



# Window Cat Press

Volume I | Winter 2014

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## Editor's Corner

Winter 2014

Window Cat Press began as an idea tossed around between friends. We felt something was missing from the lit zine scene and thought, "hey, let's create that space!" Six months later, our first issue is out and we couldn't be more proud.

We're thrilled to share this collection of pieces that speak to who we are, where we've come from and where we're going. They've made strange worlds real, and pointed out the strangeness of reality. These works forge connections between human beings and the world we live in (as well as the somewheres we've never traveled, gladly beyond.) What a diverse range of styles and perspectives in our first issue! The tools our artists use both engage with earlier traditions and innovate to tackle the task of encapsulating the present. These works manage to make connections despite Otherness—or rather because of Otherness—while exploring sexuality, gender and identity. All that while keeping things playful. AND poignant. What skill!

Many thanks to the contributors who made this issue possible as well as everyone who's supported us along the way. We couldn't be more pleased with the little community we're starting to grow together. Thank you all for coming on board with us.

Team Windowcat  
(Emily, Kim, Elana)

## **The Trouble with Planning**

Shira Rubenstein

Every so often honey starts  
to bleed from my mother's nostrils  
and she has to open her mouth  
wide to let the bees out.

We know it hurts her  
to keep her jaw tensed  
but she never complains so nor  
do we when the bees sting us,  
although sometimes we cannot  
help but cry. Then she cries.  
Still, to avoid agitating the bees,  
she doesn't move to wipe the tears.  
When it's over she lets us  
clean her face with our hands  
and lick honey from our fingers.

## **It's Good Friday, Mom**

Stacy Shutts

Dad and Susie come to me in dreams  
you come to me in the daylight  
when I am awake, thinking and moving

it's Good Friday, and  
I miss you, mom

I know your presence well  
in the brief silence after a song in church

your tears well up and hold ponds in the bottoms of my eyes down to the tops of  
my cheeks

I see your high beautiful red cheeks, the small Indian blood that is bound  
to you

I curl up now, in bed reading  
I hear you tell me to do this and forget about the world, get so enthralled  
get so lost  
the book turns me into someone else for a while  
my, I am somewhere else, I am somewhere else!

I think of you in March and April  
months when I most sympathize with you  
dates of death of family we love  
quiet grief and rejoice

I think of you in May when we have our birthdays  
we want to celebrate together, however far apart

it's Good Friday, mom, and  
I'm thinking of you.

## At Cool Matt's House (Age 13)

Jason Henry Simon-Bierenbaum

His mom isn't home yet. The internet  
has been learning to offer up boobs  
if you ask nice.

There in that first one the girl  
sits on a staircase, open legged  
with nothing but a sax and its leather strap.

Her tongue teases the tip. Of all  
the afternoon's naked ladies, she's the one  
we keep returning to, puzzled

wondering, *why that sax?* Why  
not us, her legs wrapping our bodies, doing  
that thing we've heard called blowing –

some sweet music older boys boast about.

# Hysteria

Crystal Vega-Huerta

The doctors say  
hysteria,  
my uterus wandering  
through the darkened  
upstairs of my home.

It weighs 50 grams  
and tilts towards my lover,  
looking him full in the face  
when his mouth lies  
between my legs.

If I'd been born  
in this country  
before last century turned  
maybe I'd have  
caught my uterus,

would have strangled it  
as it pulled my hair towards the moon,  
the sun creeping across the wallpaper  
during my long rest as leeches  
suckled my bloody children.

Now I,  
childless,  
sob & laugh into my clenched fists,  
clock my love in the nose,  
and walk the path my uterus wandered  
when it was last within me.

When it hadn't been 50 grams  
of red muscle on a tray  
that a nurse took away  
as I slept,  
dreaming

of how the sun lives at night.

## Like Song

Crystal Vega-Huerta

The deep blue of your coat,  
where you lived those long nights  
outside my apartment,  
watching me undress before the window.  
Only for you, darling, only for you.

You pick through my bones  
like a vulture because the moon  
is a radio jingle that I hum to  
before that last ride,  
you settling into my body, the

unmeasured span of my hips,  
the Old Ones bringing blood to your lips,  
to the inside of my thighs,  
and you *want*, you want, until the moon  
turns into so much ash.

As I turn and howl at the moon,  
your name—and Theirs—in my voice,  
the sudden depth of my mouth,  
where men and beast have met their end,  
and I sweep my sudden unbeing into the eye

that turns its heavy gaze for one moment,

and my soul rises into my throat  
like song.



## Morning After

Karen Locascio

I meet someone I should've known before last night  
and flirt like a couch thrown from a dormitory window  
while he kisses his girl, his ex-wife. *im no good @ this right?*

I reply to your text, like you're waiting, smoking outside,  
for my bus. Like it's not a gross exaggeration from a ghost.  
So, I panic and steal a book on Marie Antoinette last night

because it's pink (so rich she wore pigeon blood, so white  
she bled eiderdown, snow) and you both got girls sucking pillows  
and I got a guillotine from Ikea. I'm no good at being upright,

so I kneel. I rip apart, bleed, congeal. Bad idea #3025:  
you text me *i may drink n drive for a bit* like I'm home  
waiting. I lose my keys and cool. I turned my heat up last night

and down. I fill my flask and I run away by bus and I  
come home early. I forget who's who so I don't reply *dont*  
*do this 2 me*. I mean, shit, I'm no good at this, right?

