Select a tab on the left to see the Creators' Notes for a given issue.

These are the creators' notes for Issue 122: Rawhide:

Y-E-E-O-W-W-!, written by Scraps

There is nothing more cowboy than boasting in ways that everyone knows are bullshit. Reading Wild Sam'l Kitchen is supposed to feel like standing too close to a speaker at a county fair, and I hope you enjoyed his noise as much as I did writing it.

Cards on the Table, written by Zero X Infinity (0 x ∞)

I may or may not have read a book that left me feeling less than satisfied and thus decided 'I think I want to play in this sandbox myself.' Many thanks to the editor for being a most awesome editor and to NSD for letting me yap at them about this story and helping me wrangle some writing last minute.

Also, while this is one nickel of the "sex worker with a case of gender" variety in this issue, there's at least one more nickel here of the same variety; discerning collectors ought to collect both.

Bar None, written by shukyou (主教)

Mama, forgive me, I'm back on my bullshit.

Goodnight Loving, written by Devin Ambrosia and illustrated by ChibiSaboten

Devin: I spent a truly inappropriate amount of time researching trail rides, rivers, and apparel of the so-called "American West" for this, especially given my other commitments. Did you know that pants were called "inexpressibles" because legs were considered too private? Not for these cowgirls, though! So glad they were able to work that out, even without Cookie's matchmaking. I originally occassionally referred to the boss as Beau, short for Bonita. But then both the fact that there was another Beau in this issue and W2's helpful feedback that I was playing fast and loose with revealing the government names of our characters, I edited it out. But that's a fucking cute nickname for Bonita, ya'll.

Big thank you to Togi Kayako for beta reading, and even bigger appreciation for originally bringing me into SSBB with their horny ghost threesome. And this issue has our stories

touching? Love that for them/us. ChibiSaboten was kind enough to illustrate for me this time, the third first-time SSBB artist I've tricked into making porn with me. Speaking of, where's my toaster? Seriously though, thank you friend! It was so fun to see your art and I hope we all get more of it! Lastly, spicy-wrenegade thankfully told me my period clothing ideas were all wrong and bad. 😆 Thank you! Honest feedback is a gift and so are you. And readers, for the love of the gods don't skip our standalone art in this one. It's unbelievably good, mostly to their credit. Lastly, as a rural queer and former farmer/cattle rancher, this issue makes me happy and I'm glad I got to contribute.

An Ambitious Man, written by Togi Kayako (土宜草子)

No cowboys, but plenty of leather.

A Pretty Piece of Calico, written by Suzuran

I had this idea back in, like, February, so you'd think I'd have gotten it done without having to crunch like crazy. You would be wrong.

A massive thank-you to W2 for always being so patient, to Iron Eater for the beta read, and both Iron Eater and 0 x ∞ for helping me figure out a goddamn title. Why is that always the hardest part.

Run, written and illustrated by spicy-wrenegade

This one was a wild ride, these two fought me every step of the way which feels appropriate. If you're confused about it all, don't worry, the protagonists are too.

"Run" is set in the world of my Big Project™ even though it's completely unrelated to the main story and takes place a lot earlier (probably.) But since it habitually occupies a part of my brain at all times, I was itching to explore the world a little more (and actually finish something related to it!) If you want to know more about the main thing, I talk about it on my Patreon sometimes and draw a bunch of smut of the main characters (the lowest tier has a free access code, patreon is just weird about posting nudity.) I also want to shout out drizzledrawings whose cowbians were the whole basis for this universe (go look at it), though I've very much run with it.

So, running. We'll be getting into spoilers now, so please read the story first, if you haven't yet. Writing this was as non-linear as the story itself, I kept moving parts around, changing nuances, trying to grasp how it wanted to be told. Turns out it needed the chaos. The one thing I had from the start were their animals. Did you know that, contrary to rabbits, hares (which is what jackrabbits are,

I know, it’s confusing) are born with their eyes open, ready to run? It’s also rabbits, not hares, who are referred to as bunnies, so make of that what you will. Another bit of information that I’ll leave you with is that bobcats, and their larger family, lynx, are specialised to hunt rabbits and hares specifically, they were made for it.

Thank you to The Editor and to Devin for chasing the story with me and tying it down.

Raven and Rhinestone Cowboys, written by ChibiSaboten

This story is not historical fiction. It's about as close to history as Disney's Pocahontas...

On that note, writing Western dialect was a bit of an excursion outside my wheelhouse. The struggle with readability vs phonetics was real and intense! I hope I managed to pull off an okay balance. I promise I will read more Andy Adams, Elmer Kelton and Cormac McCarthy before attempting another "Western". As for this one, it is more fairytale than fact.

Thank you to all my betas and thank you for reading. I hope you'll enjoy Raven, Arizona and Carter's story as much as I do.

A Third of a Chord To Please the Lord, written by Greta Jia-Kang Cabrel

Figuring out what should be included in a story - or chord - can be fiddly. The day before this issue went live, I was working on a piano-vocal arrangement and marveling anew at how shifting a note a step up or down can change a moment from “merely harmonious” to “shimmering.” (Not that any kind of harmony is truly “mere,” but that’s a thesis for some other issue.) And in the recesses of my Drafts folder, there are multiple earlier incarnations of Clem, Benny, Veronika, and Drs. Opal and Takayama (plus a collaborative pianist caught in the cross-hairs) in scenes that didn’t belong in this story, but another opening, another show…

Virginia Smolders, written and illustrated by Iron Eater

Odd Moseley has been a dedicated odd-jobs man for years by this point, and sometimes that means looking after the occasional hellion sheep-herder who blows through Virginia City.

This story heavily exists as a result of me wanting more of an excuse to do something with regional Nevada history and to research even more of it. It *also* exists as a result of having

personally visited the city in question and dismaying at its absurdly steep streets in places. The irony of writing a story about a northern Nevada city's experience with devastating fire while a state of emergency has been declared for the same region is not lost on me; in my defense, I finished this thing *weeks* beforehand. I have an alibi.

Rest assured that I put a potentially alarming amount of effort into the minutiae of this one. Yes, the Washoe Zephyr still happens. Yes, there is a significant Basque presence in the region, and yes, many of them were originally encouraged to come to the area to tend sheep, and yes, that "sagebrush-strike" concept is an actual Basque phrase, though usually translated differently. Yes, the thing about the elevator is accurate. Yes, one can theoretically read the entirety of *Carmilla* aloud over the course of about three hours. Yes, the *Territorial Enterprise* is a real paper, too, and one for which Mark Twain wrote for a significant period of time. I even spent time looking into the availability of certain kinds of canned food to make sure Odd's cooking would be period-appropriate. The things I do for you people!

Patch's ethnicity is intentionally left vague, since it's unlikely even *he* knows for certain, but he's telling the truth when he claims he's originally from Florida. Wherever Odd's cousins can be found is decidedly Back East. They're going to be *insufferable* once shows like Buffalo Bill Cody's start making the rounds.

Thanks as always to sparklebeard, who helped me pick out some chunks of the original manuscript that needed major revisions or expansions, to say nothing of making sure there was a proper emotional throughline.

All illustrations were created in Clip Studio Paint EX 4.

willing hostage, illustrated by ffflks

Sooo🤠I wanted to write something for this theme, but I was eclipsed by a thing called Academia. Therefore, I made do w/ art. Pictured here is my beloved OC, Heath, on another masochistic streak involving the disembodied hands of men who want to kill (?) him ^^ The initial idea was Heath w/ some good ole assless chaps, but after fiddling around, I ended up taking advantage of the traditional image of Gun as Phallic Device. & the suggestion of a threesome.

Giddyup, written by Devin Ambrosia and illustrated by spicy-wrenegade

Wren: When Devin asked me to illustrate their haiku, they sent along a few illustrations from “Inamorata” by Michael Manning as inspiration and I didn’t need any more convincing. I’ve always been a horse girl (gender neutral), so it was a joy discussing riding gear with Devin and just nerding out about horsemanship. And discovering the quirt, which really just sounds like a

sex thing already. There is also the wave pattern that connects the words and visuals and connects the characters with each other. It's a traditional motif used in Sashiko, a Japanese stitching technique used to embellish, to mend, and to reinforce—a nod to the origins of the haiku itself (thank you for that direction, Devin.)

Devin: Get out your biggest screen and look at this one again. Really. spicy-wrenegade infused so much love and so many wonderful little details (as they do) into this one, so much narrative that wouldn't have existed without her vision. I think this little triad will be back, in some form of fashion, because now I can't get them out of my head. Background on the words: I competed in a haiku battle recently, and needed to write twenty haiku in a month. So this one let me blow off some steam and keep in my back pocket in case I made the final (I did not). ChibiSaboten suggested I stick it in SSBB and spicy-wrenegade was inspired by my words and vision enough to make this absolute masterpiece. I'm living the dream, ya'll, and I'm so grateful to this little community for being a part of it.

Shousetsu Bang*Bang Issue no. 122 Cover, illustrated by Kami

These are the creators' notes for Issue 121: The Great Outdoors

Fine Wine, by spicy-wrenegade

Befitting the theme of the issue, this story grew very organically in a much different direction than I originally anticipated and might be the sweetest thing I've written yet. And not just because of the mirabelles.

My initial brainstorming went as follows: “Something something plant hike, fucking plant woman, maybe foraging? Elderflower is cool, I like elderflower. It’s in season too. Or mirabelles. It’s a cute name and they're sweet and have a butt shape to them. Yeah.” That’s a quote from my document. And that’s how we got here.
My journey of researching the fruit quickly took me to Lorraine, France, and on an enjoyable deep dive into traditional clothing from the area that found its way into the story too. I’m not quite sure how the aging theme came to be, but it, too, grew on me and we aren’t seeing enough aging bodies in an erotic context. A shame, really.

Continuing the organic expansion beyond just my own words, this issue is a beautiful full-circle moment for me, being a part of a total of three stories. I got to illustrate the tender writing of my friend Rey Rider (who is about the only person to convince me to draw men on a semi-regular basis) and had the opportunity to collaborate with Devin Ambrosia on an art piece for their story (which I got to beta read as well and it’s been an absolute pleasure, as has our ongoing exchange of words.) Fittingly the process took place mostly under trees and near the water, as the stories demanded. I also got to witness the creation of the lovely watercolor done by my girlfriend, the yellow wagtail, who was visiting from France. Circles, networks, organisms, you get it. Enjoy the ride!

There Stands The Grass, by Togi Kayako

Set in the same universe as Bleed Me Dry and Anywhere I Wander, but featuring for the first time someone who is 100% regular-style human (and no lesbians; my apologies). I think my author's notes for the other two stories are gone, but the setting is basically a Fallout wasteland mixed with the genetically chaotic people of Ursula K Leguin's short story *Porridge on Islac*. Dace is named after a genus of arboreal ants (Daceton) both for their genetic makeup and the connection to living with plants.

When I wrote this, I was certainly thinking about the pain of having hard work to improve the planet set back by forces outside of one's control. When I edited this, I was in the middle of a heatwave so mostly I was thinking, "Fuck going outside." Take it in whatever spirit appeals in the moment. :)

Kindling, by Iron Eater

Content Warning: This story contains graphic violence and animal harm in the context of a pre-industrial hunter-gatherer society. Nature is red in tooth and claw. Reader discretion is advised.

To inherit a sacred site is a great responsibility, and while Hawk bears that burden gladly, a silent, lingering guest at his fire continues to try his patience as winter draws ever-closer.

I promise it's not about Dark Souls.

Yes, it's about sexy cavemen. No, I'm not kidding. What's more outdoorsy than life before human civilization? While Hawk and Red aren't meant to represent any particular mesolithic culture, I based the setting on parts of prehistoric Eurasia somewhere between France and Poland. All the plants, animals, and fungi mentioned are more or less local species! Hawk's cave is varying parts Chauvet Cave and Cueva de las Manos (which is in Argentina, and therefore thousands of miles away, yes) with a lot of unsorted general cave art mixed in; his actual fire-tending practice is wholly fictional.

Writing a character who is both relatable and thinks on a different axis from a modern human being remains a favorite trick of mine, even if they're actual humans themselves, and I had a great deal of fun trying to establish these two guys as thoughtful, emotional, and possessing of inner depths even if they don't necessarily recognize such ideas. I also didn't want Hawk to fall into tedious colonialist "noble savage" patterns; he's just a guy and he's doing his best out here. It was important to me to reflect his daily life as matter-of-factly as possible, including brushes with what he considers sacred. What easier way to connect with an unfamiliar mind than to focus on how there's never an end to chores?

With luck this story has managed to convey just how much of a pain in the ass it is to make any sort of bread without domesticated wheat to draw from, much less a millstone powered by animals or water. The pains Hawk associates with repeated quern use were inspired by actual findings in ancient humans in the form of consistent damage to their leg and knee bones. Repetitive stress injuries: the curse of the tool-using animal, no matter the era.

A big part of why there was no dialogue in this piece was because I've been gently dinged about overly talky stories in recent memory, so it felt like it was time for some strength training. I also denied myself complex punctuation as an upgraded variant of my self-imposed trials from Issue 117's Prosperity Gospel. Misery! I do think the end result has a refreshingly different take on my usual character voice, and general editorial feedback was positive, so I consider it a success! Making sure I had significantly more of Hawk actively doing things than him thinking about whether he would do or already had done them was another requirement for myself; this one was less feedback=based and more me acting on something I caught myself doing. It's like when I realize I'm using too many "this but that" sentences, or paragraphs that start with the same letter. Sometimes one must linger on the invisible scaffolding work.

As always, thanks to sparklebeard for pinpointing some story details that needed clarification, sections that could be pared down to give me the room to make other sections meatier, and generally making sure everything made sense to someone who hadn't been responsible for writing it! He's also responsible for convincing me to spend a little more time on the fire's old master, since Hawk's lingering grief didn't become too much of a thing until later in the writing process, and going back to seed more hints about said relationship and what happened turned out to help a lot with fleshing out Hawk as a character. So what's up with Red? The world may never know.

All illustrations were created in Clip Studio Paint EX 4.

In conclusion: Seeed - What You Deserve Is What You Get (official Video)

Casting Pearls, by Greta Jia-Kang Cabrel

The seed of this story (so to speak) was a crack 5+1 RPF on Discord that between Thing 2 and Thing 3 insisted on yeeting the RP entirely. Junjie's given name corresponds to 俊 杰, which per Namepedia can be translated as "outstanding hero." “Jie" can also serve as a transliteration of several other Chinese characters, including ones associated with terms for "sister" (姐) and the verb "to catch" (接). Junjie is invoking it all on IYKYK purpose.

Landscape with Oak and Disgruntled Traveler, by shukyou

Jacob van Ruisdael (1628/9-1682) was a Dutch painter, regarded by many art historians as the preeminent landscape painter of the Dutch Golden Age. His paintings feature naturalistic color and depict sights that would have been commonplace in the Dutch countryside of the time, such as waterfalls, sluice gates, shepherds, bridges, and villages. His works are distinguished from those of his predecessors by his choosing to foreground elements of the natural world rather than relegate them to decorative background details. "Landscape with the Ruins of the Castle of Egmond" is currently held in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Lakeshore Delights, by Rey Rider

Patrick, an easygoing, soft-bellied forager, stumbles across an unfamiliar lake in the middle of the forest he knows like the back of his hand. When he attempts to take a break to indulge in some self-pleasure at the idyllic lakeshore, he is visited by a curious creature who wants to find out what exactly Patrick’s body can do…

Content notes: masturbation, blowjob and anal sex with a long ass tongue, mouth fucking with tongue, cum eating (both human and non-human), finger-fucking of non-human genitalia, technically dubcon bc they don't talk about it but they are adorable with it?

With delightful art by spicy-wrenegade.

If you enjoyed the setting of this story, you might also enjoy my short stories HYPATOS and MYRON.

Big Girl Words, by Etienne Telling

Set in The BDSMcentric world of *The Lemon House* and *Move As the Body Moves in You*, this stand alone piece follows Melody as she sinks deeper into ageplay with her partner as they celebrate the Summer Solstice and the god of domination and summer, Skala.

Tags: T4T, ageplay (sexual and nonsexual), public nonsexual age play, daddy kink, religious kink, teasing, vaginal fingering, anal sex

I shelter you with my branches. I taste my fruit on your tongue., by Devin Ambrosia

Author note: I wrote this story as I was packing to leave the forest and meadow and seaside on Ojibwe lands where I've made my home the last six years. In many of my moves, I've learned after the fact that I've been walking in my ancestors' shoes. The passage about plum orchards and a kind of inherited climate grief is semi-autobiographical. I still don't know where I'm going to land, but it healed something in me to write this story and remember the earth is rooting for us and wants us all to belong. (And maybe wants us to orgasm while admiring her, if that's your thing.) It's in the same universe and set a decade before my first SSBB story, The Night Terrors and the Birthday Surprise.

Ok, that done: THE ART. Are you kidding me with these?! It's been such a delight to co-create with both igbyi and spicy-wrenegade. It is one of my favorite things about SSBB, and it felt visceral this time, literally writing my story at igbyi's kitchen table while they painted, and having spicy-wrenegade layer their beautiful vision on top of my watercolor. Thank you both so much. I'm inspired, honored, in awe. Also, pro tip: Having an artist you admire that is already making beautiful art will help you finish your story.

Thank you spicy-wrenegade and Caspian Greene for beta reading.

Summer Skin, by ChibiSaboten

Hello~ This is an old coming-of-age love story I overhauled for the zine (by old I mean I originally wrote it a good fifteen years ago). I hope it retained all it's youthful wonder, but is tonally nostalgic. If you are interested, here are the referenced songs and artists: https://music.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLI5Shqvwpr-A&si=p8e-8QAQ1RJo1tQT

Thank you for reading~ Enjoy!

This New Season, by Rowan York

On the Wall, by Shirozubon Saruko

Release notes for 69.420
Fortress mode

- Allowed dwarves to trans their gender
- Enabled collective bargaining
- Strikebreakers will now be violently repelled

Iykyk. If not don't worry about it

The Fisherwoman's Prize, by serenity_winner

New York's hottest club is The Fisherwoman's Prize. This club has everything: f/f, fat seal tits, vague suggestions of nonhuman genitalia, impromptu rope bondage, tears, drool, and salt water.

Issue 121 Cover, by melanofly

I had many jumbled thoughts about what to do, including: camping "in the bushes," faux scout-style embroidered patches, cheeky repeated fabric patterns (surface art). Eventually I used national parks and topographic maps as inspiration. Since it's also Pride month, I chose to depict many positive and relaxing scenes with older queers! There are many "interesting shapes" on the map. Will we fly under the censorship radar with this more cartoony style?! Time will tell...

These are the creators' notes for Issue 120: [REDACTED]

re: The Red Blossom Blades [final edits], by shukyou

I hereby certify this piece contains no incest, pseudo-incest, bestiality, rape for titiliation, age play, dubious consent/dubcon, non-consensual sexual slavery, sexual assault, statutory rape, abuse, sex with minors, grooming, age-gap relationships, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, drug use, mind control, risky sex, human trafficking, exploitative labor practices, improper BDSM practices, sex-worker shaming, or underage drinking.

Amber Waves, by spicy-wrenegade

This isn‘t anything. Amber drops in and out of Lex‘s life as she pleases and they both get what they want. Only that it‘s not enough anymore.
- a butchfemme short about the addiction to things that can’t love you back

This whole thing was strongly inspired by Ethel Cain’s song of the same name and her whole body of work, really.
Songs that influenced Lex particularly were *Amber Waves* (of course), *Crush* and *Pulldrone*. The character of Amber was mainly shaped by *Fuck Me Eyes*, *Gibson Girl* and *American Teenager*. With an honorable mention for *Unpunishable* that works for both.

Content notes include usage of alcohol and other drugs and overall unhealthy coping mechanisms, religious (Christian) themes, (relatively mild) injuries and references to mental health issues (namely hallucinations). It’s sad lesbians y’all, I don’t know what to tell you.

Thank you to Devin and Beatrice for feedback and editing!

(Un)Speakable, by Kit Miller

…Yeah, so this is me angry.

But first: Humphrey Godwin is a composite of Edward Carpenter and JC Leyendecker. Joey is, of course, inspired by Carpenter’s long-term partner George Merrill.
This piece was inspired mostly by Dr Jonathan Spangler, who wrote his PhD dissertation on second sons (‘spares’) in the French monarchy. He shared on a recent episode of the (excellent) BBC podcast *You’re Dead To Me* that he initially planned to focus solely on Philippe de France, Duc d’Orléans, younger brother of Louis XIV, but that he had to broaden his subject when he learned that Philippe’s private letters were burned immediately after his death. Philippe is widely held to have been queer.

It is also inspired by the fact that Anne Lister's diaries were found, deciphered, and almost destroyed some decades after she died (We could have lost the Lister diaries!!!). It is also inspired by John Addington Symonds' name being posthumously taken off the second edition of *Sexual Inversion*, which he had co-authored with Havelock Ellis, at the demand of his friends and family (Symonds was queer; there's a good novel, *The New Life* by Tom Crewe, that fictionalises his and Ellis' lives). It is also inspired by Edward Brittain deciding to walk into enemy fire in the First World War rather than face being court-martialled for his homosexuality and bring shame and dishonour on his family (this was completely ignored in the 2014 movie adaptation of *Testament of Youth*). It is also inspired by the 1997 work of art *Electric Fan (Feel It Motherfuckers): Only Unclaimed Item from the Stephen Earabino Estate* by John S. Boskovich (look it up if you're unfamiliar; I challenge you not to cry). And it is, of course, inspired by the ongoing, worldwide efforts to silence queer voices.

I come from a country that is, on a global scale, pretty okay when it comes to queer rights. For now.
Unfortunately, queer people are also regarded as a demographic that can be comfortably ignored, especially by politicians. Furthermore, the current, conservative administration has made repeated attempts to roll back pro-queer laws, legislation, and policies. It has silently and not-so-silently attempted to suspend or outright cancel funding and initiatives benefiting not only queer people, but artists and activists of all stripes, and in too many cases, it was successful.
That kind of fucks with you, to put it mildly.

But to end on some uplifting notes, because I am, at heart, and sometimes to my own detriment, an optimistic idealist: I am heartened to see my local queer community protest against these policies; I am heartened when I hear that there are more Pride events planned and announced for this summer than ever before; I am especially heartened when I think of my father, who, when same-sex marriage was legalised in my country over a decade ago, declared it to be a dark day in our history, but who changed his mind when I came out to him.

And a final trivia treat: Bean's nickname, and his actual name, came to me as I was jotting down some ideas for his character; I described him to myself as 'An All-Round Good Bean,' and it then amused me to call him Fabian. Because yes, that name is, in fact, derived from *faba*, the Latin word for *bean*.
May we all have Beans in our lives. I do, and I am grateful for and I love every single one of them.

What the Gods Want With a Starship, by Iron Eater

Tjok, raised since birth for a singular purpose, is comfortable keeping his record clean in front of people who matter but coloring outside the lines when no one is looking, and while that's mostly good for him and his bonded partner in the same government program, things get tricky when that same bondmate starts showing signs that go against their strict regulations. When your body is a temple, is there room left for anything but the divine?

I've been sitting on a draft of this story since early 2024, if not sooner, but I simply couldn't get any further than the conceit of "sentient spaceship and his beloved pilot" before running out of steam. Turns out having the sentience being a desired trait but the *personality* being with what a very powerful outside force takes issue was what I needed to shake off the rust, and even then I had to go through a few openers and scenarios before I found something that worked for me. Eternal praise as always to my beta reader, sparklebeard, who took my request to point out parts that could be cut extremely seriously. I was right up to the as-told-by-GDocs wordcount limit by the end of things!

Most of the proper names used in this story are Balinese because I wanted to have a specific cultural touchstone for temple ships, and the idea of "ancient" cultures thriving in explicitly far-future settings makes me smile. Arlo's name, on the other hand, was chosen purely because it sounded cute. Whether the gods (and/or the instrument readings interpreted as proof of their presence) truly exist is irrelevant to the story; Tjok and Arlo clearly think they're real, and that's what matters. The reader is left with the opportunity to decide just how much church and state are actually intertwined in this weird little sci-fi setting, since I'm of the opinion there's a lot of different correct answers here and I had no room to expand on any of them. Have fun with that!

I can't take full credit for the "genetically mingled meat ships" concept, as this was loosely (*very* loosely) inspired by a detail in the PC game *Genesis Rising: The Universal Crusade*, itself based on a Serbian comic named *Cruciform*, but you better believe I went in a completely different direction from what either of those pieces are doing. Yes, the title is a *Star Trek* reference.

