

Spring 2017-  
Edited By Tom Smith and Katie Whittle



## Who's There?

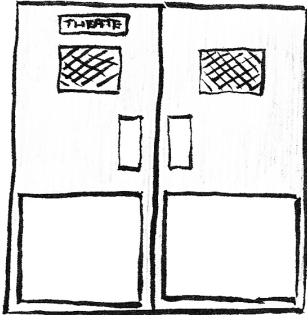
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# SHE AIN'T QUITE RIGHT

by  
CHARLOTTE  
STEAR

"She ain't quite right is she?"

That's what they say about me when they think I can't hear them. I'm the loner in town, the person people cross the street to avoid. But things have changed since the accident.



Kelly-Anne was 11 years old when a drunk driver hit her; she sustained major head injuries and was in hospital for a month.

She's the daughter

of one of the most loved couples in town, so the news shook this quiet community and everyone pulled together to get through it. I'm usually left alone because of the rumours about me, I'm old and I'm used to it, but even I was involved in this. Instead of crossing the road or avoiding my gaze, people would stop me on the streets to exchange sad sentiments.



Things were not looking good for the young girl, so it came as a surprise to most when she turned up at home one day with no explanation. She was physically fine in every way, but the girl we once knew was certainly gone.

Since she's been back, she spends every day standing at the edge of her lawn, staring out at the street. She doesn't move for hours, even that day it rained nonstop. Her once golden hair hanging in front of her face, still blonde but now all murky and dull, like the life's been sucked out of it.

You'd think she was looking at nothing in particular but I've been watching her everyday from my bedroom window and I can see her dark little eyes staring up at me.



Every day her mother takes her back in the house as daylight starts to fade, her face stricken with worry and something else... I'm too busy looking at little Kelly-Anne, her head the last thing to turn back to the house as she's pulled away. She's still looking up at me.

I've heard the neighbours talking in not so whispered voices,

"THAT LITTLE GIRL,  
SHE AIN'T QUITE RIGHT  
IS SHE?"

For once the whispers aren't about me. But they know what's changed, we all know what's changed. Kelly-Anne didn't survive that accident. She wasn't brought back from the hospital, she was brought back from the dead.



I had hoped the communities recent interest in me had been a new start, rumours forgotten about, but no, they wanted me to help them. So I did. What better use of my skills than to bring back to life the heart and soul of this community? How could we have gone on knowing we could have done more, knowing there's a chance we could have brought her back.

What we brought back I'm not sure,  
and now there's a price to pay.

I know I don't have much time left. Every night since Kelly - Anne's return there's been scratching at the front door. I'm too terrified to move because I know it's her, she's been walking around at night and I know she's clawing at the door.

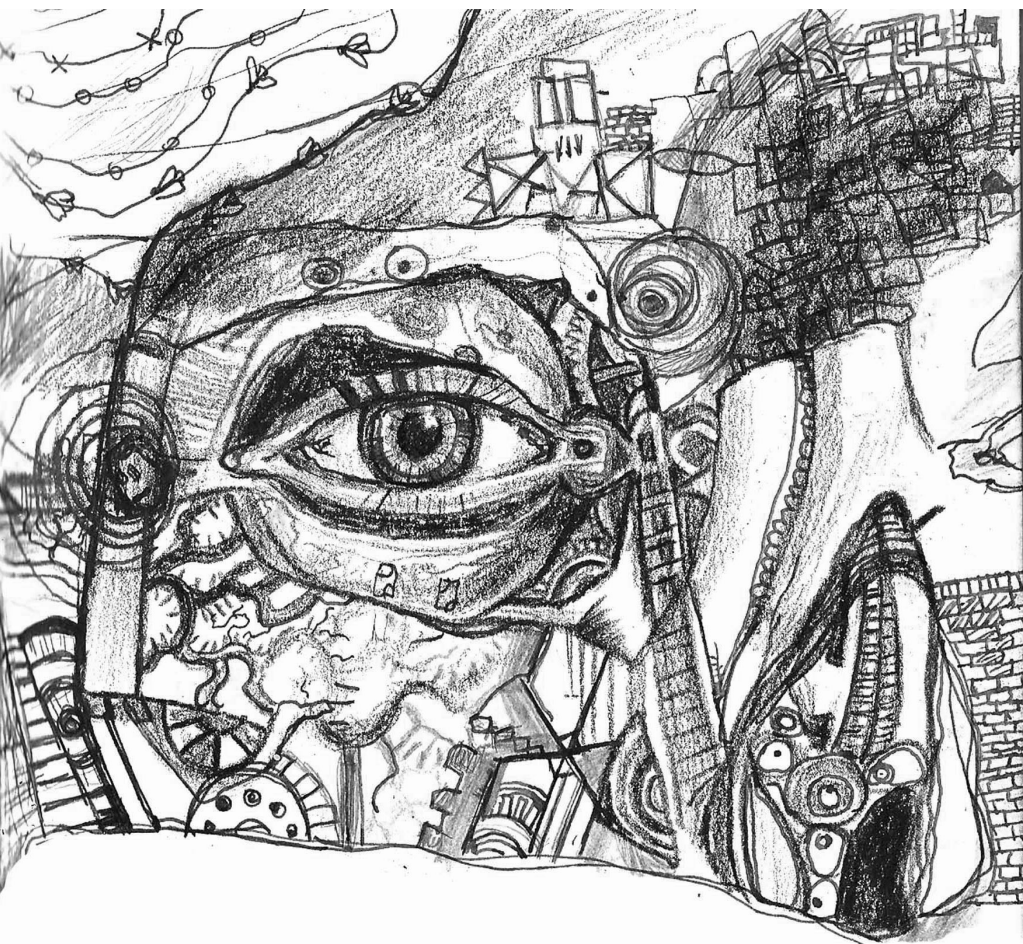
Tonight the scratching is coming further up the stairs, and I can hear the slow footsteps getting closer to my door. I'm the first on her list, the others will be next, but I'm paralysed by fear. All I can do, is watch my bedroom door and wait for her to appear, for those eyes to find me and for the darkness to consume me.



