### MOONFLAKE press.

**SEAR** 

#### ISSUE #**1** february 2021

Moonflake Press was born from a love of worlds. The worlds each writer creates within their art. Because writing is an art. An intimate art, a personal art and an art that unveils the writer, reader and world at large.

'The Affair' is a love letter to anti-love, desperate love, lust, deception born from passion and all the other sins that are never seen in the blood-red Valentine's advertisements February is overrun with.

Follow us through the pages of this ode to scandal. Leave your judgements here and we'll keep them safe until you've finished. There are no page numbers, no lists, no contents – just a dizzying spiral into desire...



Editor // @CyrineSinti



## An Illusion of Love

Long nights I spent with forever at my feet And the knocker at my fingertips I couldn't close the distance, I was scared Of your door. I know you never want to see me again, And I'm alright with that, I swear I am. Sometimes when I think of you, I recall Every second with you was me begging For what you were never willing to give. And I'm finished with it. So forget me, Forget the promises I made to you, I will not spend the rest of my life Searching every pair of eyes in the room To see if I have your permission To call myself a real woman. I am real And for some reason I'm here. All I can say is Didn't you know about my champagne Problems long before you met me? I'm not perfect- the lady's improving, As you would say. And from your words I would hang like a child on the monkey bars. You left me hanging like a branch from a broken tree After you I was a melting clock face in a Dali I was a house of stone but I let ivy grow Until it broke through the walls and now I'm covered in the remains of one look at you I had some bitter tricks up my sleeve, But no lie so sweet as the sound of a Forever As it leapt from your lips to its end in the dirt Well I hope you never, ever say that word again, I hope you lose it cause you gave it to me Maybe just one too many times, one lie I will never believe in again, not from you Whose only knowledge of a love is a magic mirror And an illness that swallows you day by day.

Now that you're gone, in my dreams I go up the river where footprints dot stepping stones, Just to see if I ever see where we went wrong Maybe one of these days I'll spot a sign, Maybe it will tell me why all my love letters Are addressed to the fireplace and why on Earth They're full even though I'm as empty as ever Cause you aren't here to nudge me and laugh At me, at the world, at the person sitting across from us What does it matter if you're on my mind As I play violin when we all know the ship is sinking? What does it matter if looking into your eyes Was a lifetime wasted in luxury when those eyes Are still my damnation, so I die on ice like a Fool. They tell me my life deserves to be celebrated I threw a ball when you said you'd tolerate it. Many long and lonely nights I was there Waiting for you in my best gown and where were you? Right now, I'm alright, I'm alright again But curses on me, I could never resist your temptation So here I am forgetting to let sleeping dogs lie because Something in me still wants to play with them Unlike you, I can never leave well enough alone I am the indefensible, the reprehensible, The eternal failure, reading one story knowing Yet never understanding how the end unfolds. So much for growing from this Unholy pain So much for roaring twenties and wishing wells. And so much for chosen families, a world all our own I hate my feet for remembering the way to your realm. I hate my heart for still feeling your fingernails Under all these layers I've built up to keep you out So I guess you could say *the greatest love story never told*, Now long dead to stay buried evermore, wasn't mine. Even the ghost of your heart wasn't mine to hold.



We sat amidst the others; white noise, idle chattering, and passing of toasted concoctions. It felt hot already – and it was early as yet. A lunatic pounded the piano keys in the room next door, while the women in the pantry appeared to be having a percussion party with the pots and kettles.

I looked across the table and met with a pair of deep, blue eyes. We exchanged a sympathetic smile. The place was hell. We were in for a long day. We both wanted out.

"Bali would be nice," I mouthed.

"Wonderful," he mouthed back.

So, we drained our tea cups, stood up – and went.

The flight was smooth and fast. There was just enough time to huddle into our back row, window seats and down a couple of gin and tonics. It felt marvellous to have each other all to ourselves. We wallowed in it. A whole day to do whatever we wished. Within reason, I thought, remembering my morals. But, in my haste to pack I realised I had forgotten to bring them. And I didn't know if he had any I could borrow. In fact, I hardly knew him at all.

At Denpasar airport we exchanged our uniforms for shorts, t-shirts and sandals. The tropical air was perfumed with musk, frangipani and desire. A waiting bemo took us off to our beach-side resort that we had booked into through the in-flight service site.

