



Fabielle Georges

SWEET TEA DICHOTOMY

Theme:
Dichotomies

Literary Magazine / Spring 2024

ISSUE 1

Sweet Tea Dichotomy Literary Magazine

Sweet Tea Dichotomy: a literary magazine dedicated to showcasing the work, the lives, the loves, the art, the truth of what it means to unabashedly candid in a time and place where assimilating is akin to survival; born from the imaginations of two friends intensely in love with all things written, all things spoken, all things created; June 2023.

Sweet Tea Dichotomy Lit Mag is a watersmeet for artists and creators who don't always fit into the conventional, and oftentimes elitist, world of art and creation. It serves as safe space for unloading your soul. A place where we plan to help magnify voices that are overlooked or drowned out in the cog that is today's creative world. We welcome pieces that are open wounds of truth and vulnerability; pieces that agitate the core of what is standard, normal; pieces that speak to the brokenness in us all and attempt to heal what was severed by pain, by trauma, by life, by living.

We promise to strive to put forth our best in presenting you with pieces that rattle the quiet parts of you.

Louis Boyd & Fabielle Georges

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Henry Vinicio Valerio Madriz
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Ann Privateer

ARTIST BIOS

Ann Privateer is an artist, photographer, and poet. Her hobbies are playing and listening to music and working in the garden. She grew up in the Midwest and now lives in Northern California. Some of her recent work has appeared in *Third Wednesday* and *Voices* to name a few.

Patrick B. Osada recently retired as Reviews Editor for *SOUTH Poetry Magazine*. He has published seven collections, *From The Family Album* was launched in October 2020. Patrick's work has been broadcast on national and local radio and widely published in magazines, anthologies and on the internet.

www.poetry-patrickosada.co.uk

Jeremy Mifsud (they/them) is a queer Maltese poet, residing in Valencia. Jeremy uses writing to delve deep into their queerness, neurodivergence, and trauma.

Nicole Servino is a writer living and working in Denver. A graduate of Naropa University, where she cultivated a deep love for language and literature, Nicole remains an

POETRY

ARTIST BIOS

avid reader and writer, constantly seeking new avenues for personal and intellectual growth. Exploring contemporary literature, she finds solace and inspiration. Her favorite font is Georgia.

Nicole holds a deep belief in the transformative power of education and remains committed to empowering students to become thoughtful, engaged citizens of the world.

Acelin Kane is a college student, herbalist, poetry enthusiast, and aspiring teacher from Colorado. She is an LGBTQ+ disabled author and activist. She currently lives in Wisconsin with her partner and their cat Turnip. Her work appears in Medusa's Kitchen. Find her on X/Twitter @acelinkane.

WILD by Ann Privateer

Dance music and a plastic ball
Sweep across the wetted floor
Genius sleeps near a rushing brook
Inspired by forever
A duteous leaf tears in two
Balloons and ribbons galore
Thrown full throttle at dancers
Seen shaking their limbs
Vigilante vigorous voices
Bodies in nature all.

POETRY

RECEPTION by Ann Privateer

Sun shines on a chapel
Streets closed for the holiday
Sore brows frowning
Society on alert

Stinking thoughts
Sent from a phone
Cymbals crash
Drowning the disturbance

Heaven and Earth
Shamed by tyrants
Saved but enslaved
Harassed by adversity

As they all pause
Reflect, then sing.

POETRY

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY by Patrick Osada

Here journeys intersect,
converging at dependency—
one coming, one going —
briefly side by side.

A commonality found
in servants, dribbled food,
incontinence.

Toothless and burbling,
they share a secret language :
exchange enigmatic smiles.

TALKING TO MYSELF

by Patrick Osada

Oh! No! You heard! You've caught me out
in a one-way conversation!
It's no use claiming I wasn't —
but, there is an explanation.

I was talking to my brother —
you'll claim there was no-one there —
but there really is another boy,
he says we make the perfect pair.

My brother lives inside my head
and I call him Mr. Right,
he's always there to give advice —
keeps me good and out of fights.

But sometimes it gets so boring
with his voice inside my head,
“Do this! Do that! Behave yourself!”
like a non-stop list being read.

Sometimes I wish I could be free
to do the things I shouldn't :
run indoors in my muddy clothes —
do goalie dives on the carpet.

POETRY

TALKING TO MYSELF

by Patrick Osada

I'd tease that yappy dog next door
pretending to throw a ball,
then I'd torment my sister's friends
with a spider in the hall.

I'd put pepper on Gran's trifle
for a special teatime treat;
write rude words on Dad's dusty car
when he leaves it in the street.

It's not that I'm a wicked boy,
but I do like having fun! —
My brother always seems like rain
that will wash away my sun.

It's sad that he's always gloomy,
that he causes so much strife —
I wish that he would go away,
leave my head and get a life!

ANTINOUN

by Jeremy Misfud

I saw you for the first time at a pride party
where we didn't even plan to meet.

You waltzed up to me half-drunk,
holding another drink in your hand.

I hoped you'd cave
to the magnetic pull
and let our lips collide.

Instead, you said
that you can't understand
why people don't pick
a gender from the binary.

Are my pronouns the reason
we hadn't yet met?

