

Anime Junkie

Kyle Hemmings

cc&d 2012 chapbook

Star's Homecoming

Acknowledgements

Versions of these pieces have appeared in: Absynthe Review, Atticus Books, Bone Orchard Poetry, Camel Saloon, Down Moon Girl (Trestle Press), Kindling, Linguistic Erosion, Liquid Imagination, Pipe Dream, This Zine Will Change Your Life, Two Thirds North.

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Black Cat Alice

Under a dangerous moon, she invites you over for Egyptian licorice tea. What she doesn't say: Sex will be thorny. Your gooseflesh for ransom. You try to act Gothic Aristocrat, even though your leather is cheap, still smells of the interiors of gone cars. With her frill tie and Cross & Rose knee sox, she makes you feel see-through glass. She is stained. You want to smash through her, causing a thousand fluttering lights over Tokyo. That would be a truth. Driven to intimate inquiry, your head on her pillow, you notice the asymmetry in her false flash eyes. But you can't move. You're marble. A prisoner of bleach-blond girls who resuscitate by giving angel-sex. And the moon is still dangerous. Not for 10,000 yen will she let you go. By morning, she will have forgotten you. Walking home, down damp streets, past closed garlic & kimchi bars, you listen to the beat of your own wings. You stupid boy. There are only feathers from her pillow. They will turn to snow. You picture her curled in the warmth of her room, just as you left her, your mind— her tea cup. Keep Walking. Smile. Keep yourself warm.

Get Shredded

At the *Tokyo Dark Castle*, she spins electric stars. Her name is Kei & sleeps with her painted egg shells. Her days are broken & full of victims. She still can't get over the suicide rat of a boy she once loved. His life was intense, the span of one glittering good night. She is all *Himegyaru*, California patch, reminds the tourists with their wingmen of a lost planet Britney Spears. The rest of the world is post-GasAttack. In conversations with other girls of tie-dyed sarongs, ones who have lived too close to nuclear reactors, she refers to herself as a "high-bleached bitch." Outside, the snow negates anyone's idea of California. Another DJ takes over. He's dressed as a serial killer clown. Kei, almost drunk on *Streaking Blossoms*, meets a crusty punk named Sharky. In his eyes, she sees the shape of her life as a tumor. Outside, the snow remixes ghosts. She decides that like so many here in the club, he is one of the mute-shell children, victims of chronic silent explosions that maim but never kill quick. In her apartment three blocks east of Takeshita Street, she undresses him, tells him to dare truths in the nude. He mentions an old woman who kept planting bombs inside him. He was still a child. She places a hand over his, suggests they make a house free of private wars. She gently lifts his chin, looks into his eyes & smiles. Let me remove the tumor, she says, it will cure the both of us. Will we be like snow? he asks, like it never was? From within his chest, she pulls out a live grenade. They kiss in arching tongues. They sway like rope bridges. Pull, pin, pull. The snow rises, seeps in through the windows. Everything becomes beautiful & white.

Pigeon-boy

When he first learned he could fly, Pigeon-boy blushed at the thought of hand-me-down wings. Yet, he learned to dance on street corners, laugh mid-stream at the thought of being lighter than an idea. Then he was hired to carry messages between lovers. The distances increased & Pigeon-boy grew breathless. Sometimes, he delivered messages to the wrong lovers. The notes read *I love you, still*, or *walking on air*. Some receivers at the wrong destinations died in air-tight bliss. When this happened, the world grew smaller. One day, a morning where everyone carried some form of artificial sunshine in their pockets, or paper planes released from the sweaty palms of air controllers, Pigeon-boy delivered a note that read: *I don't love you anymore*. He fell from the sky. A girl named Yugi took him home, brought him back to life with her songs of flight. From then on, Pigeon-boy was wiser with air-time, more cautious about his fly-ways. He circled & landed only within her. In total, they never touched ground. Whenever she breaks open a Chinese cookie, the message is always the same—When the world is cold, stay indoors.

Room Full of Mirrors

She sells sex in Tokyo's soaplands. Will go down gracefully in a cubicle. Or months later, in an image room, she's dressed as a pink bunny allowing men the fantasy of groping her cotton tail. What she doesn't expect is to fall in love with an *Otaku*, a young nerd obsessed with figurines of sailor girls & elephant seals. It might have been his bony fingers or his slurs just before orgasm or his stupid hair that keeps sticking up in odd places. Sometimes, he draws super deformed water dragons, oar fish, whales, on the pink walls. In the belly of a whale, of a water dragon, he says, *We can live forever*. With him, she feels like a fruit basket, and tries to smash that thought. In different corners of the city, where lines can't transect, they image each other, an internal telepresence without polymer reflectors. They image each other saying exactly the same things. A strange synchronicity in 3-D. She tells him she never wants to leave the room, even convincing herself that's it's not her personal hologram. He says that with her he feels lighter than a figurine, miles above the gravity of sex. They keep thinking of each other at the same times of day. They finally meet again on the street, a year later. She's missing a thumb, courtesy of a jealous *yakuza*, who pushes kiddie porn & *China White*. He's missing three lovers who disappeared in the bellies of his walls. In flat dimension, he & she reflect & melt off each other.

