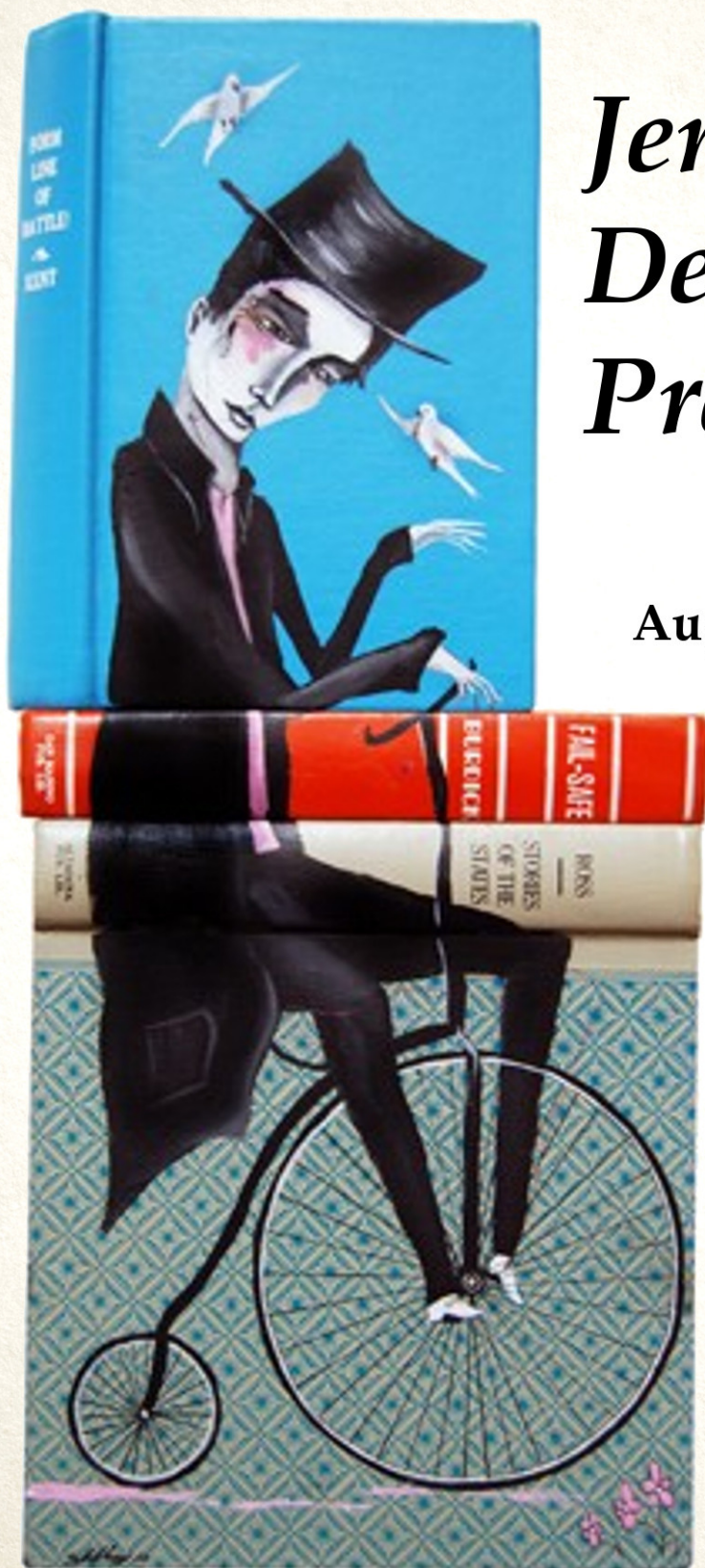


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Online Editor: Laura Garrison

Production Editor: Samuel Snoek-Brown

Associate Editor: Monica Rodriguez

Readers: Rebecca Vaccaro, Amanda Chiado

Founding Editor/Publisher: Eirik Gumeny

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Editor's Note

Our Legendary Creatures issue has it all: a monster named Tamara, a feathered octopus, the Tricks Man, a mermaid, a dragon, a pterodactyl, gargoyles, a Myakka skunk ape, a knight, a gorgon, a modern Green Man, Greek mythology, an Alien, a sasquatch, and more.

In other words, it's basically a family reunion.

— Laura Garrison

Behold the Monster in Repose

Jarod K. Anderson

The monster's knees hurt when the cold fronts rolled in and when they rolled out again. She was used to it, but that's not the same as not noticing. She noticed. The ache reminded her of younger days when enemies with their own faces and fingers and plans had to break their backs for a shadow of a chance to inflict an ache like that on her. Now, it was the cold. A change in the weather. A faceless, fingerless, planless shifting of air masses. Undignified.

Not long ago, as a sort of retirement gift, she took to calling herself Tamara, but the name had trouble sticking. All real monsters are Marxist about names. They share with the other tragedies of the world, only borrowing a name while they need it: The accident, The missing person, The attack. Nothing is strong enough to shoulder those sorts of names alone. From each according to ability, to each according to need.

Her stone house had enough turns and corners to keep out the sun. She'd earned that. Long years had made her rich with the things that seemed like riches to a monster. Most of her time now was spent reclining on a deep couch of hemlock boughs, staring blankly up at the insect-warfare that forever raged in nameless battles on the stone walls and jagged ceiling. She wondered if they had secret names or banners or insect historians and poets to keep score. She wondered, but never found out.

She had grown too fat for battles. Her sprawling asymmetry was wound round with the yellowy bulk she'd built from the bodies of countless lonely rail yard workers and the other sorts who had found themselves getting comfortable in the dark, empty spaces. Those spaces had always been set aside for monsters. The looks on their faces when she came, like they'd been betrayed by

modernity, by their own senses of the world, those looks and last moments built for her a comfortable endowment of flesh and terror. She was well invested. Back when she got out more and worried aloud about the boredom of retirement, other monsters had suggested that she build a library, so she did. She'd stolen away five big old shelves full of leathery books; they made the place stink of mildew and furniture polish. The insects treated the shelves like great fortress cities, and they were ruthless in their constant conquering and defending of them.

A thing that seemed to have a presence in every sand dune gave her a sort of required reading list. The thing thought she should think on Shelley and Milton and on things that had never asked to be born, but were born anyway. That's what the old sand-thing loved and it had sounded like a good idea at the time. But she could never put it into practice. Books seemed like obscene little things in her great hatchet-fingered hands. The books weren't made for her and she felt it in their touch. But she kept them for the insects' sake.

