

The HFC: A Journal of Art & Literature

Issue 3

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In this Issue

Our featured writer this issue is the very accomplished and talented Vishwas Vaidya. Vaidya is an author and engineer in Pune, India. Outside of his life as a poet, Vaidya is a successful engineer with some 20 patents and several international research publication/articles to his credit. As a poet he has published a book of poems entitled Symphony of the Night-flower: Love Poems which is available at Amazon. We know you will enjoy his poems so much that you won't be able to resist buying his book. Go to our website for more information and for two links to readings of his poems by Pamela Sandhu.



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A Golden Bitterness

By Vishwas Vaidya

Moon, like

A mad lover,

Is playing

With her own pain

Tinged with

A golden bitterness!

A mad lone tear,

Flaunts her moon-lit bosom,

Painting the parched lips

Of my thirsty soul

With a tinge of

A golden bitterness!

Departing Monsoon

By Vishwas Vaidya

Ziping into

My departing dreams

You decked them

With a string of

Surprised tears!

Like fast fading

Foot-prints of

A departing Monsoon

Decking the earth

With a blush of

Surprised green!

A Mad Summer Breeze

By Vishwas Vaidya

Your memory,

Drunk with her own charm,

Haunted my dreams

Like a mad summer breeze!

Weaving my night into

A misty eyed poem,

As a vagabond tear

Painted your name

On a mad summer breeze!

A Dash of Mad Cadence

By Vishwas Vaidya

If only you could

Add a dash of mad cadence

To the music of our love...

Like a river blindly drunk

With waves of her own tears

Wetting eyes of her shore!

My poetry too would then,

Flow insanely intense...

Wetting the shores of

Your eyes with a,

Silently singing pain!

A Divine Debt

By Vishwas Vaidya

Buried in the
Silken arms of Love,
My life was gazing
At the dark sweetness
Of the blushing night
Wooed by the dimpled
Glory of a young moon

"Magic touch of your lips
Has turned my moments
Into golden rain-drops
Of a sun-kissed August"

My life whispered with Love,

"Tell me how can I
Ever pay back the
Golden debt of
Your lush-green magic?"

Pointing to the infinite glory
Of the musical night,
Love whispered,

"How can you ever pay back ..
When you, me, the night and the moon
Are all not only just debtors .. but also
Sparkling drops of tiny debts
In the infinite ocean of the Divine Debt!"



Photograph by Patt Little

The Wrath of a Woman

By Riham Adly

The desert warrior lurked behind the moon swathed shades. Sheathed in black he blended well with the dark, except for the silver glint of his scabbard. He waited eagerly for her inside that silent room like a predator ready for its prey. Agitation crept slowly as he felt for his missing shield and spear, without them he felt incomplete. Disguised as a guard, he managed to sneak his way into the women's quarters. Guards wore only their swords. He had to leave his weapons behind to avoid suspicion, but he had no need for them, not tonight.

The Guard on watch tonight didn't show up. He made sure of that. The punishment begetting those who dared trespass this territory was death, but he was Suhaib The Fearless. No warrior matched up to him. The dessert was his home, its creatures his allies. The harsh elements worked with him not against him. The sweltering sun taught him endurance, the moon was his eyes in the dark and the stars were his guide and entertainer.

Instinctively, he held tight to his dagger as the chamber's door flung open. Finally, his curiosity was to be fulfilled. Was she anything like the folktales weaved around her? The fairest woman of the land, they had said, one only worth of a king. A confident smile played around his lips as his mind jumped forward to the plans he had in store. He was worthier than any king. She was going to be his tonight.

The whiff of magnolia dizzied him. The air felt heavier with the strong scent, her scent.

Holding his breath, he stood still and watched as the princess walked in. She held a lantern in her hand that cast frenzied shadows on the walls, dancing shadows that had a life of their own. Moonlight showered over her. Her beauty reminded him of the blossoming spring, ever so soft and supple, but the glint in her dark eyes made him shiver. Unease coiled around his heart like a snake.

Tales had it that she was betrothed four times to glorious kings of high power and wealth, yet none of them had lived long enough to join the princess in matrimony, an unfortunate virgin, but not for long.

