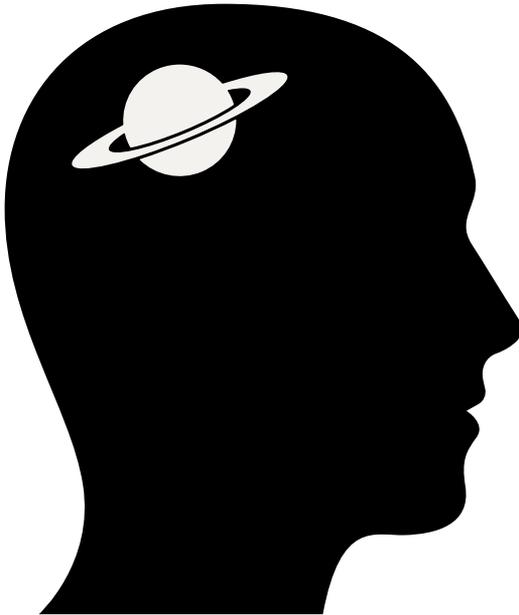


# **GUTTER VOICES**

**ISSUE #4**



# **GUTTER VOICES**

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# What's New in the Gutter

Welcome to Issue 4 of Gutter Voices, officially our largest issue to date. We hope everyone is keeping safe and well in these crazy times and you can take your time reading this issue to relax, forget and take some peaceful minutes for yourself.

The last month has had our own real life commitments taking charge, so if you've seen our website there hasn't been much movement. We do however have weekly blog posts planned going forward, so keep an eye on [guttervoices.com](http://guttervoices.com) for a blog post every Thursday. If you have any post suggestions or would like to guest-write, get in touch and let us know.

We have also re-worked our [Patreon](#) rewards to allow people to reap the rewards for only €2 a month - we only have one tier, so you access all the rewards without a need to commit more. Check it out on pages 15-16.

So that's been our life - a lot of planning and re-working to continue growing Gutter Voices. We hope you enjoy it.

Yours in the gutter,  
Gutter Voices

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- Find out how to submit your work to Gutter Voices and also how to help us improve. We always want to hear you.

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- Join our exclusive list of cool cats and never miss out on an issue!

# SPRING'S SECRET

*BY EMMA BROGAN*

The season between seasons,  
unable to compete with the crunch and  
forgotten in spite of snow.

Still she dutifully surfaces,  
surrounded in dew -

"Fetch me a flower of St David"  
exclaimed to a field of Ewe,  
to him.

She Marches forward,  
hugging an hour, that  
Summer would burn,  
Autumn would drop,

Winter would eat,

But Spring keeps

that extra hour,

for you and the

Flowers of St David.

# OSTARA OF THE DAWN

*BY TUUR VERHEYDE*

Winter's bony fingers clutch

The air and soil.

Sunlight withheld by the embrace

Of gloom.

Yet the violet twilight must retreat

And daylight pushes forward into

A stubborn eve.

Daylight saving offers an hour

Of our sleep to the Dawn.

Goddess of light and life,

Mother of the bloom, of the birth

Bring forth thy lushness

Bring forth thy life

Let the grey shroud be lifted

And the land be caressed once more

By Spring's fertile touch.

# DREAMS OF SPACE

*BY TUUR VERHEYDE*

Gazing at the stars, Man dreams

Of the embroidered cloths of heaven,

Of drifting through halls of light

Visiting those celestial specks

Which set ablaze his lonely nights.

In space, he sees wonders of infinity;

Through the vastness of soundless space,

Sails a vessel, lush and layered

With a multitude of disks and tails.

Fleets with ivory bows and curling wings,

Crafts curved in whiteness and chrome

Piercing the scarlet skies of worlds unknown.

Interstellar odysseys carving through

Galaxies of electric blue.

Silver ships with crimson eyes,

And flaming rears softly slide

Past a myriad of foreign worlds,

As uncharted spheres twirl

Lightyears into the voiceless deep.