I don't know how many decades she spent like that. Trying and failing to enjoy the rest she'd earned. Half-hoping for some great sign of a new beginning or a final end, anything to punctuate her nearly comfortable inactivity.

When something finally did happen, it began as a small, fragile thing—a fleck of color in the vast monochromatic landscape of her golden years. Four hikers, barely more than children, found her door in the mountainside. Long ago, she knew, the door had been hidden under a tumble of rotting logs, but she hadn't bothered to look at the entrance for years and years.

The monster went stiff when she heard their laughter and smelled the salty savor of their blood. She didn't dare to breathe. *This is it*, she thought. *Something new! Something is happening!* But her sudden excitement was mingled with doubt. She felt a new feeling. It was like the weather-ache in her joints, but it was a thing

of mind and spirit. She was uncertain, and that uncertainty crept toward desperation.

Before she had retired, she would have known just what to do. She'd pick the lucky one who would die fast and spectacularly. The others would see and they'd fight with themselves, fight to not understand what they were witnessing and feeling. Then she'd feed on the blood and the horror far from help and hope and it would last and last. No other monster could ever make it last like she could. But she was retired. All her hungers had been sated, all her thirsts quenched. She had made a squirming victim of her own desires.

When the first flashlight beam turned the corner and entered her main chamber, the insects all struck a hasty truce—light and movement were the common enemies of them all, and that shared hate brought sudden unity. They fled. The light fell on the bookshelves.

"Holy shit, get in here!" said a young woman with dark hair.

She raced to touch the shelves and paw at the moldy old books. The other three fell over each other to rush in after her. They saw the books. They made excited noises and speculated about origin and value and none of them saw the milky bulk of the monster watching them with wet, eager eyes.

She hung over them like a pale-bellied question mark, like a curling grub that had sprouted jointed limbs and mouth meant for its larger, future body. Her eyes, stung by the lights, strained to follow the movement of their hands. She tried to grasp the thread of their conversation and maybe learn some kernel of information that could germinate into a plan, a hope, an idea of what to do with these shrill little children who had beaten back the terrible sameness in the monster's life.

"I'm Tamara," said the monster to the hikers' backs. She meant for her voice to be calm and quiet, but all four of the people lurched forward against the shelves as if they'd been pushed. The monster cringed. Another first.

The wave of thick, nourishing fear hit her even before the hikers had turned around. The cloying intensity of it made her gag, but she was determined to remain polite. She'd try again.

"Hello," said the monster as the hikers turned their flashlights on her.

They all screamed with one voice. It was too much. The hikers ran for their lives, but their fear filled the cavern like a sticky-sweet flood. Her stomach seized and she vomited.

Out came the black, ancient contents of the monster's gut, more and more, until the entirety of the cavern was wet with it. When she finally finished, her whole body was trembling. She lifted herself up off the befouled floor and felt a strange electricity in her limbs. She felt lighter. Newer.

For the first time in long years she felt it again. Hunger. Beautiful, purposeful, hunger like the voice of a trusted friend and teacher. Mother and father.

When she looked around, the colors of the cave seemed brighter. The tingle of new strength was vibrating in her sinews and it compelled her clench and unclench her long, willowy fingers. All her senses were awake.

A hundred feet down the mountain, she heard a noise that tugged the corners of her mouth into a slow smile. She could hear panting breaths and frantic footfalls in the leaf litter. She moved without thought, heading toward the sound with cheerful certainty. She still thought of manners. What could be more polite than sharing the best of your art with new friends, freely and without pretense or hesitation?

West of the mountain, a thunderhead was building on the lip of a cold front. The leaves in the valley all drooped before the coming rain. The monster didn't notice.

Formerly, **JAROD ANDERSON** taught English at Ohio University. Currently, he works at a foundation that raises money for a wide range of college scholarships. He writes about education by day and ghosts, monsters, and madmen by night. It's a good arrangement. Jarod is a fan of comic books, John Milton, tattoos, pulp detective novels, herpetology, folklore, video games, and all things sci-fi, fantasy, and horror. Growing up, he wanted to be either a ninja or a maple tree. These aspirations led him to teach college English. Teaching college English led him to change careers. Find him online at jarodkanderson.com.

Return of the Feathered Octopus

Glen Armstrong

She'll be coming around more often.
She will blast through
the mountain.

She was away learning that night's
ever-pending arrival
was at once a perpetually

receding destination.
(It was all very Zen.)

She'll be catching us in our underwear.

Her six white horses will take turns
gesturing with their skulls,
their majestic jaws like
the bows of ships.

That young couple with the dreads
and foul-mouthed toddler

will spread the word
and organize a potluck.

Once, the forged iron ring framed
an absence over which
we'd never quite recover,

and the worn patch on the lawn
led to another worn patch
of lawn and so on.

There will still be temptations
and paths leading
into the woods,

but for a little while
we will listen
to her crimson songs
and feel blessed,

to be part of something
bigger than ourselves.

We will forgive the blacksmith's daughter
for showing up
in a miniskirt,

homemade tentacles
sewn to her tight sweater,
feathers woven
into her long dark hair,

for drinking too many
wine coolers

and calling her boyfriend
on her cellphone
in the middle of the event

to complain that,
this feathered octopus person

*is not as I expected
her to be.*

GLEN ARMSTRONG holds an MFA in English from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and teaches writing at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He also edits a poetry journal called *Cruel Garters*.

Tricks Man

Janet Barry

Tricks Man comes
with lies on his feet,
he is naming all the babies,
telling all the stories,

word play stories,
word play tricks

in Tricks Man's mouth —

Mother Coyote, feed your babies
from the rubbish bin —

Father Fox,
lie down hungry —

the chickens all live
in Lie Down House,
Assembly Line House,

the eggs all tumble
to Tricks Man's mouth,

for he is eating all the babies, swallowing
all the green-grass tell-tale stories,

and Caw, Caw, Caw,

no-one left but Old Man Crow,
Caw, Caw laughing,
 laughing.

JANET BARRY is a musician and poet with works in numerous journals and anthologies, most recently *Looseleaf Tea*, *Two Hawks Quarterly*, *Edge* and *The Fourth River*. She serves yearly as a judge for Poetry Out Loud, and has received several Pushcart and a Best of the Net nomination. Janet holds degrees in organ performance and poetry. To see more of her work, please visit jbarrypoetry.com.