Idyllic surroundings filled our senses. Swaying palms; some heavy with ripe coconuts. Banana trees, also laden with rich, ripening fruit. Brown, bare-footed children waved a greeting. It made us feel special and expected.

Our hotel was of typical Indonesian style. Lots of polished wood. rattan furniture and potted greenery. The smart, uniformed, male receptionist handed us our keys and pointed us in the direction of the lifts. They were partly obscured behind a painted, floral screen of exotic birds and tumbling waterfalls.

Our room was large, with an enormous king-size bed, circular cane chairs and a sunken bath of green marble. A sliding door opened onto a private balcony that overlooked the lush gardens, swimming pool, bar and azure blue sea beyond.

"This is really lovely," I breathed.

"Wonderful," he smiled, putting his arms around me.

It was the first time we had made physical contact of a meaningful basis and it sent a shiver of pleasure rippling up my spine.

"What shall we do first?" I asked, moving away, although I didn't want to.

"What about a swim?" he suggested. I agreed readily and we made our way down to the pool. It was quite large and sparkling blue beside its lush surroundings. Palms lent its contours to shadows and bougainvillea festooned the adjoining bar area in a riot of colour. There wasn't another soul in sight.

He looked stunning splicing the still surface of the water, with his taunt, tanned body. I looked down at my own, seemingly slimmer figure and noticed it too appeared to be beginning to glow with the tropical kiss of the sun. We drifted in comfortable silence. Strange perhaps for two who knew so little of each other. The air above was sultry. Balmy breezes teased the palm fronds and occasionally caught at frangipani flowers. I watched as they danced and fluttered, floating down to rest upon the sides of the pool.

Furtively, we watched each other; awkward, unsure of the boundaries made by a couple who were only just that. Closer and closer we swam, until cooled and pleasantly exhausted, we came to rest on the steps at the shallow end.

"I could use a drink," he said, as I lost his eyes to the bar nearby.

"Good idea."

Like the pool, the bar was void of other clientele. Even the barman had seemingly disappeared. But, upon the counter stood two huge cocktails made from halved and hollowed paw-paws, filled with some tropical delight. It tasted like paradise.

We sat on rattan bar stools, my knees between his legs. Provocative but innocent. Closeness accentuated by the steamy heat. Alone in this tropical Nirvana for a whole day. It was almost too much to handle, but I was very willing to try. Our conversation flowed freely. So did our cocktails. They never seemed to empty beyond about half-way. After an hour or so, we decided to have some lunch. We rose a little unsteadily to our feet, picked up our paw-paws and went in search of the dining area.

It wasn't far. I followed him as he made his way down a narrow winding path. It meandered around the pool side, veered off towards the main hotel building and petered out by a large, open-air restaurant.

Sculptured wood gleamed in natural hues. Rattan tables and chairs were set out and covered in colourful batik. Exotic, floral centre pieces decorated each table setting. We spied a table in the centre that was laden with assorted dishes, each one appearing more interesting and appetizing than the last. There was no one around to stop us, so we decided to sit and eat our fill.

The swim, the alcohol and the time change had made us both feel ravenous. Neither of us had realised it, being pre-occupied with other, more important matters. We feasted on fine meats, Asian vegetables, fragrant rice, fresh fruits and sipped away at our never-ending cocktails in between.

When we were both sated, we sat back and rested awhile. The air was alive with birdsong, bubbling water and unspoken words.

"Let's go for a wander. We could take our drinks and find a cool, shady spot somewhere?" I suggested.

"What a great idea." he smiled. And off we went.

Another meandering path led us through the lush, tropical garden of the resort and along to the beach. A line of palm trees grew along the edge. The sands were golden and warm underfoot, incredibly soft under our bare feet. Silently, he took my hand and we strolled along the water's edge. This too was warm but cooling to our even warmer skin. Way out from the beach, we spied a few strange-looking fishing boats. Their elaborately carved shapes and gaily painted sails made them seem like exotic water lilies, floating on the calm sea.

The beach itself was blessedly deserted. But then, we were becoming used to that. It suited us perfectly. Three or more would have been a crowd in our case.

Further along, we came to a small opening; a natural walking trail that led into the thick foliage of palms and ferns. We made our way over to it because it looked inviting and just a little mysterious.

Wherever it led, we had to find out.