MA '17







## WORSE THINGS HAPPEN AT SEA

Johnnie O'Brien's felonious friends called him 'Lucky' because, of course, he wasn't. A joke, you see - ironic. In fact, he was probably the un-luckiest petty criminal who had ever skulked the streets of Old Southampton. You've heard the expression, 'Found a penny and lost a pound'? Well if Lucky ever chose a pocket to pick, then it probably belonged to the man who'd just lost that pound - and then most likely the penny too. Or - if he opted for a spot of cat-burglary, then whichever drainpipe he shinned, would be the one whose rusted screws would choose this exact moment to come-away from the crumbling brick-work. Anyway - you get my drift - poor old 'Lucky' was anything but.

Which is why, after forty-two or three years of misfortune (he was never quite sure which, because his mother had used his birth-certificate to light a cheroot), he had decided to end it all. And a strange dream had reinforced his resolution and suggested the agency of its execution. He'd dreamt that a turbulent ocean had become depressed and tried to drown itself. Now for me personally, that just sounds like a cry for kelp. But Lucky had seen it as some kind of dark omen, a diabolic confirmation of his unavoidable fate. So he was resolved: He'd sink himself beneath the waves, forcing the air of recurring failure from his lungs, and replacing it with the salt of his nation's maritime heroes. But first he'd have a pint, and think about it.

\*

It was late. The night was dark and the sea was darker but neither could match the blackness of Lucky's intention. He stood at the railings on a deserted part of the Pier Head, peering into the freezing, beckoning waters. He'd been here some time, drunkenly thinking, musing, inwardly arguing. But the conclusion was always the same. His life was just a meaningless catalogue of misfortune. No point delaying. He placed his hands on the top bar, his left foot on the bottom, and readied to make a leap of no faith whatsoever. Until the wind howled and mingled strangely with an urgent voice behind him:

'Don't do it - you fool! It's not worth it!'

Lucky felt a hand on his shoulder, dragging him back. He turned to face a man of about his own age, height and build. But there the similarity ended, for the stranger's attire announced him as a 'gent'. If he hadn't been so drunk himself, Lucky would have noticed that Sir Arthur Pennington-Sykes (for it was he) - also seemed a little squiffy. As indeed, he was - and having celebrated a spectacularly successful evening at his favourite gambling den, had now decided to further his pleasure by indulging his taste for the dockside ladies. Until this unwanted interruption. For despite his personal vices, the intoxicated Knight believed himself a 'good Christian', and so could not stand by whilst another man damned his very soul by an act of self-murder. Even if he were such a worthless good-for-nothing.

'How dare you think of such blasphemy!' Sir Arthur scolded. 'Go home, man - get down on your knees and thank God for the life He's given you!'

Lucky punched him in the face. It was partly the natural reflex of a habitual criminal - partly fury at being rebuked by one whose God-giv-

en life couldn't possibly have been further from his own. Sir Arthur went down like a sack of King Edward's, and there was a sickening thud as his skull cracked on the paving stones. A cloud of blood unfurled from beneath his head.

Lucky grimaced at the sight - the skewed limbs, the marble eyes - the obscene grin of death. And almost vomited - until he saw the money-belt that was now visible beneath the murdered man's crumpled shirt and vest. Which brought the killer quickly to his senses. He rifled the contents - good God! There were thousands here! At last - Lucky's luck had changed! He took the money, dumped the body in the sea - and fled.

\*

Which was how, several months and a false passport later, Lucky found himself in Spring reborn! Sailing in the lap of luxury on a fantastic new ocean liner, on his way to being a new man with a new life in a new country! Only then the iceberg struck. Or the ship struck the iceberg - it was hard to say which, but it didn't really matter. On the 15th April, nineteen-hundred-and-twelve, The Titanic went down. And now Lucky was drifting in an open lifeboat, alone, starving, thirsting . . . one day . . . two . . . three. He considered suicide again, but things had changed since the last time. Now he had all of this money in his very own money-belt - if he could just hold on! Surely they'd still be looking for survivors? Surely.

\*

But the fourth night brought only a freezing fog - oppressive and desolate - like a tangible blanket of hopelessness. Lucky sat huddled in the stern, his stomach aching and his mind blurry for want of food and water. He closed his lids in hope of sleep, but the plummeting temperatures wouldn't allow it. So he opened them again - and wished he hadn't. Because now he could see something appearing over the rim of the bow: A right hand - thin, blue-white with blackened fingernails, trailing seaweed and streaked with slime. And this was followed by a left. And now they gripped the timber and hauled up the head and shoulders of their owner - Sir Arthur Pennington-Sykes! His face was even whiter than his hands, his cheeks and eyes sunken, and his soaking hair dangling in dark, lank strands about this hellish countenance. Then suddenly, what was left of his body shot upwards and landed, standing in the boat. His clothes hung from his skeletal frame.