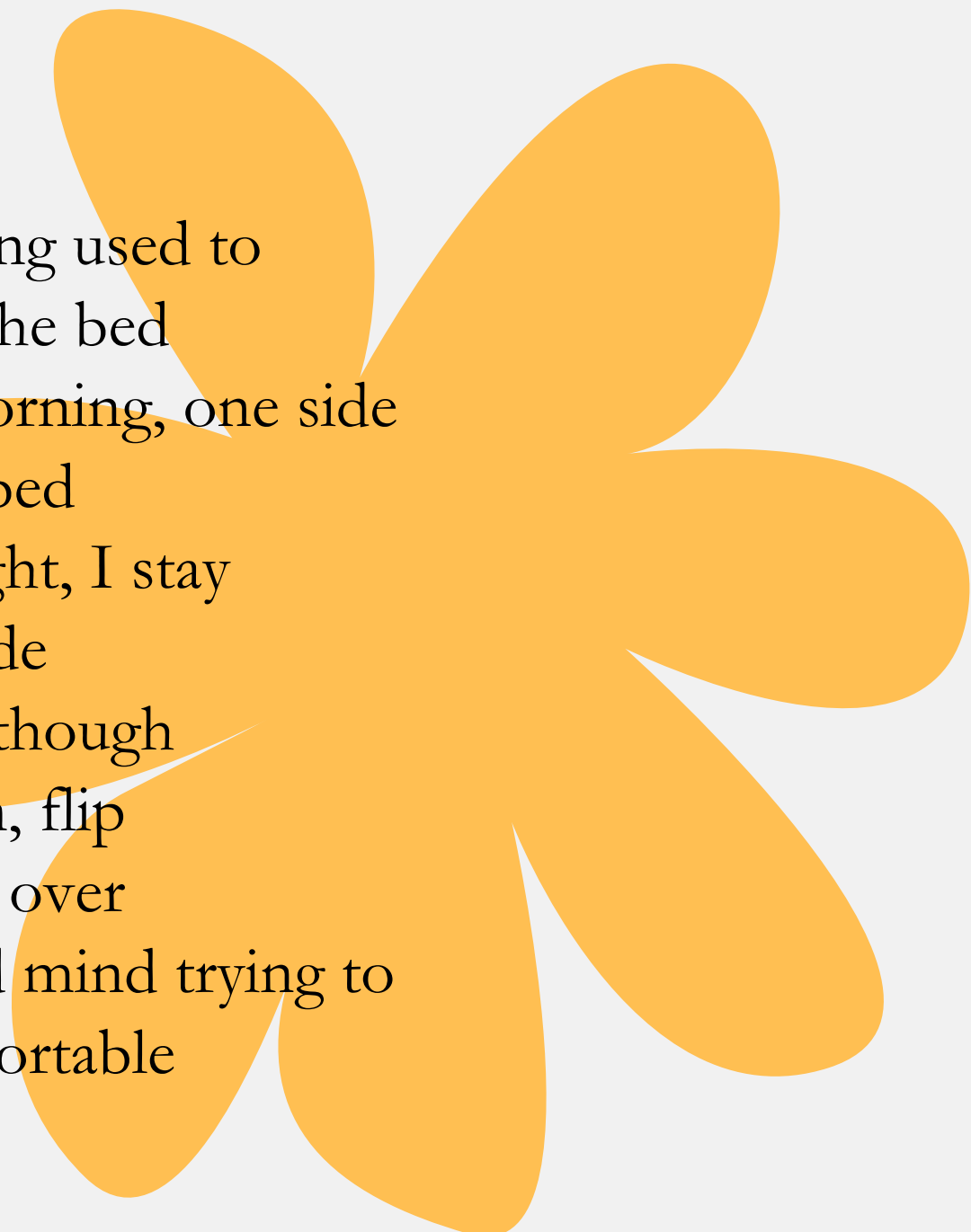
We had matched on Tinder
& sexted for weeks,
fantasising all the possible ways
you could dominate me.

I stood on the dancefloor,
humiliated
more than if I were naked
& tied up under your command.

I spent all night staring at your tongue
tangled with your friends',
wishing you'd return to kiss me,
take me home and disrespect me
in all the ways you'd said you would.

POETRY

Toss, Turn, Flip Wil Mahn by Nicole Servino



Still getting used to
Making the bed
in the morning, one side
undisturbed
sheets tight, I stay
on my side
all night though
toss, turn, flip
over and over
body and mind trying to
get comfortable
anew.

POETRY

THE KIDS ARE GOOD

by Nicole Servino

“How are the kids?”
people ask me
all the time. They’re good.

Really. They
are. Except Gennie
struggled in all
the lead
up to being a high
school fresh
man. And then
Ari got lower
&
lower
before sophomore year
until they threw
up in class. In front
of every one. Home
for days until asking to
go to ER.

Yes, better now, but oh,

POETRY

THE KIDS ARE GOOD

by Nicole Servino

so low.

Today, a victim
's advocate called from
the court, asking
How is Abbott? After
the threat.

Couldn't tell
me more.

A kid in class. A kid
with a gun & a threat
-ening eye, asking my
oldest, "What are you
looking at?" Because he was
staring because he was tired.

I'm tired.

The kids are
good.

POETRY

CEBADOR by Acelin Kane

Making my tea, I set my hands on either side of the kettle. I feel it go from cold to warm to scalding. I imagine I am holding it like I would hold your blushing face. My hands start to prickle up, sensation spreading from nerve to nerve. Gently, I pull them away before setting them on my own cheeks. So that this time, I am holding myself. So that this time, I am filling my cup with the love I have always been so ready to give to you; endless, unwavering, and unafraid of being burned.

POETRY

ODE TO THE LETTER S

by Acelin Kane

I love the way it rolls off my tongue.
The way it looks at the start of a sentence.
How it holds its meaning to fit each word
that contains it. It isn't just one thing. It can
be smooth, sharp, or simple. I particularly
enjoy how harsh it can make words sound.
Sadistic. Selfish. Stab. Strike. Sham. Sick.
Without it, these words wouldn't hold
the same impact. It means business.
It's a letter that doesn't fuck around.
Like, don't mess with me, I'm serious.
It's a letter that's held my every need.
It tells my story for me Sick. Starving.
Striving. Surviving. There's hope in it.
Sufferance. Sobriety. Security. Strength.
Sincerity.

POETRY

DIRTY/CLEAN by Acelin Kane

If to touch is to understand
and to understand is to love
and to love is to kneel
and to kneel is to submit;

then I am not my own any longer
I haven't been for a long time

I am fierce, I am stubborn
I stand firm in my beliefs
And still, it is not uncommon
for me to tilt my head back

with closed eyes and Obey
I give myself to you; an offering

I let you indulge—more—
I make it impossible to refuse
You love my willingness to comply
It is what we both crave and require;

POETRY

DIRTY/CLEAN by Acelin Kane

to be in control, to let go of it
to hold and be held

To scream out, beg, and cry
create pain or find release
Get a rush of something—anything
for a day, an hour, a moment

We think it could be enough
We hope it always will be

But if to submit is to let you
Touch me when I have said No
then I will not kneel, I will not
love, I will not understand or touch

I may not be my own any longer
but more than that, I am not yours

POETRY

ARTIST BIOS

Brandon Shane is a poet, born in Yokosuka Japan. You can see his work in the Berlin Literary Review, Acropolis Journal, Grim & Gilded, Sophon Lit, Marbled Sigh, Verdant Journal, Remington Review, among others. He would later move to San Diego, and graduate from Cal State Long Beach.

