

Outcast Press

'Ships wrecked

on skin'

INTERVIEW WITH
**JASON
MELVIN**

Katy Naylor

Aimee Nicole

HLR

James Lilley

Arden Hunter

Jeremy Scott

Charles March III

Aimee Nicole

Wayne Jermin

Rev Joe Haward

Jon Davies

POETRY

VOL. 4

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CAUTION:

Please note: This Transgressive collection carries a strong discretionary notice with various trigger and content warnings on all work in the edition.

This notice serves as a broad warning on all poetry as these will not be detailed on each piece

Letter from the editor

Outcast Press Poetry presents Volume 4, 'Ships Wrecked on Skin.' In this edition I was fortunate enough to interview our Volume 3 Winner, Jason Melvin to get to know the man behind the words and dive deeper into a number of his works.

'Ships wrecked on Skin,' takes us on a journey through the harsh agony of our lives.

Whether it's grief, loss or melancholy, the depths of human emotion can break us apart like ships on rocks. It's a place where our failures sit under the surface of insecurity, where bleakness laps at us through waves of inadequacy, and where treading water is both isolated and unforgiving. When we find ourselves lost at sea, it's the burden of choosing life while knowing our mortality, that suffocates our lungs to the point of drowning.

Volume 4's, 'Ships Wrecked on Skin' holds the work of writers who have explored honestly, spoken bravely, and skillfully executed their pain in a way that is both relatable, and admirable. I would like to thank and introduce the following writers who have offered glimpses into the fragility of ourselves with empathy, awareness, and courage. You have created this work. These are *Your* voices. Thank you to the following contributors:



Katy Naylor lives by the sea, in a little town on the south coast of England. She writes in the time that falls between the cracks. Publications include work at Expat Lit, Not Deer Magazine and The Bear Creek Gazette.

Aimee Nicole is a chronically ill, queer poet currently residing in Rhode Island. She holds a BFA in Creative Writing from Roger Williams University and has been published by Cajun Mutt Press, The Nonconformist, and Rye Whiskey Review, among others. For fun, she enjoys attending roller derby bouts, Korean food, and trying desperately to win at drag bingo. Her first collection is forthcoming from Laughing Ronin Press Jan '22.

HLR (she/her) is a working-class poet, writer and editor from north London. Her work has been widely published, most recently by Emerge Literary Journal. She is the author of prose collection *History of Present Complaint (Close to the Bone)* and micro-chap *Portrait of the Poet as a Hot Mess* (Ghost City Press). Twitter: @HLRwriter

James Lilley is from Swansea, Wales. A champion boxer. He has been featured in such publications as Black Bough Poetry, Versification, Punk Noir Magazine and many more. He was named Versifications Punk of the Year 2020. He has two collections *The Thousand Ghosts of You* and *The Blue Hour* both available 2021.

Arden Hunter is an aroace, agender writer of queer fiction and poetry. They enjoy exploring the relationships we make with the world.

Jeremy Scott is from Albany, Georgia. He is @possiblyrhino on Twitter and in real life. His work has been published or is forthcoming in All Guts No Glory Zine, Angel Rust Magazine, BOMBFIRED, Beyond Words Magazine, Versification Zine, and others.

Charles J. March III is a hospital corpsman veteran currently living in California. His work has appeared in Expat, Terror House, Misery Tourism, 3:AM, Nauseated Drive, Apocalypse Confidential, Squawk Back, Ligeia, Datura, Versification, Unlikely Stories Mark V, tragickal, Bear Creek Gazette, Surfaces.cx, etc. More can be found at [LinkedIn](#) & [SoundCloud](#).

Wayne is a writer/poet from Swansea, Wales. He started writing poetry to help with his mental health. It's helped him through some dark times and finds writing helps his state of mind. Wayne has had work published by Punk Noir, Skyway Journal and SpillWords, amongst others. You can find his work on twitter @waynejermin

Rev Joe Haward is an author, poet, and heretic. His fiction and poetry has featured, and is upcoming, in a variety of places, in print and online, including *Outcast Press*, *Cinnabar Moth Publishing*, and *A Thin Slice of Anxiety*. His debut novel, *Burning the Folded Page* (Cinnabar Moth Publishing) will be released in 2023."