Lucky was too weak to scream, so tried instead to blink the apparition away. Maybe this was some kind of trick of the mind - he'd heard that starving men could experience such things? But to no avail - Sir Arthur remained there, motionless and threatening. Until finally, the grim spectre rolled its lifeless eyes and fixed Lucky with a horrifying stare. Then it rushed toward him, gliding at impossible speed towards its terrified murderer. And wailed in a way that a banshee is supposed to. Lucky clasped his hands as though in prayer, and tried to implore mercy - but the words came out in a hopeless croak. Sir Arthur glared down, pointed a knotty finger, and spoke in an echoing voice:

'SO! You cower! You attempt to plead for your miserable life! Did I not warn you? Did I not tell you of the risk to your immortal soul? Do

you think that you can escape the consequences of your sins? Of THIS?’

And here the apparition threw out its lean arms and spread its dreadful stick-like fingers to give the trembling killer a better understanding of his heinous crime. Then lowered them and pronounced a terrible decree:

‘NO! God will not let the guilty go unpunished. You must pay the price - in this life or in one to come! Your soul must be

purged and mine have justice!’

Lucky screwed his eyes tight shut, waiting for his terrible fate - and finally - at last - regained his power of speech. ‘No, please,’ he sobbed, ‘I’m sorry for what I’ve done. I never meant to kill you! That wasn’t my fault - you shouldn’t have angered me! It was an accident - please!’

\*

He waited in terror. And waited . . . Then opened a tentative eye. Sir Arthur was gone! Lucky sat almost frozen, peering into the fog, dreading the vengeful ghost’s reappearance. Five minutes, fifteen, thirty - an hour. Lucky finally relaxed - it must have been a nightmare - or some other vision of a befuddled brain. He even began to chuckle at his own terror - until realising that he was still in the same mess he’d been in before the bad dream. Cast adrift and doomed to die of starvation or thirst or the freezing conditions. And now he almost wept - but then . . .

Suddenly - miraculously - something was approaching through the fog. A light? YES! And the silhouette of an old three-master. Salvation! Lucky stood feebly and managed to wave his arms in welcome. The antiquated vessel hove alongside. He looked at the nameplate, and though not a knowledgeable man, was sure he’d heard that title before. But he just couldn’t remember where. Still, it didn’t make any difference - once again, his new life shone before him!

A bony hand threw down a rope. Lucky took it gratefully and was hauled up on to the deck. And as the hapless villain and his rescuers finally came face-to-face, The Flying Dutchman disappeared back into the fog, and the night, and the yellowing pages of nautical myth and fearful legend . . .

