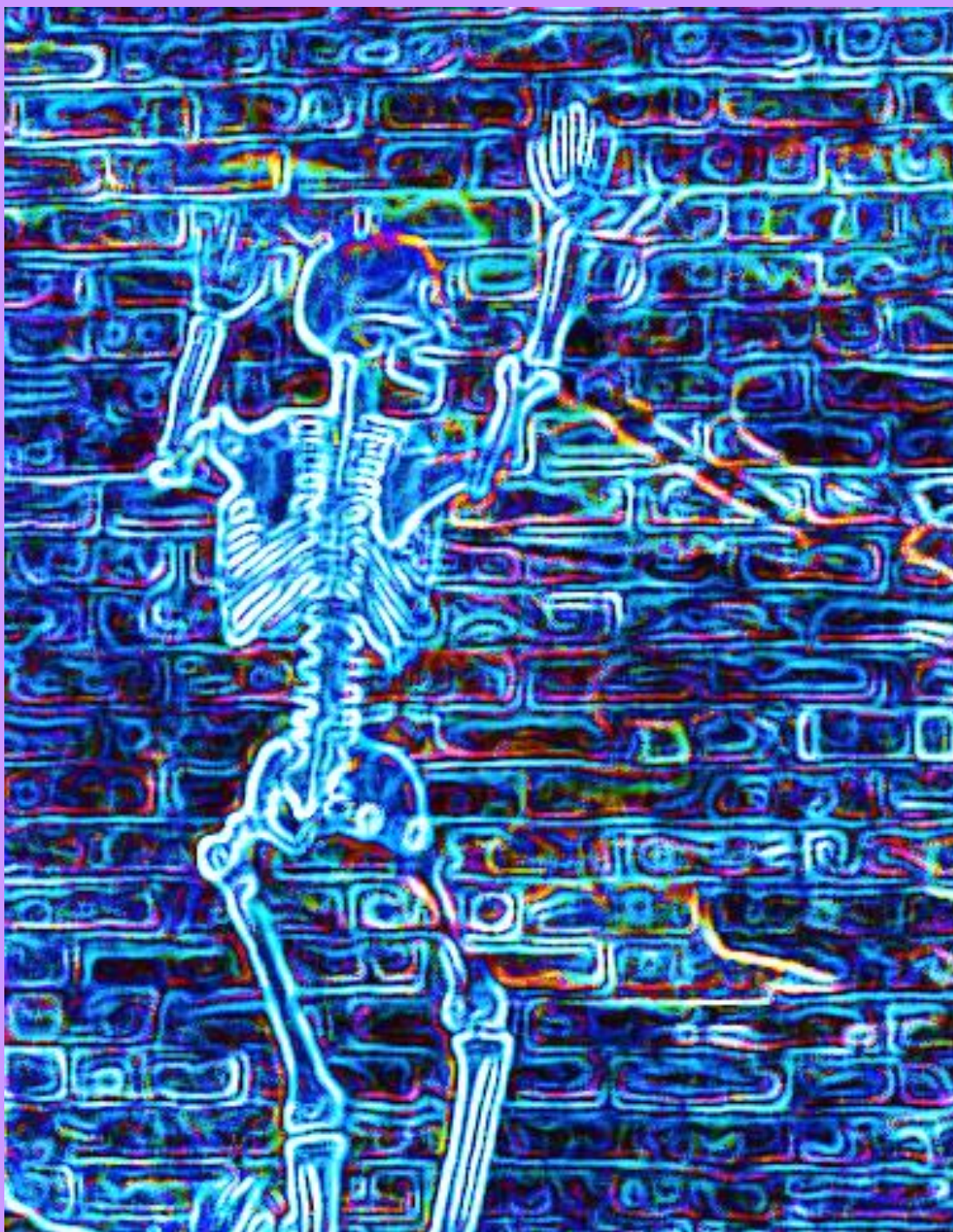
# Zoe Stefanko

## Knock, Knock

“Knock, Knock” I heard on my window around 2 a.m. on a cold dark snowy night. It woke me up out of dead sleep I jumped up wondering if that was really just a dream or if someone was really at my window. I ran to my window in fear of someone just staring back at me when I pulled the shades back, sure enough my worst nightmare was standing on the other side of that window. I only saw eyes and what sounded like they were trying to tell me to come play with them, I asked myself “why play at 2 am, shouldn’t they be sleeping.” I knew something wasn’t right but I knew that if I left even for a second this man would leave. I asked over and over again, “who are you?” I never got an answer. Why was he at my window when we lived in a house with 20 other windows, why did he choose my bedroom window? I thought for a moment on what was the best thing for me to do only being 8 years old, I decided to go outside and play. When I went outside there were so many little people for me to be friends with but it’s almost like we all had the same features. We were all blonde with blue eyes.

