

The

# WASTELAND

Issue #1 Dec 2021

Art, Poetry and Fiction by Local Creators

## Beautiful and Strange in Bakersfield

Artworks by Hayden Keene, Gabbi  
Steiger, Cindy Stodola and More!

Also  
A Bevy of Bako  
Poets

Always  
FREE

Cover Art: Hayden Keene

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(AND WHERE TO FIND THEM)

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CURATED AND ARRANGED BY RUSTY HATFIELD  
RUSTY HATFIELD CURATED AND ARRANGED BY MAL KILMER

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Gabbi Steiger

## Art is a Spark

By Rusty Hatfield

Art is a spark, and we are the flame.  
It found dry tinder in us.  
It reached into us,

It pulled us apart and together again.  
As often as it needed,  
to ignite the fire of us.

The cosmos is impartial,  
good is a thing left to mankind to create  
and when reason, and compassion  
fall on deaf ears

### Art is a spark

We are not the candle flame  
Burning gently on your mantle piece.  
We are the tormented flame.

The disturbed, and prodded Inferno.  
Belching forth constellations.  
So that each of those sparks  
might find dry tinder in them

The glow of this fire lifts callous shadows  
So that men and women might better see  
men and women.

So when the engines of change press in upon  
the tyranny of now we remember,  
and understand.

That in the heart of that engine,  
there is a spark.  
and we are the flame.

And a flame

cannot

be

burned.



ANTON KREUZMAYR



### **Poem**

By Angel Bailey

To tremble is to know winter  
The cold breath of burden  
I am certain I have too felt  
The closed feeling the familiar  
Touch of a scar being formed



dagny's  
COFFEE COMPANY



NAOMI REAM

## Unfortunately 4:30

By Angel Bailey

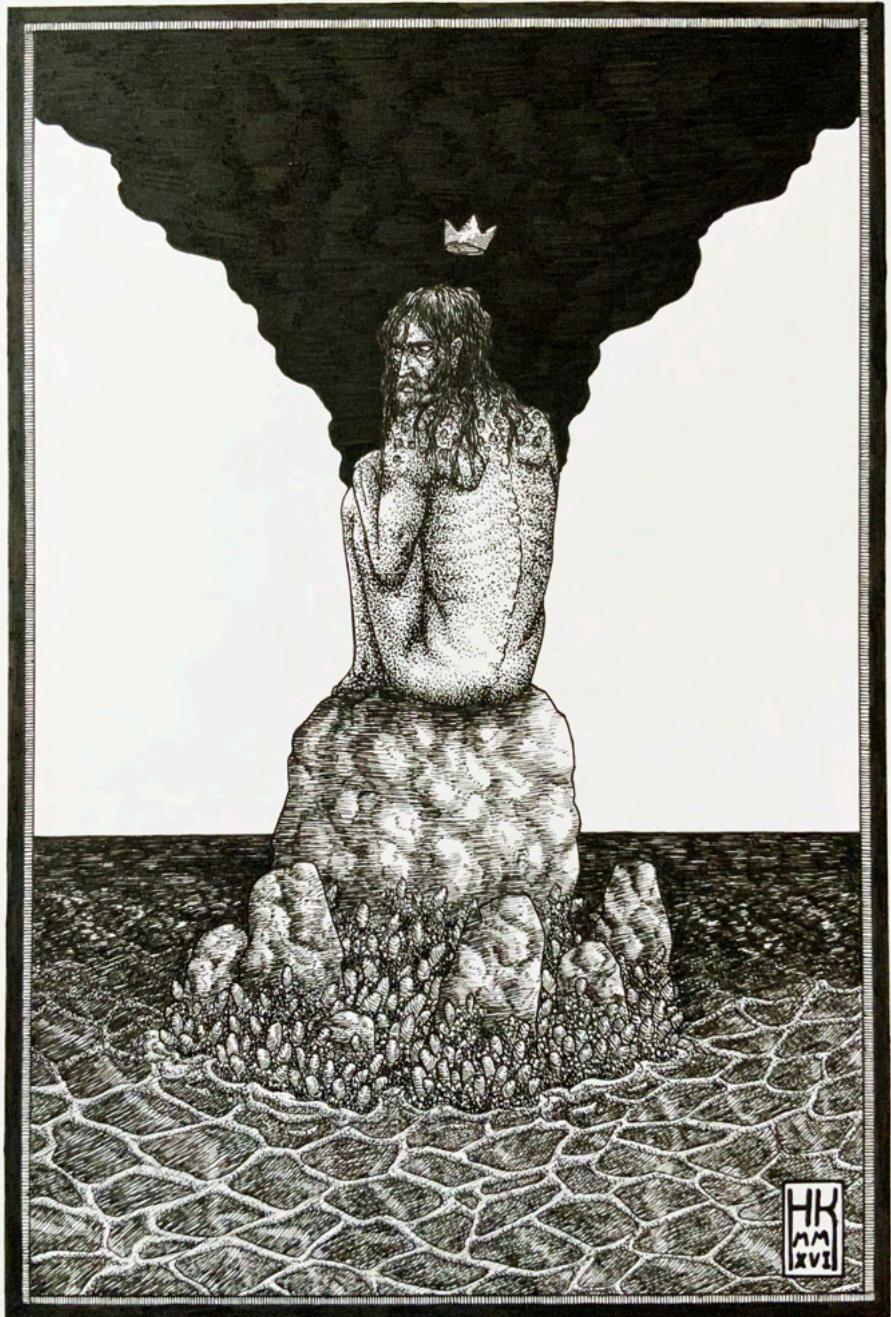
I started crossing my legs again.  
One leg over the other goes well  
with my coffee and cigarette, I think.

