

# Contents

*Cover by Yuşa Yalçıntaş, "Dystopia, album art of ケケケツ"*

*Logo design by Serra Şensoy*

## *Editor's Note*

### Art

- 4-6 Curating a Body by Matt A.H.
- 7-11 Škart's Potential by Seda Yıldız
- 12-13 Inevitable Consequences by Fatma Belkıs

### Literature

- 14-20 Coincidence by Hakan Bıçakçı
- 21-23 Detachment by Kofoworola Odozi
- 24-33 To All the Poems by Shefali Mathew
- 34-38 Multiple of Six by Jaden Pierce
- 39-41 Hummingbirds by Alex Butler with Sy Montgomery
- 42-65 Detective Fiction by Drewry Scott
- 66-76 Ghost Writing by Larry Lefkowitz
- 77-81 Concessions for You by Glik / G Koffink

### Music

- 82-xx Doppelgänger by Yellow Teresa
- xx-x Canary's Voice by Zabelle Panosian

## *Contributors*

*Editor's Note:*

*After two years as the breath of an idea, gasping for air amid thin breezes of oxygen that blow, ever so slightly across these high peaks of insurmountable dreams, I look over my shoulder and see failures & visions, not only my own, but that which are shared by those who I've yet to meet. Still, the blood of their pulsing hearts washes over my face as I drown in their plasmic deluge, reborn into a world of poetry, music, stories & art, briefly, the imagination.*

*What sound is that which I, alone, make, a single hand, clapping in an unpeopled forest, Zen-like and unafraid to face the depths of my solitude in that of my own thoughts, at the end of night, just before the first light breaks over the horizon to the sound of birdcall.*

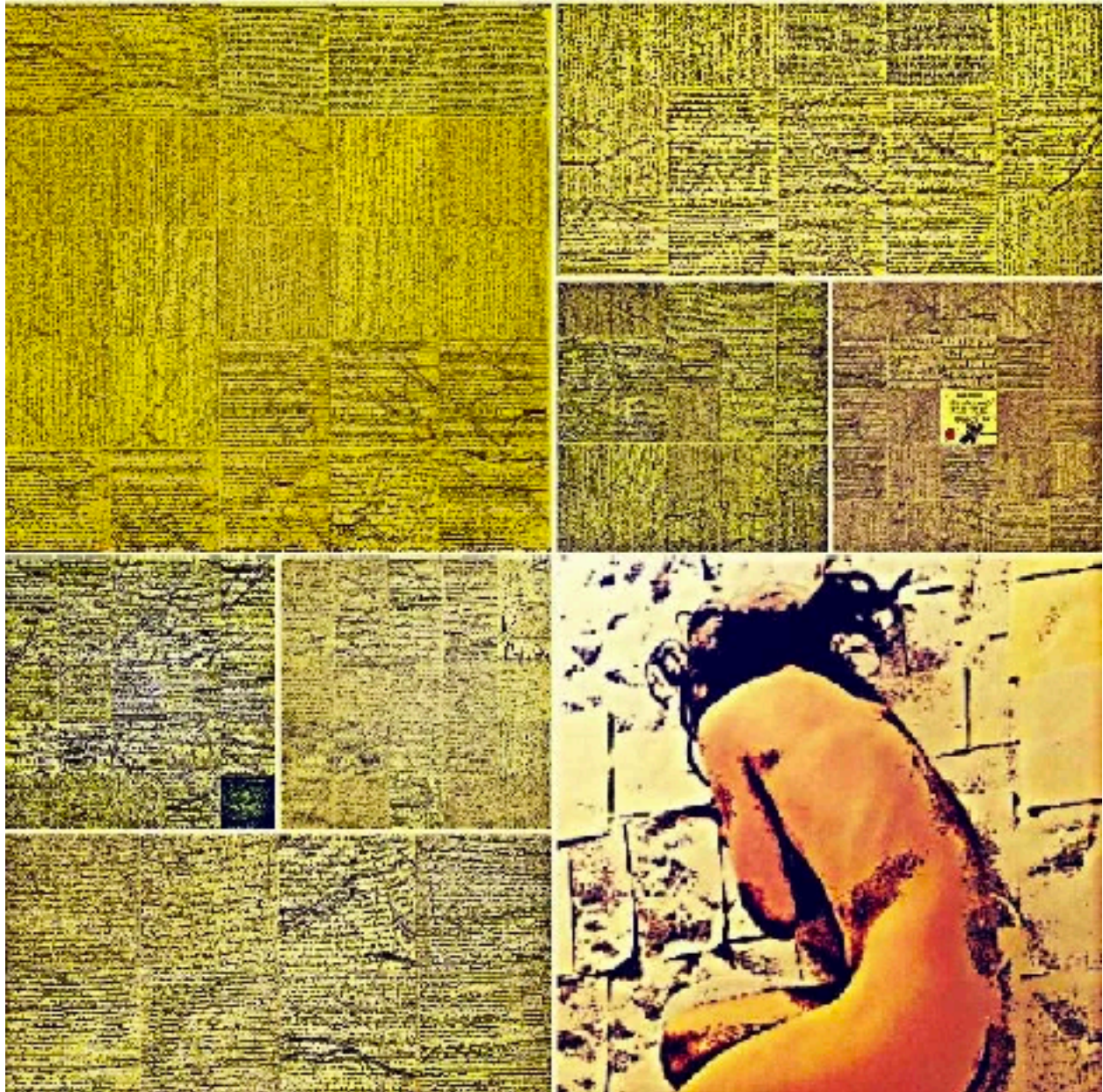
*These are hopes, mad, yes, but only for the breakable, human strength that is peace and its futile promise of longevity. I serve that which I do not know, a home on our Earth, temporary, beautiful because it is fleeting, the sympathetic chorus of voices intoned up from barren soil. Miraculous, that gravity of each word emergent from the mind, an image resting on our fingertips, waiting, patiently, for us to shape its virtual contours.*

*Here are unseen exhibitions, unread books, unheard songs, these are traces on untrodden ground, shores of a full moon tide that break to reveal an ocean floor of phosphorescent mammals, our ancestral body, luminous as a constellation, a sign from below, forecasting our romantic futures, with each other, in love, at last.*

*These pages are filled with enigmas; a schoolchild closing their eyes, a cat in search of a home, detectives confused by their own plot, lust for disembodied figures, a character rewritten in obscurity, birds bathing in honey, man as a word-machine, adolescent infatuation, antiwar satire, identity up in the air, nostalgia resonating throughout the history of a blank space and its universe of invitations.*

*Matt A.H. Nov. 10, 2022*





*"Asemic Man" (2014) digital collage, paper, paint, self-portrait by Menahem Ali*

### Curating a Body by Matt A.H.

"Body of Work" is an exhibition of 15 manuscripts by Menahem Ali, including digital collages by the late author, which he used to visualize his creative process. "Body of Work" is the result of Ali's lifelong efforts to produce a body of artistic, literary work.

Ali was concerned with the visualization of the letter, and saw literature as a visual art. Born into a Palestinian-Jewish family prior to the founding of the State of Israel, Ali grew up in a household where both Arabic and Hebrew was spoken. He received a simultaneous education in both of these languages, and came to speak a creolization of early Palestinian Hebrew and the Judeo-Arabic of his Levantine-Jewish parentage.

According to Ali, the meanings inherent in prose narrative, be it of fiction and nonfiction, and linear or nonlinear verse, could be seen and read, simultaneously, as a kind of calligraphy, both visible by the chosen font of their letters, no matter the mechanical repetition of their form, but also invisible, by the structures of thought that accompanied their metaphorical complexes.

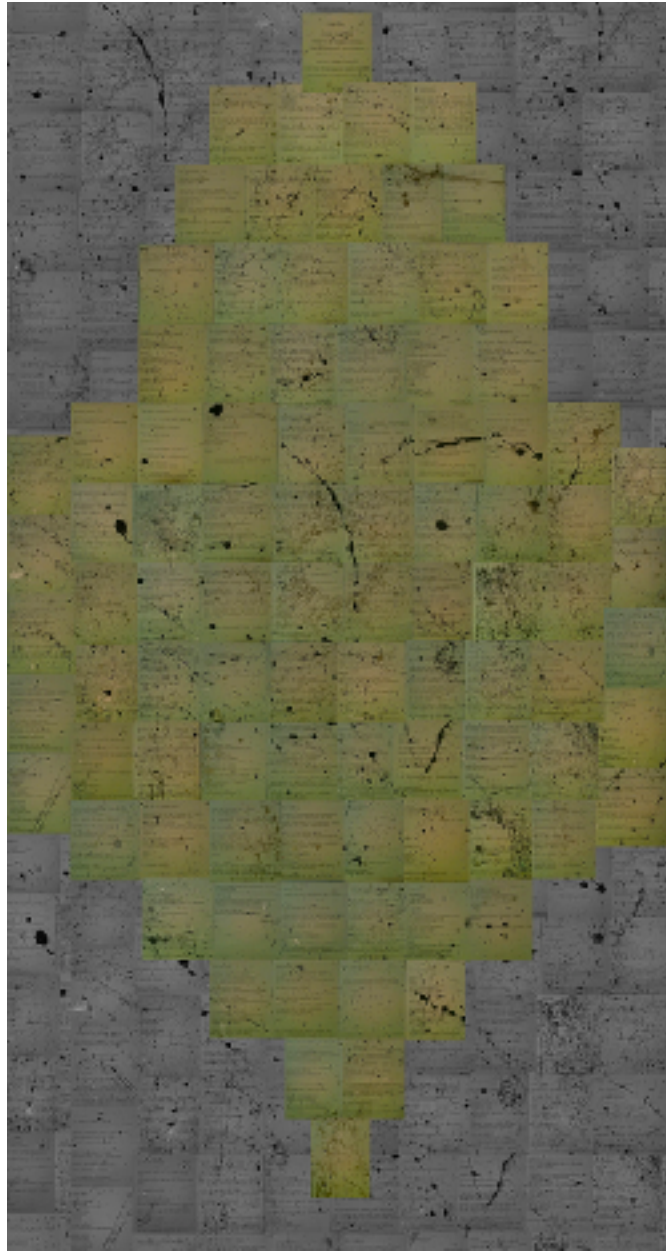
The 15 books included in “Body of Work” represent the sum total of Ali’s life work, and by virtue of that, can be understood as a microcosmic expression of his life, out of his body, following his death. The books encompass fiction in the form of a surrealist novel, a bricolage of thought, memory and dream, titled, “Arson in the Scriptorium”. There is his nonfiction study of poverty in America, titled, “The American Hallucination: Poverty under HyperCapitalism”, which he wrote at the end of his life, having lived in poverty himself upon his arrival in Brooklyn, NY after his forced exile from Palestine on the eve of Israel’s founding in 1948.

Most of Ali’s books are verse, a term that he preferred over “poetry”, because he did not see them as poetry, but more like the basic elements of the universe, based on the logocentric myth of verbalization at the origin of creation, which can be understood as nonnumerical, or linguistic. The 13 books of verse that Ali wrote chart the author’s path to clarity of vision in writing, another indication of his conviction that writing was an act of seeing, and that it constituted the material and substance, even visuality, of art.

Unknown, or unseen in his lifetime, his example is, finally, a demonstration of the concordance between knowing and seeing. It was this anxiety that caused him to produce collages out of his manuscripts, in order to

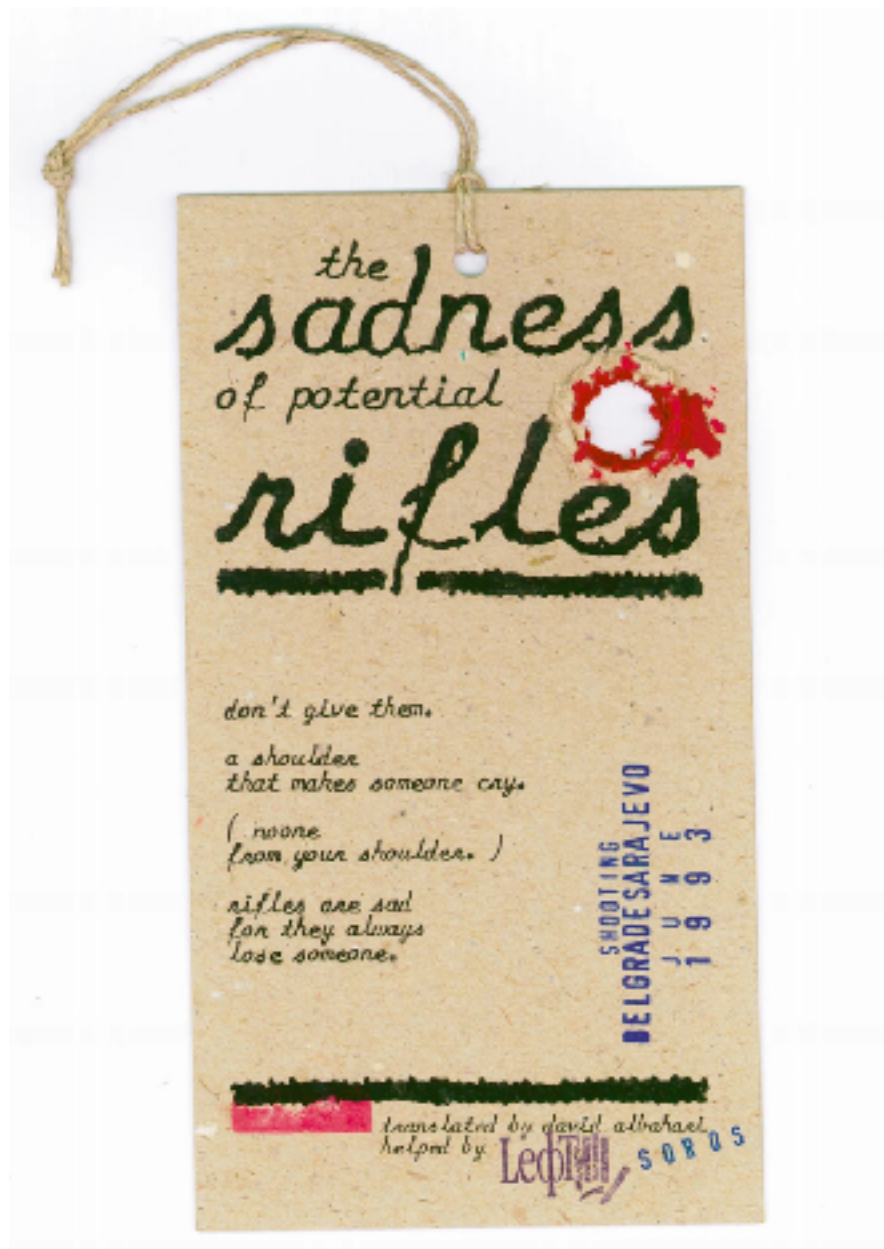


visualize the writing process. He wanted to be able to see his writing as a whole image, a reference to the cabalistic notion of the fragmentation of the universe into letters, in which a book is a symbol of its wholeness in the human mind.