The artists thus dream of escape,

Humans, dispersed as a race

Exploring the cosmic grace

The unfathomable, frightening

Magnitude of space.

Interstellar immortality lies

Beyond the stars.

In 2017, Hawking warned us all,  
We must transcend the grip of dust,  
Within one hundred years,  
Or face the certain death  
Of existence bound  
To a single sphere.  
Mankind, on this day,  
Turns its jaded face  
Once again, to spoils of war.  
I fear and wonder: Are we ready  
To ascend into glistening fields of space?  
Are we ready to explore?

# SOLAR OF SALVATION

*BY EMMA BROGAN*

You eclipse skies and replace darkness,

familiarity mistaken for mundane,

still you carry on.

Plasma sphere that commands the sea,

causes ocean to greet ocean -

from in between.

Constantly spinning, constantly heating,

Our constant source of light.

When overshadowed by your inferior, which

We marvel as a miracle,

You continue to burn your burden,

not wanting to be celebrated as the consistent,

natural wonder that You are.

Whilst humanity lies in amber,

The Solar of Salvation eliminates shattered yesterdays and

rises to expose today's surprises -

every day.

# HOW TO SUPPORT US

We recently started a Patreon page to help support Gutter Voices. We are a free publication and will always remain so, however we would love to be able to pay our contributors. The aim of our Patreon is to do this, supporting new writers, while also funding our website/domain and planned competitions.

We appreciate this time is not easy for anyone, especially on a financial side, so we have limited our package to one tier, costing €2. That's it, €2 per month to support Gutter Voices and new writers.

For that you get:

- Acknowledgement here and on our website.
- An exclusive newsletter with additional pieces.
- An exclusive newsletter with an insight into our opinions on the pieces in each issue and why we picked them.
- A monthly giveaway of feedback on your writing.
- A monthly giveaway to feature in Gutter Voices in an Author Spotlight (similar to page 39-41 in this issue).

As you will see on our Patreon page (link below), the more supporters we get the bigger the benefits. We have goals where the the number of winners in the monthly giveaways will grow with the more supporters we have. Initially we are offering one winner for each giveaway, once we reach 10 supporters we will expand this to two.

By all means, don't feel pressured to support us through Patreon. If you can, fantastic! If you can't, please continue to read Gutter Voices and share us. Ultimately, our focus here at Gutter Voices is to share new and exciting voices and act as the first stepping stone for new authors in their publication and storytelling journeys.

**CHECK OUR PATREON PAGE HERE:**

[PATREON.COM/GUTTERVOICES](https://www.patreon.com/guttervoices)

Current Backers: Jean C

# PLANETS

*BY KARA AMIOT*

You showed me a universe in pavement chalk,  
squares of concrete imbedded  
with the excitement of jumping.

Everything seemed so busy when the days slowed.

"A whole universe out there?" -

we were overjoyed to learn of other bodies  
taking up space, way up in the nothing,  
gravitating towards their own, warm light,  
moving but never getting any closer.

Everything seemed so calm, when the days sped up,  
to remember that we are all just dust  
turning in circles as if sleep-drifting on the wind,  
eternally at rest with ending up  
right back where we started .

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MR. ERIC

*BY EVAN HEY*

Where to apportion blame?

Anchored deep into a storm-tossed Atlantic Ocean,  
festooned by humungous oceanic garbage gyres, bent,  
drenched, & twisted under near permanent rain clouds,  
**some of us** (that's we/not them) are now fully marooned;  
our sole succour lies in sampling whatever poxy sanctuary  
there remains dotted around these flood sodden lands, in  
order to catch our breath, & temporarily shelter from a  
noxious miasma emanating from arseholes all around.  
Initially a tasteless whisper– oft repeated, broadly  
recognised, & in the fullness of time vaguely accepted- it  
drifted, until its realisation, albeit still nebulous, appeared  
somehow inevitable. Quickly, a confederation of  
opportunists coalesced to embrace claim & social  
stewardship over this new false dawn, with its hybrid