Most of the time I am drinking  
champagne. I watch as it is poured.  
The foam turning into liquid like magic  
in a plastic cup that looks like glass.

This cup is bigger than my fist  
therefore bigger than my heart.

It is when I am sitting outside  
and my attention is given  
to any particular thing  
to the back of that stop sign  
the back of that head a faint  
laugh after meeting again  
to the right amount of smile  
and more than enough smolder.

It is when I am sitting outside. I sit  
with myself legs crossed and notice  
how well the champagne fits in the cup.  
I notice my hands and how I hold my cigarette.  
I hold my breath while everything folds itself  
into an arrangement that goes well  
hand in hand with my heart, I think .



HAYDEN KEENE



Frances Seybert

## **Bako Summer**

By Asha Chandy

The roar of traffic is soft and distant, but I can still pick up the squeak of brakes, and the jostling tools in the back of a trailer as it hits a crack in the pavement. A car alarm goes off as a truck goes by, disrupting the ambient peace, prompting scowls from others on the patio.

Right now, I don't care about the distant problems of cars. I'm more focused on the glare from the glass building across the street from my patio. Panels of blue-green glass that look like a cool oasis are blatant lies.

The building towers above the smaller, more historic buildings on the street. Ordained with a corporate logo, the building cools computer servers. A homeless couple sit on the bulb-out on the corner, unable to find relief from the summer anywhere else besides the radiant heat of this glass building. Another man sleeps on the sidewalk outside, unconscious and unaware of his impending heatstroke.

With its frosted glass facade, probably designed by some long gone architect trying to take Bakersfield into the "Future," the eye sore reflects light, heat, and the irony of this planned city. Both my skin and corneas are singed by the western-facing panes of glass, training me for an eternity in Hell. I loathe this building, its applied use, and its design so much that I can feel each cell of my brain slowly cooling as I sip my iced tea.

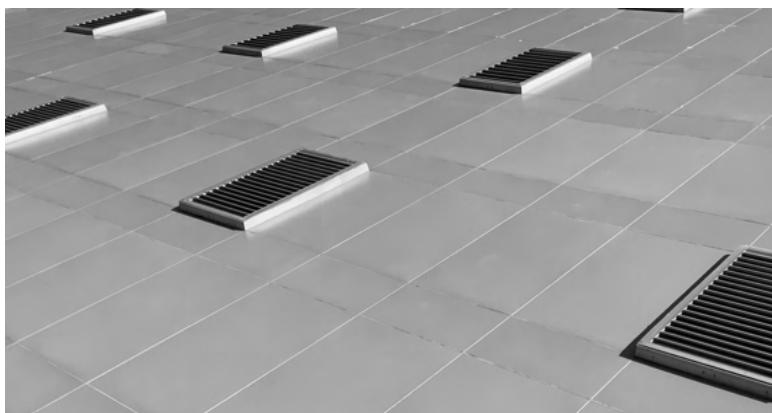
Deep into summer, each day starts muggy and overcast, and sitting next to this building is fine. The mid morning sun, always on time if not early, dissipates any moisture quickly. The sun encourages the afternoon heat to last until dusk, and these damned windows enable it. The cost of living here is a vicious cycle of sticky, buggy humidity and a dry, persistent heat each August day. The building here is not the enemy.