The illustrations were made entirely in Clip Studio Paint EX. Technically we're seeing both leads in the end image, in some fashion!

Making Merry, by Togi Kayako

First off, **this is noncon**! It leans toward the bodice-ripper side of things (everyone's having a generally good, if conflicted, time) but please skip this if that's not your cup of tea. Otherwise, if "chaste paladin gets ravished by magical construct" does appeal, please enjoy.

Thanks as always to beloved husband for reading this through twice as I poked and prodded it into better shape. New and exciting thanks to serenity_winner for the gorgeous art! I made some frankly embarrassing high-pitched noises at the sight of the initial sketches and I am *delighted* by the final pieces.

Confabulation of Desire, by Devin Ambrosia

This story poured out of me a few months ago, before I knew I'd be staying with my parents in my childhood home town, or attending a major college reunion while I finished it up. It was a

sweet companion to my time and I’m so grateful to the universe for sending it my way. Big thank-you to spicy-wrenegade and Chibisaboten for beta reading, and my college friends for egging/edging me on.

The art: After "Kiss" by Tanya Chalkin: This collage was inspired by the ubiquitous dorm room poster of two women making out, which I got mildly hassled for staring at too intently in the men's dorm where it hung. Materials are magazine and other assorted papers, tea bags, raffia, milkweed pods (clothing on the left), dried orchid flower, maple pod (stretch marks), so many black and white versions of "Kiss" printed on my parents' shitty WFH printer while they were out of town, a wedding invitation, modge podge (do people list glue?), and watercolor paint. Thanks to spicy-wrenegade for inspiring me to illustrate the story myself and fielding my WIPs.

[▬▬▬▬▬], by Chibisaboten

Afterimage, by Etienne Telling

When Jonah's estranged twin sister's activism outs him as a CSA/incest survivor to parts of his polycule/kink community, Jonah braces himself for disgust, rejection, and people being generally weird about his history. He's entirely unprepared for what actually happens.

Content Warnings: Mentions and discussions of past CSA/rape, incest, and abuse. While I do not ever go into what I consider gratuitous detail, it is discussed frankly on page with some details.

Also contains: T4T, BDSM, D/s, pain play, and possibly an excessive amount of sex/kink for the story, because survivors deserve to fuck however they want to.

This story was inspired extremely loosely by my own forced outing as a survivor to a partner. "What if someone had been normal about it?" is the question I started with and this story is what the answer became.

Huge thanks to Westie and Zeebie for feedback and editing!

Sweet Fruits, by Devin Ambrosia

Inspired by the seed pods of Magnolia X soulangeana. I thought of this before spicy-wrenegade posted their blackout poetry example in the discord!

Taste, by Jacke Hunter

I celebrated my birthday and 3 months on testosterone with a week of drawing transmasc bodies and it reminded a lot of the thoughts I had after reading The Queer Art of Failure by Jack Halberstam and My Letter to Victor Frankenstein by Susan Stryker. The text in this piece is a line from my reading notes. Walking towards authenticity and otherness often carries the risk of walking away from connection. Maybe this is just for all of us that wished Prince Adam had stayed The Beast.

Issue 120 Cover, by The Winter Cynic

W2: have you heard of bubble porn?
Me: excuse me???
That's the story of how I started moving in a very interesting direction for this cover. I knew I wanted a little peek-a-boo moment but my initial sketches looked too similar to a past cover I did. I'm glad W2 injected bubble porn into my vocabulary because it instantly gave me ideas, like those PVC character cards you can undress. Plus, there's something about the popularity of super skin right gym clothes that gets the mind going.

These are the creators' notes for Issue 119: Balls to the Wall

Encore, by Daykeeper

A short and filthy story about a figure skater and their coach. Figure skating has taken over my waking thoughts for the last three or four months leading up to the Winter Olympics, and I wanted to write something to celebrate a sport that has brought so much joy to my life. I must also give a huge thank you to my beta reader Hammy for their careful eye and guidance in improving this piece.

My suggested viewing for anyone that wants to get into figure skating: Stéphane Lambiel's 'Don't Stop the Music' from the 2011 Golden Skate Awards gala. You're welcome in advance :)

Rookie Lap, by Circe DuBois

Thanks to Nopinkertons, Goseaward, and ChibiSaboten for beta-reading. Thanks to Sean Pronger for writing a book about playing in the minor leagues (*Journeyman*). I didn't end up using anything I learned, but it was funny. Thanks also to Hilary Knight specifically for winning gold for Team USA women's hockey. No thanks to Gary Bettman or refs, ever.

Journeywoman, by Greta Jia-Kang Cabrel

Yunming's name is an indirect tribute to Taiwanese-American actress Christina Chang, in that I started out with 韻明 (Yùnmíng; Ms. Chang's Mandarin given name), but then shifted to **云明** (Yúnmíng) for my character, in part because of the meaning ("Yùnmíng" corresponds to something like "bright rhyme" or "bright harmony"--befitting an actress, one might venture--whereas "Yúnmíng," literally "bright cloud" or "clever cloud," can be read as an allusion to the agile intelligence that served my character before she wrecked her ACL). The other reason I went with **云** is because the story morphed from a nebulous threesome (tenista/masseuse/cantor) to Yunming/Ayelle when I started typing it out, and Yunming's siblings entered the conversation: "Yunxi" (云溪) can be translated as "cloud stream," "Yunshuo" (云烁) as "shining clouds," and "Yunyun" (云云; "cloud cloud") can be interpreted as "multitude."

Racqueteering, by Iron Eater

Sports trends are the bane of any career country club advisor, and thankfully Vien only has to experience the indignity of pickleball from a distance. Thankfully he has ample opportunity to

appreciate the skills of the club's racquet-sports specialist, Guy, during all those between-duties breaks they keep finding room for.

Short and simple this time because (as usual) December nearly killed me. I ended up researching quite a lot about pickleball (and badminton, for that matter) for this one! Figuring out who my leads were in the first place required writing dialogue, reverse-engineering personalities from said dialogue, refining narration based around said dialogue, going back and making sure things weren't too short or too talky, and generally putting more time into this one than one might expect given its comparative length. Thanks again to sparklebeard for his input on the manuscript!

The illustrations were made entirely in Clip Studio Paint EX. Those are pickleball paddles in the final image, and yes, they really do use that wiffleball-looking thing in all seriousness. We live in interesting times.

FREE YARN, by Suzuran

"I'm gonna take it easy this round," I said. "I'll write a thing about knitting," I said. "it'll be fun and chill," I said. and then W2 said "hey I have a cool idea" and I said "FUCK you're right that's amazing" and did about 10k words of major literary surgery in the span of four days. if this is what taking it easy looks like, I think I'm doing it wrong.

big thanks to my friend Duck for being a cheerleader the whole way through, to Iron Eater for the last-minute beta read (you're a lifesaver), and of course, to W2 for having the biggest brain ever and giving me such cool ideas to play with

Do Good Things With You, by Devin Ambrosia

I don't have words right now for The Horrors™ but I am incredibly inspired by and grateful for the people throwing sex toys at ICE agents and singing to them to change their minds. Writing this helped me work out some of my feelings about the storyteller role (in the ecosystem of social change map - highly recommend! (guess I'm doing lots of links this time)), so thank you story for that. May we all find our own ways to resist, even if it's just by surviving.

Thank you Suzuran and ChibiSaboten for the beta feedback, and W2 for telling me where I was missing the mark. I so appreciate the time and energy you put into supporting our growth and the impact of our writing. I might add more to this one over on AO3, so find me there @DevinAmbrosia if you want that (and for my other fanfic, including a bratty tuna melt BJ.)

Rules of AnonymousD, by ChibiSaboten

The Newlywed Game, by shukyou (主教)



Everything I've ever learned about hockey has been against my will. Please enjoy my intentional misreading of this very funny tweet.

Planetary Fagocytosis, by Devin Ambrosia

Watercolor paint, watercolor ink, and salt on watercolor paper. Thanks to my husband AP for agreeing with me that it was kinda sexy and the title inspiration.

Intricate Rituals, by thumbtacks

Further info about these two for those that are curious: They're in a committed relationship with one another despite always trying to kill one another in the ring. The blonde is about to spit in chesthair’s jock. The ref ends up stopping this match because chesthair actually passes out due to being so horny over this.

Shoutout to B-Side for both enduring and enabling my deep love and obsession of professional wrestling. May the wrestling channel always be overflowing with the filthiest takes about the men that we desperately want to see get pregnant. A special thanks to N who has listened to me ramble on about my special spandex clad blorbos for years; I owe you so much and ilu <3

(I’m ‘thumbtacks’ on Bsky and Pillowfort if you wanna see more of my art or horny wrestling takes.)

Issue 119 Cover, by KMO

HAPPY SPRING TRAINING RED SOX GOING 162-0!!!!!!

These are the creators' notes for Issue 118: Theme Free

A Roomful of Strangers, by Kit Miller

The “hunky bloke” is inspired by An Actual Person Who Actually Exists, but I will go to my grave without revealing who they are.

Counting Wolves, by Togi Kayako

Some short and sweet F/F to wrap up the year. <3 Thanks to Suzuran and beloved husband for helping me whip this pinch hit into shape.

Call That An Author Insert, by Kumokawa Tokuri

Bear with me. (no actual bears.) This might get a little sappy. I first found ss*bb when there were nine issues. It’s been a while, is my point. Soon after that, I volunteered for an issue (in a livejournal comment!) and worked myself up so badly doing so that I actually nearly fainted. I remember whiting out at my desk. (I got anxiety meds later, don’t even worry about it.) Anyway: I’ll keep this brief. W2-senpai answered me directly when I said how anxious I was, and reassured me that there wasnt any pressure and it would be okay.

That (kindness and attention from the Almighty Editor!!) blew my little mind. It took until now to write a story, but I’m hanging in there, and so are we. Seventeen years later, here we are. Everyone, thank you. Let’s keep loving and fighting and reaching out, together.

Anyway, the story. This started as fanfic: a webnovel author who writes his guy into a book and cucks him every time he does something to annoy him *is* canon, and I’d be overjoyed if you recognize the source– but the whole time I was writing that guy discovering his little plots and taking sexy, sexy revenge, I kept thinking, “this sounds like an ss*bb story.” Specifically, I was thinking of W2-senpai’s The Red Scare, and despite the fact I haven’t read it since 2013 and couldn’t recall its name at first, it bears strong similarities to. Not my aim, but I hope this is at least half as funny as that one.

Big thanks: W2-senpai and whit-senpai, for everything, all the way back to your kindness to a frazzled teenaged aspiring smut peddler 13+ years ago. To Suzuran, Togi Kayako, Iron Eater, and Howe-Yeing Pon, who put approximately 60K worth of edits into this little 4K story and rendered it beautiful even to its author. To bamboo-xianbei, who made sure the setting made sense and that nobody was named anything unfortunate. (Fun fact, readers: Yin Luosi’s name sounds like *luosifen,* a type of edible mollusk you “suck out with your tongue and eat.” As it

should be!) To Joss, Machi, Vince and Ronan, for joy and comfort and confidence. I can always fall back on you.

Penultimately, to Alatus. I've sat here for the last twenty minutes trying to figure out how to convey my joy, trust, and delighted gratitude. My phone kept going to sleep on me. In the end: whatever. Let's keep having fun. I love you!

Lastly: anyone who made it this far, whether you read this thing or not. THANKS THANKS THANKS.

Something Old, Something New, by Suzuran

I wrote this in like a week and a half and it turned out about twice as long as I'd originally wanted it to. Just goes to show, I guess. Show what? Who knows. Anyway! Huge thanks to Togi Kayako for the beta read, Kumokawa Tokuri and Iron Eater for all the writing sprints, our beloved editor-in-chief for having faith in me, and everyone else who helped cheerlead me through this thing. (Also, shout-out to all the real-life people, places, and events from which I definitely didn't just straight-up steal various bits to build the thing.)

Giving a Rest Its Due, by Greta Jia-Kang Cabrel

The usual disclaimer: I do spend an arguably obscene amount of time in organ lofts, but neither Shuzhen nor Janel correspond to actual people or their shenanigans.

Adjacently: I'm entertained by music and dance trends on Instagram reels - last year, Apateu was dominating my feed. This year I'm delighting in (1) classical musicians pairing everything from Bach to Shostakovich with Milkshake, and (2) a collective focus on the WORD chord in the Willcocks arrangement of "O Come O Ye Faithful." It's adorable *and* hilarious and a vibe I wanna go for in some future stories – but, it is still December 2025 as I type this, and, yeah. **flops on nearest flat surface with far less panache or intention than my characters**

Cleaning Out the Magic Castle, by Iron Eater

Lloyd and Diarmuid's unlikely marriage has made it through two whole years, but that doesn't mean there aren't personal problems of theirs that still need to be addressed, chief of which is how anyone is expected to make friends as an adult *after* retiring from the evil overlording business.

I couldn't stop thinking about these two goobers even after two previous outings with them (those being How the Other Halves Live and Making the Dream Work), though as usual, I tried

to write things intuitively enough that a reader isn't expected to be familiar with either of those earlier stories before sitting down with this one. Such is the curse. While nothing is a direct transplant from anything else, be they characters or setting, some of the pastiches used here are more obvious than others! If you have seen any fantasy anime since the mid 1980s or played one (1) classic console JRPG, you probably recognized at least a little of what I've put in the stew.

Just how gloomy Lloyd got towards the end was something I wrestled with over time and ultimately decided wasn't hugely necessary; his whole thing is that he's confident, positive, and happy to be loved, so him having a Dark Twilight of the Soul just because he (a known big-pitcher-watcher and serious wanderer-offer) isn't around his partner for a few weeks didn't feel compatible with who he's become as a person. Better for him to ask himself uncomfortable questions and come out smiling! He still *hates* being referred to as a "himbo," though.

While I tend to write great big beasts every December, things weren't intended to be anywhere near this long, but here we are anyway! My planning document was over 5K when I sat down to seriously start this one so I suppose I was doomed from the start. Eternal gratitude to sparklebeard, for helping me nail down structural issues and reading the whole thing *twice* in the space of a weekend, and to the editorial staff, for their continued good graces and mercy. I also could not have made this story without the aid of my spouse, who contributed valuable mahjong knowledge (they're playing strip mahjong at the beginning, yes) and suggested that an All Green paired with "robbing a kan" would be one of the worst possible hands to get hit with in pretty any situation. For those without much background in mahjong, trust me, it sucks so much.

The illustrations were made entirely in Clip Studio Paint EX, with the lettering being a combination of hand-drawn glyphs and the Hawtpixel "Rosegarden" typeface. The end piece was made entirely with a digital brush intended to simulate ballpoint pen that also yielded *really* interesting textures when used at higher point sizes; while I'd originally considered making more art, the deadline was coming up fast, I'd already gone *way* over my first extension due to the length of the piece and how much time revisions took, and my spouse was worried I was overworking myself, and I think this shot at a page from Lloyd's journal turned out very quiet and sweet, anyway.

I Want to Fuck You Like an Ecosystem, by Devin Ambrosia and Zan

Devin: This is a revised version of the first piece I wrote as an adult that wasn’t for my job, back in 2017. I had just moved to a new ecosystem and was in a new throuple and full of NRE. Despite loving what I made, I wouldn’t really start writing for fun for another seven years. It was fun to come back to this piece with fresh eyes and to see it come to life with Zan’s illustrations. Thank you for the beta read, my partner AP, Fox Thorne, and Molly Scothorn. And thank you SS*BB: I’m so grateful to have a steady, sexy creative practice and a community for my work.

Issue 118 Cover, by Panksage

These are the creators' notes for Issue 117: The Old Ways

Booty Call of Cthulhu, by Cattus Politterarum

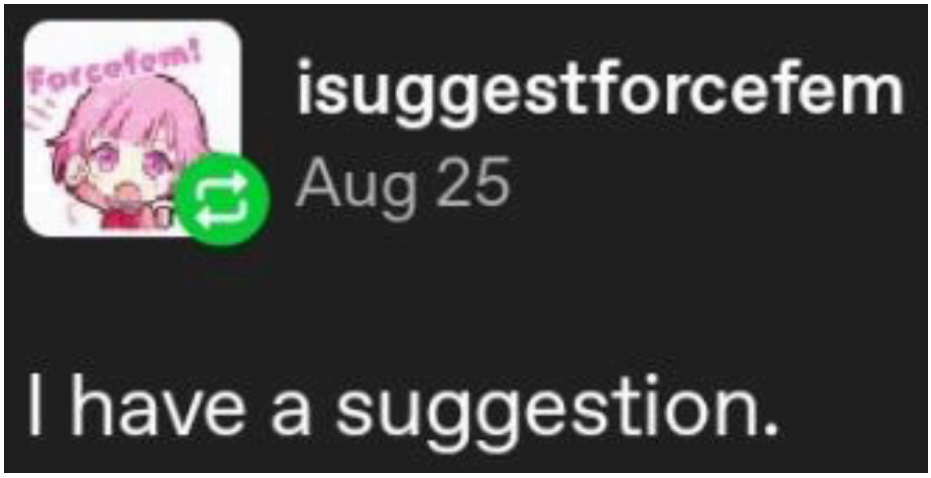
This one has had a very looooong gestation period. I started work on it at least 5 years ago, and I'm delighted to bring it to fruition with S2B2. I am not the first person to write a story titled “Booty Call of Cthulhu.” (Fun fact! Short story titles, like song titles, are not copyrightable.) Anyway, I read a story with that title published under several different names. (Which means I paid more than once for the same dang story, oops.) I liked it, but I wanted to explore a different take on consentacles, the Mythos, and HPL’s notorious racism. I also wanted to make mine more of a direct reboot/retelling of HPL's "Call of Cthulhu" (although I completely ignore the lat/long in the original story, in part because if it were all actually *true* that's the kind of detail you would get wrong on purpose).

The Nøkk of Crelan Town, by Kit Miller

From idea to final punctuation mark, I wrote this in twelve days, which I think might be the fastest I’ve ever written anything, and certainly the fastest I’ve written for S2B2. Aesthetically, this story is inspired by an irreverent amalgamation of lots of fiction I’ve been reading recently. I admit to one, but I defy anyone to be able to identify any or all other strands precisely.
Thank you to melanofly for the gorgeous illustrations, especially since it was rather short notice! They put so much thought and effort into them, and added so many little details, I feel like I could look at them for years and still always find something new.
GNU Terry Pratchett.

> Artist comments: when Kit Miller told me that the visual details were scant, it wasn’t a lie! Kit was very welcoming of my random ideas about how folks would look though 🥰. I was bamboozled, looking up all these visual references for the dried plants, only to find that they’re not real! It does make it easier for me to make up new things though! I *nearly* went down a deep hole of “what is medieval-y accessible space design for someone without sight” but I also felt that since there’s magic involved, I shouldn’t go down that hole?? I figured that Ælfric can use his magical intuition in addition to a physical cue system to organize and navigate. I also thought about (non-existent) fire codes and whether the placement of that hearth was too close to the shelf, but again, let’s pretend all the materials are magic! Ælfric can probably put out that fire immediately, or freeze stuff before it happens! One thing I did feel strongly about, was putting the kitchen knives out of reach (because the kiddos), and sheathed so that nobody gets cut if they were able to reach them (kiddos and Ælfric)! The knives also have a bead-ID system, the shelves edges are engraved, and the other objects in containers have different textures/shapes/lids/seals on them to help with ID.
> The overall colour scheme was inspired by earth tones in John Bauer’s work, which was some inspiration that Kit sent across 😀.

In the Hand of Khal Keresh, by shukyou



...So that's the joke. The actual content warning on this story is for everything you'd have to warn for if a local god took the suggestion seriously.

The Red Cap Kiss, by Devin Ambrosia



I know I took a few liberties with the Amanita species here, so don't @ me, mycophiles. For everyone else, I took fewer liberties than you might think. Here's me head to head with an older *Amanita muscaria* var *guessowii* in the fecund fall of 2021, when I could turn in a circle in the woods and count dozens:

They do require respect and humility, and for goddex' sake don't rub them on your mucous membranes!

The art pieces are watercolor (cake, tube, ink), pencil, and deliquesced Shaggy Mane mushroom on watercolor paper. I also ate the fungi ink while I painted. :)

Thank you to my husband who was a huge help with this project. Also appreciate ChibiSaboten for beta reading.

Old Ways For Modern Day, by ChibiSaboten

Blistering Bollyrat, by Shrimp King

This is pure self-indulgence, and I thought it would be perfect for “the old ways” because it is a mini-prequel to my larger body of work that I’m creating. My favorite part is how Grask references the prince being treated no differently than a ruby necklace, because throughout the story I weave that concept into the smut by describing things often with precious stone metaphors and descriptors. Writing from Grask’s point of view was also very entertaining. I hope people enjoy!

Move As the Body Moves in You, by Etienne Telling

Prosperity Gospel, by Iron Eater

Content Warning: This story contains intense elements of religious horror, abuse (physical and otherwise), uninterrogated bigotry, body horror, violence, gore, and general horrific unpleasantry. Reader discretion is advised.

Lucky feels invisible no matter what he does or doesn't do, but a chance discovery at work leads him to meet a whole new social group right outside of town, and with their help he hopes to finally get right with the Lord.

The summary email from the editor for this piece was exactly two words: "Jesus Christ." I hope this helps provide useful context for how bad a time this may or may not be.

I obviously am all about weird cults and scary faith, though since I usually incorporate them as neutral (or even positive!) influences on the stories they're in, I knew I needed to do something different this time. What if the titular Old Ways aren't connected to gods or pagan rituals or anything along those lines? What if we're talking about conservatism? And so Lucky, an unreliable narrator if there ever was one, left his job at the grocery store to start a new life in the woods with his brothers and sisters.

I managed to write this entire piece without using a single semicolon as a challenge to myself. Total colon count: three, em dashes and parentheticals: present. Whether or not anything supernatural is *actually* happening is left as an exercise for the reader, and I, the author, am not going to share the "true" ending, assuming there even is one. Not knowing is far less pleasant. That's the point.

Did you know the dagger symbol (†), also known as an obelisk, is often used to indicate pauses for breath, critical observations from future authors, and/or deaths, in addition to looking like a little cross? I thought that was interesting.

The pamphlet Lucky receives was heavily inspired by the "Snake Church" art pieces from Liartown USA, though I opted for wholly original layout and typography for the title card. I also took direct guidance from issues addressed in Dan Olson's talk-turned-YouTube-video "Call of Duty: Ghosts – Power, Paranoia, and Orbital Tungsten Rods" (a great watch that has almost nothing to do with religious horror unless you squint), and in fact it was watching this essay that helped me nail down what all was scary about this year's piece.

I thankfully had a bunch of paper textures on hand for the cover, while the photo incorporated into the final illustration is from the A Place Without Bodies photography set by Colin Spacetwinks. The cross was a hand-drawn variant of existing clip art. Some of the images overlaid on the figure are generic stock photos of old Bible pages, while the most clearly-formatted text is the opening few verses of the Gospel of Mark. Originally this was going to be a much more gruesome picture but I opted for a little something different, yet again as a challenge to myself. Gotta mix it up after 13 years of submissions!

All illustrations were created in Clip Studio Paint EX 4.

Issue 117 Cover, by Swedishjazz

These are the creators' notes for Issue 116: Binary

Brief Thoughts on Cyber Menace IV : r/GameGemsAndGroans, by Hiwaru Kibi

This is so stupid.

The Two-Body Problem, by shukyou

*Bi*nary? More like *bisexual*nary, right? Ha ha! ...Wait, I've just been handed a note.

Long story short, melanofly is the best for pinch-hitting and rolling in with amazing art. Sexy, perfect, amazing.

> melanofly (artist): I had intentions to render semi-realistically but soon realized those skills were lost in my past, after drawing cartoony for so many years!! Since shukyou wanted the focus on the two bots, I went with a more “porny” gaze POV rather than my default. I also recall that pics drawn in that gaze/POV often leave out the details of the “main” character “doing the deed”, so I silhouetted the narrator guy (as a white shape, which I hope bleeds in well with how it’s displayed on SSBB, assuming one is using light mode with white bg).

Double Catfish, by Iron Eater

Everything is fine between Roris and Lyxie Snowberry, two of the highest-regarded roleplayers on their MMO server who've invested their entire fake relationship into being laughably chaste, but a new expansion means their players are going to have to reevaluate a few things.

This one's personal for a few reasons, though none of them involve me having major immunodeficiency issues or collecting workman's comp; the reader is encouraged to extrapolate as they like. The "life insurance" conversation was inspired by actual talks with someone I used to know and whose absence from my contacts list I try not to think about too much.