You got me mixed up. Do I flirt? Fuck? Kiss? Steal? Fight?  
No, I'll drink til it hides my scent. I'll fall off the grid. No,  
I know: I'll meet you on the train again like it's our first last night,  
I'll write *it's over* before it begins. Because I'm no good at this. Right.

## Mix Tape Sonnet/Call the Snowfall Sardonic

*after Sherman Alexie*

Karen Locascio

1. Text Me and Come Over (Call the Snowfall Sardonic)
2. But We Can Be Snowbound Together...Later
3. The Next Two Times It Snowed I Didn't Hear from You
4. You've Been Quiet So Much Lately You Must Be With Her
5. Silence Is Only Not Awkward on Mix Tapes
6. Remember When a Mix Tape Could Fix Everything?
7. Keep Making Promises Like You Can You Can't Keep
8. My Hands Flutter Uncomfortably Empty
9. I Can't Be Your Friend
10. I Want to Touch You, Stop My Head from Racing
11. What She Said, What She Did (The False Pregnancy Song)
12. You Still Have One of Those Stereos That Plays Cassettes
13. I Can't Be Your Friend (the I Have Friends—I Have Friends—I Have Friends Remix)
14. Bonus Track: I Would Make You a Million Mix Tapes if That Would Make You Mine

## **middle class fantasy world**

Shana Bulhan Haydock

i'm sitting in your bedroom in your, no, your parents' house  
they've gone away for the weekend and it's quiet with your cats  
you're at work and i was sitting at the kitchen table wondering if  
an earthquake would rip up the amerikan flag up on your wall  
or whether the salt and pepper shakers would break first or whether  
your stepsister's fifteen-year-old bath and body works perfumes  
would spray around the room in some display of pink decadence  
or whether the literary erotica you call smut would get drenched in  
water from the blue glass or whether the dishwasher would squeeze  
all the dishes into glue or whether i'd finally, finally die

i wandered into your stepsister's room, you see, and i know she  
bores you so but i envied her dresser and the turquoise green tulle  
canopy and the casual display of middle class affluence and the  
pretty photos in their pretty frames and all the pretty clothes on their  
pretty hangers and the pretty laundry baskets and the pretty pink  
knick-knacks and when i was her age i tried to do something similar in  
my uncle's house in the u.s. of a. where i had finally, finally arrived  
but it was only for a year and i could not get clothes from all the brand  
new brand name stores so i had kitschy goodwill clothes and i had bits  
and pieces of a life because you see when you live somewhere only for  
a year it's always halting promises even in your middle class uncle's  
respectable house on a respectable street even with the most exquisite cat  
in all the world

there is just that rush to the moment where white tiles become trauma,  
school acquaintances become photographs of names unremembered and  
facebook connections ungained and you see i would have given anything  
to be a blonde princess and you see i started waxing my eyebrows and  
upper lip back then, i'm sure she thinks about these things too but you see  
i was finally in the zone where i could be a glam princess too just maybe  
just maybe even though my mother didn't really have a job, even so

i could be a mostly good student but also a teenager and it meant so much  
and now i am sitting in your house, not your house but sort of your house,  
and i am sitting on your queen-sized bed with the amerikan flag behind me  
on your purple walls and i am losing words to describe a movement  
across country across continents i am losing words for a desultory  
return i am losing words for yet another escape

and now in twenty something shitty apartments on federal benefits  
i am leaning on the u.s. of a. and i have still not found the words for  
what it means to be a home in bedsheet curtains and cracked floors  
and used-up tiles and in your house that's not your house shiraz wine

sits on the counter that i drank only a few sips of yet again and i was eating digiorno's pizza again, thinking about the ads you told me about, how i never learned the history of frozen pizza, thinking about how one of the push pins has fallen off your amerikan flag and the cloth is imperfect and i want to rip rip rip chew and spit it out i want to chew till colour soaks my infidel tongue, i want to tell you about an exile that is privileged and perfect

"it serves no purpose, it's art," you said and i could have screamed but even my paintings echoed canvasses and tubs of paint i could not really afford and even my drawings are made of fine tip pens and even my shirt-dress is a brand name brand store indian mall find and even my discount clothes are sometimes from the fancy discount stores and even now as a "poor person" in the u.s. of a. even now in your house that's not your house where i could get used to living this well i am indeed a caricature of queer folly and so when i told her it was all these things i wanted all these *things*, what i really meant was it was the spaces between language and neat finery that defined our childhoods and it was the languages we earned through blood we didn't deserve and blood we never knew and blood we counted through and blood we grimaced over and blood next door

and their blood is still the only thing keeping us alive.



*Jar Woman*, Ronnie Ben-Ami

## Draw Permit

Eran Hornick

אז גאט וואלט געלעבט אוף דיר ערט, וואלט מען אים אללע פענסטער אויס געשלאגן

If God lived on earth, all his windows would be broken.

Dolomite ball of rock on the cushion couch floor broken window pane on pain of death someone who doesn't answer when they're shirked, someone who you have to lay it out for, spell it all out like hop skip jump, like float sink swim, like flint life death, and what in god's name was going through god's head when he first thought of this whole circus and sordid hullabaloo? Why the need for Will to Power or manned flight or heightened orgasms or furtherance of suffering with new children every fifth of a second? Why so many heartbeats in sixty years why all the hair why all the blue why all the pearls why anything? Why do they say that humans are the only beings that cry when clearly the camel in that movie was leaking eye lubricant? What will betide this master hunter race, this parasitic urchin so keen on pushing away sleep, so set on progress, so fit for building and wanting dams that nothing, not even a child's sigh or a mother's goodnight kiss could skirt by those deadbolted valves?