*Cyclical Wordplay (2012) digital collage, paper, ink by Menahem Ali*





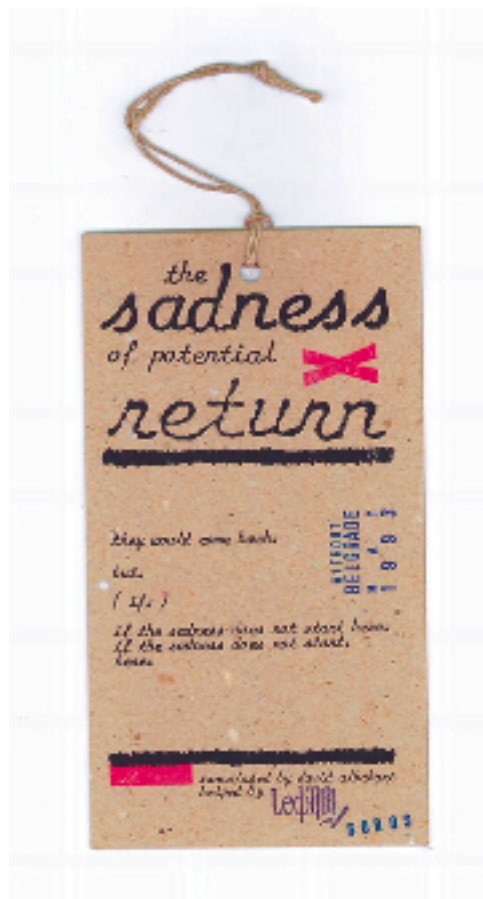
*Sadness, 32 poetry-cards, 24 x 21 cm, 1992-93 by Škart*

### Škart's Potential by Seda Yıldız

“In a city on the brink of war, Škart came to life in an abandoned print workshop in 1990, founded by two students at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade — Dragan Protić and Dorde Balmazović, also known as Prota and Žole.

The duo decided to name themselves Škart, meaning “scrap”, “despised”, or “left over” in Serbo-Croatian. Škart’s understanding of the word has positive connotations — such as a “refusal” to remain silent in times of political unrest and rising nationalism, and an active “rejection” of passivity in confrontation with a lack of well-functioning institutions, with the aim of potentially expanding our understanding of artistic possibilities.”

"Building Human Relations Through Art: Belgrade art collective Škart, from 1990 to present" by Seda Yıldız (2022), Onomatopoe



Sadness, 32 poetry-cards, 24 x 21 cm, 1992-93 by Škart

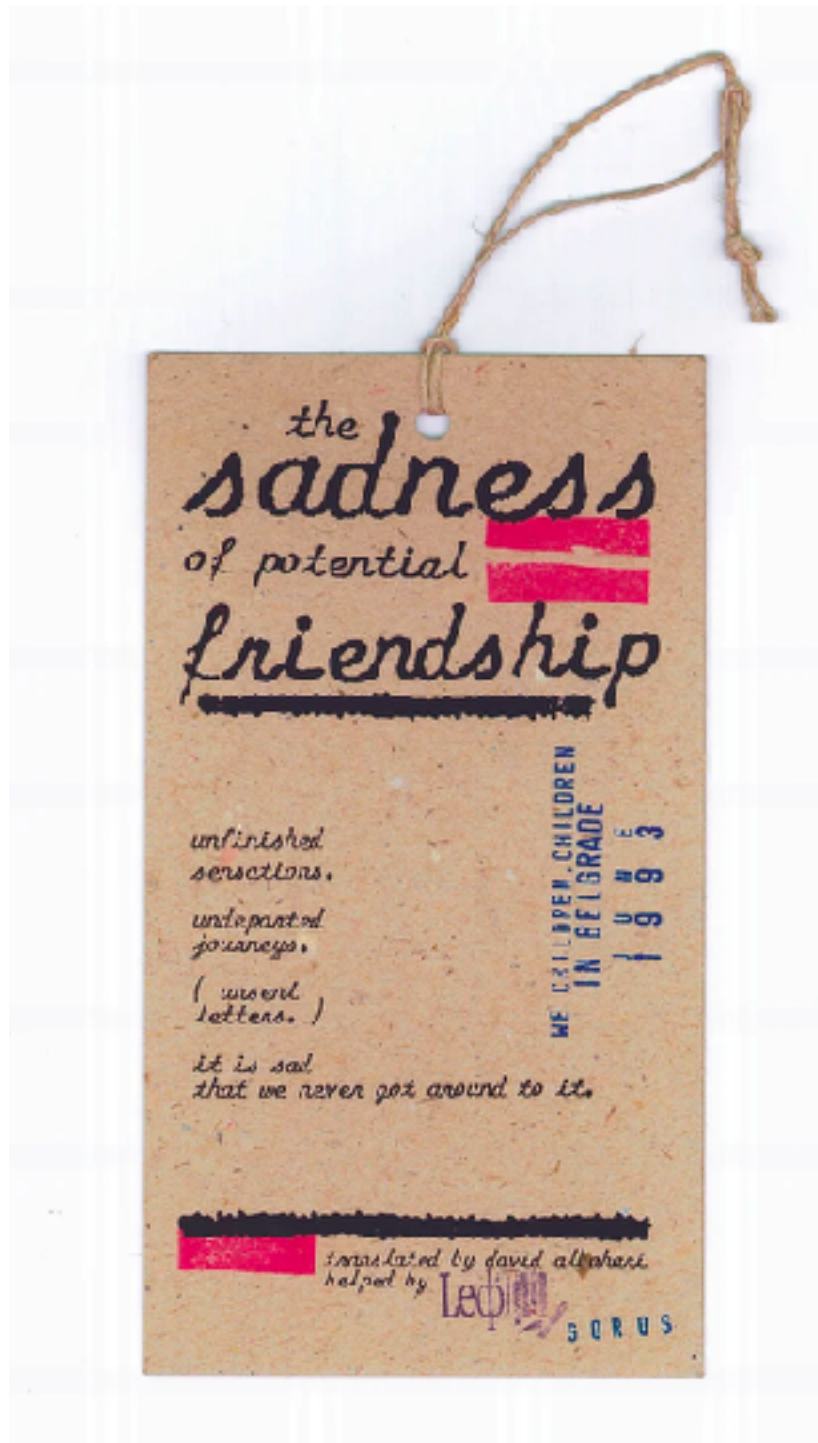


“As an interdependent curator [1] what could my role be in mediating Škart’s practice to a broader audience? The group’s work ethics triggered me to think about the questions on how to operate in the precarious art scene, and with whom and how to work with it. In line with their motto “Building human relations through art” this book is an intimate examination of Škart’s socially-engaged practice; a form of thinking and dialoguing in depth.

Bringing together some traces from the last three decades of practice, it portrays how art, as collective action, functions socially and politically. Selected works — numerous encounters, collaborations, tangible and intangible works including posters, zines, poems, embroideries, documented or non-documented workshops, events and gatherings — revolving mainly around collectivity, community, and collaboration.

The material dates from the early 1990s to the present, and also gives hints of the changing social and political setting in the region, marked by war, nationalism, isolation and transition. It is striking to observe how these shifts have developed the means to reconsider and rethink artistic production. Škart didn’t remain indifferent to this reality, and decided to reject the position of powerless observer; their practice is not marked by such darkness but optimism.”

[1] Interdependent curator, editor and writer Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez refers to the impossibility of being an ‘independent’ curator. Emphasizing the interdependence of our labor relations she points out the multilayered relations curatorial practice requires.

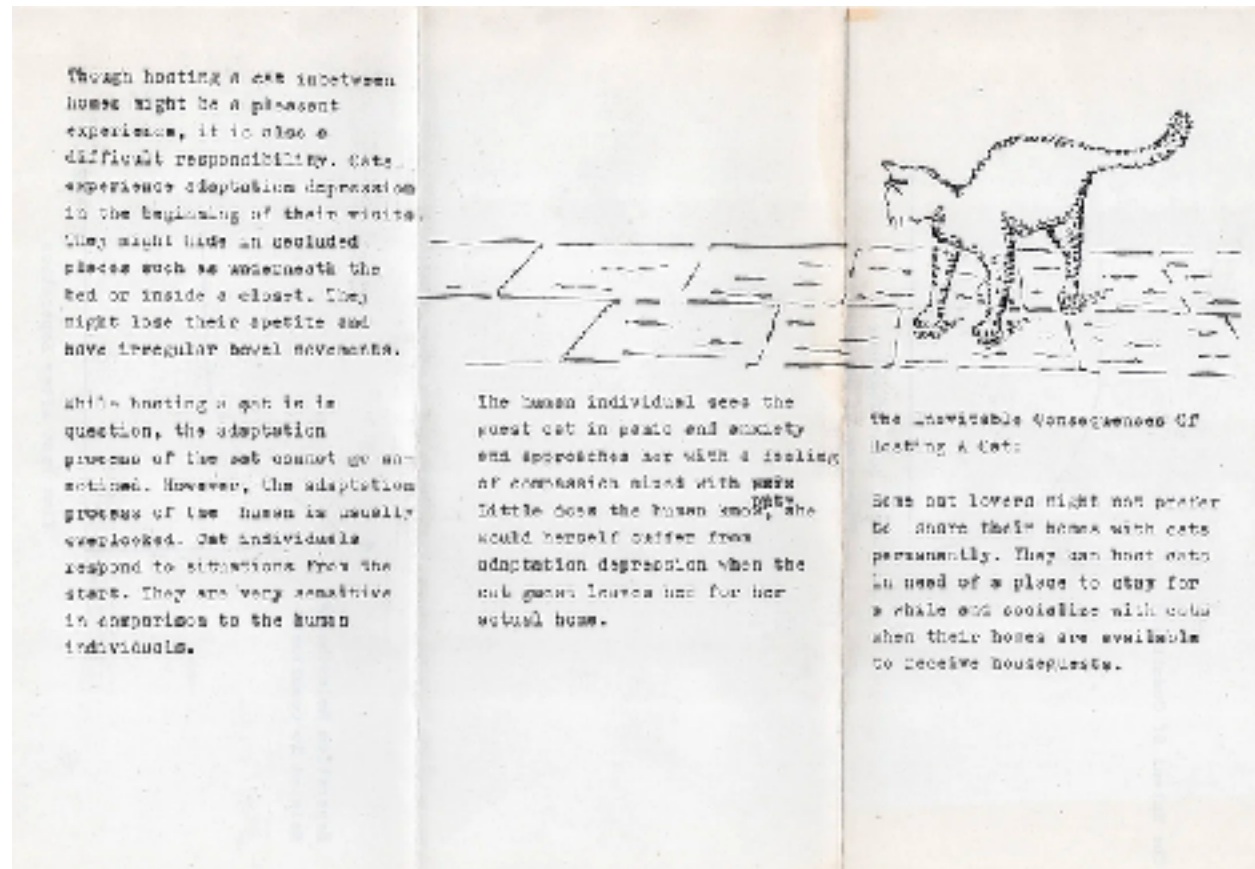


Sadness, 32 poetry-cards, 24 x 21 cm, 1992-93 by Škart



Sadness, 32 poetry-cards, 24 x 21 cm, 1992-93 by Škart

## Inevitable Consequences by Fatma Belkıs



*artwork & text by Fatma Belkıs*

### The Inevitable Consequences of Hosting A Cat:

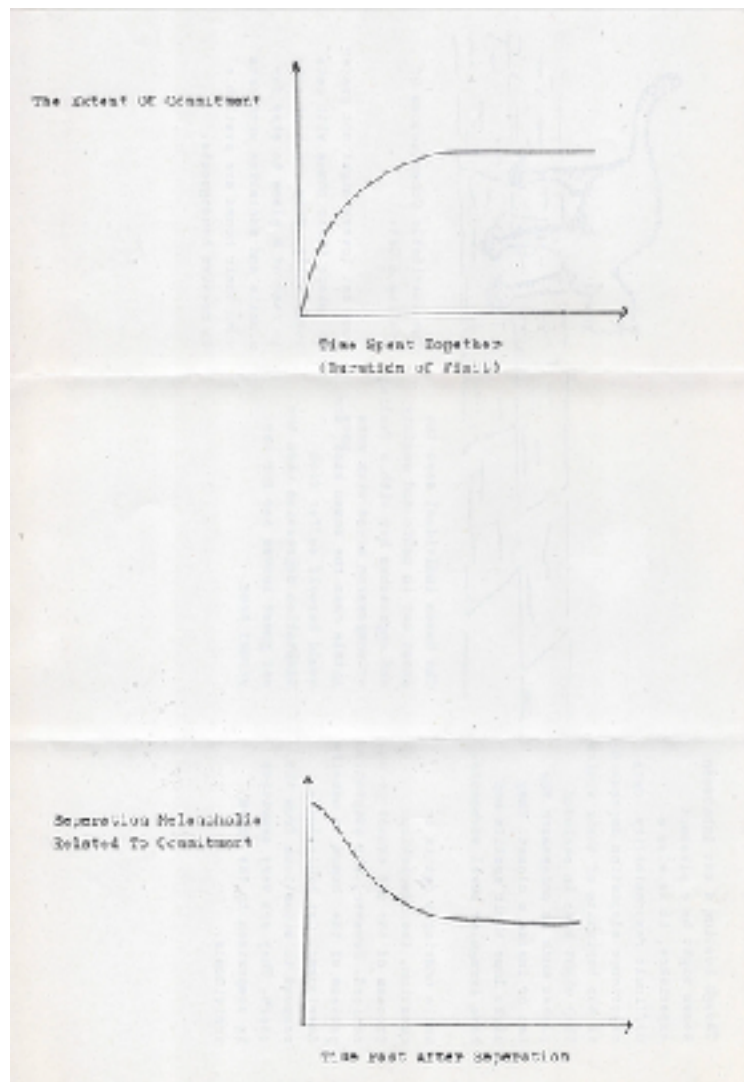
Some cat lovers might not prefer to share their homes with cats permanently. They can host cats in need of a place to stay for a while and socialize with cats when their homes are available to receive houseguests.

The human individual sees the guest cat in panic and anxiety and approaches her with a feeling of compassion mixed with pity. Little does the human know, she would herself suffer from adaptation depression when the cat guest leaves her for her actual home.



Though hosting a cat in between homes might be a pleasant experience, it is also a difficult responsibility. Cats experience adaptation depression in the beginning of their visits. They might hide in secluded places such as underneath the bed or inside a closet. They might lose their appetite and have irregular bowel movements.

While hosting a cat is in question, the adaptation process of the cat cannot go unnoticed. However, the adaptation process of the human is usually overlooked. Cat individuals respond to situations from the start. They are very sensitive in comparison to the human individuals.



*artwork by Fatma Belkis*

## Coincidence by Hakan Bıçakcı



*Preciosa (c. 1642) by Rembrandt van Rijn*

## WAITING FOR A COINCIDENCE

“The dead are the products of living people’s imagination.”

J. Berger

Dr. Kemal

It was the best hour of the best day of the best month of the year. After seeing off his last patient with a smiling face, Doctor Kemal took his briefcase from the next room and, as he did at the end of every work day, he turned off the electrical instruments and the lights and left the office. At one time, there used to be a secretary who did these chores. But after the economic crisis left him without help, he had to take care of everything from making tea to answering the phone.