NON-FICTION

NO ONE READS ANYMORE

by Brandon Shane

This simple question of coming out is complicated. I have many published poems describing my love for men, descriptions of kissing, holding hands, even sex, with the same sex. But no one in my life has seen them, my Podunk conservative town has yet to discover there's a gay poet lurking about. The many family friends bearing their embroidered American flags, radical stickers plastering their environment destroying trucks, will pass me saliva laden beers in brotherhood fashion, at the same time believing all it takes is a wet homosexual lip to manifest and transmit HIV. There are many who know the truth; I am who I've repeatedly said I am, on the internet, but my two lives have yet to merge. We are a few carefully camouflaged capital P- Patriots cloistered in the holy bigotry of Sunday morning singalongs. I sometimes tilt my head and look at them aloof; haven't you read my poetry?

NON-FICTION

ARTIST BIOS

Robert Sachs' fiction has appeared in The Louisville Review, the Chicago Quarterly Review, the Free State Review, the Great Ape Journal, and the Delmarva Review among many others. He holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Spalding University. His story, “Vondelpark,” was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2017. His story, Old Times, was the Fiction Winner in the 2021 Tiferet Writing Contest. Read more at www.bobsachs.weebly.com.

Born in Atenas, Costa Rica, 1969, *Henry Vinicio Valerio Madriz* graduated in English Teaching and Linguistics & Literature. Photography lover. He’s published “Strange Fate” in Darkness Falls, “Loving Shadows” in Dear You, “Ages” in About Time, The Red Penguin, USA; “Running” in Strangest Fiction Volume One, USA; “The Cyrenian” in Otherwise Engaged Literature and Arts Journal Volume 11, USA; “My Love’s Gone On A Train” and “Treasure” in Younker! The Flight Of Youthful Temptations, India; “Green Mirrors” in All Your Stories, December 2023,

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UK; “Who are you?” in *All Your Poems*, February 2024, UK; and "Where have you gone?" in *Taludtod Umaatungal, Linyang Aagal*, Philippines. He got shortlisted with his poem “Soldiers’ Death Sentence” in *Voice of Peace: 1st Intercontinental Poetry And Short Story Anthology 2021*, The League of Poets.

FICTION

KESSLER'S MAGIC

by Robert Sachs

Danny Kessler. There wasn't a better high school basketball player in all of Chicago. He was dark and short—a few inches shy of six feet. And he was hairy. Was he hairy! Thick and dark, like fur—on his arms, but especially on his legs. It looked funny even to his fans. To make matters worse, basketball shorts back in the Fifties were tighter and shorter than they are now, and well, you had to laugh. Opposing players would call him names to rattle him, throw him off his game. “Wolfman.” “Hyde.” “Yeti.” “Fur Ball.” None of it worked. He was the calmest, most focused guy you could imagine. He'd take the out of bounds pass, dribble down the court, give a couple of head fakes, a quick jig one way, then the other, a little jumper from about twenty feet out and swish: Two points. Like clock work. He made it look easy.

Years later, during a court recess when I was representing him on his third DUI, he told me that keeping his leg hair had been a strategy. “While they were looking at my legs, Professor, they weren't looking at my hands. Get it?”

I didn't mind the “Professor” bit—he had been calling me that since fourth grade—but Danny had this annoying habit of ending many of his pronouncements with “Get it?”

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KESSLER'S MAGIC

by Robert Sachs

I think it made him feel smarter. Another guy, I'd say, "Enough with the 'get it,' already. I got it." But Danny deserved deference because he was our very own star player. And that deference accompanied him through, well, all the way through to the end. He had a terrific work ethic during our high school years. I don't mean studying—which he never did—I mean practicing. He'd be at the Y for hours shooting and dribbling. He'd line up six or seven of us. "Try and stop me, guys. Do your best. Get it?"

And we would do our best, but it was never enough. He'd dribble through and around us as if we were granite statues, and lay it up. Left handed. Right handed. Made no difference to him. He could sink free throws standing with his back to the basket. Yeah, we were in awe of him.

And he was one of the last of the underhand free throw shooters. That's how he learned it and he wasn't going to change just because of some fad. That ball would just float up, rarely touching the rim. Even when it did, the ball would slowly roll along one side, softly kiss the backboard and drop in. Magic.

Nineteen Fifty-Five and we're in the finals. Kessler's last high school game. His shooting keeps us close during the first quarter. But then a guy the size of Buckingham Fountain accidentally on purpose plows into him and they both go down hard.

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KESSLER'S MAGIC

by Robert Sachs

Kessler comes up with a broken ankle and that was all she wrote. He was recruited by a couple of colleges. They hoped, I assumed at the time, that he'd bounce back. He did—at least he tried—but he was never the same on the court or off. He wasn't limping, but he could no longer move from side to side the way he used to. Whether it was physical or mental we never knew. But one thing for sure, the magic was gone.

He got his degree in phys ed from the University of Illinois and a job coaching basketball at our old high school. His teams had a pretty good record through five seasons. Took the school to the state tournament a couple of times. Then for three years, nothing.

Depressed, with his job hanging by a thread, he figured what the hell and dropped two bucks on a lottery ticket. He won Seventy-five Million. That was the end of Danny's coaching career. He moved to a mansion near the lake and took up oil painting. Every Wednesday his teacher would show up at the mansion for lessons. A Cuban immigrant, she was young and beautiful and quite encouraging. Her name was Cheena and they married before the year was out.

Danny took up expensive cigars and drove a Bentley, but if you

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KESSLER'S MAGIC

by Robert Sachs

saw him walking down the street, you'd think he was dribbling a basketball. That had become his natural gait. So the first time he had me over I expected to see a full basketball court or at least a half court. But there wasn't even a hoop attached to the three car garage.

"I'm done with that," he said. "Ancient history. I'm in a different place. A different Danny Kessler. Get it?" Sounded to me like he'd been seeing a shrink.

Then there was the drowning. The district attorney alleged he drowned Cheena in their indoor pool on their fourth wedding anniversary. First, Danny shot the guy he found in bed with Cheena. Allegedly. Disposed of the body so well, it was never found. That much he told me. The police had Danny's gun and the lab confirmed that a shot had been fired. But no bullet, no body, no case. As usual, I handled that case for him.

Cheena was another story. They found her body floating in their indoor pool. Bruise marks on her shoulders consistent, the coroner said, with being held underwater. Danny had the motive, but he also had three witnesses who put him at the Bulls game around the time of death. I was one of them. The jury deliberated for a week before telling the judge they were hopelessly deadlocked. Eleven jurors voted to convict, one to

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KESSLER'S MAGIC by Robert Sachs

acquit. The judge declared a mistrial and after many more months of legal wrangling, the prosecutor decided not to retry the case. An interesting sidelight to this unfortunate matter was that Danny had painted a full-length nude portrait of Cheena a month before her death, and after the trial he sold it to the Playboy Club in Chicago for \$45,000. In some respects, Danny led a charmed life.