Jon Davies is a writer of crime fiction and poetry, living in the UK. When he's not writing, he's reading, going down YouTube rabbit holes, or limping around after judo sessions.

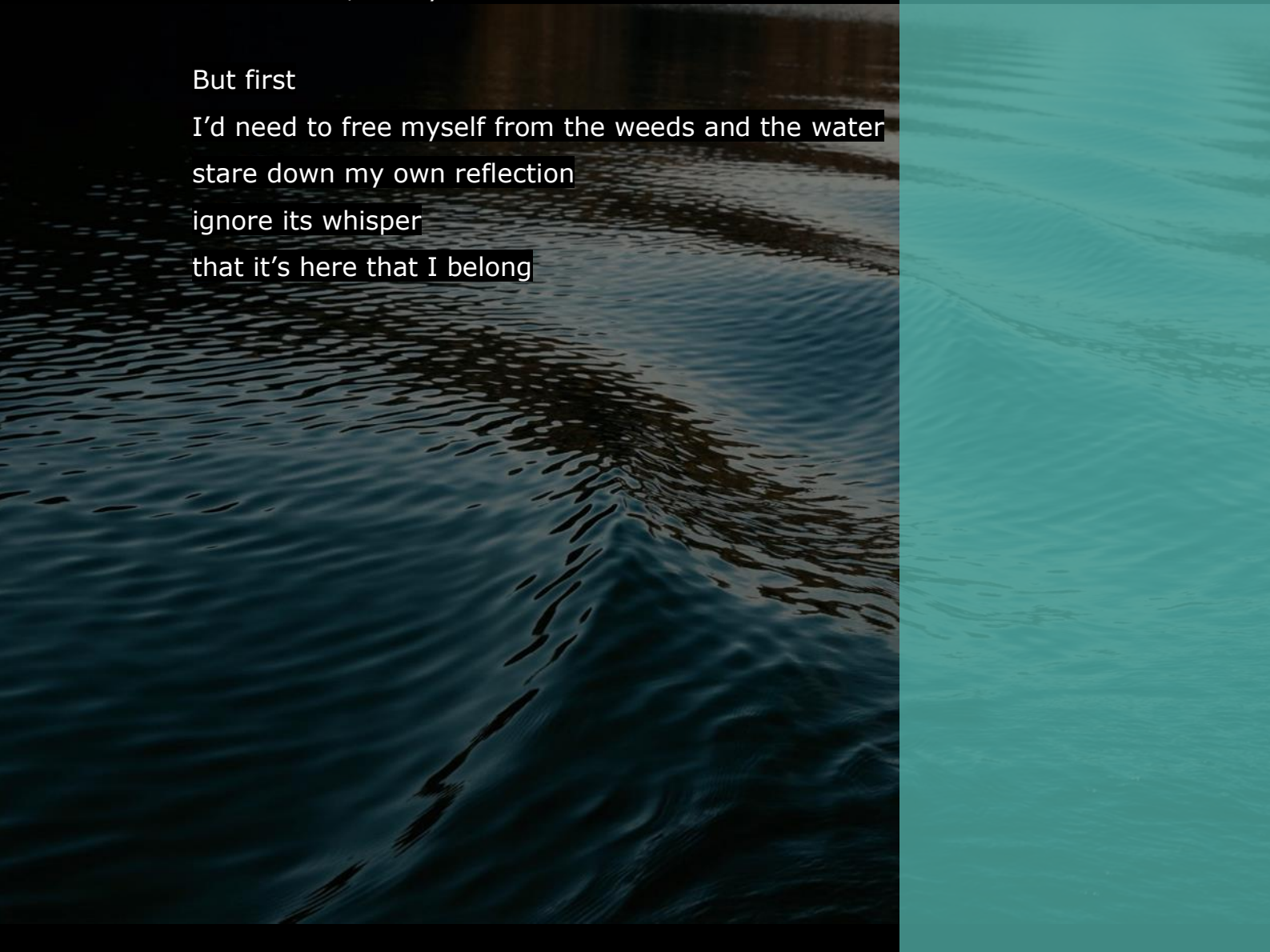
On the rocks

– *Katy Naylor*

Reeling hours on the cliff's edge
waves splinter below us
we revel in the glare and the throttle of it
put our hands in the fire to keep the bones from showing
roll the old chariot along, we'll hang on behind