I was still so young so I never felt like this before, I had a throbbing pain in the middle of my stomach and I felt like I was gonna puke, but I just didn’t understand. My parents always told me it was good to play with people your own age and to always have as many friends as you can. I was just doing what they taught me, but these people weren’t friends. Not even 20 minutes later, I was being chased by what felt like the whole world. I never ran so fast in my life, so many things were going through my mind that should’ve been in my mind before I left my bed. “I knew I should’ve woken up my parents,” “never should have listened to this stranger,” “I was taught better than this.” My vision went black and I thought that my life was just over, I felt like I was getting shook to death, but I heard a little voice from a distance yelling “wake up, you’re okay, nightmares happen.” My eyes shot open and sure enough there were my parents, at the end of my bed, with breakfast. I never wanted

to close my eyes again in fear that that same man might be still out there waiting for me. 10 years later and that man still comes up in my dreams.



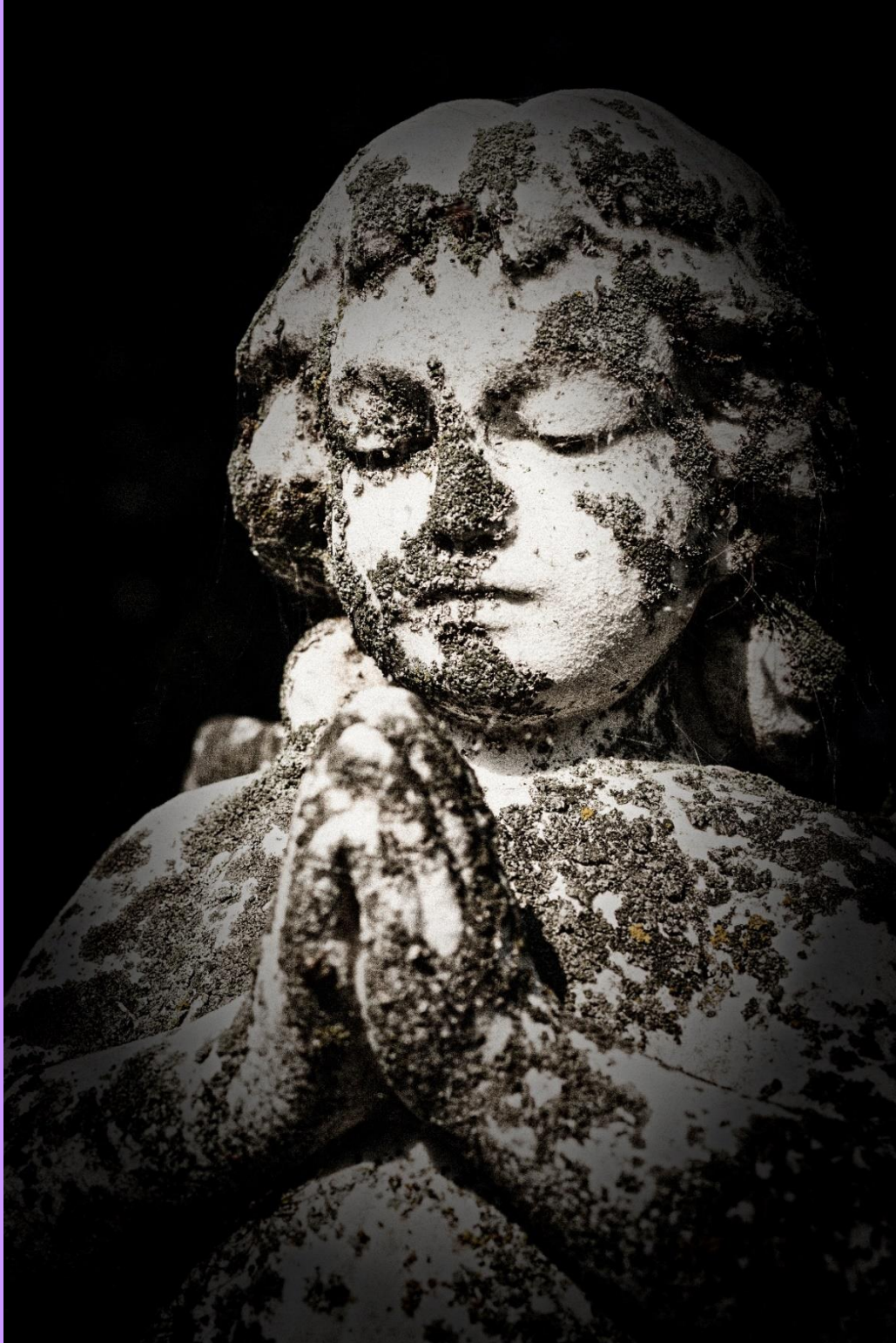
# Nieka Apell

Looming



# Nieka Apell

Nameless Daughter



# Strider Toll

## A Party for Two at the End of It All

Spend the end of the world with me.  
No hopes.  
No dreams.  
No worries for what the future brings.  
We could stroll through the park  
as the stars fade away.

Don't stress out about what we could have done.  
We are here.  
We are now.  
We are ok and we always will be.  
Take some time for yourself  
and the people you love.

Have a good time.  
Party like there's no tomorrow.  
There isn't.

Put on some music.  
Nobody is watching,  
so we can finally dance like it.

Hold my hand as the ground starts to crumble.  
The sun sets.  
The sky shatters.  
The lights fade to white.  
It doesn't matter that the world is ending,  
because you mean the world to me.

# Tom Zimmerman

Poe

The queen of death wears square-toed shoes, and I  
would love to slip them off to rub and kiss  
her alabaster feet. The murk of Dis  
would vault above to be my starless sky;  
the queen would spread her wings and let me fly  
with her inside the red and black abyss  
that tunnels deep to her necropolis  
where death is life and I would gladly die.

And so I lie and dream about her square-  
toed shoes, which seem to me the crux of lust,  
of fear, of cosmic wonder, even. Often  
have I written of her lips, her mare-  
like thighs and neck: but fantasize I must—  
about her square-toed shoes, our double coffin.