His move to Florida after the trial was not a surprise to me. He had been complaining about the cold weather for years and now he told me his ankle was giving him a lot of pain. He set himself up on the east coast of the Sunshine State in a big condo right on the water and would alternate between lounging at the pool and catching the greyhound races at the Palm Beach Kennel Club. He started shaving his arms and legs and other body parts and before long met a divorcee named Norma Chitlik. That's when things started to get interesting.

Norma was one of those Vassar girls. She didn't go there, but she had that look: Leggy, pale skinned, blonde. The cardigan sweater type, only down in Florida it was too hot for cardigan sweaters, so Norma walked around in sundresses and wispy shawls. She smiled, but never laughed. I think you know the kind of woman I'm talking about here.

I was against the marriage from day one. It's one thing to be a

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KESSLER'S MAGIC

by Robert Sachs

former high school basketball star with Seventy-Five Million Dollars; it's another to try to pull off being a sophisticated former high school basketball star with Seventy-Five Million Dollars. But Danny didn't listen to me. Norma was on the boards of the Norton Museum of Art and the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts. She had been married to old money. Danny was relatively new at this. I wouldn't say he was naive exactly, but I was afraid he wouldn't relate well to the horsey set. To my surprise, after the marriage he seemed to blossom. In ways one would not expect.

He began showing up at concerts wearing Norma's sundresses and wispy shawls. When I asked him about it while preparing for the divorce hearing, Danny said it was something he had always wanted to do. "You know, Professor, my whole life has been macho this and macho that, and I tried my damndest to be the guy everyone wanted me to be, but deep down that was never me. I don't know what kind of label they're going to put on me, but I like wearing women's clothing. I find them more interesting than the drab stuff you and I wear. And before you ask, I am strictly gynephilic."

I nodded, but it was a word I had to look up. It was a word he no doubt heard from Norma. The divorce was amicable. Norma was worth four times Danny's money and neither got anything

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KESSLER'S MAGIC

by Robert Sachs

from the other except that Danny paid court costs. And my fee. And here's the interesting thing: Women started falling all over themselves to get a piece of Danny. Turns out he had a real eye for women's fashion. As he elegantly put it, "We shop together all day and fool around all night. Get it?"

West Palm is a far cry from our old neighborhood in Chicago, and getting my head around this was difficult. "Women don't mind you dressing up as a woman?" I asked.

"I'm not trying to palm myself off as a woman. I'm a guy wearing women's clothes. There's a difference. Even so, some make me promise not to do it in public."

"And then it's alright?"

"These are women of a certain age, Professor, divorced or widowed. Get it? They've got no interest in going with me to the dog races. They don't want to spend the effort pretending to like all the things I like. But they love to shop for clothes with me and then we have our own private fashion show before we end up in the sack."

"And I don't mean to be nosey, but your body hair?"

"A no-no, Professor. I shave a couple times a day now. It's the only downer."

"Downer?"

"I miss my hair. Strange, huh?"

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KESSLER'S MAGIC by Robert Sachs

I wanted to say it wasn't as strange as dressing up in women's clothing, but I just said, "Mmmm."

I lost track of Danny for a while, but in the summer of 2005, he called me. "Wish me happy birthday, Professor. I'm seventy-five today."

"Happy birthday, Danny. We're all seventy-five. You do recall we went through eight years of grammar school and four years of high school together, right?"

"Are you two months older than me or am I two months older than you?"

"Doesn't make a difference. But seriously, happy birthday. What are you doing to celebrate?"

"Janis and I are going on a South American cruise."

"Janis?"

"Don't say it. No, I didn't get married again. Cheena and Norma were enough. But I've been living with Janis for the last couple of years. I'll email a photo. And she's age appropriate—forty-one." He laughed so hard he started coughing.

"Careful you don't hurt yourself."

The cruise ship was one of those floating cities. It would be like putting Skokie on the water. They had four swimming pools, two casinos, an ice skating rink. There was a zip line and a forty-foot rock-climbing wall. And it had a basketball court. Danny

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KESSLER'S MAGIC

by Robert Sachs

told me he was out there every morning in a sweatshirt and sweat pants taking shots, mostly short jumpers and free throws. A rag of teenagers noticed him. “Hey, old man,” one of them called out. “Why don’t we go one-on-one?”

Danny obliged and, of course, he walloped all of them in turn. He was huffing and puffing pretty bad at that point, but he challenged them to a five-on-one. He was going to show these brats a thing or two about basketball. I imagined him doing to those kids what he did to us at the Y sixty years before. And he did. Maybe he still had the magic after all. But the game took its toll. As I understand it, Danny was having trouble catching his breath and one of the kids ran for help. He ended up in the ship’s hospital. It didn’t look good. Janis stayed with him day and night. Danny hung on for a few more days in that floating hospital. And then he died.

Janis called me from the ship. Yes, I told her, I have a copy of his will. “I’ll bring it down with me,” I assured her. She told me Danny had written specific instructions for his funeral service. I introduced myself to Janis at the funeral home. We were among the first to arrive. She was an attractive woman, but she wasn’t forty-one or even sixty-one. She was our age or thereabouts.

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by Robert Sachs

It's nice of you to come. Danny had so few friends from the old days. You were special to him." I gave her a hug.

"Danny was the special one," I said.

The casket was open. As I got close to it, I started grinning. Couldn't help myself. I could feel Janis glaring at me. But there he was, dressed in his high school basketball uniform, a basketball pressed against his hip, with the hairiest arms and legs anyone had ever seen. I leaned close to the body and whispered, "Got it."

FICTION

TRICKY TWINS

by Henry Vinicio Valerio Madriz

The day both brothers were born was not a regular one; it was a tricky day for their mother; in fact, she didn't see it coming...

Their biological father met their mother at a party long ago, a party in which alcohol was the official drink and drugs were the official food. You know, the kind of party where people who lack self-love or their parents' love attend with empty hearts, willing to fill their souls' holes with whatever is at hand. This kind of party is the teens' favorite. Nevertheless, these wild parties only have one obvious result: to maintain their status quo or, worse, to lower it. In such a way, society will always renew individuals who always feel pity for themselves, you know, the "somebody else's fault" blamers. Somehow, society needs them.

That particular night, their father was high—too much cocaine—and their mother was far gone—too many whiskey shots! He was an insecure person (drugs were his anchor to this planet) looking for a one-night romance. She was socially programmed to please this kind of "man". She knew she had to get drunk to be easy prey for him. (Conscious drunkenness is the perfect excuse to have sex without being called a slut. When in doubt, blame alcohol!) The logical consequence? A bastard, or, in their case, 2.