They say the first step is the hardest
I feel the sweetness of that imagined threshold
warm bread, finally home

But first
I'd need to free myself from the weeds and the water
stare down my own reflection
ignore its whisper
that it's here that I belong



Needs

–Aimee Nicole

Today I need you to
take my hand and
lead me. Gentle reminders
that don't feel like
delicious temptation
to break rules
or run from you,
tuck behind curtains
until you find me.

Today let me drift asleep at noon
with your arms caging me,
protection from that
crack gaping
mattress and wall.

Today I need grilled cheese
sandwiches served on
plates the size of an island,
ice cream cones with three scoops,
and please drive me everywhere
like I'm a newborn baby
so precious the world is
foaming at the mouth for me.



We Sigh

– HLR

In the bathroom, you sighed as you applied

bio-oil onto the red & white

lines that brand my inner forearms.

Wrapping my limbs in cling film

you said, with forced optimism,

*I want your scars to disappear
so that you can wear
short-sleeved tops
when it's hot outside*

to which I replied, for the n th time

*I want to disappear
so that the sadness stops.*

"Pardon?" "Nothing," I lied & sighed.

We sigh a lot these days; sighs of frustration

& exasperation, not contentment or gentle admiration;

you may want to fix my outside but we both know that

the real damage lies inside & so we sigh:

heavy breaths that reiterate that you have tried, & tried

so many times, that remind me that

I am still alive, sighs that aren't the good kind or the right kind,

that have no place in a happy home, that reverberate through
walls

& echo along bone, sighs that change absolutely nothing,

nothing at all & so, still, we sigh



A hand reaches out of the ocean under a cloudy sky. The hand is dark and appears to be reaching up from the water. The ocean is dark and choppy, with white foam from the waves. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

Cut Throat

– James Lilley

Dried blood on the old razor
Crush it up, take a little for later,
She wondered about justice
That came and passed
Twisting scar still marked her face
Chewed fingernails
Tracing crescent moon like
She sighs mist onto the mirror
To dry to cry
Leaving the emptied place.



Wreck

– Arden Hunter

you could calm the waves that seethed and roiled
you carried my fear through currents unseen
the waves roar now as you're not here to hush them
I sink down deep far from harbor far from home
I'm thrown onto the shore smashed to pieces by your absence
wrecked on the spit
my ribs all exposed
seagulls pick me clean and they keep watch and they keep
screaming
I lost you somewhere here where the shallows rip and pull

your sweet salt smile lingers on in dripping rock pools
I hear your voice hidden in the frothing foam
the rage recedes like the tide rushing to meet you
leaves me with smooth sand that whispers of before
I see no footprints and no names left there to guide me
my path to safety has been erased by the swell



Stinkhorn

– Jeremy Scott

maggot's flesh, grey, phallic, wilting in the summer heat—beauty
a fungus of the corpses, erect with death, decay, rot,
filth, putrefying in the summer sunlight—decadence
flies all around, laying eggs with their little hands,
I stand back and puke my guts out in the field—overwhelmed
it's too much for my young mind to transcend



Lube

– Charles J March III

Subjective

66yo BM with history of alcohol abuse and cannabis use presents for medical evaluation. The patient has been consuming alcohol since age 20. He never drinks daily but when he does, it is often quite heavy and dependent on his social environment. He estimates 5-8 drinks (beer/wine/liquor) a day when he does drink. No history of withdrawal symptoms which he does not consume alcohol because of it. Patient last consumed alcohol on Sunday, 8/15/21.

The patient also has been smoking cannabis since age 17. He denies daily use but when it is accessible he would smoke most days. Last use was on Saturday, 8/14/21.

Currently, the patient is feeling anxious. He slept relatively well last night considering the fact that he was entering treatment today. He often has trouble falling asleep. Once he is asleep he may wake up but has no trouble falling back asleep. The patient also reports a mild headache.

