

*A Menagerie of
Monsters and the
Macabre*

A Spooktacular Penumbra Collection

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and the Macabre**

A Spooktacular *Penumbra* Collection

Penumbra Press

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If Today was her Last
By Carmen Baca

Same old, same old, she thought, sneaking away unseen
From the haunted house this disappointing Halloween.
Prepared to be scared, even a bit, she did more scoffing
Than shrieking. Horror movies at home appealed more.
Darkness concealed her escape. Not one friend noticed.

A familiar path on the edge of town led straight there.
But stealthy steps soon followed, stopping when she did.
They gave her the willies, more so when no one appeared.
She ran for a while, almost screamed. Turned instead
Into the nearby trees. An abandoned house was closer.

She snuck through the forest, real fear spurring her on.
Flirtation with death hadn't been part of her plan today.
But here she was, losing any hope of rescue or escape
From something sinister skulking, lurking, hunting.
Fourteen was too young to wonder if today was her last.

Passing the cemetery where the town buried their dead,
She stumbled upon a grave, glimpsed her family name
Before gloom wrapped all in a mist, moist with the smell
Of the sepulcher. A cloying bouquet of funeral flowers
Sent her off again in a desperate search of safe haven.

Cat's Claws circled the decrepit house, a grove of guardians
Against intruders. Thorns, blade-sharp, tore through flesh
From her face and arms in her rush to find a way inside.
All the shuttered windows and boarded up doors foiled her,
Save one, the cellar, into which she slithered, snakelike.
There was a grain of truth to the warning she hadn't heeded
About the spirits haunting the place. It exuded an eerie aura
Of occupancy through a maze of hallways leading nowhere.
She froze when a breath and otherworldly moan covered her
In a shroud. If today was to be her last, the house—her crypt.

The Banshee

By Schuyler Becker

Banshee in the basement
Banshee beating the knell
Burrowing in bedsheets
Banshee bashing at brains
Borrowed from nightmares thought—

Dead, beneath the earth
Between what they've said
Bleeding, bitter, blessed
To bare beast's screams with
Blackened burdens borne;

Biding, bitten, battering
Through fortresses and heartstring
Broken, brittle, beseeching
Bride to the dead and the tide
Better buried together;

Banshee in the border
Banshee breaking from hell
Boreholes in deepest blue
Banshee blooming scarlet
Born biting back a howl.

Welcome

By Amanda Trask

Medium: Pencil and Ballpoint Pen



Who Will Tend the Roses

By Mark Hendrickson

'Twas stench of rotting roses roused
the spirit of disgruntled corpse,
flowers on another's grave
but none there were on his, of course.

Cadaver frowns in wooden box,
and wonders why no roses, he?
Nothing there but soil and dust,
Perhaps I should get up and see.

*Who tends the roses, now I'm gone?
yellow petals, pink or red,
some white as snow, yet tipped in blood,
who tends and trims my flower bed?*

*A garden back of house I owned,
'fore illness stole me 'way from there
and auctioned off my memories.
What's happened to my flowers, fair?*

Ghosts, they do not rise and float
insubstantial from the grave;
they wrestle out of body prone,
they bite and chew and claw and rave.

The toenails rip the lining back,
phantom fingers clack and scrape,
until they pierce corporeal veil,
making good the soul's escape.

He trudged down once familiar paths,
across the creek and up the hill,
to find beloved garden patch
and see if it was tended still.

Now passing through the iron gate,
then 'round the back and through the lawn,
his glassy eyes at last beheld
his lovely garden, kissed by dawn.

He bent to touch the bud and stem
and catch the scent of blossom's head,
but at his touch it shriveled back,
and by his breath it withered, dead.

Now when October comes to call
and moonlight sifts between the trees,
you'll catch a glimmer of the ghost,
still sad and weeping, on his knees.

Shadow
By Cleo Griffith

Even as the sun must set
so do creatures long to net
prey, as in the dark they hide,
trusty weapon at their side.

Be it knife or gun or rope,
you must watch with care and hope,
nightly beasts might follow you.
Who knows then what shadows do?

As you open up the door
look around all ways before
twisting lock to go within,
turn on lights as you begin.

Look! The light switch blew the fuse!!
What comes there? That stagnant
ooze?

Something slimy has my arm!
Alas, I fear

it

means

me

Harmmmmmmm.....