At first, it was difficult for him to accept this situation. But he got used to it after a short while and never saw the extra work as drudgery. He started walking along the dusty streets that led to the noisy main road of the modest small Aegean town. As he hadn’t felt like changing into street clothes, he drew a lot of attention from children and women as he walked in his doctor’s uniform along the short and yet long way from his office to his home. The briefcase was full of the money for four months’ rent and Doctor Kemal was finally at peace, full of confidence and joy after a long period of distress. The question “Where will I find all that money?” had been growing inside him like a spider’s web for four months.

Now that it had disappeared, the space left behind was filled with a magic blend of sweet evening aromas, the soft light of the setting sun and the song of many birds. What he wanted to do was to have a deep sleep without nightmares after giving the money to the landlord who had constantly been pacing up and down with nervous steps in Doctor Kemal’s mind like a second person. But first, he had to stop at the barber shop. His hair had grown out of control and lost all shape, casting sinister shadows on the noble whiteness of his doctor’s uniform.

## Osman the Barber

It was an ordinary hour of an ordinary day of an ordinary month of the year. Osman the Barber put out his cigarette and began to change the channels of the small black television set which was hanging from the ceiling like a large bat. After a long tour, he stopped at a channel which was broadcasting Turkish pop music videos. He began to fold the light blue head towels carelessly as he hummed wrong words to the music.

At the sound of the opening door, he shifted his gaze from the darkish drawer where he kept the cleanish towels to the refreshing luminosity of the mirror. It was in this mirror that Osman the Barber first saw those who entered the shop. Then he would turn his large eyeballs to the owner of the reflection as if testing the validity of the image. This large mirror had never failed Osman yet. Nevertheless, the sneaky doubt that the one who entered might be different from the person in the mirror never left his side for a moment.

Finally, first gazing at the image in the mirror, then checking the original turned into a tic which he wasn't even aware of. He turned his large eyeballs to the owner of the image,

“Hello, Doctor, welcome!”

“Hello, Osman my friend, how are things?”

“I'm fine I guess. Working... Your hair has really grown.”

The doctor said, “Do something with it, for heaven's sake.”

He left his briefcase on the stool by the door with a secretly proud air and sat on the black chair which the barber was pointing at with an inviting air. It resembled a wounded animal with badly torn skin. Osman the Barber tightly tied the large white barber's apron around the doctor's thick neck. He looked at the image in the mirror and asked the question to which he knew the answer would be “Yes.”



“The usual, Doctor?”

Ahmet Bey

It was the worst hour of the worst day of the worst month of the year. Ahmet Bey left the office hastily without even saying goodbye to his colleagues. He wanted to get home as quickly as possible. Without being seen by anyone... He decided to walk along the narrow, winding, dusty footpath passing through the cemetery. He didn't like it at all and it was a much longer road but it was completely deserted, therefore a preferable choice. The cemetery was making him nervous and tense but at the same time it also had a calming and relaxing effect. Ahmet Bey continued to walk, trying not to pay attention to the clash of these contrasting feelings inside him.

He hadn't had a moment's peace since that horrible night when he had run home like a miserable rat after stealing the gray briefcase from the back seat of that car which had crashed so badly against the wall. He hadn't seen the face of the driver. The skin on the poor man's face had merged with the leather of the steering wheel, becoming a bloody and dark whole. He learned the next day that the man had died on the spot and would be buried in the cemetery whose wide gates he had just walked through.

Nobody said anything about the briefcase which contained very little money. After that day, the lost briefcase which nobody cared about became Ahmet Bey's most important problem. He had always prided himself on his righteousness and honesty, and he could exist only through these pure traits. The briefcase broke his sleep many times every night, caused him to wake up listless and tired every morning, to be careless and sloppy at his job all day and it made him take isolated cemetery lanes in the evening.

The briefcase he had stolen played the central role in a different nightmare every night. The first night, the severed head of its owner had emerged from the briefcase amidst all kinds of vermin and had scolded Ahmet Bey at length. The next night, everybody in the street had briefcase-shaped heads. One night,

he dreamt that he bought eight electric saws with the dollars in the briefcase, lined them up, turned on the power and jumped on them. The eight pieces of his body were put into different briefcases and left at the doorsteps of his loved ones.

Another night, he found a briefcase within a briefcase within a briefcase and so on while he wrestled with briefcases until morning. The curse of the briefcase was not limited only to nightmares. Even when Ahmet Bey was awake, it appeared and disappeared in most unexpected places. Sometimes this was repeated so many times that Ahmet Bey stopped being human and turned into an insane briefcase detector.

The only reason, even if a feeble one, why Ahmet Bey had committed such a contemptible and inhuman crime was that he was up to his neck in debt. Ever since that disgraceful night when he stole the briefcase from the dead car, he was living with a terrible feeling of guilt and could not tolerate facing another living being.

#### Dr. Kemal

The scissors were flying around the top of the doctor's head with a rapacious speed like an iron-winged prehistoric bird. The scissors' jingling sound seemed to remind him of money counting machines. Just as he had abandoned himself to its rhythm, the sound suddenly stopped.

"Doctor, I have some very good face powder, European. Shall we put some on?"

"Sure, Osman. Go ahead."

The barber poured the powder into his hand and started applying it to his important client's face with gentle slaps. With his white shoes, white trousers, the white apron that stretched from his neck to his knees, his white powdered face and the righteousness of finally paying four months' rent, the doctor was covered from head to toe in a dazzling whiteness. With a childish glee, he

looked at the mirror to see the reflection of the briefcase on the stool by the door. He didn't bother to check the original.

### Osman the Barber

The barber carefully put back the powder in the cabinet. He chose the blue comb from amongst the ones standing in the glass of water and took it in one hand. With his other hand, he picked up the red atomizer he used to wet hair and he turned back to the doctor. Suddenly they heard the door open and close quickly with a loud bang. The bag the doctor had left on the stool close to the entrance was no longer there.

Osman the Barber turned his large eyeballs to the stool to confirm that the bag was not there. The doctor realized what had happened and jumped from his seat. He shouted "My bag! Thief!" and began to run madly. The barber stood outside the door and watched the doctor run down the road and disappear around the corner in the fading light, with the barber's apron flapping behind him like a cape. As he went back into the shop in bewilderment, it passed through his head that he would not be able to charge the doctor for the haircut.

Then he was immediately ashamed of himself for this sneaky thought. He changed the television channel with his powdered hands. At the sound of the opening door, he shifted his gaze from the television to the mirror, then from the mirror to his new customer who was entering the shop.

### Dr. Kemal

The doctor could not bring himself to believe the tragedy that had happened to him. In desperation, he had started running after a thief whose face he hadn't seen and didn't even know which way had gone. With eyes wide with panic, he was looking for the briefcase like a hungry dog. As he stopped in desperation by the roadside to catch his breath after a long and tiring chase, he noticed someone walking with uneasy steps in the cemetery ahead. Assuming that nobody except the dead and fugitives would be in the cemetery at that

time of the evening, he started running towards the man he suspected had stolen his briefcase and hid it in the cemetery.

### Ahmet Bey

When he heard the running footsteps, Ahmet Bey shuddered and turned around. He saw a white figure approaching him from amongst the gravestones leaning in all directions. He froze before this mind-boggling sight. When the whiteness came closer, he saw that this was a ghost with a white face, a white cape and disheveled hair.

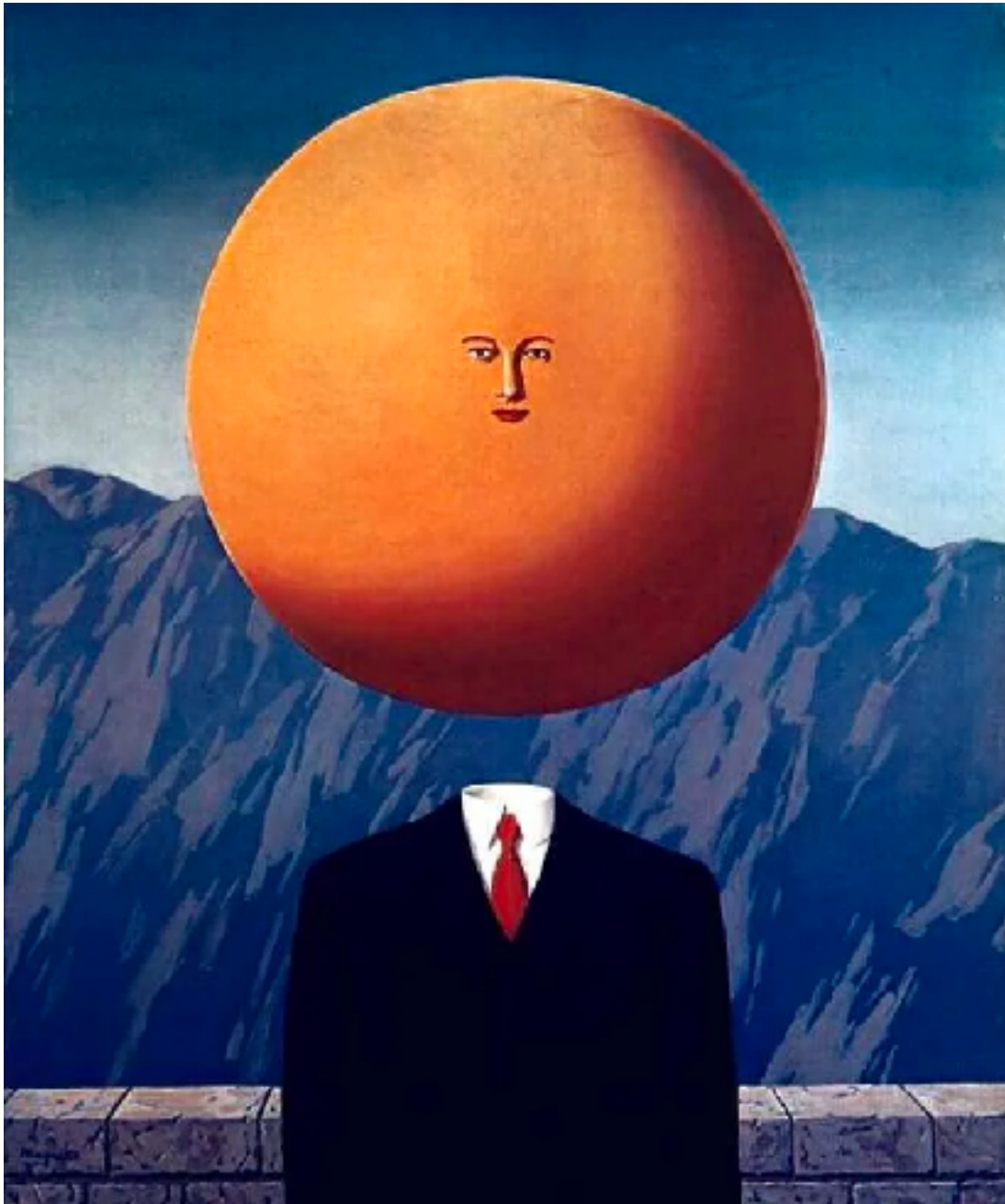
Ahmet Bey's feet were beginning to sink into the ground from fright. He shut his eyes very tightly and opened them again. The white ghost continued to come closer. Ahmet Bey wanted to escape but could not move. All his joints were locked. Finally the white creature grabbed him by his left arm and with a voice that seemed to come from the ground, he said:

"Give me my briefcase, quick! Where is my briefcase? Give me my briefcase, I'm telling you!" Ahmet Bey's body suddenly went numb on the left side. Everything turned black and then became white. Ahmet Bey quietly collapsed amongst the gravestones and lay there very still.





Detachment  
by Kofoworola Odozi



*"The Art of Living", René Magritte (1967), courtesy of ReneMagritte.com*

## A note on learning detachment

Perhaps I have loved you too hard.

Held on too tightly. Perhaps you have outgrown me, and I'm just learning to synchronize my breathing with yours.

Perhaps I should stop gaslighting myself and step out of this self-absorbed state I'm in.

Perhaps

I say, so it doesn't enact itself.

So you don't learn how to go on without me, so the tears I hold back don't fall, so I still - we still have a chance of surviving.

Perhaps I'm overly dramatic, and nothing is wrong, and these walls I see when we speak are just figments of my overactive imagination.

Perhaps we are fine, and I am just a jittery mess who has only known dysfunctional relationships.

Perhaps that is why I can perceive what is happening here.

Perhaps we are coming to a catastrophic end, and I refuse to wrap my head around it. Perhaps I choke on the jokes I would tell you because I no longer know how you would react; I think twice or thrice of my words, afraid to be the final straw on the camel's back.

Perhaps I'm too careful, and I should let it all loose; I laugh as I type.

I am incapable of such.

Perhaps that is why you have decided you no longer want anything to do with me, and perhaps I'm far too burdensome for you.

Perhaps I caused all this from the start, and where we are, where we aren't and where we couldn't be are all my fault—results of my overbearing soul, my reactive mind.

Perhaps I should stop this self-berating trail, fishing for compassion.

Perhaps I should walk away now that I still have the pieces of my heart accountable.

Perhaps you were only ever dreaming, and it is time to wake up.

Perhaps good things are not meant for me.

Perhaps.

I'm just an over-thinker.



# To All the Poems I've Read Before:

## A YA Love Story

by Shefali Mathew



*illustration via Canva*

## The Beginning

Dear Poet,

For I assume you must be a poet, if you saw this title and thought Aha!

Change it.

Dear Reader,

For obviously, if your eyes are going over this word, you are a reader.

Scratch that.

Dear.

This is a love story.

Mine, in fact.

My story.

Your story

History

Herstory

Ourstory

I've said story too many times.

Delete all.

Love stories start with meet cutes. I think. I am not an expert in romance. I can give you advice if you wish - fall in love everyday, when you fight don't say something you regret and being in love is like learning how to be a frog, sometimes its comes naturally, most times there's still a lot to figure it out. Still, I wonder. Do you have meet cutes if you're childhood friends? A quick google search should solve my question but I'm going to answer it for myself because I think the way we met was kind of cute.



**Stage 1: Childhood Friends**

You are sitting near the lake, your hands covered in mud. You are five and you want to throw mud everywhere. You also don't want to be in this park. People suck. A boy comes and sits next to you. Eew. Boys. He offers you a Dairy Milk bar, half eaten. "Amma told me sharing is caring," he says. You look at the mud on your hands, slathered across your palm lines. You take the chocolate - the brown of the wet mud, very similar to the colour of your hands and the colour of the Dairy milk. You eat, mud and chocolate in your mouth. You grin, your first tooth having fallen out the day before yesterday.

He grins back, all teeth in place.

Meet Cute.

I am seven and Mama says write a poem which is all well and good but I feel the need to remind her that I am seven.

Mama smiles. "Write," she says.

She sits with me and we write each word in crayons. My poem rhymes. I am going to be the next winner of the Nobel Prize. I do not know what the prize is but I know I will be the winner.

Poems will become me. I will become poems.

I will write poetry as I watch the rain, because that is poetic.

I will find spaces and rooms of my own while others play in the park.

I am seven. I am poet.

I write a poem about the sky.