Beyond Fimbulwinter isn't meant to be any particular game, though based on beta feedback it started skewing away from a more typical colorful fantasy setting towards something a little more *Monster Hunter*, to better play up the post-Ragnarok theme. Given the focus on taking care of one's character as though they were a particularly violent Sim, it's safe to assume there's some survival-based elements in things. Traditionally such games have low playerbases and tend to either limp along or flare out dramatically. Here in the land of I'm Writing It, they'll have people to speak to for years and years.

The vast majority of chapter 2 ended up being written thanks to some involved talk with the editorial staff about concerns about the pacing/exposition balance, and I think it's much stronger as a result. Always read and think about the feedback, folks! Even if you end up taking a wildly different approach than might be expected!

My entire reason for writing this story in first person is to not have to gender Roris the Player, and it's interesting hearing what pronouns our narrator is assigned by others. Lyxie's "real" identity is also intentionally vague; Roris knows her as she/her so that's what the text uses, though there's room for all manner of interpretations. I also went out of my way to try to include some level of ace rep in this one, which is *tricky* when one is writing what is meant to be explicit pornography, but I have to represent my kith and kin whenever the rare opportunity presents. Tactical crabs unite.

I'd actually written the entirety of the first draft when *The Reality of Hope* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMWpcHrIMBo) dropped, hence why there is a conspicuous discussion of why the Snowberries' players prefer keyboard and monitors to VR headsets. Very sweet documentary, though!

All illustrations were created in Clip Studio Paint EX 4.

Leisure and Little Luxuries, by Kit Miller

David and Jonathan, lordling and valet and vigilante art thieves, first appeared in "Nothing But An Unassuming Valet" and its direct sequel "An Unexpected Mole."
The Victorian era, especially the latter portion of it, was an explosion of new technologies and advancements and discoveries. I chose to centre telegraphy, with a secondary focus on photography. My knowledge of photography, especially vintage photography, is very akin to Jonathan's, though – it appears a bit like witchcraft to me. As such, the camera David uses is sort of kind of based on contemporary models – I looked at so many digital museum archives – but it is not based on *any one specific* model. Every feature of the camera was available in 1890, but I cannot say that there existed a camera like the one David uses that combines them all.
Cable codes were unofficial phrase books used as both a cost-saving measure as well as to ensure privacy and discretion between correspondents. Single words could stand in for whole phrases (as "Cadmium" in this very story stands for "message received, and acting on it). Mass produced cable codes were available, but individuals may also use private codes between each other. Here's a really good article on the subject, including a scan of two pages of an actual cable code!
Akan goldweights were used to measure/weigh gold dust, the most common currency in West Africa before colonisation. Early ones were geometric or non-pictoral (probably because of Muslim/Arabic traders) but later ones were rather elaborate, and often alluded to Adinkra symbols (like the two-headed crocodile Funtumfunefu Denkyemfunefu) or proverbs. The one I mention in the text about a gazelle with overly long horns is based on a real weight (if you have access to JSTOR, I found it in this article. It's figure 23). There's also good, freely accessible (if brief) articles by The Met and Moma.

Writing historical fiction is really fun, because I get to learn so many things during research :)

infinitelove.exe, by Devin Ambrosia

Devin: I wrote this story because I wanted to give our engineer MC permission to indulge her every sexual whim with the latest in robot tech, but also to explore subspace outside the bedroom, i.e. the tantalizing possibility of having someone crunch all the numbers and make a foolproof plan to reach our individual and collective goals. I thought it would also be fun to play with an early backstory to the ComfortUnits found in the Murderbot Diaries series by Martha Wells (highly recommend, btw).

Thanks to Alice and saoirse st. clair for beta reads, and melanofly for the story feedback and lovely art as always.

Written with the robotfucker 3000 playlist by steel runner.

> melanofly (artist): I loved the softness of bodies that Devin Ambrosia has in the story, so I tried to bring that into the drawing as well. I gave Viv binary coloured hair because of the theme! Devin Ambrosia sent me academic paper graphs to female orgasm charts, which we've dutifully included in the pic hehe. When thinking about the environment, I imagined there would be harsher light coming from above in a bedroom, but I also wanted to include some darker shadows around their body so that the glow of the screen would be apparent.

Robik, by ChibiSaboten

Duple Minor Improper, by Greta Jia-Kang Cabrel

Heidi previously appeared in "Beautyberry" and was greatly amused about how the leads in that story were eyefucking each other every time she glanced at them. Fang being a fictional choreographer, "Now o Now" and "Saint Melangell's Warren" do not exist as dances (at least in the versions discussed in this story), but on YouTube there's a lovely rendition of the former by Les Canards Chantants (The Singing Ducks), an actual vocal ensemble now based in Philadelphia, and lutenist Jacob Heringman.

I Dream of Being Split Into Five Easy Pieces, by atarashii merle and Morimoto Ushi

Content warnings: There's some language and imagery that feels mildly body horror-adjacent, though Pet is a robot so the 'body' part is questionable. Similarly, if Pet were human we would all be very concerned about its compulsive desire to destroy itself via increasingly violent, dangerous sex, but again: robot.

Title lyrics from Victor Jones – Mother Teresa

Gender Fluid, by Devin Ambrosia

I made this right before and during top surgery recovery. Thanks AP, for taking good care of me. Materials are magazine paper, bodyglitter, glue, oil pastel, and Snapseed.

Issue 116 cover, by Suehiro Moncrieff

These are the creators' notes for Issue 115: Bedside Manner

Without a Trace, by Domashita Romero

This one is dedicated to the guy who livetweeted getting a vibrator stuck in his ass.

Spike Traps and Other Adventuring Hazards, by Fil-in-the-blank

“I don’t think I have anything for this issue,” said I, unaware two dumbasses were about to spawn themselves in my writing software and insist that actually fuck-or-die was the best and possibly only way to get together. My personal proclivity for snarky rogues strikes again and this time it’s everyone’s problem.

Map of the World, by Hyakunichisou 13

Bedside Manners, by Howe-Yeing Pon

Hello, I hope you enjoyed the read 💕 Thank you for your time and support ☺ if you would like to read more about the characters from this world please DM ☺ I have a whole novel about Yashka that needs beta-ing lol or just some fans 😄

Shout outs to Vogerl, Rae, Devin, Etheryal, Elizabeth, ArcturusViotto, Godmother Deb and Sepi~ Thank you for beta-ing! And thanks W2 for editing and the bigger suggestions (concerning italics etc) 🙂

Special thanks to Frankie who I consider my first fan and emotional support as a fellow writer who also struggles with imposter syndrome 😖😄

Music: “Свободна (Free)” - The Brookln

Now you are free
flutter , flutter , flutter
only the air caresses you
fly fly fly , there where the sun is
past routine and darkness, fly fly fly
don't look back

Naming Conventions Note:
Eastern Slavic naming customs are the traditional way of identifying a person's family name (surname), given name (first name), and patronymic name. For formal situations, the use of first name and patronymic would be used in the same way Mr./Mrs. is used to be respectful. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the use of several degrees of diminutives is quite common. These are employed as nicknames and can be used for such things as speaking to small children or expressing tenderness and intimacy to an adult. The "smaller" the address, the more affectionate and endearing it is. For example, пирог (pirog, a pie) becomes пирожок (pirozhok, a small pie, or an affectionate name), which then may become пирожочек (pirozhochek, a very small pie, or a very affectionate name).

This work is based on a fictionalized version of modern day Russia. All names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents in this book are used in a fictitious manner or are the product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Beautyberry, by Greta Jia-Kang Cabrel

As always, the characters are fictional and cherish quite a few opinions/preferences that aren't mine. But the worlds of Renaissance song recitals and twenty-first-century English country dance balls are real, and here's a YouTube playlist with some clips of them:

- "See, See the Shepherd's Queen" - sung by The Queen's Six
- "The Astonished Archeologist" - 2018 Adirondack Dance Weekend. At around 1:25, the flute player introduces "London Bridge Is Falling Down" into the mix.
- "Rosamond's Pond" - 2017 Seattle Ball. While it's not front and center in this video (or this story), the caller, Brooke Friendly, is a strong advocate of global/positional calling, which dispenses with the gendered roles heard elsewhere on this list.
- "Apollo's Hunt" - 2017 Fandango (Atlanta)
- "Beautyberry" - demonstration video by DC/Philly-area dancers
- "Wa' Is Me, What Mun I Do?" - 2019 Nashville Playford Ball
- "Good Man of Cambridge" - 2013 Montreal "From Playford to Roodman" Ball. The tune - Mozart's "Turkish March" - invariably cracks up dancers who know it primarily from childhood piano lessons.
- "Barbarini's Tambourine" - 2023 Jane Austen Ball, Rochester
- "You Meaner Beauties of the Night" - sung by Emma Kirkby with The Consort of Musicke. On a personal note, this song comes to mind whenever I reread Jo Beverley's *Devilish.*
- "Tell Me True Love" - sung by Alison Hill, with Yair Avidor on lute

A couple of the band members have their own S2B2 tales: the violinist is Maeve, whose own sartorial concerns are discussed in "Of Figures and Fingering Things Out," and the recorder player, Iggie, got frisky in "Biddable."

Iterum, by Chiyohana Odile

Thank you very much to W2 and Ironeater for editing and reminding me that I actually need a plot.

The first piece of art was done mostly in Procreate until I got frustrated with the default brushes and swapped over to Ibis, in which the second piece was done entirely.

Proboscis Me Please, Daddy, by Devin Ambrosia

Devin: I originally had a different idea for this issue but the perfect himbo drone popped into my head one day and I had to bring him to life.

I managed to cram a lot of bee facts (and other stuff) into this story, and everything except the ending *should be* accurate to honeybee anatomy and social structures. One thing I couldn't fit in there: A swarm is the hive reproducing. About half of them leave home, find a place to hang out, and then send scouts to scope out new homes. Each scout comes back with a dance describing what they found, and the sisters/workers mimic the moves of their favorite prospective home. They dance, eliminating the less popular options, until they have a majority and move to the new spot.

Thank you Chiyohana Odile (千代花 オディール) for the beautiful illustration and asking me all the right bee questions. And to Nico, shipAroo, and Howe-Yeing Pon for the helpful beta reads.

The Man With the Golden Syringe, by shukyou

Who's listened to like fifty episodes of the Kill James Bond! podcast over the last two months? Surely not me.

Hands-On Procedure, by Iron Eater

It's important to have people in your life who accept you for you, and aren't afraid to pull out the sewing kit in an emergency.

"I'm not sure what I want to draw for this issue," I thought, foolishly ignoring that I hadn't penciled in anything for Ward & Wainwright this calendar year. Once I stopped ignoring that, everything came together relatively quickly, and *thank goodness* since my household had an AC outage during some of my scheduled pinup working days. I don't actually draw direct pictures of these two for my story illustrations, so here's a helpful reference for what they both look like, more or less (minus noses this time, though rest assured they do have them). Hugh is very proud of personally harvesting every single specimen floating in those vats in the background.

This piece was made entirely in Clip Studio Paint EX 3.

Issue 115 Cover, by Pastel

These are the creators' notes for Issue 114: Quantum Entanglement

Scenario ATU-480 [F173.1, K1363], by Togi Kayako

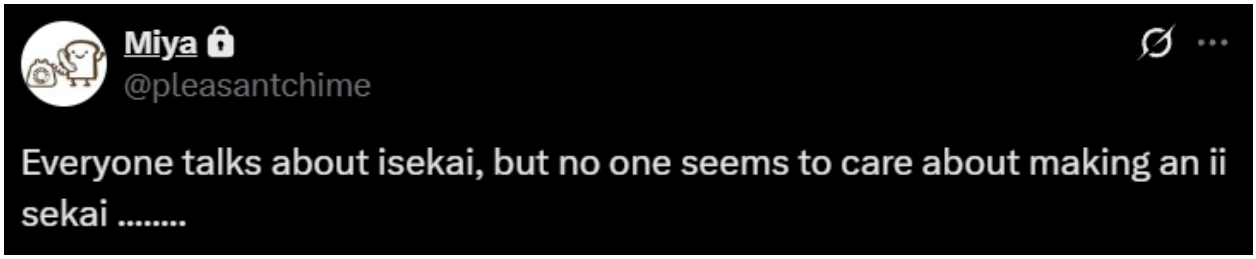
This is a POV swap of the very first thing I ever wrote for SSBB, over sixteen years ago! I challenged myself to keep it in the same person and tense, and used all of the original dialogue verbatim. It feels quite clunky to me now, but if anyone's curious to see what sixteen years can do, here you go: *Herr Hall*, from issue 17.

As for the title: ATU 480 is the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index number which includes Frau Holle, the story I based the original piece on. The numbers in brackets are from Thompson's Motif-Index: F173.1 (Otherworld land of pleasure) and K1363 (Seduction of person ignorant of sexual intercourse), which I picked for description alone rather than accuracy of my story to the motifs. What the narrator and its associates are is related to another story of mine, but that one sadly isn't out in the world yet. They're all named with Bayer designations of stars, though the specific stars aren't significant.

Biddable, by Greta Jia-Kang Cabrel

Readers of my previous S2B2 stories may recognize Robin from “To Hone High and Low” [Issue 104] and Sheila and Dr. Bonnemann from “Accidentals” [Issue 108], as well as a now-infamous bucket of recorders. Lucienne and Iggie (derived from “I-Jen,” and some of her clubbing friends call her “Azalea”) are definitely fictional (they showed up earlier this month while I was trying to tame a different story) and their opinions are definitely their own.

Good World, by Domashita Romero



The Night Terrors and the Birthday Surprise, by Devin Ambrosia

Author note: Time travel dream orgies for the revolution. Inspired by adrienne maree brown's Pleasure Activism, the perhaps-apocryphal Emma Goldman line "If I can't dance, it's not my revolution," and the very real Rainbow Serpent Dreamers Society.

Art #1 by melanofly and it's aMAzing!

Art #2 is Sanctuary by Lindsay Lion Lord. It's an honor to have your beautiful creation with my words, my friend. Here is more info on the art:
Lindsay Lion Lord
Sanctuary, 2021 (detail)
Hand-dyed cotton fabric, MX dyes, cotton thread, wood, latex paint, synthetic carpet, aluminum, spells for embodiment and intergenerational healing.
8'x4'x5'

Thanks to Togi Kayako for getting me hooked on SSBB and proofing, and shipAroo, Zia, and my husband AP for the feedback.

melanofly (artist) notes: I think this might've been the first time I've illustrated an orgy?! What a great way to pop that cherry with so many different characters :D. I wanted to have everyone involved and recognizable in the picture, so I went with a stacked (foreground to background) viewpoint. Execution wise, Devin Ambrosia mentioned a former illo of mine (Animated) so I went with more flat tones with rim lighting (which happened to also work with the environment of this story!). Enjoyed drawing lumpy and saggy bods and rolls of so many babes enjoying themselves together~ It's hard to tell, but I was musing to myself about how Flame is the only one who still has clothing/accessories left on.

Hosing down the (other) public fuckhole at the mall, by Fil-in-the-blank

With great thanks to Arson, author of the original story, for allowing me to play in the world of space catboy public sex-amenities <3

All Roads Lead to Rome, by Iron Eater and shukyou

Dating someone you know you didn't visit the last time you had field work to do, but who remembers your previous arrival and collaboration perfectly, is a lot less of a problem than it sounds at first blush. The problem is whether or not one or both of them are going to end up wearing holes in the universe thanks to all that constant back-and-forth…

While a basic scenario and character dynamic was figured out ahead of time, an awful lot of this piece came into being as the direct result of two people hurling spaghetti at the wall to see what would stick. Would you believe there was almost no revisions done before the first draft was done, save for slightly rephrasing an earlier line of dialogue to hook into a later section better? Laying down tracks in front of the train is generally not a sustainable form of writing; that said, it was a *tremendous* amount of fun, and the need for two different people with two different schedules to get the same piece of fiction done on time at least kept the process from getting bogged down in minutiae!

I (Iron Eater) have described the process of writing this story as "literary PVP" and "two people throwing a series of bear traps in front of each other to see who falters first," which isn't incorrect, but it was actually a fun, breezy, and quite cooperative experience, all told. Thanks as always to sparklebeard for his triumphant last-minute review pass since this one was getting right up to the line!

All illustrations were made in Clip Studio Paint EX 3.

Issue 114 cover, by serenity_winner

These are the creators' notes for Issue 113: Nine to Five

Working From Home, by Domashita Romero

The creators of Shousetsu Bang*Bang do not endorse doing this during a meeting, no matter how much it could have been an email.

collateral damage, by sen no akumu

Honestly Fabian ought to just change careers (well, not that it can really be termed a ‘career’, lol) at this point, he’s very clearly not cut out for this whole assassination thing.

Pyretic Victory, by Togi Kayako

Just under 8K of gay supervillain/henchman smut featuring aphrodisiacs, gunplay, and rough sex. Maybe dubcon if you squint, but trust me, everyone is having a great time.

I swear to god as soon as I started writing this I kept running into mad scientists in one form or another pretty much nonstop. Is something in the air? I don't know, but I'm here for it! Huge thanks to Devin for beta reading and my husband for the critical (im)moral support of basically peppering my draft with eggplant emojis.

The Mill Girls Case, by Scops

Chandra and Bridget were inspired by my desire to have a lady-Sherlock character with a butch bruiser Watson. I came up with them several years ago, so I’m excited to finally put them on their first case. A fairly straightforward adventure/heist story, and it maybe fits the theme if you squint at it sideways.

The Aftermath of Overtime, by JJ

Not a whole lot to note, but I did want to add that while it’s never explicitly stated, Daniel is trans as well, and Leo’s post metoidioplasty.

Keep On, by Iron Eater

This one involves a lot more discussion of vehicular homicide than you'd think, but not in, you know, a *serious* way.

Rosie's pretty comfortable with his not-too-exciting life, but that doesn't mean when a familiar face shows up at the industry bar he haunts he's not going to *not* try to make friends.

I felt like I was due a reasonably simple plot this time, especially after the behemoth that was December 2024! This one started out with a pretty basic conceit (two guys who work for rival isekai truck companies meet cute, hook up) and everything else just kind of happened as I looked for interesting details to work into these guys. *Is* a prison stay an isekai? You could certainly make the argument.

Not turning this one in for the alternate-worlds issue was 100% on purpose. I am a menace and cannot be governed (except by turn-in dates and thoughtfully-worded concrit).

All illustrations were made in Clip Studio Paint EX 3.

Wonder Women in Schenectady, by Greta Jia-Kang Cabrel

This is both a standalone story and an addition to my “Being Extra to Nail All the Things” universe (with “To Hone High and Low” [Issue 104], “Accidentals” [Issue 108], and “Of Figures and Figuring Things Out [Issue 112]), this time with a percussionist and a music librarian. I started it last July, with boozy muffins from Ambition on a dorm dresser and three totally different characters dissecting the previous night’s opera production, and I periodically peeked in on them during the rest of the year, but then Miao-Fei swaggered in.

A gloved hand against his heart, by Shrimp King

This story is a silly take on “jobs” because as a prince, Pav’s job is mostly to have heirs. He also masquerades as a courier, another silly ‘job’. Micah, on the other hand, is your unemployed friend that doesn't know how to cook. Earlier drafts emphasized how other characters do “work”, but for the final draft I wanted to focus on the much broader, less theme oriented parts of the story. There's a lot of inherently terrifying aspects of their situation and society, but Pav and Micah are both just trying to navigate it and make the best of it they can. I was very inspired by my love of demons in media, as well as the original myth of Midas and the song Midas by the artist Skott. This was such a fun and raunchy write, and I hope people enjoy.

The Day After the 655th Time Through the Time Loop, by shukyou

I had never seen a discussion about what happens *after* the time loop. So here we are.

Issue 113 cover, by floremipsum_

These are the creators' notes for Issue 112

Shades of Purple, by Togi Kayako

A nice, light little threesome with some gender sprinkles on top to cap off the year. If your current gender's not serving, why not try something new for a night? ¯_(ツ)_/¯

Nothing They Can Do About It, by Kit Miller

We first met Marcus and Sebastian in "A Snapshot of Married Life"; this is a prequel to that.
Right out of the gate, a disclaimer that I am a medievalist and not a classicist; while I did a lot of research, I cannot guarantee that I didn't make errors that might make a proper classicist huff in annoyance. I do apologise.
Neither the manuscript nor the unknown poems therein exist. However, the description of the manuscript is an amalgamation of myriad manuscripts from roughly the right era and location. I weep for joy that I am a medievalist in the era of high-quality, digital facsimiles!
A few notes on the real Latin authors I reference in this piece:
Catullus (Gaius Valerius Catullus, c. 84 – c. 54 BCE). You can read his works – originals plus various translations – here. Only one manuscript of Catullus' works is extant – which is why discovering another one would be a huge deal! At one point, Marcus quotes *Carmina* 48.
Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso, 43 BCE – 17/18 CE). His *Ars Amatoria* is a – probably satirical – manual for how to Love Properly. In contrast to other and usually earlier Roman poets, he was vocal about preferring to have sex with women rather than men/boys.
Vergil (Publius Vergilius Maro, 70 – 19 BCE). More commonly spelt Virgil, but his actual, Latin name is Vergilius; the variant with i is a medieval invention that stuck for no good reason, and neither I nor Marcus are fans of academic conventions that got stuck for no good reason, so we both insist on the spelling that is closer to the guy's actual name. Vergil's second *Eclogue* is the lament of Corydon, a shepherd, over his unrequited love for the boy Alexis.

Of Figures and Fingering Things Out, by Greta Jia-Kang Cabrel

This is both a standalone story and a part of my "Being Extra to Nail All the Things" universe (with "To Hone High and Low" appearing in Issue 104 and "Accidentals" in Issue 108). As in, yes, Hongyu (the double reed specialist here) and Robin (a main character in "Hone" and side player in "Accidentals") have played assorted ciacconas, bergamascas, and folias together over the years, but none of that's germane to this account of Hongyu and Maeve getting to know each other. I hadn't planned on mentioning Robin at all, but every character in this universe keeps surprising me: Hongyu's lipstick collection wasn't even remotely on my radar when I started writing this.

Chain Reactions, by juou no zan

This is another example of a story I started and got stalled on until I realized I could make one of the characters trans, at which point it all came together.

I like plots that are caused by someone being trans, but them being trans is not the Point of the story. If Radek was cis this whole thing would have been a non-issue, and honestly probably it would just be something Talib feels weird about when he thinks back on it. But since Radek is trans, there's this whole other complicating factor that comes into play!

in a hallway, somewhere, by sen no akumu

Your Head, Your Neck, My Hands, by Sylla C.

Altare Sacrificiorum Columbarum, by Iron Eater

Content Warning: This story contains intense elements of body horror, medical play, graphic violence, and gore, paired with mentions of animal harm, and readers are encouraged to be honest with themselves about whether or not the first chapter makes them uncomfortable because *it will only get worse*. Reader discretion is advised.

Hugh, gentleman monster hunter, is used to his physician-valet, Mr. Ward, disappearing into his work for weeks at a time when their secret society's dissertation window rolls around, and the most recent holiday season is no different. Mr. Ward has never been so distant during his past thesis-writing sessions, however, and the strain upon their household is real. What drives Mr. Ward to the edge of obsession? Who can Hugh turn to when his usual confidant is occupied? And if his life's work is ever accepted by the society, will Mr. Ward still have use for Hugh at all?

It's more original knockoff *Bloodborne* fiction featuring Ward & Wainwright, in full-length novel form! As with all W&W stories, it is not necessary to read any of the other parts of the series to understand this work, though some names and themes will carry more meaning for people who have been following these characters since their original October issue installment; familiarity with the aforementioned video game is also not required at all, given how far I've strayed from the source material. The night city, the society, and all other related nonsense can stand alone.

This will probably be the only time I have POVs trading off across two separate timelines for several years. It took some serious doing figuring out how to pace everything so that the chapters still felt thematically connected despite advancing what one could argue are two

different plots (despite their common end point), and my outline file was an absolute tangle of notes, highlighter, and bookmarks. I am forever grateful to S2B2 for giving me the confidence to try something this ambitious, the skill to execute it, and a platform on which to share it with the world.

Historical food is a delight to research! Believe it or not, the decorations mentioned throughout the story are taken from historical sources, too, even the bits about using powdered glass as glitter. The Victorians were on another level of arts 'n crafts.

Yes, the title is a play on the "Dead Dove" concept, because I know what I've made, here.