Once They Sainted a Mermaid

Chloe N. Clark

It is always the same stories that we tell
of women with fish tails and hair
caught full of seaweed and we
never remember how the feel
of water constant and pressing
must have been. She saw
villages overtaken by waves,
she imagined constellations of star
fish, and when she wept it tasted
the same as the sea and so she never
knew when she was actually sad.
Her fingers caressed the bones of sailors,
drowned in storm or mutiny, and she
thought that men were only skeletons, and she
wondered how they danced, if they clicked
and clattered as they did. She fell in love
with a shark once, but the shark left her
behind, movement was life, forward was
breath. She spent one morning watching
the sky filter down to her and then she
was given the choice between eternity under
and a moment with the sun. And in the
flash of dissolving, of filled with stars, of glow,
she thought she remembered land, how it
was to feel the earth turning beneath her
feet, like dancing.

CHLOE N. CLARK is a MFA candidate in Creative Writing & Environment. Her work has appeared such places as *Rosebud*, *Abyss & Apex*, *Menacing Hedge*, and more. She loves all chupacabras, bakes cupcakes, and likes learning odd facts about magicians. Follow her @PintsNCupcakes

The Dragon

August Donovan

I was a bloated, bored carp.
Then I thrashed up the waterfall—
and became a legend.

*

My face like a fierce sheep,
my ping pong ball eyes . . .
you embroider me on silk.

*

I soared over your battle.
You all dropped your guns to gape.
You're welcome.

*

My scales glitter.
I fell in love only once,
with a bracelet.

*

In my cave, silence—
like sinking onto a pile
of closed books in the dark.

*

Spread your shoulder blades
further apart, until it hurts—
look, now you've got wings!

AUGUST DONOVAN grew up in downstate Illinois and earned an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Arizona. He publishes genre fiction novels under a pseudonym, and he lives and works in Kansas City.

Pterodactyl

Joseph Dorazio

One needn't have feathers to fly;
one needn't be a bird —
squirrels and snakes do glide.
And long before the human herd,
in the shadow of volcanoes,
flapped ample wings of hide.

JOSEPH DORAZIO's poems have been published widely. His latest collection, *AS IS*, won an editor's choice award and was recognized by *Shelf Unbound* book review magazine as a notable volume of verse.

Gargoyles

Christina Frei

Their twisted forms
jump from the walls of
Notre-Dame cathedral
as if on springs,

jack-in-the box
monsters, the stuff of
nightmares. They thrive
on fear, eat their young

and defecate limestone.
They screech and howl
as if in pain,
and when it rains

they vomit water,
letting it stream
onto passersby,
a joke by their creator.

Dragons, boars,
evil dwarves, demons,
all beaks and horns,
like the illustrations

from the gothic volumes
in my grandfather's
cigar-fogged study
where he composed

his Sunday sermons
and kept dead flies
in a blue vase on his desk.
He had a bad temper

which taught me
how horrifying
human faces can appear
when angered.

On a trip to Paris in the 80s
my boyfriend and I
stayed in a dingy
back-alley hostel

with blood-stained sheets,
near the Gare du Nord.
We followed the Seine
to Notre-Dame cathedral,

reveled in the candle-lit
atmosphere of decay,
took polaroids
of the chimera Victor Pyanet

conceived in 1864,
like a mad scientist,
from blocks of granite.
Like evil workmen

perched on scaffolding,
they are all silent hoots
and cat-calls.
Women shouldn't

pay attention to this
kind of flattery; it
could get them into trouble.
One, it seemed,

was devouring its young:
a *grotesque*, I was told,
which unlike
gargoyles, were not

used to shunt water,
but existed solely
to induce terror,
to bode ill; guilt purged

from the inner
sanctum, ridding itself
of something unnamable,
unwanted, unloved.

Gargoyle: from the French
Gargouille = throat.
Grotesque = ghastly,
not quite human.

CHRISTINA FREI grew up in Nova Scotia, Canada, and has been living as an ex-pat with her family since 2001, both in Senegal and the Netherlands. Her poetry has been published in *Red River Review*, *Turbulence Magazine*, *Bareback*, *Apple Valley Review*, the *Inflectionist Review*, *Kansas City Voices* and *Sterling Magazine*. She is currently nominated for a 2015 Pushcart prize, Best of the Net 2013, and a Best New Poets award.

Dinosaur World

Andrew Hemmert

"In that day, the Lord will punish with his sword, his fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea." (Isaiah 27:1)

Ignore the koi
pond empty of koi.
Ignore the rain

tree marked
for eviction
with yellow

spray paint. Ignore
the rum-laughing
college girls

straddling
a plaster mammoth
for a photograph.

What's left? A dragon-
fly balances
on a century
plant's prongs. A

rabbit grazes untamed
grass under
a cracked raptor. Look
here, in this

raptor's toothless mouth.
Every night, the orb
weaver eats its own
web and rebuilds.

Myakka Skunk Ape

Andrew Hemmert

Stippled with ghost-white
water roses, the river slips through

cypress. Lightning drips from
clouds, bright veins in

grey flesh. By April
rain my tracks' message is

damned to erasure, but I am
in good company—here,

fox prints follow a heron's
path, and winding lines show a snake's

escape. I too
offer my signs

to soft earth, my foot
a stamp

in shore mud
sealing wax.

ANDREW HEMMERT recently graduated from the University of South Florida. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Creative Writing and a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology. He will begin a Creative Writing MFA at Southern Illinois University in the fall. His poems have appeared in *Driftwood Press*, *Symmetry Pebbles*, and *thread*.

The Dragon Slayer

Madeline Maske

The monster took a step towards the knight, baring its teeth and fluffing its crest. She'd seen many dragons before, but never one this large or this magnificent.

It had metallic traces spider-webbing across its wings and winding through its large, perfect scales. The knight found herself wondering if the very gold it hoarded and coveted ran through its mighty veins. It hissed and great plummets of steam—or was that smoke?—poured out of its nostrils, and the tongue, easily as long as she was tall, darted out of and over the beast's many fangs.

It didn't have the scars that most dragons were adorned with.

The thought sent a jolt of fear down her spine. More than its size, more than its fire, that was what frightened her the most. She had heard stories about this creature, tales saying that no one had ever lived long enough to wound it, though many accomplished knights had tried. She had brushed them off, dismissing them as old tales told from one generation of terrified farmers to the next, but here she was, face to face with the creature, and it had no marks.

The dragon slinked forward again and this time the knight gave ground, clanking in her mail as she did so.

Its reptilian eyes, cold and intelligent, sized up its prey as it began to circle her. No doubt it was calculating the fastest way to get the knight from her standpoint beside the rock in the middle of the chosen arena and into its razor-sharp mouth. She could tell from the bits of armor and bone strewn around the clearing at the entrance of the cave that eating prospective dragon slayers was an art in which the beast was well practiced.