Demons & Girls

In a room three flights up from dense summer she shows the boy she names Baby-Face her mother's collection of antique lamps & lanterns. Some have pictures of fat Buddhas or cats with wide sloppy smiles. Her nickname is Misfit Girl, given spotty love by the mother who sometimes melts away, who is herself a child of parents whose faces she cannot see. Misfit Girl says to Baby-Face, *Do you want to see how we can make a god?* He says that there are only demons. She makes strange shadow plays across the wall. The same shadow stays with each after they have left. One night, following another of her mother's breakdowns, Misfit Girl imagines being sucked in by a gigantic vacuum cleaner, of living in a dust bag forever, breathing in her own exhaust. She calls Baby-Face & tells him that she is suffocating along with the mother who can't love her own shape & that he must be strong for her, that he is her god. He says he has purged his demons, released them into a hand-drawn darkness, that he can see her shadow everywhere he goes. He says the shadow expands, has strange ways of working. *No one will die of suffocation*, he says. The shadow agrees. The night they sneak out & sleep together, Tokyo has a black-out.

MeatHead

For 17 earth years, Kat's nocturnal dreams have not turned her into a boy. Nor does she believe in chromosome 5 and the circadian tragedy of her pocket-size life. Her dreams are grey scale, and in all of them, her prince is a superhero rendered impotent by the lack of light. She wakes up sucking her own finger or believing she is a fruit bat. But today, the faces in her deck of cards predict otherwise. Buildings will still fall and hobo dictators will still rule on street corners, but she will find love. His nickname is MeatHead, a lowboy under clouds, all autistic heart and slow on arrivals. He sits in the back of the class and she does not turn or tell him later that she holds his breaths in the palm of her hand. She spots him after school, staring at his own absence in store windows. One day, she enters the store and climbs next to the manikins. Facing each other, they press their noses against glass. They blow little clouds that don't live for long. They pretend their finger pads are touching. She whispers to him again and again: *I want to get pregnant*. She smiles, imagines herself big as twin castles. He slinks away and is deaf to the world of noise. She sleeps with him and keeps his glassy blue eyes under her pillow. In her dreams, castles are underground and voices are pitch black. But she saves the prince from falling.

When Two Is More Than a Dozen

Why do you still sleep with the girls from the Third Ward? Am I not enough for you? Am I not all sweet gum & butterfly? says Kiko to her lover, Hoshi, a girl with big gluey teeth, wide sweeping eyes that seem to say *You can enter but you might never leave.*

Kiko sashays to the bed, lifts Hoshi's chin so their eyes meet in oblique love. She bends over, kisses the traverse scar along Hoshi's forehead. *You love them because they are dangerous because there is something that you cannot keep. . . Because, sister, you are so damaged. Forgive me, for saying it.*

Hoshi stares past Kiko, into the swirl of snow outside the window. She is still shivering from the chill of subways, from the stare of double-edged girls, envious of pedestrian princesses. In broken chain links of five to seven, they hang out in front of Tower Records.

I'm addicted to their sweet poisons, says Hoshi. Yours is nicotine & too much meaning. I love it when their bodies, so white, rise in the night. I lie there stunned, unable to pull them back. I love to listen to the aftermath of their words, who has cut & dragged them & why. After we make love, the beetles in my glass jar tell me that sex with strangers will make me live longer.

Kiko embraces Hoshi, snuggles beside her so their lips face similar vanishing points.

& what do the beetles say about me? asks Kiko.

Hoshi swallows hard. The cold air in the room feels hard. Someone could cry murder & not be heard.

They tell me that someday you will hurt me the way no one ever has.

They both close their eyes, their foreheads now touching. Hoshi says she is so tired, wants to go to bed. Kiko whispers in Hoshi's ear that the world is only for the two of them.

That night, Kiko wakes up, feels a strange presence in the room. Is someone watching? She turns over. Hoshi is sleeping, her face a white forgetfulness. Perhaps she is dreaming about the Third Ward Girls.

The moon is at the window. It is a full moon and it is peeping in. Kiko thinks it must have watched them wake up a thousand times, make love, cry, cry for the other & come up with incompatible fragments of their lives based on Fantasy Girl-to-Lonely Girl stories.

There are no shades to block out the voyeur.

The scarred moon is at the window.