I just hate this building, right now. The heat would be tolerable if this building wasn't in my way. Sitting on the patio, you must face it. Standing and facing the patio, you still feel the heat from the glass hellscape, melting both my ice and will to live. But there's no other patio in town like this one.

Maybe this daily climate dichotomy makes us forget the suffering we endure here as each season intensifies. We enjoy the aridity of desert living after a humid morning, and secretly enjoy each bloody evening getting bitten by mosquitos after the heat of the longest afternoons clocks out.

As summer fades away, leaves of nonnative trees begin to litter their leaves on the sidewalks and medians. I get a seasonal nostalgia for a deep summer morning, when the sun is early and the day is long, and when the sun hits these window panes warming my skin.

Because as the heat fades, so does the day. And soon we will have amnesia from the onset night, praying for 110 degree days to return so that we can squint into smiling again.



## Wasteland

By Thomas Brill

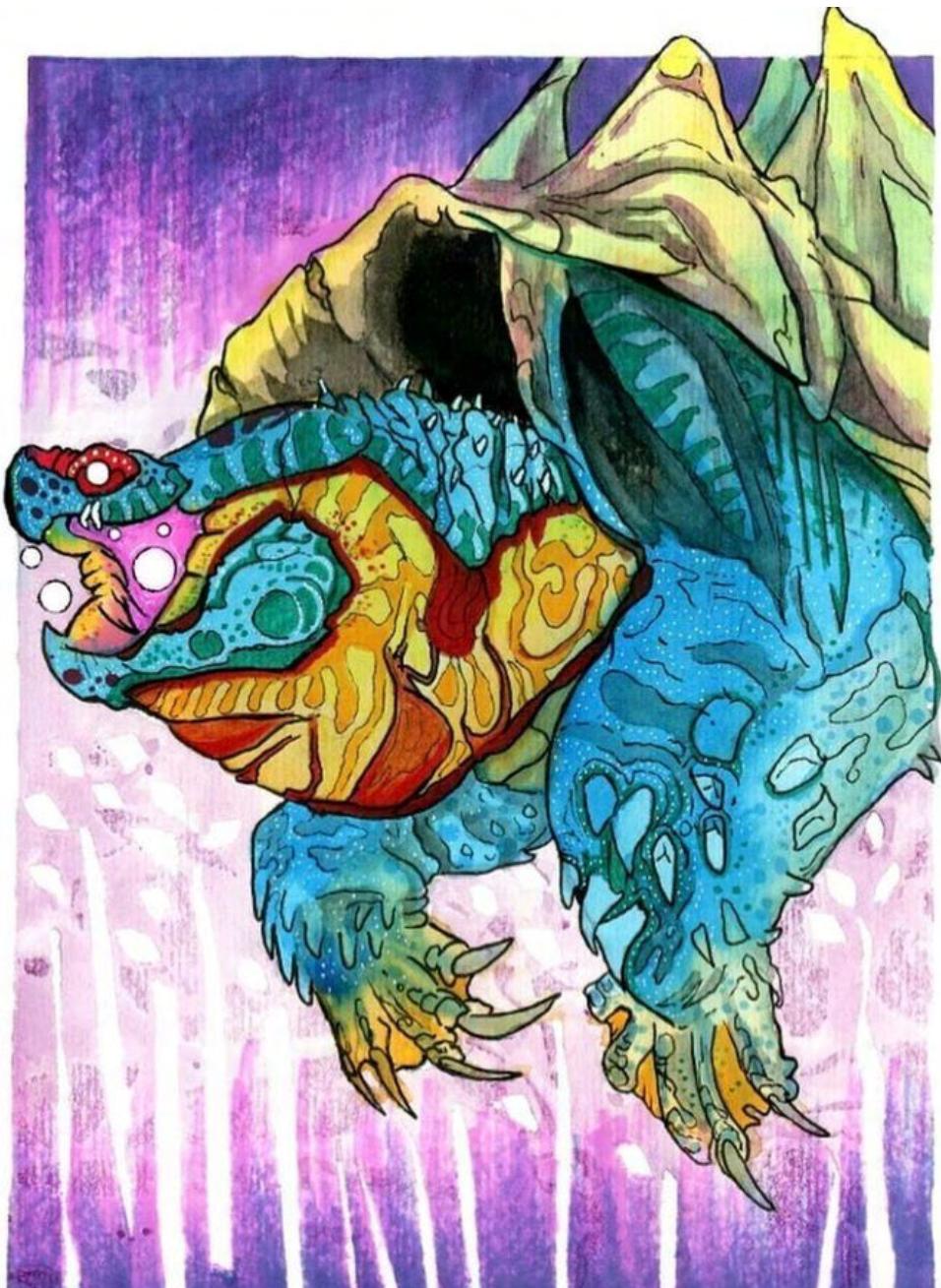
Traveling is inspiration  
But I soon notice  
How threadbare  
Appears the path ahead,  
Vowels and consonants  
Wilt and wither,  
The Thirst, the bursting sun,  
Turning my neck red  
And inside my head  
Where once was blue  
Is starting to turn red too