discontents drawn from deep multifarious bowels of irritability. Adroitly manoeuvring across a rudderless, floating faux democracy, a patchy fear of dishonourable global redundancy was evoked by these perfidious sophists; self-pitying bilge aside, a dilution of national identity, & most alarmingly, general fears of losing personal benefit entitlements arose (just so many dependent on this bloated state)– so, soon such querulous voices, rallying behind a renaissance of sovereign power, became deafening (tellingly Blighty’s fabled lost intellect from yesteryear wasn’t recollected as having been of any value, or any great loss– only the muscular exertion of Imperialism). This reactionary notion, now epidemic, congealing ubiquitously, settled & most grossly manifest as an endemic sickness, rooted deepest into those heartlands, where **flag-waving-buffoons** happily-cheer on an undisciplined, & over extended military, huge gulfs between those vulnerably weak, & the unassailably strong, given human form in monarchs, aristocrats, home-grown celebrity oligarchs, & off shore tax

avoidance empires. These insensately patriotic, mostly English areas remain fertile ground for state-surveillance agency's seeking to increase staff membership via gullible volunteers. Subjects of suspicion find themselves awkwardly ensnared within a shrinking island culture; rampant historical revisionism, & overbearing bad-faith, affecting fellow subjects into protracted idiosyncratic bouts of **Folie à deux**, itself playing havoc with their hereditary, gnarled, & ever deepening Stockholm syndrome— we ache for respite from acute strains applied from left (if you think there's nothing wrong with tomorrows world, abandon hope now) & right (wallop, that's for nothing son— now do something). Have we done something wrong?

Intergenerational liberal wisdom freely points toward promoting clear ideas of sustainable social democracy— stability based on an understanding of shared values, & strong moral convictions pervading throughout society as integrity reigns: this is the happy house, recently deserted, & targeted by all manner of contumely. In response, a radical

left would have us act together with unifying purpose, material resources held in common, nationalised, shared amongst everybody with need- devotional acts designed to heal rifts, bind people together, remarkably demanding forgiveness for those selfish acquisitive souls, whose **cunning orthodoxies** forever aim to divide & rule, to stand in contumacious opposition, but who, through wondrous programs of re-education, should eventually relax, & refrain from nonstop one-upmanship. Or so the received wisdom goes. In the course of events, a general election decided otherwise, rationalism lost, self-interested empiricism won big- erecting strong leadership: con tutti attributi.

**WYSIWYG**, but amusingly advocates of centre ground politics maintain our traditional FPTP electoral system fosters antipathy, an automatic gainsaying of progressive opponents, adversarial spirals of futile contradiction, bottle-necks, brakes, levers, traps, & crafty side-shows, performed to support an entrenched status quo. Maybe there's an ounce of truth in this view, although funnily enough-

obviously all this cat herding happens not by accident, but rather by design: if you've a proudly archaic constitution, you get archaic triumphalist outputs. Certainly, one doesn't experience an honest collective series of statements, carefully considered, & weighted, seeking to establish a balanced, definitive proposition, which tracks an equitable direction- aiming at a largely homogenised commonwealth. Fair play, British academic pedants, very often during their spare time, comically gather to debate the degree that there's an authentic constitution at all- e.g. a series of principles enforceable by a supreme court constrain a government's freedom of action & legislation. Pondering prorogation: was it that the monarch's will was not **justiciable**- even when it was supporting an action intended to frustrate the will of parliament? Is parliament sovereign, or the crown in parliament, or is it (& here's the lame punch line) those austerity bearing masses (burdened by that fictional national debt)?

**Blame the masses!** By now its oblivious scant assistance can reliably be anticipated from those hunkered down in salubrious comfort zones or dulcet **echo chambers**, & so it goes. So, out here on the perimeter, rubbing shoulders with a plethora of cerebrally challenged fantasists, we see the mob imagining itself as the latest exceptional generation of supremacists', seeded & sprung from a long line of pioneers, conquerors, & industrial capitalists– sufficiently intelligent to spread enough of their affluence benevolently over large swathes of deserving foreign peasants, to keep a Pax Britannica. But there is no peace: it's replaced by endless war perpetuated by our grandiose time honoured military industrial complex, funded by fiat QE forever.