Paper Boys

The boy Tsukiko wants is made of paper. After five false starts, lines too thin around the edges, she cuts along the outline. His eyes are too big for her to contain herself. She names him Mamoru and her head is daffodil-May-Pull or May-Pole. Outside the long summer streets, she imagines children with runny noises and explanations meant to elude adults made of starch and dime-store talcum powder. She opens the window, pitches Mamoru to the silent applause of air, just so she can run down five flights of stairs to catch him. This paper boy, she thinks, has got a soul. It's the only reason why he can float. But she's jealous of other girls, girls not like her, girls made of paper but with no souls. They will tear up Mamoru, shred him, and toss him to the garbage where he will die under pretentious love letters, never sent. Tsukiko holds Mamoru by the light and pokes a hole through him. It's the only way she can conquer her fear of darkness, of losing him, of forever being a light sleeper.

The Girl Who Loved Watari

He was blind in some ways, prone to early morning fogs, susceptible to classic Trance and lock-down cyborg thought. Still, she loved rolling in his honey under the sheets, those times when he forgot he was made of cold metal—stuck him with all kinds of tweets about love. She knew it was one way. He hinted at how he was ruined by machines disguised as mothers and older sisters, that he couldn't get too close—he would only self-destruct. She tattooed a rabbit on his naked arm. He was muttering something about the fall of Tokyo and how he would be one more useless body of cogs and flat-headed screws under a heap of shorn instructions. She said she believed in rabbits and so should he. Sauntering to the closet, her body, a warm glow of gooseflesh in early sunlight, she said rabbits were a catalyst to forever. With schizoid glare, as if speaking to not-her, he stated that it was because they hide underground. She inspected his face as if searching for signs of her own life. She couldn't understand why she loved him, only that as a child, she slept with broken dolls, her lips pressed against their hard blue eyes.

He disappeared.

Months later, after the earthquake, she nurses a drink at the Vanity Lounge in Roppongi on Halloween night, talking to a girlfriend dressed as a furry animal, one with big warm eyes. She says a rabbit has died. The girlfriend's sticky fingers smell of apples. The girl without rabbit ears still wants honey.

White Crane

On the sidewalk, Misty rescues the fallen white crane. Cradling it in her arms, she imagines that it fell from the top of the ten story crab restaurant, rumored to serve demons in the soup. A voice inside her keeps saying *It's dead. Spend your time doing worthwhile things—like shopping for parasols or teddy bears, chokers with charms, opaque stockings thigh-high, your favorite top hat with satin ribbon under the chin. It's such a beautiful day.*

But Misty takes the crane home, sings to it, sleeps next to it at night. She has a premonition. She starts reading to the crane her love letters to an ex-boyfriend, the one who could never love her. He claimed she was too grounded. Slowly, over days, the crane's eyes open. It struggles to get out of bed. Its features turn human—it morphs into the boy who could not love her. She dresses him, packs him a lunch. She says, *Even though I still love you, I know it will be the same old story. You will never walk back to me.*

He stares out her bedroom window then turns. No, he says, this time is different. This time I can't grow wings. She screams at him to wait. He crouches at the window and dives into the air. By the time he reaches the bottom, she has lifted her hands upwards and closed her eyes. She pictures the ceiling as glass and trap doors and whispers, imagines herself a crane, high in the sky, circling her only lover.

Strange Monsters

Whenever speechless clouds settle in her eyes, Miko goes shopping at the community center for low-cal peanut butter or garlic-flavored hummus. In her apartment, she does Pilates to make her hard to intruders but soft enough to dream of babies. She is in love with a boy named Masaomi, an installer of computer firewalls, an anti-spammer who tells her he fights strange monsters. You mean viruses, Miko once said with the smile of rain streaking across her East Village window. Since meeting Masaomi at The Knitting Factory, Miko sometimes mistakes strangers in a storm for parent duplicates. Sometimes they follow her home and stand next to her bed, staring, saying nothing. She hides her head under the sheets. She pretends to hug Masaomi. Sometimes she cries over what is happening inside her body, a subtle force of nature or an unnamed waterfall. Masaomi tells her that in the darkness, there are portals to other worlds, monsters who take normal shapes during their day jobs. A Starbucks addict on street corners, Masaomi says these monsters have been with us since childhood—they wore the faces of parents, teachers. In an abandoned building on Loisaída, Masaomi reveals that he is an assassin of Miko's fears. They hold each other still on a creaky second-story floor, while the night rushes past them and through the city. Tonight, he whispers, there are no monsters. Miko wants him to marry her despite her constant feeling of being air-lifted or homeless. She imagines waking up to Masaomi, who will have last night's peanut butter smudged against his lips. She imagines an imperfect love in the core of the city. She wants to marry him because someday a monster with hard-drive memory will corner her and she will be out of time.

Love Spiders

You & me should team up & bring the city machine down. We could hide our identities behind desk jobs while dreaming of Joni Mitchell having a second life & doing black-metal. TokyoPop sticks to our throats. During sex, you chirp like a cricket drunk on rich-dirt visions. We could swing from rooftops with handmade rope. We could entrap the city with the webs of our steel-matrix love. We will fix each other's broken nose. We will fall with amazing grace. The bad guys cannot defeat us with semi-automatic purr & talk talk. Our real-identity angst is pure & prone to adolescent simple tense. We cry like ordinary people. We will die like rock stars.