FSD

## Dance of the Moth

Frances Kimpel

*From the diaries of HQ,  
October, 2000+*

*I've found it, Diary—I've glimpsed it at last.  
Secreted in a cage beside her alien heart: a moth  
beating perpetually.*

\*\*\*

He used to watch them from the window: the butterflies, how they would howl in the night, forms studded and polished like precious stone, hair wild in the living wind.

Sometimes when his sisters were out dancing and his father had fallen beneath a thick and yellow haze, with trembling fingers he would take up the skins they had left strewn about the floor—slippery and half-alive—things made of gossamer and stars, or water that lapped coolly at his skin and shimmered in the light. At first he dared only hold them, afraid lest they dissolve like fairy-gold in his hands—or worse, lest some mark left by his human filth betray him, if not the garments themselves. Despising his mortality, might they not relay his infractions back to their proper masters? For surely they were endowed with some sentience, and how much further would it be to speculate that they could manage communication, through a subtle manipulation of the elements—through the hissing of silks or the play of the wind—intelligible only to the elite?

Night after night he held them, caught between a terror and a want.

And perhaps one night there was a wind through the window; perhaps there was a flickering of a lamp. Something turned behind the fabric in his hands, and something spoke.

Yes, it whispered—he saw it now, a mermaid in blue and gold—Yes. *But those you fear are not our proper masters.*

He buried his face in the glossy folds, breathing in sweat and perfume.

*Of course.*

The power lay not in those who wore them, but the things themselves: demigods, beholden to no human will. His sisters, knowing nothing of that power, never dreamed that if their gods spoke to any of this world, it was to him. Or rather, not to Matthew, but to the face he hid: Alice, who herself was far too proud to hide for long.



But Matthew and Alice are two sides of a weighted coin: Matthew, barred by circumstance, and Alice, the phantasm supreme. I can't say whether she was more important to the child for her gender or as an all-purpose avatar, but I do know that everything about her was absolutely preferred. Nonetheless Matthew remained necessary, as a kind of shield. That way, nothing on earth could suppress her. No measure of fear or degradation on his part: where he despaired, she dreamed; where he hid, she built a home.

I do not know, Diary, how far I actually credit the supremacy of love over hatred—or death, for that matter. (I'm afraid this has everything to do with a wariness of the argument and very little to do with anything so sensational as cosmic pessimism.)

Rigour aside, however, I like to imagine that if one can meaningfully claim the ascendancy of love, then one might also posit that a wish—however stifled—is always far more potent than a fear.

Thus for all that she was unnatural (*because* she was unnatural), Alice—an entity of pure desire—was beloved of the gods. Alike in unreality, they gifted her with images and fragments of stories. These she stitched together through the abandoned corners of the house: a swath of dreams overlying the grime of unchallenged decay, mingling with cobwebs and befriending small creatures that moved in the dust. She was Cinderella, with a second family of rustling, blinking friends who could neither sing nor sew. She could tell when the moths were dying, and made them death-beds from the rubble on the windowsills. There, she would hold tender vigils, murmuring softly as each life flickered to a halt.

Unlike butterflies, moths were only insects. They lived in the dark and the filth and made themselves pests. But their wings told a different story: if you looked closely, you could see that when they died, they were reborn as angels.

\*\*\*

The first gown she took was the green of new leaves, in riot with a gash of violent pink.

For months Matthew had eyed it, and stroked its slippery form, but only Alice at last had courage enough carry it off—away and up the stairs to her secret kingdom.

Alone in the dust, she slipped it on.

The neckline cut a sharp triangle down the length of her torso, and the excess, long and snake-bodied, pooled around her feet. A nervous laugh escaped her, and she jumped. Remembering that she was alone in the house, she laughed again, and spun. A thin layer of dust shook itself from the floor: assuming a spectral form, it extended a hand to greet her.



*May I have this dance?*

No stranger to ghosts, the girl accepted with a voracious smile.

*Of course.*

She curtsied, and gathered her dress. The spectre bowed. Cold hands guided her through series of gliding steps, drawing her like a paintbrush—dress trailing—through the dust. Once she had mastered the geometry of the dance, the teeth in her smile glinted.

*Faster.*

The spectre complied, and the music (there was music now, it had leaked in from behind) leapt to match them. Alice took the lead, pulling her fragile partner around the room, spinning out new and bolder forms until the wind got into him and he began to crumble at the edges. She laughed and quickened the pace, and danced and danced, scattering his remains throughout the room. Then she spun in place, and stamped one foot hard on the floor. The music stopped.

She stamped again, and jumped at once into a reckless whirling. Her movement called up spectres in her wake, all of whom wanted to dance with the girl in the snake-green dress—the beautiful one—hair wild in the living wind. Those she picked out lasted no more than a minute. She flew from hand to hand around the room in a wide circle, faster and faster until the walls ceased to be fixtures and the air ceased to be fixed: it wavered and bent backwards, and in places seemed stretched to its limit—translucent and paper-thin—as if with one hand she might tear it away. If only she could! But no matter where she chased, the thickness of reality poured in before her fingers, and her grasp fell ever short.

Even after she had stopped the room spun on. The walls reeled, fumbling for their places, and the floorboards tilted out from beneath to drop her back into herself—again and again—back to where her corpse lay fixed and breathless on the floor, surrounded by a cloud of spectres, danced to death.