I need a hat,  
I need to perspire  
I need a curveball  
I need new metaphors  
But the scrubby dust is lined  
With tired and dying cliches,  
overused simile  
whose carcasses are like  
caskets

I see my muse on the other side  
Of a dry river bed  
Puking up "l"s and "g"s  
In no sensible order and even  
those  
soon dry up and burn away

my muse wanders off,  
Lips chapped, eyes squinting  
Under a brown sky,  
She sneezes up a few wry phrases  
With a sameness that reduces  
Every profound thought to dust

Then, off in the distance  
this small tribe  
I can hear their footsteps  
Crunching the hard surface  
Breaking the sterile soil  
Uncovering living matter  
Green tendrils spring forth  
fountains of fresh  
force their way  
into this wasteland,  
almost celebrating the sterility  
while risking  
assimilation, annihilation  
a fine balance  
challenged every day  
by the aridity that surrounds us  
here in the desert  
where good ideas go  
to die



CINDY STODOLA



# Tiki-Ko

1919  
Tiki-Ko

TAHITIAN TIKI BAR & GRILL

1919  
Tiki-Ko

Tiki-Ko

NAOMI REAM



GABBI STEIGER



HAYDEN KEENE

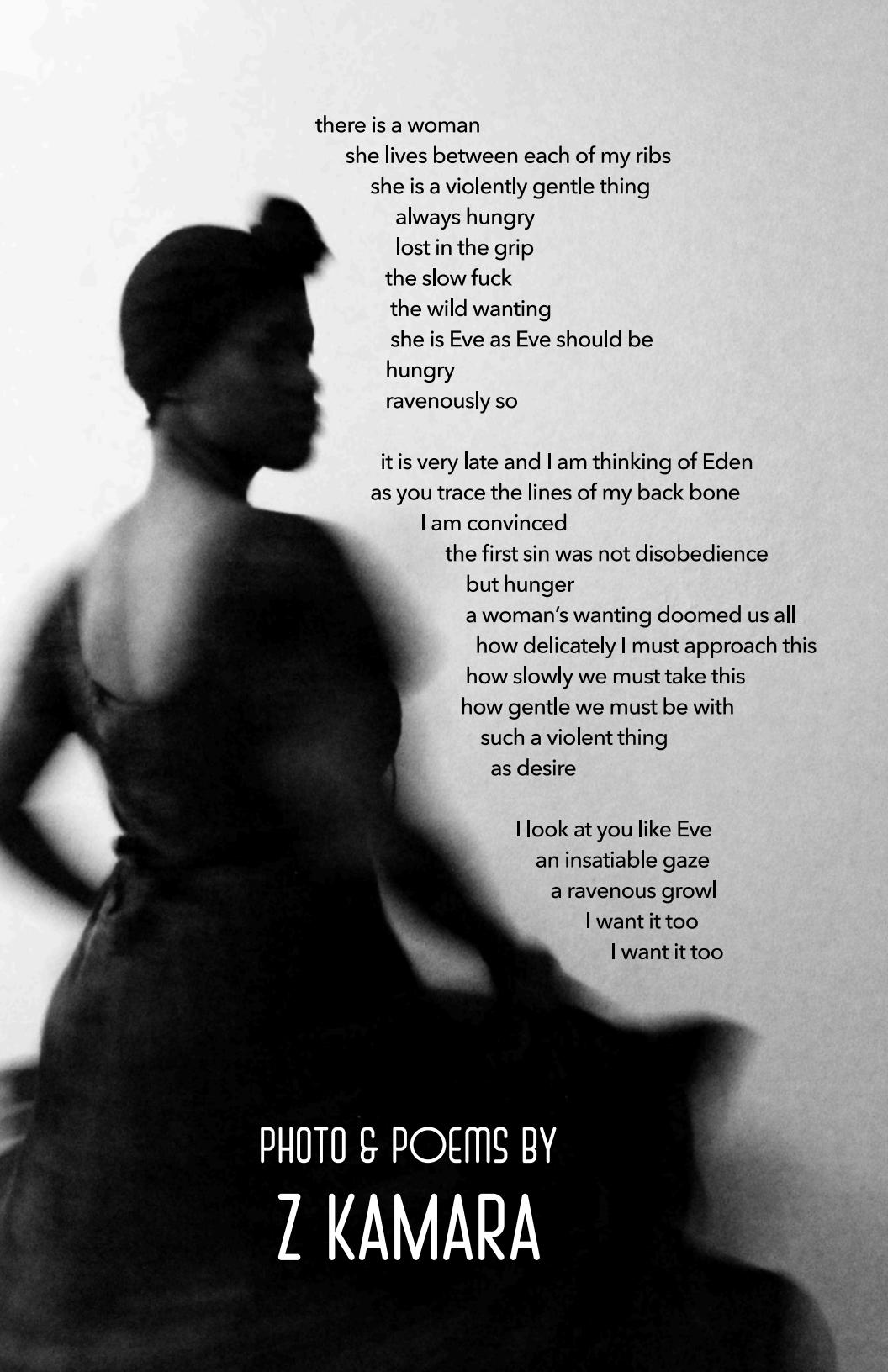
## A Poem By Henry Walker

I'll see her in my days of last  
When the spirit of death whispers for me to follow  
And only then will I understand  
Only then  
Will my hands raise with no questions to ask

In the branching memory  
I'll feel the touch of her voice,  
the once reassuring tart that made up all of my fancy  
Cause the winds may be brittle but they sing in the chimes so tender  
And I'll remember then  
What had floated through my life to become ghostly  
Remember why you took my soul with you,  
and how I'll take another's.



FOOLISH DREAMS PURSUED UNTO RUIN



there is a woman  
she lives between each of my ribs  
she is a violently gentle thing  
    always hungry  
    lost in the grip  
    the slow fuck  
    the wild wanting  
    she is Eve as Eve should be  
    hungry  
    ravenously so

it is very late and I am thinking of Eden  
as you trace the lines of my back bone

I am convinced  
    the first sin was not disobedience  
    but hunger  
    a woman's wanting doomed us all  
    how delicately I must approach this  
    how slowly we must take this  
    how gentle we must be with  
    such a violent thing  
    as desire