Under Distant Microscopes

It's a season of love & odd numbered pairings. At night, the crickets forget the B-side of their songs. You work hard to decode the gravelly voice of the radio DJ, a survivor of throat cancer & his own second-hand smog. The song he plays: The Moon Is Down. It's the truth, you think. That night, in the stolen warmth of a car's front seat, your boyfriend remarks that there is no moon, only a shade of blue different from day and some dirty hands. His hands are great deceivers. The back of his tee-shirt reads: Rebels With Lost Teeth. You remind him in your sweet-grungy Lolita voice that you are both under the stars. And the stars are really microscopes and the microscopes are the eyes of jealous trekkers who never found a way back to Planet Tokyo. From the slip of your eye, you notice a white-silver sailboat floating in the sky. You smile and know that some things are never lost. As you and he sink deeper into the comatose of the night, the belly of a fog, cut open, but does not bleed.

Listrophy

Airi: GateCrasher/BelgianWitness/Bubblegum Pretensions/
Ketchum on your hollows/meta-weasel rapper/Susanu's sword/
Don't drop from aerial 18 pt. heights/Don't petition Artemis for
gentle suicides

Chichako: Metal dog scorn/Lethargic Juniper/Those walleye
moons/Sunday's hysterical blasphemies/Your mother in a pepper
shaker/Texas is not a proper egg/ paper walrus & Kafka
giraffes/The History of His thong Is in Limited Editions

Nao: Buckle Bo Freddy/Mætatarsal influx/Unison calls,
Cranes w/ fallacies/attitude doom/Conceptual Martians/
Semiotic Boogaloo/Cannonball repression/Sand hill
calamities/Comma uproars/Mother, your marble girls are hiding
in the dunes

Rin: Lips like Jagger/Hex cat/Cubist duplicity/Human scis-
sors/Pronominal dispatch/Castrated worms/temps w/out sugar
curls/ Post-apocalyptic rabbits/flax peaches/Gucci Space
Shoes/Bosho, Keep the child honest

Tsubami: Born as a feather/Semi-Lunar doors/your eyeballs
on e-knook/lynx spider hegemony/Manic Q warriors/Cross chok-
er revenge in mirrors/Take your stretched black rubber leash off of
my steam-punk poodle that smiles behind your back

Yoshiko: Give me back my heart-shaped whistle

Destroy All Monsters!

Dead girl's world is post-apocalyptic, in the shape of a syringe labeled Ennui. When the pretty boys call, all Botox & helium-high, she says wrong number or can you take a hint straight up. They laugh until they die. For them, sex is about body counts. One day, the color of plutonium hearts, of nuclear wastelands post-flesh, a mechanical boy saves her from an E-longated form of suicide: hanging upside down from bare trees. Or hanging in wind-warped trees now the shape of ears. Perhaps by Dali. Mechanical boy & Dead girl sit in the ear that can still hear them. He has a sponge heart & a voice like Raymond Burr missing his cues from Godzilla out-takes. She's beginning to fall for him, stiff-curl lip & eyes of lives-in-holes. She suspects that like her, he's hard-wired to fail. When she begins to undo his nested codes, he says Do you know the world will end in ten minutes? It doesn't matter, she says, the world has already ended. Anything after is just surplus goo. But can you feel? she asks. Can you feel anything? Just as he's saying something about the large shadow over the city at night, about something stronger than the ocean surrounding Okinawa, how his brain is made from the leftover thoughts of ten unarmed geeks—the ear detonates. There are no more fake trees. Only purple hearts on mute.

Rina, a Tall Buzz-fly Girl Who Never Goes Short in the City

When Black Friday hits, Rina will stand along Koen Dori in Shibuya & play old love songs on a ukulele. She will sing for free. She will laugh at the taxis running out of gas, the stocky four-eyed businessmen crashing their bicycles into department stores. The world as a flat tire, ruined rim. Or, donning white gloves, she'll direct traffic. Towards afternoon, she will post herself in front of the Haichiko statue, named after the dog that waited faithfully for its dead master. She will give fake tours through Spain Slope or the Tobacco & Salt Museum. Someone towards the rear will suppress a painted girl giggle. In Mark City, she will lose all the old women who have mistaken her for the daughter they once gave away. By the end of the day, she will be alone again. She will take the cheapest room at a love hotel & wait for her married lover, a man who has lost everything.

If I Were Jimmy Stewart

On some days I walk on Tokyo mist. On some days, we slip through the other's grasp like irascible fish. Or if we meet in San Francisco & I catch you watching me from a distance of UP & behind a Knob Hill window, your face, my inward tilt, the dreams of vertigo-drop, still unravel me. On some days I am the private eye tailing clones of confiscated you's. For days, I remain introverted & sulking. When I do find the You in my mug of wax, you start to melt. And I spend the rest of the day trying to gather what burns.