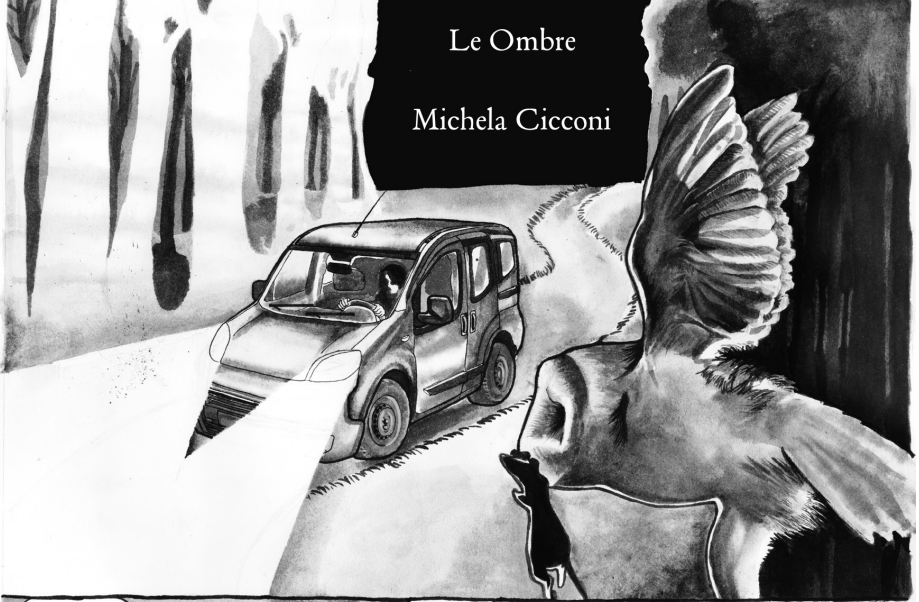




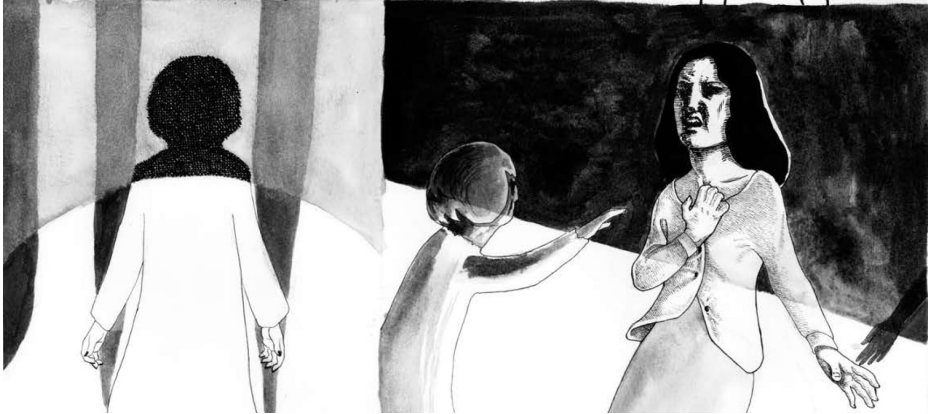


Le Ombre

Michela Cicconi





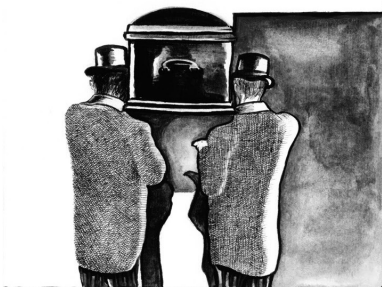




19 YEARS LATER...

THE DAUGHTER FOUND HER

THEY SAY IT WAS SUICIDE



## Moving Forward

Sal lies in bed dozing, in and out of consciousness between asleep and awake. The room was warm as July on Long Island often graced endless days of sunshine. She was in the staff accommodation for the hotel she was housekeeping for, her second summer job of the season. A grand, but secluded in location, sea facing hotel on an Island between the North and South fork of Long Island. Shelter Island had appealed to her when the agency rep had read the list of locations of people needing staff in her monotone voice, it had sounded safe. As with all grandiose hotels, its staff quarters were cramped and squalid. She had finished early for the day, it was Tuesday and the weekend hotel trade had been and gone so they were finished not long after lunch time.

She lies under a cotton sheet brushing against her skin, no duvet as it was far too mild. She had needed to sleep loads since she arrived on the Island, just completing her workload then going to bed to snooze again. She had made attempts to be sociable with the other workers and the girls in her quarters, but she was so exhausted she was not her 'Laughing, joking' self and at that moment in time, she was unsure if she would ever be again.

She drifts again into sleep, falling deeper and deeper into the dream world of the pillow. To the right of her gaze she see's a dagger, she focuses on her imaginary vision. It is, in fact, more of a miniature sword with a blade which curves towards the tip. Almost a female bowie knife, similar in size but more curvaceous, gracious towards the the fine point of the tip finished off with the ergonomic grip of the handle. A magnificent piece made with the latest technologies but finished by hand with the care of a master craftsman.

Sal could see the dreams vision of the weapon as real as could touch the cold stainless steel, feel the weight in her hand and run her finger over the sharp blade. She imagines whipping the knife from the sheath, then bringing the curved point towards her neck. The sharp edge glistens in the daylight, the serrated edge grating against her forefinger. The safety of the sheath has gone, the blade is free to hunt and destroy. Sal watches the vision of her hand grasping the miniature sword as if from a great height looking down on herself from the girders of the room. She imagines the point of the curve moving towards her throat, she thinks this would be easy, it would all be over instantly. She has a vision of herself slashing into the jugular, blood spurting out from her human form, she would be dead instantaneously. Her demons, her pain and her existence would be no more, she had put an end to things.

At that instant the sun moved another degree around the building, sunlight pouring into the room full beam to remind Sal it was still there like the fully functional World. She flipped over onto her back, directly joining the waking world. Her breath was deep and her heart raped at full throttle. In coming back down from the adrenaline of the dream she began to think softly to herself 'No I don't want that'.

She realised she had been spending too much time in bed, dwelling over what had happened, she needed to get out and about, explore and take in what this secluded island had to offer. She dressed, her clothes feeling loose as she had not eaten properly since she had been in Maine. A slice of pizza here and there combined with a few mouthfuls of the staff meals dished out routinely as part of the job. She didn't bother to fix her hair and makeup, trying to look nice had seemed alien to her since her escape route across New England. She felt like hiding under a massive trench coat, but it was too warm to be feasible.

On her wanders, Sal walks away from the hotel towards the remoteness of a secluded beach area, she veers toward a pebbled shore and a small boat yard. Then after passing a few nets she came across what seemed to be her destiny to find: a small vessel full of water. The small dingy like fibreglass body was filled to the brim with the liquid of the sea environment. A mix-up, a contradiction, outside in. The boat, which was supposed to float on and protect from water has filled the fluid and the surrounded area was dry as a bone. Sal paused as she pondered over the topsy-turvy existence which had presented itself in her vision. Then she realises what had happened, this was not a supernatural experience, the vessel had simply collected rain water, the algae and sea plants had simply spread onto the marine vehicle.

Sal walked on from the boat yard, further away from the tourist bustle and towards the most rural aspects of the shoreline. In this, she met a long term resident of Long Island, a pleasant lady with a dog on a leash. She said hello to the lady as she seemed friendly, then in missed being near her family pet dog for several months she was delighted to see the canine. She bends down to stroke his shaggy fur, looking to run her hand around his chin. At the point, her hand pats her head the dog looks her straight in the face. His eyes protruding from the mountains of wiry hair. The expression on his face reads:

'You don't need to pet me, I'm not a silly dog.'