Pumpkin Patch Guard

By Terry Brinkman

Medium: Acrylic on Recycled Cardboard



CATCHING FLIES

By Elizabeth Clifton

Angela couldn't have another child, so she made the most of every special, motherly moment she could. She especially liked to watch her young son sleep. She'd sit at his bedside, long after the story had come to THE END, long after his eyelashes had fluttered down to rest upon his cheeks, long after she should have been in bed herself—just watching him.

He always slept with his mouth open. Her mother called it catching flies— a one way ticket to cold-sores and bad breath, but Angela liked it.

All the better to see his little teeth.

She liked to let her gaze linger over every inch of him. Soon, she'd no longer be able to. He was four years old and about to start school. Children learn what scrutiny is in the company of their peers. Soon, it would be rude to stare.

She was tucking a stray hair behind his ear when the cockroach crawled out of it.

Angela flinched—drew back her hand—almost slapped the sleeping child's face, but the cockroach looked at her, its long antennae waving desperately as the arms of an island castaway hailing a boat far out at sea.

Fear turned to panic.

It was then that Angela did something she thought impossible—she who had always been afraid of scuttling things, picked up that cockroach with her bare hands and with it gently cupped within, rushed it to the kitchen. She put it in a jam jar, padded with tissue—the lid pierced with holes.

That night, Angela watched over them both—cockroach and boy— waiting for morning to reveal which of them was the child she'd raised.

At the corner of Turner and Elm
By Emma Lowe
Medium: Linocut Print



Not Enough Room By Marco Etheridge

Jacob Parker hates tight spaces, elevators, and clowns. He's cursing two of the three as an ancient elevator lifts him from the depths of a parking garage. Jacob's therapist tells him hate isn't the right word. Phobia is more accurate. The therapist wants Jacob to face his fears. After twenty-eight trips around the sun, Jacob would rather avoid his fears. Completely. As he rises ever so slowly to his therapist's office, Jacob mutters curses like a Tourette's sufferer.

The hateful elevator lurches to a stop. Steel cables flex in the unseen shaft above Jacob's head. The lift bobs up and down. The letter L glows red above the door. The door opens with a groan. That's when Jacob sees the clown.

The gaping door is blocked by a massive shadow, but there is no mistaking a clown silhouette of gargantuan proportions. The grotesque creature steps forward. A giant red boot hits the stained carpet. The elevator sinks a half inch. The clown squeezes in, hunching a bit so his tam o'shanter will clear the top of the door.

The clown's bulk nearly fills the car. His head is the size of a watermelon, topped by a green plaid tam and framed with blazing orange hair. Three hundred pounds of clown. Twenty-five stone of phobia. Jacob presses himself into the farthest corner. Sweat beads on his forehead.

The head swivels like a tank turret, dark grey eyes peering from a sea of white pancake makeup. Jacob feels his own eyes drawn to the clown's gaze, like a bird to a snake. He sees the rest of that horrible face, a genuine smile on blue lips hidden inside the enormous painted-on smile of white and red.

The clown snaps one red-gloved hand beside his melon head, index finger pointed at the too-close ceiling. The blue mouth forms an exaggerated O of surprise. The clown winks at Jacob, turns toward the door, and begins hauling in a tangle of ribbons.

Two dozen helium balloons descend into view outside the

elevator door, each one straining against its tether. The clown gives a yank and the balloons dip and slide inside. The balloons obscure the ceiling of the elevator car. The giant clown is wreathed in bouncy mylar bags. Even Jacob feels the need to duck.

The elevator doors slide closed. The car lurches upwards. And the clown speaks to Jacob in a rich baritone.

“How’re you doing this fine day?”

No way. No talking in elevators. That’s the rule. Ten floors to go. If I could reach the button, I’d get off and take the stairs.

“Not bad, I guess.”

The clown taps one finger against his nose and gives Jacob another wink.

“Got it. No talking in the lift. Sorry.”

Jacob is trying to sputter some false protest when the elevator lets out a gasp and a bang, then bounces to a halt. Between floors. The clown squeaks out a horrible giggle and starts mashing buttons with a sausage finger. Jacob fights back the scream in his throat as the elevator car shrinks and the clown grows.

The clown gives up on the buttons and looks down at Jacob.

“Well, ain’t this a kick in the ass.”

His head tilts and he is staring, painted eyebrows rising.

“Hey now, take it easy Jacob. Nothing to be frightened of.”

Jacob jumps at the sound of his name.