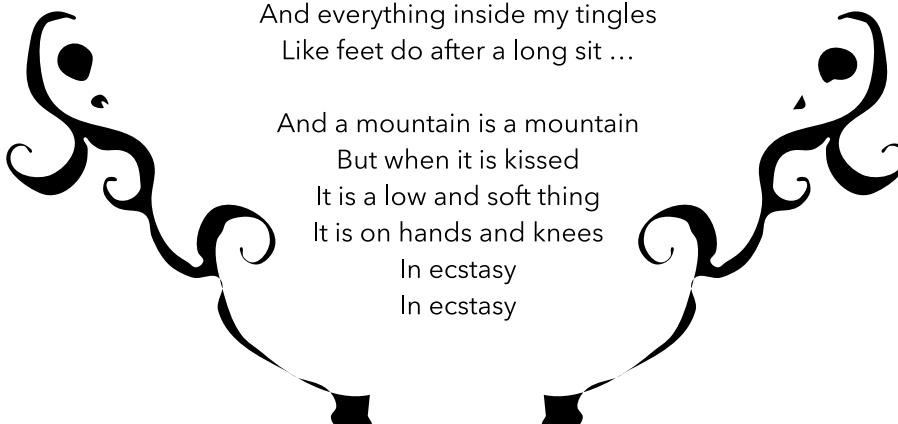
I look at you like Eve  
    an insatiable gaze  
    a ravenous growl  
I want it too  
    I want it too

PHOTO & POEMS BY  
Z KAMARA

I am nothing but dust  
And by this I mean you blow me away

I sit to write you a poem  
I a poet  
My hands are shaking like thunder  
Ready and waiting for a big sky  
I smile  
The corners of my lips rise  
Like the Santa Monica tide  
And everything inside my tingles  
Like feet do after a long sit ...

And a mountain is a mountain  
But when it is kissed  
It is a low and soft thing  
It is on hands and knees  
In ecstasy  
In ecstasy



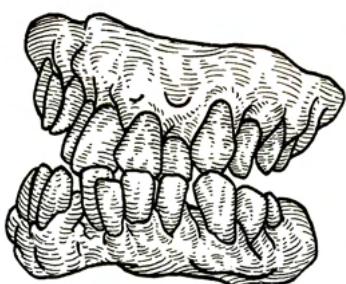
When will you stop punishing yourself for the wanting. this is all you do, you flagellate your Body, your mind, your will, your worth, with Expectations of of things unrequited. You are so Preoccupied with being holy, but you forget that it is holy to want. Let me say it again, it is holy to want. Desire can only live inside a living thing. You are a living thing, stop punishing yourself for your existence, relax into the truth of your body. Of your soul. this cycle of punishment and punishment for failure of enduring punishment and then around again, this is where it must end. this is how it must end. Let go of it quickly.

1

Bound to be a hound  
He lost his crown  
He moved all around  
Searched, never found  
With a nose like a dog  
A head wrapped in fog  
He smelled something cold  
It tasted just like gold

He was my friend  
He made amends  
Not quite a man  
He crumbled into sand  
I think there's still a life  
Somewhere out there shining

It's probably blinding  
  
Bound to be a hound  
It's a smile or a frown  
Let's get out of town  
Have a look around  
Have you seen a ghost  
Have you read my note  
Did you crush it in your hand



HAYDEN KEENE

# KING OF DOGS

BY SAXON CROSS

2

Unknown forces  
Uncharted course  
A wild horse  
What do I want more  
Smoking crushes  
Kissing lash to lash  
Staring at the ash  
What are you waiting for

Woman and a man  
Do we feel good or bad  
I don't know if I would  
If I am bad or good

Will you say something  
Anything at all  
Will you just take a stand  
You're making me uncomfortable  
On your hands and knees  
I know what you believe  
I know that you deceive  
And you want control

3

Only God knows how  
much love there is  
Inside  
Only I know how much  
I have to hide  
When I die  
Look me in my eyes  
Only then can you tell the  
truth from  
The lie

Reaching out to a  
stranger for an open  
heart  
Listen to me as I tell it  
from the start  
The story when  
We began again  
Hurried through the  
blend  
And I lost another friend

When will we learn to  
earn our love  
How will we fight to keep  
ourselves



CINDY STODOLA

4

The best part of the animal  
And the worst part of the man  
Combine in you so beautiful  
Something like God's plan  
Right up on subliminal  
Along the sleeping edge  
I feel like I'm invisible  
It's just like you had said

I have my fill

I feel the sensation of guilt  
I put on clothes and go outside  
There is nowhere left to hide

This feeling of losing control  
That you fucking made  
You made me uncontrollable  
And this area is gray

5

Wind blows through my heart  
The sound of an empty space  
I have not forgotten the lines