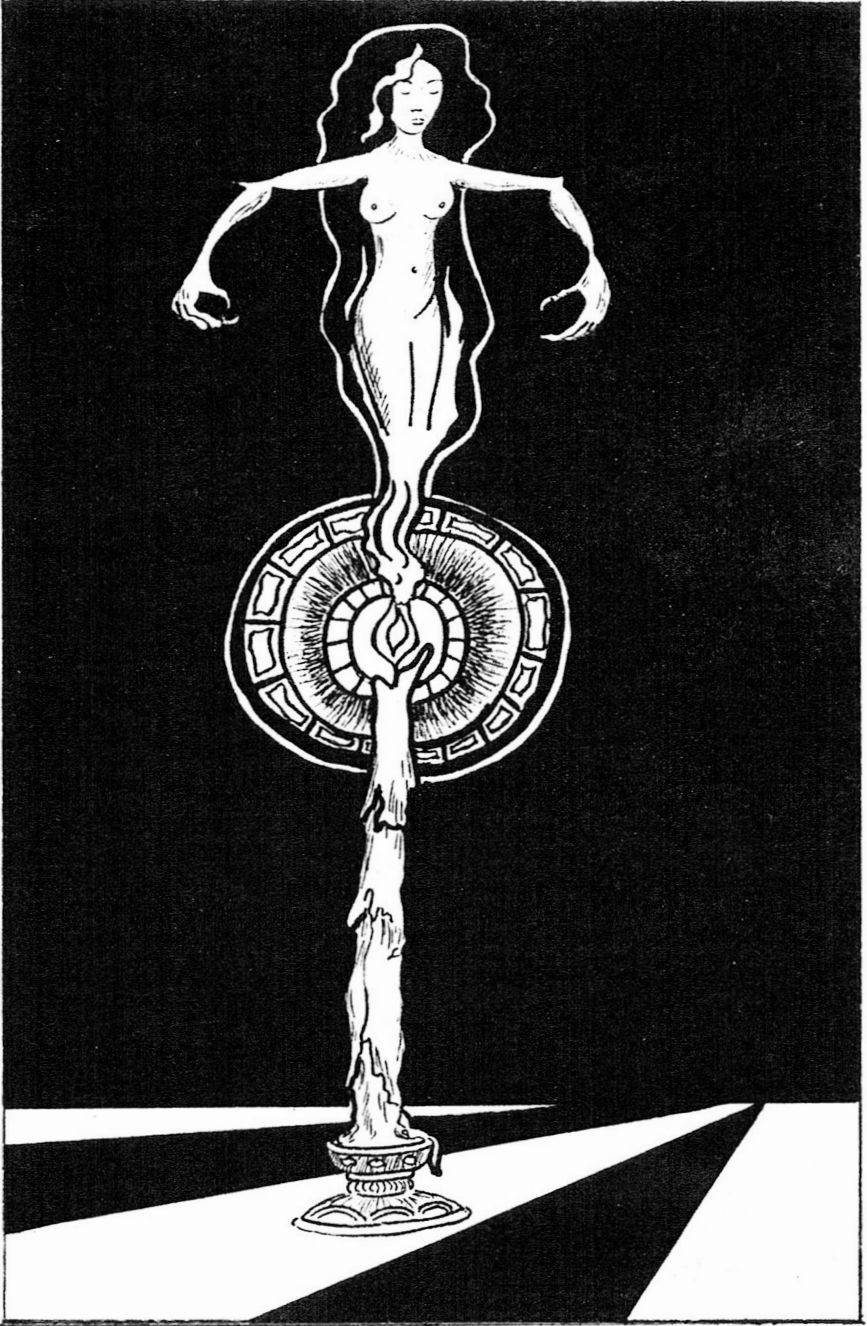
Sal was somewhat shocked by this unusual reaction from one of mans best friends. Then she realises he must be some kind of working dog, he had reacted like a border collie or something similar. Sal looked at the animal fawn and shaggy, eyes were hidden by masses

fur, looking dusty by character not but the day's activities, what a magnificent beast.

As it was beginning to turn dark she decides to head back to the hotel. In retracing her she began to comprehend what had really happened to her, why she had fled across New England, she had been Raped.











Jason waited to cross the street, drinking his veggie smoothie. He only had ten minutes to get back to the office. I can't be late, deadlines deadline dead..

The flashing amber traffic lights turned to red. He thought of spreadsheets. He thought of management reports and key target areas. He thought is something looking at me? He swivelled his head from side to side like a CCTV camera. I'm the business strategy Terminator he thought, just before he looked down and locked eyes with a seagull.

Their gaze remained unbroken as the staccato beeps alerted him to proceed over the pedestrian crossing. He detached himself from the bird's stare, distracted by the scrum of office workers surging towards him from the other side of the street. He looked down and the bird's eyes were still fixed on his. He couldn't look away but needed to cross - a data chaos needed him! He stepped off the kerb and as the sole of his beautiful shoe hit the tarmac, so did the bird's webbed feet. Ignore it he thought, as the bird kept up with each stride of his exceptionally tailored legs.

They got to the other side of the street. Jason lit a cigarette and stared down at the bird. He became incredibly self-conscious, looking around to see if anyone was looking at them.

