



DEMONS

a Shanghai poetry zine
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To the bird who took my father

Amahl S. Azwar

*Three days before my father's passing, a bird sat on his window
No, it wasn't a scarecrow, for the voice was much mellower
The bird was indeed black and the eyes were yellow
My neighbour saw the bird, so she took her son away*

*'You should be careful if you see the bird'
My neighbour said, I shook my head
But still I was curious, so I searched and
searched Can you guess the name of the bird?'*

*The bird, apparently, was a plaintive cuckoo
In my home-town, we called it the Bird of Death
You can rarely see it
But you can never mistake its voice
High, long whistle in the beginning
Lower and lower
Shorter and shorter
To the end*

*Three days before my father's passing was my birthday
The day he went away was my mom's birthday
So now, when we sing happy birthdays
To anyone, really
We will always remember him
Maybe this is his plan?'*

*His grandfather's clock, my great-grandfather's clock, still chimes
My father used to sing a song
Make no mistake he was a good singer
Elvis, Sinatra, Lennon, McCartney
His voice was smooth and dark
Like a black silk*

*Anyway about that song
See my father keeps this clock, his grandfather's clock
My great-grandfather's clock, my nephew's great-great-grandfather's clock
My father used to sing
About an old clock that stopped working As
the old man who owned it dies in sorrow*

*But here, his grandfather's clock, my great-grandfather's clock,
It still chimes
Does that mean that my father is not really dead at all?
Just a hope--well, at least if he does die, he doesn't die in sorrow*

Black Tears

Elena Sichrovsky

Black tears white face

Red lips no trace

Of life

She paints the tears with drops of blood

And the night stains them dark

In shadows her skin is thick as mud

And the day washes it pale

Black eyes white sight

Red hands no light

Of life

She wipes her eyes with fingernails

And the flame burns them out

In alleys long she drops her veils

And the vacuum sucks it in

Black breath white heart

Red lungs no part

Of life

She tastes the ground with eyelashes

And the earth plucks them off

In whispers her name is but blushes

And the clouds move the sky on

Black box white lace

Red rose no grace

In death

Samsara

Lei Wang

The Buddhists say it is better to be humans than to be gods. Certainly worse to be demons or pigs, those most unmagical of creatures, ruddy muddiness we tolerate only due to their being precursors to bacon, but no, they insist, even the heavenly devas with their good karma, their need not to work, cannot compare to a human life as rare as a blind turtle poking its head out from a vast ocean every hundred years and just so happening to come out of the water into a golden hoop floating at just the right time and place for some unsuspecting turtle. That is to say, an improbable thing. That is to say, there are many many more ghosts and demons and spirits, a universe absolutely teeming with them, than humans and this rarity is itself a covetous trait, like members-only Ferraris and other kinds of clever marketing to trick you into thinking all the pain (or money) is worth it. It is better to be humans than to be gods, how? It is good to eat and laugh and lust and love, but the gods (in the Buddhist paintings at least) do that, too. Ah, there is too much pleasure in heaven, they explain, so much that no god is spiritual anymore, as it takes a certain history of strife to want to believe in something greater than your own self, to aspire to a life in which you are never born.

Just remember the next time your demons visit:
all the gods are jealous of you.

They're already dead/Beautiful Bones

Hexa Fleet

They're already dead.

The bones.

The ones that walked among us,
And whispered to our demons.

They're already dead,
But still here, haunting,
In videos, photographs,
Stories of loss surrounding us.

They're already dead,
Smaller than before
As their thinning hair is rotting
Somewhere beneath the roots.

I loved the grace...
Of the pale skin and blue lips,
Little ribs sticking out
To enjoy the sunshine.

Still love the grace...
Of the dead and dying
As they build a coffin around themselves,
Locking out the silverware.
They're already dead.
Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful...
Beautiful bones.

Untitled

Sherry Mao

You are very seductive. Probably you never realized it.

But you,

You seduce alcoholics' aesthetics after they are thick with drink;

You seduce a man in conflict, to pick up the gas and burn down the house;

You seduce every heartbroken man or woman to wound another the way they themselves got wounded;

Sometimes, you seduce men and women to hurt themselves...

Yes, it's you.

Screams and Prayers. Neither of these has meaning for you.

Mercy, joy and compassion. All of these have no meaning for you.

Not even the sorrow from the lovers will stop you:

not even the tears from your intimates make you stop;

not even the blood flowing from a life could stop you.

Nothing makes you cease...

Yeah, the remorse, regrets and apologies would come, but afterward...

Even then, you'd still hide deeply in each of the beats of the heart and each blood vessel.

Inside, it's you, but not all yours.

Sorrow deepens into the soul.

The cycle never ceases because the consequences are still to be taken, and everything leads to everything.

You have no worries, because the worries are brought on by you.

Yes, it's you.

You are hidden, in each piece of a lunatic or a normal person.
No matter if men and women are calm or not,
No matter if men and women are sheltered and secure or not,
You'd still chase them and conceal yourself inside them like you never existed.

Yes, you are deceptive, yet it's not your fault.

You being seductive could not be blamed,

it's every man or woman who sees every move you make as
seduction... But neither is it their fault.