A short way in, the trail petered out to a small clearing. A kind of glade with a small pond surrounded by lichen-covered rocks. Vines clambered over them all. A ceiling of palm leaves dappled the sunlight and enabled a soft, thick, carpet of grass to grow abundantly upon the ground. We sank into it, laughing at our own witty chit-chat and from too many sips of our cocktails. It was cooler here in the shade, but still very humid. I lay on my back and he lay beside me, his face filling my vision and my mind. We kissed, tentatively at first, then stronger, more passionately. It felt idyllic, like something from a romance novel, or a Hollywood movie. But we were writing our own lines, creating our own scenes...

Later, we splashed about in the icy, cold pond. The boundaries were down now. We felt free to touch and caress as we desired. He hadn't brought any morals after all and I didn't care. It was what we both wanted. To be free with each other, not restricted by anything or anyone around us.

The sun was sinking as we made our way back to the resort. The same bemo with the same driver was waiting for us. Beside it stood the same receptionist, holding his hand out for our room keys. We hadn't really needed them. Nature had provided instead.

We sat close on the plane, a little tired, but very contented. He put his arm around me, and we fell asleep somewhere over the Timor sea.

Our arrival back at work was timed perfectly to coincide with the last few minutes of the shift.

"Have a nice day?" The boss enquired.

"Wonderful!" We both chimed.

We grabbed our tote bags, followed the rest of the staff out of the building and went our separate ways home.



Dawn, De Bragt Frozen Valentine

Dora went missing on Valentine's Day. The tongues in town how they wagged. Everyone felt that she ran away. With a salesman, Dora had snagged.

Years flew by. Suspicions were strong With a shotgun laid 'cross his knees. Edmund waited for she done him wrong. In the rain, the snow, and the freeze.

There was always a chance that she could appear. With Edmund's keen eye, he would wait. Stoically sitting there year after year. With a belly filled with such hate.

Thunder did rumble, lightning struck. It started some terrible fires. Blew out the power, Edmund's bad luck The company came to fix wires.

Forcing the door of the freezer apart A flashlight revealed as it shined. Dora clung to her sweetheart, like a frozen Valentine.

Edmund feigned shock. He let out a cry. Pretending, he shed some fake tears, "Dora's run off," had been such a lie. She was froze to her lover for years.

The old man was tried for murder, you see His life they decided to spare For Dora was cold, as cold as could be, when deciding to have that affair.

#### Stepmonster

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I tried to love them. I did. "Hansel, you're such a clever boy." "Gretel, so doting to your brother." Sometimes I even sang them to sleep. But I could not trust the boy for his pranks, his burrs and salamanders. And the girl whom I once hoped to befriend, she looked straight through me and cried for her dead mother. How could I ever compete with that mythic memory? He, the woodsman, strong and gentle though not too bright. But one did not need brains, only brawn, to chop wood. His hands, meaty and calloused, powerful enough to take down an aged hard oak. I wanted to feel their coarse skin scratch the surface of my body's terrain. But the children—the girl, serious and beautiful; and the boy with all his volcanic energy—they put distance between me and my new husband, complaining of hunger. I tended the geese. I cooked what little we could grow in the garden, such a small patch of sunlight quickly doused by shade. I cleaned and mended, little more than a servant now. But what of my appetites?

One day I suggested we look for wildberries, plotting to leave the children to the woods. They would have no choice but to toughen up. That, or we might all starve. I, already starved, roused them at the break of dawn. But the fool boy turned to look back for the little white cat that prowled the cottage, wanting for scraps. Shadows stretched out early in the forest, and we built a fire in a small clearing where the light danced and lulled the children to sleep. And then I flirted with the woodsman, lifted my skirts, ran away. I knew he would follow, my giggles always out of reach, bouncing off wide trunks. A game of hide and seek, I darted in a serpentine pattern to keep him guessing. His laugh, a boom in the woods, luring him further from the children who had nothing more than a loaf of bread and a small basket of berries blood-red. By the time I let him catch me, it was dusk. The yellow moons of night creatures glinted from the darkness. The woodsman knew not to go back into the woods until morning. That night, he paced. I called him back to bed, but he would not come. His footfalls shuffled against the rough pine boards.