"No one is watching us Jason".

Did that bird just talk to me? thought Jason as his fag fell out of his wing.

"Wing? What happened to my arm?" said Jason.

"You don't need arms anymore. Follow me down this alleyway," said the bird.

Jason felt a powerful wave of nausea and by the time they were standing by the large wheelie bins in the alley, he was ready to pop.

POP! He rained vomit down towards the bird.

"Thanks Jason, but I've eaten today. Haha, some bird humour there."

"Wha...what are you...wh, why am I talking to a bird?" said Jason as he wiped his beak. "Beak! Holy fuck, where's my mouth?"

"No time for this, Jason. I'll need your trousers please."

Jason looked down to see that his muscular legs were now thin twigs with webbed feet. He looked up to see an exceptionally tailored man with a tiny seagull head and a man's nose in place of a beak. He instinctively flapped his wings, rising up to the man's face.

"What happens next?" squawked Jason.

The man reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a packet of cigarettes. He put a cigarette into his mouth then struck a match, the flash of flame startling Jason. He flapped backwards and landed on top of a wheelie bin. The bin lid was dented and filled with

rain water. He looked down into the gently rippling puddle to see his tiny yellow eyes.

"I'm going to the office and you're going out to sea," said the man, his words travelling through the smoke. "Nice to have met you, Jason." The man turned, flicked the cigarette down the alley and walked away.

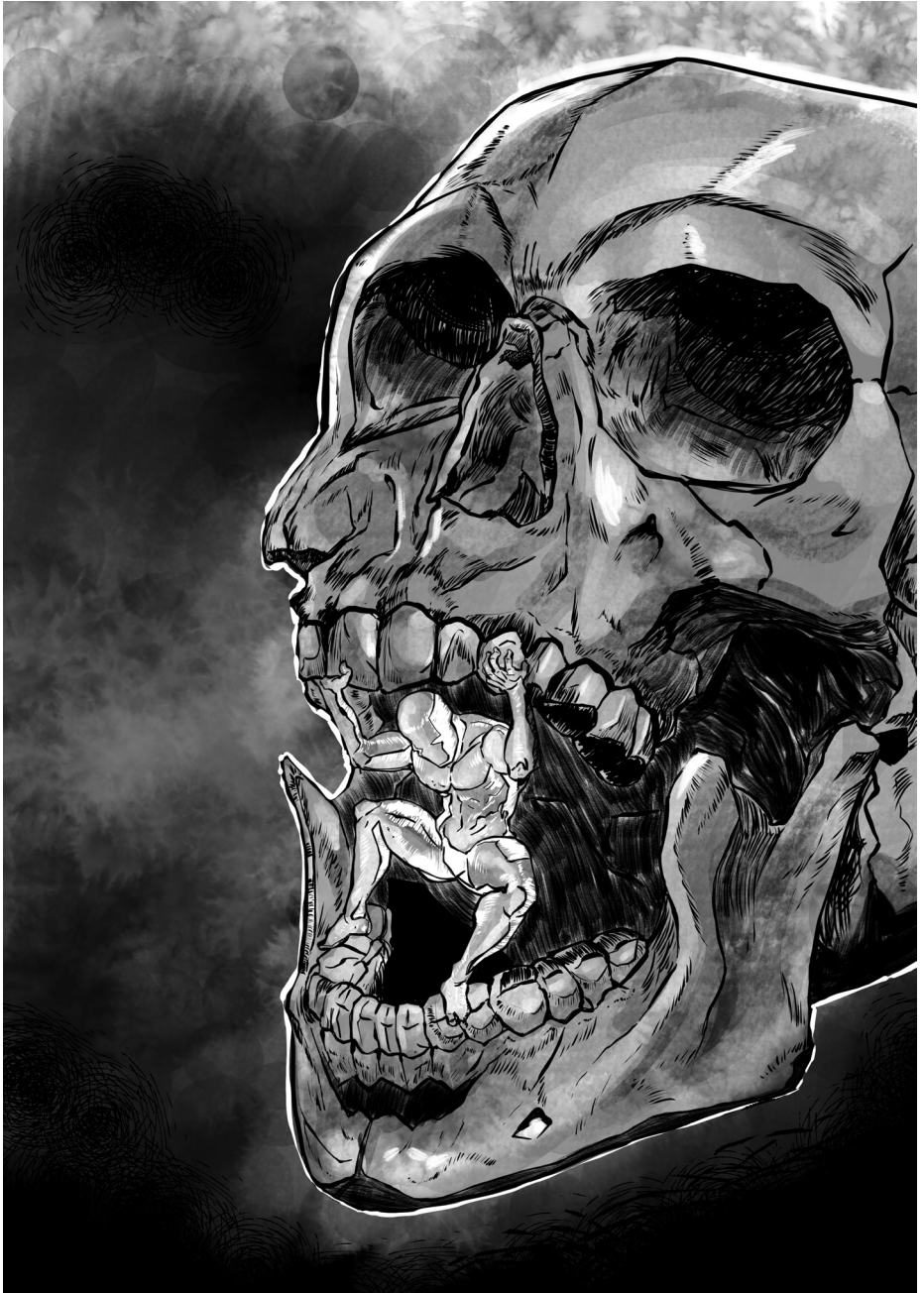
Jason looked up and saw the sky framed by parallel buildings. He flew up onto an air conditioner unit where another seagull chased him away. He then headed up onto the roof and surveyed the city skyline. He launched himself into the air.