# Nieka Apell

## Possibilities

This could not have happened. This did not happen. If it had, it would have opened a Pandora's box of questions that would have rocked my entire belief system. If there are ghosts, there are souls, and if there are souls, there is a Heaven and a Hell, and if those exist, then there must be a God. My entire life, I've been a faithful atheist, comfortable that without any evidence to the contrary, God simply does not exist. People always told me that once I had children, I'd gaze into their tiny faces and just know that there is more to life than flesh and bone. That never happened to me: science explained everything. Until that night when two words brought everything into question.

It was our first night in our new house, a charming 1927 Craftsman bungalow. The house had been in the same family since it was built, so it surely came with stories to tell. In fact, days after we'd inked the deal, I'd found a newspaper article filled with gruesome details of an elderly woman with the family's name being murdered by a serial killer. Thankfully—for me at least—the woman was a sister of the original owners and she had lived (and was murdered) a few blocks away.

My parents had generously come to watch our young boys while we unpacked, and although I was grateful for their help, by the time bedtime approached, I was exhausted and craving a few moments of solitude. One by one, the others went to bed, leaving me alone at my brand-new kitchen island. I grabbed a box of cereal and ate it by the handful as I scrolled through Facebook.

It didn't take long before a woman's voice broke the silence. "Good night."

I whirled around, irritated, expecting to see my mother standing behind me, interrupting my peace. There was no one there. I paused for a long moment,



wondering if I might have dozed off and dreamed the voice. Given that I was still chewing a mouthful of cereal, I knew I was wide awake.

A few days later, I talked with Lisa, the woman who sold us the house. It was her grandparents who built it and Lisa had grown up there. I hesitated to tell Lisa about the voice in the night, wondering if she'd roll her eyes at the mention of a spectral visitor. Instead, Lisa brightened. "That was my mother. She was born over there," she said, gesturing toward the living room, "And she died right here," pointing just feet from the spot in the kitchen where we were standing. Lisa told me that her mother was a wonderful woman and that she certainly would not have intended to frighten me. I assured her that I felt no fear, that the two words, "Good night," were welcoming and kind.