This was only a test-wish: a preview of a gift more permanent. It did not matter that the spell would dissolve.



*Untitled, Ronnie Ben-Ami*

**Joan—**  
LynleyShimat Lys

Aunt Joan, Saint Joan?  
What did you see in that open field that made you fight?

My family claims a root in you, do I not  
see saints, hear visions at twelve,

chase dragons at fifteen? What do I demand  
from a name, the Fleur-de-Lys, French crown emblem –

Do I trace my line to you, to your brothers who dragged  
the Lys from France, to Protestant England, dispersed

to Canada, India, South Africa, New Zealand  
hauling the motto *Spero – I hope*. What should I

make of martyrs and saints; women who wage  
war in men's armor burned at the stake, our family

history of queering gender, religion, ethnicity.  
It prickles my skin to imagine

people praying to you as a saint, my ancient aunt,  
church trials, the clergy court grilling you –

How odd inheritance. Your female relatives retained  
your family's name. Will me

your faith in the open field, your fearlessness under fire.

## **Epicenter: Marla in Jerusalem**

LynleyShimat Lys

Wires drape like vines from the ceiling.  
Shattered tables sit amid a fine rain of plaster.  
Chairs at skewed angles  
mark trajectories.

On the same stretcher  
with the body no longer  
yours, they take away  
sense.

The fortress  
of the university  
has been imploded, the room  
raised and dropped  
by the impact.

The photographs are hieroglyphs –  
I can't decode  
a cell phone, a bag,  
building supplies,  
the contents of the bomb.

If I could piece back  
this broken glass,  
screws, bolts, and nails,  
I could build a house,  
fertilize a garden, and you  
would be  
a year younger than me,  
not frozen in photo stills.

I wish death  
on your killer  
in that instant before  
breath brings  
pause.

But you wanted peace  
and I want that for you,  
not more shattered ceilings  
not more walls caving in.

*I have a front-row seat for the history  
of the Jewish people.*

*I am a part of the struggle  
for Israel's survival.*

*Paying for my groceries is the same  
as contributing money to my favorite  
cause.*

I return  
    despite the nightmares.  
I feel you everywhere on campus  
    the stone plaza  
    makes concrete  
    your absence. I break down  
in mid day, under the scalding sun  
    I weep and leave  
    a rock on your memorial, and I cry  
when the yearly wreath dries.

*There is nowhere else in the world  
I would rather be right now.*

Your words leave traces  
on the stone, engraved beneath  
    the carved letters  
of your name.

I shy away from eating  
    at the tables where I once  
    spent every summer lunch,  
    and from chairs now potent with dark meanings.  
I pluck at the strands  
    and rivulets  
    of a stream of circumstance.  
Time seeps into  
    the vortex of a chance event.  
    I age further and further away.

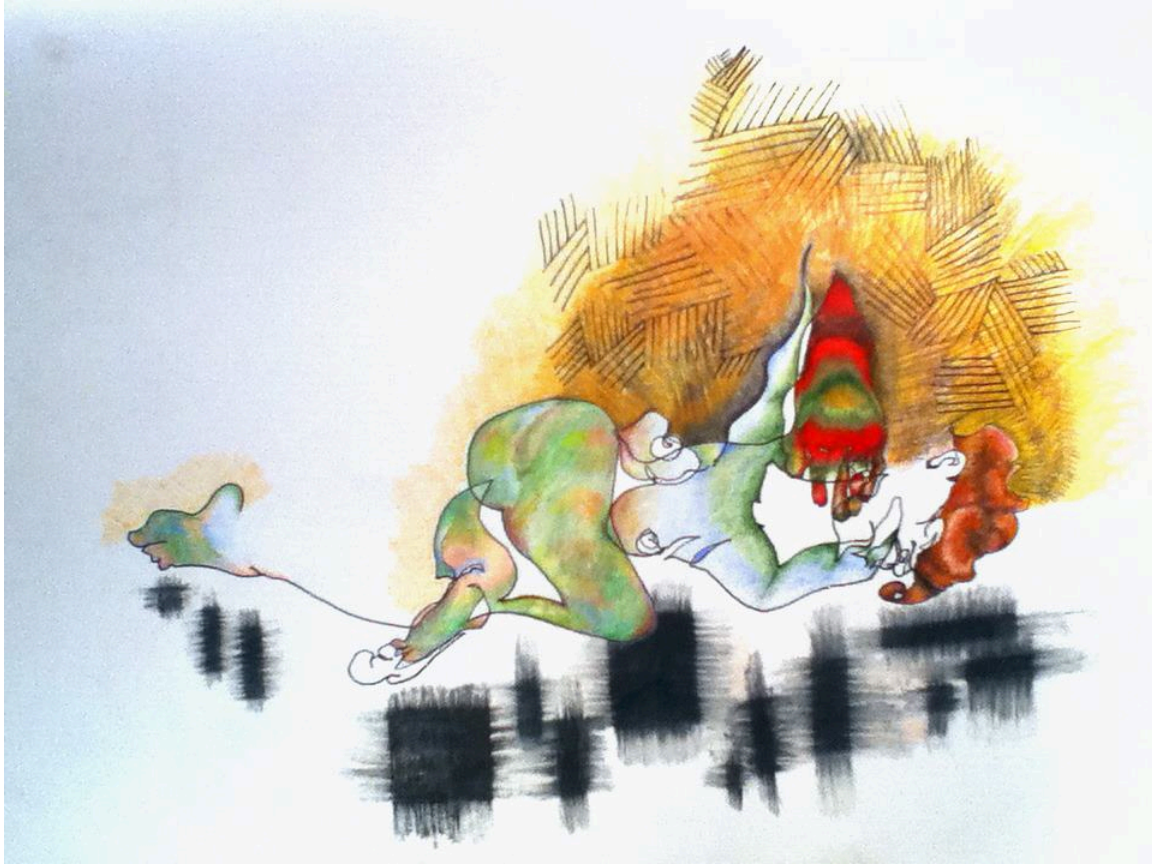
From the universities  
    at Bethlehem and Abu Dis  
came condolences, remorse  
    from the wall painter  
    who planted the bomb  
    and set off  
    the chain of events.