Alcoholics, men in conflict, the wounded, and the heartbreakers.

Lunatics, geniuses or normal people.

You are the possession for all of us.

Yes, for all of us.

Moonlight

Michael DeMaranville

The mountains gather twilight
around their shoulders
pulling that black blanket
over bodies weary of being
unbendable.

In the darkness, they lose
their stiff form. Freeing
those desires carnal,
carnivorous - quietly creeping
beneath their treed skin.

The night hides what we
don't want to see
until dawn draws anew
the stolid deception of
immovability and fidelity.

Her

Michael Cui

Crepuscular. Chitchat.
Nocturnal. Rambles.
Diurnal. Struggle.
Incessant. Fatigue.
Perpetual. Darkness.
Ephemeral. Light.

And she turns around,
you can see her,
scintillating
oscillating.

And she beckons
you, draws you in,
and that instance
you know that
there is no
going back.

You see. Her eyes.
Filled with. Sweet lies.
Kaleidoscopic. Lights.
Superstitions. Fallacies.
Summertime. Sadness.
Endless. Abyss.

You feel. At once.
Magnetism. Heat.
Flickers. Conflagration.
Penitent. Longing.
Gravity. Constraint.
Trapped. Soulless.

Confused. Lost.
Soothed. Done for.
Engulfed. By greed.
Swarmed. By envy.
Gone. Manipulated.
Remorseful. Nostalgic.
No more. Conscience.
No longer. Yourself.

A smile is made of tunnels
and our lives twined
around the lure of being young
we made a promise to the future,
there by the Chinese lamps,
what have we done,
oh...
what have I done?

Your face has a new light
smoothed in the mist
of this two hundred degrees heat
perceptions absorbed
distortions allowed
saints all forgiven
it's only left over
a single excuse,
the one which refrains from making us sane:
but there!, you may be...

a verse is seducing you,
a blink of your lips
and suddenly I'm lost...

A Bedtime Story

Stan Vullings

Be still now my child, your father is here.
Your tears have all dried, be calm now my dear.
Unburden your heart, of dread and resent.
A new day has started, the night found its end.

For under your bed, no monsters remain.
An eerie resemblance, or shades playing games.
Halt now your trembling, your screams are in vain.
I've come to console you, all will be the same.

Forgive me for smiling, my memory is keen.
How they shared your horrors, the others, I mean.
Yet distance you feel, you are not alone.
You fare in the waters, of children long gone.

Heed me and listen, the last you shall hear.
Your breath. Is it fading? Oh yes. It is near.
A sickness, a fever, they don't understand.
Losing the sinners, the naughty, the banned.

Your fingers now cold, your gaze open-wide.
The monsters you fear so, they hunt in the light.

Bad neighborhood

Amahl S. Azwar

Inside my head, there is a bad neighborhood
Except for the kids, the residents seldom sleep;
One of their eyes is open when they do
Some put a gun under their pillow, some put a knife
The husbands always protect the wives
Protect from whom, you ask?
Why, my friend, it is a bad neighborhood

Inside my head, there is a bad neighborhood
The residents who have swimming pools are wary
For in each swimming pool lives a merman
These mermen have sharp teeth, to devour men
Who will they eat, you wonder?
Why, my friend, it is a bad neighborhood

Inside my head, there is a bad neighborhood
The dogs are not friendly, which is odd
Dogs are supposed to be friendly
But in here dogs will kill the first child they see
Why are the dogs unhappy, you ask?
Why, my friend, it is a bad neighborhood

Inside my head, there is a bad neighborhood
There's a wicked witch who strolls every night, with her might
The witch will slash the throats of the kids who refuse to sleep
The parents tell this tale to their kids—who weep
But why is the wicked witch wicked?
Why, my friend, it is a bad neighborhood

So there you have it, my friend

Husbands who protect wives but not kids
Mermen who love the flesh of kinds like you
Dogs who hunt kids
Witches who kill kids
It is a bad neighborhood
Please don't let me walk this neighborhood alone

GHOSTS

Patrick Schiefen

He blamed his outsized temperament on the Gods,
as if his ill-informed decisions were not his own,
crying out at 4 AM in my doorway that it was
simply how he was made,
how we were all made.

I saw the past in him
in the way you see your spectral self staring back
when you look into a cloudy mirror after
washing yourself clean

but I could only ever catch glimpses of his intentions
like the car lights moving across the bedroom wall at night,
the ghost of a better man, of a better time
before he anchored his demons to his
heart and became content with drowning.

He didn't want to be saved.
He never asked that of me,
he never asked that of the Gods
and he never asked that of himself

so I never asked, either,
hoping for rebirth

but not caring enough anymore to open the door for him.

Pain

Brine Taz

I can feel it seeping in
Consuming all memory of innocence that existed

How do you cope with it
I find myself drifting further and further away from humanity
My humanity.

I have begun to find solace in pain
The acknowledgment of existence
By external reassurance

These voices aren't making it
Any easier
All they seem to desire
Is my sanity,
if there's still any left to give

I hear them scheming at night
As the obstacles pile up
They draw nearer and nearer
Ever so silently
With malicious intent

How does it feel,
When you can't feel like
everyone else?