I never heard from the voice again. I still want to believe that it was a dream, but I have to admit that night made me question my spiritual beliefs. Are there ghosts? Souls? Some kind of essence that exists after our physical bodies have died? Reluctantly, I find myself forced to open my mind to those possibilities.



# Joshua Evans



## JOSHUA EVANS

### A PUMPKIN SCENE IMBUED WITH YELLOW & ORANGE DISPLAY

A focus to remember

I was put there originally to forget  
Halloween is a pleasant Experience  
I once thought that a pumpkin was a  
pie

Further in life I found that to be a lie  
It might transform into something like  
a pie

However, does this make it a pie?

This pie evolved into a sequence of  
numbers

Without end and without meaning

If we think of a Holliday as scary as  
Halloween

Imbued with witches and zombies  
and candies and treats

Now I know why everyone is hungry

Its time to feed the beast

Kids filled with sugar running around  
to feast

Out late in the evening knocking at  
the gate requesting for treats

If not, tricks are in place

As we look in the sky, we admire the scene

How grateful we are to continue to be—

Lieving a positive sequel for you and for me

# Ginny Ordonez

## Run, Someone's Coming

All throughout my town there were people being killed. There was a serial killer loose and the police didn't have any leads. I'm hiding in the middle of the woods in a small tree cleaning, someone's coming after me. I woke up in the middle of the night to someone breaking in, my town isn't safe anymore so I ran. I climbed out the window and jumped. I didn't even look to see what was happening, I just knew I had to get up and run like the wind. I cut myself pretty bad on some stupid plant that got in way, hopefully i'm far enough away that they don't know where I am. I'm safe for now.

Once I'm strong enough to, I'll get up and run again, this place isn't safe anymore. Who let our once beautiful community turn into such a disappointing place? I'm not scared of turning into one of the statistics. I will survive this because I'm smart and capable. My dad always taught me how to survive in the woods. He taught what was safe to eat, how to filter water, and even how to hunt. I'd be alright until I found ~~other people to rescue me~~ a new community to join and live in.

Since I was a young girl I've always been independent, I had a family and lots of siblings and friends, but I prefer to keep to myself. It's easier that way, no more damage.

The woods are cold at night, I can't get the fire started and it's snowing so hard. I'm so tired and cold but I can't sleep, I have to stay vigilant. I will not turn my back, I'm smarter than that, I'm smarter than everyone else.

\*SNAP\*

A twig. Someone's nearby. I don't run, that's too loud the snow will crunch under my bare feet. I just stand up slowly and try to get a better view of whatever made that noise. They're right in front of me, maybe a few feet away but they're so close I could take a few steps and touch them. The moon is hiding tonight, she also doesn't want to be seen.

Another crunch behind me, there's more. They're getting closer and there's no way I can escape now, I thought I was better than this, I thought I could-

"POLICE, PUT YOUR HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE THEM! YOU ARE UNDER ARREST FOR THE MURDERS OF TAYLOR RUNNERBERG, EMILIA STONIE, DALLAS PHISHOT,..."

Damn it, they got me. I lost, how did they even know it was me? I don't even care to listen to those cops, obviously I know who I killed. They must think i'm stupid or something reading me the list. Whatever, it was getting cold out here anyways.

THE END

# Rachel Barsch

## Running at Night in October

The haunting melody awaits, as I lace up my running shoes.  
I glide around the corner, only to see the devilish reflection looking at me.  
As I quicken my pace, there appears an alien from outer space.  
He laughs and jaws and dances, while the spooky kitty prances.  
My heart is beating furiously as I ascend the curvy hill.  
Meanwhile, the monster stalks its kill and even the cute pumpkin has lost its  
chill.  
Gliding, gliding, gliding am I, hoping to outrun the Witch's keen eye.  
I race on quickly, ignoring the shadows, which I know are teeming with  
werewolves.  
As the miles fly by, I spy vampires, and goblins, clowns, and ghosts.  
But the thing I now see, I hate the most.  
Finally, finally, finally I am home, where I am greeted by Michael Myer's  
creepy tome.