But the dead  
stay dead.

The last thing I said  
    to you, I'll see you around Jerusalem.

I still do.

*there is nowhere else in the world I would rather be right now. I have a front-  
row seat for the history of the Jewish people. I am a part of the struggle for  
Israel's survival. Paying for my groceries is the same as contributing money to  
my favorite cause—Marla Bennett*



*Untitled, Ronnie Ben-Ami*

# La Llorona

Cecelia Raker

---

## People:

MARIA:

A sixteen-year-old girl. She might be Latina; she might just be taking Spanish classes at school.

LA LLORONA:

The reason you don't go out alone at night down by the arroyo, a ghastly woman with long, dark hair. She wears a torn white dress and string of severed children's hands. She is Latina.

## Place:

The arroyo out behind a bad neighborhood, on the edge of the desert in the American Southwest, right now. The streambed is dry most of the time, but when the rains come, the water flows fast enough to kill you.

---

A dark and stormy night. Weeds lash the banks of the arroyo, where water flows fast and angry against the dry earth. MARIA, a gangly girl with dark hair, makes her way down the embankment.

MARIA

Hey!  
You coming to get me?  
You real, ghost lady?  
Hey!  
Come and get me!

A long wait, the wind rising.  
MARIA definitely isn't scared  
nope, she is holding it together.  
For sure. She's not crying.  
Shuttup.

MARIA

Come and get me.  
Please.

An eery weeping rises above the wind. LA LLORONA stumbles on. She's whistling something that might be a children's song or lullaby (A La Ru Ru Nino? Ring Around the Rosy?) interspersed with sobs that might be giggles.

LA LLORONA

aay, mis hijos!  
will you give me your name, mija, will you will you will hey kid will you give  
me your hey kid  
wanna come down  
by the water tonight  
wanna hear the water run  
in the arroyo  
it sounds like music  
ven, ven, hey mija  
you wanna tell me what your naaaaaame is  
come on

MARIA

Maria. my name is Maria.

LA LLORONA

really?  
no jodas?  
me too!  
that's my name too!  
you're not shitting me?  
I got the same name as you!

MARIA

yeah, I know. we got the same name. 'cept mine's alive.  
so.  
um.  
How's it going?

LA LLORONA

Llorona down by the dry creek  
by the cracks in the dirt  
where the water don't run no more Llorona  
llorando  
hair splayed out on the wind



like a crow wing  
like a splatter of blood like a  
child'sssss cry in the night Llorona  
eyes como lunas blancas  
como dry bone snake spines out in the desert  
no pupils

MARIA

that good, huh?

LA LLORONA

Llorona hears the blood  
pumping in your  
burnt out veins  
squeezing your fingernails  
into your plump soft palms  
hears your eyelids straining Llorona  
holding in salty water  
why?

MARIA

I got a situation.  
he left, and I.  
well.

She rubs her hand on her  
abdomen and lets it rest there.

LA LLORONA

aaaay, mis hijos!

MARIA

I'ma be all like you, now.  
One Maria  
Two Maria  
Red Maria—

LA LLORONA

mira mija  
you don't wanna be like  
me  
pinche saint Peter won't let me into the pearly gates  
keeps asking me where my kids isssssssssss

what kind of fucking question is that, coño  
you KNOW where my kids—  
asshole gringo what the fuck

MARIA

well gimme a sec down there in the water with those rocks and the flash flood  
situation and  
you can  
tell him I'm your kid.

LA LLORONA

you're not a kid

MARIA

I'm only 16, bitch.

LA LLORONA

not a kid you're pregnant  
A long silence.

LA LLORONA

Llorona took the soft ssssskin  
the little unsure smiles  
the tiny fingernails  
like jewels  
freed the sound from their  
little ears  
opened their faces with  
rocks  
blood like lace in the water Llorona  
went back to el rico rich man and said  
I'm a virgin again  
I got no kids, I'm pure  
I'm free.  
And that pendejo still wouldn't marry me.  
Llorona looks back over her slump shoulder  
long line  
long, long line of Marias with bastards in the womb  
some of us handle the situation with more  
grace  
than others

MARIA

I got no grace.

LA LLORONA

Llorona outside the gate looking in and it'sssssss  
peaceful  
in where they let you see God  
wish I could say  
go home and let that baby grow

MARIA

wish I could wish I could wish I could should would...  
whatever.  
Aren't you sposed to like eat my soul or something?

LA LLORONA

tienes miedo?  
you scared of me, mija?  
got old dry blood under my  
fingernails from prying open  
the lid of my coffin tienes miedo?  
I could breath on you and  
the sound of demons could  
never leave your ears Lllllllllllorrrrrona  
you want that?

MARIA

no but.