The patient has been prescribed citalopram for the past year. He is on 10mg but at times was instructed by his psychiatrist to increase the dose to 20mg if he was in a crisis.





Sub Space

– Aimee Nicole

Carefully submerge me
so far underneath the surface
I cannot rise until
your voice pulls me up by the throat.
This skin requires
firm holds
that cannot be broken
by strong winds.
Can you handle
my fickle ways?
One moment demanding
a bruise on the hip,
the next a chest to
bury head so far
into I'm hoping I'll disappear
until reincarnated life
as a butterfly
floating from one moment
to next.



Just a thought?

– Wayne Jermin

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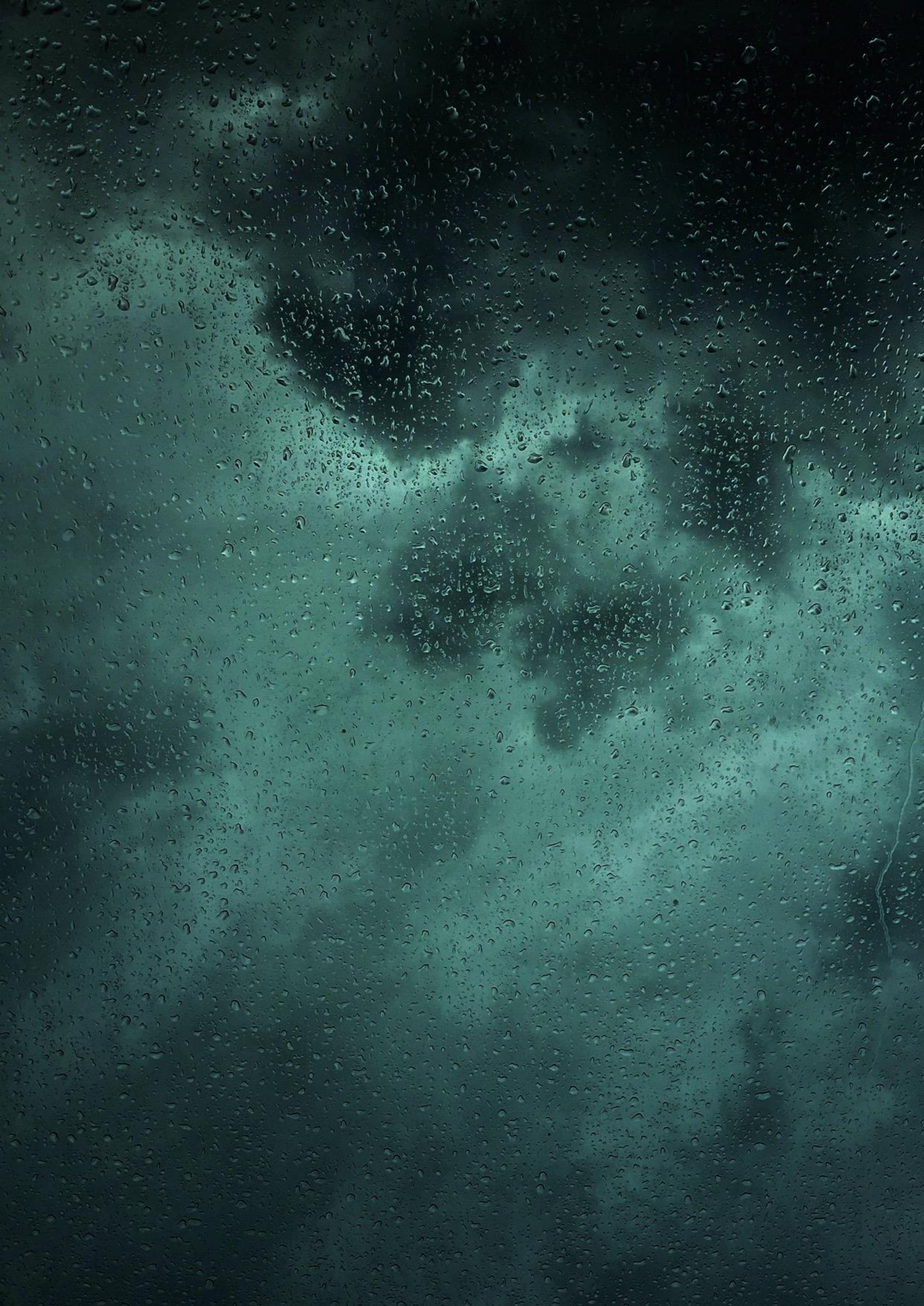
Just a thought?