Financial capitalism, a **debasement** of currencies, stock-buy-backs, conspicuous displays of wealth by those elites, who when recognised are worshipped as celebrity deities, despite a massively burgeoning disparity between rich & poor. The poor idiots working to pay tax bills, in contrast to a universal desire to ostentatiously ponce about as bitching

Benefits Queens, enjoying large, offshore, off-limits, off-the-scale debauchery off the Virgin Isles; an obsession with sex, butt thumping school children without shame, be it itsy bitsy little girls, priapic adolescents, wanton piglets, **the whole schmeer**. It's all about exercising power– interest rate apartheid, credit vs. debt. To theologise about some moral deficiency in the 1% is to misunderstand, that since morality doesn't trade on the NYSE– then there is no morality: there never will be. So, we free thinkers don't cogitate from a place of morality, instead from a peculiar place of sublime, **360-degree** corruption, with no beginning- nor any end- a **möbius** strip of greed, which goes all the way back to the terrorist of terrorists at the Federal Reserve. Motherfuckers, do you forgive them? Or harbour impotent feelings of revenge & retribution?

Some say, **if you can't forgive, forget– pick one**: sounds easy but we're not orbiting Parliament Hill carrying an LRB pink canvass eco tote bag, we're certainly not fortunate ones, virtue signalling from atop coigns of vantage; we were

but simple, unemployed secular philosophers- most days I am waged gainfully specifically not to think, but simply obey, wearing ones best servile smile, undertaking chores on behalf of assorted symptomatic Philistines, profiting from all manner of delegated tedium. After our labours, our obedience, our commute back & forth, to & from our rentals, if all our energies aren't entirely spent, we leisurely eke out a modicum of sedulous reflection, concerning how ill-fated are one's economic constraints, daily submissions, & wonder about ones oxymoronic, noisy, aggressive, yet predominantly servile neighbours. Like a cat on hot bricks, powerless to emigrate, relocate, or magically change up reality (in a fashion so emblematic of our central banking overlords, who in collusion worldwide, infinitely regress, & with impunity, simply remove laws, risk, regulations, or even time itself- anything at all- because their ilk can never get enough of what they don't need) to obtain a marginally higher rating upon **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**.

Numerous community action groups flatter my types, & will

obligingly take what little subscriptions or profile we might add, to buttress the impression that 'Their Momentous Cause' is swelling its ranks, & has velocity, yet inevitably having served my meagre purpose, lines of electronic intercommunication will fizzle out, & anonymity return. **De profundis**, wicked temptresses-of-corruption cannot be unheard– paradigms of lasciviousness, moaning seductively from as far afield as Dog Shit Bay, whilst obstreperous drunks perched on the banks of the rat infested canal, call me- hidden away behind the wafer-thin walls of my ex council tenancy, taunting me, daring me to take their **Kestral Super** challenge, & swallow whole its decadent promise (all ones problems solved/or no money back). Even factoring in & accounting for seasonal affective disorder, last winter went so heavily dark so as to obfuscate hope, eradicate all prospects of improvement, leaving only angry thoughts, self-harm, me unresponsive, unwell, ever tied to this broken grounded tiller, washed up in bits, an unwanted gross spent force of stinking life fluids, seeping through

arthritic fingers into a blocked figurative gutter. It was such a sad state, that I sat in a defecatory position, close to a squat, leaning back against my grey composite front door in a listless trance, which was raised instantly, as the unsolicited unparalleled pamphlet that changes bad lives for good fell slap onto my stale loaf. No more than a tiny booklet, its impact was colossal, clearly illustrating, not only what's wrong with apathetic defeatism, but how to remedy matters, because everybody's looking for something. Some of them want to use you, whilst some of them want to be used by you. And it is these latter folks, who await identification, & to be taken aside discreetly for processing. In an increased heartbeat, I perceived my moment of personal redemption had arrived, time for me to trade repression for regeneration; that bullet in the head caught my attention. In disintermediated charades of give & take, it is the true mission of an anarchic modern artist to figure out how to take as much as possible, without giving back very much at all. No longer suffice to endure, but to grasp, & fondle robustly. Mastering the simple instructions, & helpful