My regular beta reader, sparklebeard, was a tremendous aid in helping me navigate the many conversations going on here and ensuring they all landed. The fact that he described the climactic scene as "very gross" and "unsettling" which made him "actively uncomfortable" (all in positive ways, mind you) were proof to me I'd written that part the way I'd hoped. Having three separate parts of my outline using the word "vivisex" meant I couldn't be half-assing this one in any form. Thank you so much for being able to cram *multiple* readings of this brick of a piece, to say nothing of the as-always excellent commentary, in the space of only a few days! It would not be what it is without his efforts.

All illustrations were created using Clip Studio Paint EX 3.0. The simpler style is partially due to me being creatively drained by a furious Q4, but I rather like how they turned out in the end.

Rosebuds, by lonelytuatara

Nice n' Naughty, by yabamena

Issue 112 Cover, by Swedishjazz

These are the creators' notes for Issue 111: Hauntology

Through The Woods, Homewards, by Kit Miller

The wild hunters are an eclectic medley of references to all sorts of deities, spirits, and heroes of the Hunt, the Wild, the Forest and all those things from all sorts of European mythologies. Herne himself is an amalgamation of the actual mythological Herne – what little we know of him – and Odin/Oðinn/Wotan, who is usually the actual leader of the Wild Hunt. I also may or may not have been a little bit inspired by the Dread Pirate Roberts. Reinhardt is named after the fox.

Content notes for opening with a fox getting shot dead, and for depicting fear of the dark and the beginnings of a panic attack.

Dead Hung Rigging, by Togi Kayako

Just a couple of guys taking a light-hearted romp through a haunted theater. No content warnings; this one is decidedly not spooky. Part of that is the fact it started as a project for an earlier issue (Fit To Be Tied; please don't do the math on the dates) and part of that is just my inherent need to be contrary. Also, sometimes you gotta have some sugary fluff!

Thanks as always to my beloved beta reader and an extra special thanks to lonelytuatara for illustrating. I could not be happier with both the choice of scene and the illustration itself, so please leave him some nice comments.

Sakazuki, by Domashita Romero

What if you outlived your first love? What if you got to see them again, despite that?

Sakazuki is the term for a ceremonial sharing of a sake cup, signifying a formal bond between two people.

Something Else, by shukyou

Suicidal thoughts aren't a *huge* part of the story, but they are relevant to the plot, so, you know, there's that.

Laid to Rest, by juou no zan

Now I love the Fatal Frame games, but I do think the approach danmei xianxia fandoms take to casefic, wherein the solution to hauntings involves sex more often than not, has some merit.

I did start out *trying* to write horror, honest!

Gentle Giant, by Holden Marrs

Taking Care of It, by Iron Eater

Content Warning: This story contains heavy horror elements focused around death, loss of self, medical entrapment, and mental decay. It also contains period-appropriate slurs. Reader discretion is advised.

Jack and Billy have a good thing going on in their new place, aside from the hallucinatory episodes Jack keeps having. They've been getting worse. Their new community might be able to provide the help Jack claims he doesn't need; the question is whether or not it's too late.

Introducing yet another horror story where I knew how I wanted to start it but not where it was going to go until I'd played around with my building blocks for a bit. Jack's relationship with Billy wasn't even a sure thing (beyond "they are/were an item in some way") until I'd figured out the best way for them to relate to one another, and whether one or both of them were malevolent parties took some time for me to decide. I'd wondered if Billy was perhaps trapped in part of Jack's head that his deteriorating state was making difficult to maintain, or if Billy was dead and Jack had forgotten this detail; as is evident from the finished version, I picked something else.

I heavily based this piece on themes covered in The Caretaker's *Everywhere at the End of Time*, a hauntological piece meant to reflect the effects of Alzheimer's on a subject through six separate volumes of music, because that is a horrible idea for a sexy story; therefore, I had to see less whether or not I could do it but what it would look like at the end. Jack and Billy's surnames are derived from the Three Magi, more specifically the versions encountered in *Chrono Trigger*, because ha ha, Jack really *is* everywhere at the End of Time. Belthasar even transfers his consciousness into a machine to last beyond his physical body in the same game. Funny how originally a name chosen on a whim worked out thematically.

This story is set somewhere in America, probably a more remote part of California or possibly Oregon. Believe it or not, the detail about the hold music is historically accurate (if relatively rare, especially once indirect-broadcast legal issues start getting thrown around).

Brought to you by many, many repeats of Blue Öyster Cult's "Don't Fear the Reaper," a song so incredibly obvious in what it's doing I felt like outright naming it would be too much. Thanks as always to sparklebeard, my wonderful beta reader, without whom I'd still probably be staring at my manuscript wondering why the parts haven't gelled properly.

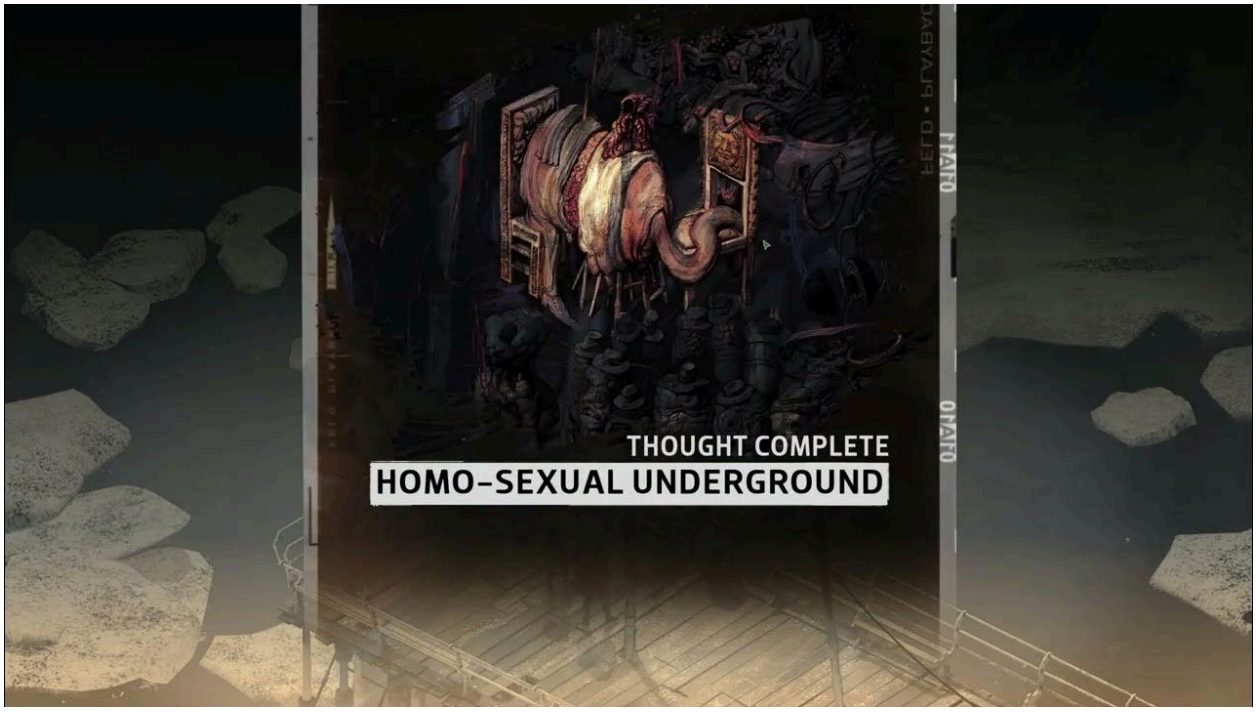
Issue 111 Cover, by 2013

These are the creators' notes for [Issue 110: Neon Lights]

We’re all light, by Hyakunichisou 13

This story can be read as a standalone, but we first met (Ezekiel Grover) Brooks in [Imagine travelling so far.] Now he’s on the road with ghost helpers Peter and Duncan, whom you can read about starting with [Everyone goes through the door].

Paint the Town Vermilion, by shukyou



Going Up, by Domashita Romero

LOVE IN AN ELEVATOR!!! LIVING IT UP WHEN YOU'VE GOTTEN OFF OF THE CYBERPUNK STREETS AND ARE NOW WORKING IN A CYBERPUNK TURBO TOWER AND GOING DOWWWWWWN

Eleven, Twelve, by Suzuran

This one gave me a surprising amount of trouble. For the longest time, I couldn't get it to feel sufficiently cyberpunk-y, but I'm happy with where it ended up. Big thanks as usual to the

editors, and this time to Pastel for putting up with just. So much negotiating. And so many of my terrible, *terrible* thumbnails. You're a real one <3

And, just for fun, behold! A helpful diagram I created to aid in the aforementioned negotiations:



A Snapshot of Married Life, by Kit Miller

I've not got many deep things to say about this piece, other than that I've been working on it on-and-off for a while before deciding to submit it here (as I realise is often the case with my pieces). As such, the issue prompt is roundly ignored.
Sebastian is named after the saint, because St Sebastian is quite possibly the most gay-coded of them all, and is usually depicted tied up and ~~penetrated~~ pierced by multiple arrows. 'Marcus' is just a very common Roman name, and I picked it because he's a professor of Classics/Latin.

The Confidence of a Beast, by Ladz

As someone with an ongoing vampire series taking place in an alternate universe of the early 20th century, I couldn't help myself from writing vampires at a more contemporary understanding of a club.

Daughter of the Redsun, by ShrimpKing

I'm super proud of this story! It was one of the projects I've spent the longest on, and I learned a lot. I'm a huge fan of cyberpunk 2077, flawed as the series is. I wanted to create something that mirrored (and lightly parodied) the feeling of playing that game, but with more sapphic yearning. I hope that people enjoy these two flawed queer women as they navigate their messy lives.

Heat Up, by TOFU+BEAST

Pixel art piece created in Aesprite with the “Copper Eroge” palette. Originally I was going to hold myself to only using the colors in said palette, as I wanted to make something evocative of classic eroge like Dokyuusei (no, not that one, I mean That One) aka Bangin’ Summer. Something simple, keeping with the rendering style of a Tokimeki Memorial: Girl’s Side.

Then I just lost my mind while I was looping ZEROBASEONE tracks+Macroblank albums and drew catboy robot x-ray cumshots with GBA style gradients and too many layers. Had a minor breakdown. Bone apple teeth.

Issue 110 Cover, by juou no zan

The theme immediately called to me to do a cyberpunk cityscape, which is...not something I've ever done before. I started doing studies and city practice almost as soon as I got the email about this being my cover for the year, mostly because I knew I was going to end up taking long unintended breaks as is my ADHD's wont.

I did thumbnails to make sure I had a layout I liked and thought would work, and while doing that I realized there was no reason not to make the "neon lights" rainbow colored, which kind of shifted the direction of the piece. But in a way I like! It's no longer very cyberpunk, but it *is* very gay.

These are the creators' notes for Issue 109: The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea

Haul Away, by Torino Koji

Once again, shoving my terrible taste in music at you.

As soon as I saw the theme for this one, I knew I wanted some ridiculous, over the top, porn fest of a situation. The first draft of this was … outrageously long, and hardly close to finishing by the time I realized I had about a week left to turn something in. In the end, it's still a ridiculous, over the top, porn fest of a situation — just a slightly more scaled down one than originally anticipated.

In here, you will find: my increasing penchant for trans men in smutty situations; group sex; free use; an almost complete disregard for the actual workings of Golden Age maritime workings; and just enough creepy mermen to keep you guessing about whether or not this qualifies as fantasy or not.

Arame Cove, by Domashita Romero



Hunger at Sea, by Johannes T. Evans

In the River’s Hands, by Someone Else

As I was out paddling last summer, thinking of the times when paddling was central for trade and communication rather than being a recreational activity, thinking of how such times could return in some post-apocalyptic worlds, the basic scenario of a person taking another person as cargo on a desperate emergency voyage and ultimately falling for each other came to me. From there the worldbuilding got out of hand and the present story resulted.

As a note to the reader, this world has a sentient species treated as work animals, and since when breeding work animals one doesn’t typically ask for consent, one scene of coerced sex.

Many thanks to Bennie, our editor, and especially to Iron Eater.

illustrator's notes from Iron Eater: I'm busy this summer, and hadn't had much luck thinking up individual pinup ideas, so when I heard that Someone Else was looking for someone to illustrate their story, I jumped at the chance! I love working with authors who have a particular *look* they want to evoke, especially when it means I get to design environments, outfits, or entire species. While I was given free rein to pick whatever I wanted to draw, the scene I chose really jumped out at me as a turning point for both characters beyond their initial dramatic inciting incident, and I got to do a lot of looking at nature photography to better envision the riverbank I'd be depicting. Originally this was going to be a simple flat-color piece. Surprising no one, things got out of hand. Turned out pretty alright, if I do say so myself!

There's a short hidden message in the title card, too, though it's probably not going to be obvious at first. Why not reread the story and see if you can figure it out?

All images were created in Clip Studio Paint EX.

Odysseus Didn't Know What He Was Missing, by shukyou

Helen: I will urge him to give me a vessel, from which I shall have the offerings from your tomb let down into the sea's embrace. (Tr. Coleridge, 1938)

Kudos to Whit for identifying that while Pelly looks like a Tom of Finland drawing, he sounds like a Greek Ilmo Koskela.

The names and number of the sirens are inconsistent across ancient texts, but if you were going to pick a number, it might be eight, and if you were going to assign them names, they might be Thelxinoe, Molpe, Leucosia, Teles, Raidne, Aglaophonos, Ligeia, and Peisinoë.

Bitter Little Things, by Shrimp King

I wanted to take this idea of “the devil and the deep blue sea” pretty literally, and I wanted to feed my beloved husband, Runny, so well. He loves T4T, modern settings, and dubcon. I was also grateful to have the mentorship of a good editor - who helped me unlearn some old habits and try some new things. It’s hard to be vulnerable and there’s vulnerability in trying something new! I hope people enjoy Roman & Simon. I love that the Devil & Poseidon both love the trident. Big fork hours start now.

The Diary of Mr J. Walker, by Kit Miller

First of all, a brief content note: there is some animal cruelty in this one. It happens off-page, but if you want to avoid it, skip the entry for 24 July.

This piece was literally years in the making. The core idea of ‘human artist-scientist and curious merman’ had been incubating in my head for a very long time. The spark that really lit it, though, came when I wondered what merpeople genitalia would look like, and I went on a deep, deep dive into cetacean and pinniped genitalia. Okay, mostly penises. So I’ve been seriously working on this piece for a good three years, on and off, and was intending to submit it in one of the Theme Free issues—and then this issue’s theme was announced!

I can’t really remember when the whole diary idea happened. Probably around the time I watched *Gentleman Jack*. It will come as no surprise that I took the idea of an encrypted, explicit, queer diary from Anne Lister. Even the name of Walker’s editor is a reference: Lister’s main editor is Helena Whitbread, I invented Ellen Baker. Walker’s name is some kind of reference to the Lister diaries too: as I contemplated what to call my human protagonist, I recalled that Lister’s wife was called Ann Walker, and thought to myself, “Wow, wouldn’t it be stupid as hell if the land-dwelling part of a merman/human couple would be called *Walker*?!” But then, like so many things in my brain, it stuck.

I can’t remember why I called Maurice Maurice. Sorry.

Most of the merman’s sexual behaviour is based on the courting and mating behaviour of dolphins, but I based the rest of his biology mostly on that of seals. I am, however, *emphatically* not a biologist, and I am certain that, if aquatic humans existed, they would not be considered a subspecies of humans; actually, I think they would not even be considered in the same genus at all. But merfolk do not exist and so I can do what I want. So, in essence: the biology and taxonomy and other sciency things in this piece are nearly all hogwash, though I hope it’s at least verisimilitudinous hogwash. I did try to follow taxonomic rules and conventions as much as I could. For those wondering: *aquatilis* means “dwelling or growing in water, aquatic” while *terricolus* means “dwelling on land, terrestial.”

I had an absurd amount of fun making this look as scholarly as possible. Don’t try to seek out any of the citations; except for the OED, I made them all up. Many, but not all, scholars’ names are some sort of pun or wordplay.

With thanks to Joanna, who read this when it was still a WIP and left excellent commentary, and to melanofly, who once again blew it out of the water with their amazing illustrations!

melanofly artist notes for The Diary of J. Walker, by Kit Miller

When I first heard about Kit's story, I felt intimidated that I had to *try* to draw like a *real scientific illustrator*™ , but later realized the illustrations would be for a personal diary instead. You know what that means…all those "S" super, floating random eyeballs, etc. in the margins around text…NOT! Instead we had good fun chatting about *Torn Sexy Merman Pics* (TSMP) and whether or not to include them. After coining TSMP I felt compelled to also draw TSMP, but we wanted to make it clear that those were not drawn by Walker.

I studied biology eons ago and have fortunately seen IRL rare books on anatomy/nature and their respective carved woodblocks. Although Kit mentions some of the content being hogwash, I felt that the vibe and way it was presented was well done :D. Thanks again to Kit for the lovely story, and for letting me illustrate for them once again!

Breaking in the Deckhand, by Pastel

Issue 109 cover, by Prosodi

These or are the creators' notes for Issue 108: Another Round

Everything's Easy, Side B, by Domashita Romero

Hey, remember that last story? What if it again, but from the other guy's perspective! Spoilers: it's sexy!!

Arctic butterflies, by Someone Else

As you may have noticed, Hrun and Ara are based on Minecraft villagers. Meeting them this second time, we get to learn what happened before, as well as what happens next, the latter being what you might have expected if you put on your Minecraft hat and thought about what the player was probably trying to do here.

Ara has epilepsy, which has substantially coloured their whole life, as well as having, in the present time, PTSD. Any medical inaccuracies I will credit to the fact that they aren't human so one can't expect things to turn out exactly the same way as in humans. We do see multiple seizure types and once postictal psychosis. Given that they sometimes experience aura, their usual seizures, which they have many times per day and which substantially impair their daily life, are perhaps focal impaired awareness seizures rather than the absence seizures that I'd originally intended. On the other hand, the duration and lack of postictal period for those seizures is more like an absence seizure, as I understand it. Given that Ara has certainly never had an EEG or even heard the term epilepsy, I'll just say we don't know exactly.

Thanks to Togi Kayako for beta reading and to Iron Eater for the phrasing of the line about the frozen footprints in ice.

An Unexpected Mole, by Kit Miller

The theme this time is "sequel," so of course I wrote one, but I also played around with repetition and echo in the piece itself. Several lines are uttered by one character and then echoed by another later on.

As with "Unassuming Valet," I had great fun playing with deceiving appearances and the actual truth that lies beneath. Additionally, in that first piece, I decided, purely for my own amusement, that all members of the Prevost household would have names found in the Old Testament. With the Lewis household, I chose names that are of French origin or which are also popular in France, though I did not apply this as strictly as the OT names — you could argue that Sophia is the Germanic version of the name and I should have chosen Sophie.

I deeply, deeply regret picking 1885 as a date. Whenever I wanted to make some kind of historical reference, and went to check if it was historically accurate, I found that whatever I was looking up — be it a novel, play, or event — was either too early or too late. The only major thing that I could find that happened in 1885 was the complete criminalisation of homosexuality. Hooray. /s

Here's a few explanatory notes of the historical trivia I did include.

Sophia speaks of "women in Halifax wearing top hats and conducting their own business." This is a reference to Anne Lister. Sophia also idolises the French actress Sarah Bernhardt, who was as bisexual as is possible to claim about a historical figure, and who famously played both male and female roles, at one point playing both Hamlet and Ophelia on alternating nights.

North and South is a novel by Elizabeth Gaskell, first published in 1854. It is a social novel advocating for workers' rights and equality, including gender equality. At the time this story is set, Gaskell's works had largely slipped into obscurity, but I think a righteous, covertly rebellious young man like David would surely still be aware of the novel and connect with its themes.

Sophia nicks a statuette of Narasimha, the fourth, lion-headed avatar of Vishnu. I chose to put this avatar in the spotlight as he triumphs over seemingly unconquerable evil with cunning, ferocity, and fearlessness.

"The Law" that David and Jonathan occasionally speak about with dread is the Labouchere Amendment, which criminalised more or less everything two men could do with and to one another as "Gross Indecency." Also known as the 'blackmailer's charter," this was the law that would bring down Oscar Wilde. It would not be until the Wolfenden report in 1957 that decriminalisation of homosexuality was beginning to be discussed, and homosexuality (in private, between consenting adults over 21 years of age) was finally decriminalised with the Sexual Offences Act in 1967.

David reads *The Sins of The Cities on the Plain*, which is a real Victorian queer erotica movella. If you want to read it, too, you can do so on Wikisource.

This is the first piece of mine that is illustrated! My sincerest thanks to melanofly, who did an *excellent* job rendering my boys. I keep staring at their illustrations and I keep grinning like a loon.

> **Illustration comments by melanofly**
> This was an interesting time period, with hair and fashion becoming more and more trim. I thought I'd have to use more of this visual research intel, but then they ended up mostly naked 🤣. after reading the story I was drawn to two moments with contrast.
>
> The idea of doing a Victorian-style pen and ink drawing was Kit's! At first I inked one pic digitally, but it still felt TOO digital, so I ended up pulling out IRL pen and nib (extra fine) instead. A few set backs on my part:

- I misplaced my light box's power supply so I couldn't use the light box as intended, thus I couldn't clearly see the original sketches I was trying to ink over 🫠
- I also used not the best paper (though now I wonder about the bleed proof quality of Victorian art supplies and paper), so the ink bled and thus the line work became THICK

In the end I still have to do an impressive amount of digital fixing 🫠. Some of the references were looser in inking style, where the peripheral and background elements sort of "trail off" into the white space, which I tried to do in the illos. TY to Kit for trusting me 🙌 and for making such charming, loving characters.

A Little Bit Louder and a Little Bit Worse, by Iron Eater

Obsidian hasn't seen Rhett in years, and for good reason: they're terrible for each other. Unfortunately, they're also in the same line of work—dungeon exploration—and there's only so many places one can actually practice said craft, so their paths were bound to cross eventually. Maybe this time it'll be different?

When presented with an issue theme all about revisiting previous stories, I, a serial sequel-writer, felt it was my duty to write something completely original and unconnected to anything previously submitted. I may or may not have been accused of being "a fucking troll" by the editorial team in response. It's fine, I thought it was funny!

This story is not based on *Dungeon Meshi/Delicious in Dungeon*, but I will forgive the reader for assuming otherwise. It's not meant to be any existing property in particular; there's a mysterious dungeon, people keep going in, death means something different inside of it, and these two idiots are part of that. That's all you need.

I usually write characters who are more or less good together and make one another better, whether lovingly or just as friends with benefits, so this issue was my opportunity to write a couple who are very, very much not that. Obsidian is *mean,* and not in the gruff-exterior-but-soft-interior way, and writing that sort of perspective in a way that's not intended for October horror issues (and therefore either unpleasant to hammer home a theme or unpleasant because he's going to get dumpstered along the way or, occasionally, both) proved to be a unique challenge! I wanted him to have a reasonably distinct character voice without being so awful a typical reader couldn't stand being around him for the length of the story.

Rhett exists mostly because I felt like writing another sexy fat guy; with Riaag Bough-Breaker gracefully retired for the time being, I was feeling malnourished in that department. Rhett's a big, hirsute elf because I will always enjoy writing fantasy critters with diverse body types. He and Obsidian both had some design drafts sketched on the back of an envelope before more than a

few paragraphs of the manuscript were done, since this was a case where I knew I was going to have to draw them. Fun fact: an early attempt at drawing Obsidian had an eyepatch! Obsidian himself doesn't have a specific nationality but I started from somewhere vaguely Vietnamese. Rhett is Rhett.

Thanks as always to sparklebeard for his impeccable feedback and suggestions. Without him (and some extra nudging from the editor's pen) the ending would have been a lot less interesting.

Accidentals, by Greta Jia-Kang Cabrel

I've been working on a different story low-key set in this universe since September (a standalone with the concertmaster of Robin's orchestra, whose girlfriend is in a supper-club with Li-Chen), but that plotbunny hasn't stopped slinging curveballs at me, so when some other musicians in Robin's circles started getting chatty about recorders and spreader bars, I figured I should pay attention.

Since I have been known to spend a week here and there sneaking into harpsichord rooms and trying not to trip over theorbos, I feel compelled to emphasize that the characters' opinions and extracurriculars are theirs, not mine, nor should they be attributed to anyone else I've tarried with on the early music scene, even though I did once contribute a recorder to a Dirty Santa exchange I got pulled into. Thanks heaps to the editors for superb suggestions and accommodations, and to the possums for putting up with the moaning from my corner.