Sitting at my desk at home
staring at the rain
battering the windows with
drops bouncing off the car windscreen
A depressing grayscale
surrounds the skies
as thunder rolls
and lighting splits the darkness
through thoughts of emptiness
sweeping through my mind

This would be a perfect day

To be found

hanging in a bad place.



An underwater photograph of a person's legs, from the knees down to the feet, floating in a teal-colored liquid. The legs are positioned diagonally across the frame, with the right leg in the foreground and the left leg slightly behind it. The skin appears pale and somewhat translucent due to the water. There are some bubbles and light reflections visible in the water.

Lover's Revenge

- Rev Joe Haward

Fingers

Stroking the extremities of self-respect

Searching for the sweat

Signs of surrender

Intoxicated by shame's danger.

Damascus Road

Bright flash under obsidian sky

Foreshadowing burning bulbs of forensics' certainty

Shotgun steel baptising saints and sinners in power and blood.

Single moments

Transformation of respectability

Deranged illusions cast back by narcissism's glory

Scorched skin tattooing irredeemable future.

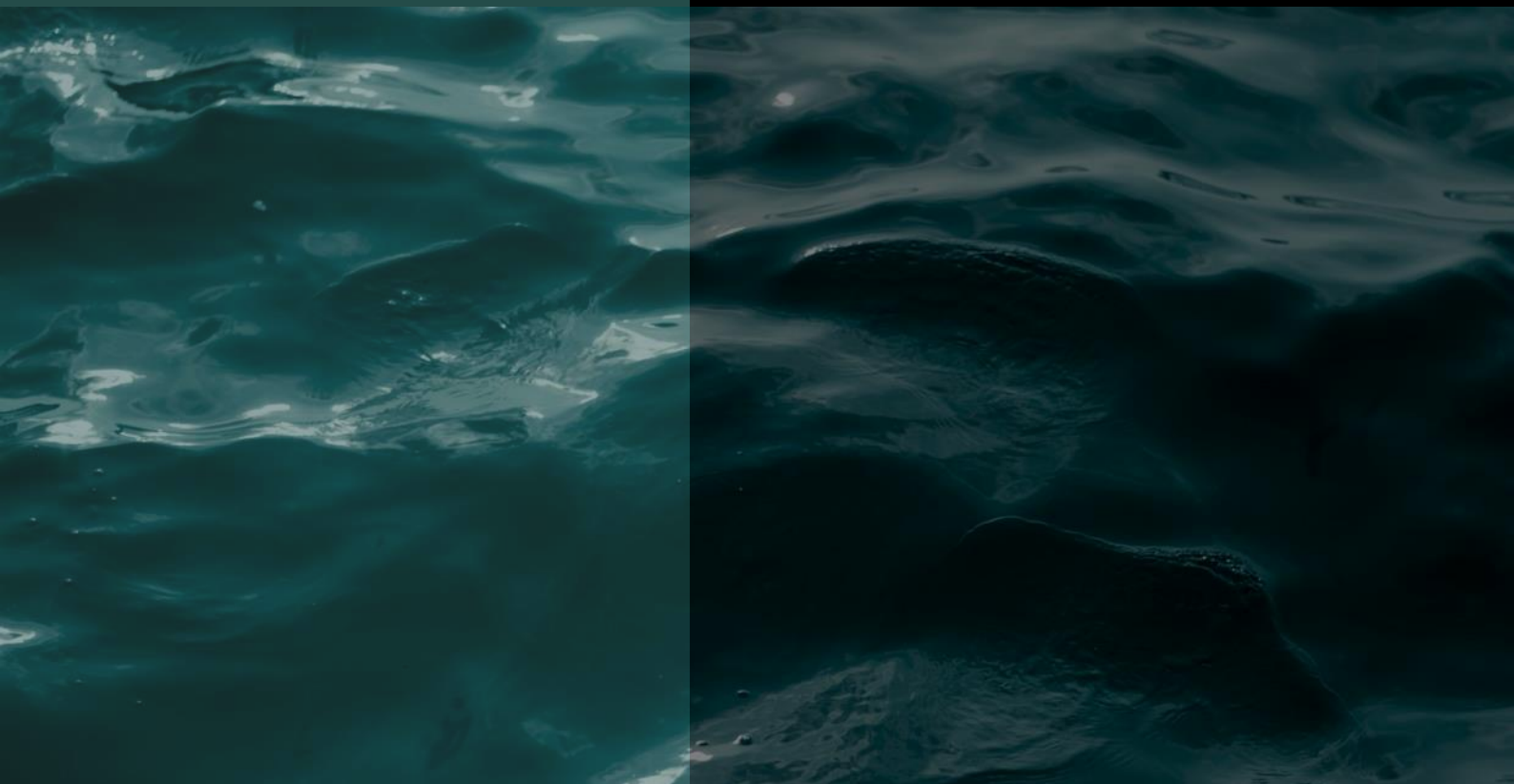
Journey

– *Jon Davies*

A long, grey stretch of road
Made sickly by the sodium lights
A jaundice yellow in the dark
That makes my eyes feel dirty

I've been here for hours
The music from the radio
Has become a tinnitus drone
My ears feel ready to pop with over-pressure

Or maybe that's just the headache.
The steady squeeze of my brain
Feels like my skull is thickening
The bone growing thicker with every mile like coral reef





Interview with Jason Melvin



AJM: Jason, congratulations on winning Outcast Press Volume 3, 'Weeping worlds and paper shelters.' What is it about Outcast press that inspired you to submit?

JM: Reading the work from earlier contributors and following on Twitter, Outcast felt like a good fit.

AJM: Outcast Press is dedicated to exploring dark themes, is this something that drew you to the press?

JM: Absolutely. I can write the mushy stuff too, but the majority of my work would fall into the 'dark' category.

AJM: I had the pleasure of reading a number of your works. The themes of reflection, masculinity, nature, and the inevitable move towards death is something you explore quite a bit. Do you use writing as a means to understand your place in the world or as a means to record it?