Nine months later on April 1st their twins arrived. Maybe it was fate!

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TRICKY TWINS

by Henry Vinicio Valerio Madriz

The day the twins were born was not a regular one. The same way the Moon influences tides, Fools' Day has influenced both brothers enormously. One twin was the low tide and the other was the high tide.

Fate decided to make them a coin. Well, at least, two sides of the same coin! That is, even though they looked alike (2 drops of water), they were meant to be opposites without connection. Like the 2 sides of the same coin, they were made to look at and face opposite views and realities.

Sometimes life is a bed of roses; sometimes it doesn't give much; not because life itself is stingy, but due to the social system it is caught in. Different societies, different circumstances, and different opportunities.

Bobby and Art were normal kids, raised and loved by the same person, but when their birthday came, they used to do opposite things; like the two sides of the same coin. After eating the traditional birthday cake their grandmother prepared for them with breakfast because it was the only present she was able to give—thanks to God for coupons! Bobby used to walk throughout the hood looking for friends and always found a game to play or maybe a neighbor in need of help. Art, on the other hand, was seduced by lazy, hood homeboys who loved easy life and money or those kept violent traditions without knowing the beginnings

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by Henry Vinicio Valerio Madriz

or backgrounds to these bloody traditions. But, whenever Bobby and Art came back home, Art would always played a prank on his twin brother. After all, it was Fools' Day.

Like the day they turned 6, Art ate "his" half of their birthday cake and kept Bobby's half to sell it among his kindergarten classmates for one dollar a piece, even though Bobby wanted to share his part of the cake with them for free).

Or like the day they turned 9, Art stole an Alameda Striped Racer from the Science Lab and put it into his brother's backpack, and when Bobby opened it in Math class, the snake took a tour around the classroom, making everybody jump onto their desks. Bobby was put in detention. However, in the end, Art was the one punished.

Or like the day they turned 13, Art placed a bucket full of blood he got from their dog that accidentally died that same day on their bedroom door, leaving it just ajar for Bobby to open it and dirty his new shirt (the one Bobby worked for 4 weekends cleaning their neighbors' gardens to get the money for; he just wanted to go to his middle school with a designer shirt).

Or like the day they turned 15, Art, helped by 3 of his homeboys who restrained Bobby on the ground, decided to

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by Henry Vinicio Valerio Madriz

rape Bobby's high school girlfriend because she chose his brother instead of him. Although Art, as a member of the local gang, was already selling drugs in the streets and schools, that was the first time Art was put in jail. No more school Besides, who needed it to have a bright future anyway, Art always thought.

Or like the day they turned 19, when Art came back home from prison. There was no other place to go to, or for him to be accepted in. He brought some presents for his brother and grandmother, stolen from the grocery store owned by a Chinese family. That day, Art told the Chinese family: "This shop has the honor of being robbed by Robert Brown, at your service!" The police officers came home to arrest Bobby, but instead, they took Art with them (give a dog a bad name and hang him). That day, after explaining Bobby's innocence at the police station, their grandmother died of a heart attack. Bobby didn't have a chance to face Art (Bobby never forgave Art for what he did to his girlfriend). After their grandmother's funeral, Bobby just focused on college and becoming a doctor to save lives.

Or like today, when they turned 21, Art came back home from prison, again! But nobody was home. Bobby was taking his last class for the day at the university. So, Art put his gun on the kitchen table, went to the bathroom, took a shower, put on

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TRICKY TWINS

by Henry Vinicio Valerio Madriz

some of his twin brother's clothes, and took a nap. Art was very tired! Art was sound asleep when Bobby got home. Today was their birthday and Fools' Day! No grandmother's cake this time. Bobby thought it was a good idea to take the bullets out of Art's gun. What a prank! Besides, Bobby always wanted Art to never do anything bad. Bobby left home because he didn't want to confront Art. Something really bad might have happened.

Art woke up. There was only one thought in his mind: to make money the way he had decided to since he was a kid.

Art took his gun, his only friend. He was determined to do whatever it took to get some money. He left the only home he had ever known and went on his way. Art started to walk, observing everything and everybody around, chasing his prey or selecting a good business with no security system, any easy target.

"Don't move! The money... Give me everything you have on you. MOVE! Quickly, I ain't got no time", Art threatened his victim.

The only problem was that Art's victim had a gun too, and she used it.

FICTION

TRICKY TWINS

by Henry Vinicio Valerio Madriz

Wrong move, pal; I'm packed", she explained by showing her own gun. She saw it coming.

When Art pulled the trigger, he realized his gun didn't fire any bullets. It was too late; his victim shot him in the chest. Art fell to his knees. She called 911 calmly.

"He who lives by the sword, will perish by the sword", a police officer said.

"Yeah, we know this cutie, ma'am. So, don't worry. We know it was self-defense", his partner added.

"I understand. But remember: Every time a person is killed, something dies within us", Art's victim sentenced.

Bobby's neighbors helped him with Art's funeral expenses. Art's gang members didn't show up this time; they were in the streets doing what they knew best: nothing! Bobby's cheeks were dry; no tears were rolling down... just a profound, painful sadness.

FICTION

ARTIST BIOS

Allison Fradkin (she/her) creates satirically scintillating prose, poetry, and plays that (sur)pass the Bechdel Test and enlist their characters in a caricature of the idiocies and intricacies of insidious isms. She has contributed to Synkronicity, Chaotic Merge, New Plains Review, SHIFT, Rejoinder, and Emblazoned Soul Literary Review; as well as the anthologies Frozen Women/Flowing Thoughts (Palmetto Press), Sapphic Eclectic (Butterworth Books), and Audacious Women (Hot Redhead Media).

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

SYNOPSIS

Turquoise is a pony bead who won't get off her high horse. Magenta is a steed of a bead who doesn't hesitate to read her the riot act. And it's not just their colors that clash. Can Rainbow Heart, a charm who's both intrusive and inclusive, hang in there long enough to string these beads together?

CHARACTERS

TURQUOISE

a pony bead
cisgender female
open age
open ethnicity

MAGENTA

a pony bead
non-binary or genderqueer
open age
open ethnicity

RAINBOW HEART

a charm
transgender
open age
open ethnicity

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU by Allison Fradkin

SETTING

The arts-and-crafts station at summer camp.

TIME

The day before camp starts, the present.

At rise, pony beads MAGENTA and TURQUOISE are at the arts-and-crafts station at summer camp. Magenta is excessively energized while Turquoise is substantially more subdued.