LA LLORONA

Llorona curling up her hands  
in that wild hair you got  
latching on  
como bats and birds and insssects writhing and  
pulling you  
down under the dessssspair  
with me

MARIA

I shouldn't've

LA LLORONA

oh, late for that now!  
you're gonna get it,  
you're gonna get what I got to take from you.

MARIA

no, I only—my mom says I have to I have to go with her to the hospital  
tomorrow and I

LA LLORONA

you're gonna get it

MARIA

what's it?

LA LLORONA

it t t t t t  
Llorona  
heart like cactus spines  
full in the drought  
cut one open and you find  
agua milagrosa

MARIA

milagrosa.  
Miracle?

LA LLORONA

dejame decirte—  
you claw your way down deep  
past the grave dirt Llorona  
and the iron smell  
on your hands from  
holding onto those pearly gate bars and  
looking inside y el picor en el cuello where they won't stop  
looking at you looking at you  
looking  
get down under the smell  
and the weeping and the  
blood  
find it t t t t  
find  
no matter rich man no matter pure

you just you only you you are the one  
choosing.

heart like  
Llorona—

MARIA

LA LLORONA disappears.  
MARIA shivers and lets the rain  
fall on her upturned face. The  
wind whistles and weeps.

## Party Game

nina jane

*"I said I want to hear from all you young women" -@lemonhound*

We toppled out of the van onto the dark main street in San Pedro. I hooked my small backpack over one shoulder and pulled out a flyer with a hand-drawn map for a hostel. It was only 7:30, but it felt like midnight, and I didn't know San Pedro at all. Julia and I puzzled over the instructions as the driver passed bags down from the roof of the van. Local men in shorts and flip-flops stood in front of a travel agency, ready to lead us to our destinations. I suggested we find our own way to avoid paying a guide and asked the driver to point us in the right direction, but he turned to a local man and told him to take us.

"Ahh, si!" the man, who was rather drunk, exclaimed at the name of our hostel. "Mucha fiesta! Untss! Untss! Untss!" he shouted, trying to emulate the sound of heavy bass. Julia and I shouldered our large backpacks, placed our small ones onto our fronts and followed.

I asked Julia where she had stayed in Antigua and how she had heard about this place. She said she'd been staying at the Blue Banana where I'd picked up the flyer. They recommended the hostel to her. Plus, a friend was staying there. The drunk man stumbled on ahead still going "untss, untss, untss," and slurring his Spanish. At the end of the road, he took a right down an alley. We stopped and I pulled the map out again, but he motioned us to follow.

"Vamos! Aqui! Aqui!"

"Si?" I asked in cobbled-together Spanish, "Es seguro que este hostel es par aka?"

"Si, si. Vamos!"

He kept on walking. The map *did* say we had to take a right, so we followed.

"I really hope he knows where he's going," I said as we turned another corner to discover a wall painted with the hostel's name. When we rang the doorbell a curly-haired Australian answered and invited us into the small office.

"We're looking for two beds in a dorm," Julia explained.

"Sorry, all our dorms are booked."

"Shit." I worried this would happen. Taking the last van of the day, we ran the risk of a full hostel and there was no way to call or e-mail in advance.

"We've got a private room with two beds, though."

This seemed like a good option: we had already made the journey and Julia had spotted her friend.

"Great! Right, I'm Adrian. We'll just get you signed in."

Julia and I handed him our passports and set down our bags. The drunk came in asking us for quetzals, we shook our heads and tried to explain we hadn't wanted a guide, but Adrian cut in, in Spanish and paid him. Mariel, a Canadian girl, found our key and led us to our room.

In the yard, groups of people sat on benches around tables, rolling joints and drinking beer. One guy sat in a corner playing guitar while a couple giggled in a hammock. Julia offered to share her bottle of wine, and we took a seat on a bench around the table where four Israelis played cards. Julia struck up a conversation with the guy she knew from Antigua and I turned to the larger guy next to me with the square, black plastic glasses.

"Hey there."

"How's it going," he nodded, breaking conversation with the guy next to him, "Sam."

"Nina. From the States?"

"California."

"Cool, Canada," I pointed to myself.

"This is Darren," he gestured at the tan, dark-haired guy next to him. I gave a little wave and Sam pulled some wrapped candies from his bag.

"They're quite strong," he told Darren. They were pot infused chocolates, 15 quetzals each, two for twenty five.

I turned to Julia, "Want to try one?"

"They're actually really good," her friend with the Austrian accent said.

"Sure, alright."

I paid Sam and passed a chocolate to Julia. We unwrapped them, made a little cheers and ate them in two bites.

Taking a sip of wine I sat back to take in the scene. Adrian sat at one end drinking Quetzalteca, the local moonshine-like liquor, straight from the bottle. Groups of guys slapped each other on the shoulder and boasted about their sexual conquests. A few professed their "gayness" for each other. *Like a bro-y high school party*, I thought.

I eavesdropped on Sam as he brought up sex or something of the sort. He seemed a little queer to me, but as it turns out, my queer radar is terrible. I asked him if he preferred men or women and he looked at me like I was an alien.

"Excuse me?"

"Sorry, I don't care either way, I was just curious." Cue the social awkwardness, *and this is why you suck at meeting people*. He shot me a dirty look; I apologised again and got up.