JM: I'd have to say option A on this one. I question everything and love exploring my mind and the minds of others. I have a tendency in a lot of my writing to ask the big questions, but I don't have any of those answers.

AJM: The speaker in your poem 'He always seemed to be chasing you,' talks about 'collecting treasures and providing memories.' Is your use of specific memories in your writing, akin to the collection of the treasures of your own life?

JM: I've never thought of it like that, but I would have to say yes. My memory sucks. When I write about my childhood or family members that I've lost, I'm able to recall moments that I hadn't thought about in years. Especially when grieving, it provides a peace and even some joy to recall these moments.

I've always been a collector of sorts. I still have toys and books from my childhood. Every time I'm tasked with cleaning up the basement, I usually just spend hours reminiscing without anything actually getting done.



AJM: Grief and loss are key themes in your work too, this is explored in your piece 'He always seemed to be chasing you.' Was the juxtaposition of death and the materialistic nature of the human condition intentional?

JM: If I say yes, does it make me sound smart? Lol. I don't know. I was eleven when my father died, the 'you' in the title. I just wanted to hold onto some things that were his. He was a truck driver and I still have his road atlas. Is there anything more useless in this day and age than a road atlas? But I'll never part with it.

AJM: You speak about the act of being 'chased.' Do you think grief is something we chase to comprehend loss, or something that chases after us?

JM: Both. We are always searching or chasing for the answers after a loss, whether it be by asking God or searching the cosmos. I try not to ask why anymore; it seems so futile. No answer would ever satisfy me. Writing out my grief is my way of chasing it. Expressing my emotions verbally is not a strong suit of mine. By writing, I can explore these feelings of loss.

The issue is this sense of pride that follows the publication of a poem like this. If my brother doesn't die at a younger age like my father did, I never write this poem. If I never write this poem, I don't win the chance at this interview. I'm proud of winning this contest and I'm proud of the poem that won. But if I keep digging this hole, it just leads to a lot of guilt. Maybe writing about loss is my way of fictionalizing death, so I don't have to deal directly with it?