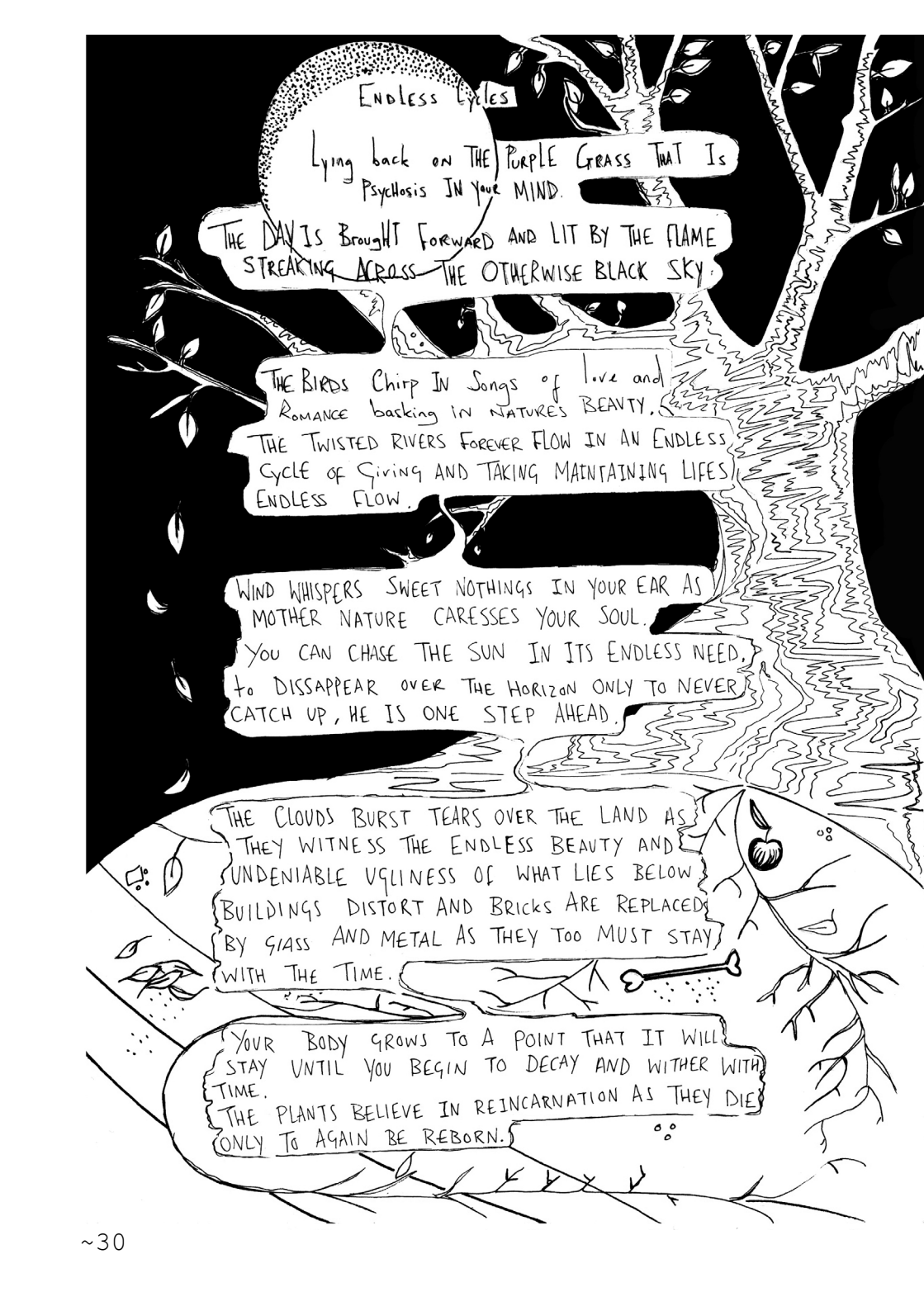
After about ten minutes, he forgot what minutes were. He felt hungry. Have I eaten today? He spotted a woman leave a bag of chips on a wall and swooped down to tuck in. He fought with pigeons, snatched a chip and flapped across the street. A pigeon followed, so he flew up onto a nearby window ledge.

The view looked familiar. He swallowed the delicious chip and turned to look inside the window. He recognised the exceptionally tailored man, who sat at a desk staring blankly at a computer screen with another man leaning over him. He watched the exceptionally tailored man pick up a pen and jab it repeatedly into the neck of the other man.

The now exceptionally blood covered man noticed a seagull staring at him through the window. He stepped over his dying colleague, walked closer to the bird and smiled. The seagull squawked loudly, which could almost have been mistaken for laughter, then flew off over the buildings out towards the docks.







Endless Cycles

Lying back on THE PURPLE GRASS THAT IS  
Psychosis IN your MIND.

THE DAY IS BROUGHT FORWARD AND LIT BY THE FLAME  
STREAKING ACROSS THE OTHERWISE BLACK SKY.

THE BIRDS CHIRP IN SONGS OF LOVE AND  
ROMANCE BASKING IN NATURE'S BEAUTY.