black & white freehand illustrations featured within **The Gospel of Mr. Eric**, one can stealthily become a viral form of abuse, in the novel shape of a corporeal rentier, dug snug, subcutaneously, unnoticed into swathes of throbbing living flesh, abundant upon so many dumb unsuspecting hosts– potentially to include that awful basket of deplorables, full of those who had previously tormented, or cruelly shunned you. This self-help guide teaches clear headed ambitious students, how to bravely approach, disarm, & parasitically feed from one’s target host. If you can’t beat them, join them. Ending with a nominal caveat: caution may be habit forming (change is accompanied by risk). But what’s a chap down on his luck got to lose? Truth is it’s a **moral crusade of self-forgiveness**, to right a wrong with gusto, to at last stop punishing oneself by criminally neglecting one’s desires, & childishly accepting guilt by association: all blame & retribution must instead be poured down upon the heads of others.

Inspired by financial instruments, exerted penetratingly into lives of those too dim to recognise reversible morality- or elected officials, serving external creditors other than the basic needs of Joe Public. Before a back-drop of municipalities never balancing budgets of odiously opaque debt, & spurred on by inexorable environmental evaporation across an exhausted planet. This proof of concept heralds an era of developing **carnage**, during which most shall willingly or otherwise, lose any civilising properties in panic, initially en masse, but splintering down into smaller, ugly, specialist groups of thugs, who when spying someone unmaddened by those same psychic afflictions as themselves, then they'll violently assault this someone with furious anger; meting out an official, crass, all-inclusive, no-nonsense beating of sense into them- as to exactly why all folk must abide by the new financialised testament- itself being a pure-ish reflection of the ancient original manifesto of **Mr. E**. The prognosis is dire, but in respect to that beholden herd, what do you expect from pigs but a grunt?

So, make them all grunt long & loud. For a fading species, on a dying planet, devoid of moral leadership or positive influence, in over extended, overpopulated, corrupt societies, a journal of ideological deprogramming is long overdue. Reassuringly inspired by extracts from the **Book of Eric** – it's the fourth synoptic gospel, the only one in which the character of **Jesus of Nazareth** fails to make an appearance. *He wouldn't have felt comfortable there.* It loyally tells of the life & ministry of Mr. Eric, a questionable messiah, whose frank enjoyment of divine privilege is exceeded only by his persistent attempts to evade all responsibility for that enjoyment (its consequences, & anything else for that matter). Like Jesus, whose life Mr Eric's' parallels & parodies, He was born in a Bethlehem stable, issue of a mystical union between the Holy Spirit & a St Bernard. Half man, half god, half dog, half biscuit, His early childhood is conveniently unrecorded, His teaching beginning only after a punishing 40-day drinking session, at the end of which **Beelzebub** came forth to him in the form

of a **horned ham beigal**, which Mr Eric promptly ate. Thus fortified, He took up the career of travelling preacher, gathering around himself a coterie of disciples lured by promises of '**everything all the time**', a goal he attempted to attain by **(a)** masturbating until a nearness to God was observed, & **(b)** spinning around as quickly as possible. In the first instance his apostles experienced nothing more than sore willies, while in the second only sensations of dizziness, nausea, & acute futility. Thereupon His communion questioned Him regarding his credentials, & requested the return of monies advanced. Repeatedly throughout the text, Mr Eric's appetite for **violence & treachery is chronicled**, reaching ever higher pinnacles of madness & insight. Yet there were those amongst His flock who followed in His footsteps whatever banal/painful fate awaited them. When Mr Eric changed water into methyl alcohol, there were those who held out their bowls for more: blind faith indeed. Unlike Jesus, Mr Eric's story ends not in His crucifixion, but rather the crucifixion of the last of his