The sky is high

But I'm not high

So I write. Proud. Three poems a day, eat lunch, meet poetry, eat strawberry icecream and hope you will shit pink. We are friends, poetry and I. We hold hands and play games and never fight.

We are best friends.

## **Stage 2: Friends to Strangers**

He is a boy and he is eww but sometimes he holds your hand and you feel calm. He is nice with wise ten-year-old eyes. You are also ten now but are your eyes wise? Some days, he tells you stories - of dogs with black fur that shine and how when it is dark, all you can see are the tanned parts of the body. You wonder why he calls it "tanned". You are tanned. Dogs are not. Still, he knows better than you. He is older.

A moment.

Most childhood friendships do not dissolve in moments unless people leave. Yours does, a little. You see, he is cool and all your friends think so. A thinks so and wants to be his friend. Is his friend. And if A is his friend, how can you be? You watch as they become closer, as people comment on their happy smiles and the fun games they create. It is time to walk away, you decide. To leave friends who are meant to be together alone. You were never meant to be.

I write a poem. My Dog Shadow, it is called, even though I have never met my dog Shadow. An excerpt, if you will accept it.

My dog Shadow

Is small and narrow

He is a dachshund

My magic wand

It goes on for a while. I am ten and I will soon have a dog. I will love him with all that I am and he will teach me how to write. He does, or rather, he will, but the form is no longer poetry - it is the essay. This is will happen when I am

thirteen. But now I am ten and poetry and I are friends and I meet Shadow and we smile at each other.

I am proud of the poem I have written for Shadow. I insert it into all my other poems - a poem within a poem. I am Scheherazade but poetic.

People give me books of poetry and I sit and read them. One day, I will do this too, I think. I will hold a book with my poems and I will look modest while inside I will scream, joy pouring out of my mouth in blue waves. Others start to write poetry too but I am not jealous. Poetry can have more than one friend.

But someone says something, praises someone else or insults my writing, maybe it was only constructive criticism. I do not know. I cannot remember. But I believe for some reason that it was a Friday. I know I was eleven or twelve. Fridays are happy so when I went home I should have been happy about a weekend but I lay in bed cried. Poetry and I, we cannot be friends because poetry has other friends and I want her to be my friend and mine alone.

I stop writing.

### **Stage 3: Strangers to Enemies**

The boy does not try to repair the friendship. He does not seem confused or concerned by the way you suddenly cut off all ties. Instead, he continues to make new friends, talk to new people and find new ways of being. It is obvious he does not care about you. You will not care about him either. You try to make new friends, hesitantly asking people questions - the boy who sings, the girl who paints. It does not work.

His cousin sister joins school. Her body parts are in the wrong places; her nose is next to her eye, her lips are stuck on her forehead. She is a year younger than you and him, but she says wise things, just as he did. You want to be her friend but you are scared. She is the one who reaches out to you. And just as you grow

to love his sister, you learn to hate him. His words are convoluted even when they are simple, he speaks of the same thing over and over again. He teases you sometimes, not by pulling at your hair, nothing as common as that. He says things about others and through that he is teasing you, reminding you that even though you left him, he does not need you. The worst part of it all is he is not doing this on purpose.

For one year I barely write.

I still read, of course.

I read about a boy wizard full of love and courage, trying to save the wizarding world.

I read about a boy billionaire, who will learn love and courage after he kidnaps a fairy.

I read about a girl whose father reads a villain from a book into life.

I read with a passion and fire that only a child can.

I do not write.

We have to write for school and my teacher praises what I write.

I feel proud.

The essay is my form.

I will write the essay. Poetry is dead to me. We are not friends, maybe we never were. I try to write humour and happiness. To find love in words - I write about trees and essays on subjects like "Every Cloud has a Silver Lining." The cliché turns real in my writing.

But it is mine.

In school we learn poetry and I don't hate it completely. Well, most of it, I do. But once in a while I like a poem. Abou Ben Adhem, may his tribe increase.

**Stage 4: Enemies to Friends (well, sort of)**

You join college and you spend time with his sister. You discover your selves in each other.

Sometimes his sister's hand is replaced by a leg, sometimes the leg by a hand. Time sort of slips when you are together. It's not that you don't fight. You do. All the time. She can be cutting, brutal and you can be so unsure. But when the world comes crashing down on you, she is always there.

He also joins this college and you are asked to work together on a Chemistry project. You want to sneer at him, but you also want to be open-minded so you don't. He smiles at you, and it is so different from the grimace you are used to. His smile is welcoming. He has grown, as have you.

You are both different now. A tentative friendship begins. You work on the project together. You still spend time with his sister. She is happy that your relationship has started again.

"Start with what confuses you," the Professor says.

I start to read poetry again and again, waiting for the words to make sense. Then my teacher looks at the poem and offers an interpretation. My eyes widen as I start to see beauty in words.

As Kingfishers catch fire, I scream Gerard Manley Hopkins' words, "Whát I dó is me: for that I came." What I do is write, for that I came, I think. But then sometimes I can't write.

I am doing modernism now. And they say something about words and everything makes so much sense in class. I try to write a poem about a leaf. It's not really a poem. I don't care.

I write essay after essay, the form becoming one I am comfortable with.

And then I start to write fiction as well.

I have begun to like poetry, finding myself in it.



It does not feel as inaccessible as it used to. I cannot write it but I enjoy my English poetry classes.

I talk about poetry to my mother. She recites lines from Coromandel Fishers when we go to the Beach and from Robert Frost when we go to the woods in Kodaikanal.

It's a slippery slope and I can be pushed off any moment.

### **Stage 5: Sort of Friends to Friends**

You both join the same college. His sister also joins. So does his brother. They've been promoted. The college decided they were all smart enough to be together. You are alone but they keep you company. Him, not so much. But his sister and brother do.

You make new friends and one of them is also good friends with him. She says nice things about him and you wonder if you know the same person. But she keeps saying nice things, wise things.

And so you decide that maybe you should try the friendship once more. He is sitting on a bench reading T S Eliot. You walk up to him, your palms sweating words and you ask him if you can sit with him. He grins at you and shuffles to give you space. You sit down. It is awkward. A friendship being repaired can often be awkward. "I... What lovely weather today," you say. It is hot and you are sweating. He laughs and closes the book.

"As lovely as you," he says, an eyebrow arched in challenge. You pick up a stick and throw it at him. This time when he laughs, you notice the sound. It is somehow both rough and clear at the same time. It is sandpaper floating in an ocean and cotton in a mixer. He holds out his hand, offering it so you can shake it. "I'm thinking," he says, his eyes dark but his smile wide. "That we should start over."

You hesitate.

Then you put your clammy hand in his. He does not flinch at the sweat and you think maybe he's kind of nice.

I meet C, basically a poem walking around in human skin.

She quotes poetry like Mama does.

She likes words I cannot understand.

She sends me poetry sometimes and I'm surprised how little I dislike it. How I actually quite like it, the words creating music that I did not understand but were completely beautiful.

I do a research paper on Crow Goes Hunting by Ted Hughes.

I interpret it all wrong.

I don't care.

Our relationship is not the same as it was when I was a child desperate to be a poet but it has changed as we have. We learn to like each other, but the relationship is new and often fragile.

I still cannot write poetry.

### **Stage 6: Friends to Lovers?**

I'm not sure who should ask who out at this point. Does he ask you out and you say no? Or do you ask him out and he says yes? Do you fall in love, desperately. Do you sing love songs to each other? I do not know how this story ends.

I bought a book of poetry today.

This is strange and unlike me. Carol Ann Duffy speaks of fluffy skeletons and I see words turn alive.

Am I in love with poetry?

Yes? No? Maybe?

I'm uncertain. Write a poem Shefali.

And I do.

Of teaching and uncertainty and love and the Loch Ness monster that lives in my stomach.

### **The End**

Do you live happily ever after? I don't think so. You have your problems, so does he. But maybe so do happily ever afters. Perhaps, happily ever after then is simply finding yourself again and again, and sometimes that can happen with someone else. But how do I end this story then? When the ending is ambiguous and the feelings uncertain.

This is what I will do.

I invite you to a reading of T S Eliot. C will be there. Mama will be there. He will be there. You will be there. I will be there. And I will measure out my life in coffee spoons, all the while telling Maya Angelou that still we'll write.



## Multiple of Six

by Jaden Pierce



*Machine Man -- 16th century German illustration, Henry Kamen (public domain)*

## Foreword

The illustration to Jaden Pierce's lead poem, "MAN THE MACHINE" is an excerpt from the Brazilian edition of a book by Italian-American intellectual Silvia Federici, entitled, "Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation", published in 2004.

A caption describing the image printed on page 264 reads: "A revealing example in the new mechanical conception of the body in this German woodcut of the sixteenth century, in which a peasant is represented as nothing more than a means of production: his body composed entirely of agricultural utensils."

The book is available online free from the publisher Coletivo Sycorax.

## MAN THE MACHINE

Numerous inquisitive conversations have I had

Comparing man to but a machine

So often refuted yet I disagree with the norm

Working constantly mechanical like to me

Putting pieces back together by surgeons

Only difference is that we are waterproof

Heart, lungs, kidneys, liver

Merely replaceable parts

Blood types and transplants behind the scenes

Pondering silly ideas such as freedom

One is merely left to sulk with melancholy



## TOUR

Walking rigidly reminds me of schoolyard games

Following the leader is confinement

Eyes darting at the sights intrigued as if seeing for the first time

Hoping for a chance to disappear and stumble upon a magical wardrobe  
transporting to Narnia

But then I come to realize I'm talking to myself again

Silly imagination

## DIFFERENT

I watch people following the throngs

Yet I stand far aback feeling out of place

I watch people shop at the mall incessantly

And I amuse myself reflecting on the days I was interested in such activities

I go to the film sometimes

Only to have a different reaction from the masses

I watch people protest so passionately

Yet I only display passion through my tears

## SOLITUDE

Isn't it easier to be alone

Without judges or artificiality yet so uncommon in society

Rarely can one hear the silence

Searching for some quiet and comfort greater than the pillow

Different than the typical nine to five

Sweet solitude beckons me

Not a short vacation only to return

## FLAPPER

Fun loving flappers scurrying around

Creating panic at the peaceful picnic

Outrageous disruption of societal values

Barrier breaking freedom untold of before

Independence is but a hoax as all are dependent

Gender fluidity now being pushed

Rambunctious opponents fight back in disgust afraid of unworthy change.

## FUN

Futilely trying to change my habits

Frivolous lover of fun

How dreadful to serve a purpose

How ruthless to have servants

Abundant admirers corrupt lame waltzes deserving of the gallows

Rather balance a plate of uncertainty

Watching the kite but drift away

FICTIVE

Hummingbirds  
by Alex Butler  
with Sy Montgomery



*The Amethyst, Brazil (1863) by Martin Heade, Museum of the Shenandoah Valley*

## Preface

I'm moved and honored that Alex Butler nestles his immured sonnet within the embrace of my book. Both his sonnet and *The Hummingbirds' Gift* are odes to beginnings: his unborn child, in the sonnet, is still under construction; the two orphaned baby hummingbirds, unfeathered and flightless, are as well. One baby is in a belly and two others are in a nest, but all three of these tiny, vulnerable, unfinished creatures need our careful nurturing to survive. All three are as yet unfinished, but already loved. And that is the glory of these twinned journeys--of the loved and wanted fetus on her way to meet her parents, and of the orphaned baby birds, destined to one day master the sky: The gift they bring us is to enlarge our compassion, to open our hearts to welcome these little ones to the world.

Sy Montgomery

## Intro

My newest immured sonnet finds its home nestled in a piece of prose by Sy Montgomery, from her book, "A Hummingbird's Gift" (2021).

The sonnet works with a rhyme scheme (ABBA, CDDC, EFFE) and a traditional rhyming couplet at the end. I chose the prose because it illustrates a mysterious picture - a precious incubator.

The "jewel box" incubator is home to something... but the reader doesn't find out what exactly it is until the last words of the piece: 2 baby hummingbirds.

The subject matter of my poem hits very close to the heart because it details a pregnancy. Like all my immured sonnets, I try to draw parallels between the prose and the poem. While writing this, my wife and I are expecting a baby daughter in the next few weeks. And so, as you read on, the idea of an incubator is broadened.



## Hummingbirds

By Alex Butler

Excerpt by Sy Montgomery, 'The Hummingbird's Gift'

An incubator is just a glass and metal box, about the size of a double-wide microwave. Nothing much to look at: it's got a couple of dials and a glass front and makes a soft humming sound as it goes **Almost seamlessly at work, Fluttering** about its task of keeping the temperature inside a constant 85 and **heating the internal nest enough** degrees Fahrenheit and maintaining 45 percent humidity. But on **deliverance to us in times so tough**, this day in June in 2008, I have flown across the country, from **sunlit and sprawling, big and bustling** Manchester, New Hampshire, to San Francisco, California, **discovering what future lies in store**, ridden on a bus across the Golden Gate Bridge to Marin County, **the mysterious swell rose within me**, and finally caught a ride with my friend Brenda Sherburn La Belle, **a curious meeting aside the sea**, all for the chance to have a look at this particular machine. For today **the beauty is palpable, and, what more**, this incubator is a jewel box, containing priceless living gems. It's as if the **whole world is possible**. The machine sits on a table by the window in the guest bedroom **elevating our daydreams to match height of Brenda's house**. I hold my breath as she swings open the **resplendent mind's eye — a colorful tight** glass door. She reaches in and removes a small red utility **lens, a weaved motion in our washable** basket — the kind in which parents store their kids' crayons - **Landscapes dispelled under an ultrasound** and places the basket atop the incubator so I can get a better **reveal, our future, a sight most profound** look. There, raised an inch above the tissues lining the bottom, resting on a pedestal fashioned from the cardboard core of a toilet paper roll, is a cuplike nest the diameter of a quarter. It's soft as cotton candy, made from puffs of plant down and strands of spider silk and decorated with lichens. Inside, facing two opposite directions, with short black bills and eyes tiny as dressmaker's pins, are two baby hummingbirds.



# Detective Fiction

by Drewry Scott



*AI image by the author via Midjourney*

## Foreword:

The story, "An Easement for the Detective", is a satirical work of genre detective fiction, but also speaks to the emotional catharsis of loss and the process of metamorphosis it may bring about.

### **An Easement for the Detective**

The rain came down hard. It had started suddenly, a great levy in the sky seeming to have broken, sending a deluge down on a city below that tried its best to pretend at nonchalance. The heavy drops of rain served as newfound connective tissue—every thing, living or non, felt its touch and all were bound together in unspeakable communion: the drops that graced the businessman's umbrella described the tiny feet of a rat in the sewer system far below; minerals of brittle bones from a long forgotten death realized the grand vista of the sky seen from the penthouse a quarter mile above, which in turn knew the cloud from which the storm itself surged.

At the same time, as it connected the rain also offered isolation, privacy. Those that didn't escape indoors to hide away the remainder of the evening found they could move about shrouded within it, hunched and secretive.

That's what the detective liked best about it, the anonymity it afforded him, allowing him to imagine himself as any other denizen of the big city, or any lowlife freak the like he plied his trade in pursuing. The connection was what he craved, but not in the way the other lonely citizens did. He strived to understand, to connect, but his end was to bring about justice, not fellowship.