THE TWISTED RIVERS FOREVER FLOW IN AN ENDLESS  
CYCLE OF GIVING AND TAKING MAINTAINING LIVES  
ENDLESS FLOW.

WIND WHISPERS SWEET NOTHINGS IN YOUR EAR AS  
MOTHER NATURE CARESSES YOUR SOUL.

YOU CAN CHASE THE SUN IN ITS ENDLESS NEED,  
TO DISSAPPEAR OVER THE HORIZON ONLY TO NEVER  
CATCH UP, HE IS ONE STEP AHEAD.

THE CLOUDS BURST TEARS OVER THE LAND AS  
THEY WITNESS THE ENDLESS BEAUTY AND  
UNDENIABLE UGLINESS OF WHAT LIES BELOW  
BUILDINGS DISTORT AND BRICKS ARE REPLACED  
BY GLASS AND METAL AS THEY TOO MUST STAY  
WITH THE TIME.

YOUR BODY GROWS TO A POINT THAT IT WILL  
STAY UNTIL YOU BEGIN TO DECAY AND WITHER WITH  
TIME.  
THE PLANTS BELIEVE IN REINCARNATION AS THEY DIE  
ONLY TO AGAIN BE REBORN.



THE CHILD CRIES AS THE MOTHER SIGHS ONLY  
FOR THE CHILD TO BE THE MOTHER AND HER  
EARS RING WITH CRIES OF HER BORN.

WE BREATHE, WE AGE. WE THINK WE AGE  
WE MOVE WE AGE. THE ONLY THING CERTAIN  
IS THE COUNTDOWN HAS LONG BEGUN.

THE FOOD GIVES LIFE TO THE ANIMALS ONLY  
FOR THE ANIMALS TO FERTILISE THE FOOD.  
THE WORLD TURNS OUR EYES CLOSE IN THE DARK,  
THEY OPEN IN THE LIGHT AS THE DARK WAITS  
FOR YOUR DAY TO BE DONE.

THE ENDLESS CYCLE LIKE A WHEEL THAT FOREVER  
TURNS FOREVER SPINNING MOMENTUM HAS  
GATHERED AND NOW IT SHALL NEVER BE STOPPED.

IT'S MARCH 20TH IN THE VILLAGE OF MOOREND.  
THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING.



BUT, FOR VIC, NICK AND LIZ, THE SEASON  
OF SAMHAIN IS NOT OVER.





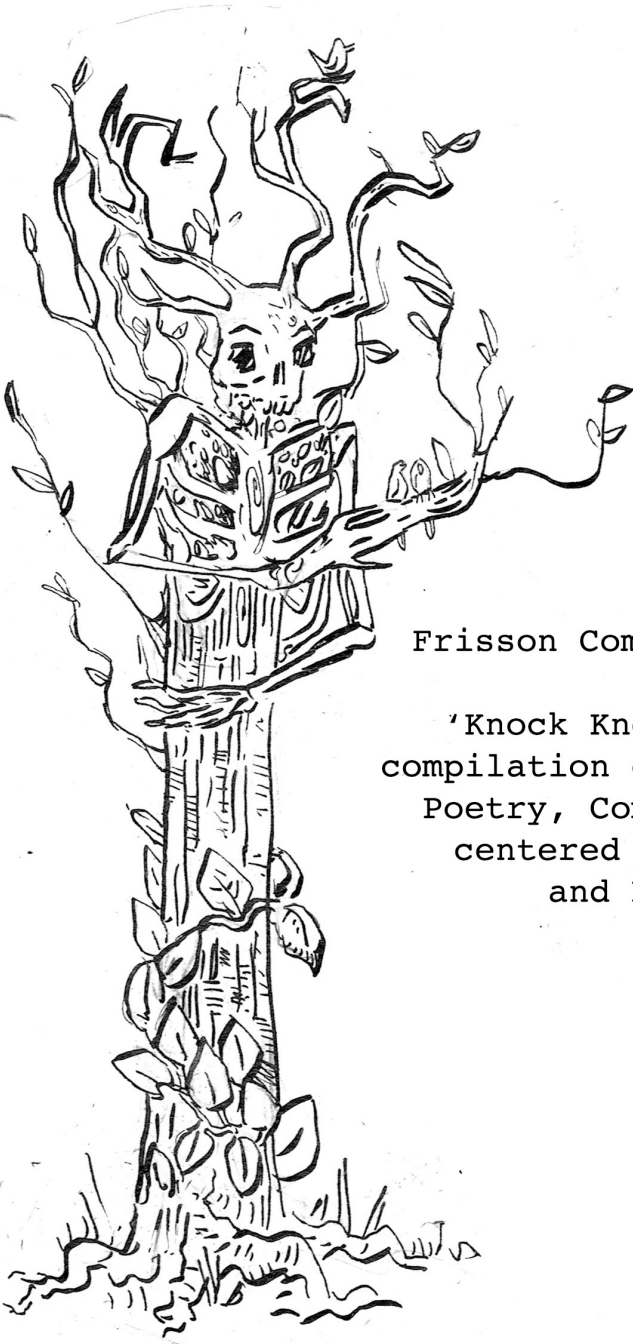




TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY FIVE DAYS TILL NEXT HALLOWEEN.







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