On your face  
We are not who we were then  
That goes without saying  
I don't know who you are now  
But I know who to blame

It feels so silly  
To have these feelings  
Still  
I spill myself into  
The memory of you

You have got my heart  
It's beating in your open mouth  
I have not been me  
In the time since we went south  
But i'm still trying, trying to live

Like i can, like i did  
You can keep it, for a memory  
The memory of me



CINDY STODOLA

6

Lonely lonely lonely  
I looked at her and told her coldly  
Lonely lonely lonely  
I am the one and only

King of dogs  
All along  
He needs meat to keep him strong  
We both know i don't belong  
Please, prove me wrong

I am very sorry  
For the soul inside your body  
I am very sorry  
For the weight that you will carry

I was the King of dogs  
All along

## **In which Time and Death arrive early to a party**

By Rusty Hatfield

In a sheltered valley hidden away in some sacred mountains, there was a great feast hall in which the gods would sometimes play. They would convene there every so often to celebrate their many victories, and therefore the continued existence of the universe. They were festive affairs with much revelry where stories were shared, grievances set aside, and the gods played tawdry games of anthropomorphic personification. Time arrived quite early as was her habit. Not being one for parties, she preferred to say her hellos and then slip out quietly once the drinking had started. She was followed shortly thereafter by Death, who always arrived whenever he chose and was often earlier than expected.

Despite their many obvious disagreements the two were friends and had been since the beginning. Time, being a gracious goddess and a good friend would send Death tributes and gifts at regular intervals. She had done so for as long as anyone could remember. The flowers had been lovely, as were the gardeners, the old kings, and the young beggars. All her gifts had been chosen with care, but despite the flowers, and gardeners and civilizations or the letters of well wishes, Death, being the less gracious friend would rarely reciprocate.

This inequity did not bother Time in the slightest. She was always generous with her gifts, and they were given with the purest intention. She rarely expected anything in return and had never been one to let the little things bother her. Truth be told, she just hoped that her gifts might bring the dour fellow some joy. Death had admittedly once harbored a bit of an infatuation with Time. This had been back in the early days of course before the whole scene really got started. There was something about Time that he could never quite touch and as a god who is accustomed to getting what he wants this only further drove his infatuation. However, eons of flirtation were ultimately for naught and their relationship had settled into a comfortable friendship.



GABBI STEIGER

At rare meetings such as this one, it was not uncommon for the pair to needle each other playfully with jokes or mock insults at the other's expense. All in good fun, of course. Death would mock Time for her frivolity, her impermanence, and fickle nature. "It's just like you Time" he would say. "First it was the wheel, and now sailing ships. Your interests and hobbies dazzle and confuse. How fickle you are. What's next? Mortals soaring through the sky like birds? You slide from one obsession to the next with such subtle ease, and with each the last is forgotten. Remember when reptiles were all the rage? Reptiles, reptiles, reptiles, it was all you ever talked about and where are all those reptiles now?"

"I wrapped them up and gave them as gifts to you old friend, and I seem to recall you enjoying my reptiles then. Perhaps mortals should fly with the birds she mused. It would be marvelous to see, and at the very least it might hasten a few of them to your door."

"Besides," She added. "All of your sour remarks, all of your clever quips, they are but expressions of your jealousy of me, for mine is the greater kingdom"

At that, Death scoffed. Loudly. A truly terrifying sound that presently startled some of the other guests, who had only just begun to trickle in. Night and Fire had arrived, with several of their attendant stars in tow. That pair were always great fun at parties, but upon seeing Death they regarded him only meekly. They looked at him oddly and gave polite hellos and hesitantly asked in which room Night might lay down her cloak. Death had seen that look before. Death was not great fun at parties, and the pair were clearly uneasy at seeing he'd arrived so soon. After Time had pointed the two in the right direction, Death continued.

"Why would I be jealous?" He said. "You see how our friends regard me. Do you know why this is so?"

"Because you are sullen, and selfish, and always showing up unannounced". She said bluntly. "and to be honest, you're just kind of depressing". She paused for a moment considering before she added, "I mean that with all due love and respect, naturally."