# George White

Shadow large and sunlight fading,  
Children hungry, plastic shrieking,  
Door to door and night creeps on  
Bowls are emptied, candy is gone,  
Trick or treat don't make them beg  
Walking home and it must be said,  
Was it mum or was it dad  
When there's choices to be had  
A werewolf or a witchy hag  
You must think that I was mad  
To be that kid dressed up as  
An oversized chex-mix bag

# Willow Symonds

## A Siren's Lullaby

I sing a siren's lullaby  
Not gentle like a small, silver bell  
Not a wail, not a battle cry  
But the voice of a fallen angel  
Stranded all alone in the sea  
With nothing but a rock for anchor

I sing a siren's song  
The melody echoes a lie  
The words follow along  
Through the storm, high into the sky  
Desperately seeking the minds  
Of poor, unfortunate souls

I sing a siren's lullaby  
But what I am, forever unknown  
Not gentle, a petal floating by  
Not a fallen angel, all alone  
Something much, much worse  
Something patient, something waiting, something hungry

# Susan Houston

## Some bad rhymes—for Autumn

The sunlight wanes to dusky light,  
The moon begins to rise each night  
The leaves drift down from high above  
And chili waits upon the stove.  
Fall is for flannel, fires and mums  
We celebrate the harvest done  
The earth is going back to sleep  
And chills upon my shoulders creep.  
Spiders, skeletons and ghosts  
Appear in windows and on posts  
Halloween is coming near  
For every kid to scare and fear.  
It's not too long before the frosts  
Will kill the flowers and the hostas  
Cold will keep us tucked indoors  
Dreaming of some warmer shores.





# Janel R Baker

## Spooky Cauldron

“September is over.  
Prepare for  
October!”  
only the  
kids  
yell.

Candy and costumes  
and  
unsettling  
legends and  
doorbells  
rung.  
Onward, into the  
night!

# Del Pritts

## **This is a House Haunted by You**

You move into an old house. It is empty and large and moves with the wind. It leaks when rainy and shifts in its sleep.

Dust fills the corners and cracks. Long-lost grandeur fills the house. No two pieces of furniture came from the same set. Sometimes you find things not where you left them.

History rests heavy on the air and stirs slowly when you move through the rooms.

You move into the house and settle down, despite it telling you to leave. You coo over it yelling “get out!”

You move into the house and watch as it shifts and contorts. You say, “oh, what interesting things this house does.”

You move into the house and watch as it tells you in the only way it can that you should not stay. You move into the house and ignore all its words.

You move into the house.

The house groans. It twists its hallways and bloats its walls. It pulses with the unsteady beat of its wooden heart. You stay despite it all.

You venture deeper and deeper into the house. You watch it twitch and moan. You poke and prod with your sturdy-heeled boots and record its reactions with glee.

You observe the house and its pain.

The house oozes its regrets, and you look on as it cries. You do not listen when it asks you to please, please leave it alone.

The house does not want you. It says and says and shows in every way possible that you must go.

You do not go.

This is a house haunted by you.

# Seth Blake

## A Twilight Dinner for Two

The picture frame had slipped from my fingers as I'd turned into the kitchen. I wanted to run, but my feet wouldn't move. The sight—the rotten flesh turned green and purple—the one eye turned permanently up toward the ceiling—the shagged clothes and twisted limbs—it all made me want to vomit and scream at the same time. I'm still not sure how I managed it, but I did.

And that was the first time that I met your father.

Years later, I would smile every time I heard his familiar thumping sound as he came up the back steps of the house, watch him play catch with Jimmy in the front yard, watch his face light up at the sight of dinner whenever he'd come home from work, but our relationship wasn't always like that. The first time I saw him, for instance, I wanted to put a chair through his head—and nearly succeeded, I should add. Ah, I still remember our first conversation as if it were yesterday.

At the sight of me, dad had gone into a flurry, knocking over the stacks of mail on the counter as he moved between the pans on the stove and checking what he had in the oven.

I was still rubbing the throw-up from my face with my sleeve when he took all four pans at once and rushed to my table, not even wincing to the heat. Expertly, carefully, he laid out two plates of steak, caramelized mushrooms, fried eggs, and homestyle gravy. Then, with one last set of flailing movements, he set out three candles, lit them, and dropping the remaining pans and utensils at his feet, he posed, gesturing with its broken fingers toward the table for two. His voice was little more than a gargle.

*“Ta-Da!”*

“What are you doing in my house?” I had asked.

“Making dinner,” dad had said.

“You want me to eat dinner with you.”

“Yeh.”

“And you can cook steak?”

“Yeh.”

“And you’re a zombie.”