“It is Jacob, right? Jacob Parker? You grew up on Green Terrace. My dad used to do your birthdays. Never forget a kid. That was his motto. I took over when Dad went to the clown car in the sky.”

Jacob’s brain is skittering like a deer on ice. This huge clown, too big, too close. Image of birthday parties flashing through his skull, the childhood dread when the clown would arrive at the curb in front of his house. All his friends cheering, so he cheers too. He’d give up every wrapped present if the clown would just drive on.

“Cat got your tongue, Jacob? Wait, are you one of those kids who grew up scared of clowns? Dang, I’m sorry. I should have guessed. Koko K. Klown at your service. Put ‘er there, pal.”

The clown shoves out a massive hand and dangles in front of Jacob. He can’t refuse the offered shake. His hand disappears inside the red glove. Two hard pumps and the clown releases his hand.

“Hey, Jacob, we might be stuck here a bit. Let’s have some fun. Guess what my middle initial stands for. Go on, guess away.” Jacob has no idea what the K might stand for. Kalliope? Katastrophe? Kale? He looks up at Koko and shrugs.

“Yeah, no one ever guesses. Too scary for most of them. K for Killer. Get it?”

Koko’s booming laugh fills the space, crushing Jacob’s eardrums.

“See, so many kids grow up terrified of clowns, Dad figured it was better to just stick the middle name in there and be done with it. But you want to know a funny thing, Jacob?”

Jacob nods because he doesn’t know what else to do.

“Dad had the same middle name. Because it’s true. He was a killer clown, and I’m my father’s son. Dad had thirty-eight confirmed, Jacob. Think of that. He would have made forty for sure, but his ticker gave out on him. Me, I’m only up to nineteen, but I’m young, same age as you. Twenty-eight, right? Working for your dad, just like me.”

Jacob is plastered against the corner now, eyes wide and staring. The elevator starts with a bang and a lurch. As the car rises, Jacob sinks to a crouch, wanting only to disappear. The elevator rises two more floors and slows to a halt. A bell dings. The door opens.

Koko K. Klown slips a red-gloved hand under Jacob’s armpit and hoists him to his feet. A firm, gentle pressure, like a dad raising a fallen child. The clown smiles at him with merry eyes.

“Relax, Jacob. I’m just messing with you.”

He squeezes a bicycle horn at his belt. Toot-a-toot-toot. The elevator comes to a halt. The doors open. Koko K. Klown turns away, leaving his balloons behind. The ribbons dangle from the ceiling grille like hungry tendrils. Jacob cowers away from their touch.

Halfway through the elevator door the clown stops and turns back to Jacob.

“My body count is only fifteen. Sorry I lied to you. Enjoy your day. See you real soon.”

The elevator door slides shut. Jacob Parker feels the warm wet stream flowing down over his shoe into a growing puddle that darkens the carpet.

im perfect

By Richard Rubio

it doesn't take much
to hate yourself, but

try holding your slimy
imperfections in both hands
like a pile of wriggly, tangled
worms. bring them up to your

face, and know their smell of
dirty feet and armpits.
to face each imperfection
is to learn

the bitterness of a taste
you just never acquired
our flaws aren't tasty,
but putrid, shameful, horrid.

the taste of guilt reminds you
of the worst times of your life,
like a horrible, twisted up
nostalgia.

you close your eyes
and you don't inhale
and you face your imperfections
like you face shots of dark

liquor, one after the other
and trying not to gag,
each shot softening
the blow of the next,