entourage, too crazed or stupid to see what was coming down. Mr Eric, it seems, saw no need to die for the ugly sins of the world; quite the reverse. In contemporary British 'thought', Mr Eric presents a provocative & deeply ambiguous figure. To Melvyn Bragg He "stands at a crucial junction in Western history, the point at which the inchoate 'I' becomes the complex 'me'" but then Melvyn Bragg is a smug tedious git, who'll be one of the first chivvied up the scaffold with electric cattle goads come the day of retribution. We 'Eric's' do not seek to judge: our concern is not with truth, but **propaganda**, the massing of sound, the therapeutic use of paranoia. **Mr Eric** is, for us, nothing more than the ferocious beat of pastoral nihilism drumming through a culture of sedated panic, in which the atomising of individuals, in the name of The Individual, proceeds apace. Mr Eric teaches us man is completely controlled in the body & mind; before it ends, sing an anthem of collective loss- together let's make the finest primal scream for freedom ever to be heard.

# A FAITH

BY ANTHONY SALANDY

There is a strange faith.

That exists in the minds

Of all those that believe

In the grandeur of a cosmos

So mightily enduring

Yet ever in flux,

For everyday a new faith grows

Deep in the souls of all those

That dare to believe-

That there exists more

Than what we are told as fact

In a universe so perplexing

And so contrasting

In the minds of all those

That at random inhabit it,

An inhabitation that exists

Only in the conscious existence

Of all those that live and love

On stars of an unknown creation

That fascinate and enamor

All those who philosophize-

And question the meaning

Of a never ending faith

In the beauty of a cosmic entity-

So separate to textbook evolution.

# DESCARTES' STICK

*BY JONATHAN HUMBLE*

Entropically speaking,

it is just a matter of time.

So I plant a few daffodil bulbs

to muffle these nagging thoughts

with a promise of spring brilliance,

fresh beginnings, awakening, renewal,

life, joy and all that jazz.

But flesh corrupts

and bones diminish.

I know the soil beneath will shift  
till overhead the rafters fail  
and the loam roof collapses  
onto where a hearth once glowed  
and a stout heart pulsed.

Too soon, old friend; too soon  
to find a new walking companion.

Someday I might trawl the local papers.

For now, I must find other distractions.

I'll talk and walk with Descartes instead,

though we both know he's useless

when it comes to fetching sticks.

# ANOTHER MOMENT OF SELF- OBSESSION

*BY JONATHAN HUMBLE*

I think this skin is tired:

days in tens of thousands

stretched and stressed,

wearing the hours in shapes

mirror checked for suitability.

Broken on a daily basis:

elementally punctured,

eroded, baked and beaten,

an over-used whipping boy

experienced in such matters.

Exposed to judgement:

harshly compared with benchmarks,

body targets shifting over time

all template aspirations withered

or hopelessly out of reach.

Disinfected and scrubbed:

exfoliated until the rawness

and newness of subsequent layers

begs to be sluiced free of the dead

and left alone to recover quietly.

Exhausted and subverted:

comprehensive ongoing replacement,

redundancy notices handed down

over years of chaos and change,

yet still defined by me

as *me*.

# AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT: EMMA MALES

EMMA MALES' DEBUT FANTASY NOVEL *THE SHADOW PLANE* IN THE *ITHAERON* TRILOGY IS OUT NOW AND AVAILABLE ON AMAZON ([CHECK IT OUT HERE](#)). WE ASKED HER A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT IT.

## **WHAT IS *THE SHADOW PLANE* ABOUT?**

It's a fantasy novel set on a parallel plane, but don't think there's only one! Almost everyone on Ithaeron has powers, and there is a big emphasis on parallels. A group of people have to save the multiple planes from the takeover of an evil, parallel group. There's a heavy romance story, and a lot of plot twists.

## **WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE WRITING *THE SHADOW PLANE*?**

The actual challenge was my home life. I went through a lot. I went off on maternity leave shortly after I started writing it, then a few months later split up with my husband. I've been

through the ringer a lot recently, but I've still managed to keep at writing.