Winter Comes

Alana Tashjian

When you're not around, winter comes.
She sends a chill down my spine,
through my legs, through my knees,
through the bones of my toes
She - relentless - aches of an absence
The loss of something unstated, unseen
Yet how can we conjure what we cannot know?

When you're not around, winter comes.
She breathes her hot breath on my frostbitten neck,
My hand, rising up to touch, chin cupped in a palm
Fingers coming up to air, a dolphin to oxygen,
Finding only your antithesis
the shadow of your breath in the air
the negative of your silhouette on the wall
the imprint of your body in the bed

Winter comes - oh, she comes, and she's cold.

Closer

Earle Figuracion

It is closer than you think, that which you feel and fear:

On the corner of your eye, just eluding your sight,
Something you never seem to fully see.

A slight shift, that sudden movement
That makes you jerk and look-

That always empty spot, one that's never occupied;
A space that always gets your eye-

That sullen place where you always dread to stand,
Where you never wish to sit.

The feeling when you are alone,
With only ringing in your ears,
As the breeze licks your nape.

And in the dead silence as you listen
To its voice giving answers in the dark,
Be mindful, know it too hearkens:
For when there is a voice, there is a body too
And soon it will find you.

A Fly in the Soup of my Dreams

M.L.Robinson

In the soup of my dreams
There sits a fly.

A buzzing, biting, nasty thing
That saw itself content to sit
Inside the bowl I made myself
And lap the broth I planned to sip

Now, as disgusting as that might seem
To anyone who does not like flies
To bathe and drink and swim and stink
Inside their broth of memories
I cannot for the life of me
Find a way to pluck that fly
And put it back where flies should be.

I've tried just about everything.
Or as much as I can think
Of ways to get that fly
To find another soup to drink
From dinner's bell to closing time
I sat and tried my best
With no success

It's obvious I should give up

Hungry I go to bed once more
Tears brimming in my eyes
I know my bowl sat far too long
And untouched soup draws in the flies

Demonic Divisions of Conscience

Damon Leo Hansen

I: Angel of Nihilism v. Incubus of Vigilance

A of N: "Pompous protrusions of pointlessness pervade mind."

I of V: "Cleverly combat demons with fervent individualism; concoct clever methods of imbuing life with meaning"

A of N: "Nonsense -- nitpicking will neither nullify nor normalize the inescapable nihilism nailed into your noggin."

I of V: "Fie ! You must thrice thrust yourself into the throes of professionalism -- suits, ties, caviar, Don Perignon -- with every pressed suit and synchronous cufflink unavoidably correlated with contrived outward expectations."

A of N: "Insist on spontaneity -- go with the flow -- life is best lived with transmission set to automatic -- relentlessly ridicule the arrows of external socialization that seek to pulverize and penetrate the depths of your skull."

I of V: "Fie! Fie on your blaspheming modes! That which has molded for millennia methods of

amassment of mirth shan't be denied!

Fie and fiddlesticks!

Be vigilant -- vilify all that which obstructs your vainglorious vertical posture upon the soapbox!

Be vigilant -- boastfully brown nose to boost your standing and ascend the corporate hierarchy.

Be vigilant -- sleuth and slide your way into the upper echelons of the organization.

Be vigilant -- value prestige and shimmering physicality -- vilify ascetic immateriality and detachment."

A of N: "Nonsense!

Be nihilistic -- dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return

II: Draconian Demons of Dimwitshire

Dialogic confrontations demonstrate disastrous inner dwindling of delight. A representation of a mind divided – bound to bi-directionality between the blasphemy of buttocks and the blindly boastful biblical beseeching.

Angelic Utterance:

“Grasp the intangible aspect of transcendence of flesh -- pounce upon the pomposity which prioritizes among the infinite -- Yaweh, Allah, Ganesh, Shiva, Krisna, Siddartha, K’ung Fu-Tzu—father, son and holy ghost.”

Demonic Demand:

“Embrace finitude! Fall endlessly into the cycle of voluminous vapidity – vex not the temptations at the tip of your consciousness – harlots, hussies, hops, and hash. Seek endless excitation—exalt ecstasy as the only viable distraction from disintegration to dust.”

Angelic Utterance:

“Purify! Be cautious of the threat of fire and brimstone! Purport the position that morality requires the seraphic hand in worldly human affairs. Have you no shame you slothful sycophant of Lucifer -- slovenly serpent! Repent!”

Demonic Demand:

“Balderdash! Enter the sanctum of Dimwitshire in which you shall be excellent bedfellows with the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence of the Abbey of Saint Joan. -- don your petticoat, polish your lashes and embrace materialistic frivolity. Fornicate forthwith with reckless abandon -- care not for dubious attachment to a nonexistent soul.”

Angelic Utterance:

“Differentiate a mythical fable for instruction of the simpleton and literal interpretations of sacred texts! Appreciate the wisdom and literary merit of Sutras, Vedas and archaic texts in which the multitudinous methods of spiraling descent into madness the human life course may follow appear.”

Demonic Demand:

“My mind provides enough significance! I can engage in a soliloquy.”

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