Dad had looked around the room, then down over its body. He’d turned its hand over, examining his rotten flesh.

“I dun-nuh,” he said.

“You don’t know if you’re a zombie?”

“I dun-nuh. How do you know you aren’t a z... zum-bee.”

“Excuse me?”

“You heard me. A *zum-bee*.”

I’d nearly beat him to death when I chanced upon the picture frame I had dropped. At the sight of the broken glass covering a picture of me and my latest ex, I had a change of heart. I wasn’t desperate, but I wasn’t getting any younger.

One act of kindness (however it was received) deserved another, so I invited the man that would become your father back for lunch a couple of days later. He was a changed man by then—a real gentleman, who swore never go into

strange houses and cook steak anymore. I was so proud.

And I still am, to this day.



# Evelyn Mihai

## Loss

Epitaph written,  
Ink bleeds in a dark puddle,  
Just like her heart does

## Tearless

Tears burn like acid,  
Stinging the trails left behind  
She did not stop them

# Olivia Bottum

## Two Operations

I was eight years old. Something was very wrong with my five year old sister Care. It was late at night. I saw lights on. I got out of bed and peered around her bedroom door. Care was lying on her back in bed and Mom was pressing on her belly.

Mom cried out, “Bill, her abdomen is hard! I think it’s her appendix! We have to get her to the hospital right away!” The next thing I remember is my grandma Sookie arriving at our house and putting me to bed while my parents took Care to the hospital.

When I woke up the next morning, I was scared. What had happened to Care? My dad was with me. He said, “Care had an operation and she is fine. When your mom and I told Care what was going to happen, she was very brave. Her lips trembled but she did not cry.” Then he left me with Sookie to go back to the hospital.

I snuck down to the basement with my big doll. I called her that because she was the size of a toddler, molded from hard plastic. I lay her on a table and took a safety pin and scratched hard at her belly. I worked on her quite a while until her belly was covered with scratches. Then I got my nurse’s kit. I wanted to be a nurse like mom when I grew up, so I had assembled a really good nurse’s kit from several different play kits. I took the red liquid which I guess was supposed to be medicine but I pretended it was blood. I poured it over the scratches. It dripped down off her belly. I took a square gauze bandage and used adhesive tape to fix it to the doll’s belly. The blood soaked through the bandage. Satisfied, I put the doll to bed and waited for my sister to come home.

# Maddisen Walesby

**What evil did I live?**

I could not have been more than 13 years of age.

I relive that night over and over in my head

I was so young, so innocent

Nothing could have prepared me for what my eyes were about to see

I awoke from my deep sleep to the sound of my old hardwood floor cracking with what sounded like bigfoot was walking around

I sprung from my bed, think it was my dad coming to give me a goodnight kiss

I would have never thought I would see such a horror sight

I stood in front of my parents' large wooden bedroom door

I slowly pushed the door up, firm in my stance

I heard my mother voice yell out "No, please"

With my father's voice echoing her with "Isabella, RUN"

I could not move in the moment

I saw the figure of a man, dressed in all black with a black mask covering his face

Leaving only his deep ocean blue eyes exposed



A chill rushed down my entire body as he turned to look into my soul  
He left a smirk towards me and raised an axe above my mother  
Once again, I was unable to move or make a sound  
Even when every inch inside of me was screaming "Mama, NO"  
But those words never left my mouth  
He swung the axe straight down with so much force  
Just like my daddy did cutting freshly cut wood for firewood in the mountains  
I knew what was coming  
I knew my mother's head would split like those pieces of wood did  
And that is exactly what happened  
And yet I could not look away, I stood frozen  
A final scream came screeching out of my mother's mouth  
I watched as that axe flew back up  
And her severed head fell off the side of the bed  
While her lifeless body still lay in her bed  
I watched as her freshly severed head rolled to the edge of my little feet  
I looked down to see her mouth and eyes open as if she was still screaming  
I made a horrible mistake by looking up to my father on the bed

He jumped towards the black hooded figure

But he was too slow

The hooded figure pulled out a little gun that was the perfect size for his large hand