### **WHAT WAS THE MOST EXCITING MOMENT WRITING *THE SHADOW PLANE*?**

For me, the love story. I'm a sucker for a good love story, and the more twists the better.

### **WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE SELF-PUBLISHING YOUR DEBUT VS THE TRADITIONAL ROUTE?**

It was about getting my work out there before I could change my mind, I think. The longer I left it without publishing, the more I found wrong with my work. I started picking at things that weren't even an issue!

### **IF YOU COULD GIVE ONE TIP TO SOMEONE LOOKING TO SELF-PUBLISH, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

Make sure you format as you go along! A friend of mine told me about how it took so long to format it, and explained what should be done. I skipped the whole process by doing it as I wrote.

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR EMMA MALES?

I've been working on the second book in this series since I finished the first draft of *The Shadow Plane*. I plan on making it a trilogy. In the meantime, I will also put out short stories and poems, as I have an awful lot of them!

*NEXT UP: READ AN EXTRACT OF THE SHADOW PLANE*

# EXTRACT: THE FAR PLANE

*BY EMMA MALES*

When she finally got home, Star threw her sodden coat onto the floor, and kicked off her shoes. She pulled her light hair out of the bobble that restrained it, and shook it out, massaging her scalp.

Five minutes later, she'd set alight to the logs in the ash-ridden fireplace, all reflective surfaces around her now glittering, green gemstones. She flung herself into her favourite old chair, pouring the cheap silver wine down her throat so quickly she barely had time to swallow. She was already a third of the bottle in when she heard it.

It was just a whisper- barely there. A low moan of despair that seemed to hang in the very air. She felt a chill pass through her, realising with a deep sense of dread that it didn't sound like wind. Her eyes snapped to the window, her heart plummeting. Outside must have been ten times darker than any night she'd ever known.

She found herself out of the chair, and leaning forward against the large sill. Outside, she could see nothing- not the fence that rested just beyond the door, not even a single shard of the glass-snow. The outside world appeared as empty as a black hole, and looking up, she saw why. No stars, no light. Never in all of her twenty-six years had she ever known a night without stars; they were too big for even the thickest, most dense clouds to cover. She didn't like it, it felt wrong. Anything could be out there.

The whole thing began to feel too close to the dream and she could feel beads of sweat starting on her forehead. She backed away until she was almost standing in the fireplace, the flames dancing dangerously close to her legs.

She let out a peel of unnatural, nervous sounding laughter. She was being insane. What was she, afraid of the dark now? She forced herself to calm down, raising the bottle to her lips with a shaking hand.

Mirrors everywhere, black, splintering, yet no reflection. She was running, feeling pain in every step, now outside, alone in the unfamiliar darkness. Everywhere she turned, there was nothing but shadows. And then she was going up,

away... Star sat bolt upright, her face slick with sweat. The bottle of wine lay empty by her side, and she realised with a twinge of shame that she had passed out on the sofa again. Faylie's words about her own dark dream came back to her suddenly. The disappearances were enough to conjure some powerful mental imagery, that must be the cause. She pulled herself up, noticing the brightening sky; perhaps today she would be early for work. Feeling nauseated, Star made her way to the bathroom. She caught sight of her reflection and was suddenly unable to take her eyes off the woman before her. She was a mess; worse than a mess. Her tangled hair framed a face much thinner since the last time she looked, her prominent cheekbones jutting out, her complexion dull and waxy with dark rings beneath her round eyes. And to top it all off, her clothes were baggy and clashed terribly. *No wonder people stare at me*, she thought with distaste. *Must take better care of myself.*

She heard the post arrival, and dragged herself away from the stranger in the mirror. Skimming through the heavy cloth letters, she saw one about another missing teenager, one bill that she had dreaded the sight of, and... *Oh no. A*

notice warning people to refrain from going out at night.

Faylie was sure to have a field day today.