It looked at her then, straight in the eyes, with a haughty triumph. The knight realized that she was out in the open. The beast had maneuvered her to right where it wanted and she had been completely unaware.

She cursed herself for her stupidity. The knight wasn't inexperienced in this field. She knew better. She knew she should have assembled a hunting party or at least come up with a plan, but emotion had blinded her, a mistake for which she had seen many good knights fall. Even though she had not known the girl this dragon had taken for very long, she had shown the knight much kindness. The girl had sat and talked with her, a lonely stranger, one night, and it had seemed that she treated everyone she encountered with that same compassion. This kind girl did not deserve this fate that had befallen her, and the knight knew that the people of her village would have left her to it.

The villagers had lived in the shadow of this creature for too many years, and they had accepted it as immortal. Their parents had told them stories of it to keep them in bed at night, and that image of the invincible monster from their childhood had lived on in the people of the village. They would not have gone after the knight's friend, as they did not go after any of the women before her.

It was in that thought that she found her strength and shook off her fear. She had fought dragons before and she had always won. Would this time really be different because of stories from cowards or unmarked scales?

She gave her shoulders a shrug to loosen them and to move her short cape so that it gave her arms free movement. She checked the buckles fastening the shield to her arm, held her sword level, and took a deep breath.

"This is for my friend," the dragon slayer said under her breath, before lifting her sword and —

"Amelia! Time for dinner!" her mother called from the kitchen downstairs.

She lowered the yardstick with a heavy sigh and plodded over to the door, being careful to not step on the blanket tied around her neck as she went. She gave one last, longing look at the dragon still coiled and ready to pounce, took off her armor, and headed down the stairs.

MADELINE MASKE is a high school senior from The Middle of Nowhere, Texas. She has been writing on and off since she was six years old, but this is her first published piece. She is also highly involved in community theater with twenty-seven plays and counting under her belt.

Gorgon

Roselyn Perez

You have turned me to stone.
Mistaken me for an enemy
My throat is full
lips weighed down with the things I need to say
I stand in your garden and watch

A hero,
a coward, come on flying feet
cloaked in Death's shadow.
He cannot see you,
only your reflection
I watch, wishing my voice could wake you,
my scream slams uselessly against my stone skull,
and, so he takes your head,

But your blood creates the red sea
You birth a slithering multitude
that spans across continents
Death has not rendered you powerless,
But a weapon of the gods.
I watch, remember, and stand as a monument to you.

ROSELYN PEREZ is the fifth of six children, all girls. She is 26 years old, resides in Southern California, and is studying creative writing and psychology at California State University Northridge. Her poems and short stories have been featured in *Eclipse Literary Journal*, *Think Journal*, *writer's type.com*, and *Magnets and ladders*.

Green Man

Ben Pullar

My neighbor David Geraldson is a Green Man. I found out one night while I was putting the bins out. I wheeled out the main bin, then the recycling bin, then stopped to admire the green stars, the eggnog moon, various constellations. Then I saw a man over the road in a green robe, yellow sandals, carrying a lantern of fire.

‘Hey, Tom!’ he yelled, waving at me. It was David.

‘Oh, hi, Dave, what are you up to?’

‘Oh, nothing,’ he said, walking off down the hill. ‘Take care, mate!’

Well, I didn’t take his word for it of course. David and his wife Edna had been in the street for eighteen months and we hadn’t really got to know them very well. Partly because my wife Jill and I had just had a baby, little Jerry Allen, so we were busy with him. But it had never occurred to me that David was the sort of fellow who would dress in a robe and wander around in thongs.

I made sure the house was locked up. Then I followed him at a distance down the hill, careful not to make myself seen. I have always been good at making myself invisible. Something to do with growing up on a mountain, you understand foliage at night.

After walking three blocks David finally came out onto the main road. I saw him stop at the traffic lights. He got out a brass key from a pocket in his robe. I watched him climb up the pole, unlock the pedestrian light box, crawl inside and shut the door. And then I saw a Green Man flash on.

A few people crossed the road and they had no idea what had just happened. They didn't notice the vivid bright green light draping the road and the trees and their shoes.

But that was it for me. That was the moment I first realized David was a Green Man.

I went home and told Jill.

'David from next door is a Green Man,' I said.

'What, an environmentalist?'

'No, a Green Man. Like a walk signal at a traffic light.'

'David? How does he fit?'

'I don't know, with great difficulty I suppose,' I said. 'Anyway, that's him. I saw him. He's a Green Man.'

'How weird,' said Jill.

I thought that too. How weird.

After that I became very interested in talking to David. It was tricky, though, because he mostly kept to himself. My best opportunities were bin nights or in the back garden when he was mowing the lawn or pruning or something.

Of course I could follow him to his traffic light pole any night I wanted, and I did a few times. It started to feel a bit creepy after a bit. Also it was winter, and I didn't want to get a cold and pass it on to little Jerry Allen or anything.

Two nights after seeing David climb that traffic pole, I was braising a chicken in the kitchen when I saw him out in his garden working the sprinkler. I ran out to talk to him. With the chicken. Possibly a foolish thing to do but I didn't want to miss the opportunity to chat. I ran up to the fence. I waved at him.

'Hey, dude, what you up to?'

'Lawn sprinkler,' he said.

'Yeah, great. Got to keep the back garden green in this drought, for sure.'

'Been dry,' he said.

'Hard to keep the grass green at the best of times,' I suggested. 'That nice green colour. I like it like that. Greenish hue. Important. Green.'

He looked at me oddly. 'Yeah,' he said.

'Do you like that colour?'

'Pardon?'

'Green. Do you like it?'

'Sure,' he said.

And I knew I had gone too far. Not sure how, just a talent I have always had, an ability to understand when I have overreached. I had to back away a bit.

'Brown is good too,' I suggested. 'I see some of your grass is brown. Nice aesthetic. Well done.'

David looked at me. Then his eyebrows scrambled up his balding forehead a bit.

'Yeah, well, that's the problem, we don't really like brown grass, hence the sprinkler.'

An awkward pause.

'How's Edna going?' I asked.

'Good, working hard. How are Jill and Jerry Allen?'

'Good. Jerry Allen's a bit pushy at the moment, he knocked over a kid in his playgroup the other day, stepped on the kid's left ear, pretty grizzly, lot of blood, Jerry laughed about it but he's two years old, not a worry.'

'Hmm.'

He looked down at my chicken.

'You making dinner?'

'Eh? Oh, the chicken. Dinner? No. No.'

'What are you doing with it?'

'Just a hobby. Just braising it. I like to braise chickens.'