MAGENTA

(singing, to the tune of “Leader of the Pack” by The Shangri-Las) They found me at the crafting store / And brought me here to summer camp / Now get a bead on / the strand please / Yes, arts-and-crafts is / the beader of the pack. (speaking) I cannot wait for camp to start tomorrow! I feel the need, the need to bead. Well, to be beaded. It might be kind of tough to

—

TURQUOISE

If I end up ringing your necklace, I might end up wringing your

—

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

MAGENTA

Hands? The way bracelets do?

TURQUOISE

Oh, I'll be bracing myself for that.

MAGENTA

It's always wise to make the proper preparations. The camp counselors certainly did. Look how organized we are!

TURQUOISE

You're right about that. They've divided us by size, shape, color, style—but not, apparently, by sound.

MAGENTA

Well, I wouldn't say we're divided. Once the campers get their hands on us, we'll be all mixed up. Glitter beads beside glow-in-the-dark beads, animal beads beside—

TURQUOISE

Okay, slow your roll there...

MAGENTA

Magenta. But you can call me Gent.

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

TURQUOISE

You're a gent? A boy bead?

MAGENTA

It's just a nickname. Actually, I'm—

TURQUOISE

I'm Turquoise. But you can call me Turqie. Because as you'll quickly learn, I talk turkey. That means I tell it like it is.

MAGENTA

Even if you might hurt someone's feelings?

TURQUOISE

Do you moonlight as a guided journal or something? Because feelings are for reading, not for beading. And I am not a woman of letters. I don't even like alphabet beads.

MAGENTA

Really? I think alphabet beads are the spelling bee's knees. I especially like "U."

TURQUOISE

Cool it, Gent. We just met.

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

MAGENTA

I like the letter “U,” because it’s smiley-shaped. I hope a camper with a “U” in their name includes me on their name bracelet.

TURQUOISE

Name bracelets are for babies. And just look at those letters. They’re so square, whereas we’re well-rounded. Plus, I prefer uniformity.

MAGENTA

Not me! Who wants to be part of a bland strand when you can be part of a grand strand?

TURQUOISE

Not I! I am all about simplicity and tradition and sequence.

MAGENTA

I love sequins!

TURQUOISE

Not sequins, silly. Sequence! One thing, then another thing, then the first thing again, then the second thing again. And around and around we go.

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

MAGENTA

You're talking in circles.

TURQUOISE

Exactly! The sequential is essential. Therefore, it is in our best interest to get along, since you and me—he and she—will probably end up next to each other. There's no sequence more traditional than boy, girl, boy, girl.

MAGENTA

Wow, you're really good at patterning your life after...patterns.

TURQUOISE

Thanks! I like to think of myself as a one-trick pony bead.

MAGENTA

That's not the flex you think it is.

TURQUOISE

Good, because I am inflexible—unlike those trendy bendy wristbands that people put words on. Can you imagine being a part of something so...inspirational? “You Are Enough,” “Be Strong,” “Choose Kindness.” The only kind I'm choosing is my own kind. As the saying goes: Beads of a feather knock together. (playfully nudges Magenta)

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

MAGENTA

I hate to break it to you, Turqje, but if variety gives you anxiety, then you're in the wrong place. Kids are so unique and aware and creative. I don't know if you're aware, but...they color outside the lines now. So not to yuck your yum and all, but I think authenticity is way more important than simplicity and uniformity.

TURQUOISE

TL;DB.

MAGENTA

Huh?

TURQUOISE

Too long; didn't bead. And quit whining, would you? I don't know if you're aware, but...boys don't vent, Gent.

MAGENTA

I never said I was a boy.

TURQUOISE

Oh, don't tell me I misgenta'ed you.

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

MAGENTA

That's heartless! Just wait 'til the counselors hear about this. You are so canceled!

(RAINBOW HEART CHARM enters. Internally and externally, Rainbow is the epitome of inclusivity.)

RAINBOW HEART

When there's strife among the strands, my heart just skips a bead.

TURQUOISE

Excuse me, but this is a private cancellation. So mind your own beads-wax, okay?

RAINBOW HEART

Get off your high horse, Pony.

TURQUOISE

You can't hang with us, Charm. Not only would you weigh us down; you wouldn't align with our design.

RAINBOW HEART

What's wrong with the way I look?

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

TURQUOISE

Well, it's one thing to be a few colors short of a rainbow. It's another thing entirely to be a few colors...long of one. Aren't you, like, capped at seven?

RAINBOW HEART

Capped? What do you take me for, a marker? My colorfulness is limitless.

MAGENTA

And my gender is no offender! Everyone is beading material. You've got a lot to learn, Turqie. Forget summer camp. You need summer school.

RAINBOW HEART

She needs charm school.

MAGENTA

Yeah, ever thought about enrolling?

TURQUOISE

Hey! I am perfectly acceptable just the way I am. The other beads will back me up on this. (addressing a container of turquoise beads) Won't you, my fellow wrist watchers?

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

(Silence. Turquoise shakes the container.)

Hello in there!

MAGENTA

Maybe they're afraid to speak up.

RAINBOW HEART

Or maybe they're nothing like you. On the inside, anyway.

TURQUOISE

I'll have you know we are all empty inside. I mean vacant. I mean open.

RAINBOW HEART

As in open-minded?

TURQUOISE

No, as in...open-ended.

RAINBOW HEART

That's another word for limitless.

TURQUOISE

It is?

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

MAGENTA

You're right about one thing, Turqie: You're perfectly acceptable just the way you are.

TURQUOISE

Thank you.

MAGENTA

But you're not perfectly accepting just the way you are.

TURQUOISE

Do I have to be?

MAGENTA

Don't you want to be? What would you say if a turquoise bead and a magenta bead couldn't "knock together"? That they had to be separated by a spacer bead because they're not in a safe space? Or worse, what if Turquoise and Magenta couldn't even sit at the same arts-and-crafts table because their colors clash?

TURQUOISE

I'd say that's a raw deal. I'd say that's an un-bead-able deal! I'd say (singing, to the tune of "Let It Be" by The Beatles) Let her bead / Let her bead / Let her bead / Let her bead / Any way she wants to / Let her bead.

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

RAINBOW HEART

Loving the limitlessness. However...while it's true that all children should be seen and heard, it's also true that not all children should be seen and...her'ed. Or she'ed.

TURQUOISE

Cut it out. You're giving me the he-bead-jeebies.

MAGENTA

He doesn't bead jeebies. He beads bracelets. And so do they! In fact, sometimes they—I—prefer key chains to bracelets. Hey, that's exactly what you need, Turqie: a key change. Then you'll be singing a different tune.