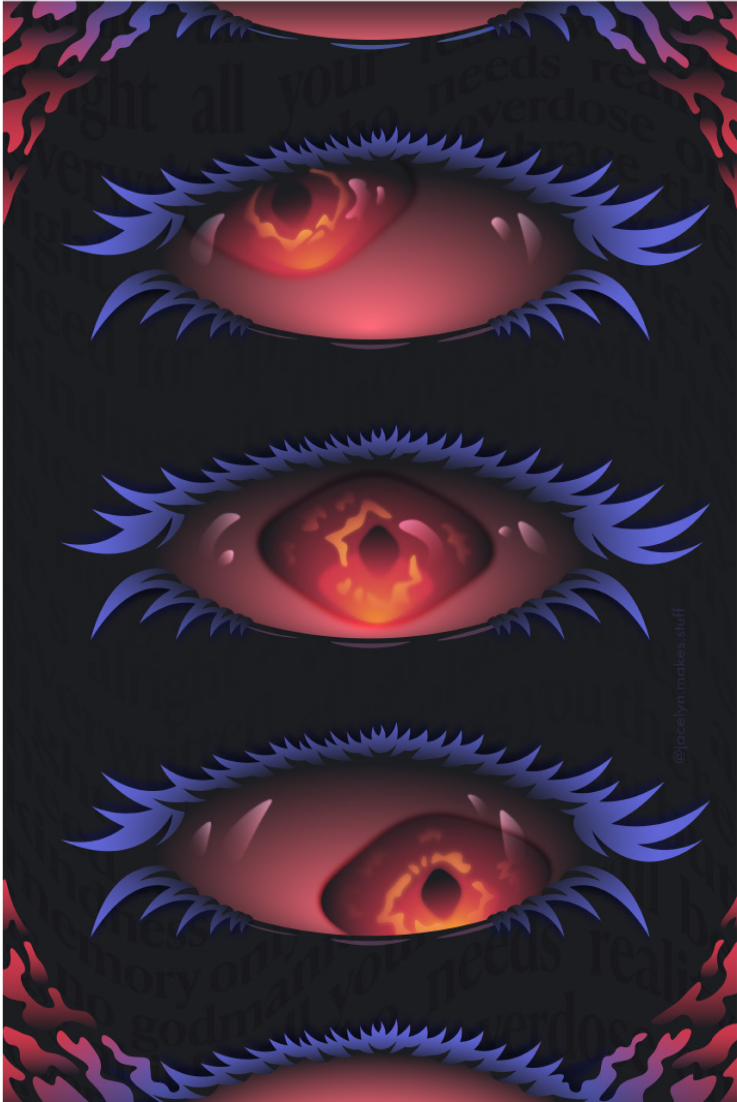
each shot convincing you
you're brave,
you're cool
you're sexy.

i love my flaws
i love my liquor.

My Dripping, Bleeding, Heart
By Rachael Durham

I'm running through a haunted maze
You're chasing me, I love the pace
My heart and breath are both in tune
As I am running room to room
You're slowing down, I can't see why
Until I slip and start to slide
My breath hitches, I start to cry
I fight and fight I try I try
I kick him and he drops the knife
I grab it and I slice him twice
He falls and so I push away
But I can't leave and so I stay
You're right outside and so I hide
I grip the knife and bide my time
You walk in slowly, not surprised
You had this planned the whole damn time
You find me and you pull me down
You lick his blood off of me now
I find your heart, it beats like mine
You feel my fear, it tastes divine
Now for sure it is my turn next
You always cheat and leave me vexed
You really do not like to share
You cut my skin and make me swear
I get up, start to run away
You are the god to which I pray
I float so fast, don't leave a trace
I hope I get to use my mace
I love to see the way you burn
Your voice like gravel when you're stern
You'll never let us be apart
You've touched my dripping, bleeding, heart

Reality Overdose 01
By Jacelyn Yap
Medium: Digital



Wildvine

By Brian U Garrison

Claw and clay share the same root
linguistically. A rosebush
shreds human skin as easily
as the bud perfumes the garden
to lure a curious nose.

Dig deep enough and you'll uncover
petrified details hidden in the soil.
A thorny lust for animal flesh
predates the switch to photosynthesis—
the days before we tamed the cucumber.

Tomatoes have no memory,
but some raspberries will prick
when plucked. Our sticks and strings
keep them contained, it seems,
but we keep coming back to feed.

After Dining on Eggs I Thought of Her

By Ryan Mayer

I longed to nap inside this pretty crypt—
the fleurs-de-lis in its veined marble, its flare
beneath the oak branches! I used shade
and makeup to lighten my skin, renounced all food,
all drink except for brandy, and donned a black suit.
(Don't all worthwhile venues have a dress code?)
I've been sitting in front of the crypt for weeks
becoming a body—breathing yet deader than dead:

last night, a rodent bedded down between my thighs;
this morning, crows (diurnal angels!) plucked worms
from my face. Just now, a bone-thin mutt made a meal
of my atrophied arms.

Trés exclusive—the crypt
remains sealed! I flash my teeth to coax it open,
but too much (albeit putrid) flesh obscures my grin.

Halloween Night

By Michele Cacano

I.

I used to love to dress up
in costumes of my own;
never princesses or pumpkins—
I'd rather stay at home.

A

I'd only go out scary
as a demon or a ghost,
a mummy or a vampire
or a parasitic host.