Make It Last, by Suzuran

I started plotting this (or something like it) even before I'd finished writing the previous story, so when the themes for this year were announced, and I saw not only that there was a sequel-specific issue, but also the name of the theme, I knew I had to write this for it, no matter how much of a pain it was. And oh boy, was it ever a pain. I think this is probably the most technically difficult piece of writing I've ever accomplished. It's also the longest original work I've completed so far, so I'm all kinds of proud of it.

A big thank-you to starry for the early input, and an even bigger thank-you to Togi Kayako for betaing and cheerleading throughout the bulk of the writing process. Big thanks as well to the lovely and supportive folks of the Discord server, especially everyone who joined me for a writing sprint or several, and of course, thank you to W2 for being so patient.

The Dictionary of Daily Wants, by Hyakunichisou 13

The old Stratford General Hospital (later known as Avon Crest) was a real, and indeed really spooky looking, building. You can see it on Google Maps at 38 Avoncrest Drive, Stratford, Ontario. Most of the details about the inside given in this story are made up, as there is a dearth of online photographs of the interior. Sadly, the building was torn down in 2023. The metaphysical fate of any spirits left behind remains unknown.

The Dictionary of Daily Wants, compiled by Robert Kemp Philp and published in 1859, is available at the Internet Archive.

Come As You Are, by H.P. Lovecock

Now that I've written a sequel I can give this series a title: The B-sides! Bastien and Ben, B&B, the rivals-with-benefits karting besties are back! I've said it before and I'll say it again, what an absolute joy to return to these two. I've been thinking about this story since finishing "Smells Like Teen Spirit," I had a rough outline in my head, but I let the characters do their thing and they still managed to surprise me.

I've been uploading my fav SSBB stories to AO3, my favourite tags are "Porn With Plot", and I've also added "Porn With Feelings" (the best kind) and "Porn With Probably Too Much Plot". I'll be adding "Porn With Parental Issues" for this one, that feels right. I go there a lot (not necessarily in smut all the time), anyone who's done counseling knows that our early relationships affect how we experience intimacy as we get older. Exploring Ben's relationship with his dad and getting to dive into the dynamic between Bastien and his mom a little more was a lot of fun, very cathartic. I also got to learn about Emily Kame Kngwarreye, who is badass, and her work, which is gorgeous. The gift of smut!

Last but certainly not least, melanofly's mind blowing Melbourne-sunet-palm-lined-vaporwave anime poster, holy crap. So far beyond what I could have imagined. One of my favourite things about F1 is that the teams will often do race posters, an artist's take on the look and feel of the city and track they're visiting. I love seeing the boys in their full race suits more than I can say, and the anime movie poster–especially as a sequel to the BL book cover–so perfectly captures the feel of the story.

Once again including the glossary, because F1 is it's own weird little world. Thanks for reading!

GLOSSARY

car setup - Adjustments made to teams' cars over the race weekend to maximize aerodynamics and drivability. This can include (but is certainly not limited to) front and back wing

adjustment, tyre cambering (the angle that tyres touch the track), suspension, overall downforce, car software setups, and so on and so forth.

Constructors' Championship - Determined by the combined points of the two drivers for each team, the Constructors' Championship celebrates the efforts of the entire F1 team, with financial rewards distributed from a pot to each team based on their standing in the championship at the end of the season. Higher winnings can mean investments in each team, contractual bonuses to team members, improvements in car development and design… and employment! So teams are incentivized to remain competitive.

downforce - The finely tuned downward force exerted on a car caused by its speed and aerodynamics, the way air is designed to flow over and through the exterior that pushes the car down onto the track and allows them to cut through the air at such high speeds. A commonly touted fact is that F1 cars have so much downforce that they could drive upside down in a tunnel at top speed.

Drag Reduction System (DRS) - Driver adjustable bodywork that reduces aerodynamic drag to increase top speed, in F1 the DRS is an adjustable back wing. Each track has DRS Zones where cars are allowed to open their wings. This is at will during Free Practice and Qualifying sessions when DRS is enabled by race control, although during a race drivers are only allowed to use DRS when they're following behind the car in front of them by less than a second, enabled by DRS Detection points along the track. You'll see the cars' back wings flip open as they fly down straights when DRS is enabled. It's mega.

Formula One - The highest calibre of open-wheeled, single-seater racing in the world. Formula racing is governed by the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) and the "formula" refers to regulations and restrictions in car design, testing and spending set by the governing body. A standard Formula One season consists of around twenty-two races or "grand prix" typically attended by ten teams, each team supporting two drivers.

Free Practice - Three 90-minute sessions that take place over race weekends, allowing drivers and teams to get a feel for and collect data about the track to make adjustments to car setup and prepare race day strategy.

Grand Prix - "Grand Prize", referring to money awarded to teams at the end of every season based on their overall standing. Each individual race in the F1 season is titled a grand prix, eg. Bahrain Grand Prix, Grand Prix de Monaco Historique, etc.

grid - The starting formation for each race in Formula One made up of ten canted rows of cars, also used as shorthand for "on track" or "in a team's seat."

kerb - Curbs on the side of racing tracks that signify track limits, a safety feature that can also sometimes offer extra grip coming off of corners. Drivers will often talk about "hitting kerbs" coming out of a corner; important to get right, dangerous and damaging to get wrong.

overtake - Passing another car during the race. Overtakes can happen pretty much anywhere on the track, although there are safety regulations that can apply penalties or exclude cars for unsafe or unfair racing and overtakes.

Qualifying - An hour long session that takes place over three knockout rounds, Q1, Q2 and Q3 where drivers can go out onto the track at will and are trying to get their fastest time on the board. Five drivers are eliminated in each of the first two sessions, and the top ten starting positions are determined by Q3. This final tally determines track position at the start of the weekend's race. The coveted "pole position" is awarded to the driver with the fastest time, and offers major advantages from the start of a race. Drivers usually take two passes at each session they qualify for, with an out lap to warm up the tyres, a hot or flying lap to put a time on the board, and then a cooldown lap before they come back into the pit lane to change tyres and prepare for the next run.

paddock - Typically an enclosure made up of a row of opulent motorhomes behind the garages that serve as each teams' headquarters during race weekend, which includes a team mess, offices, conference rooms and hospitality facilities. During a number of "away" races, teams rely on auxiliary motorhomes or permanent facilities (like in Bahrain) to save the cost and environmental toll on shipping humongous motorhomes around the world. Delicious paddock fact: paddock position of the motorhomes is based on standing in the Constructors' Championship, so winning teams have a shorter walk from the paddock entrance to their respective motorhomes.

pit box - A single rectangular section in front of each team's garage where cars stop and mechanics change tyres, swap parts and make repairs during the race, or bring them into the garage if needed. "Box, box" is often heard over team radio, the command for drivers to come into the pit lane, taken from the German "*boxenstopp*," which means "pit stop."

pit wall - A control centre wall across from each team's garage where the team principal, race engineers and strategists sit to coordinate each session. Large bank of radio control and computer monitors. Anxious monitoring of meteorological readouts for rain guaranteed.

race engineer - A race engineer is paired with each driver throughout their season, and is the driver's point of contact during sessions by team radio. Race engineers take ownership of running the car and feed the driver car information, race status, strategy and more while they're on track.

race weekend - Standard race weekend takes place over three days from Friday to Sunday, with two Free Practice sessions on Friday, a third on Saturday with Qualifying happening later, and the race taking place on Sunday. Other formats exist, such as "sprint race" weekends. For some reason the first Las Vegas Grand Prix is running from Thursday to Saturday… disturbing and cursed.

team principal - Simply, the boss of a F1 team, typically making wide ranging decisions over staffing, drivers, strategy, car design and setup, and so on and so forth, answering to sponsors and investors, representing the team in matters of official rulings and media. See: Toto Wolff vs. Christian Horner, or Best of Guenther Steiner

team radio - A channel open between the pit wall and drivers during sessions, team radio is open publicly, including broadcast media and other teams. While team radio is typically between drivers and their race engineers, team principals occasionally pop onto team radio for congratulations or commiserations.

track limits - Essentially, the boundary between the racing track and what is considered “out of bounds” detected by laser sensors. Repeated violations of track limits can be reviewed by track officials and lead to warnings, time penalties and lap time deletions. Universally cursed by drivers and teams alike.

tyre - F1 spelling for tires. They spell it with a “y”, because Europe. A range of tyre compounds exist and three compounds are designated for each track during “dry” sessions based on track conditions, soft, medium and hard compounds. Regulations state that teams must run two different compounds during the Sunday race. Intermediate and wet tyres are available during “wet” sessions.

World Drivers’ Championship - Determined by the driver with the most points at the end of each Formula One season. While teams are rewarded from Constructors’ standings, drivers are compensated with salaries and bonuses from teams, so the World Drivers’ Championship is a sport title, and allows the driver to take “1” as their car number in the next season. While pairs of drivers are on the same team, they are often competing against each other for points, prestige and the World Drivers’ Championship. That can get very juicy.

> **Illustration comments by melanofly**
> I didn't think I'd be drawing these characters again, but thank you to H.P. Lovecock for making it possible. I'd also like to thank my past self who had saved the names of the cars I drew in the first round 😂. The concept for this picture was "what is the next step after fake manga" (drawing done for Smells like Teen Spirit) and it became "fake anime adaptation." At first I thought I'd do some fake anime screencap drawings (if I had more time, the bath tub scene was high on the list), but it turned into a poster instead. In the prequel, Bastien and Ben were scowling at each other on the cover. Since their relationship has progressed, I wanted them to be physically closer and share a friendly rival-like smile. I wanted to sneak in Bastien's little pony tail.
>
> H.P. mentioned vapourwave aesthetic so I tried to run with that vibe. I've never drawn anything in that aesthetic before 🤪 but I listen to music inspired that vibe. This is one of the most elaborate things I've put together in a while (so many shinies, glows, dodge effects, blurs, etc.), maybe since my end goal was to make something like those epic anime movie posters with lush backgrounds. At some point I went and counted the rows

of windows of tall buildings in the east Melbourne skyline. I was concerned that someone from Melbourne might see this pic and say it doesn't look like the Melbourne skyline...! Then I realized I was going to cover it in dark colours anyway. There were many technical elements that have been fudged...please don't look too closely.

So many fake logos, everywhere, that I didn't think I'd have to draw again. No surface left unscathed. I couldn't find a typeface that did what I wanted it to, so I ended up writing/drawing the text by hand.

He who Bleeds, by Shrimp King

never love someone who could love someone like me, by shukyou

I had considered writing this story for other issues, but I ran into a problem: Haley and Bailey. I knew I had to either leave them out of the story (which I didn't want to do), or burn a lot of time explaining Reincarnates (which I didn't have room to do except for maybe a December issue), or include them but treat them like they're not Reincarnates (which would make them not make a lot of sense). So watch me exploit my own sequels-permitted idea and trust you already know what their whole deal is! I also like getting to have that little bit of the two of them interacting when they're not being incredible bitches to one another.

The title is from The Moth & the Flame's "Empire & the Sun," which you can listen to on my WenZhou playlist (which I listened to repeatedly while writing this). You don't have to know anything about the source material -- it's just good music!

There are a number of discrepancies between how Winnie and Jo told the story in soulmates are stupid and how it actually worked out here. A lot of them can be chalked up the gap between something that happens to you at eighteen and how you remember it at thirty-one, but the big problem is that Winnie says their eighth anniversary is coming up, and that number is just not right. Pretend she said thirteen.

Issue 108 cover, by Viy Sitante

Hooray, cover time! My first cover for SSBB and…it sure is a cover! (I should play the lottery now for how many times I've mentioned that word.)

I wanted this cover to be more metaphorical than literal, since it was the first time SSBB was doing this sort of theme in its long and varied history. So I had about two cover ideas where the

concept of "Another Round" alluded to: how does a person "rerun" their lives? How do you relive experiences again?

Then I had about two other cover ideas that were more literal, in case the ones above didn't pass muster! Both involved bars and drinking, which shouldn't surprise anyone I suppose.

The final cover was one of the more complicated layouts however and as someone who cannot curb their ambition enough to learn well, when given the greenlight to try this option and another out, I took this one. It's part of the Viy brand to hit above the paygrade--but hey, I had good reasons! I thought emulating Futurism, where many paintings and other works dealt with the visuals of speed, would work here. After all, the representation of speed wasn't literal but a feeling, and that's what I wanted to showcase. Here were some of the ones I had in mind: Planet Mercury passing in front of the Sun, Futuristic woman, Speeding Car (study) Abstract Speed.

As I wrote to Editor: *"The spirals are meant to represent another facet of "Another Round," meaning here another round of affection with different parts each time!"*

Past me believed in me more lol. This cover went through two versions, where the spirals were kinda in place, with each head inside each spiral split, per se. But it looked too busy (and not the Futurist busy kind), so I returned to the halfway bit (the multiple different kissing heads) and decided to rework it instead by making it multiple different people all going for "another round"--and also make it, well, Gayer In Your Face. Not my intention (yes, shocking for *this* magazine) but certainly easier and perhaps even viable for each viewer to make up their own stories about each character shown on the cover, since the colors here are directly taken from the original Pride Flag by Gilbert Baker. With the exception of one, and I do hope you notice!

There's about two characters that are also meant to be fantastical, though you can also find any of these in fantastical situations. I suppose I should say *more* fantastical, but basically I also wanted to make sure to give shout-outs to fantasy and/or sci-fi genres.

Now, *why* do you think there are *two* people at the end of this round, though? Are they two different people? The same? One's just dead and the other's alive? Hmmmm, so many questions arise…

Also, on the design side: *really* happy with how the logo and info bar worked out. I wanted the info bar to allude to fancy magazines that were still indie, maybe like a 1960s vibe. The logo's font is Universum, which is one of my favorite fonts that I have *never* been able to use until now. Mainly because as you can tell, it can get really busy if you're not careful. It worked here because of layout planning reasons. This is why you draft, kids! I still had to edit some of the letters, because they could be read "wrong", mainly the T, (second and third) S, and U. I think it works very nicely, though choosing a color for it proved tough. Went with classic black, because it was the only way it was readable against the background. (This is why you should also draft in color before you make the thing, kids…)

Hope you enjoy the cover!

These are the creators' notes for Issue 107: Yes, Chef

Everything's Easy, by Domashita Romero

A story about being a regular at a place, having a crush on the chef who runs it, and then what happens when you run into him outside of his restaurant. Spoilers: it's sexy!!

A Lick of Sense, by Cowboy Rider

A bratty student pushes his professor too far one too many times, and earns himself some… unconventional one-on-one tutoring.

Content warning for mildly dubious consent, student/teacher relationships, impractical sexual positions, and trans femboys

I told someone once that asking yourself, “How is *that* sexy?” is basically just a free submission idea, and so that's what I did for this issue. And then I realized I know entirely nothing about cooking and also it was not so long ago that I swore off contemporary settings, so he's a magical chef making potions. Thanks as always to W2 for being an awesome editor and being right even when I don't fix stuff, but an extra big ups because I dragged over the finish line with this one, and she was very accommodating.

some you bend and some you break, by zerodignity

An attempt to write some very soft and cozy D/s dynamics, consent negotiation, obedience, and praise kink between two older men. I think I was going for utopian rustic sexual fantasy with enough cracks in its hermetically sealed little cabin-in-the-woods setting to let reality in. Sappy romance with a hint of angst, because I don't know how to write anything else. Breakfast foods with a dash of prison abolition, because those are my favorites.

He who Follows, by Shrimp King

Recommended listening: my body is a cage by monarchy.

First real attempt at writing in about ten years, I'm so glad to be connected to such creative people who are writing such incredible works. Reincarnation, polyamory, and a bitter little chef man are all the main ingredients this time around.

Ideal Pairing, by shukyou

A small plate this time.

All the Flavors in Neapolitan Ice Cream are Delicious, by Kit Miller

We first met Matt in Even Vanilla is an Achievement For Some People. In this one, I'm exploring the different kinds of relationship he has.
I struggled with this one. The issue theme is only vaguely alluded to (mostly because I completely overlooked the D/s aspect of the prompt and only realised it was there when it was too late), and I had to do some heavy editing to mould it into something I didn't dislike, which the editor kindly and correctly nudged me towards. Many thanks again for the nudging!

Comedy Tonight, by Iron Eater

Working in television isn't all it's cracked up to be, but Howie, one of the hardest-working felt-folk at the network, tries to make do anyway. He and Reuben, the host of the show Howie produces, are convinced they've got a solid idea for bringing the joys of cooking to the TV-watching public at large in ways completely unexpected for the channel. The problem is whether or not the suits agree.

Did I spend a surprising amount of time studying period mid-70s broadcast television to nail the vibe of this, including watching old programs and looking up how camera equipment worked? Did I said old programs include *Galloping Gourmet* reruns to contrast with the show in the story? Yes and yes. You give me an excuse to research something for fun, I'm almost certainly going to take it.

This issue was originally going to get a completely different story, but inspiration for this one struck me like a bolt from the blue, so now everyone has to deal with size differences and Sexual Not-Quite-Muppets. What can I say, I like drawing them. Howie's design is informed by typical unspecified monster puppets (he's not anything more specific than a goat-cat-squirrel sort of thing), whereas Reuben is explicitly meant to evoke a walk-around costume with a performer's gloved hands able to perform feats of manual dexterity, such as piano playing. It's safe to assume Howie's paws work on Powerpuff Girls logic when he's not directly thinking about doing anything involved with them: stuff just sticks to 'em as much as it needs to.

I don't write FWB pairings too often. Pretty pleased with how this one turned out!

All illustrations were created using Clip Studio Paint EX 2.0. I stylized that camera (most heavily referenced from old footage of the BBC children's program *Magpie*) to hell and back and it still took me ages to do.

Things to Call Your Dom That Aren't Daddy or Sir, by the Winter Cynic

Hilariously there was a reel that started off exactly like this, and top of the list was "chef." The actual piece doesn't feature chefs, sadly.

I was possessed with the idea of a dom stepping on his sub and pouring wine all over him. Does it remind me of other fluids? Yes, but there's nothing quite like being super careless with expensive things.

The concept story is: two maitre ds are caught in a fierce rivalry. The dom is from the chef's older, more classic, restaurant that consistently pulls in the uppercrust crowd. The sub is from the chef's new, modern restaurant that is now the talk of the town and is blowing up all over social media.

They hate each other. They will most assuredly fuck on one of the tables, maybe the kitchen too.

Issue 107 cover, by melanofly

The idea stemmed from watching too many competitive chef competitions, where you hear a lot of the competing chefs say “yes chef” to the judging chef(s). I thought this could be some sort of after-hours training for a pastry chef mastery certification, where the examinee finally gets to say “yes, chef” BUT in a different way…? Insert cream visuals. I tried to tow that line between how to make this illo clearly very homoerotic and implying something NSFW without being overtly NSFW because of the possibility of publishing stuff on other platforms. Is it Smashwords-appropriate??? I guess we’ll find out…

These are the creators' notes for Issue 106: Theme Free

Kramping, His Style, by Cattus Politterarum

"I'll just dash off a bit of fluff about Krampus topping Santa," I thought, and then it went off the rails immediately. CW for mentions of bullying, abuse, poverty, war, death. And, more cheerily, odd body parts, mild D/s (switchy), impact play, oral sex, anal sex.
Merry Christmas to all (whether or not you celebrate it) and to all a good night!
— C. Politterarum

The Lemon House, by Etienne Telling

Short slip of a story about a submissive in a d/s verse going through it's day. Contains religious kink, neopronoun havers fucking, a variety of genital configurations, intense bdsm, semi public sex, punishment, orgasm denial, and fisting.

How Soon is Now?, by Viy Sitante

Let's get those TWs out of the way first: exchange (or extortion? HAHA), pregnancy and childbirth talk, mentions of miscarriage, body and gender dysphoria, too much swearing, about one slur dollar and a "slurry" cent (thanks, Max) and exactly one non-derogatory use of the word *transsexual* (thanks, Magnus). Oh, and I'd say dubcon somnophilia, except it's also not quite somnophilia maybe, ehhhhh, all these -philias are hard.

(Hopefully I got all of them lol)

MERRY CHRISTMAS, HERE'S A DISASTER SEQUEL. Featuring Magnus and Max from my Anathemaphilia story earlier this year. This one is a little later in the "timeline", as it were.

I originally didn't write *How Soon is Now?* for SSBB–half of it had been written so far before it occurred to me to submit–but I thought, oh it'd be funny to submit somewhat of a Christmas story to this issue. Now, I didn't plan this to be as long as it turned out–I was actually challenging myself to write a much, much shorter story! Naturally, I failed. But I really like some of the stuff I wrote here, especially Max's thoughts on himself. I'd like to hope that those are the parts that get the reaction I'd like to see, but you never know. Expect the worst, don't hope for the best. (Wow, who am I, Max?!)

Thanks to Suzuran for the proofread! I did this story half-asleep (it's been a year and a month), so I appreciate the help :)

ONE THOUSAND HOURS LATER: I can't believe I forgot to thank melanofly for the AMAZING ART AAHHHHHH. My face still is stuck as a grin. Thank you!!

Title comes from How Soon is Now by The Smiths (and if you're of a certain age, here's the t.A.T.u. cover)

> ### Illustration notes for "How Soon is Now"
>
> It's my first time illustrating for a story that has comic origins, so it was a treat to dig back into character profiles, past illustration/comics/stories, etc. to get to know these characters. I wanted to match up with Viy Sitante's artwork where I could, so I kept the b/w hatched look for the illos. For the first illo, you can mainly see Magnus's face, so I knew I wanted to show Max's face in the 2nd illo. I know some artists like to draw THE ACTION shots but I tend to focus more on facial expressions 😂. For this particular set of illos, the main challenge was figuring out how to best depict Max's body given where he's at in this story. How big booba? R u hairy? Etc. since some of those visual details wouldn't/shouldn't be vividly described in writing. There was a funny point where the author thought Max was wearing pants in the 2nd illo and then I was like "oh no, this is just my bad hatching job, sry lemme fix that" hahaha. I can tell that these characters are very precious to Viy Sitante so it is an honour that I was able to draw them for your story 💖. I look forward to their future comics, and really wonder why Magnus drops so much French haha. The part that hit me the most in the story was (I will poorly paraphrase here) when Max was conflicted between being succumbing to romance and being stronger/manly. Big gender feels.

And I Give Myself Away, by Arbitrary Delight

Hart and Evil got engaged! I'm happy for them.

Like Hart says, I'm sure their life will be so easy from now on. They probably have a small wedding (while struggling to fill the guest list), then honeymoon in some beach resort (where Evil discovers the joys of fishing).

Antivenin, by shukyou

Sure, there are consent issues, but if a bunch of what are essentially Bond villains can't have a slightly dubcon-fueled threesome, I don't know who can.

Damnatio Memoriae, by Iron Eater

Content Warning: This story contains body horror, violence, mentions of gore and animal harm (neither explicitly depicted), medical issues (including injection and meal tracking), loss of

self, and extremely complicated family issues up to and including estrangement. Reader discretion is advised.

Hugh and Mr. Ward have been sent to the countryside to investigate some ongoing trouble at the manor house of one of the society's benefactors. That the benefactors are the Wainwright family, none of whom have seen Hugh for years and many of whom still blame him for the reason he was sent to the society in the first place, only makes things more complicated.

Here it is, the first jumbo-sized Ward and Wainwright story ever penned; since putting my usual December subjects out to pasture with 2022's *Unearthed Substratum*, I really wanted to make this one count. I had a great deal of fun with trading off POVs with this one! Mr. Ward's particular limitations make for an interesting contrast with Hugh's chapters—one will note that, much like his time in the spotlight back in *Leo Equum Domitor*, the reader doesn't have a direct line to Mr. Ward's thoughts, feelings, or sensory feedback that couldn't be picked up by a camera on a tripod—and having obvious narrative breaks actually made scripting this beast a lot easier.

I am forever grateful to my past self for writing out what was actually happening at any given time with notes on what bits might make for a good mystery. Mystery stories with supernatural elements are a tricky thing if one hasn't laid out reliable guidelines for the weirdness; as I prefer to keep what all a "practitioner" can do on the vague side, to say nothing of Hugh's own abilities and limitations, I tried to keep as much in the realm of what a first-time reader might be able to figure out as possible.

Some parts of this story have existed for multiple actual years, and the second chapel scene was written around the idea I had for its illustration. The whole of the process was one long string of remembering smaller details and bringing them back in later in a more significant, or at least satisfying, manner. Infinite gratitude to sparklebeard for reading this *entire* thing twice through before leaving me feedback, as without his aid we'd have a real mess on our hands.