And the perfect shade of jet black

He pulled the trigger as a hole appeared into my father's head

His now lifeless body fell flat on the bed

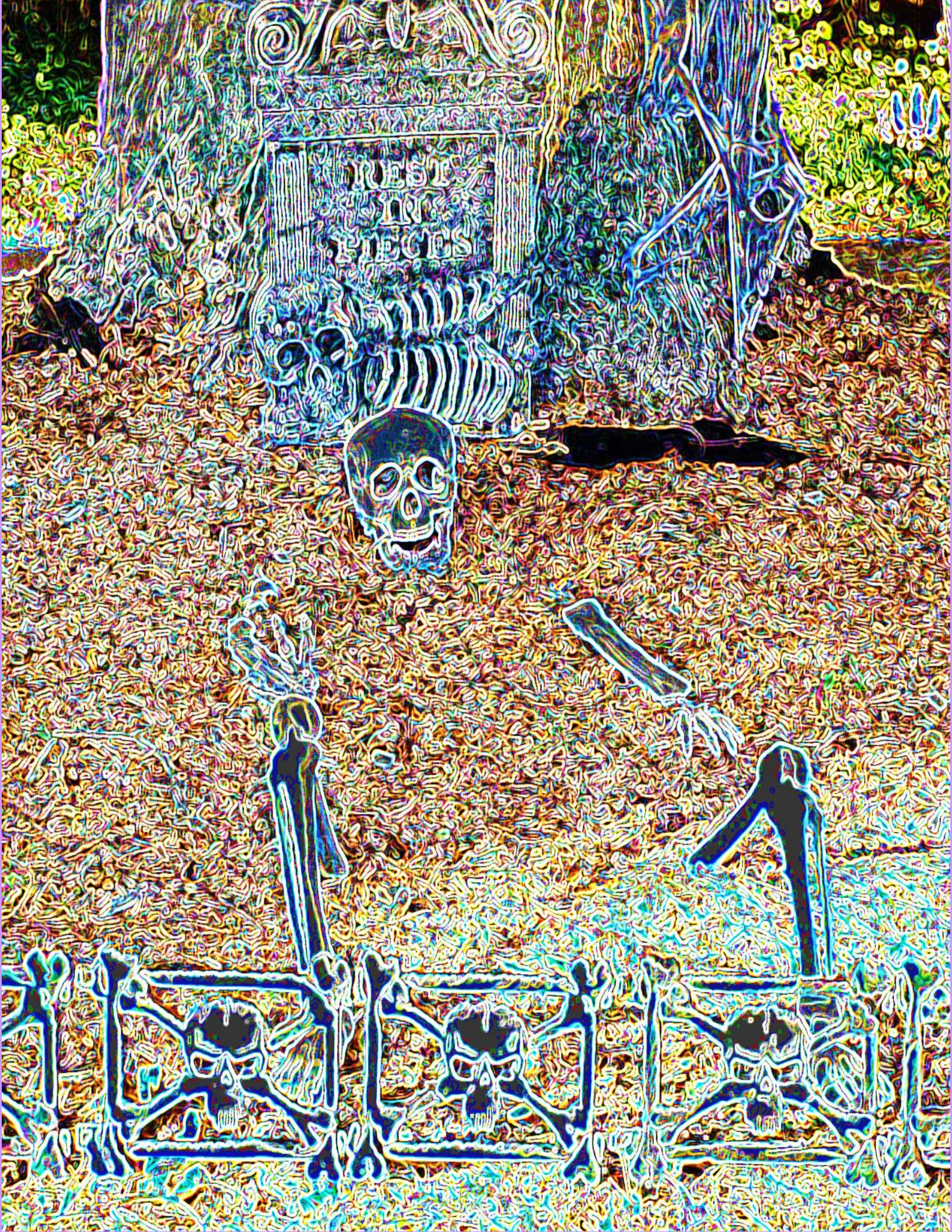
I glanced over to the back wall as fresh blood splatter started to drip down

The black hooded figure looked at me and then glanced ever so slightly to the full length mirror to see someone we both would recognize

It was me

I was myself, slowly dropping the gun into the fresh pool of blood.

What evil did I just live?



Appel  
Aseltine  
Baker  
Barrie  
Barsch  
Blake  
Bottum  
Evans  
Fleszar  
Fortune  
Fried  
Higgins  
Houston  
Howard  
Mihai  
Moorman  
Musielewicz  
Ordonez  
Pritts  
Stefanko  
Stringham  
Suresh  
Swiczowski  
Symansic  
Symonds  
Tauer  
Toll  
Walesby  
White  
Williams  
Zimmerman