The princess sat down on her ornate armchair and started to weave a yarn of silk around her needles. Her scent grew heavier, and his desire for her stronger. He thought he was hallucinating when he noticed the lantern light gave way to a pinkish mist that surrounded her, peeking and probing at her work.

"I know you're here, please come out."

He wasn't surprised that she found him. Any woman in her right mind should feel his masculine presence. They all gravitated to him, this one shouldn't be different. The warrior stepped out from behind the shades revealing himself. His pulse drummed in his chest when he stood face to face with her consummate beauty.

"What do you want?"

"I want to claim you as my woman." His masculine ego emanated through his words.

The princess gave him a playful, bemused grin, and buried her smooth face into the crook of his neck. He felt still with desire, his palm no longer gripping the dagger. He let his strong arms around her back feeling its contours, slowly and deliberately navigating her body towards his. He let his unease slip, he was in control. Soon he'll quench his thirst for her, soon he'll conquer her.

A tingling prick snapped him back from his ecstasy, followed by a sharp pain in his chest. The air seemed to escape his lungs, rendering him obsolete and impotent. He was paralyzed now, his body collapsed, and his mind floated. His eyes searched for her in quest of help, but instead of finding her exotic eyes, he saw a monster with black shiny scales, and an orange hour glass on its back. Thin scaly arms pinned him to the wall. Her scent suffocated him, every inch of him was trapped, even his thoughts.

A loud feminine laugh resonated in his ears.

"You poor fool. How dare you think you can claim me as your woman? You shall pay with your life, like the others did."

He wanted to close his eyes but he couldn't, his gaze fixed on the silvery web behind the monster and its scaly hands.

Four rings. He thought in confusion. Why is it wearing four rings?

"I could hear your thought, my delicious." She closed on him, before oozing the frothy liquid all over him.

"Aye, four rings, for four kings, all dead, devoured. I am the black widow. The greatest female of all."

As the seconds passed, the once brave warrior felt the burning acid melt his insides. The muscular, heavy body ceased to exist; now a gore of oozing, indistinct remains.

The starlit sky was no longer clear. The powerful wind took over and summoned the sandstorm.

The warrior's soul left the dissolving body, bidding farewell to the mortal world that was once his domain. He mounted on the swirling waves of dust that obscured the moon from view, plunging into a journey to the afterlife, leaving behind his glorious name, and his triumphant battles.

For all his strength and power, he was crippled by his very own ego and scalding desire that scattered his might and crushed his soul.

The Ramblings of an Angry Woman

By Riham Adly

The shutters shiver from the wind's howling threat
The sky thunders and the spacious grounds are wet.
Slivers of lights barred by a malicious cloud set.
My fury is unrivaled, and only my curse you beget.
Don't conjure the darkness within or else,
It is the worst fate you'll get.

You will linger in your sorrow for my sweet smile you will see no more,
You will get banished from my kind heart's core.

You will lose a friend who was always there,
Helping you out through despair

Hurt me once and i shall forgive,
Hurt me twice and i shall never forget.