'But you don't eat them.'

'No.'

'Jill eat them?'

'Lot of questions about a chicken,' I said.

Things were getting tense. Another pause. I was starting to think David didn't like me much.

'Anyway,' he said. 'Got to get rid of this brown grass.'

I let him get back to his sprinkling.

I went back inside and put the chicken in the oven, shook my head. How come I'd said I wasn't cooking the chicken for dinner? Of course I was making the chicken for dinner. Just the way my brain worked, I was always coming out with stupid stuff like that. If I'm not careful, I thought, David is going to think I'm a real idiot. A real big one. I was sure he hadn't reached that conclusion yet, but if I wasn't careful . . .

Over time David's job as a Green Man, and his unwillingness to share this with me, or anybody, started to make me feel very sad. About life, really. Society. Our inability to talk to each other, to share, really started to disturb me.

The worst moment was a street barbecue over Christmas. Most of the people in the street came, Jill and Jerry Allen and I went, David and Edna were there, but I couldn't get David to talk about his Green Man job in front of anybody, no matter how hard I tried.

He was happy to talk about his work as an accountant. His problems with the brown grass in his lawn. 'Man, brown grass is good,' I offered at one point, 'green is better though, right?' Everyone but David nodded.

It was just very sad.

Even Jerry Allen tried to get through to David. He toddled over, stepped on David's right foot, said 'David made of green.' I hadn't kept anything from Jill or Jerry Allen. Indeed I had pointed David

out to Jerry Allen at different points, said things like, 'that man there is a woodland sprite,' and so on. It's just an important part of parenting, I've found, sharing neighborhood gossip with your child. But David frowned at Jerry Allen. 'You're standing on my foot,' he said.

'Jerry standing on foot, Daddy,' said Jerry Allen. Classic moment from Jerry Allen, there. I'm very proud of that boy.

Later I took a turn at the barbecue, made sure the sausages were well done. When David came for his meal I took a sausage from the grill and dropped it onto his plate with the tongs.

'There you go, Green Man,' I said. It was an accident. I didn't intend to say that. It was a joke that went wrong.

David raised his eyebrows. Then he shook his head and walked off. I've got no idea if he liked the sausage.

He never told me.

David started to ignore me after that barbecue. I would run out into the garden with a giant turkey attached to my hand, or I would leap out there carrying a big pot of spaghetti bolognese, or whatever, and I'd ask: 'How's the brown grass going, mate?' and he'd run off.

Again, I just felt sorry for him. Tragic really, not being able to live with your true nature like that. I personally have never had that problem. Well, I have, I suppose, but it didn't involve municipal hardware or electricity, so it's a whole other thing, I think.

One night I put Jerry Allen to bed, and I turned off his nursery light, and I happened to glance out the window. I saw David on the footpath over the road, and he was in his robe, scampering down the hill in the dark holding his lantern up high.

I felt like following him that night.

I said to Jerry Allen, 'Daddy has to go and spy on the Green Man,' and he understood. 'Daddy catch David Green,' he said.

'That's 'Green Man', Jerry, you weren't one hundred percent right there, but you're on the right track.'

'Jerry on track, Daddy,' he said.

'To a degree,' I said. 'We'll work on it, anyway.'

I told Jill I had to duck out, that I was just going for soft drinks and chips, then I locked up the house and hurried down that hill.

I saw David from a distance. He climbed up into the light box. That box instantly flickered to life, casting a deep green haze over the whole street. A group of teenagers crossed over the road, too busy with their hairstyles and their money to notice anything.

I stood there for a while, just watching that luminous green light. Then I heard a cough. A man walked past me. He was wearing a red robe. Smoking a big cigar.

He stopped at the traffic light pole. Yelled up.

'I'm here,' he said.

The light box door opened, and the Red Man, for it was clearly a Red Man, climbed up it, clambered inside, and shut the door behind him.

That was an odd one for me. How did these two fellows fit in the one light box? It looked very cramped from where I was standing. Very odd. I wanted to ask them. I wanted to run over to the green light with a braised duck over my shoulder and ask David, but I didn't think I should do that.

I didn't know what to do. I walked up to the convenience store, bought soft drinks and chips, munched on them as I walked back through the suburb under the moldering stars, the dripping galaxies above.

The houses and the streets were like a yacht club of magnificent old boats.

* * *

I got home and ate for an hour. I thought and thought 'til my brain hurt, but nothing good came. Finally I went to bed. Jill whispered to me as I got under the covers.

‘You’ve got to let this Green Man stuff go, it’s ruling your life.’

‘I know,’ I said. ‘By the way, I saw the Red Man climb up into that light box tonight.’

There was silence

‘How do they fit?’ she asked.

‘I don’t know. No idea.’

‘Very odd,’ she said.

It was.

I made a decision that night. I lay awake in the dark, looking up at the night ceiling, at the bugs, at the geckos, and I decided that I was going to have to take this up with David. These questions I had. This secrecy. Lying there in bed I devised a plan. We would host a garden party. And I would arrange things so that David would have to own up. He would have to start talking.

Jerry Allen woke up early in the morning, and I went in to his nursery and told him about my plans.

‘Daddy gonna make Green Man very sad,’ he said.

‘You better believe it, buddy,’ I said. It was good to get his support.

When I told Jill about my plans, she wasn’t so keen, but I worked on her, and a week later we sent out the invitations.

Then I got to work.

I rearranged the garden. I did what I could. I put up large tarps so David and Edna couldn’t see what I was up to.

Then, on the evening of Friday the fourteenth of January, I opened the gates up. Almost immediately our neighbors started

coming through.

When David and Edna walked through into the garden with their coleslaw and their snags at quarter to eight, I shut the gate behind them, barred the way, watched for their reaction.

Ahead of them there was the exhibit I had worked up.

It featured some very significant Green Men of the past. A large woodland spirit effigy, bigger than the mulberry tree. A big Green Man gargoyle, based on the kind you see in churches. Made out of paper mache. Bit messy but you could tell what it was. There was a leafy jack in the green outfit, the sort that used to march through the London Streets on May the first, getting pies thrown at it and so on. There was a big flow chart I made, sketches of different Green Men representations. I also included an essay I had written about the Green Man.

Finally a big sign. 'Be open, be honest, admit you're a Green Man, David. Thankyou.' I was quite proud of that sign. I felt I'd done a decent job with the lettering, anyway.

David looked over the exhibit. He turned to Edna.

'Screw this,' he said.

And he turned around and he saw me. He made a fist with his right hand.

'You bastard. You've been following me.'