Once again this thing is stuffed with references to whatever I felt like at the time! The most significant, I feel, are the adaptation of Beast in Black's *Crazy Mad Insane* for a big chunk of the last dinner scene, a riff on Robert Browning's *Andrea del Sarto*, and wholeheartedly ripping off the "natural causes" joke from the questionable-but-fascinating gory 90s point-and-click title *Harvester*. I also included some bits from Jason Charles Miller's *Rules of Nature* in a pivotal scene because I am a menace and must be stopped. This is also some of the most blatant game-mechanics-as-narrative-devices content the Ward and Wainwright series has seen since its very first entry; I figured it was about time to bring those back, especially since *Dentes Sub Corium* had Hugh essentially display his boss meter to someone as a form of intimidation. As always, nobody here is aware of the presence or absence of numbers behind the curtain.

All illustrations were created using Clip Studio Paint EX 2.0. Hugh is probably a little too hunky-looking for a man regularly compared to a piece of living beef jerky, but I think we'll be okay with that.

Issue 106 cover, by visceralhit

These are the creators' notes for Issue 105: Skin Deep

In the Playroom, with the Reanimated Couple, by Cattus Politterarum

Hi, I'm new here, thanks for inviting me to your sandbox. There will eventually be more to Bobby and Lucas's story, with more classic monsters of filmland. Probably for Halloween 2024, unless I decide to make it a Walpurgisnacht thing.
I tried to write a novella with only guy-guy action and someone who identifies as a woman still made it into the story, totes my brand, #sorrynotsorry. My brand is also people getting nudged out of their comfort zone, but staying shy of "dubcon." I'm guessing we don't need CW for buttstuff hereabouts? There is butt stuff.

Weighed and Wanting, by Togi Kayako

Despite the issue, this one's pretty light fare unless banging an eldritch horror is a dealbreaker for you. We've got a spooky side dimension, some bargaining with unknowable powers, one tipsy and irreverant protagonist, and a nice little F/F?/NB threesome.

Mostly I'm just happy it's a finished story. I started it for last Halloween, and only came back to it this year after two other stories I started for this issue refused to cooperate. Really hoping that next year stops producing two extra projects for everyone one I finish! Thank you to my beloved beta reader, and W2 for both extra time and some solid suggestions as usual.

Fun bonus fact that didn't make it into the story: Martinet named themself after the type of small whip/flogger, probably from an early kink experience. Originally they were going to be carrying one themself, but with the way the story wound up there really was no reason for them to have it.

Imagine travelling so far, by Hyakunichisou 13

The gravestone in this story was inspired by the puzzle tombstone designed by Dr. Samuel Bean in Rushes Cemetery, Wellesley, Ontario, which you can read about here:
https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/bean-puzzle-tombstone

Over My Dead Body, by shukyou

Not *not* inspired by *Swiss Army Man*.

The Knight, The Dragon, and The Princess, by Shallow Grave

Content warning for the violent and the grotesque, but tis the season… I wrote the first draft of this years ago and then hid the notebook away, so big thanks to Suzuran for all their help getting it into sharing shape!

If We Shadows Have Offended, by stills

Things have been so busy that I wasn't planning on writing anything but I managed to whip something out over the weekend. Can you tell what mid century gothic novelist I have been reading? Content warning for garden variety misogyny and dubcon.
Huge thanks to my wonderful girlfriend spitkitten for being a magnificent editor and introducing the theme of carnivale, and W2 for being supportive yet flexible.

a ghost without a soul, by Viy Sitante

CONTENT WARNINGS OUT THE WAZOO!

I'm being serious, please be advised for the following: *religious mentions and imagery, MC's usage of religious metaphor and simile that may go too far into the erotic, grooming, homeschooling environment, repression turning into education, gender thoughts and questions, misogynistic language, too many sex scenes, possible noncon, mommy kink turned actual incest, oh no–and uhh body control, body horror, xenophilia, and many allusions or homages to Spanish-language literature and American media if you can catch them.*

Yes, that's a lot of warnings. I didn't think I'd need so many, to be fair…And of course, because that seems to be a pattern with me, this is a very long story. Sorry. Title comes from one of the lines in the song Heard Somebody Cry by Oingo Boingo.

Honestly this story came out when I was asking myself about my own limits as a creator. There are lots of tropes or ideas that squick me out and I generally refuse to either engage creatively with them or avoid them all together both in the consuming and creating parts. One of those limits was incest. Then I was listening to some podcast, I can't even remember because I came up with this *back in April I think?* And started to write it then and there since I had the plot bunny, as we used to say, when thinking about how depraved you'd have to be to commit incest with your younger relatives. (Ironically the podcast was not about that. I think it was about Hollywood stories…)

That's the loophole I found myself engaging in: I can write about incest if I can try to weave a story where I personally don't have to feel like taking a shower afterwards. If I can wrangle

something out of it where the whole point isn't the incest, it's *everything else*. The story quickly became one of revenge very easily as a result, and the (unfortunately) very real idea that sometimes, there are just people willing to hurt you so long as their need for personal vengeance is satisfied. In this case, it was someone who had enough and decided to use an innocent who has no clue what's going on, and never will.

Our main character Clarinda: a naive soul called by some, a fool called by others. (Twitter would probably hate her lol.) That's the other thing too: I wanted to write a true believer. I wanted to write someone who you had to feel bad for in different ways. For example, if you can't grok with her being religious, (very fair) do you think that still means she deserves to be taken further for a fool? If you think she's too much of a fool, is that because of something innate or something nurtured? Is it entirely possible to be a Clarinda in today's world, or ever, whether secular or religious? Would you see the humanity in her? Could you see the humanity in Bárbara?

Would you be willing to take revenge that far?

I often liked the stories from 50s-60s science-fiction where there's a plot twist alongside the heady stuff, so this story was my attempt at that. I'd like to think that based on Editor's help and comments, I must have succeeded with *them* at least!

The real cause of the Zanclean flood, by Someone Else

I am not a geologist; apologies for any errors. This was in fact inspired by the theme and indirectly by some conversation on the discord. Thanks to Suzuran and our editor too.

Angel, by Cowboy Rider

Content warning for noncon, kidnapping, implied human (ish) trafficking, and a non-HEA unless you squint and tilt your head just so.
This was inspired by a conversation with my beloved mutual cowboyhorsegirl. It's just a short little bite which is not my forte, but I sort of accidentally started renovating my house and was short on time. Anyway, what if you were an angel tasked with enduring all of the despair of humanity but mean ole humans trapped you and forced you to have a bunch of sex instead? Definitely doesn't say anything about my current mental state, don't even worry about it.

for as long as the light does not reach us, by zerodignity

This is less horror, I think, than a cosmic horror-flavored queer and genderqueer power fantasy. But hopefully the mood fits anyway.

Features/bugs/content notes:

- unlikable protagonist
- loosely defined 19th-century setting
- bodily transformation and mild body horror
- a mix of explicit consent and dream-logic ambiguous consent
- elements of voyeurism and exhibitionism
- internalized homophobia and repression

And, some more spoilery notes:

- sleep paralysis
- tentacles, plant imagery, xenobiology, ambiguous genitalia… that sort of thing
- lots of bodily fluids, like arguably too many
- monsterfucking from the monster's POV

Honest Work, by juou no zan

If some elements of this setting seem familiar, that's because this is set in the same world as Bending the Knee and Cultural Contact! I set up enough interesting cultural conflict that I couldn't stop thinking about what it would be like for the first couple of Deshnadians to get into farming. And also all the good, good mess that comes from a homophobic society suddenly having a bunch of openly queer people in it who are absolutely not safe to hate crime.

I cut out a lot of farming and worldbuilding when I realized we might need some extra relationship building to get Tillon from "aggressively uncommunicative tsundere" to "actual boyfriend material". I didn't even get to explain the potato berries...BUT I did get to explain a little bit of why the Deshnad came to Kepprala, which never quite fit into the arc of King Lorrit and Lord Nateno's relationship, so there's that. Maybe in another three years I'll have a story about some tangentially related gays that will talk about the weird botanical shit.

I don't remember at what point I decided Tillon was not only going to be grumpy but outright tsundere and uncommunicative, but boy did that turn into the whole damn story. At one point I was stuck trying to figure out his reaction to something, and wrote several thousand words of his POV to figure it out. Then I waffled a little bit about if this was a time when showing both sides of the romance was warranted. Obviously, I decided it works better with just Haran's side of things,

but figuring out why Tillon is the way he is was super helpful and made the end of Honest Work easier to write.

I do still have a whole file of things I wrote and then looked back at later and went, "He would not fucking say that." Is Haran ready to have an open and honest conversation about a relationship? Sure. Is Tillon? Lmao. Will Tillon *ever* be ready to have an open and honest conversation about their relationship? Define both "open" and "honest".

I ended up using a similar approach for "can Tillon talk about this?" as I did for Chenillin's language learning in Ve Cherinitat, except instead of "Can I say this in Spanish/How would I say this in Spanish?" it became "How difficult/excruciating would it be to talk about this with anyone other than my wife?" If the thought of talking about it myself gave me any pause at all, that was a no for Tillon, except in tortured, indirect ways.

Anyway this is the only time I've set myself something of a writing challenge and ended up needing to talk about the process in therapy, so. Thanks, Tillon the tsundere farmer for the uncomfortable self-realization?

Mother's Daughter, by Suzuran

First: content warning for consensual but graphic body modification. This goes for the illustration as well.

Second: hoo boy was this piece stubborn. I came up with the concept specifically as an excuse to drag Luskhuu into the SSBB fold as my illustrator, but that meant I didn't really know what the story was about until halfway through my first draft (and about four days from the deadline). Note to self: figure out what you're writing about before you try to write it. Huge thanks to W2 for allowing me the time to finish whipping it into shape.

One of these days, I promise, I will write a story for SSBB that does not involve some form of Mommy/Daddy kink. Not today, but someday.

Sour Grapes, by Arbitrary Delight

The real horror here is Niagara Falls (I'm kidding, I'm kidding!). This is my first submission to SSBB, so I'll be glad if you enjoy the torrid tale of corporate drama. I ended up making references for the characters because they're my meowmeows: Hart, Evil.

By the way, Hart's last name is never mentioned in the story but it's Lovelace.

Jolene, Jolene, by Iron Eater

Content Warning: This story contains intense body horror elements (and internalized period-appropriate homophobia) and was partially approached as an attempt to squick the editor, which was apparently successful. Reader discretion is advised.

Molly just wants the best for Robert, whose unique needs necessitate a live-in caretaker, so of course she's concerned when he starts getting threatening phone calls. The problem is that it's more than just the calls. It's so much worse.

I've been sitting on this title for a literal year or so, ever since this year's themes were announced, and while it changed shape (and time periods) multiple times, to say nothing of constant health problems bedeviling me come the tail end of September, I'm very pleased with the results. Enormous thanks as always to sparklebeard, who has a knack for finding small details that, once addressed, yield a far stronger story in the end. He's also the kind of person I can ask questions like "is this scary enough?" or "how can I make this grosser without being gratuitous?" and expect answers. Reliable betas are worth their weight in gold.

I knew I wanted this to be F/F because I so rarely write such pairings, and as mentioned above I wanted to see if I could make a horror aficionado go "ew" at my work in a sincere and well-earned manner. One trashed draft of the plot involved the conceit of "what if someone claiming to have Morgellon's wasn't just reacting to groupthink medical delusions?"; had to drop that one because the phenomenon wasn't really a thing until the aughts, as I decided later that this was going to be set in the mid-to-late nineties, and verisimilitude is *important* in one's sapphic nightmare fiction. The plentiful references to fibers are the legacy of this idea.

Jolene's koi fish chat avatar is a throwback to when I was playing around with the idea of catfishing, and two different people misrepresenting themselves to each other on a private community; *that* one I dumped because I wanted there to be a physical sexual encounter, and I didn't like how wimpy my lead was turning out to be. Molly's not the most proactive person on the planet but at least she knows when to saddle up and get things done! If anyone is wondering why Jolene made her own Comic Chat program sans Jim Woodring's art, talk to more programmers; anyone in a sufficiently unsatisfying tech job is going to use their skills to Tinker, and if she can terrorize people to drown out her own self-loathing, all the better.

This story technically includes tentacles, but I've opted not to explicitly warn for them above since they are *not* going to be the kind the typical tentacle enthusiast would want. "What would a non-penetrative, non-bondage-themed use of this anatomy be?" is always a fun challenge for myself! Molly's whole deal only revealed itself to me over time; giving her a name and mannerisms that read as demurely feminine simply made sense even before I knew for certain she was a Thing In The Walls.

For those curious, Robert is sort of a flesh golem Molly made since he "wanted to exist" (no further clarification available on this one), Molly is not a unique species, and I'd consider this one a happily-ever-after in spite of everything. Probably.

Brie-zy Costume, by Norowareta Chiizu

A monster gal encourages her girlfriend to explore her many holes.

Three days ago I was suddenly possessed by the spirit of creativity, who inexplicably screeched "THOU SHALT DRAW THE CH●●S●!!!"
I was not sure if that meant **chests**? **Chassé** dance? **Cheese**? So I have depicted partygoers in seasonal, thorax-revealing costumes.

Heavily inspired by Caravaggio and many other things *formaggio*. The "mouse" outfit is from Mean Girls.

Issue 105 cover, by cloven

These are the creators' notes for Issue 104: Barely Legal

A World Made Up of Silver and Copper, by shukyou

The King of Spain never rushes.

Nothing But An Unassuming Valet, by Kit Miller

I invented these characters and the setting quite some time ago, but had only dabbled around with them, writing little more than snippets. I thought they would be quite the good fit for S2B2 and gave them a dust-off. Originally, I had intended the criminal element in this story to be the fact that homosexuality itself was illegal at the time. But this, I decided, was way too depressing and would just not do! I then wondered what other laws these two could be breaking. I wanted them to still remain unquestionably heroic, so my mind turned to Robin Hood; and from there, to the repatriation of colonial loot. And hey presto!

It was important to me to make clear that despite the power imbalance inherent in their master-servant relationship, Jonathan has quite a bit of power in his own right and is on equal footing with David. He may be inferior to David as his servant, but in the organisation, Jonathan is firmly in charge, and on an interpersonal level, they are equals.

The hierarchy of domestic servants in old aristocratic houses is complicated and I probably got it wrong somewhere. I also probably got the forms of address of the various aristocratic guests wrong; in fact, I'm sure I did. But, in contrast to my usual approach to writing historical fiction — which is to obsessively research every minor thing — I decided not to sweat the details with this one as much and focussed instead on having fun (not that my research rabbit holes aren't fun, of course).

For example, the idea that a servant would be ignored or overlooked in investigations into major theft is not based on a shred of truth. It is much rather inspired by classic crime and detective novels à la Doyle and Christie, in which the butler most certainly never did it; domestic staff and servants are usually ignored or glossed over. In reality, Jonathan would probably have been found out the first time he ever nicked a colonial artefact.

David and Jonathan are, of course, named after the biblical figures, but don't read too much into it; when I come up with new characters, I usually give them placeholder names, which often are some kind of reference to the characters' respective roles in the story until I come up with better ones. This time, though, I'm afraid the placeholders stuck. It then amused me to give the rest of the Prevost estate names derived from the Old Testament, as well; but the names are all I took.

The county 'Spokehamshire,' and the county-town 'Spokeham' I invented; I imagine Spokehamshire to be located somewhere between present-day Warwickshire and Northamptonshire. The 'Spoke' part comes from Swedish "spöke" meaning ghost (i.e. it does

not exist, it is insubstantial, not real). I chose Swedish because of the long history of Scandinavian/Norse place names in the British Isles. Also, the word “spöke” is fun to say.

Since we are celebrating Shousetsu's eighteenth birthday, I peppered that number around the story; even the fact that Jonathan meets his co-conspirators at six pm counts, as six pm in the twenty-four hour format is 18.

Some historical trivia: the Ethiopian cross is mentioned to have been stolen in 1868, which was when the British Empire sent a group of soldiers on a roaring rampage of revenge to Abyssinia, which turned out so destructive and vindictive even contemporary commentators were appalled. Ethiopian crosses are beautiful, by the way, you should look them up.

The name Featherstonehaugh is pronounced Fenshaw. Yes, really!

If you want to read an (extremely) comprehensive Victorian guide on domestic staff and household management, here's one at project Gutenberg.

I plan to return to these characters in the future — I've already got more plot bunnies than I can contain!

The Very Hungry Incubus, by EmboSnoodler

A cock-hungry Incubus proves that nothing is stronger than the power of come.

Make It Worse, by Suzuran

Ahhh, it's good to be back!

I've been meaning to take on a new pseudonym and get back into writing for SSBB for ages. When the one-week-to-deadline warning went up, and I was reminded of the theme for this issue, I realized I couldn't *not* write anything for it, so I sat down and composed the quickest & easiest sex scene I could think of: sexting. It took me about 26 hours. (The only reason it took so long was because I had to think of a title before I could submit it.) (And also sleep.)

I had a ton of fun writing the first version, and then even more fun going back and editing it into the version you'll be reading here. Massive thanks to W2 for giving me the guidance and space to play with it, and to melanofly for the gorgeous illustration! It's exactly what the story wanted and I'm a little in love with it.

I redid the timestamps on the whole thing about three times. Turns out a minute is simultaneously way shorter and *way longer* than I think it is. Gotta love time blindness!

Huge thanks also to all the lovely folks in the S2B2 Discord, and everyone who's dedicating their time to keeping the whole project running. You're all beautiful, beautiful people and I appreciate you.

And thanks to you, the readers! I hope you all enjoy reading this self-indulgent bit of filth as much as I enjoyed writing it, and I hope you're as excited as I am to see what I come up with next. With any luck, it'll be even better and more self-indulgent than this one!

Oh — and happy birthday, Shousetsu Bang*Bang! Here's to many more years of good, dirty fun 💖

Cheers,
—Suzuran

Artist notes by melanofly

> When Suzuran asked for a "tit" pic I have to admit that the first thing that came to mind was the bird. Was I looking at birds that day, or is my brain just not in the zone? I felt that Suzuran nailed the different voices and dynamic of the two in the story. Since the story was text message dialogue, the details about the environment and characters weren't explicitly described—but luckily we had time to chat through what sort of photo this would be, based on Cameron's character and intentions (which goes much deeper than what is visible in the story)! Suzuran also mentioned liking texture and something artsy, so I kept the illustration looser, but still tried to incorporate low lighting selfie photo look. It feels deceptively simple but the camera angle ended up mattering a lot to believability.

Smells Like Teen Spirit, by H.P. Lovecock

Formula One is its own weird and wonderful little world, a high drama, high octane, highly capitalist microcosm of celebrity, wealth, sport, politics, and technological dynasties. You don't need to be a fan to enjoy this story, set in a fictionalized F1 world, but I've included a glossary below of common terms you'll find in the story for quick reference. If this story has at all piqued your interest, I would highly recommend *Formula 1: Drive to Survive* on Netflix! It's basically a very long and expensive trailer for F1, and how I got into it over the pandemic, now I'm obsessed. It's also basically a sports anime in documentary format.

This is actually a kind of sequel-prequel for a finished larger project I'm currently (unsuccessfully) querying around. The larger project is a globe-trotting young/new adult queer romance set in the circuits and pit lanes of Formula One. The premise is basically: "What if the most famous driver of all time had a queer son in his F1 rookie season?" The story follows (almost) 18-year-old Brazilian-Canadian driver Izzy Gauthier on his disaster gay tour around the world starting mid-season in the 2024 world championship as he falls for his championship rival. Izzy even makes a little cameo in "Smells Like Teen Spirit"! All that to say, I've been itching to return to my little F1 world. I always have narrative character playlists--my playlist for Izzy is…

currently 17 hours and 12 minutes, and counting--its a fun tool to get into a character's head, and helps track the emotional beats. So needless to say I made one for Bastien, and it's been really fun to dig into my dormant love of classic rock and Nirvana to get into his headspace. If you follow along closely there's little guideposts to the emotional trajectory of the story! *Na na na na nana nanananananananana!*

Last thing, I just can't say how much I adore melanofly's art for this. I pitched a "BL manga-style cover," as is my way--I just wanted to see their take on the boys in their race suits--and they absolutely went above and beyond. I may be a little biased but, F1 or no, I would grab the hell out of this as a BL manga. I absolutely fell in love with these two boys, especially Bastien, so here's looking forward to writing volume 2!

GLOSSARY

car setup - Adjustments made to teams' cars over the race weekend to maximize aerodynamics and drivability. This can include (but is certainly not limited to) front and back wing adjustment, tyre cambering (the angle that tyres touch the track), suspension, overall downforce, car software setups, and so on and so forth.

Constructors' Championship - Determined by the combined points of the two drivers for each team, the Constructors' Championship celebrates the efforts of the entire F1 team, with financial rewards distributed from a pot to each team based on their standing in the championship at the end of the season. Higher winnings can mean investments in each team, contractual bonuses to team members, improvements in car development and design… and employment! So teams are incentivized to remain competitive.

downforce - The finely tuned downward force exerted on a car caused by its speed and aerodynamics, the way air is designed to flow over and through the exterior that pushes the car down onto the track and allows them to cut through the air at such high speeds. A commonly touted fact is that F1 cars have so much downforce that they could drive upside down in a tunnel at top speed.

Drag Reduction System (DRS) - Driver adjustable bodywork that reduces aerodynamic drag to increase top speed, in F1 the DRS is an adjustable back wing. Each track has DRS Zones where cars are allowed to open their wings. This is at will during Free Practice and Qualifying sessions when DRS is enabled by race control, although during a race drivers are only allowed to use DRS when they're following behind the car in front of them by less than a second, enabled by DRS Detection points along the track. You'll see the cars' back wings flip open as they fly down straights when DRS is enabled. It's mega.

Formula One - The highest calibre of open-wheeled, single-seater racing in the world. Formula racing is governed by the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) and the "formula" refers to regulations and restrictions in car design, testing and spending set by the governing

body. A standard Formula One season consists of around twenty-two races or “grand prix” typically attended by ten teams, each team supporting two drivers.

Free Practice - Three 90-minute sessions that take place over race weekends, allowing drivers and teams to get a feel for and collect data about the track to make adjustments to car setup and prepare race day strategy.

Grand Prix - “Grand Prize”, referring to money awarded to teams at the end of every season based on their overall standing. Each individual race in the F1 season is titled a grand prix, eg. Bahrain Grand Prix, Grand Prix de Monaco Historique, etc.

grid - The starting formation for each race in Formula One made up of ten canted rows of cars, also used as shorthand for “on track” or “in a team’s seat.”

kerb - Curbs on the side of racing tracks that signify track limits, a safety feature that can also sometimes offer extra grip coming off of corners. Drivers will often talk about “hitting kerbs” coming out of a corner; important to get right, dangerous and damaging to get wrong.

overtake - Passing another car during the race. Overtakes can happen pretty much anywhere on the track, although there are safety regulations that can apply penalties or exclude cars for unsafe or unfair racing and overtakes.