The streaming droplets divided the scene from the driver's side window into a hundred strips, and through them he watched EMTs and police officers rush around. They all tried to avoid the weather, even those in bright plastic slickers they'd procured from under the hastily erected canopy tent beneath which

forensics had already commenced. Each person likely anticipated finishing their meager tasks in order to re-enter the dryness below the tarp, or else be cleared of duty for the night and go home—a dry bed and a warm spouse were waiting.

Mechanically, the detective then pulled the door latch and emerged, Unlike these workers, he was home. The highway underpass under which another John Doe had been discovered was his warm bed, and his spouse the myriad clues ripe for divining. No one would address him, knowing by word of mouth not to interrupt what was for him the beginning of a delicate dance...

“This way detective.” A familiar voice to his right. “Body’s over here.”

It was Jimmy. Young, bustling Jimmy—more energy than he knew what to do with. Already he’d made his way toward the underpass, the area brightly lit with high watt white LEDs, and was expertly pulling latex gloves on. The kid could still count the bodies he’d seen on two of those gloved hands (that is, without the need for mentally tallying the ten and resuming count on a previously extinguished hand’s worth of digits, as one does when needing to count a higher amount of something—bodies, in the detective’s situation, of which he’s maybe actually might have lost count by now, he’d have to check back at the office). Clearing his throat, the detective jutted his chin slightly and stepped forward toward the scene.

From his coat pocket he pulled a cigarette pack. He shook one out and pulled it directly from the pack with his lips. He let it sit there while his other hand fingered the flip lighter in his other pocket, running his thumb over the HELL OR HOME engraved across one of its faces as he did, never forgetting when and where it came from or that he was its second owner, a succession of pain harbored in the small object which he took on through the will of sheer duty. Duty—thoughts of his duty went through the detective’s mind as he stepped down the small, muddy hill, brushing past sprouting yellow grass and sidestepping ancient aluminum cans that likely once held cheap lager. On rainy

nights like these he liked to imagine he was stepping in between the raindrops, that none of them could touch him.

“Another one, eh,” he said when he got there, and the two other officers looked at him. But really, what does one say when encountering the fifth such body in as many weeks? The same discouragement was felt by all—the aching disappointment at having one’s gut feeling confirmed, at finding a grim pattern there for the discerning, and the likelihood that such situations usually get much worse before they get better. For now, and going forward, flippant remarks would have to somewhat suffice.

Jimmy, hunched over the deceased, nodded sullenly. “Vic is a John Doe, early 30s. Prints are on the way to the lab. And yes, it does look like another one from our guy, detective. The markings are there, plain as day, but I’d say it appears he’s stepping up his game in terms of brutality...” Using the tip of a ballpoint pen, Jimmy moved aside the opaque plastic sheeting covering the mess. One of the officer’s flashlight beams wavered slightly, and then returned to reveal what at first glance appeared to be some abstract parody of art: through the recognizable darker navy bits of the man’s cotton shirt shone radiant blue-white of flesh, parts of it torn jaggedly to reveal vivid and horrible deep reds, coagulating blood that glistened in the light, and looking even closer other details began to take shape—subtler textures of exposed muscle and sickening yellow bulbs of subcutaneous fat, the gleaming white of bone peeking from underneath, all of it sitting like an inert pile of matter arranged in somewhat recognizable fashion, instead of the remains of a man’s body. Using his lips the detective transferred the cigarette to the other side of his mouth, and from his pocket he withdrew the old lighter. Using his thumb he flicked it a few times, but it refused to light.

“As you can see,” Jimmy continued, “the wounds are consistent with our two others, but worse this time, more vicious.” With his gloved hand, he gently moved aside a mound of flesh that looked to be the victim’s arm. “All one weapon, from the looks of it. Likely the same serrated blade.”

Again and again the detective flicked the flint wheel but it still wouldn't light. One of the other officers seemed to notice and looked over, the detective defensively turning away a small bit and making a pained face. He switched to his other thumb and tried some more. Jimmy was still considering the corpse.

"Also, something different this time is the choice of vic. From his appearance, choice of clothing, I think we're looking at someone different than the killer's typical vagrants." Using the pen again he moved aside the dark gray wool of a pricey looking peacoat to reveal the glimmer of a gold pocket watch. "Wallet's loaded with cash too," he said, "although his cards and ID are gone. The perp wanted us to get our hands dirty on this one. Sick freak."

Using the meager, reflective light from the lamps nearby, the detective raised the old metal lighter and tried to peer inside. Then, grumbling, he rolled the flint wheel some more. No spark emerged from within, though everything looked to be in normal working order.

"Um. Detective?" said Jimmy, looking up at him finally. "Something wrong?"

"Um, no. Sorry," he said, given the wheel some more absent minded flicks. "So any guesses why the vic was out here to begin with? Guy with money, under an overpass on a night like this." He teased the bit of wick inside the lighter a little, seeing if it was possibly obstructing the flint. "...Maybe our man The Gasher sensed an opportunity, decided to upgrade to someone with a bank account."

Silence followed and the detective looked from the lighter to see all three faces looking his direction. "Um."

"Gasher?" said Jimmy.

"Detective," one of the officers said after a moment, "you caught the Gasher last year. This one here's the work of the—"

"Right!" cried the detective, his hands in the air. "The Spooker! The Saw Blade Spooker. Right. No duh, sorry."

“Yeah, the Spooker,” the officer said, sheepishly. “I mean—maybe the Spooker... You’re the detective after all, detective.”

“Oof. Sorry guys. That was dumb. Spooker. Saw Blade... yeah.”

“Are you ok?” Jimmy said, narrowing his eyes at the detective.

“Uh, yes Jimmy. I’m fine. Excellent work so far. Please proceed.”

“It just seems like—”

“Proceed, Jimmy.”

The young man considered the detective for a few seconds longer before finally looking down toward the mangled remains. “Anyway, given the apparent status of our victim, it’s only a matter of time before we get an ID, which begs the question, why take his cards? Why send us through the legwork?”

Flick.

“He knows we’ll get there eventually. So it seems to me—”

Flick-flick.

“—he’s just trying to buy some time. Something about this murder—”

Flick.

“Has got the Spooker...”

Flick, flick-flick.

“...spooked. Detective, please if you wouldn’t—”

“Hm? What’s that?”

“Probably wet,” mumbled one of the officers.

“What’d you say?” The unlit cigarette joggled a little in his mouth as his head snapped toward him.



“Your lighter there. Got wet, seems like.”

Flick. Flick, flick. “Don’t think so. This lighter don’t get wet.”

The officer stepped closer. “Well, it happens. I—in the rain. The wick gets wet or the flint... Doesn’t spark. Maybe your hands were wet when—”

“No, no. Doesn’t get wet, officer.” A glance from the detective caused the officer to take a step back. “Other lighters get wet. This one doesn’t. Sorry.” Flick, flick. “I know you’re trying to help but...”

“Alright, detective.” The officer put his hands up as if to placate him, or was he mocking him? “I’m just saying—raining cats and dogs out here and lighters get wet an’ don’t work—”

“Doesn’t get wet.”

“Guys, please,” said Jimmy. The detective had never, in their months of working together, heard such an edge to the young man’s voice. “Can we please focus? I think I might be on to something here.”

“Yes, Jimmy. Yes.” The detective gave a surly glance toward the officer, who had resorted to pouting with his arms folded. “By all means, you may proceed. And I’ll say you’re doing excellent work so far, Jimmy. Really doing good.”

“Thanks detective.” Jimmy took a moment to organize his thoughts once again. The rain continued pummeling down around them. Single, lonely cars swished by on the overpass above. Hours remained before daylight. “If I had to guess,” Jimmy said, loudly to be heard over the rain, “I would say this vic knew the Spooker personally. That’s why the abrupt change in choice of prey. This guy here knew something, something he wasn’t supposed to know. Maybe he confronted the killer here, under cover of darkness, middle of nowhere... and the Spooker got scared. He—”

Flick-flick-flick-flick-flick.

“Fuck’s sake!” Jimmy cried, rising to his feet with a maddened look on his face and stomping through the muddy rainwater to the detective. “I mean—I’m sorry detective but really... for god’s sake!” The boy fumbled in his coat pocket. “Here, take these.”

Pulling a small book of matches from his coat, he slapped them into the detective’s hand. “If it’s really that damn important to smoke. Then can we finally get on with this?”

Trying to remember the last time anyone had spoken to him this way, the detective looked down at the matches, noting the logo of an infamously seedy nightclub printed on the cover. There was no way Jimmy went to a place like this. “Jolly’s?”

Jimmy ignored him. He’d returned to once again squat down in front of the body, as if he were finding his mark in a play. He tapped his forehead almost audibly, trying to regain his train of thought.

“Uh.”

“What!” Jimmy exploded, glaring at him with his teeth bared. “What now?”

“...I can’t use matches.”

“You can’t—you can’t use matches.”

“Nope. Take ‘em back. Shoulda’ said something right when you gave ‘em. They don’t work for me.”

Working twenty years on the force, the detective had chased murderous criminals into dead-end alleys, only for them to wheel around and face him; he’d locked eyes with mob bosses in courtrooms as he was in the process of testifying against them; but the looks on Jimmy and the officer’s faces then made his heart skip. Jimmy especially seemed overcome with a baffled rage. The other officer, silent until now, was the first to speak up.

“They don’t work?”

Setting his teeth, the detective bravely returned the gaze. “Nope. They don’t work. Never have.”

“Meaning you don’t know how to use them.”

“Meaning they don’t work, like I said.”

“Here, let me show y—”

“Step away from me!” The detective cried, surprising even himself by jerking his arm instinctually toward the hip where he kept his holstered snub-nosed revolver. The officer froze.

“Uh... Easy, detective.”

“Woah, man,” said the other.

Exhibiting what the detective considered his patented Quick Thinking, he began to scratch a spot on his lower back. “Hm? What? Oh, sorry—got an itch here.”

Skeptical, both officers nonetheless stepped backwards away from him. “Uh sure. N-no problem.”

Jimmy, tossing the plastic sheet down to again cover the body, then stood and considered the detective with what looked like real concern. “Are you feeling alright?” he asked. “I’m getting a little concerned.”

“I’m fine—” he snapped. “Got an itch, that’s it. Rainy overpasses at night gives me itches. Big deal. Anyway, fine—I can see you don’t believe me. Watch this.” He opened the matchbook and tore a single match from inside. Staring very closely, he applied the tip against the striking area and quickly pulled it along the strip—flup. Nothing.

“See?” he said. Flup, flup, flup. “What’d I tell you.” Flup, flup. “Nothing.”

He began trying match after match. As they watched, one officer leaned over to the other. “Hey,” he whispered, “that matchbook—you ever been to Jolly’s?”

“Nah,” said the officer. “Weird spot, ain’t it? Didn’t that come up in afternoon briefing? Jolly’s is like, equidistant or some-such to where we keep finding these stiffs?”

“Oh yeah. That’s odd.”

Meanwhile, unlit matches rained on the detective’s feet. “Don’t know what more I need to show you. These things don’t work for me.”

Jimmy, seeming to not have heard the officer’s conversation, moved cautiously toward the detective. “You’re not doing it right.” He held his hand out. “See, you’ve got to put the—”

“I know how it works! Christ! I’m sixty goddamn years old. I’m telling you I’ve been trying my whole life and they don’t work. It’s like a curse.” His voice cracked loudly on the last word.

“You’re not—detective are you crying?”

“I’m not crying, I’m just...” Perhaps it was due to some unconscious acknowledgment that perhaps his usefulness to the city police department were waning, perhaps it was just the weather, but the detective found himself on the verge of sharing something he rarely told anyone. “Here,” he said, “since you dips are so adamant about it, I’ll tell you the story. Because there was once, just once that I was able to light a match.”

“...Ok.”

“The year was 1964...”

The detective—then a lowly private on a search and destroy mission in southern Vietnam—was taking a break after a long few hours combing the

areas of jungle immediately surrounding the surprisingly calm village by taking a seat on an overturned metal bucket when, deciding to have a smoke, he discovered that his lighter had stopped working.

“It was a cheap little thing. Given to me by my sweetie back home,” he said to his audience, the two officers and Jimmy seeming to accept the beginning of his tale with sincere slight smiles, all of them unaware that a gigantic oily rat had slipped underneath the plastic sheeting covering the body next to them. It started voraciously to gnaw on one of the deceased’s pinkie fingers.

“Luckily,” the detective continued, “another grunt pops a squat next to me, only him directly on the ground. He removes a heavy looking backpack then proceeds to light one of his cigs with a pristine, shiny looking flip lighter.”

At this point, the detective held the lighter up, not pristine by any measure, but still it glinted in the dark off the meager light from the forensics lights.

“I go, ‘Hey friend, how ‘bout a light?’ and the guy just looks at me, gives me a smirk and proceeds to tell me that no one touches that lighter but him, him and only one other person—his sweetie back home. See, according to him, this particular lighter would light every single time, first try. He said it never needed new parts, never needed fuel. So this guy turns out to have a very similar story to my own, only like a flipped version, a yin to his yang—because while he claimed his own lighter owed its magical qualities to his and his sweetie’s pure love and fidelity, the same could have been said of my lighter because (unbeknownst to me) my own sweetie around that time had shacked up with a young supervisor at the grocery where she’d been employed for only a few months, and so in a manner of speaking her and my “flame had gone out” in more ways than one. (She would go on to marry the supervisor and have a child, whom last I heard he was something of a complete sociopath who I wouldn’t be surprised to find amongst the ranks of the bedraggled agents of criminality those in our profession come in contact with every single day.) But I only include such elements in order to enhance the irony present in what I consider an already fantastical story, one that I would possibly not even believe

had it not happened directly to me, albeit years and years ago. But anyway—the lighter...” The detective held it up again. It glinted spectacularly once more, and one of the officers flinched and seemed annoyed he kept doing that.

“...The lighter and the grunt shared its special sweetie/fidelity connection, and after denying my use of it he retrieved from his breast pocket and tossed to me a pack of ratty old matches, not unlike this matchbook you’ve provided me tonight, Jimmy.” He frowned down at the matches, recalling a debriefing about the Jolly’s nightclub being found in connection with a local mobster recently, said mobster known to own copious real estate all over the city. Recently a recording was captured through undercover surveillance of his intent “clean up the city” in ways that local politicians couldn’t. But maybe the detective was misremembering.

“...but anyway this matchbook was like that little box of matches thrown to me that sultry day in the jungles of Vietnam, and before I got a chance to let the grunt in on another small little bit of irony to be shared between us that day—vis-a-vis my match conundrum, where seemingly they decide never light themselves at my behest—when my captain came by and, gently prodding the metal bucked I was seated on with his boot, said we were heading out. We were joining ranks with the one the grunt seated next to me belonged to and leaving on the double.”