She threw them down onto the windowsill, recalling as she did the strange, gripping terror she had felt looking out of the very same window last night. Today, the only fear she felt was the dread of trudging through freshly fallen snow again. She grabbed her warm sanoulie wool coat, suddenly grateful to the charity shop where she purchased it, and left. The door was unlocked, she noticed, shaking her head. She really should be more careful. While she doubted Faylie's strange theories, there *had* been a lot of disappearances recently.

The day went as expected. Faylie bombarded Star with nonsense she had researched about storms and dark nights, and Star was forced to listen since thanks to the stir the disappearances were causing, no one came into the shop all day.

'But they say it's happened before,' Faylie said as Star stood painting.

'Yep. And I'm sure silmarens really exist,' Star said with heavy sarcasm, never removing her gaze from the picture she was working on.

‘Well... I heard there’s proof! People who are still young from the first time...’

‘Ok, stop there,’ Star said, finally looking up. ‘Listen to yourself for a moment. Not even the sorceress in the River Hills has enough power to stay young! You see how old she’s getting?’

‘Yeah... but-‘

‘Seriously Fay, it’s insane. There’s some madman on the loose or something. That’s all.’

Faylie stood in stunned silence for a moment. Star could see her wondering if she could be right. It was always the way; she had to convince Faylie that everything she feared was all in her mind, like a mother with a young child afraid of the monster under the bed. It didn’t seem to work this time though, as Faylie continued to hound her with it continuously. Every time she thought Faylie had listened, there was yet another answer as to why something strange was going on.

By the end of the day, Star left feeling a little unassured in spite of her soothing words and nihilistic attitude, looking over her shoulder more than once. As she rounded the corner, she thought she saw a blue-haired figure, but

realised with depreciation that it must have been the one blue plant, vibrant amongst the usual shades of pink. She rolled her eyes at herself, and picked up her pace, making it home long before nightfall.

She went straight to the fridge when she got in, pulling out the closest bottle. It was cheap, and left a bitter aftertaste in her mouth, but it was alcohol, and it did the job. She finished it off and staggered towards the hallway, intending to spend the rest of the night in her room, but as she entered the living room the sight of the unveiled window caught her eye. In an odd fleeting moment, the pitch-black darkness seemed to summon her, the deep shadows crying out for her to be cloaked in them.

She found herself wandering over, unable to stop herself. She paused abruptly less than a foot away as her eyes took in an unexpected sight. She thought she saw someone, or something, moving. She strained to see more, but couldn't make anything out. Her heart pummelled uncomfortably, her breath coming shallow. She crept up to the window, resting her hands on the sill, leaning forward, unsure if she had imagined the shadowy figure.

But there was nothing. Fear rippled through her core, and she shuddered against the feeling that something was very wrong. The figure had *looked* real, was it possible she had imagined it? After all, it was so black, so empty outside, that she doubted she could see someone even if they were pressed right up against her window. However, she knew one thing for certain; she would not be going outside to find out.

# SEND US YOUR SUBMISSION

If you would like to be a part of our next issue, submissions are now open!

Send your submissions to [guttervoices@gmail.com](mailto:guttervoices@gmail.com) with 'Submission' as your subject line.

Submissions can be one or multiple pieces but the total amount must not exceed 3,000 words or 12 pages (taking 250 words to equal 1 page).

We are open to poetry, flash fiction & short stories.

Please make sure to introduce yourself in the body of the email, include your website or preferred social media, and title your documents.

**Submissions Close October 20th.**

# SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

We sincerely hope you've enjoyed Gutter Voices Issue #4 as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

If you have any feedback or suggestions, please send them to [guttervoices@gmail.com](mailto:guttervoices@gmail.com) so we can continue improving.

# JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST

If you want to be first in line for Issue #5 and all future issues, send an email to [guttervoices@gmail.com](mailto:guttervoices@gmail.com) with 'Email List' as your subject line to join and receive it direct to your inbox on November 15th!

This email list will only be used for delivering issues and no other purpose.

**THANK YOU!**

**SEE YOU NOVEMBER 15TH FOR ISSUE #5**