I pleaded with David. 'Why not just tell us? Why did you have to keep it a secret?'

'What's a secret?' asked Mrs. Phelps, who lived two doors down.

'That David here is a Green Man at the traffic lights down the road.'

'Really?' said Bob Knolls. 'How do you fit?'

'Good question,' I yelled, 'because, get this: He shares his light box with a Red Man!'

Everyone gasped.

'It's simple, right,' said David, 'it's just like a magician sawing a woman in half, except there's no magician. And no saw. And er . . .

no woman.'

Nobody said anything. I looked at him. I looked into his eyes.

'What I want to know, David,' I said, 'is, why the secrecy? Why the mystery?'

'Because you're all bloody idiots,' he yelled.

That didn't go down well. People started to murmur.

'Edna and I moved here to start a new life,' he said, 'a good life together, and all we found were petty idiots with too much time on their hands. Nosey, spiteful. You're the worst, Tom. Absolutely pathetic.'

'Well, I'm not lying about my profession,' I said.

'Well, why is it any of your business?'

I sighed.

'Because we're raising our kid Jerry Allen here, David. So we have a right to know. It's called gentleness. Or something. It's not called gentleness. Respect, maybe? Not sure.'

'Well, so far you haven't passed on much gentleness to young Jerry Allen if he's stepping on people's ears.'

'How dare you,' I said, raising my voice.

'He stepped on my foot the other night,' said David. 'He's out of control.'

'You keep my son out of this,' I said.

But then Jerry Allen toddled up.

'Green Man is very strange,' he said.

Well, that really set David off. 'You tell your boy to pipe down,' he snarled.

And we both had to be held back. I wanted to throttle David, he wanted to throttle me, it got very ugly.

Finally I said: 'Thing is, I reckon you're not coming clean. I don't just think you're a traffic Green Man. I think you're a Green Man Green Man. I think you've come from a church. I think you were in the forest before that. I think you're a genuine woodland sprite with terrifying green powers. I have a suspicion that you are

dangerously powerful. And I think you should own up.'

'Maybe I am an all-powerful green god,' he said. And he gave me a very ugly look. His eyes flickered bright green, like his luminous traffic lighting. 'Maybe I have walked the forests for ten thousand years. Walked from the Pacific to the Atlantic oceans tending to canopies. Talking to oaks. And maybe I did spend four hundred years up a church ceiling, inspiring saints, whispering to visionaries, guiding human beings along a better, healthier path. And maybe you've come in and spoiled things. Interrupted my work. Set me back years. Maybe, and this is something you are going to have to think about, sport . . . Maybe I am dangerous. Maybe you should watch yourself . . . '

I shook my head.

'Well, you just sound like you betrayed your own cause, going electric like that. Doesn't seem quite as holy as perching halfway up a church.'

'Dylan went electric and he's still Dylan,' said David. He was seething.

'Yeah,' I said, 'but you're not Dylan, are you. You're David Geraldson. A whole other thing.'

David started to growl. We needed almost all of our guests to hold him back after that comment. For me it confirmed everything I had thought about our neighbor.

'Well,' I said, 'all I'd say about that is if you can't manage your anger after ten thousand years I wouldn't trust you with my begonias.'

He had no answer to that.

'Come on love,' he said to Edna, 'these people are jerks. Let's go.'

They walked off into the night.

Despite all that unpleasantness between David and me, it ended up being quite a good night. Jill and I had fun. Jerry Allen stayed up

late eating ice cream. At one point he threw his spoon at Don Edwards who lives down the street. Got him in the neck.

‘Now, now, Jerry,’ I said.

‘Drop ice cream very bad, Daddy,’ he said.

‘You got it, son.’

Near the end of the night, just before the garden party ended, Bob Knolls approached me.

‘That guy was a total jerk, well done on exposing him.’

I felt really good after speaking to Bob. He’s has always been a very honest, very decent guy. If Bob Knolls thought I was on the right track, well, I almost certainly was.

Bob made my night, really. He really made it good.

A week later a ‘for sale’ sign appeared on David and Edna’s lawn. A week after that they were moving out.

I tried to talk to them, but they ignored me. They buzzed off, and they were replaced a week later by a strange old hippy couple, Leon and Miriam Wallis. Horribly obnoxious bunch of no-hopers, I thought. I worried about their influence on Jerry Allen, what with their beads and the incense they no doubt burnt, though I had no proof about that. Just a hunch. I told Jerry Allen to watch out for the hippies. I told him that all hippies are bad.

‘Hippies very naughty, Daddy,’ said Jerry Allen.

‘You said it Jerry. You said it.’

I hated those hippies right away, missed David and Edna.

One night I was putting the bins out, and I looked up, and Leon Wallis was standing there smoking a cigarette, leaning on his front fence.

'Hi, Tom,' he said, waving, 'lovely night, makes you think about the late sixties, doesn't it? When just about anything seemed possible?'

He wasn't wearing a robe. Or a lantern. I felt very bored by that.

I walked down the hill, wandered through the back streets, up to where the traffic lights were. There was David in his light box, flickering green. I walked up to him.

'I'm sorry about what I did,' I said.

The Red Man spoke on suddenly.

'Piss off,' he said.

I went.

I go every night though, now. I watch the Green Man flicker from a distance.

I tell you, I wish he was back here. David and Edna were much better neighbors, the new ones play a lot of Paul Simon songs. James Taylor. Okay in small doses, but it's constant. I'm thinking of hosting a garden party featuring flow charts showing how both have a lot of weaknesses as songwriters, but I'll wait a bit. Wait until they admit how bad their taste in music is.

'Their music tastes very bad, Daddy,' says Jerry Allen at the dinner table, throwing spoons at the fridge.

'It's the worst, Jerry,' I say. 'They're going to know it, too.'
Any day now.

BEN PULLAR lives in Brisbane with his family. He writes stories, novels and songs. He has had stories published in *Jersey Devil Press*, *The Journal of Experimental Fiction*, *Metazen*, and other places.

Δείτε τι θέλετε; Θέλετε να βλέπετε
(See What you Want; Want What you See)
Jerrod Schwarz

There is a basilisk in my left eye, rapping the
sclera like cat claws on a window pane.
Sometimes, I can see its shingled
bends when I turn on my bathroom light in
the morning, when it zigzags from my cones
to my rods.

When my second love (who smiled) left for
Houston and said that our arms were too
short, it hissed Greek proverbs, scrawled them
red in the snowy edges:

Δείτε τι θέλετε; Θέλετε να βλέπετε

It sleeps when I sleep, and I dream
its dreams, reveling in its visions
of Cyrene rebuilt, writhing against
ancient, swollen women buying silphium.