The rat under the plastic sheet had succeeded in removing the victim’s finger (a detail the pathologist would later puzzle over until finding traces of rat saliva on the severed joint along with the telltale teethmarks), and had at that point surreptitiously slipped down a sewer grate to join its newly born brood in feasting, the whole lot having developed a taste for human flesh that began with their mother, who after being born in a wave of hundreds of other writhing rat babies was washed to the lowest part of the sewer system in that particular section of town, the rat making its home just below the runoff drain where a local and infamously cut-rate group of plastic surgeons did their carving, the office assistant of which, instead of disposing of their clientele’s

undesired remainders in the standard legal way, had been instructed to simply toss the quite sizable bag of weekly parts out the window of her moving vehicle on her way home in the upper east side.

“So on we went, back on the march. I fell in line toward the back with my unit, while the grunt with the lighter put his large pack on his back and disappeared somewhere in the front. Still I had his matches and still I tried fruitlessly to light them, the cigarette now soggy in my lips, the matches falling spent in our bootprints along the way. The little phosphorus heads were scratched at until they became scuffed and useless, or else come off entirely from the sticks at the first attempt, and clumsily I followed after the line of soldiers. One of them—Jones maybe? José?—was continuing a prior conversation about giant centipedes, and how a buddy of his in another battalion found a squirming, living one in a sandwich he’d procured at a small cafe on leave—when suddenly there was an explosion from up front. We’d been ambushed.

“Dirt and vegetation along with men’s bodies took to the air, and everyone hit the ground—scared, yelling, trying to get their rifles in working order. There were more explosions from I guess VC grenades, and machine gun fire came from the darkness of the jungle to our right, the men’s shouts cut short as they were torn to pieces. After securing my rifle in my hands and peeking over the backs of fallen men to see how many separate shooters were in the trees, guessing there were countless more waiting behind them, I cowered. I maintain to this day there was nothing else to be done. I buried myself beneath the bodies of the men as they drained all around me. I felt the life escaping from them all over my clothes and skin the way that undoubtedly few have ever before. Trying not to breathe, trying not to be sick, I stayed that way for a while. Night fell and the Viet soldiers continued to mill around the massacre they’d caused, collecting arms and ammunition, food ration and trinkets the dead soldiers had brought from far away. I feared they would find me, would see the tiniest movement of my breathing and put a bullet in my back, but it soon grew dark and they moved on.”



Having eaten their fill of the flesh of the pinky finger, the family of tiny rats all fell asleep cradled against their mama rat's warm stomach—all except one baby rat, who sat awake. His little brothers and sisters twitched slightly as they dreamed of myriad things: of memories with papa rat, when he was still around; one baby rat grimaced as the wheel of a bicycle courier, in the slow motion way only dreams could move, squished her against the pavement from tip of her tail to whiskered snout; more than a few dreamed coincidentally of another severed pinkie finger, only this one as big as their entire nest and gone perfectly rotten for just the right amount of time—a week and a day to be exact. The little rat who didn't sleep moved quietly toward the exit of their nest and peered out, out through the doorway of twigs and branches, surveying the environs outside the L shaped corner pipe inside which the family were left in relative peace. He decided something there, his little head nodding slightly. Then, after taking one last look at his family, he slipped out and away into the dark, his tiny paws splashing determinedly toward a destination only he could describe.

“It got cold,” continued the detective, his audience beginning to sort of fidget and sway foot to foot, knowing it was rude but not able to help themselves. “It got cold in a way I'd never experienced before or since. The temperature was dropping considerably and I was freezing, coated in the cooling blood of my brothers all around me. I had to move. I had no other choice.

“The quiet in the jungle around me was no real indication that the enemy had moved on; I knew their ways, knew they could be invisible as ghosts among those trees if they wanted. Even still, I got to my feet and tried to see anything around me in the pitch black. They would be back by morning to finish scavenging our things, of that I could be sure, so I needed to move fast. Each uneasy step fell on a different dead man's body, and I tripped more than a few times, catching my fall by putting my hand down into something unspeakable each time.

“From somewhere in the dark came a strange, muffled sound: the low static of a radio. I stumbled over to the spot, where I could hear the radio crackling slightly underneath the mound of bodies, but I couldn’t see a thing. I fumbled in my pocket and brought out the box of matches. There rattled inside one last, single match. I’d wasted all the others, they lay strewn along our path in the dark, a breadcrumb trail leading to the final horrible resting place of the two battalions of young men. I said a little prayer, took out the match and tried it against the strike strip, and it lit. The match sprang angrily to life, a drop of solvent that pushed back the ink-black night, the light from it seeming like the sun itself in my hand. The blessing of sight that the night yielded to me seemed at first anything but, and the death and mayhem of what remained of my fallen brothers is to this day the worst thing these eyes have seen, but something caught my eye amongst the pile of corpses under which the radio was hidden: an unmistakeable glint of gold. A man’s arm sticking out from beneath held in its palm a lighter, the grunt’s lighter. The HELL OR HOME engraving on its face seemed to be a direct inquiry as to my preference, and I answered by quickly snatching it up. At the same moment, the match in my other hand sputtered out, but not before I saw, to my dismay, that the lighter had been left with its flip top open. Almost the entire object, not to mention its insides, had been coated with thick, viscous blood. I thought about what the grunt had said about the lighter’s magical qualities, and wondered if such tricks would work for one such as me—a pitiful man with a non working lighter and a deceitful sweetie (again, unknown to me at the time, and of which I would learn of only a few months later, along with the fact that she’d become pregnant with the grocery store manager’s child, who alas grew up to be one of the biggest brats I’ve ever seen), but just maybe the grunt’s sweetie/fidelity situation and the lighter’s uncanny tricks would work again just one final time.

“At first, my thumb slipped on the bloody flint wheel, but—picturing in my mind the grunt and what I imagined his sweetie to look like, seeing them smooching happily upon a reunion that was never to be, the camera pushing in and the soundtrack swelling—I tried the lighter again and the thing effortlessly

burst forth with a stout, robust flame. The thing rather ghoulishly crackled and spit as it burned through the blood clogging its insides, but after a few seconds it was in perfect working order, seeming to desire never being unlit again.

“The static noise from the buried radio sounded once again, and using the blessed light, I began to search. After moving a few limbs out of the way, some attached to bodies and some not, I found it. It had been attached to the grunt the whole time, the big pack he wore on his back the field radio, his position up front for scouting purposes. The palm-up hand that had graced me his lighter still stuck out from the heaped bodies and congealed hunks of viscera, but in his other hand, positioned close to his mouth as if he were to come to life any moment and speak into it, was the radio receiver.

“I thanked the kid once again for saving my ass, and after sliding the pack off his dead body I learned his name, which I will not be sharing with you folks today, no offense.” Jimmy and one of the officers shared a look, perplexed, while the other one appeared to have fallen asleep on his feet.

“I put the pack on and I radio’d out, explaining to the person on the other end what had happened and where I was positioned. He told me the coordinates of the nearest battalion, and again using the lighter for help I found maps on another nearby soldier, likely the grunt’s scouting partner. Along with those maps I took a compass and his mostly full pack of cigarettes, then looking out towards the thick, humid night, made even darker by the light of the flip lighter, I began my journey. With the light I was able to read the compass and navigate the terrain, avoiding a fall into a steep ravine as well as stepping into a well hidden VC trap, but also—to my amazement—it kept me from walking into a nest of giant centipedes, a writhing mass of legs and bulbous segmented bodies, the smallest one not less than four feet. I thought about the soldier José as I snuck past them, imagined his amazement at finally glimpsing such a thing. I made a promise to him then, if we met again in the afterlife, to tell him he was right. The hissing bugs bade me on and I continued on toward my goal.” One of the officers, the awake one, narrowed his eyes almost imperceptibly, as

if the story he was hearing had finally pushed past the line of what he was willing to believe. The detective seemed to note it and continued on, his voice now hoarse from the retelling.

“I would go on to experience many more things over there in Vietnam, a lot of them horrible, but as I finally found the other battalion, I swore that every day from then on I would give thanks to three things: the match that decided, for whatever reason, that I was finally worth lighting for; the grunt, who maybe in some form is somewhere far away out there, reunited with his sweetie; and third I would give thanks to the lighter, which to this day continues to light on the first try, every single time.”

The narrative curtain closed, or rather was removed from where it had sheltered the four men for its meager duration from the harsh environs of the driving rain and the horrible murder scene. The detective could not take his eyes off of the lighter in his hand.

“...Except now,” said Jimmy.

Snapping to attention, the detective blinked at him. “Hm? What?”

“Except now. It won’t light now.”

A feeling came to the detective’s eyes, the rare sting of tears. “Yeah, well...”

Seeing the man’s eyes begin to shine, Jimmy abruptly turned toward the corpse under the sheet.

“Well, anyway um... the body.”

The sleeping officer startled awake, inhaling with a sharp snort. His eyes went from person to person, then froze on the detective as he saw that the man had begun, embarrassingly, to fully weep.

“Why now?” he asked no one. “Why stop now?”

Jimmy refused to look away from the corpse, as if physically unable to witness such an abrupt change in his hard-edged mentor. He’d tried to study everything

about the man, attempting to glean some of his notoriously mercurial genius, but to watch him cry in public, and on the job no less, seemed a step too far.

“Why now?” the detective repeated, his plaintive question reverberating amongst the stoic pillars of the dank old underpass. The rain slowly began to alleviate all around the four men. Soon it would be day, but what then? Something big had changed for him. Nothing of the night could truly be erased by the warming sun, no other result revealed through its illumination. If he could only go back, turn back the hours to the last time the lighter had graced him, if he—

“But,” a voice blurted—one of the officers, the one that had remained awake, “sorry if I’m wrong, but you really need to smoke? Can’t it wait... s-sir?”

The detective’s eyes pierced the man, sobered by the question. The past twenty years working law enforcement reeled through his mind: on a stakeout, smoking; interrogating suspects, smoking; with his feet up on his desk after being bumped down to desk duty for the umpteenth time, smoking; chasing a perp down an alleyway, cigarette joggling around in his mouth; waking up after a night of hard drinking, grabbed a pack and lit up; comforting a dame witness, smoking; practicing with his snub nose, smoking; frowning down at an autopsy while the snide pathologist gave his assessment, smoking; at every single crime scene he’d been called to in the middle of countless dismal, rainy nights... smoking. Smoking cigarette after cigarette. All the time, non-stop, smoking of cigarettes.

“I smoke at a crime scene,” was his answer.

The officer who had asked waited with an expectant look on his face, but when no further explanation materialized he shrugged slightly and looked away. Jimmy, on the other hand, finally cocked addressed the detective.

“Well yeah, but why?” he asked. “You smoke at crime scenes, and for that matter I never see you without a cigarette, but what—are you saying you need it? You need to smoke to solve a case?”

Staring back at the kid, the detective felt his breath suddenly catch in his throat. His entire mentorship of Jimmy, every minute gem of insider knowledge about the job and about the intricate, roguish art of criminal justice in the big city seemed to be on the line with what he said next. And because of what? Because he needed a cigarette at a crime scene? He was due this harsh examination because he needed a cigarette and his magical lighter stopped working? This couldn't actually be what was happening. He could have let the city chew up this kid and spit him back out in a matter of weeks, and was starting to regret that he hadn't.

"You're out of line, Jimmy," he said. "All of you—way outta line."

The kid, beginning with almost unintelligible muttering, began to lose control and fully rant at the older man. His voice cracked embarrassingly. "—I'm out here in the middle of the night, trying my goddamn best. Trying very hard to do everything you told me right. Consider the clues, imagine myself as the killer, think outside the box... everything. And what, you can't do your job to catch this multiple murderer because you need to smoke? It's a sick compulsion, detective. Not to mention a gross habit, but a weird, sick compulsion if that's what you gotta do just to..."

The two officers endured just a moment and then, sharing a look, promptly left. There was only so much discomfort they could take. Everyone knew the detective and Jimmy to have very fixed ways in which they communicated with one another: when not remarking in awe over the detective's prowess, Jimmy sometimes chided the man for his gruff nature, or his fastidiousness regarding case-work while his hygiene fell to the wayside; in turn, the detective complimented Jimmy's plucky ingenuity but paternally scolded his naiveté or was pretended bafflement by the kid's lack of experience with women. This scene under the overpass—with Jimmy now finally wrapping up his prolonged diatribe against the detective with multiple examples of the man's character flaws getting in the way of their work, the specificity of which exposed a much

deeper and more firmly rooted hostility than anyone would have guessed—this moment would spell the end of their working relationship.

“...womanizing slob who dares question my prowess in the female department...” Jimmy was saying and the detective looked down to see his own hands were shaking. He couldn’t salvage this. He thought of when the two of them had met, both of them in an old motel room exchanging theories regarding motive over a dismembered prostitute; remembered Jimmy’s face when the detective overturned an old mattress to find where her missing toe had been deliberately placed, thus exposing both the motive and suspect all at once. Jimmy’s increasingly effusive admiration clearly meant more to him than he’d realized, which only dawned on him now, in its dissolution.

“...tag along with you like some snot-nosed sidekick. ‘Oh great idea detective,’ ‘fascinating deduction, sir.’ Such bullshit. Sit on your ass while I run around inside the crumbling tenement full of insane junkies, then get your face all over the news, articles written about your so-called genius mind...” At the word “articles,” and to the detective’s surprise, Jimmy gave the corpse under the plastic sheet a firm kick. His foot landed with a thud, after which he continued muttering and pacing around, seemingly not realizing what he’d just done both to the crime scene and the victim’s body. Something occurred to the detective, arriving to him like an electric jolt—not only the victim’s identity but the likely killer.

His breath left him. He had to do something.

Jimmy had his back turned, apparently not even wanting to look at him again, and before he even noticed, the detective hurried away. His feet splashed in the muddy puddles up the small hill, toward where his and other law enforcement cars were parked behind yellow caution tape. Bright blue morning skies seemed to be trying to emerge from behind dissolving purplish storm-clouds that had ruled the night. A few forensic investigators continued work underneath the canopy tent. Officers mingled about, drinking cups of coffee served from a portable airpots, including the two officers from the crime scene.



They were joking with their fellow officers, laughing about something. What could it be they were saying?

Confronting those two turkeys was added to his list of things to do once he found a goddamn workable lighter and smoked just one miserable cigarette. Just one cigarette and he could begin to confront the epiphany he'd had just now under the overpass. Over an hour had passed since he'd had one on the ride over here, before his flip lighter had decided to betray him. He tore open the passenger seat of his car and got in, then began to rifle through the glove box, then underneath the seats for another lighter. Maybe one of his informants had dropped one after he gave them one of their routine rides between wherever lowlifes routinely go, the detective trading their information for a few measly dollars that he was sure were as fleeting in their grasp as a city rat caught out in the day. But still, all of them carried cheap little gas-station lighters, corners burnt from packing bowls, butane regulators rigged so their flames came out three inches high. Under the seats the detective found ancient coffee cups, take out containers, and handfuls of fossilized french fries but no lighters; not even any more matches, not that they would do him any good.

Hyperventilating and half crazed, he then went from car to car, performing the same frantic search inside any one he found unlocked. Most of the vehicles were personal ones, most of them belonging to complete strangers, but still he bitterly cursed each of their owners after he finished, exiting empty handed. One of the cars had an old socket-style cigarette lighter built into the dash, but after pushing it in and waiting about a minute, he determined the key was required for it to function, which was also not present in the car. A small group of officers and crime scene techs had assembled to watch him, some of them the likely owners of the cars he was tearing around inside, but no one stopped him.