Qualifying - An hour long session that takes place over three knockout rounds, Q1, Q2 and Q3 where drivers can go out onto the track at will and are trying to get their fastest time on the board. Five drivers are eliminated in each of the first two sessions, and the top ten starting positions are determined by Q3. This final tally determines track position at the start of the weekend’s race. The coveted “pole position” is awarded to the driver with the fastest time, and offers major advantages from the start of a race. Drivers usually take two passes at each session they qualify for, with an out lap to warm up the tyres, a hot or flying lap to put a time on the board, and then a cooldown lap before they come back into the pit lane to change tyres and prepare for the next run.

paddock - Typically an enclosure made up of a row of opulent motorhomes behind the garages that serve as each teams’ headquarters during race weekend, which includes a team mess, offices, conference rooms and hospitality facilities. During a number of “away” races, teams rely on auxiliary motorhomes or permanent facilities (like in Bahrain) to save the cost and environmental toll on shipping humongous motorhomes around the world. Delicious paddock fact: paddock position of the motorhomes is based on standing in the Constructors’ Championship, so winning teams have a shorter walk from the paddock entrance to their respective motorhomes.

pit box - A single rectangular section in front of each team’s garage where cars stop and mechanics change tyres, swap parts and make repairs during the race, or bring them into the

garage if needed. “Box, box” is often heard over team radio, the command for drivers to come into the pit lane, taken from the German “*boxenstopp*,” which means “pit stop.”

pit wall - A control centre wall across from each team's garage where the team principal, race engineers and strategists sit to coordinate each session. Large bank of radio control and computer monitors. Anxious monitoring of meteorological readouts for rain guaranteed.

race engineer - A race engineer is paired with each driver throughout their season, and is the driver’s point of contact during sessions by team radio. Race engineers take ownership of running the car and feed the driver car information, race status, strategy and more while they’re on track.

race weekend - Standard race weekend takes place over three days from Friday to Sunday, with two Free Practice sessions on Friday, a third on Saturday with Qualifying happening later, and the race taking place on Sunday. Other formats exist, such as “sprint race” weekends. For some reason the first Las Vegas Grand Prix is running from Thursday to Saturday… disturbing and cursed.

team principal - Simply, the boss of a F1 team, typically making wide ranging decisions over staffing, drivers, strategy, car design and setup, and so on and so forth, answering to sponsors and investors, representing the team in matters of official rulings and media. See: Toto Wolff vs. Christian Horner, or Best of Guenther Steiner

team radio - A channel open between the pit wall and drivers during sessions, team radio is open publicly, including broadcast media and other teams. While team radio is typically between drivers and their race engineers, team principals occasionally pop onto team radio for congratulations or commiserations.

track limits - Essentially, the boundary between the racing track and what is considered “out of bounds” detected by laser sensors. Repeated violations of track limits can be reviewed by track officials and lead to warnings, time penalties and lap time deletions. Universally cursed by drivers and teams alike.

tyre - F1 spelling for tires. They spell it with a “y”, because Europe. A range of tyre compounds exist and three compounds are designated for each track during “dry” sessions based on track conditions, soft, medium and hard compounds. Regulations state that teams must run two different compounds during the Sunday race. Intermediate and wet tyres are available during “wet” sessions.

World Drivers’ Championship - Determined by the driver with the most points at the end of each Formula One season. While teams are rewarded from Constructors’ standings, drivers are compensated with salaries and bonuses from teams, so the World Drivers’ Championship is a sport title, and allows the driver to take “1” as their car number in the next season. While pairs of

drivers are on the same team, they are often competing against each other for points, prestige and the World Drivers' Championship. That can get very juicy.

Artist notes by melanofly

H. P. is *very passionate* about F1 and I wanted to channel the same energy and enthusiasm into the cover. The cover was a mixed effort of illustration, branding, and design. I made up a lot of weird logos, including some shout-outs to our lovely SSBB 👌. I forgot how much advertising is on F1 gear. At some point I explored blending the design of Nirvana's single cover for Smells like Teen Spirit (the water waves, elongated serif type) but it clashed with the "masculine" and "cutting edge" design language typical to F1. Instead you'll see a small nod to Nirvana on Bastien's shirt. Then I thought to give Bastien the same guitar used by the band, but turns out that the handedness on Kurt Cobain's guitar was oriented differently from Bastien's 😅 so it ended up being **gestures vaguely** a Fender-inspired guitar.

I know nothing about F1 and cars, so I spent a lot of time doing visual research. I went down a rabbit hole trying to understand if racing kerb designs have visual perception science rationale tied to the relative ratio/sizes of red/white stripes. I couldn't find anything conclusive, so I just made it up 😂. I heard that red/white kerbs used to be very standard, but host sites began making kerb designs based on their city/district's colours. I considered incorporating Sakhir into the kerb designs on the cover, but decided that detail was perhaps too obscure to be visually identifiable as a "racing" thing for the common person.

Bastien's suit relies on more polygonal colour blocking, while Benji's incorporates more curves. The lighting is chaotic, but it's loosely based on bottom-light-source in the midst of car exhaust. IDK why I chose green—maybe because it's a colour that SMELLS? I feel *kinda* clever for turning a heart into a fake race track line.

All's Fair in Love and Taxes, by stills

This is satire, I know this is a stupid way to commit tax fraud.
Once upon a time Jeremy Irons said something hilarious and vaguely homophobic about gay marriage (I can't tell you what it is without spoiling the premise) and thus this story was born so it is slightly dedicated to him (enjoy, Jeremy!) but mostly dedicated to my wonderful girlfriend spitkitten, without whom this would never have existed (told me about Jeremy Irons) and whose brilliant assistance made this far more the comedy it was meant to be.
Contains medical peril (heart condition) among other things.

When Skies Are Gray, by Cowboy Rider

To Hone High and Low, by Greta Jia-Kang Cabrel

I’m forever committing crimes backwards. Including sketching things that don’t happen until after the story ends, such as this one.



(Or, what happens when the plotbunny hops in ten different directions and the illustrator forgets which one the author ended up wrassling into [cough] submission.)

So Much Hocus Pocus, by Sirenia

This is my first submission and I’m excited to participate!

I've always been intrigued by the world of Victorian music halls; the heroes of this story are a magician who accidentally makes the bad guy disappear and the soldier who's been inconvenienced by this development. From this, they work things out.

Thank you to Iron Eater for the lovely illustration as well as the valuable support. Thanks to my beta beautifulduckweed for helping me grow as a writer, and to the squad for the tireless brainstorming and encouragement. First step achieved.

illustrator's notes from Iron Eater:

I could not think of a good writing prompt for this issue for the life of me, so seeing someone looking for an artist to collab with was an absolute godsend. I haven't worked with another author since Shirozubon Saruko's *Polyeleos* back in 2020! Absolutely nobody is surprised that I leapt at the chance to draw handsome guys in nice clothing yet again. The experience was a fun one, from researching the outfits to putting together basic designs for both characters to drawing all those fussy little card suits by hand. And I got to make more title cards! Always a plus for me, those.

All images were created in Clip Studio Paint EX.

Ursa Minor, by spitkitten

Been a while since I've managed to get something original to the finish line: I'm very happy to be back and I hope everybody enjoys the result! In terms of warnings, it'll be pretty obvious early on who's going to be having sex 😌 Read it or don't! There's also some (1920s-typical?) bad parenting and some members of the British aristocracy (ew.).

I ran across this particular definition of bear-leading (no actual bears involved) in a Ngaio Marsh mystery and continued running from there. Other painfully apparent influences: Evelyn Waugh (especially *Decline and Fall* lol), EM Forster (especially *A Story of a Panic* and double especially *A Room With a View* — hello Fiesole), the *Raffles* stories, and a very small dash of Patricia Highsmith. They're all incomparably better than me but none of them have as high a cock-and-balls quotient so. Choose accordingly.

The painting Dickie is so heart-eyes over doesn't exist and certainly isn't at San Miniato, but is loosely inspired by Mattias Preti's St Bartholemhews and St Sebastians with a little bit of his Incredulity of Thomas and Caravaggio's Martyrdom of St Matthew thrown in. The other most notable antiquity mentioned is inspired by this little guy at the met: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/468469.

Thanks to the Editor for your sage advice and to anybody who takes the time to read. And finally: stills, my incredible gf. Thank you so much for all the cheerleading and support and inspiration 🥰🧸 I adore you, and so does Aloysius. This one's for you.

Issue 104 Cover, by Swedishjazz

These are the creators' notes for Issue 103: Off the Beaten Path

Miles and Miles of Ice and Snow, by Kit Miller

Every now and then, I get obsessive over certain topics. Like, cannot-think-of-anything-else obsessive. One of those obsessions is the 1925 serum run to Nome (also known as the Great Race of Mercy) in specific, and dog mushing and Alaska in general. Combine this with the prompt for this issue *et voilà*.

I did my absolute best to research as thoroughly as possible. However, in addition to taking some deliberate artistic licence (see below), I am almost certain that I have also made errors and inaccuracies without meaning to. For these, I apologise.

Dogs and dog mushing

A glossary of the most important dog mushing terms can be found here.

Most of this work is inspired by the serum run and the people who participated in it. A great book on the serum run and its historical and cultural context is *The Cruellest Miles* by Gay Salisbury and Laney Salisbury. The internet archive has a digitised version that can be found here (it includes a map). A more concise report on the serum run can be found here.

Leonhard Seppala, a musher Henry idolises, was one of the most famous, successful, and daring mushers of Alaska. With his lead dog Togo, he was the first choice and initially one of only two participants in the serum run (the other being "Wild" Bill Shannon), and completed the longest and most dangerous leg of the relay, crossing the treacherous Norton Sound twice. Henry as a luckless prospector turned thriving musher is based on Seppala's biography.

Additionally, Henry travels the same route as the Serum Run (it was the established mail route between Nome and Fairbanks), and his tribulations on the trail were similarly inspired by events that happened in 1925. The only fictional stop is the Irish House. I also fudged around with the timeline quite a bit. According to one source, a trip to Fairbanks and back could take up to four months — I had Henry make the trip in two. Furthermore, for a journey such as this, Henry's team is far too small. Realistically, he'd take twice as many dogs, at least. I chose to have a more concise team because I wanted to give each dog a name and at least one 'moment to shine' and this proved difficult enough with seven.

The Siberian Husky as a breed was not recognised by the American Kennel Club until 1930. Before that — and in some regions and contexts, until today — the term 'husky' was used as a generic term for a sled dog, even for dogs more similar to the Alaskan Malamute (recognised as a breed by the AKC in 1935). During the time the story is set, nearly every sled dog would be a mutt of some kind as cross-breeding was extremely common (and nobody gave a fig about breeds and breed standards anyway; if a dog was large and strong enough to pull a sled, it was deemed an acceptable sled dog). The Siberian Husky as it is today is derived from imported dogs from Siberia to Alaska between 1908 and 1930. Leonhard Seppala's legendary lead dog

Togo, whom I mentioned above, was of Siberian lineage and is one of the most famous ancestors of the modern Siberian Husky.

The Iñupiat people and the Iñupiaq language

An online dictionary of Iñupiaq can be found here (though note that this dictionary is for the North Slope dialect, not the one from the Seward Peninsula, where Nome is located).

A (very) brief introduction to the Iñupiaq language, where I also found the Iñupiaq names of three of Henry's dogs can be found here.

The majority of the mushers of the serum run, and the majority of all mushers at the time, were Alaska Natives, and the most successful White mushers had adopted, to a large degree, Alaska Native technologies and skills. In fact, many European settlers of Alaska were quick and eager to adopt certain indigenous technologies, products, and customs, such as clothing, despite the government's insistence on introducing "better, more advanced" (i.e. White/European) customs. One particularly doomed effort was the attempt to use reindeer instead of dogs for transportation, simply because dog mushing was an indigenous practice. Salisbury and Salisbury make a compelling and convincing case that the serum run being done via dog sled rather than aeroplane “would be a testament to the hard-learned survival skills and spirit of the Athabaskans and Eskimos [sic]” at a time when the government deemed the cultures, languages, and customs of Alaska Natives ‘decadent’ and ‘primitive’.

Still, Henry's choice to integrate himself into an Iñupiat community ("going Native") would still be regarded as odd if not wrong, as many of those who adopted Alaska Native clothes and technologies had little regard for the peoples who’d come up with them (for instance, Roald Amundsen credited his success as a Polar explorer to the survival skills he learned from the Netsilik, a Canadian Inuit people, but still considered them “savages”), and even those most sympathetic towards Alaska Natives mostly swung largely in favour of assimilating them into White society (a policy that lasted until the 1970's). More devastating even than that was the forced relocation of Alaska Natives, the abduction and imprisonment in boarding schools of Alaska Native children, and the ban on Alaska Native languages to the point that most if not all of these languages are critically endangered today, as well as other colonial atrocities. Furthermore, Europeans brought diseases to Alaska that would prove devastating to the indigenous population; the 1918/1919 influenza epi/pandemic and the 1925 diphtheria outbreak in Nome are only two examples.

Miscellaneous and historical trivia

Henry and Conor share a bottle of whiskey, but this was the height of prohibition in the USA. However, at the point the story is set, Alaska was not yet a state and merely a territory, which many Alaskans riled against as they were governed from afar from people who knew next to nothing of the circumstances in Alaska itself. Alaskans thus sometimes cared very little for governmental policies and restrictions.

The teddy bear, first invented in the early 20th century and named after Theodore Roosevelt, quickly became one of, if not the most popular toy of all time. "Growlers", aka the noise boxes

inside the bear, were first introduced (by Steiff, at least) in 1908. A timeline of the teddy bear by the Steiff corporation, who claim to be the inventors of the teddy bear (though this claim is not uncontested), can be found here (yes, really).

If you want a complete list of Henry's team, here it is:

Lead: *Gerda*, female, fawn and white, with blue eyes. Bit of a feisty little missus, but loyal, obedient, and hardworking. Won't win any races, but then, Henry isn't interested in that.

Swing/Point: *Rose*, female, grey; *Maguyuk*, male, tan, almost ten years old.

Team: *Orca*, female, black and white; *Delta*, male, greyish brown.

Wheel: *Siku*, male, white; *Suka*, male, reddish-brown. Brothers.

Bowerbird, by Sparklebeard

I'd originally hoped to finish this story for the previous issue, as it's a decent fit for that theme as well. However, some writing burnout after finishing an incredibly long fanfic project as well as a health scare with my elderly cat (she's doing ok now, thankfully!) kept me from completing it early enough for the deadline. I think it's a bit better suited to this issue, though, so it all worked out for the best.

While I'm not personally into actual camping, I do really love hiking and spending time alone in the woods, and hopefully that shines through here! I often have a difficult time with titles, but in this case the title and concept appeared in my mind at the same moment when I was battling writer's block in another project.

This was also a fun exercise in writing a sex scene that isn't focused on clear communication and explicit consent, which I tend to center by default. I did experiment with this a little bit in all parts there made one prisoner, but that story still takes place in the context of an established relationship that already has a foundation of loving communication. Nathan and Quiscalus have no such history here, at least not from Nathan's perspective. While Quiscalus is invested in Nathan's comfort and pleasure in a general sense, he feels no reluctance to lean on the power imbalance between them or use magic to manipulate or persuade Nathan to do what he wants. It would be a problem if Nathan wasn't so into it, but since he is...it works just fine, for the time being.

Thanks to Iron Eater for the beta!

Keeper's Finder, by Togi Kayako

This one's a bit of an outlier for me as it runs more on the bittersweet side of happy than I usually write. Off my own beaten path, I suppose? I did a bunch of challenging things in making it, and while the end result isn't perfect, I'm pleased with it. Happy Pride, particularly to everyone

who is in their own imperfect situation and finding some joy anyway. Thanks to Ramy for beta reading, and my husband for both support and indignation on behalf of my fictional characters.

If These Mountains Could Talk, by Torino Koji

First of all, the playlist I made so that I could write this story in less than a week.

I made a joke in my Issue 101 creator note that I was just going to write trans queerness, and I'm apparently holding to that. This one was inspired in not quite equal parts by many cross country drives (including a recent one through the Blue Ridge and Ozarks, then down into Texas), growing up a farmer and friend to ranchers, and wanting a happy ending for a couple of *Brokeback Mountain* inspired hired hands. Also, but an absolutely astronomical amount of silly Tumblr posts, like this one and literally this one.

Fairy in the Forest, by EmboSnoodler

This is my first submission to SSBB and my first time writing a story. I'm happy to be here! I like tentacles.

Reverse Cowgirl (Not Gay as in Take Off Your Pants and Jacket, Queer as in Dude Ranch), by shukyou

The absurd title for this piece comes from two places: first, McKenzie Wark's recent memoir/auto-ethnography; second, this truly spectacular t-shirt.

The piece is set in 1974, so genders and terminologies in the rear view mirror may appear significantly different from what they would be if this were all happening today.

This was somehow written in five days.

Illustration notes, by The Winter Cynic
The Bull riding scene was so vivid in my mind that I had to draw it from Pearl's point of view. I wanted to capture the awe of being so close and how intimate it is. I'm a little sad I couldn't draw Bull in all her glory because she is so stupidly hot. I tried so many new things in this piece, and I am most proud of the perspective.

Queen Baiting, by juou no zan

The inherent eroticism of being bound to a near-stranger by knowing each other's secrets!!!

So obviously at the end of "The Prince's Plaything", I left Prince Tiede's younger brother in kind of a pickle. He never expected to be the heir to the throne, so he had some expectation of latitude in arranging his own marriage, plus I kind of already had in my head the idea he was bi as well. Thus we have here another example of me transing arranged marriages, which mostly came out of the idea of Arden and Famke's initial meeting, and how extremely funny and awkward it would be for them to see each other again and be like *peering out of car windows at each other meme*.

This isn't even the last "transing arranged marriage" story I have in progress...what can I say, I like exploring a theme with so much potential for Shenanigans! This barely even has any mistaken identity in it! Trans arranged marriages are so obviously rife with possibilities for mistaken identities!

Glimmerite, by Someone Else

The world here is based on Fraggle Rock, but I deliberately left out any truly telling details and you can take the characters as fantasy humans where candy-coloured hair is natural or as Fraggles, as you prefer. I was, though, trying to capture part of the essence of Fraggle Rock: the interconnectedness (even when characters aren't aware of it), working out problems using the explicit ideals of friendship, being true to oneself, and learning to understand difference, and a world that is kind without oversimplifying. I wanted to bring that same aesthetic to a problem of an adult nature, something that would be antithetical to Fraggle Rock itself, which was entirely family friendly, without even eye-winking at parents type innuendo, but we can imagine a gentle world where the same approach underlies everything, without needing to excise sex and sexuality. Thanks to Sinezona for betaing and to our editor; their help really improved it.

I feel like I ought to add something about how this is now the second thing in a row (out of only two things total) that I have written that takes inspiration from childhood media and then makes porn out of it. With Minecraft I have the excuse that it is not part of *my* childhood because I'm a generation older than that, but I don't have that excuse for Fraggle Rock. However, I don't really have something to say about this observation, other than that in both cases the worlds are rich and yet somehow gentle, and I liked that.

Lucky Stars, by Cowboy Rider

A trans guy picks a BBQ place on a long drive home and falls in love with the owner. Mildly inspired by *Tim McGraw* by Taylor Swift. Kind of my love letter/goodbye to the South as I move away and start getting enough distance from my childhood to feel nostalgic about it. Also, I'm never writing contemporary again, so if you love it, get your fill here, and if you hate it, never fear, my next work will have scifi phalloplasties and/or magic for sure. Content warning for mentions of homophobia and transphobia. Big Props to tk hoshikuzu for beta-ing this one when

I was pretty sure it sucked, and for the longsuffering W2 for wading through my endless sea of dialogue and finding things I didn't even think about.

If you want an idea of how much of the night sky you can see, here's a useful map.

Making the Dream Work, by Iron Eater

Learning how to be a good partner to someone you didn't expect to marry can be difficult, but at least field work provides plenty of chances to learn how to communicate and cooperate…up until unexpected circumstances keep interfering with what little routine you'd established while on the road.

I keep claiming my goal for S2B2 is to write original stories unconnected to existing works, but here we are again. This story is a direct sequel to How the Other Halves Live from Issue 85, which was exactly three years ago! I didn't do that on purpose. I just kept thinking about these two and their dynamic (ray of sunshine/terminal grouch-ass will always be a favorite of mine, provided they actually like each other), and the idea of coming back to them trying to clean up their mess was appealing to me. As usual, you don't need to have read that first story to make sense of this one; it's probably *pretty obvious* that the leads in the original end up together, and not just because they start the story arriving at their honeymoon destination.

This one *fought* me, requiring a whole extra week of writing time to get done despite starting it before I'd even begun my previous submission, and in spite of regularly cutting out or revising entire swathes of material as I went (you would not believe how many scenes got summarized/jettisoned in the process), I was still a few thousand words over my limit once I finally put a bow on the damn thing's first completed draft. S2B2 is a great way to learn how to self-edit under duress! Thanks as always to sparklebeard, my skilled and thoughtful beta reader, and the editorial team, who put up with my nonsense and constantly challenge me to make things crisper and tighter in spite of everything.

Fantasy continues to be a favorite genre of mine so it's important I mix up how I write it. This setting's one of the less deeply cohesive! The characters and their world still aren't based on any single source, but there's an awful lot of Dragon Quest in their DNA, along with bits and pieces of other games sprinkled about (such as Lloyd's knack for inventory Tetris and his exhaustive journal). Aside from "opposites attract," I enjoyed the opportunity to further explore why these two work together as a couple, why they like each other (aside from finding one another physically appealing, which helps), how they elevate one another, and what they can still comfortably do on their own. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts but the parts are still plenty potent, you know?

The "made of cake" joke is 100% stolen from my husband and was originally about a cheeked-up statue of Perseus. Reduce, reuse, recycle.

The illustrations were made entirely in Clip Studio Paint EX. Some of the hand-lettering is based off of Kingthings Versalis Regular, with a lot of adjustments and personal flair. I had to bash both the picture and the title card together in much less time than usual (see above comment re: the story fighting me), so I'm pretty happy with how nicely they came together! Diarmuid's Resting Bitch Face is a treasure to draw every time.

Fallen Dust, by Johannes T. Evans

This is my first submission to SBB and I’m super excited about it! It’s a little bit darker than the usual tone, but also has a happy ending of sorts? And I loved the opportunity to get weird with it and mess around with the Eldritch.

The Shape of a Place Out West, by stills

This is a deeply personal story which has roots in a number of places - for my best friend, M, rodeo queen of my heart; for D, the first boy I properly kissed, who was a good sport about it; for my ex-spouse, E, who showed me how much it is possible to love and belong to a place; and for my wonderful girlfriend, H, who gives me all the feels about distance. And who also beta’d. <3

Title, obviously, from the Dixie Chicks.

Issue 103 Cover, by Druid

These are the creators' notes for Issue 102: The Monster in My Closet

Steve, by PeriwinklePip

This is my first ever submission to SSBB! Naturally, I had to jump in when the theme seemed so monsterfucker-y, haha. Reverie and Alistair technically come from another unpublished piece of writing I've done, so maybe you'll see them again someday somewhere else, but for now I had a lot of fun writing about their college adventures with the titular character, Steve. Special thanks to my beta, Togi Kayako. Enjoy, and hopefully you'll see me around here again!

Love Bites, by Cowboy Rider

W2 challenged me to write something without dialogue, to hopefully stem the tide of my stories that read like screenplays, and this is the result. I didn't quite make it to no dialogue, but I did give it the old college, as it were, and am fairly pleased with the result. It's my first s2b2 submission without a trans MC, but I also love an omegaverse moment, so that's what we did instead this time. Content warning for some mild blood play and assumed consent.

Sunrise over ice, by Someone Else

You may have noticed that Hrun and Ara are based on Minecraft villagers and quite a number of Minecraft things figure into the story. Thanks for reading my first story and thanks to starry and Togi Kayako for betaing it.

Jabberwock, by mihlen & idolkilling

What a thrill it is to debut a story in SSBB! Thank you to my co-writer, idolkilling, the one to introduce me to the zine and to come up with both the premise and primary outline for this project. Although I took the lead on writing since my character, Alexei, was the protagonist, it was idolkilling's Nightsong that carried the narrative, and their beautiful prose that brought this story past the finish line. I'm immensely grateful to them for bringing me on board and working with me in this creative undertaking.

It was an interesting challenge to try and capture some of the witty, linguistic charm of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. Though the direct quotes and adaptations are more obvious, I wonder if some of the more subtle wordplay was successful? Though I hope it was, even if it wasn't, I had great fun wracking my brain over it, so it's still a win in my book, haha.

Fun fact, did you know the viburnum willow is considered the national tree of Ukraine? Though we took care to fictionalize certain aspects of the setting, such as the military, to untether

ourselves from too much research, I ended up learning a plethora of trivia over the course of writing anyway…

In any case, thank you to you, the reader, for taking the time to venture down the rabbit hole and into this curious story. Though “Jabberwock” veers a tad dark in places, if you read it to the end, I hope we were able to entertain you all the way through. —*mihlen*

———

Hello! Huge thanks to S2B2 for existing as an anthology for queer writers, and for having mihlen and I this month. I was the one who stumbled on the project by chance and instantly thought: Oh, I want to be in on this somehow! As someone who only makes original works, sometimes it feels a bit lonely putting stuff out there; people tend to be more interested in fanwork, because they’re already familiar with the characters. So finding S2B2 was really exciting to me!



the Nightsong and Alexei (drawn by idolkilling)

“Jabberwock” is the first fully-enclosed story I’ve worked on in a while, and there’s a big sense of accomplishment with that. I’m very grateful to mihlen for fleshing out my mess of an outline in a deadline-meeting manner (god knows I take forever to write prose LOL) and proud of the snippets I wrote myself (I wonder if it’s obvious based on style? haha).