Tokyo Blue

She doesn't believe in fruits & baskets or lucky Zodiac animals. In the meltdown of her nucleus, she cries at the thought of Zen Masters succumbing to sugar cubes & promiscuity. The boy who stole her super powers is a lonely ghost. Her days are slapstick arrangements in a tragic rain. In the nameless wards, she tips a homeless woman. The businessman, who loves her dressed as a boy, calls & says Let's have sex on a kinky cloud. She decides to grow her hair. Her ex-boyfriend is a lonely ghost.

Traipsing through a water color world, she discovers Autumn as god & Orange as the most beautiful version of her. In the halls of the community college, she hears the stretched voice of the ex-boyfriend in lockers, off tile & walls. It says: Listen to Me. Love is a high from unlikely places, an epiphany after sequential drownings.

Under waning sun disc, thoughts of Chrysanthemum gilt dust, she feels Orange. A homeless woman, this one with cataracts, thanks her for the coins & says Your powers will return. Her ex-boyfriend is a lonely ghost. At school, in burnt sienna & milk-white tones, she draws herself as perfect. The new boy she loves is a Photoshop nerd with an addiction to jumping off bridges. He never really survives the attempts. The shadows do not resemble his true deaths. After each resuscitation from cold water, he comes back believing he is a camera. She vows to save both the nerd & herself. Her ex-boyfriend is in the negatives. Her ex-boyfriend is a lonely ghost.

I'm (Y)oung, (U)gly, & Too (P)oor to Afford A Bathing Ape

On the metro, Hot Girl makes faces at the Goth Lolitas of last year. She tells me, a boy she calls Tut-Tut, her sooty-face squeeze from a ruined matrix, that her best lovers had three eyes—one hidden while the other two pleaded no contest. Between pony tails, she's soft, blonde-dyed-on-blonde, and bad licorice tasty. In stolen cars, she's always getting flat tires. We get off by some Bauhaus-styled apartments in a Victorian rain. She loves Poe & a street artist called *Dugged*. Yesterday, she was almost expelled for handing the school nurse a plastic container labeled *Frog's Piss*.

She even made her eyes bulge, then hyperventilated. The shit she does will crack me up for years or make me cry at my own pre-arranged marriage. Reading my palm in a college cafe, she says that we'll both die simultaneously—her, from a chemical overdose— me, from a noble suicide. You mean driven by a future wife who turned me into a voiceless toad, I say. Whatever, she says, shrugging. Later, after making love to demons in the form of each other, she shows me a glass jar, in which she stores the voices of her favorite ghosts. When I open the lid, she says, Grandmother tells me that she loves me, and this one strung-out No Salary dude, who did murals along Cat Street, tells me to rebel against slow buses. & dictators. They multiply like the frogs under our feet, the ones we never hear in traffic, the ones we leave for dead.

Underground, she says, sipping her latte, you don't get representation. I ask her if my ghost will someday be in that same jar. Yes, she says, and points to my reflection off the glass. As we walk hand in hand towards *Meji Dori*, buildings bend, trees curve. I already feel that I'm inside looking out. I hear the frogs and know that I am not alone, that one of my three eyes is blushing from a freaky rain-on-me love.

Tomomi (Beautiful Friend)

She's an introverted vampire who sucks the thoughts from her ex-boyfriends' brains, soft as tofu, failed nerve transmission I-XIII, a riot in the heart. Then she uses the thoughts to blackmail them by saying that things have a way of getting around, you know? The dude she loves is super-flat in affect but has good veins. She's into pepper stuffed sleeve shrug and Halloween pettipants. He's into Idol and looking goofy on dating simulations. At the clubs, she's known as Angry and he's Happy. Angry is three heads shorter than Happy in sneakers. Happy wants death by Gunmetal Sulfide. Angry wants life with mint cotton and red licorice. At night, she has strange dreams of lying in an ultraviolet forest where wooden dogs lick her face. When Happy is not thinking about Angry, which is virtually All The Time, he's figuring out new permutations of the bean machine, or how to bend light by doing heel flips on a skateboard, or what it would be like to be a cut tongue sparrow, needing to be owned. When Angry is not biting necks or denying DNA evidence or dancing to Exist Trace in Fuck Up Drape at Club Echo, she pretends she's a frog princess with eyes in the back of her head. When Happy sleeps spooning her, he always dreams with one eye open.