When the children returned, pockets full of moonwhite pebbles, I saw how they looked at me with a hardened gaze. That night they slept with the woodsman, curled into my marriage bed while I slept alone. Soon I hid the gander, let the sack of grain run low. Gretel whimpered, wild catcalls rising from her empty stomach. Bruised circles deepened under Hansel's watchful eyes. Again, it was easy to convince the woodsman, dim in the aftermath of love. I tended the fire that night, guarding the door. We would leave together at dawn. Of course I knew of the witch and her cravings. It only required that we get close enough. I knew by the bones placed high in the crooks of the trees when we were within her reach. How I envied that hag's self-standing.

Again the fire, the loaf of bread, no berries. I knew it would not be so easy this time, so I clamped the woodsman's thick wrist and walked him home, wearing my best face of grief. Heavy with sleep, I sat in the rocker and watched his shadow grow long. He stared into the fire, listening for their return. He refused to come to bed.

I woke to a deep chill, the embers dying, an empty house. The woodsman's axe, his bow and quiver, gone. I killed a goose for his return, glazed with apples and honey. He would not eat. His hands no longer wandered my body, even when I directed them to the mossy dark spaces. I thought it would be easy. I thought we could be happy and free. But he withdrew, spent his evenings staring into the fire or sharpening his axe. In the void of passion, I knew my days were numbered. He could cut me loose. The goose had gone to waste, its bones thrown into the underbrush at the edge of the forest.

How I learned to hate the woods, a dark boundary, silhouettes of trees falling across the clearing like prison bars. The woodsman had taken to sleeping in the children's beds—the only time he didn't sleep in fits. The chamberpot went missing. The white cat now deposited the toyed-with remains of small creatures on the doorstep. How few choices I'd been given, none of them fine, making a ghost of me before it was my time. I kept close to the house, watchful, wary. I no longer remembered my name. One night, skittish, stumbling outside for relief, I saw the glint of silvered eyes. A glare, certain of my guilt. The flash of the axe blade felled me. I buckled, broken, accepting its final judgment, grateful for my release.



# the princess and the party

Hugya

Sleeping for eternity sounded awfully bleak to the princess. She worshipped

the idea of everlasting dancing instead, in a hidden place. Meanwhile,

shoes wore out and the other, pirouetting performer girl was reeling in her head for rest and privacy. She was the one who kept twirling

when the other swans were kissed and saved by marriage to strangers; she must keep dancing, for the world to spin.

They traded fates like children slipping peas on neighboring supper plates.

After the party, they wore each other's shoes, neither of them aware what they truly desired was dreaming;

neither of them remembering what it was like to be alive.

## Tattoo Pivotal

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#### ΤΑΤΤΟΟ

We angled ourselves to face Lyra-I turned repeatedly to him. Hid in a blanket-cocoon we beat a rhythm of fingertip-dreams.

We angled ourselves to face Lyra-I turned repeatedly to him. He rained prayers and promises; a sky-full of stars fell down unseen.

We angled ourselves to face Lyra-I turned one last time to him. Pinned dead-butterfly colours to his mouth, his tongue, his skin.



#### PIVOTAL

I want you to see herbut she winds, unwinds on an old question-hook she is pinned by it. spins around and around. paper-windmill - razor wire, every rotation more freedom. remove her for you? no. she'd bleed-out in the knowing, and a tortured dancer is better than no dancer at all.

# And They Will Live Happily

Deutsch

It's a story everyone knows. There is a girl. She is noble, beautiful, kind, smart. It doesn't matter what she is like, really. She is perfect for the man that will rescue her. From what? It doesn't matter. She is an innocent victim, and that is all we must know. She is saved by a man. He does not matter. He just needs to exist, to be the sort who would rescue the girl.

They get married. Because marriage is expected. He is a prince, or a duke. He is rich, powerful, and handsome. He does not matter. It is implied they have children, and the words 'happily ever after' are said.

But the boy and the girl, the prince and the princess, the husband and wife, they do not know each other. They have barely talked. They are beautiful though. And thus, they got married. But really, they do not love each other. And this is why they do not sleep in the same room. It makes it much easier to sneak others in.

At first it is just the boy, the man, the prince, the husband. It is easy for him, he grabs a passing noblewoman, and duchess, a servant girl, a prostitute. It goes unquestioned. It always is. Even if children do not hear this part of the story. He goes to be with a woman with alcohol on his breath. She sneaks out, and he cannot remember her the next week.