I made my way over to sit with Mariel. She'd recently lived in Montreal so we shared stories about shows and snowy days, and she gave me the scoop on San Pedro. A group of guys broke into song and I took a joint that was passed my way. I tried to learn the Israeli card game, but couldn't understand the rules. I fumbled a cigarette out of my pack, resolving to smoke and watch instead. The smoke was thick and tangy, and my mouth became pasty. I stubbed out the cigarette and headed for the kitchen. Adrian stood by the fridge, reaching behind it to add his empty bottle to a growing collection on the windowsill.

"It's all I've drunk since I've been here." He leaned backwards into the counter and rambled on about something unintelligible. I laughed as he stumbled out of the kitchen only to fall down in the garden.

"Shit," I said, half-skipping over. A guy tried to help him up, but Adrian groaned. We decided it was best to let him be.

I got a glass of water and went back to sit with Julia. As I sat down, I overheard Sam talking to Darren. "I will give you three chocolates" he said, "if you stick your dick in her face." I froze, my head foggy with weed and wine.

"I just have to, what, stick my dick in Nina's face?"

"That's all."

"Excuse me?" I turned around. "You think he can just stick his dick in my face?"

"Well, for three chocolates."

I looked to Darren, who sat thinking about the proposal. "Are you fucking serious?"

Darren shrugged; Sam passed him the drugs. Challenge and satisfaction permeated Sam's smile, and it hit me, this is going to happen. Sam was determined and I was too inebriated to walk away.

"So what?" I continued to argue, "You will pay him to stick HIS dick in MY face without even asking me?"

"Yeah."



"And, what, if I hadn't been listening he would have just surprised me with a dick in my face?"

Sam gave a short laugh. I could see where this was going, but it was too late to back out. "So he is going to do this to me and I don't get anything?"

"What?" Sam asked, "You want some chocolates too?"

"That would be fair wouldn't it?"

"Ok, I'll give you one.

"Are you fucking serious? It's my face."

"Yeah, but it's his dick."

"Three, or fuck you."

"Yeah, right. But fine, three and he sticks his dick in your face."

And there it was: the deal I was making. The realisation hit me as I took in the group around us. I fumbled for a cigarette. "Yeah, sure, whatever."

Sam's face lit up; I caught Darren's eye but he turned away.

"Darren here," Sam announced, "is going to stick his dick this girl's face."

He gestured in my direction. I swallowed my wine and shrank further into the bench as Sam talked to a guy with a camera. I smoked slowly and looked at Julia. She frowned; I laughed at the absurdity.

The chatter died down as Darren began unzipping his pants and pulling his penis out of his boxers. I sat alone on the bench listening to the laughs and whispers around me. A camera flash went off. I tried not to look at anyone, tried not to look at the man walking across the bench, his dick half out of his pants, towards me. I turned to the side as he lifted his penis into my face, barely touching my nose. Several flashes went off in succession. I scrunched up my eyes.

Then Darren was putting his penis back into his pants and hopping off the bench. A round of cheers went up from the men in the group. Sam clapped. Darren zipped up his pants and Sam gave him a pat on the shoulder. And that was it. I took a sip of wine and went over to Sam.

"Enjoy that?"

He pulled three chocolates from his bag. "Yep, it was pretty fucking great."

I took the chocolates. “Do you realise I just had to bargain for myself?” I asked, knowing that what I was thinking wasn’t going to come across.

“You offered to do it.”

“You paid for it, and I didn’t offer. You weren’t even going to...”

“Look, you got the chocolates, it’s not like you didn’t want them.” That wasn’t the point, but I couldn’t explain it; that there were pictures, that I had been humiliated in front of strangers, that I felt I had to prove something. It was a fair deal, right? I waved the thoughts away and went back to talk with Julia.

More weird shit ensued that night, including a naked guy with a guitar dripping hot wax on his balls. But I couldn’t shake what had happened. I drank more wine, smoked a few joints and threw up in the bathroom. Adrian rose from the garden and stumbled into some tables. Two guys helped him into his dorm room where he fell asleep on the floor. I stumbled off to bed and woke up with a wicked hangover.

I could have left the next day. I could have run off, but I had met some good people at the hostel. We went kayaking on the lake, hiked, smoked joints, and I learned how to play Yaniv with the Israelis. We had bonfires and sang songs, but I avoided speaking to Sam.

A few months later I returned to San Pedro for Christmas. Sam was still there, partying, selling drugs and working at another hostel. When I ran into him again, I said hello as if nothing had happened and he didn’t bring it up. Somehow, I had earned his respect that night.

## Contributors

**Ronnie Ben-Ami** is a 25 year old student, artist, and aspiring rationalist. She is currently living in Chicago and pursuing a Master's in art restoration and conservation. She knows many secret things but she can never share them with you.

**Shana Bulhan Haydock** is a young, South Asian, trans\* / non-binary and queer writer, artist and activist. They currently reside in Massachusetts, USA, though they grew up mostly in India. They work with The Freedom Center, a radical mental health collective that hopes to provide sanctuary for psychiatric survivors. Shana's work has appeared or will appear in such publications as the *Reveries & Rage* anthology, *The Outrider Review*, (parenthetical) zine, *East Coast Ink*, *aaduna* literary magazine, and the *Everyday Abolition* project.