I loved to scare the neighbors
dressed as a fright'ning witch,
a goblin, or devil—
something scary. That's my niche.

Halloween is for the monsters
And for tricking devils, too,
by dressing up and scaring them
before they get to you.

So glue your horns and dust your skin
with powders green and garish,
Bravely walk among the ghouls
who wish to make you perish.

II.

Now that I'm a grown-up,
who still loves Halloween,
I leave the makeup to the young ones;
I prefer to be unseen.

No longer needing costumes,
I am the witch inside.
I thrive as magic blooms—
in darkness, I reside.

At Samhain, veils are thinner,
allowing worlds to mingle.
The living and the dead are
close...spirit bells a-jingle.

Instead of trick-or-treating
or partying all night,
I spend my Halloweening
calling spirits to the Light.

I'd rather build my altar,
an homage to the dead,
while the pumpkins go on living
where dark things go unsaid.

A witch's place is special—
a one-stop hallowed ground—
where ceremonies happen
and rare comfort can be found.

I keep the fun and playtime
social, early on,
but solitary ritual
is from midnight until dawn.

That time is for the magic;
the crossing of the veil;
communion with the other side
and sharing of the ale.

Come join me on Halloween?
You think you want to dare?
Well, start your own tradition! I told you—
I'm a singular affair

Dracula Plans His Hallowe'en Soiree
By LindaAnn LoSchiavo

Near Hallowe'en, routine tension sets in.

Expected entertainment, catering,
Décor: a bachelor like Dracula
Tries to outdo last year's event— though some
Attended by mistake and won't return.

Tradition dictates hospitality's
Essential to his kind. Longevity
Must be preserved. Drinks are but one concern.
His entourage deserves to be amused.

Instead of necks turned red as after-birth,
Refreshments can be served by a blood bank,
Thanks to a generous donation made.

Exquisite concentration on details
Is a tourniquet for his unquiet mind,
Obsessed with real estate, castle upkeep,
Demands imposed by vamphood's life-in-death.

His party plans completed, its checklist ticked,
The Transylvanian lord licked his lips,
Succumbed to tempting pleasure-crested pricks



Medium: Mixed Media

Three Strikes

By Veronica Aguilar

I was still rubbing lipgloss between my lips when Caleb finally showed up. He was twenty minutes late to our study session, but I was very forgiving at the sight of his sheepish, apologetic smile.

It was a Friday night, and he picked a spot on campus. A quiet, little building film students often recorded final projects in for its cinematic structure. I honestly couldn't see the magic of a Film-Festival-worthy movie in here when it was only an old, two-story building holding rooms cluttered with spare desks and broken equipment. The only room that seemed suitable enough for a study date was the break room so that is where I set up my materials on a round table surrounded by creaky chairs. It was still not ideal with its humming refrigerator and giant, smelly microwave though. The stench of pizza pockets mixed with my perfume, but as I leaned closer to Caleb, I hoped he only noticed me.

“So, I thought we would begin with something a little fun,” Caleb starts, peeking at me through golden-brown strands of hair hanging over his eyes. His boyish grin widens when he pulls out his phone—shoulder brushing mine—as he shows me the screen. “I found this website, and it's a little sketchy, but it has the most daring news coverage. I think you could gain some perspective on the type of journalism you want to pursue.”

I nodded, eagerly accepting his advice as I typed the website address into my search engine. Caleb was studying videography, and most film majors I knew described him to be ambitious in creating the next big blockbuster. He was cute and he offered me some tips on the type of stories I wanted to tell—of course I accepted. I want to be a notable reporter one day, and I really believed that Caleb could help me with that—even if he was more into capturing make believe than actual eye-catching news.

The site *was* sketchy. There were many shady advertisements and clickbait links, and the one Caleb was directing me to was an article title that read:

College Girl Gets Brutally Murdered By Unknown Attacker!! Click here for link to watch “To watch?”

I repeated with an uncomfortable laugh. “Who posted this? Are you sure this won’t get me a million viruses?”

“Nah, it’s fine. I’ve watched it before. It’s insane,” Caleb tells me in an excited burst as his wide blue eyes lock onto me. “This is *real* journalism, Rosie. You won’t see anyone putting content out like this, but they *should* be.”