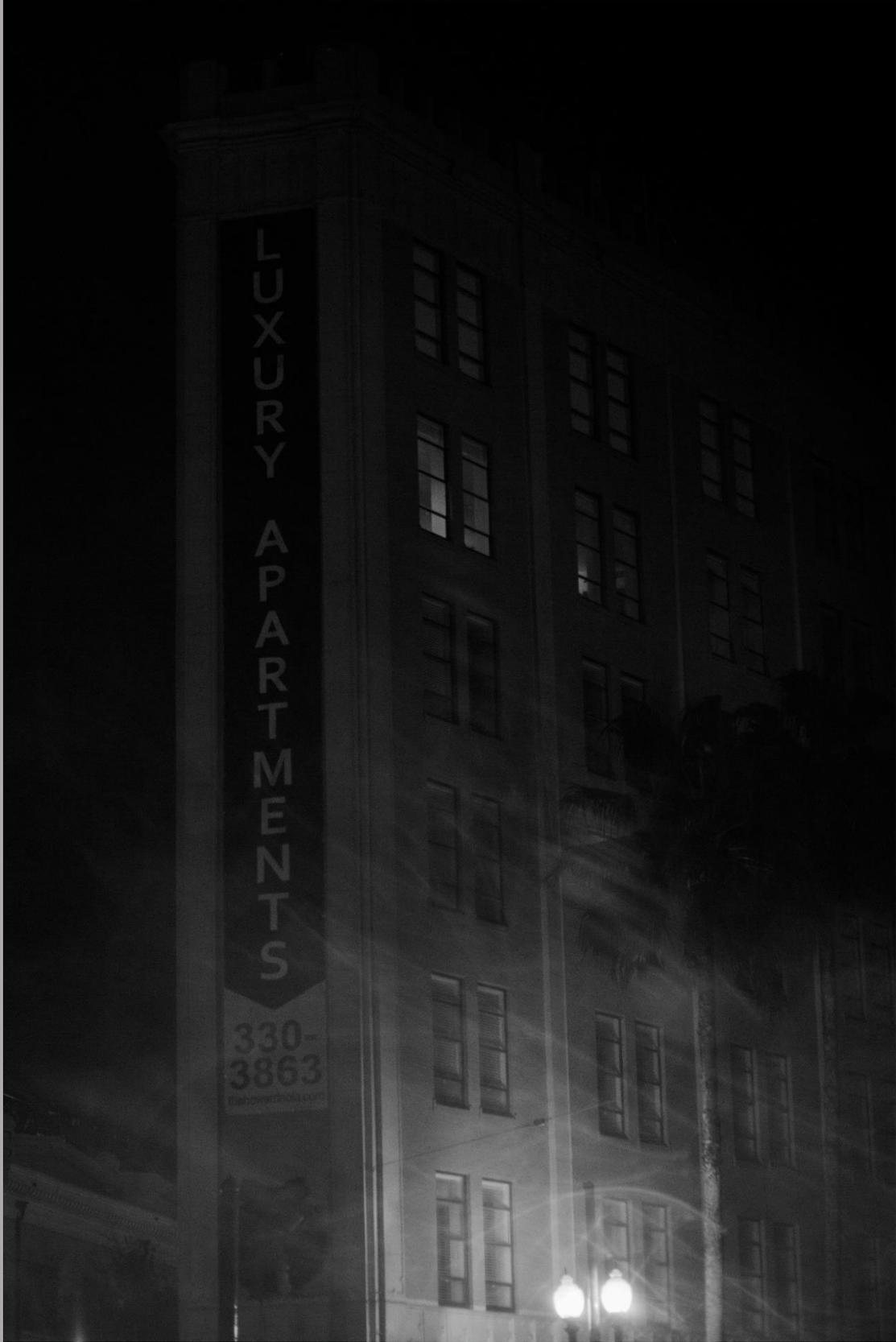
You'll taste my wrath, and feel it sting.
While i lick the sweetness that revenge's path shall bring.

Betray no more i warn you.
Or my eternal curse shall haunt you.



Riham Adly

If Riham, or Rose as she's known by friends, seems familiar you might remember that she was the featured writer in our last issue and we've invited her to share even more of her amazing work in this issue.



Photography by Patt Little

Blue is, Blue is Not

By Paula Harmon

Blue is for uniforms.

Teenage girls reluctant in boring old sensible
navy blue.

Blue to make us all look the same.

Me and Susan and Annette.

But it didn't of course:

Short or curvy or thin or tall or a mix of these
things

We simply looked ourselves in navy

No, blue is not just for uniforms.

Blue is dreary.

No, it does not have to be an apologetic tint

Like white that got in with the navy wash.

And neither do I - I can like blue but not be
uniform

Like blue but not be indistinct.

Blue is cold.

What about peacock or turquoise or teal?

Those warm blues, sultry blues, Moroccan
blues,

The colours of possibility

The open sky, the open road,

Mystery of Indian sapphires,

In them I feel sensuous, rich, warm,
adventurous.

Blue is dull.

Oh think of the wine dark blue of winter

Brightened with pink or red

The colour of cuddles by the fire

Of spicy plums and apples and blackberries

In Latin there is no proper word for blue

Caeruleus covers everything

From wine dark sea to stone washed jeans.

In blue I can feel the moods of the skies:

In October I wore fine sophisticated Delft

Blue and white, fine patterning on

a flattering summer dress

I felt grown up and pretty

Sipping my anniversary wine

in a charming side street restaurant.