He exhausted his search and sat and stared a while, his resting on the ground outside the passenger seat of some stranger's sedan. Looking in his hand, he saw that the cigarette he'd been gripping there had become soggy and torn,

leaving shreds of white paper and dusty brown tobacco coating his palm. He took out the rest of his pack to see that they too were ruined, rainwater having at some point gotten into his pocket and soaked each and every one. He leaned forward in the seat, his face in his hands, and sobbed.

His whole face was covered in bits of tobacco, wet from rain and tears, when he pulled his hands away. There was some sort of commotion going on over by the tent. People were laughing and milling about, some were clapping. Wearily, the detective got out of the car and plodded over.

Some of the faces looked concerned at the state of him, but mostly they were all busy with what looked like celebrating.

“What’s going on?” he grumbled.

“Jimmy’s got him!”

“Jimmy found the killer! The Saw Blade Spooker!”

In the middle of the crowd of people, Jimmy stood triumphantly, his face beaming. Other officers patted his shoulders and congratulated him. “Hooray!” could even be heard from one officer in particular.

“What? How?” the detective asked, his voice barely audible over the others.

“What does it matter?” someone answered. “Jimmy cracked the case!”

He thought to protest, but the detective couldn’t even pretend to possess the energy to do so convincingly. Besides, they’d all begun to leave together, the whole group departing with the same joviality as sports team fans leaving a stadium after a home town win. It seemed it was all they could do not to hoist Jimmy up on their shoulders.

“Let’s go get him! Let’s get the Spooker!”

“We’ll end his reign of terror!”

They all left their cars, deciding instead to parade down the street. Curious civilians that came out of their homes to see what the fuss was about ended up joining the group as they made their way, presumably toward the location of whomever it was Jimmy had identified.

Suddenly very exhausted, the detective looked around on the ground for a moment, and then stiffly sat down directly in a puddle. He pulled his old knees up toward his body and began to rock back and forth, half-words and whimpers escaping his lips. The joyous procession could still be heard a minute later, their voices echoing among the drowsy city buildings and away into the new morning, growing more fervent as more new people joined in.

In the absence of the workers, and apparently either oblivious or uncaring toward the detective's presence, rats of all shapes and sizes began to emerge from nearly every covered spot or discreet hole in the vicinity. He heard their curious squeaks first, and soon they got their courage up and began to swarm from their hiding places. Echoing the parade of people going the other direction, they coursed around the man sitting there, their little feet pitter-pattering in the puddles as they streamed by. Chattering and squeaking, they celebrating their good fortune: the forensics workers, overcome with enthusiasm at catching the killer, had forgotten the dead body completely, leaving it lying in a heap still down where it had been discovered. It seemed almost the whole city's population of rats were here, all of them with a taste for human meat, due to them being city rats. A few of them nibbled at the detective in their flesh-craved delirium, making holes in the back of his coat as it soaked in the puddle beneath him, but mostly he was ignored.

The soggy pack of cigarettes was still in his grasp, and the detective reached inside, pinching out ragged bits of paper and tobacco. These he stuffed into his mouth, his face grimacing against the taste. As he chewed he felt bits of it stick in-between his teeth and gums, but he swallowed the horrid paste down and then pinched out another mouthful.

Soon even the rats had left him. A beautiful day had dawned all around, but a few meager rain clouds remained above. Eventually it began drizzling once again, and looking upward, the detective counted the drops that found his face.



## Ghost Writing

by Larry Lefkowitz



*W.H. Hyde, illustration from "Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes" by Arthur Conan Doyle  
published in 1894 (public domain)*

### Ghost Writing the Canon

I am a ghost writer.

My attempts at writing my own novels came a cropper (read: were rejected by publishers) and so I became a ghost writer out of economic necessity. My failures to get my novels published and my having to write the drivel of others sent me early on to the opium dens fortunately ubiquitous in our Victoria era. So ensconced, I spend half the time in a delightful stupor and half the time

ghost writing which came to me easier when "freed" from restraint due to the Wonderful O.

I believe I would have become an almost permanent denizen of the opium dens were it not for a gentleman named Arthur Conan Doyle. Conan Doyle was busy writing his serious historical epic "The White Company" set during the Hundred Years War and wanted me to write for him a series of stories and novels about a detective named Sherlock Holmes and his partner in crime detection, Dr. Watson. Conan Doyle had sent a story about the duo which a publisher accepted and published who wanted more stories when the public liked the story.

"I don't have time for such popular 'literature' (the single quote marks his). I am a serious writer. You can write the stuff for me – I will pay you well."

This last persuaded me to give it a go. A steady source of income and an end to listening to elderly men and women wishing their pedestrian life stories told in novel form. Also, the advantage of being able to use the same protagonists placed in different plots was a bonus. Of course, after each story was finished, I rewarded myself with an extended visit to a den; in addition to visits during which I wrote many of the stories.

Conan Doyle, a bit of a stick in the mud, rejected my idea of having Holmes smoke an opium pipe instead of a pipe. "The Victorian age will not permit it," he admonished me. "In private, yes -- in print, no."

Although many of the stories I considered second rate, I do pride myself on the longer work, "The Hound of the Baskervilles." Conan Doyle also thought "it was a cut above your usual work." He had wanted to call it, "Let Sleeping Dogs Lie," but I convinced him the title under which it was published was superior.

Not every Sherlock Holmes adventure I penned was accepted by Conan Doyle. Anything smacking of humor was anathema to him. Holmes, like himself, had to be above "foolishness." Thus the readers of "the canon" -- as the total corpus

of Sherlock Holmes stories became due to the popularity of the stories – were denied, in my opinion, some rather amusing stories.

Here is an example.

### The Most Revealing Affair

For a long time, Watson has been at me to write up some of my cases. Perhaps I have rather invited this persecution, since I have often had occasion to point out to him how superficial are his own accounts and to accuse him of pandering to popular taste instead of confining himself rigidly to facts and figures. “Try it yourself, Holmes,” he declared somewhat testily on the last occasion I reproached him, and so I have.

The case, to which I have given the name The Most Revealing Affair, began on a crisp morning with a ring at our Baker Street door. I nodded to Watson with my “Would you be so good, Watson” nod, and he was indeed good enough to open the door.

To Watson’s surprise, there was no one there. He looked down and spotted a white envelope, which he picked up and handed to me. It lacked an addressee or addressor.

“A nice valentine,” I said, “anonymous in the spirit of some of that genre. And yet it is not February.” I opened the envelope and read the note inside. “Ah, Watson, inside something more revealing,” I said, tossing it over to Watson. It read:

Mr. Sherlock Holmes

You are cordially invited to our guest day “open house”



which will take place on the 16th of May. Dr. Watson may accompany you, if you wish. You will not be disappointed, Mr. Holmes, and your failure to appear could lead to serious consequences.

### Serendipity Nudist Colony

N.B. Other than a hat, no clothing is permitted on the premises. A changing booth is provided just outside the gate.

"I wouldn't go if I were you, Holmes."

"I rather fancy it. Things have been a bit dull lately. Moreover this appears to be a case which promises those unusual and outré features which are as dear to you, Watson, as they are to me. I hope you will come down with me."

"Well, the situs of the case is certainly unique," said Watson. "I hope our presence can be accomplished with discretion."

"Nudist colonies pride themselves on being operated discretely, despite which the epitome of discretion, our Queen, is not in favor of them."

"I should think not."

"What's the harm, Watson? There are Freemasons, there are the clubs of the aristocracy. Each to his religion, so long as it is not harmful. And you will admit that there are few things more democratic than a nudist colony."

"I have never been one to champion democracy, save in the broad sense."

"Perhaps our visit will change that."

The Serendipity Nudist Colony was located in a secluded area of Kent. We arrived without incident and were welcomed by the message inscribed above the gate “In naked beauty more adorned,” which earned a scornful glance from Watson. In the changing booth provided for the purpose, we declodhed, except for the permitted hats –my deerstalker and Watson’s pith helmet. Watson said that he felt more completely exposed than he ever had been in his life, even more than under the Jazail spears in India. When he covered his private parts and urged me to do so, I replied, “Watson, I am known by my face, so I would be better off covering it, yet there is no need in a nudist colony, where total exposure is a virtue.

Watson’s embarrassment at his denuded state soon passed. The resident nudists were not in the least ill at ease and I adjusted to the situation, as was my wont when faced with anything unusual. I was aware that Watson thought that I would not enjoy being at the nudist colony since appreciation of Nature found no place among my many gifts. He was incorrect in this assumption. I not only fancied the changed surroundings, I also felt such freedom such as I had not known outside the confines of Nevill’s Turkish Baths.

It was the custom in this particular nudist colony to wear hats. One could observe men in shiny top-hats or canvas caps or tam-o-shanters. To my satisfaction no one else wore a deerstalker or a pith helmet. The women wore more varied headdresses, which I enjoyed commenting on to Watson on the way to our lodge – “emancipation” by name – inscribed over the entrance, which earned from Watson the opinion that “nudity seemed to stimulate denomination,” to which I replied that the conclusion was far from being proved, that it might as well be claimed that nudity seemed to stimulate inscription. As for my commenting on the women’s hats, Watson deigned not to notice them and kept his eyes downcast, content with replying, “I take your word for it, Holmes.”

At our lodge, we sent in our cards and were shown into an elegantly-appointed, if rustic, residence. Following a meal which was vegetarian in

tribute to the salubrious culinary tastes of a majority of the colony's residents, I suggested to Watson that we take a turn around the premises. I prefer to establish a mental map of the scene of a case, whenever possible. Yes, a case, despite the bucolic surroundings, the "failure to appear could lead to serious consequences" ever in mind. The nude inhabitants of the colony paid us no heed, save for a brotherly - or sisterly - nod here and there.

"Holmes" Watson turned to me, "can you deduce anything from the appearance of a naked man as you do so well from that of a clothed one?"

"An excellent challenge, Watson."

"What about this chap approaching now?"

I winked at Watson and waited until the man came abreast of us. Then I addressed him. "From South Africa, sir, I perceive."

"Yes, sir," he answered with some surprise.

"Imperial Yeomanry, I fancy."

"Exactly."

"Middlesex Corps, no doubt."

"Sir, whoever you are, you are a wizard," he said, doffing his hat, a simple straw hat against the sun; a hat less military in appearance it would be hard to find, which provided no help whatsoever to Holmes' feat of deduction.

"How did you ever know, Holmes?" Watson looked at me with that amazed yet admiring look characteristic of his reaction to such performances of mine.

"When a gentleman of virile appearance bears such a tan upon his face as an English sun would never give, with his handkerchief behind his ear instead of in his sleeve, if he had worn a sleeve, it is not difficult to place him. He sports a short beard, which shows that he was not a regular. He has the cast of

a riding man. As to Middlesex, everything in his bearing testifies to this regiment."

"You disprove of the adage, Holmes, that clothes make the man," said my companion.'

"Here the opposite is true, Watson."

A man passed us. "How about him?" Watson challenged me.

"Beyond the obvious fact that he has at some time done manual labor, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason, that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately, I can deduce nothing else."

When Watson, apparently believing I was pulling his leg expressed doubt as to the accuracy of my analysis, I called after the fellow, and recited one of the Freemason secret codes – in Mandarin. He stopped, turned around to face me, and hailed me, "a brother Freemason," also in Chinese. Watson was dumbfounded at my powers of deduction, not for the first time.

"How do you do it?" he gasped.

"It is my business to know things. Perhaps I have trained myself to see what others overlook. It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the more important."

"I never would be capable of such meticulous observation."

"You see, Watson, but you do not observe. The distinction is clear."

As we continued to stroll on the path that wound through the grounds, another man passed us, then stopped and cried, "Watson!?"

We stopped in turn, and I said to Watson, "It seems you are more recognizable in these parts than I am."

But Watson was concentrating upon the features of the man who had called to him. "I'm afraid that I cannot place you."

“I remember that wound very well, Watson,” the man said. “A Jezail bullet, if I recall rightly.”

“Murray! Is that you!?”

“Yes, I may forget a face, but I never forget a wound.”

He was indeed Watson’s orderly, the same who had rescued Watson after he received a Jezail in India by throwing him over a packhorse and bringing him back to the British lines.

I let the two old campaigners sit, however gingerly, on a wooden bench and renew old ties as I ambled about until they had finished their conversation. My usually reliable sixth sense told me that I was being watched by someone, but was unable to see anyone, which told me that my watcher was a skillful player of the game.

After we took leave of Murray, Watson shook his head. “I wouldn’t have thought it of Murray. Here, of all places – in a nudist colony.”

“He probably thought the same of you.”

“But I was invited here.”

“And Murray?”

“Murray is a member here. Says he believes going about nude fends off illness and prolongs life.”

“Well, Adam was living fine until he covered himself.”

Yet for Watson, it seemed a personal betrayal that Murray would be found in such a place. As if it, somehow threatened the foundations of the Empire itself. Thereafter, he studiously refrained from mentioning the previously faithful Murray.

I informed him that I had the distinct feeling that I had been watched as I walked about.

“Probably a voyeur,” snapped Watson, still peevish at seeing Murray in this place.

“I don’t think so. I suspect, Watson, that Moriarity may be behind this business of our being here, though it is unlike him to expose himself. If so, the stake must be high, indeed.!”

“Well, Holmes, you have been crowding him of late.”

“True, Watson, True.” I suddenly stopped and grabbed Watson’s arm. “Look, there, Watson,” I said, nodding in the direction of a man who stood fifty meters away. He was extremely tall and thin, so much so that his whole form seemed dominated by his head, itself dominated by his forehead which domed out in a white curve of almost mathematical exactness. In contrast, his two eyes were deeply sunken in his head. The professorial features were completed by an academic mortar-board pushed back on his head.

“He looks like a professor who has chosen his sabbatical at a nudist colony,” said Watson.

“Not just a professor – the professor,” I said.

“Not –”

“Yes, Watson. The Napoleon of Crime in the flesh.”

Moriarity walked toward us, his face slowly oscillating from side to side in a curiously reptilian fashion. He stopped facing me.

“You have less frontal development than I should have expected,” he addressed me.

“The result of pursuing you,” I replied.

The professor uttered a cunning little half-laugh. “Ah, I see that you evidently know me.”

‘I would recognize you anywhere, Moriarity.’

“And I, you, Holmes. And that creature must be Dr. Watson.”

Watson bowed.

“I thought you might be behind our appearance here, Moriarity.”

“Yes, I thought you might so think. Yet I knew it would not deter you from coming.”

“I must be getting close if you deem a meeting necessary.”

“Close, indeed. I implore you to back off. There is no reason we cannot, ah, live and let live – literally as well as figuratively.”

“I make no compromises with evil in general and crime in particular,” I replied.

“A pity,” exclaimed Moriarity, suddenly running behind a rose bush and picking up a large stick. It was a fine, thick piece of wood, bulbous-headed, of the sort which is known as a ‘wooden lawyer.’ “I have brought along my personal lawyer to assist me in this case,” he cried, running towards me brandishing his ‘lawyer.’ In all our adventures I do not now that I have ever seen a stranger sight than this usually punctilious figure running towards me in that curious fashion of his, the club in his hand at odds with the mortar-board on his head, as if Man himself caught between progress and atavism.