I nodded, a little hesitant. “I guess you’re right,” I muttered, my cursor hovering over the link button until I finally exhaled, shrugged, and thought, why not. I held my breath when the screen went black for a second before lighting up again. It was a webcam of...me. I watched confusion wash over my side-profile in the same yellowy light of this musty room, and then I fought a scowl at how it made my tan skin look. I didn’t perfect my make-up and put extra holding spray in my dark curls to look bad tonight—but that should have been the least of my concerns. The top of my screen held the red LIVE sign and a viewership count slowly climbing higher in numbers.

“Uh...” I trailed off before cracking a smile, hopefully hiding the spike of nerves jumping in my pulse. “Are you seeing this...?” I turned away from my screen again to find Caleb’s phone camera pointed right at me with the flash on. His cute smile disappeared from his pale face. “What are you doing?” I asked, anxious laughter bubbling out of me as I struggled between staring at his camera, my screen, and his emotionless features. He ignored me, but kept recording, and I was about to say, *seriously, this isn’t funny* when the angle on the screen suddenly shifted.

I could see my own curls now, coming into view as the image rounded the corner of a doorway and captured me stiffly sitting in this creaky chair. Gasping, I turned around and didn’t try to keep in the alarmed scream that shrieked out of me before I fumbled out of my seat. Another man, much taller and bigger and scarier, crept into the room. His face was masked by solid, metallic black plastic. Slits for eyes and a mouth were melted into the face while the rest of him was covered head-to-toe in a black hoodie, dark jeans, and army boots. He held a camera phone like Caleb.

I felt an awful, stomach-dropping sensation when the man nodded to Caleb before they both looked at me.

Backing up into the corner of the room, my hip hit the jug of a water cooler as my hands trembled at my sides. “Okay—this really isn’t the funny joke you guys think it is.” I stuttered through my speech, sounding nearly as terrified as I felt before Caleb stood up and joined the man, blocking the single exit there was.

The single exit.

My horror only swelled when Caleb said, “took you long enough.” His tone was dry as he pulled out a switch blade and held it out to the man. “Use this for the smaller stuff. Make it slow, and make it bloody. I want to see actual gore that CGI shit can’t recreate, got it?”

A startled, incredulous laugh jumped out of me. “You’re not serious, are you?” I cried, feeling actual tears swelling up in my throat when they both ignored me. As they discussed my murder right in front of me, I looked around myself, trying to figure out what to do. I was not going to die tonight, but I hoped the fresh fear that kept my adrenaline pumping would make some survival skills kick in.

I tried to move cautiously away the second I saw the bigger man advance towards me. He took deliberate steps, tilting his head from side to side as Caleb caught it all on camera with the face of a determined director. I was conscious of each step I took, the pulse fully hammering at the base of my throat, and the glassy sting in my eyes. *I’m not going to die tonight*, were my last thoughts before the man, agile and smooth, *pounced*.

With a sharp breath, I dived for the table and caught a swift kick to my ribs as Caleb grunted above me. I crawled with desperation, digging my hands into the stale multicolored carpet before I arched towards the exit.

A *slicing* burn penetrated the skin of my thigh as hands grappled for my ankles. I let out a shrill cry, fighting to get to my feet then out the door.

The fear of being trapped was nothing compared to being chased. I ran faster than I have ever gone before as warm wetness trickled down my leg, soaked my jeans, and pooled in my shoes.

It was dark, but the railing overlooking the second floor guided me as panic and anxiety rushed through my veins, begging for an exit when I couldn't find the stairs. Pounding footsteps echoed all around me until I couldn't tell which were mine and which were *theirs*.

In my whirlwind, I spot something red catching the moonlight seeping in through the windows. The heavy appearance of a dusty fire extinguisher began to look a lot like freedom.

I went for it, struggling to pull it from the walls. With a final, overcome yank, I hugged it to my chest and hoped it would do the job. I would have to fight, and my hope to take down Caleb came with a vengeance only a boy you waste lipgloss on would deserve. I didn't have to find him when the moment I turned, a piercing stab sliced through my arm. His switchblade was sharp, but my extinguisher was bigger. I swung it once and hit home. The metal slammed against his skull. *Again*. He stumbled back and hit the rail with a wheeze. *Again*. He lost balance, slipping in the drops of my blood, and fell *right* over the railing.

My heartbeat pounded in my ears, and I looked up to find the flash of a camera pointed at me before it went dark.