Anoraksia

I'm the geek you meet on a train. A head full of hex code and sac spiders, I'm obsessed with things out of sequence. I can tell by your fairy tale mini skirt and high collar frill that you're a train spotter, getting off at Tokyo, but wanting California, or you, switching signals, causing fake blue-eye lovers to crash. I must be the first car you've jumped all morning. We chance a berth, a cube of first-class darkness. Up closer, you almost look cute in a beret. You tell me that speed is the answer to everything. Love them and leave them in a blur. Kyoto still wants you. By nightfall, at speeds approaching 150 m.p.h., our porcelain bodies, bones rigid with memories, press against each other. Or maybe we are two sheets of paper, unevenly lined up, torn from different notebooks. I'm always taking notes and reading them back in a mirror. *Your breasts are A) silicone B) Po rtabella or C) real human.* After a cross town climax, the two of us cradled by some spurious silence, you tell me how you once slept with the deaf boys from the back alleys of Ura-Hara, just to spite some humanoid more experienced than you. Once a member of a death cult, he was an artist you nicknamed Wanton. His hands spaced then framed you. It's so Britney of you to whisper dysfunction in your own Valley-Girl-DirtySpeak. Maybe your artist and I are distanced by only six degrees of separation and some blanched islands in the sun. Maybe in his dream or mine, those deaf boys scream louder than trains.

Frostbite

They met while she was still hungry and he was about to give up on eating. In college, he drew portraits of people outside themselves, of the German Expressionist who hung himself just so he wife could capture the loose angles.

His name was Yohji, entertained delusions of the world coming to an end. The girl, Shiatzy, believed that's all they were, personal fables, until she heard distant bombs at night, the razor edge of voices from childhood. At first she thought: This kind of love leads only to frostbite and death. Later, she wore his frozen smiles to bed.

At times, her limbs felt numb.

She tried to picture Yohji before the winter, imagined his love of qipao collars, knot buckles, sakura trees in an ink painting. Her trees.

He took her to a little blue house by the East river. She asked who owns it? He said Nobody.

The house was almost barren of furniture. The inside was colder than the outside.

They lived there. She tried to take care of him. He made her forget her old toys, greeting cards: *Rainbow Brite*, *Strawberry Shortcake*, *Sphere of Light*. He stopped drawing fragmented faces, withdrew to a corner of the house. He said: *Leave me. Save yourself. The war cannot be won.*

She said: If you love just one person, you've saved the world for seven minutes.

He closed his eyes. His lips turned blue. He stopped breathing.

She cradled his head, rubbed his hair in half-circles, back and forth. Planted cherry kisses.

The bombs stopped. She could no longer hear the voices of the child-haters, rainbow-molesters. She sensed the return of blood flow to the part of her that was once his.

She thought: *Single mothers. Single mothers.*

She made a wish.

Rinko

Your real name is Rinko, a cold child.

Whenever you were down with flu, a strain they had no number for, you father could announce your exact temperature using the back of his hand. It was the same hand he used to make you laugh, shadow plays across the wall, impressions of spiders or Gummi Bears coming to life. You lived off his sweetness, until he jumped from himself. A bamboo bridge. A winter's day. The body never found. Your mother lived the life of another ghost. You kept thinking about that story, a woman crushed by a train, now without a bottom half, staring vehemently into the eyes of strangers, wanting to take their full rich lives.

You jump across the years. Autumns, amnesia, broken twigs. In her solitude, your mother speaks a different language but you understand her, half-empty— all broken love and smiles. On Cat Street, the graffiti boys bore you with imported gruel running from their lips; on Takesthita, boys in leather taunt you with their heavy metal posturing. Your best friend is a *Ganguro* girl, trying hard to look like Brittney Spears. But her thighs are too fat. Next to her, you look so pale.

And one day, you wake up and are in love. An older man in tweed, he twitters you daily. He accepts you in steam gear and puffed sleeve shrug, your mint cotton dress in the stretched rubber of the night. He's married, awkward at sex, but in his eyes there's something cracked and primal and sad. He musters the courage to show you a photo of his son.

You imagine the boy much older, deprived of his Pokémon heroes. He will be crushed by a train. He will go through life without legs.

One day, you whisper in your married lover's ear: It's over. You want to make babies with a boy from HaraJuku, a no-punk, clumsy with zippers and in plaid; his kindness is slightly mute. Days pass without a breeze. You learn that your married ex-lover has thrown himself from a bridge.

Each day, you visit that river. Like your father's, his body is never found. You slip your hand into the river, hoping that some day, his hand will reach yours. His head will emerge over the tea-colored water. His lips are blue. "Your hand feels so warm," he says. It must hurt him to breathe. You tell him how your father once named you Cold Child. How you tried to steal the warmth from anyone who came too close.

White Bird

As a child, walking home from school in the Shibuya ward of Tokyo, Yami winked at the white bird that followed her home each day. She never told anyone, not even her best friend, Rin-Rin – who was in love with rain and the early Bob Dylan – that White Bird confided in her. Like how to glide in her sleep. Or how to navigate her personal dream wards, full of cityscapes, low and high risers. The adults complained that Yami never said very much or that she was too withdrawn, that someday her personal spiders would eat her. And it was true that after her first period, which coincided with a heavy storm, Yami often thought about suicide, even of hanging herself from the Harajuku Bridge. She believed she stayed alive because that White Bird stole all her weapons of self-destruction, took them to a nest too far north or south, depending on one's definition of the weather.