"No". Death replied flatly. "It's because when they look at me they see inevitability. They see everything they love, ebbing away. They are right to feel that way. That's why mine is the greater kingdom. They know that despite all of their endeavors, all of their striving, all of their defeats and victories. Despite all the wisdom they've gained, the pride in their life's accomplishments, or the passions they felt in their tenderest moments, they ultimately come to nothing. I will be awaiting them at a time of my choosing, to cut short all of their hopes and claim the fruits of all of their ordeals. They will be mine and everyone who knew them will be mine, as will all who knew them. Turn by turn until a day comes that even the memory of them has died. Do you think gods are immune to this? Gods rise and fall with the mortals who speak their names, and may die with the nations that birthed them. But I am Death, and I am god of every nation".

"Yes..." Time affirmed slowly. "that is what I said".

Death sighed. If one were to imagine the sound of stone sliding across stone, like the lid of old sarcophagi with a hint of a scream into the echoing void, one might have some approximation of the sound. "Even the stars will die Time. When they've burned to cinders they will be mine. Their light extinguished forever. By that same token, our friends would like to mean something and I extinguish meaning. In the end, I win. What greater god could there be than that?"

"Well someone certainly does have a high opinion of himself" said Time. "Look" she continued, "I've been around longer than just about anyone, and this has given me something you might call a unique perspective. You're not so frightening Death. I've seen you give peace to the suffering and rest to the world-worn and weary, and despite all of your self-indulgent musings of inevitability and eminence, meaning is something you can never extinguish."

Abruptly she turned her attention to a new guest, just now entering the hall. "Music you look LOVELY dear". Time smiled wide and waved gingerly as Music passed, indeed she was lovely with indigo and moonlight woven in her hair. She beamed back, radiant, as she moved into the hall of revelers that eagerly awaited her arrival. Now the party was really starting. Time, however, turned back to Death and continued.

"It's like the starlight," she said. "Certainly the stars will one day die, and you will own the cinders. But the starlight will always be mine." Death looked puzzled, thus Time continued. "Do you really think the light dies, when the candle is extinguished? Nay. The light goes on, fast as a dream. It will always be mine. I am Time, I am the wellspring of things that will be, and I am the ever-deepening sea of things that were. The stars existed, and they were beautiful. These mortal lives that you claim to hold in such low regard? They existed, and they were beautiful, and that is something you can never take away. They continue in me Death. That's why my kingdom is greater. They meant, something, and thus they always will. You don't extinguish meaning death, you focus it, you give it urgency. You make the moments precious, and before you act all high and mighty remember this. One day, long hence when you've accomplished your goal and the stars have shone their last, when the last mortal has drawn their final breath what will a god of death be then? You too will be a memory, passing into the sea of things that were. I will remember you fondly Death, and you will be important."

At hearing her words, Death found himself struck dumb. Humbled, and lost in thought. He had never considered such things before, and the idea that one day he too might end freed him somehow. Time had given him many gifts, but none had moved him so. For her part, she merely stood and brushed the dust from the hem of her garment before straightening Death's collar and resting her hand gently on his shoulder.

"You are kind," she said. "Now, ready yourself. Let us join our friends, and when Music has begun her art we will slip away quietly. The last things people want to think about at a party are Death and Time."

## **The End**

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The Wasteland is a 'zine. A collaborative project made up of local artists and writers from Bakersfield and the surrounding Kern County communities. Our goal is to create a collaborative space showcasing all of the talent that the community has to offer.

Why "Wasteland"? Because on the surface, Kern County is a barren and inhospitable environment for those with a creative voice. Each local creator is a scrappy survivor in an inhospitable place, wielding their chosen art form as their only shelter and weapon. In doing so we find that the area is not so barren after all, but is instead fertile ground waiting for us to lay down our roots.

If you'd like to support The Wasteland, or if you'd like to contribute your own art, photography, poetry and fiction, find us on [instagram](#) for all the latest Wasteland news and information.

[instagram.com/wasteland\\_zine](https://www.instagram.com/wasteland_zine)

If you'd like to submit your work to be considered for future Issues, send a plain text email, .pdf, or high-resolution image to:

[thewastelandsubmissions@gmail.com](mailto:thewastelandsubmissions@gmail.com)