My father (who always smiled) often spoke of a
demon who coiled around his left ear canal, who sculpted
marble columns in his Eustachian tube and
pierced Greek symbols into his stirrup with
tipped fangs:

Δείτε τι θέλετε; Θέλετε να βλέπετε

Only once I asked it for a name, for
nomenclature. And when it sibilated
I am instinct, I laughed because
she used to smile and he never frowned,
and because I had worried over the wrong eye.

JERROD SCHWARZ is a student at the University of South Florida. He currently lives in Tampa, and he has forthcoming work in *Squalorly Literary Journal*.

Xenophobe

Trevor Tingle

We understand the Alien monster.
The terrific propagation of species,
a matter of no small personal interest,
an exoskeletal pleasure at hand.

A seed has been planted
deep inside this generation,
a parasitic consumption
of emotional nutrition.

You know how this story begins,
the double jawed glares
teeth snapping within teeth
appetite swelling within appetite,

something writhing inside you.

TREVOR TINGLE has tried and failed to sail around the world. He lives with his wife and son in New Orleans and has been published by or has work coming out in *Natchez Poetry Contest*, *Jersey Devil Press*, and *Maple Leaf Rag* 5. He was the Guest Editor for the January 2014 issue of *Dead Flowers: A poetry rag*.

Ring Rock Riot

Steve Vernon

Sea water stinks.

“So are you here to kill me?” the Sea Hag asked.

“What makes you think I’m here to commit murder?” I asked her right back.

I was standing waist deep in an ocean as warm as a baby’s freshly peed-in diaper. As a rule, we Sasquatch try and avoid the water. It’s just not in our nature. But there had been babies disappearing from the little Nova Scotia town of Port Hood, just in the mouth of St. George’s Bay, and I felt my hirsute heroic duty was to investigate and intervene.

“How should I think?” the Sea Hag replied. “I never met a Bigfoot before.”

I hate it when people call me Bigfoot. I mean that’s just a tacky tabloid nickname thought up by some fellow from Humboldt. I far prefer Sasquatch, which is a derivation of a native term meaning Big Hairy Man, which I figure has got a lot more dignity than Bigfoot.

But I wasn’t going to let her know that.

“Do you know they used to call this town Just-au-corps? Means up to your waistcoat, on account of they didn’t have a wharf way back then. You got off the boat you had to wade on in.”

“You came all this way to give me a history lesson?”

She was looking down at me, which was quite a trick. There aren’t many who can. The truth is I could stunt-double for a poorly carved totem pole. I stood nearly nine feet tall with knuckles that hung down around my knee caps, and I was still standing in her shadow. The Sea Hag was about as large as some islands I’ve visited, the color of rotted peas and newly-picked boogers. She was

built heavy, with a rotund belly that spread out into an overblown gown of tentacles and weird wriggling fronds of seaweed nestled around the remains of a sunken caravel.

"I'm fresh out of history," I said. "The best I can do is to give you a bedtime story."

"I'm all ears," she said.

She was that, too, sporting a pair of big finny earlobes that could have easily accommodated a pair of battleship anchors in place of earrings. A fellow could have drowned in her accumulated ear wax and no one would have likely noticed the difference.

"This is the way I heard it," I began. "In old Port Hood there lived a pair of sisters born eleven months apart and as different as night and day. The oldest sister Myrtle had long golden locks and a disposition as warm as a sunny August afternoon. The youngest sister Mabel had hair the shade of the shadow of midnight and a heart several hues darker. The trouble began when the two of them fell in love with the very same fellow. The oldest loved him from her heart, and the youngest loved him from spite of her sister."

"Didn't I see this on HBO?" the Sea Hag asked.

"Do you want to hear this story or not?"

She settled down and I got back into the flow.

"Being oldest, it was customary that the youngest sister should step back from such a tangle and allow her sibling to marry first, only that didn't sit well with the youngest sister. She took her sister down to the Ring Rock and braided the girl's long golden hair to the loop of the great iron ring that they used to tie the ships off of. She sang her a weird lullaby that kept her entranced until the tide rolled in and swallowed Ring Rock."

"How good was she at holding her breath?" the Sea Hag asked.

"Not very well. After the tide had come and gone the oldest untangled the braid and left her sister's corpse drifting in the shallows. In time the body was found and the man in question,

being a practical and callow sort of fellow, wept a few tears of the crocodile over his dead love and then married her younger sister."

"Men will do that to you, every time," the Sea Hag added.

"By the time the next summer rolled around the two were married and the seed of a child nestled in the deep lonely harbor of the younger sister's womb. She called the child Mona, but Mona was born with fins and flippers for hands and feet. Her hair was a long and tangled snarl of seaweed a rusted iron. In remorse her mother carried the baby down to the water and when she got to the water's edge she kept on walking."

I saw a tear forming in the Sea Hag's left eye.

"The only trace they found of her was the beautiful gold wedding band, hung from the great iron ring by a carefully braided strand of long golden hair, or at least that's what the storytellers tell you. But who in their right mind would trust such false-tongued windbag truth-stretchers?"

By the time I'd finished my tale the Sea Hag had begun to weep—long fat green tears that rolled down her scaly cheeks and splashed in the waves about her tentacled bulk.

I let her cry a little. I suppose if I were a gentleman I would have offered her a handkerchief, but I didn't see any spare mainsails handy to my vicinity.

"So where did you hide the babies, Myrtle?" I asked her.

For that's who the Sea Hag was. She had woken from her sister's evil lullaby just before the tide had swallowed her under, and with her last dying breath she had sold her soul to the devil of the sea in return for five more lives. Two of her debt had been paid when her younger sister Mabel had walked into the waves carrying her curse-stricken child.

"You figure on paying off the devil's debt with those three newborn children?" I asked. "You know that's wrong, don't you?"

Sea Hags are so easy to fool. I knew that my story had touched her heart and that all I had to do was to talk her into giving back those three little children.

At least that was the plan—until Myrtle the Sea Hag raised a meaty fist the size of Utah and smashed down in my direction.

I barely hopped out of the way. Being hip deep in seawater wasn't doing wonders for my agility. I dove under, swallowing a half a bucket of seawater, caught hold of the mast of that sunken caravel that served as a milk stool for her batrachian bulkitude. I tore off a mast and babe ruthed her in what I'm guessing was her rib cage, although it might have been her assbone.

I might as well have been trying to pummel her into submission with a soggy Q-tip for all the good it did me. Turned out those tentacles of hers were both remarkably prehensile and appeared to have a mind of their own, getting me in at least three varieties of headlocks and a dozen or so arm bars with a pretty good ankle twist.