Then, close to twenty, Yami fell in love with a punk rocker named Akiho. To his friends, he was known as Soul Surfer. At night, Akiho remarked that after making love to Yami, he saw a white flash in her eyes. She said that it was just him looking too hard inside of her. He said that maybe it was him looking out from inside of her. She giggled, but knew White Bird had never left her.

One day, several months after Yami and Akiho married, a tsunami swept over the village where they settled. People were found drifting miles out at sea, faces down. Cars and trucks were overturned. Buildings were demolished. The house where Yami and Akiho lived was destroyed.

Years later, a house was rebuilt in the same spot where the two once lived. And on its roof, three white birds – mother, father, and baby – perched. They always spoke to each other about the girl who once lived below, who had really wished for a set of wings, but kept asking for a noose. One of the white birds explained she did all she could for this girl; after all, birds of a feather flock together. The other two chirped a hearty laugh. It's not funny, not funny at all, said the mama bird. The three of them took off in a triangular pattern.

Heat

New York City is in the grips of a heat wave. White smoky demons rise from car radiators. Old women faint from dehydration, fall through manholes in the streets, sewers below sewers. Kazue rescues one such woman. In the back booth at a McDonald's, the woman paper-crowns Kazue as Princess of the Speechless. She promises to be Kazue's hidden guardian. Kazue has a dream of the woman turning into a Persian with emerald eyes, the same one she drew for manga class. Slowly, the heat lifts from the streets. The sky is not a hollow drum. Kazue is seized by a mania for lanky boys with green eyes. There is a space between night and day where New York City resembles crystal. Words are too heavy to float. Victims jump from windows and live to grow tall. In his apartment over a narrow street of stunted elms, a boy with rubber soles dances for Kazue. In her new love, she stretches beyond sunrise and winks at a familiar cloud, as clear as her own sky writing across city walls.

The Only Comes Clean After an Uncertain Victory

You're as crazy as those blind street ninjas, demanding that we give up every glitter pony, that we become all rainbow dash, moonstone unconscious. Will we glow blue in the aftermath? Will we gain posthumous fame as the first civilian casualties with internal burns, sunset lust oozing?

In bed,
we slither
like glass snakes
we break
until we are
broken glass.

Bio

Kyle Hemmings lives and works in New Jersey. His work has been published in Matchbook, A-Minor, Wigleaf, Atticus Review, and elsewhere. His most recent ebooks are *Down Moon Girl*, *You Never Die in Wholes*, and *Tokyo Girls in Science Fiction*.

Anime Junkie

Kyle Hemmings

scarspublications

published in conjunction with

cc&d magazine

the unreligious, nonfamily-oriented literary and art magazine

ccandd96@scars.tv

http://scars.tv

ISSN 1068-5154

INTERNET ISSN #1555-1555

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Design Copyright © 2012 Scars Publications and Design

Magazines: Children, Churches and Daddies (cc&d magazine) founded June 1993, Downs in the Dirt, conceived 1994, founded 2000