But the girl was not always a princess, a duchess, a lady, whatever nobility sounds nice. She was a peasant, a commoner, an inventor's daughter, a shepherd. She does not know of marriage without love. She does not know of marriage like this. She sees her husband, the boy who saved her, and she sees him cheating on her, a different woman on his arm each night. She hears other women talk, telling tales of his wandering hands and eagerness in the bedroom and she wonders why she stays.

The handsome man shows up. He is a peddler, a servant, a noble, a prince, a gardener. She sees him, and she sees revenge. She sees him and she sees a way to understand her husband, a way to get back at him. She takes him to her room; she does the deed. Her husband finds out. Of course he does. These things never stay secret for long. But she was a commoner, a peasant, an inventor's daughter. She does not know The Rules. That while men may cheat and have affairs, women are left to enjoy whatever scraps their husbands give them. That while her husband may sleep himself halfway across a country, she must stay her innocent, pure self.

But everyone always forgets that she wasn't always the princess, the nobility, the wife. Once, she was a commoner, a peddler's daughter, the odd one out. And so when they call for her head to make up for her

cheating, she runs. She knows this land. She runs for she once was this land's backbone, its very heart. And land does not give up its soul that easily.

She runs. Off into the woods, into the fields, it does not matter. Perhaps she ends up in a town, perhaps a single inn. Perhaps this is where the story ends, her sprinting into the night, running from her past.

But everyone knows it is not. She finds a house that will take her in for the night. They give her food, and a place to stay. If it is in the house, they are one bed short, and she sleeps with their daughter.

If not, the daughter takes pity on the girl lying in the straw, drawn and weary. Either way the outcome is the same. The two girls bond. Perhaps over the unjustness of the world they live in. Perhaps over their hair, their clothes. Perhaps over scarcity of food. They bond nonetheless, and when the girl leaves the next morning, the daughter begs to come. She is stifled, or she is lonely. She is bullied, or she is feared. But she has nothing to stay for. So she leaves.

The two of them go, and they run. They do not rest. Over the kingdom, people hear stories of the woman who married above herself, of the woman who couldn't take marriage and snapped, of the girl. They will listen to these stories, and they will laugh, together. They will slowly fall in love over beds in the straw and a campfire in the woods. They will murmur their confessions, and next to a stream in the woods, they will recite their vows. They will laugh and sing and cry together, and they will not live happily ever after. They will live happily though. They will run across the world, and they will live happily.

And years later, there will be an inn. It will be in a small village, or in the middle of the woods. It will be in a city; it will be by a river. Does it matter? It will exist. And there will be two women. They will still be virtuous; they will still be kind. They will still exist, even if their beauty has faded. There will still be stories of the girl who couldn't take the pressures of the upper class. These women will laugh at such things. They will be darning socks, fixing up breakfast, plumping pillows and counting money. But nonetheless, when someone brings up the girl who ran, they will look at each other and laugh, they will laugh and they will remark on the importance of love, and on the importance of a quick getaway.

Williamson, Ardently Most

I whisper my secrets to the moon hoping stardust will sweep them over to you. And I wait to see if any murmurs come back to me. But the night air is still. The moon tells me to be patient. And so, I wait all night for your words to stir in my ear. Yet, all I am met with is deafening silence. Doubt clouds my mind like the dark landscape of night. Still, the moon tells me to be patient. I wonder if you have forgotten about me. Time and space can dull the images in one's mind, fading memories to nothing more than faint visions—never really knowing if what one thinks and sees is real.

But my mind can see you clearly. My blood does not stir with the hatred it once did at the thought of you and the way you would look down your nose at me. Yet, I saw your eyes always trail after me, though I was certain they followed me with disgust. And so, I steeled my nerves against you. I was determined to arm myself against your words—your pride and prejudice. Though, your words still did cut me despite how thick I tried to make my skin. And when our anger peek, I finally came to understand that the rushing pulse and skipping heartbeat at the sight of you was not entirely out of hatred, but rather something more. Something fragile, delicate, which was easily crushed by your disapproving words.

Yet, you can image the rush through my veins when you confessed your stares were not out of loathing but rather out of longing. A wanting that mirrored my own, though neither of us understood it at the time. And so here we are, two parts of a whole even though now you are far from me. Yet while the winds remain silent and your comforting words do not greet me, I wonder if it was all a lie. A sick joke at my expense.