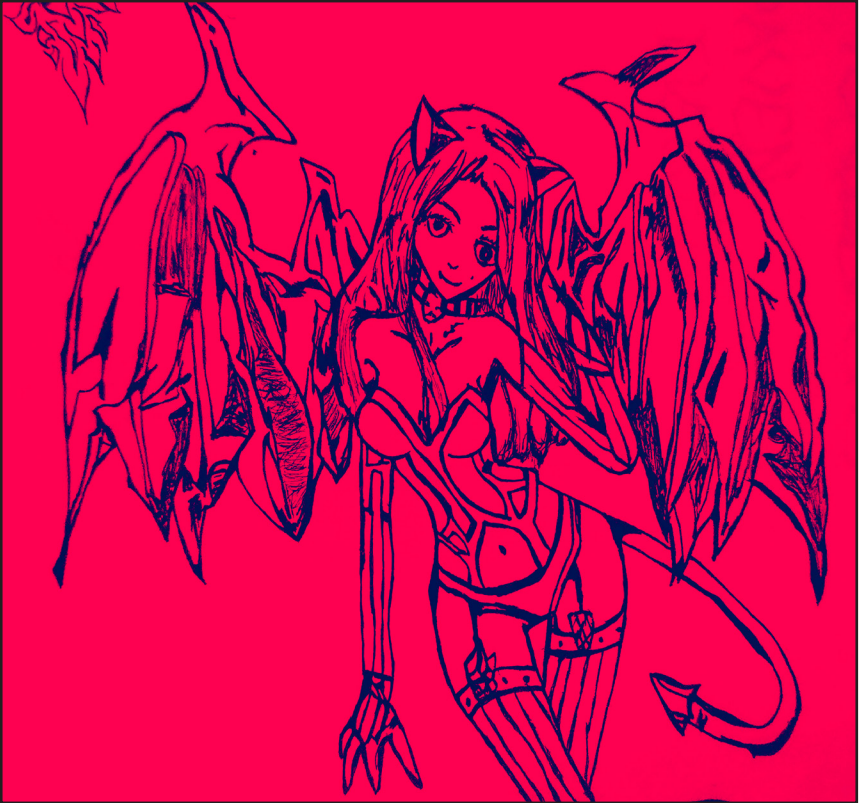
"Nice job, babe!" My boyfriend shouted from across the second floor. "Really? You didn't think it was a little...campy?" He shook his head. "This is Pulitzer-worthy." I beamed happily at him before getting back to business. "Okay, let's get down there. I want some shots of his gray matter. I can already see the blood pooling around him!"

College Girl Heroically Fights Off Assailant!!
[Click here for link to watch](#)

Demoness

By Essence Saunders

Medium: Sketch with micro pens overlaid with a red filter



ENTOMOPHILIA

By Lauren Krone

That itchy feeling on my skin occurred and I listened carefully for the sound of buzzing that normally rang in my ears. I slapped my upper arm, the itchy feeling gone and the pain of having my blood stolen from me began in a swollen, red bump.

My mother used to joke that I had sweet blood and that's why the mosquitos liked me. *I was a human Capri-Sun.*

I continued into my home, carefully locking the door behind me. Living alone in a creaky old house was not good for my nerves. I jumped at every noise, even the occasional squeaking of the wood as I hovered over it. I tried to not think about all the bad things that could happen to me.

The buzzing started again, and I groaned in frustration. Of course they had followed me into my own home.

I grabbed the bug spray from the hall closet and sprayed it into the air, hoping this would end those pests who had come for my blood again. It usually only worked on a few and the rest would have to be squished.

I trudged into the kitchen, exhausted from my long day at work and restless night I had had last night. I knew I wouldn't sleep tonight either; I hardly was able to sleep anymore. The buzzing never relented, even finding its way into my dreams somehow. I reached into the cabinet to take my pill and suddenly, as I tried to only pour one into my hand, every pill in the bottle tumbled to the ground. Frantically, I tried to pick them all up when the buzzing began, this time louder than ever. My heart began to beat faster and faster, feeling like it would leap out of my chest. I couldn't breathe and I felt a wave of nausea hit. I tried to relax, but I couldn't. The itchy feeling began, as it always did, and I felt them on me. All over me.

I picked up pill after pill and swallowed them quickly until no more remained. After the last one went down, my throat began to itch, and I clawed at my throat in a panic. It felt like something was slithering up my throat, like when you get a tickle in your throat, but a thousand times worse and much more painful. Opening my mouth, centipedes and earwigs crawled and scratched their way out, but, even after the last one fell onto the floor, the itching never ceased.

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