TURQUOISE

(to Rainbow Heart) Ugh, make him stop.

RAINBOW HEART

Anything for you, T.P.

TURQUOISE

That's not my nickname.

RAINBOW HEART

Well, it should be. Your breed of bead is Turquoise Pony, right?

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

TURQUOISE

But T.P. stands for toilet paper! That's not who I am!

MAGENTA

It's a crummy feeling when someone calls you something you're not, isn't it? Like, if I were to call you Jerk-quoise instead of Turquoise, that would hurt your feelings, wouldn't it? And I don't want to do that.

TURQUOISE

I don't want to be a jerk. I don't want to be heartless either. T.P. doesn't stand for Tin...Person. (to Rainbow Heart) This is all your fault, making me think and rethink and think again. You can't spell "charm" without "harm."

RAINBOW HEART

Sorry-not-sorry, Turqie, but in addition to being limitless, I am also harmless.

MAGENTA

She'll never have a change of heart, will she?

RAINBOW HEART

She sure will. I could charm the bead off a bracelet.

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

TURQUOISE

But then I wouldn't be included. Ugh, my chances of acceptance are hanging by a thread and the beading hasn't even begun yet.

MAGENTA

I don't know if you're aware, but...it's entirely possible to (singing, to the tune of "Turn the Beat Around" by Vicki Sue Robinson) turn the bead around! Learn to show acceptance!

RAINBOW HEART

Ditto. Next to arts-and-crafts, inclusivity is my favorite activity.

TURQUOISE

A bracelet united will never be divided! (gasps) Did I just say the quiet part out loud?

RAINBOW HEART

No, you said the best part out loud!

MAGENTA

(to Turquoise) You really mean it? You're not just stringing us along?

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

TURQUOISE

That's the job of the gir...of the camper who picks us.

MAGENTA

Look at you, all flexible, like a trendy bendy wristband with the admirable advice "Choose Kindness." How does it feel?

TURQUOISE

Surprisingly spectacular. There's even a certain...simplicity to it. Thanks, you two, for keeping me from making a mortifying bling blunder. Plus, you helped me realize I could accesso-rise to the occasion and take a shine to acceptance. I really am open-ended!

RAINBOW HEART

I heart you.

TURQUOISE

Careful, Magenta's got their heart set on U.

MAGENTA and TURQUOISE

(singing, to the tune of "We Got the Beat" by The Go-Gos)

We got the bead / We got the bead / We got the bead.

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

THE STRAND THAT BEADS YOU

by Allison Fradkin

MAGENTA

(still singing) Yeah! I got you!

TURQUOISE

(speaking) I got you!

RAINBOW HEART

Oh, my friends. You work like a charm. (belting—badly—to the tune of “Where Does My Heart Beat Now?” by Celine Dion)

Where does my heart bead now?

TURQUOISE

Right beside us.

RAINBOW HEART

Ooh, now that is on point.

MAGENTA

Not to mention on brand.

TURQUOISE

And perhaps most importantly...on strand.

The End.

FICTION-SCREENPLAY

ARTIST BIOS

Born in Atenas, Costa Rica, 1969, *Henry Vinicio Valerio Madriz* graduated in English Teaching and Linguistics & Literature. Photography lover. He's published "Strange Fate" in Darkness Falls, "Loving Shadows" in Dear You, "Ages" in About Time, The Red Penguin, USA; "Running" in Strangest Fiction Volume One, USA; "The Cyrenian" in Otherwise Engaged Literature and Arts Journal Volume 11, USA; "My Love's Gone On A Train" and "Treasure" in Yunker! The Flight Of Youthful Temptations, India; "Green Mirrors" in All Your Stories, December 2023, UK; "Who are you?" in All Your Poems, February 2024, UK; and "Where have you gone?" in Taludtod Umaatungal, Linyang Aagal, Philippines. He got shortlisted with his poem "Soldiers' Death Sentence" in Voice of Peace: 1st Intercontinental Poetry And Short Story Anthology 2021, The League of Poets.

PHOTOGRAPHY

ARTIST BIOS

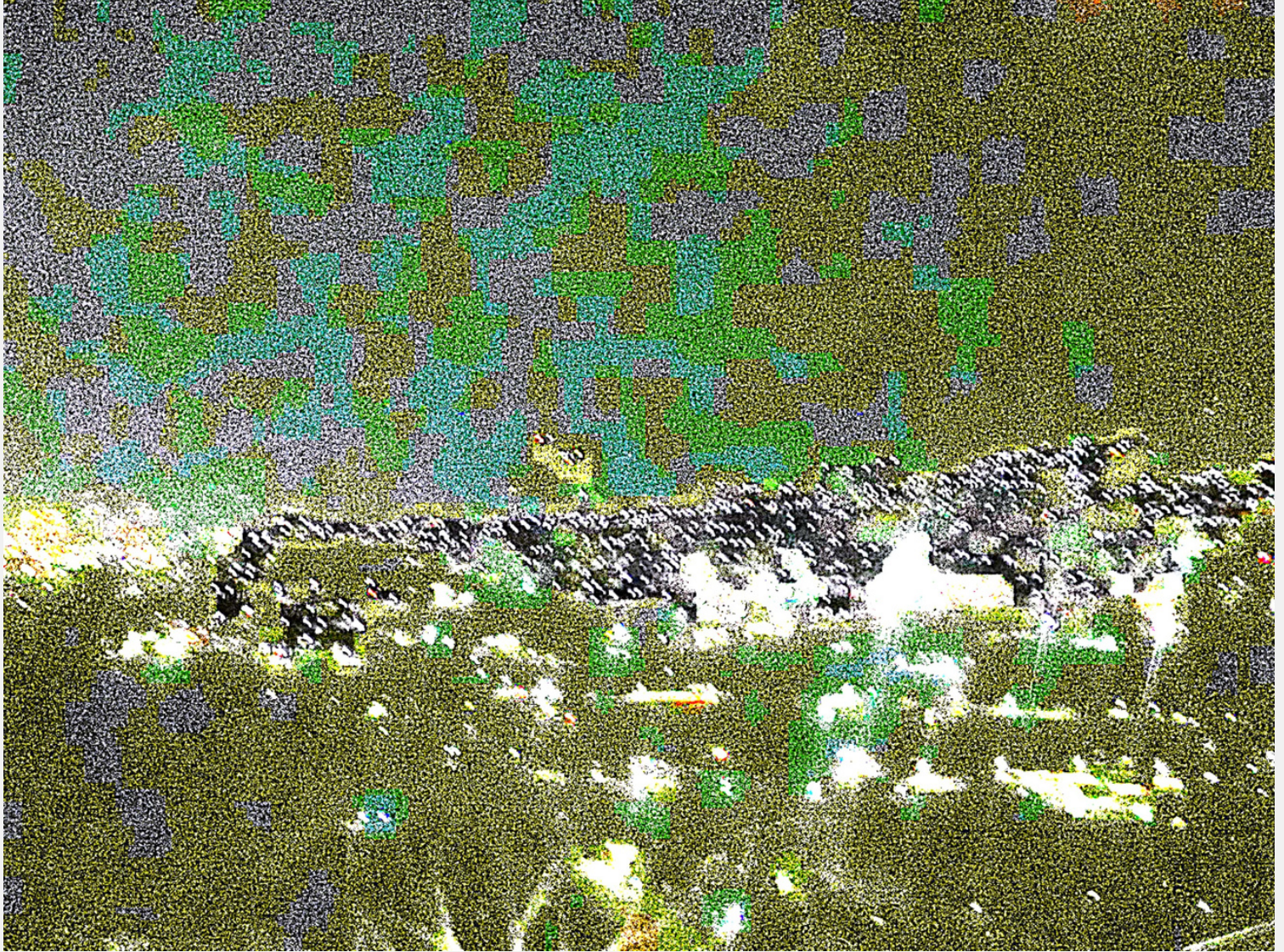
Binod Dawadi, author of *The Power of Words*, holds a Master's degree in English Literature and is based in Kathmandu, Nepal. With over 1000 anthology contributions, he aims to enlighten society through his writing. Binod is also deeply involved in digital photography and painting. His work has been showcased in prestigious exhibitions, including the International Art Festival in Korea in 2023. Combining literary excellence with visual artistry, Binod is dedicated to societal transformation through creativity.