My heart rate falls as my eyelids flutter closed. I feel moon beams on my face and as my mind drifts to sleep, I finally hear a whisper drifting over me.

I still love you, my dear. Most ardently.

Boudreau Vira inia

## The Woman In My Garden



A woman clings to my garden trellis nurturing brambled scratch and sadness of thorn.

I want to ask her why she stays, obscured by philandering vine.

Rioting honeysuckle runs slipshod through the ditches. Her vibrant fleeting beauty masks struggling

bloom of the Van Fleet rose, whispering fading hue into deaf ear of the lattice.

And off to the other side, Muscari persists in the shadows by the swinging yard gate:

flooding turf, misting crumbled ground a million shades of watered blue.

Observe too, eloquence over by the stone wall: threaded stems dripping wild fuchsia lobes,

fragments of her perennial bleeding heart.





now

riannaduffin1

Brianna R Duffin (she/her) studies English at Rosemont College and hopes to earn an MFA in Creative Writing and an MA in Publishing. She is passionate about mental health and advocating for the LGBTQ+ community. She has been featured in several online literary magazines, most recently Analogies & Allegories. She also publishes her work on Medium @briannarduffin



'THE GIRL FROM FAR AWAY' published by Gnome On Pig Productions, May 2016.

'THE MADDEST KIND OF LOVE' published by Driven Press, August 2016.

'HILLCREST – OAKDEN: THE DIARY OF A PSYCHIATRIC NURSE' published by Vine Leaves Press, June 2018.

Christine has had numerous poems and short stories published in a variety of anthologies and magazines.

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https://www.facebook.com/All-The-Clever-Names-Were-Taken-114783950248991 https://www.amazon.com/Dawn-DeBraal/e/B07STL8DLX

Dawn DeBraal lives in rural Wisconsin with her husband Red, two little rescue dogs, and a stray cat. She has discovered that her love of telling a good story can also be written. Dawn has published over 300 stories in many online magazines and anthologies, including Spillwords, Mercurial Stories, Potato Soup Journal, Zimbell House, Black Hare Press, Clarendon House, Blood Song Books, Fantasia Divinity, Cafelit, Reanimated Writers, The World of Myth, Vamp Cat, Runcible Spoon, Siren's Call, Setu, Kandisha Press, Terror House Magazine, D & T Publishing, Iron Horse Publishing, Impspired Magazine, Falling Star Magazine's 2019 Pushcart nominee.



**desfletcher** 

Elizabeth Fletcher, MFA, RYT-500, still owns her worn, childhood copy of Hansel & Gretel. Her work has appeared in Confrontation, Schuylkill Valley Journal Online, Leaping Clear, Versification and more. She writes and teaches yoga in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

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Ellen Huang (she/her) is the type of person to take "Netflix and Chill" to mean movies and ice cream. She is published in miniskirt magazine, briars lit, From the Farther Trees, Grimoire, Enchanted Conversation, Sword & Kettle Press, Gingerbread House, and more. She reads for Whale Road Review and has seen 3am way too many times. She also thinks dressing up like a princess/royalty at home for no one but yourself is something everyone should try at least once.

Julie lives on the Isle of Wight with her husband and two grown-up children. She works full time as an early years practitioner, and writes at weekends

> Katie Deutsch © @k.w.deutsch

Katie Deutsch is a writer and poet from northern California, though she now lives in southern England. She has written for two poetry competitions before, though this is her first time publishing a short story.

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Virginia Boudreau is a retired teacher living along the southern coast of Nova Scotia, Canada. Her poetry and prose have appeared in a wide variety of international literary publications, both in-print and on-line. Some of these include The New York Times, Grain, Westerly, TNQ, Understorey, and FireWords. She won the 2020 Bacopa Review competition for Flash Creative NonFiction.



We hope you enjoyed our offering.

Our writers and poets deserve all the praise for making our first issue the absolute best it can be. Their words made our little magazine buzz with life. We're honoured to share their art with you.

So to Brianna, Christine, Dawn, Elizabeth, Ellen, Julie, Katie, Mollie and Virginia -

Thank You!

Support our writers by following them, reading their work in other publications and

however else you can.

Lastly, thank you for taking this journey with us.