I figured I had one chance.

There are 873 different muscles in the body of a Sasquatch, and I flexed all of them at once and then exhaled sharply, sliding loose from her tentacle grasp just long enough to work fingers into her squamous oozing tentacle-pits.

"Kootchy-kootchy-kootchy."

It is a little known fact that Sea Hags are about the most ticklish organism on the planet, ranking second only to certain peculiar centipedes living deep beneath certain unknown antediluvian chasms.

"Hootchy-kootchy-wootchy-smoochy."

Using a curious Portuguese man-o-war wriggling style of tickle that I had picked up after three years of intensive study in a Shaolin temple located thirty-two miles east of Medicine Hat, I worked my big hairy fingers into her tickle-pits and commenced rooting.

"Kootchy-smoochy-tooshie-OH-HELL!"

Which was right about when Myrtle the Sea Hag decided to sit down.

Now, I have always wondered just exactly how an ant feels after you step on it on the sidewalk, but that was only in the strictest of theoretical manner, you understand. Experiencing the mega-crush of Myrtle's be-tentacled butt was a little more than my scientific curiosity was ready for.

I tried taking a swing at her, but from this angle impact was virtually impossible. In fact my limbs were completely pinned.

So I started to gnaw.

On the Sea Hag's left butt cheek, about three and a half inches west of oh-my-god-don't-go-there.

Have you ever had a tick stuck to your butt?

A Sasquatch is way nastier.

I started chewing and biting and bearing down just as hard as I could manage—and I had lived one winter off of the remains of a petrified nine-thousand-year-old moose fossil.

I'm telling you I've got some serious world-class biting power.

After about ten minutes of pure and unabashed gluteal mastication, Myrtle stood up with an eek that would have deafened a dead man.

I slid out deeper into the water, wishing for a mouth full of Colgate and a whole carton of breath mints.

Now getting this far out into the open ocean was going against every fiber of Sasquatch instinct. Like I said, we just don't like to get wet. And Myrtle—well, hell, this was her home stomping grounds, so she swam after me like a fat man going after an all-you-can-eat pizza buffet.

I'm not saying it was pretty.

I'd love to tell you that I was following some grand master plan, but the truth is, I was nothing but desperate. In fact, in all honesty, I had actually got confused in my sense of direction and had intended to head for the shoreline when I had got turned around and headed for deeper water.

Which was right about when I saw that second Sea Hag.

It was smaller and younger than Myrtle, and was when it saw it sitting there in the water waiting for me like the world's most patient floating bear trap I figured that it was time that I hunted up a waterproof pen and fill out my last will and testament.

Not that I had all that much to leave anyone.

"Auntie Myrtle?" the second Sea Hag said.

"Little Mona?" Myrtle replied.

"Momma Mabel says that everything is forgiven. She says you ought to come on home and we can go back to having a happy household."

"I'm not ready to talk to her," Myrtle said.

"Well, who else are you going to talk to?" Little Mona the Sea Hag asked. "That hairy fur-ball?"

"Hey, now!" I complained. "I'm not letting your Aunt Myrtle go anywhere until I've seen those three babies she stole."

"And you were doing such a fine job of keeping her contained, weren't you?" Little Mona said.

I was beginning to get fed up with Little Mona's saucy lip.

"What about that, Aunt Myrtle?"

Myrtle the Sea Hag stuck out a lower lip that could have easily served as a diving board for an entire squadron of deep-sea pearl divers.

"I wanted to have a baby of my own," she said.

"Well, you've got to give them back," Little Mona said.

"I want a baby of my own."

"Aunt Myrtle, you can have a baby. You can have me. There is nothing wrong with a little Sea Hag having two mothers, now is there, fur-ball?"

That last interrogative was directed at me. I still took umbrage with that whole "fur-ball" reference, but I knew enough about human nature and Sea Hag love to nod my head enthusiastically.

"What better way to raise a child than with a double dose of motherly love?" I said, which may have been pouring it on a little too thickly, but Myrtle seemed to like what I was telling her.

"All right," she said. "Just reach under my tentacles one more time—but lay off the tickling, would you?"

So I reached in and under just as carefully as I could, and aided with a little bit of guidance from Myrtle's prehensile tentacles, I found the three babies suckling at Myrtle's sea-dugs.

And then Myrtle and Little Mona swam out to sea and I let them go, telling myself that I was being both merciful and wise.

You say the word chicken shit and I will reach directly off of this page and demonstrate my Shaolin Sasquatch strangulation skills.

Don't think I can do it?

Just try me.

I dog-paddled back to the shore and was surprised to see how readily those little babies took to the water. I guess the haggis-juice that they had already suckled from Myrtle's ample bosoms had a little bit more staying power than might have been expected.

I left them at the doorway of the church, not wanting to explain those frilly gill-like structures that had begun to sprout about each baby's chubby little necks.

I'd accomplished exactly what I had set out to do—perhaps not in the manner that I had originally envisioned. Now all that I needed was to find myself an open-minded hair salon and about six or eight bottles of industrial shampoo.

Or at the very least a pay-as-you-go car wash.

Born in the Northern Ontario Shield country, raised by a pack of unsubstantiated wolves and now residing in Halifax, Nova Scotia, **STEVE VERNON** has been writing for the last forty years. Someday he figures he will finally figure out how. Steve's first Bigfoot story, "Three Thousand Miles of Cold Iron Tears," originally appeared in the pages of Edge Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing's TESSERACTS 16. Steve's five-page epic poem, "Barren - A Chronicle in Futility"—detailing the 1820 presidentially-commissioned hunt for the Jersey Devil—took the first-place prize in the 2010 Chizine Rannu Poetry Competition.

On the cover:

“BIRDS ATTACK MAN ON BIKE”

Mike Stilkey

Los Angeles native **MIKE STILKEY** has always been attracted to painting and drawing not only on vintage paper, record covers and book pages, but on the books themselves. Using a mix of ink, colored pencil, paint and lacquer, Stilkey depicts a melancholic and at times a whimsical cast of characters inhabiting ambiguous spaces and narratives of fantasy and fairy tales. His work is reminiscent of Weimar-era German expressionism and his style has been described by some as capturing features of artists ranging from Edward Gorey to Egon Schiele. His work has been exhibited throughout the United States as well as internationally. He has also created numerous large-scale installations internationally, in Turin, Italy; Bern, Switzerland; Manila, Philippines; and Hong Kong and Beijing, China. He is online at mikestilkey.com.