This week wearing dark blue

Like the bruised dusky sky

When the clocks went back.

Oh blue. It is the colour of calm.

Perhaps. But it is the colour of water.

And water has many moods.

Under the water the feet of the calm swan

Paddle madly.

It is the colour of sky but

The blue can hide the coming heat

Or the coming storm.

I can look calm.

But I am not.

Underneath, I whirl with possibilities.

I can wear the uniform

But I am not the uniform

I am, finally, myself.

Yellow

By Paula Harmon

Yellow is a tempting colour: If I wear it will I look confident?

Children respond to it in primary vibrancy -

Sooty, Spongebob, La La, Minions.

Me: I love the delicate primrose of springtime:

Narcissus and buttercup, the trumpeting daffodil in Gloucestershire masses

The gold of the Autumn barley and the Harvest loaf, plaited into a sheaf

I sense the lure of Limocello and Advocaat

Can remember the taste of 70s lemonade and ice lollies.

And then there is dangerous yellow:

Stripe of tiger and wasp; The scorching of summertime sun

Safety gear; life jackets; warning signs

Once Deb & I walked from The Trundle through oilseed rape

It looked short enough but wasn't

Soon the highlighter yellow was over our heads

Pollen staining our skin and clothes, we were drowning and lost in an aurulent sea.

Should I wear yellow?

No. I did once and turned up at work: Little Miss Sunshine

Of course, that was the day they asked me to clerk in court.

Not even wearing yellow can make you feel confident

In a room of black.

I liked to think maybe I represented a ray of hope in litigation

But I suspected, if they noticed me at all, they simply thought:

What on earth is she wearing?

The fact that I still worry or care

Proves that as I knew all along

Inside I am always just unvibrant me

Safer in blue.

IN EXCESS

By Paula Harmon

The meat aisle overwhelmed her. She could not choose. Her only creative outlet was cooking but desires, dictates, delicate stomachs, determined dislikes of husband, children and mother disabled her. Too spicy, not spicy, wrong meat, wrong method, wrong accompaniments. Pride destroyed with one sigh, one resigned poke with a fork, one scowl.

Trailing up and down, she worried: pork, beef, chicken, lamb?

A sob choked her, tears filling her eyes. Empty trolleyed, she stood lost, interrupting the stream of shoppers.

If it was up to her - if she could choose? Choose whatever she wanted?... she could not even decide that.

CLIFF-FACE

By Paula Harmon

Lost

Hanging onto the edge

“Don’t look down” -

If I fall, there’s no way up

“Don’t look up” -

I’ll be overwhelmed

“Don’t look over” -

Tantalizing yet distant

If I take one step

It might be over

Or night will descend.

I press my face to the wall

Nothing but blank rock

“Hold on”

Maybe

Someone can help

“Look down” - I’ve come so far

“Look up” - I’m nearly there

I lift my face and

Look sideways - I am not on my own

I will reach out one finger

I will take one step sideways

I will hold out for the light

Paula Harmon is a civil servant living in the UK. She has been writing since she was a child but only recently began to publish her work. She is a wife and a mother of two teenaged children. She enjoys reading, travel, photography and cooking. Go to our website for a link to Harmon's writing.





Photography by Patt Little

The Escape

By Liam Regin

It bothered him, disturbed him, haunted him, even...but what was in the back of Jason's mind wouldn't leave him alone. Continuously trying to rise from his sub-consciousness, but never quite getting to the surface. Day after day. Night after night, constantly tormenting him. Did he lack courage? Was that it? Was his lack of courage the demon that tormented him?

It was almost four months now since he had last tried to eradicate the torment. Since he had turned back from the house...his vision blurred by the swelling tears that filled his eyes...cursing his lack of courage. Now, kneeling alone in the last pew of the dimly-lit church, the white marble altar standing out against the dark wall behind it, its large stained-glass window, with its army of saints looking down at him, his courage was returning. On this dark, wintry storm-lashed November day, he swore he wouldn't fail again.