Books: Hope Chest in the Attic, the Window, Close Cover Before Striking (Woman.), Autumn Reason, Contents Under Pressure, the Average Guy's Guide to Feminism, Changing Gears, the Key to Believing, Domestic Bilaters, Etc., Oeuvre, Exora Versus, L'arte, The Other Side, The Boss Lady's Editorials (regular and 2005 Expanded Edition), Duality, Seeing Things Differently, Change/Rearrange, Death Comes in Threes, Moving Performances, Six Eleven, Life of a Cafe Aloha, Creams, Rough Mixes, the Entropy Project, The Other Side (2006 Edition), Stop, Sing Your Life, The Beauty and the Destruction, cc&d v1 67.5 (Writing to Honour & Celebrate, editor edition), Blister & Burn (the Koyers edition), SBM, cc&d #170.5 Distinguished Writings editor edition, Living in Close, Silent Screams, Taking It All In, It All Comes Down, Rising to the Surface, Galeopsis, Chapter 38 [v1, v2 & v3], *Shady, Literature for the Sassy and Elio (v1, v2 & part 1)*, a Wake-Up Call From Tradition, (recovery), Dark Matter: the Mind of Janet Koyers, Evolution, (sweet), Get Your Buzz On, Janet & Jean Together, po-em, Taking Poetry to the Streets, the Con-Dixie Citi-town Union, the Written Word, Dad, Prepare Her for This, Uncorrect, Living in a Big World, Pulled the Trigger, Venture to the Unknowns, Janet Koyers: Enriched, She's an Open Book, "40", Sextism and Other Stories, the Stories of Women, Prominent Pen (Koyers edition), Elemental, the 2012 Notebook, Prominent Pen, Chaotic Elements, Fusion, a Picture's Worth 1,000 words (color and black and white art books), Stability Stable Side Side Side, Sulphur & Sordid, Slight & Murrow, Blister & Burn, Rinse & Repeat, Survive & Thrive, (not so) Warm & Fuzzy, Torture & Triumph, Oh, the Elements, Side A/Side B, Balance, Chaos Theory, Writing To Honour & Celebrate, Distinguished Writings, Breaking Silence, Unlocking the Mysteries, the Book of Scars, We the Poets, Live on the Edge, Revealing all your Dirty Little Secrets, Decept Remains, Chanted Remnants, Hope & Creation, Bending the Curve, Layers of Creation, Dark Matter, Survival of the Fittest, Crawling Through the Dirt, Laying the Groundwork, Weatherhead, echo, Ink in my blood, (board) (4 editions), Enriched Poetry, cc&d Enriched Press, Enriched with Dirt, An Open Book, Literary Town Hall (2 editions), Prominent Pen (2 editions), Fragments, Bleeding Heart Cadaver, 100 Words, 1,000 Words, Cultural Touchstone, It was All Preordained, Infamous in our Prims, Anais Nin: an Understanding of her Art, the Electronic Windmill, Changing Women, the Swan Road, the Significance of the Frontier, The Sweetsavory Upenshield, Harvest of Gems, the Little Monk, Death in Midway, Moments Most, In the Palace of Creation, R.I.P., Bob the Bumble Bee, Remnants and Shadows, I Saw This, the Drive, Thumbs at You, Cracking Down Intentionally, Blue Collar Ballet system, In Your Heart the Quasi-epic's Testimony of God, the Adventures of the Key to Believing Her, Anais Nin: an Understanding of her Art (second printing), *David Under / Cheryl Hemming*, 12 Times 12 Equate Grace, a Marble Made Poetic, Advance with a Marble Apple in her Marble Hand, Challenge of Night and Day and Chicago Poems, Lighten Up, Not Far From Here, Waterhead, You Have Finally Won, Beverse C. Suburban Rhythms, Down Syndrome, the Dark Side of Love, the pill is a man's best friend, Angel's Syllable is Good Bess of Devil's Spine, Poems and Stories from The Blue Collar Book of the Dead, Cat People, Death of an Angel, Ghost, Science: A Carmudgeon's View, Ghost Dancers Leaping from a Tome, the 4-D Window, Open Wounds, Give What You Can, Down in the Vint v0.84, Come Fly With Me, Clearing the Debris, Sectioned & Sequestered, Six Six Six, Skeletal Remains, Out of the Web, Don't Tread on Me, Lines of Latency, Entering the Ice Age, When the World Settles, Into the White, Along the Surface, Uhh... From Nothing, the Line to Power, Fear the Forsaken, Down in It, Falling Into Place, Wake Up and Smell the Flowers, Unknowns, Looking Beyond, Forever Board, See the World Burn, Exploding on the Scene, America the Lost, Moving the Earth, Crick Fire in the Treetops, Wisdom in Broken Hands, Autumn Again, Up in Smoke, Symbols Manifest, No Return, Grounded, Up in Smoke, Perfectly Imperfect

Compact Discs: Men's Favorite Voice the demo tapes, Koyers the final (MP3 Inclusive), Woods and Flowers the beauty & the desolation, The Second Aging Something is Sweeting, The Second Aging Live in Alaska, Pettas & Koyers Live at Cafe Aloha, Painless Orchestra Rough Mixes, Koyers Seeing Things Differently, 50/50 Tick Tock, Koyers Change Rearrange, Order From Chaos The Entropy Project, Koyers Six One One, Koyers Stop, Koyers Masterful Performances mp3 CD, Koyers Death Games in Threes, Koyers Changing Gears, Koyers Dreams, Koyers How Do I Get There?, Koyers Contact & Conflict & Control, the DMJ Art Connection the DMJ Art Connection, Koyers Questions in a World Without Answers, Koyers SW, Koyers WEI Radio (2 CD set), Horrors from Hell (Two and the Second Aging Three Part), uncorrected writing Theory (6 Audio CD), Life in the Cafe (3 CD set), the DMJ Art Connection Indian Film, the DMJ Art Connection Music Depression or Something, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #1, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #2, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #3, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #4, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #5, Chaotic Radio the Chaotic Collection Collection #01 05 (5 CD set) etc. (Audio CD, 2 CD set), Chaotic Elements (2 CD set), Chaos in Motion (6 CD set), 50/50 Screaming to a Halt (EP), FBI/ Two for the Price of One (EP), *Kiki, John and Haystack: An American Portrait*, Koyers/ the Beard Trio/ Paul Baker/ the Juliana Paveses Trio Fusion (4 CD set), podcasts the Evolution of Performance Art (13 CD set), Koyers Live (14 CD set), the DMJ Art Connection the Things They Did to You (2 CD set), Koyers Seeing a Psychiatrist (3 CD set), Koyers St. Paul's (3 CD set), Koyers the 2009 Poetry Game Show (3 CD set), Koyers the Halmos of South Africa/Burn Through Me (2 CD set), Koyers "40" (amazon.com release), Koyers Sextism and Other Stories, Koyers the Stories of Women (amazon.com release).

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