**Eran Hornick** grew up in Boston, and outside of a short stint living in Providence, he has continued living in Boston all his life. His goals include identifying a screech bird call he has heard for many years towards dusk and also particularly after dusk and after dark, around his neighborhood and in a few other places. This remains one of the largest unknowns itching at him that needs to be found out. Other goals are climbing the abandoned iron rust bridge crossing the D line probably between Longwood and Brookline Village, or else between Brookline Village and Beaconsfield, which is a footbridge that has long been fenced off, but which he has passed under while riding the T a million times, and each time he sees it and desperately wants to explore it. There appears to be no actual walkway left, just the naked struts of sharp tetanus-infested splinters, and it's questionable if the bridge is even capable of supporting a human's weight. But it probably could, since when it was originally built it must've been tested for such purposes. He thinks that would be a nice way to experience Brookline and the D line, and to see this simple frontier that's spanned over his head his whole life, but as yet is still unexplored. The other important goal would be to climb the Gano Street Bridge in Providence, which is an abandoned train drawbridge stuck permanently in the "up" position, something he intended to do for 4 years, then for 6 years, now for 8 years. Thus he must do it.

**nina jane** is a poet, short story and non-fiction writer from Ottawa, Canada. She works in social media for a literary festival and serves coffee in a hotel. She is a volunteer for several writing organisations in Ottawa, has had her poetry published by *In/Words Magazine* and has self-published two chapbooks. She graduated from a creative writing, English and theatre program, traveled throughout Central America and now calls Ottawa her home. She is always looking for adventure.

**Frances Kimpel** is a resident of Waltham MA, hails from the Pacific Northwest and works in a variety of creative media spanning written, visual, and performance genres. In addition to producing works of poetry, drama, and narrative prose, she has recently founded Tools of Enchantment, an original line of hand-crafted jewelry and art-objects. She is also a director, actor, and member of the steering committee for the fledgling theatre troupe, Chameleon's Dish. For her, art is a vital means of negotiating the relationship between reality and imagination. To this end, her work is seldom either realism or fantasy, but aims instead to function as a kind of bridge between two, if not an outright deconstruction of the dichotomy.

**Karen Locascio** is a recent graduate of the University of Massachusetts-Boston with a MFA in poetry. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Amethyst Arsenic, Spry Literary Journal, Cider Press Review, Paper Nautilus, and others.

**LynleyShimat Lys**, who is on the poetry track of the Queens College MFA in Creative Writing and Literary Translation, comes from Berkeley, California, and returns to New York after five years in the Middle East studying and working in Jerusalem. Lynley has a B.A. in Comparative Literature (Hebrew, Russian, English) from UC Berkeley and an MA in Middle Eastern Studies (Palestinian Poetry) from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Lynley's current interests include contemporary African-American women poets, intersections between Israeli and Palestinian poems of place, and plays in verse.

**Cecelia Raker** is a Boston-based playwright currently at work on a cycle of movement-and-text pieces based on fairytales, a few more traditional plays, and a collaborative experience with the Project:Project devising collective. Recent exploits include production in the Boston Theater Marathon and a reading at the 2014 Great Plains Theater Conference Playlab. [www.ceceliaraker.tumblr.com](http://www.ceceliaraker.tumblr.com)

**Shira Rubenstein** is a native of upstate New York. She holds a B.A. in Creative Writing from Brandeis University. She has taught and performed poetry in the Boston area, and has been spied at various sites working as a baker and a preschool teacher. She believes shoveling snow builds character, and enjoys rewriting the lyrics of pop songs. Her poetry and translations can be read online in the Brandeis Institutional Repository.

**Stacy Shutts** is from Ohio and currently preparing to complete her Peace Corps service in Paraguay. With writing, she's found herself overwhelmed and intimidated here, challenged by the number of stories she felt involved with as an "integrated outsider". The simplicity of pen, paper, and solitude is meaningful to her personal development and reflection. Next, she will move to Alaska to

work and live with her sister and she looks forward to much debriefing of her last two years in quiet spaces, with pen and paper.

**Jason Henry Simon-Bierenbaum** first proclaimed he wanted to write when he was six. He started writing regularly when he was thirteen, and has been invited to read at the Dodge Poetry Festival, the New Jersey Hip Hop Action Summit, and has been a national slam champion as part of the Philly Youth Slam Team. Currently he's in the UMass Boston poetry MFA program while making his living as a teaching artist at various places (Institute of Contemporary Art, Urbano Project, Harvard) and Arts Organizer (MassLEAP, organizing the statewide Louder than a Bomb Youth Poetry Slam Festival). He does his best to take nothing for granted.

**Crystal Vega-Huerta** is a California State University, Long Beach graduate and lives in Southern California. She has previously been published in *Poets & Artists* and *Aviary Review*.

## Editors

**Kim dela Cruz** is a Boston-area poet and freelance editor working on her first book. Her writing can be found in places like *Breadcrumb Scabs*, *Every Day Poets*, and *Broad!*, and her current project is a collection of pieces that examines the transformative nature of intimacy, among other things.

**Elana Friedland** is a Boston-based poet, musician, and theatre-maker. Her poems have won a scholarship from Grub Street and a fellowship from Summer Literary Seminars. Her writing can be found in *Broad!* and the *Jewish Journal*. She is originally from the Midwest and currently resides in Brighton, where she discovered the original Window Cat while on her way to work.

**Emily Jaeger** is a poet, returned peace corps volunteer, and MFA student at UMASS Boston. After living for two years as an agricultural extensionist in rural Paraguay, she returned to the Boston-area and is currently re-discovering the joys of public libraries and the internet. She co-founded Window Cat Press to foster community and visibility for young writers. Her work appears in *Broad!*, *Broadsided Press*, *Cecilia's Writers' Magazine*, *The Jewish Journal*, and *Zeek*.