The wiper-blades were fighting a losing battle against the torrents of freezing rain that lashed the windscreen, as Maura tried to negotiate between the glaring head-lights of the on-coming traffic. The thoughts that filled her mind didn't help. She loved Patrick, and always had, but she had married Jason...and now she would have to tell him, that she was leaving him. About her feelings for Patrick...and she would have to tell him tonight. And Patrick would have to tell Jane. She and Jane were friends. It would be hard for her to hear the truth. Was it guilt she felt as she drove through the blinding rain, or anxiety, or even excitement. Perhaps it was all three. Whatever it was, there would be no more sneaking around, no more afternoons in a cheap B and B...it would be her and Patrick from now on.

Night had lowered its dark veil as Jason stepped from the porch of the church and walked towards his car. In his coat pocket. The pearl necklace brushed against his fingers. The rain had now turned to hail but he was oblivious to it as it bit and stung his skin...he had other things on his mind.

Maura was starting to panic. The traffic had slowed to almost a stand-still and she was not yet near home. She wanted to be there before Jason got home, to be ready, prepared. He would be hurt, she knew, but it had to be done. It had been going on too long, almost six months now. It was time to tell him.

The clock in the spire of the church was chiming seven o'clock when Maura turned into the drive-way. The house was in darkness. Jason wasn't home yet, perhaps he had been asked to work overtime. Whatever the reason, she was glad. She breathed a sigh of relief as she let herself in, prepared dinner, then went to the bedroom and changed her clothes. She hoped Jason wouldn't be too long more...she wanted to get it over with.

It was late when she heard Jason turn the key in the front door. She had waited up for him and was beginning to doze in the arm-chair.

"Where have you been?" she asked. Her voice was shaking. She couldn't tell if it was with relief or expectation.

"I met Patrick and we went for something to eat." he answered, "I better change my clothes, they're soaking wet."

Maura lay in bed, confused, puzzled, unable to sleep. Jason's words kept turning over and over in her mind.

"I met Patrick and we went for something to eat." What was happening? Did he know? If he did why didn't he say? And when sleep did come, it was uneasy.

Night hadn't yet turned to day when some noise in the drive-way got Maura out of bed. Looking through the curtains she saw the blue flashing lights of two Garda cars...then the door-bell rang.

"Are you Maura Sweeney?" Maura looked past the Garda sergeant who had asked the question and towards the patrol cars.

"Yes I am." She answered, "Is something wrong? An accident?" The sergeant looked at her.

"Do you know Jane O'Sullivan?" Maura could now feel the colour leaving her face.

"Yes I do." She was trembling as she answered. "Why do you ask?" Her mouth was dry, she felt unsteady now.

"Jane O'Sullivan was found dead tonight, by her husband." The sergeant was speaking slowly now. "Murdered, we believe. We would like you to come to the station. We want to ask you some questions in relation to her death".

In the bedroom, Jason took the key that Patrick had given him and slipped it into Maura's hand-bag. It would be there when the Gardaí came looking for evidence. He had never killed any-one before and he never wanted to again. But it would be worth it. He had given Patrick Maura's pearl neck-lace to leave beside Jane's body. That evidence should send her to prison for life. Then he and Patrick could be together. They had been lovers for over two years, now with Jane and Maura out of the way, they had their whole lives ahead of them. Everything had worked out perfectly.

It was almost noon when Patrick stepped into the taxi that pulled up outside his house. The rain had stopped, but it was still bitter cold. Settling into the back seat, he was met with the broad smile of a young African man. They embraced.

"Take us to the airport." the young man said, "We're going home."

Liam Regan's poem The Old Seaman was published in our first edition. He is a member of Ballylinan Writers Group, He lives in Stradbally, Ireland.

The photography (aside from writers' bio pictures) was provided by Patt Little. Little is a founding member of The HFC arts collective and an accomplished filmmaker. He's taught in Prague and South Korea and currently resides in New Orleans with his wife and their greyhound. Visit our website for links to some of Little's work.



A Word from Our Editor-in-Chief

I'd like to thank you all for reading our journal. We are an all-volunteer staff and our mission is to produce a journal that serves as a platform for artists of all disciplines. We're still trying to perfect the look and feel of the journal and I honestly think we are getting better with every issue. If you have any ideas or want to help out somehow drop us an email hfcpublishing@gmail.com. Otherwise check out our website for more information on this issues contributors. www.HFCjournal.org

Jeremy L Janice
Editor-in-Chief