AJM: Do you think writing enables writers to somehow make sense of loss and death? Is the act of writing itself a form of grieving for you?

JM: I started writing a few years after my father's death. It didn't help make sense of that loss as much as it allowed me to grieve in a way that I hadn't been able to do before. It was an outlet for a lot of the anger and guilt that I felt and didn't fully understand. I don't know that I'll ever make sense of death, but I certainly have an acceptance of it.

AJM: You are a father and grandfather, and it's evident in your works that you observe your own life through theirs. Is this form of reflection a means to contemplate mortality?

JM: I would say I'm a little obsessed with death and mortality. By the time I was eleven years old I had no grandparents left and my father had died. I've been exploring mortality for most of my life. I have a hard time truly remembering my dad. He was a truck driver and on the road a lot. I was a quiet kid



who enjoyed being by himself. The memories of him are there and lovely but I can't help but feel like there just wasn't enough of them. When I had my first child, like a lot of parents, I wanted to be there for every moment. I wanted to make sure he remembered me. My brother and I fully expected to die young like our father had, so I always made life choices with that in mind.

AJM: What is it about family and human fragility that interests you in your work?

JM: I'm a 'write what you know' kind of writer. I used to be one of those guys with a 'I hate people' T-shirt on, but the truth is I love people. I love exploring and trying to understand people. Our motivations and why we do the things we do. I don't know how anyone could be a writer without that obsession. How can you build characters without a constant study of people? I mean, we are a mess and fragile as can be but we can be the other side of that coin too. And all in the same person.



AJM: And lastly, how is the way you approach your writing similar to how you approach being a father and grandfather?

JM: I always thought writing was good for my mental health. I didn't write for about fifteen years. I promised myself, someday I'd get back to it. In 2018, after my second son graduated high school, I found myself with time on my hands. I coached all three kids in soccer and most of my time not spent at work was spent coaching. My younger son played on multiple teams, and I coached them all. Once the realization that I was going to actually have time to write again, I came up with a

plan. Write for a year and then do the work to figure out how to get published. In May of 2020, I had my first poem published. That was the whole goal. I completed my mission. I've been published numerous times since but it's all just icing at this point.

My oldest son recently asked me if I regretted not sticking to writing when I was younger, considering the modest success I've had so far. I told him no. The twentysomething kid couldn't have handled all the rejection. He wanted to be a writer or filmmaker. He dreamt of success and fame. This forty-five year old man just wants to share his thoughts and hopes people read them and can relate or enjoy them

Back to what started this: is writing good for my mental health? Not at all. I stress over not finding the time to do it or holding a pen without anything to write. After a shitty day at work with my back killing me, I can walk in the house and see my granddaughters toothless grin and that's where I find my joy. Writing is a wonderful hobby and I'm loving this ride, but I do not approach it the same way as being a father and grandfather. That is my everything.

When Jason Melvin dies, he wishes to be cremated and his ashes placed into a Nacho Cheese Doritos bag, resealed. Sticky googly eyes should be placed on the outside of the bag, that way his grandchildren will be able to shake and play with him. And if they forget that Grandpa's in there and open the bag at snack time, so be it.

His work has been published in *Olney*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *HorrorSleazeTrash*, *The Daily Drunk*, *Sledgehammer*, *Rat's Ass Review* and others. He is also an Outcast Press Pushcart Nominee.



ABOUT THE EDITOR

Amy-Jean Muller is an artist, writer and poet from South Africa who lives and works in London. Both her art and writing explore culture, memory, mental health, identity, femininity, and sexuality. She has exhibited her art in South Africa and London. Her writing can be found in various publications and is a regular contributor for Versification, The Daily Drunk and Poetry EIC for Outcast Press.

Her poetry book, *Baptism by Fire*, was released in January 2021. She has been nominated for both Best of the Net and Pushcart prizes and will be guest editor for ELJ Editions Anthology 'It Shouldn't: Facing an Empty Chair,' due May 2022. She also writes transgressive fiction and is currently completing her first novel, a collection of short stories, and a second poetry collection. amyjeanmuller.com | Twitter: @muller_aj