Ann Privateer is an artist, photographer, and poet. Her hobbies are playing and listening to music and working in the garden. She grew up in the Midwest and now lives in Northern California. Some of her recent work has appeared in *Third Wednesday* and *Voices* to name a few.

PHOTOGRAPHY

CITY SCAPE AT NIGHT 101

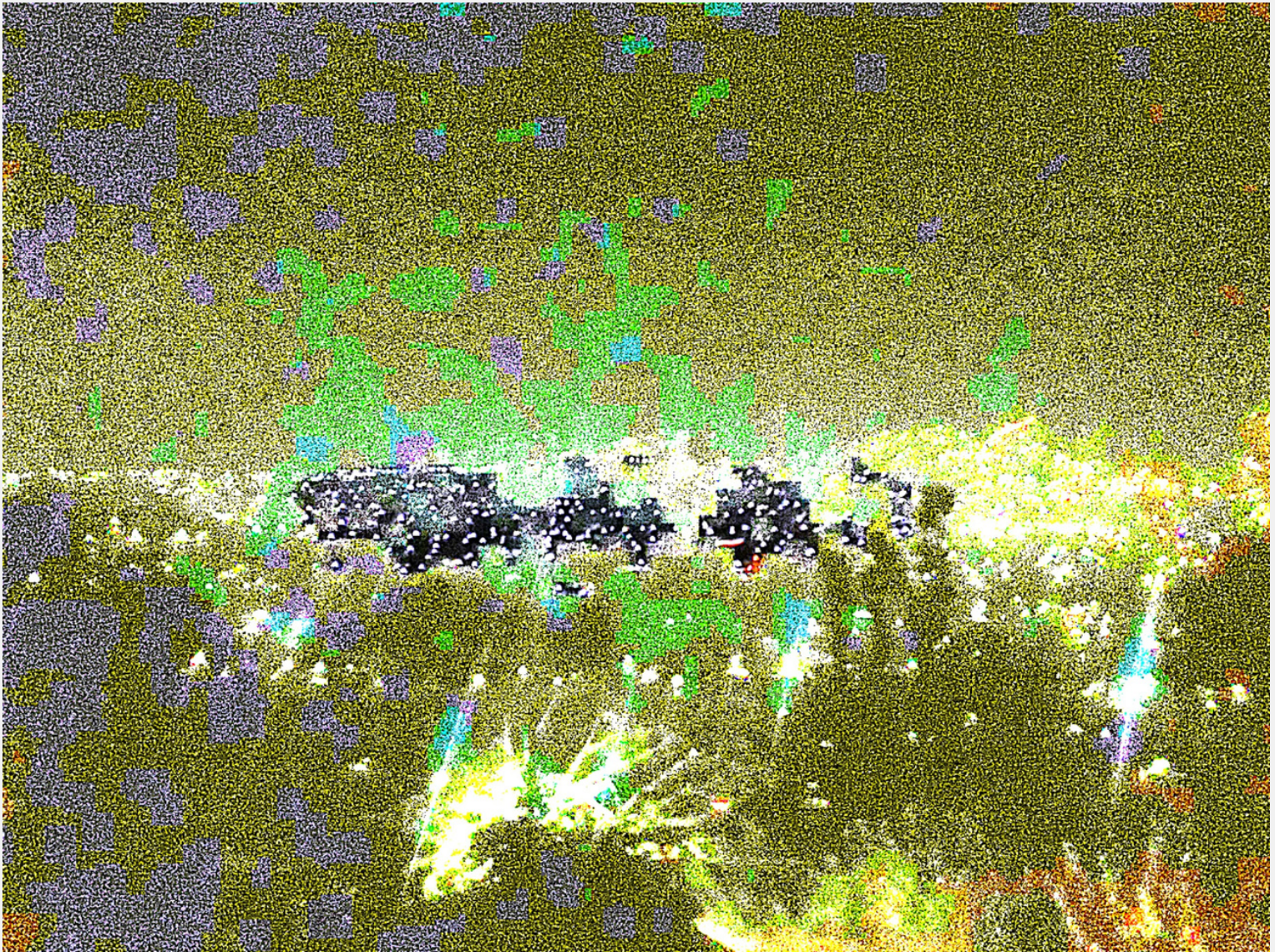
by Binod Diwadi



PHOTOGRAPHY

CITY SCAPE AT NIGHT 2

by Binod Diwadi



PHOTOGRAPHY

BEAUTY IN THE MUD

by Henry Vinicio Valerio Madriz



PHOTOGRAPHY

POTTED PALMS by Ann Privateer



PHOTOGRAPHY

FRENCHIE by Ann Privateer



PHOTOGRAPHY

THANK YOU



ONE.