When Moriarity was within striking distance, I called out to him, “I, too, have brought along a counselor,” quickly removing my deerstalker cap. Taped to the inside was an ivory-handled knife with a sharp blade marked ‘Weiss & co., London’ which I whipped out.

Moriarity stopped in his tracks. He bowed. “We will call it a draw for now. We can’t have it our here. No need to taint the colony with scandal.”

“On that we can agree,” I said.

“This is my last warning. Stop crowding me or you are headed for a fall.”

“We shall see which of us falls and which does not,” I shot back.

Here, Conan Doyle stopped my reading. “No humor,” he said and on the spot vetoed the story, which I rather fancied.

I got my revenge on him by finishing off Sherlock Holmes in a later story. But not for long. Conan Doyle's supreme opus, "The White Company" was only lukewarmly received. Sighing, he asked me to revive the late Holmes. He decided to bask in the success of his (my) consulting detective. And reap the rewards.

Small wonder I sit silent – if economically well situated – in opium dens more and more. There I sometimes come to believe that I am Sherlock Holmes. When I sober up, I identify more with Dr. Watson.





## Concessions for You

by Glik/G Koffink



*image courtesy of the author*

## Preface

These pieces act both separately and in conjunction under a title of “A Performance of Ghosts & Concessions for You, My Sins” in which I, an academic by training, and poet in praxis, yield the stories of my patriline by blood, by force and body. All these pieces are screen-captures, aside from the last three poems (“I have an appointment” and “My Body”) which runs 400 words total.

This set of pieces give the reader a crash course to the self-de(con)struction I experienced as a trans-disabled person in Fall 2021. The purpose of their presence was not only as an outlet for my rage, but a way of getting to know my inspirations and directions as a man without present men. ‘Men’ in these pieces are defined individually by name and broadly by institution and often move fluidly in interpretation; there cannot be and will not be a single treatise to that identity in my work – and that’s what these pieces stand for.

Though all of these are poems, they fall under visual art as they play with the visual space poetry occupies as an art, literary and academic medium. In an academic setting, these pieces hold no value, instead to be revised and taken a part for analysis and digestibility. That is hence why both “DRAFT 3”, “Figure 2.” and “My Body” have two different revisions – reflecting the process and result of cutting an experience down for clarity and reach that is often required for publishing in both written arenas of academic research and poetic submissions.

My intent with this series is to expose the liminality occupied by the poet as a medium – a medium for analysis, discovery, and deconstruction of one masculine identity. It is to expose the incomprehensibility of this embodiment – the mystery of never knowing how, what and who to embody. These works, like my body and lineage are ephemeral: always changing and breaking for your mirrors.

In brief, my work has to do with:

- (a) the ephemeral masculine figure and poetic speaker
- (b) the breakage of written mediums through revision

This series not only reveals the reader these (missing) theoretical relationships but draws a curtain on who and what you're looking at and for in those relationships, a form of protection and harm.

As an up and coming graduate student in a Gender Studies Masters program, I have presented at two regional conferences on trans- and disabled kinship networks in literature and singular communities.

Further, I have an upcoming publication in *Women & Therapy's* special issue on "Feminist Therapy with Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender-Expansive People." These publications comprise of diverse discussions within frayed kinship and intersections between disabled, displaced, and trans- identities within liminality.

Koffink 11

**The Body**  
is still.  
she.

with mom's finger

tips in the incubator                      mostly

of wire

veins, it is  
funny.

he    bleeding.

through Grammy's knit hat  
the size of a big toe  
grown at 5'4"  
22 years now

the past  
ten weeks.

Koffink 3

**DRAFT 3: Maternal Genealogy**

Ray Koffink

LIT-401-001

October 16, 2021

*(CITE YOUR SOURCES)*

I never want to take  
 anything. Like Steve <sup>1</sup>  
 Earl <sup>2</sup> and Glenn <sup>3</sup>  
 For cigarettes and drugs  
 you won't name  
 in exchange are Grandpa's <sup>4</sup> cash  
 registers.

Your Uncle Ray has one <sup>5</sup>  
 because he kept you  
 from running your makeup down the aisle  
 though I still manage to.

I want this poem to be longer.  
 However, I can't write without smudging  
 every word in salt <sup>6</sup> to hollow  
 out the bruise left by needles; <sup>7</sup>

either way, you don't want  
 them in the house. <sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> never found (H████, Steven "Ashley K████ Mutual Friends" Facebook Search, n.d.)

<sup>2</sup> dead (G████-M████, Michelle. "Hi [deadname], I'm your Uncle Earl's step daughter. I'm trying to get in touch with your mother regarding Earl. It is urgent." Facebook Messenger: Requests, January 14, 2018.)

<sup>3</sup> the gay one (H████, Glenn. "Interested in: Men" Facebook, March 30, 19████.)

<sup>4</sup> who died when you were 13 (H████, Glenn. "Was thinking of you today Dad. I miss you!" Facebook, October 10, 2020.)

<sup>5</sup> H████, Marilyn. "Not bad for 83 years old. Happy Birthday Lois H████" Facebook Memories, May 26, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> crystals (see: "drugs" in line four) (K████, Lori. in person conversation, June 24, 2021.)

<sup>7</sup> they've taken blood or injected T (K████, Lori. in person conversation, March 24, 2021.)

<sup>8</sup> the needles, your brothers and me (K████, Lori. in person conversation, 22/02/2021.)

Doppelgänger  
by Yellow Teresa



*Dystopia, album art of ケケケツ by Yuşa Yalçıntaş*



**Doppelgänger (x8)**

red moon dark night road

beckoning across the road

Consciousness on the verge of a deepening fog

Wandering frantically to death

Hey I go now more I go now move

It's meaningless to fight back DNA spirals to survive

I can't hide this instinct that can't allow the same existence

Which one is real? I am you or both

Surrender yourself to the intertwining destinies until they disappear

kill or be killed hunt or be hunted

I don't need two of the same

*Dystopia, album art of ケケケツ*

*by Yüşa Yalçıntaş*



## kekeke / dystopia

Members:

Producer: TATARĬ

MCs: 病みキンコ (sick mushroom), ラバブン LABBABOOM (Lababun), TATARĬ, TAU the HEELAL,

Special Guest Artists: METEOR (Rapper and Voice actor of Yano -from Odd Taxi anime

Featuring: OMEGA, YELLOW TERESA (She is a reggae artist produced ラバブン)

Lyrics: TATARĬ, ラバブン, 病みキンコ, TAU the HEELAL, OMEGA, YELLOW TERESA,

Track: TATARĬ, Daiki Kagata

Logo: 金風呂タロウ (Kanafuro Tarou)

Album Artwork: Yuşa Yalçıntaş

"kekeke" is a non profit rap collective from Japan that connects horror manga, sci-fi, rap and art.

Founded by Yuta aka sick mushroom (病みキンコ) is a new art space for horror manga artists, drawing & graphic artists, rappers & musicians.

kekeke collaborates with artists from overseas and likes to gain new members.

They created their own genre called "horror manga core rap"



...

The albums are not available on Spotify & Youtube

Only trailers are available on Youtube & Instagram

Physical albums are limited edition

Zines are limited edition and not digitally available



Canary's Voice  
by Zabelle Panosian



Boston Post, January 24, 1920

*Zabelle Panosian, 1920, Boston, photo courtesy of Canary Books & Records*

Among the most significant Armenian singers in the early twentieth century, Zabelle Panosian made a small group of recordings in New York City in 1917-'18. Unaccountably, she was then largely neglected as an artist for more than half a century.

This volume by three dedicated researchers is the first effort to reconstruct the life and work of a woman who had an exceptional and cultivated voice — who toured the world as a performer and made a significant contribution to the cultural lives of the Armenian diaspora, the elevation of Armenian art song, and the relief of survivors of the Armenian genocide.

Panosian's music is derived from a syncretic experience of the Western Armenian village near the sea of Marmara where she was born and a passion for the coloratura sopranos she encountered in Boston. As an immigrant carrying the traumas of dislocation and the loss of her home, she transformed her grief into action, dedicated her life to an expression of the greatest art she could imagine, both from her former life and her new life in America, and she created a path in her wake for her daughter to become a renowned dancer.

Tracing her story from the Ottoman Empire to New England, from the concert halls of Italy, Egypt, and France to California, Florida, and South America through two World Wars, the story of Zabelle Panosian is that of a serious talent recognized and celebrated, dismissed and forgotten, year by year, waiting only to be known and loved again.

- Ian Nagoski, Canary Books & Records

I drink ouzo  
I swallow meze [nibbles]  
In this world I enjoy kef [good-times]  
You better not be fooled by words  
You better not believe in love  
In this world everything is fake  
It's fake, it's fake, it's fake, everything is fake

- Edward Bogosian, lyrics translated by Harry Kezelian

Edward Bogosian was born Yevtart Boghosian in 1900 in Constantinople. During the 1920s-60s, he was an immensely popular performer for Armenians in America and progenitor of kef music. The term “kef,” derived from the Turkish for “stoned,” came to mean “good times” and was the music associated with partying and relaxation for a community driven by ambition, hungry to assimilate into the U.S., and still traumatized by the genocide of over a million of its people in the mid-1910s in Anatolia. The music was a rocking and fun expansion on the folk music of a homeland to which the audience could no longer hope to return.

He was no one's idea of a great singer. But he was funny and a spontaneous and charismatic performer. Although he is barely-remembered today he was a much-loved and greatly influential in the mid-20th century. His biggest hit of the 1940s, "Sood E, Sood E" ("It's Fake, It's Fake") is still performed at Armenian-American gatherings with a ubiquity that border on the cliché.

Bogisian was the son of an actor and teacher known as Nazaret Effendi, a short, bushy-eyebrowed, serious and renowned figure in the theater scene of

Constantinople. Yetvart began performing professionally in his teens, and at 20 emigrated to the United States. For the next forty years, he toured and performed relentlessly throughout New England at the mid-Atlantic, playing theaters, picnics, and the boozy gatherings where Armenians let off steam. Through the 1920s, he appeared in over a dozen touring companies of plays and operettas including the popular "Arshin Mal Alan," Through the 30s and 50s, parallel to the "borsht belt" of Jews in the Catskills, Armenians had their own "yogurt belt" of resorts where he was a mainstay. His songs mention periods at the seaside hotels of Asbury Park, New Jersey, where he played.

He first recorded a dozen performances accompanied by the Guzalian group and, in other cases, by the group headed by the popular tsarist Shah-Baronian, in the late 20s for the Pharos label, based out of the Vartesian Brothers watch and jewelry store on Third Avenue. (Six of them are available on the Canary release *Very Sweet: Armenian-American Independent Releases vol. 2 ca. 1926-29.*)

About fifteen years later, he cut another thirty performances for the independent Metropolitan label. Harry Kezelian has proposed that the backing band for most, potentially all of the backing for most of those Metropolitan sessions was the Arviz group from Philadelphia: Bernard Kondourajian (b.1897; d. 1988), violin; G. Kalayjian, oud; and K. "Tommy" Nersesian, dumbeg. We know that violinist Nick Doneff and likely the oudist Marko Mekon accompanied him on some recordings (including tracks 5 & 15.) The performances on this release are all derived from those recordings. (Nearly all of the remaining performances are available on the *Two What Strange Place B-Side* download release.)

His songs were often derived from traditional melodies with his own sardonic lyrics, dealing with the troubles of immigrant life, of finding and keeping love, of partying and family. They were plainly impolite, honest, and border-line raunchy.

In the 1960s, two short-run LPs were issued material from his Metropolitan sides, attesting to some continued interest in his songs. They included a few new performances, among them a follow-up to “Sood E, Sood E.” Bogosian died in 1977.

This collection includes amazing full English translations of every song by the kef music expert and historian Harry Kezelian. (See his fascinating [keftimeusa.blogspot.com](http://keftimeusa.blogspot.com) ).

This collection was originally intended as a release within the forthcoming Don't Let Me Be Lost to You set, dealing with the Me Re/Balkan/Kaliphon/Metropolitan label in New York. That project continues and will see release in 2019. This is just an aspect of it.

credits

released January 18, 2019

Transfers and restoration by Ian Nagoski.

Translations by Harry Kezelian.

Research by Harry Kezelian and Harout Arakelian.

Thanks to Gary Lind-Sinanian and the Armenian Library and Museum of America.

## **Listen**

Zabelle Panosian

“Groung” (Crane), take 2

1917-18



## *Contributors*

**Zabelle Panosian** was an Armenian-American soprano. She was born Takouhi Der Mesrobian in a Western Armenian-speaking town, Bardizag.

**Ian Nagoski** is a music researcher and record producer in Baltimore, Maryland. For more than a decade, he has produced dozens of reissues of early 20th century recordings in languages other than English for labels including Dust-to-Digital, Tompkins Square, his own Canary Records, and others.

**Menahem Ali** was a Palestinian-Israeli writer who fled to America at the age of 18 during the outbreak of war in 1948. He lived the rest of his life in exile, mostly as a paper-hoarding recluse in Brooklyn, New York before passing away in 2020. He never published a word in his lifetime, but left behind 15 manuscripts handwritten in a creole of Judeo-Arabic Palestinian Hebrew, including thirteen collections of free verse, a study of poverty in America and a surrealist novel.

**Matt Alexander H.** was born in 1986 in Northampton, Massachusetts by the Holyoke Range and Connecticut River Valley. He was raised in the Atlantic coastal town of Mattapoissett, which, in the Algonquin language, means, “place of rest”. He lives by the Sea of Marmara.



**Hakan Bıçakcı** was born in Istanbul in 1978. He is the author of eleven books. His most recent novel is "Sleepy" (2017).

**Kofoworola Odozi** (she/her) is a writer from Nigeria who shares her creativity with the world @kofoisart. She believes in the solemnization of self and is an avid lover of good music.

**Seda Yıldız** is an independent curator and art writer based in Hamburg / İstanbul.

**Shefali Mathew** is an incoming fiction candidate at Iowa Writers' Workshop. Before this she taught English for three years at St. Joseph's College, Bengaluru.

**Jaden Pierce** is an emerging Asian American poet and writer from the DC area. His poems 'Comparison', 'Rhythm' & 'Scare' will appear in Dreich Magazine.

**Alex Butler** is a nurse in the operating rooms at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, specializing in the trauma and oncology unit. He is an avid reader and writer, living in Somerville, where he enjoys cooking with his wife, Allison.

**Fatma Belkıs** was born in Antalya in 1985. She now lives in İstanbul. She works with text, video, and printed matter either individually or collectively with friends.

**Yellow Teresa** is a reggae artist in Japan

**Drewry Scott** (he/him) is a resident of the Pacific Northwest. He graduated from Evergreen State College in 2016 with an emphasis in creative writing and literature.

**Larry Lefkowitz's** story collection "Enigmatic Tales" is published by Fomite Press. Fomite will soon publish his novella and story book "Lefkowitz Unbound."

**Glik/G Koffink** (xe/xem/xyr) is a first-year M.A. student in Oregon State University's Gender Studies program.