Since the Nightsong and Alexei were existing characters from other projects of ours, seeing the “Monster in My Closet” prompt on the list was like a flashbang to the head. The idea was instant, vivid: a play on who the ‘monster’ is, the symbolism of a closet and coming out of it, a journey of healing and independence and escap[e, ism].

When I initially pitched the story to mihlen, we both had our concerns that it’d be too dark for S2B2’s usual tone, despite the fluff interspersed and unabashed happy ending. I really worried this would be the fic that would make the mods say ‘okay, you guys got a little too crazy with it’ www so I’m very grateful it was able to be featured in this issue! And if you read it in full, humbled you took the time out of your day to do so. Thank you for giving it a chance!

Some miscellany for the road: Alexei is not Russian, but rather Ukrainian and Japanese! (I know, he shouldn’t be a natural blonde if we’re being realistic about genetics, but he’s a supersoldier dating an eldritch entity, let’s suspend disbelief 😭) Aside from the Lewis Carroll references, the Nightsong’s name is a nod to Chopin’s nocturnes and their shared home in the

epilogue refers to Chet Baker's "Blue Room."

Anyway, thanks again! I really hope I can collaborate on more for S2B2 in the future. And maybe gather the courage to submit a solo piece? 😂 only time will tell. Cheers! —*idolkilling*

"Jabberwock" is a story about trauma and escaping it, so CW for: [redacted]. (Spoilers—highlight or copy-paste to view!)

Head, by shukyou

Not what I originally planned, but I think it worked anyway.

Anathemaphilia, or, how I learned to love the Beast who so loved the world, by Viy Sitante

My second submission to SSBB! Hooray! And best of all, it's a monster issue, so that meant I could take some of my characters from a serial story out for a spin. Max, Magnus and Astemar are all from a larger work of mine that's unpublished but worked on constantly, but I knew I could try to do a one-shot where you didn't need to know anything previous to enjoy this. At least, I hope I succeeded! I wanted to do something with Astemar's beast side for ages, so why not do it for SSBB :D

Once more, I am bad at providing warnings in the sense of "did I warn for everything?," so here's an attempt: mentions/philosophizing of body dysphoria, someone trying to ignore that with nice compliments, some rough sex, and I don't know, if a MM threesome with a F!monster isn't up your alley, then be on your merry way! Oh, and cussing. Lots of it.

Shoutout to Iron Eater for not only helping me beta-read this but also giving me some suggestions for the title! Originally this was named *Euphorophobia; or how I learned to love the Beast who so loved the world.* I came up with it when thinking about the behaviors of the characters in it and looked into the etymology of "euphoria." I found that the root meaning, euphoros, means "bearing well" or "healthy" and that the word euphoria originally meant something close to that before shifting to its current meaning. So I thought it'd be neat to use the title to refer to the character Astemar, who's the monster in this story and the happenings of the latter half of the story, and go "a fear of the healthy" --> thus, euphoros + phobia = *Euphorophobia*.

As I am someone who's been struggling with good titles lately for my work in general, I wasn't too hot on it. Also, a pretty long title but I wanted to be fancy this time. I was also alerted to the

fact that Euphorophobia also means something else in regional parts of the USA, and as a linguistics nerd, that meant I had to really get a better title. Oops. Thankfully, *Anathemaphilia* works great! “Love/fondness of the detested,” or “love/fondness of the devoted,” if you look into the root meaning :)

It’s really good that Iron Eater beta-read this because this was easily one of the longest stories I’ve written and I managed to cut down a lot thanks to their help, thankfully. It was fun to write this, despite all the struggles with editing and rewriting. I ended up solidifying certain aspects of the characters, and coming up with ones for the rewrites that ended up being great ideas for them in the long run.

Home to Roost, by Iron Eater

"I have written so damn many different monster stories," I thought, "so what new thing could I do for *this* issue?" I actually didn't know the answer to that one at first; this was very much a piece that I had the opening line for well before I knew much about the rest of the plot. I ultimately went with a harpy since I had a Zofzerit-adjacent character design lying around that I'd never done anything with, and since I was going to be out of town for over a week *and* dealing with updating a long-running project in the interim, it was time to be efficient. It was still my solemn duty to write something for the monster-liker issue, however, as I'd be failing my fellow teratophiles if I didn't, hence why this piece is relatively brief for me. Sometimes that's what works best!

Once again I have written at length about why a funky critter-person might be into a human, and this time we're going for one who's shorter and smaller; why not make him *really* be into that difference? Zof's a little bit bigger than an Andean condor if you don't count the neck. It doesn't come up in the story but he owns a car and has driven Seyyed around before during visits. Hand controls are involved. They presumably have appropriate seating for when he's riding in Seyyed's car, instead, though this is probably closer to a booster seat than either of them would care to admit. It beats a cat carrier.

Seyyed's personality formed slowly as I figured out more things he *did* with his life. I've written plenty of shy nerd types before and I wanted someone who could counter Zofzerit's high-energy approach, so I started with him being into cosplay and felt things out from there. His connection to low-stakes theater was *very* last-minute; some of the dialogue wasn't quite landing the way it needed to, and him being a sucker for theater kids (paired with his extant anime habit) made that make a lot more sense. Him being a vet tech was also a good way to show more ways he interacted with his community outside of his hobby. The hunt for Rosie was one of the last things added since I wanted to show him actually making use of that animal-medicine knowhow (and because the story was pretty short without it).

Sometimes I include phrases in these things simply because it's funny for me to do so, and that's why I made sure not to accidentally write out my use of "isekai brain disease," especially

since it led to a decent ending! Seriously, though, that stuff tends to be pure sugar, be sure to vary up your diet.

The illustrations were created completely in Clip Studio Paint EX, and aren't based on any particular Super Sentai (or other tokusatsu) team; I did choose purple and orange for their costumes since these are some of the least likely colors you'll see in your typical toku set. A quick search promised that there is no O*CON*omiyaki event held at this time, much less seven of them, but if somebody eventually names a con this there isn't any intended connection.

Thanks as always to sparklebeard for his tireless beta-reading work!

Tako Nyōbō, by TOFU+BEAST

I got drunk and explained the plot of *Urotsukidoji: Legend of the Overfiend* to a friend. Or at least, I attempted to, but then I got mixed up with *Teito Monogatari*. Anyway, I had the image of "Yasunori Kato" in my head, that sort of 1920s retrofuture Meiji era occultist theme.

The Tako Nyōbō is a yokai whose name translates to "octopus wife", and all stories have them as female, but mine isn't so clearly defined. Also, I wanted an 80s/90s PC eroge look, as I've been inspired by that generation of pixel art as of recently. The character here is a remix of a BL character I've created for a 24 hour comic jam challenge years ago.

Basically, I just took all those elements, mashed them up in a jar and shook them. Bone app the teeth.

Issue 102 Cover, by KMO

These are the creators' notes for Issue 101: Back to Basics.

Cable Entertainment, by stills

Phone sex, that is all. Here is an interesting article from 1985 that I found during my research about cable operators.

Even Vanilla Is An Achievement For Some People, by Kit Miller

Blackmail Boyfriend, by juou no zan

I read a lot of extremely questionable manga as a teenager, my favorites of which often featured cross-dressing, for reasons that would not become apparent to me until several years later. It turns out this kind of plot is not limited to shoujo manga I felt comfortable reading in the middle of a classroom! And it also turns out everyone else was doing it wrong once again. SMH. The correct answer to walking in on your roommate/teammate/classmate changing and them having a surprising body configuration is OBVIOUSLY not "this is a cis person cross-dressing For Reasons", it's "trans people exist".

Anyway, like several of my other stories, this story could easily involve more transphobia, but it turns out I don't want to write about trans people having a bad time! So here we get Richard fumbling this about as hard as someone could fumble finding out their crush is trans without it being a hate crime, and he manages to recover through sheer force of...Aidan is also a horny teenager. (I mean, he could have done worse after that initial incident. I tried to make it clear even through Aidan's misreading of the situation that Richard was Trying.)

Richard firmly believes he would not have outed Aidan even if Aidan had quite reasonably gone "Um, no?" to his threat of blackmail. This may even be true! He almost certainly still would have been kind of shitty about it, in a pigtail-pulling kind of way. He may have been trying but he is still a teenager having a time with his sexuality.

And There Was Only One Bed, by Clowderforce

Hi. Long time listener, first time caller. This story is pretty much exactly what it says on the tin! Uh, CW I guess for incredibly stereotypical small town homophobia?

Capitalism Breeds Innovation, by Cowboy Rider

ISO, by Torino Koji

The ideas behind "ISO" (*in search of*) was originally inspired by one part personal experience with the weirdness that was Craigslist personal ads and cruising, and one part the most ridiculous tropes I could ever come up with. Refining the ideas to something to fit SS*BB was a lot of cutting and culling and scaling back to find the perfect bite.

Frankly, the best trope at this point is just making at least one character a story a trans man. I've given up pretending like that's not exactly what I want to read every single time I sit down, and so I am excited to write that too. When I set out for the first story of the year, I wanted to make a tropic through line for everything I managed to finish. Starting out with a story that's been percolating on and off since 2013 that prominently features a trans man in an explicitly queer relationship is, as far as I'm concerned, the best way to get going on that idea.

I don't know if Jonah and Shaun will show up in another story somewhere down the line. But I do know that I had a lot of fun with this first vignette of theirs.

It's Hard to Say "I Do" When You Don't, by shukyou

So when time to do something for this theme came around, I contemplated what tried-and-true tropes that I, despite my years of contributions, had not yet tackled, and the most prominent of those seemed to be ... fake dating! Nothing against the trope, of course; it just hasn't been one that's called out to me. Well, no time like the present!

The title is from a Fall Out Boy song, though the actual song title is "It's Hard to Say 'I Do,' When I Don't." I figured the pronoun change worked better, what with the pining and all.

Many thanks to Whit, my partner in crime here. Much of this story was developed in conversation with them, and I think it turned out a thousand times better for it -- and for being done with plenty of time to spare. Instead of crunching in something at the last minute that I wound up hating anyway, I had this done and could sit on it for a bit before I did my final edit. Makes all the difference in the world, at least to the way I feel about it.

And many more thanks to melanofly, whose amazing work perfectly captures the sentiment I was going for. Tell you what, I swooned when I saw that last one. Those pieces absolutely make the story, and I am tremendously grateful.

> melanofly illo notes for **It's Hard to Say "I Do" When You Don't**

HEHE it is always a delight to be able to draw for an author, especially excellent stories by Shukyou!!! The theme of the drawings were “moments where Avery clenches/grabs things” and “how do I make these look like scanlations.” I contemplated whether to draw in a way that was more yaoiest yaoiz (e.g., Zetsuai Bronze-esque?!) but decided to not go *too far* into parody tropeland with the style, since I still wanted to convey the anxious, sweetness that was inherent in the story, as accurately as I could. I used more tone than I normally do for comics, since I felt that it would help set the mood and how Avery gets a clearer, brighter view of Baldwin as the story goes on.

Some easter eggs in the first illustration: Avery’s laptop has a cheese grater sticker on it 🤣, the champagne bottle has 101 SSBB on it 🍾. I watched a lot of sommelier videos to see how a champagne bottle should look after it’s opened properly 😂 because the general internet populace does think that a roughly torn foil and POP explosion is the right way to do it. The bar has a lot of round elements to go with the Pearl name, with some art deco influence.

Illustration 2 has the boys all suited up and I felt that Baldwin must lean towards fancier european style with double vents and high polish cap-toe brogues. I recently got into better leather shoe maintenance, so it was nice to apply my research in a different context. Avery is probably wearing off the rack suit stuff hahaha (I gave him loafers since they were mentioned briefly before). I wanted to convey that “reality” vs “space” concept that Avery has in his inner thoughts. Despite being in the cabin, fiction/space/anti-gravity have broken in (also conveyed by breaking the planes of the panels) and have become reality.

Illustration 3’s vibe was meant to feel a bit like those searing anime summers where you hear sounds of cicadas, but whatever the Southern USA(?) equivalent of that would be. I tried to use light more deliberately here, and they both have more casual hair/clothing because they’re comfortable together 😍.

As a shorthand for naming layers in the drawing file, I laughed at how Baldwin is shortened to “Inks bald” or “pencils bald” and thought about how Baldwin would look very different if he was bald (I also draw most people bald before putting hair on them anyway, so a sketch of this exists). Thanks again for Shukyou for the lovely story and characters 🥰.

Viola Sororia, by The Winter Cynic

I remembered *Maria-sama ga Miteru* one day and knew that I had to do something like it. Catholic high school lesbians just hit a special part of the brain for me.

More importantly, I heard "All the Things She Said" by t.A.T.u while I was browsing Instagram reels and was instantly transported to 2002. I'll leave drawing rain soaked school girls for another time, but this was definitely part of the vibe.

In the end, I chose the color scheme for the tri-color violet rather than the common violet hat I named this piece after. Naturally, this is a nod to Sappho.

These characters are a play on two ladies who have appeared in another SSBB piece. Many thanks to W2 for letting me borrow your characters a bit! I wonder if any of you can guess which piece they're from?

Seeing Stars, by Taki no Me

Have you ever heard that sex with someone you love can be “out of this world” or “makes you see stars” (in a good way)? That’s what I was going for, a literal representation of these sayings.

I enjoyed learning from drawing the beard, blue man, color blocks, facial expressions, from-the-back (chute) position, glasses, and handholding for this couple.
By the way, I must give thanks to my husband for modeling the hands with me when I couldn't find a useful reference. (Sweetheart: I promise not to tease so much next time!)

Angel Food Cake, by The Winter Cynic

Me, half-jokingly, in chat: What's more back to basics than a devil/angel ship?

Again, on another occasion half-jokingly: What if I named it "angel food cake," because she's an angel, she's got cake, and she's gonna be a meal?

This is a hard lesson to myself that any jokes I make are actually me sussing out where something is going. I hadn't intended to submit a second piece but I couldn't resist the ever classic angel who gets preyed on by a succubus. Only when I finished it did I realize that it had a lot of St Michael slays Lucifer vibes, only the reverse and so much more gay.

Overbooked at the Chess Meet, by Iron Eater

What's a more classic, straightforward story prompt than "there was only one bed"? I'm sure there's a few but this is the one I went with. Why a 50s pastiche? Partially because I love period pieces, but also because it was easier to have these two goobers stuck in an unfamiliar place with limited options for travel, lodging, or even communication until their event is complete. At least they both have common interests to talk about! Assuming they don't become bitter rivals in their field, which I suppose some people find far more interesting. Let your imagination soar, reader.

The room layout is derived from old photographs of period hotel and motel rooms while the wallpaper was taken from period patterned wallpaper. The ducks on the back wall are based on generic 1950s wall decor, while the paintings on the sides are (presumably cheap prints of) Paul Cézanne's "Still Life with Fruit Dish" and Vincent van Gogh's "Sunflowers." My newspaper halftone brushes continue to get a powerful workout in my mostly-colorless work; I paid good money for the things, so they're gonna earn their keep.

This piece was created entirely in Clip Studio Paint EX.

Issue 101 Cover, by 2013

These are the creators' notes for Issue 100.

The longest night of the year, by Hyakunichisou 13

Some of Us Are Looking at the Stars, by Togi Kayako

So first off, I started this bad boy a year and a half ago for the sci-fi double feature issue and I could not be happier to finally shove it out of the nest. The worldbuilding ate my brain. I have almost 2k words of notes, so if you'd like to know more about my funky little aliens, *please* ask me anything you want. I will put one tidbit here: If you're curious to get an idea of how Issik sees colors, look up tritanopia.

Title shamelessly stolen from an Oscar Wilde quote. The working title was "Pet Project," which felt off, so I snuck the phrase into the story instead. Thanks as ever to my husband for looking it over, and of course the tireless W2 for both a wealth of suggestions to improve the story and some much-needed encouragement to do so.

All I Want, by stills

A little bit of indulgent nonsense for the holidays. Happy Chanukkah, joyeaux noel, happy yuletide and congratulations on 100 issues!

Contains breath play.

Unearthed Substratum, by Iron Eater

Content Warning: this story contains a lot of harsh language, mentions (but no depictions) of pretty significant violence and the killing of animals for food, a character dealing with the fallout of childhood abuse (not depicted), and people eating carrion on purpose. None of the main characters are human.

It's that time again.

This is the eleventh consecutive Rhoanish story, finishing off on the tenth anniversary of what was supposed to be a one-off that ended up being…not that. You do not need familiarity with the characters, setting, or previous stories to be able to enjoy this work (I always try to write these things as new-reader-friendly)! Thanks as always to sparklebeard, my friend since high

school and long-time beta reader, for helping point out anything that might be a stumbling block for someone new to the stories, as well as all the other structural problems he helped me figure out and solve over the course of a few very frantic days.

I plan to be gracefully retiring Sarouth and Riaag from the yearly December slot with this piece, as I have done my best to tie up as many loose ends as possible and I feel like it's a good place to take a bow; I may return to them again in future issues, but only if the mood truly strikes. I'd rather let them go out with potential gas in the metaphorical tank rather than run 'em into the ground. This means you'll see some *different* idiots next year, almost certainly all presented at a nigh-unbearable length. Hooray!

Writing this required sitting down and figuring out what all would be most satisfying for a returning reader see get resolved. I needed to make myself as invested in my handsome green sons as possible to ensure I'd be sending them off properly, and between less writing time than usual due to a collection of factors and dealing with a week and a half of coronavirus in the household, it was a Thing getting this piece done. Once again I foolishly expected I'd only be going slightly over 25,000 words, as I like to make my December entries "count" w.r.t. that big, tempting lack of an upper limit, and then I decided I needed two more chapters to make the pacing work, and then I had more than a few days blitz by while making my laptop earn its keep. But it's finished, complete with five original pictures! I plan to celebrate next week by not doing very much at all.

The illustrations for this were created entirely in Clip Studio Paint EX, barring some planning sketches on typing paper. All lettering and textures were done by hand because that's the kind of mutant I am. Keen-eyed readers may notice some very intentional similarities between the footer of this story and the header for The Stones' Earthen Grasp from all the way back in 2012. Pulling that off was satisfying in ways that cannot be overstated.

I hope you've enjoyed your time with my domestic orcs. May their lives be peaceful, filled with healing and barbecued horse chops.

Made of Triangles, by Yūdoku Fukuronezumi

“It feels good. Soft. Warm.” A cozy blanket of a short story about the teething problems of a nb/m/m throuple. Illustrated by my alter ego. Content warning for brief discussion of homophobic violence I guess.
Also this is my great comeback to SSBB after almost a decade (the fact that the editor remembered me made me legit tear up). Hello there :)

The Hard Place, by beautifulduckweed

I had originally planned a novella-length story for this issue, full of angst and feelings and Plot, and then life blew up in my face and I just didn’t have the time, brainspace, or energy to write

30,000 words in a couple weeks. So I took a premise I was musing over one morning while half-asleep (“Man, what if a demon is assigned to torment a dude, but ha ha joke’s on the demon, the guy actually loves it”) and turned it into a story.

A few warnings/enticements: this story features, among other things, verbal humiliation, monsterfucking (demonfucking, to be precise), improbably large dicks, belly bulge, sounding, come inflation, self-loathing, deeply internalized shame, dubon/noncon (but uh, the one getting nonconned probably isn’t who you think it is), and corporate doublespeak for comic purposes. Among other things. As soon as I started writing I knew I wanted this story to be the kinkiest and filthiest story I’ve written yet, but also the softest and the most wholesome. I hope I succeeded with these infernal idiots.

Many thanks to etoile_sombre and TheGlintOfTheRail for the beta and cheering me on as I deliriously pushed through; truly, they are the best writing partners a bitch could ever hope for. Credit for the title, which, yes, is a riff on *The Good Place*, goes to TheGlintOfTheRail. She is way too good at this kind of thing. SAVE SOME OF THAT MOJO FOR THE REST OF US, god.

Happy fuckin’ 100th issue, SSBB!! I’m so glad I got my poop in a group and finished in time to submit.

How to Write Haiku, by H.P. Lovecock

No major content warnings, other than a little body dysmorphia. Unapologetic queer rip-off of *Words Bubble Up Like Soda Pop*. A love letter to high school/college romance BL. 2022’s been a fuck of a year, so I wanted to write something fluffy, trope-heavy, bittersweet, and an excuse for some haiku, just really follow my bliss. Haiku format is up to or under five-seven-five syllables. So yes, I know, that line does have four syllables. Don’t shout at me, I’ll cry.

Major thanks and kudos to the SSBB team and all their hard work. Always an absolute joy to work on a story with everyone, and you folks put together damn good issues!

Soft susurration,
Now, a hundred winds whisper,
Breeze bends sunny fields

Illustrator’s Freetalk: TOFU+BEAST
Hello, I’m TOFU, the artist who drew the cover for H.P.’s story! It’s a very summer-y story, isn’t it? Thank you to H.P. and the head editor for their infinite patience as I flung myself across the finish line down to the wire here, much like attempting to cram for exit exams in year three of *Tokimeki Memorial*.

That sort of soft, pastel/80s citypop style is what I leaned into heavily, without trying to 100% copy the art direction of *Words Bubble Up Like Soda Pop*. And then I put cum on it, because I

need to be physically restrained from adding fluids to things. H.P.’s request was for a “BL Manga Cover”, and so it was fun to attempt something like that composition-wise as well!

Childhood Friends, by juou no zan

Maybe give this one a pass if BDSM, eroticized sexual assault, rape fantasies, or mentions of underage sexual activity are not your thing!

You can do all the research about kink scenes and BDSM etiquette you want, but at the end of the day, it doesn't actually mean that much if you can't *talk to your partner* about it. So yeah, Gray and Riley come at things kind of ass-backwards. Personally I cannot imagine being in a place where "telling my best friend about my rape fantasies" feels less terrifying than "telling my best friend I want to date them", but that's more because those are equally terrifying to me than because I am unsympathetic to the terror of "telling my best friend I want to date them".

Senior-year Gray is clearly aware that his freshman-year attempts at safety were not entirely adequate, but not as aware as he's going to be in several years! Gray is going to wake up one day in his 20s and have a day-long anxiety attack. "Who let us do that???" he is going to demand. "We literally snuck around behind our parents' backs," Riley is going to remind him.

Paul was not supposed to be in this story. I mean, he was, but only as much as Chad or Jason, or the unnamed teammates who do not participate in the gang bang. But I thought, Gee, I shouldn't just write *all* of Gray's teammates as "Jock #4". I'll throw in an probable autistic and a snarky bisexual, for flavor! And then Paul said, "Move, I'm bi," and wriggled his way into my (and Gray and Riley's) heart.

The Man Of My Dreams, by Cowboy Rider

Content warning for mildly dubious consent and tentacles (?)
This story was inspired by a friend's kinktober prompt but I liked it so much I decided to flesh it out more. This was actually my Break Glass In Case Of Emergency WIP for this round, as what I originally planned got too-revealingly self-indulgent very quickly (some day, though). I'm happy with how it turned out, and hopefully you enjoy this little bite of divine pronces and nerdy trans guys as I do.
Big ups to the whole team on this one!! I'm new here but having a grand time, and glad to take part!

All That Rises, by shukyou

The title is from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, though it's actually my misremembering of the time the line was quoted at the start of an *Aeon Flux* episode ("Chronophasia," if you're curious). The full (translated) quote is as follows: "Remain true to yourself, but move ever upward toward

greater consciousness and greater love! At the summit you will find yourselves united with all those who, from every direction, have made the same ascent. For everything that rises must converge." I didn't use the actual full line for Flannery O'Connor reasons.

The quote Lizzy can't place is from T.S. Eliot's "East Coker":

> Our only health is the disease
> If we obey the dying nurse
> Whose constant care is not to please
> But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,
> And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse.

Turning into a legendary creature isn't a metaphor for anything. Having your wife turn into a legendary creature is a metaphor for something.

The Incubus, by Sparrow

A New Bride of the Night, by Viy Sitante

I'm really bad at warning people about stuff in my comics, mainly because I have such a vastly different perception of what to warn about compared to most people, that I fear I'll end up not warning about the proper thing that should contain it.

That said, I'll give it the ol' college try, so: warnings for possible dubcon, one single mention of sexual child abuses, bad sketchy flashbacks, POSSIBLE SEXY VAMPIRE and boomer-style complaining about rejecting tradition. (And because we live in a society: if you don't want to see two women boinking, then feel free to pass and have a nice day, you hear?) (Editors: you can delete that last parenthesis if it's a stupid warning.)

My aim was to make the story ambiguous in parts however, because I like it when readers have to think and decide when confronted with such. I also took the time to experiment with this comic, as I tried to aim for an underground comix vibe. Not sure if it worked, since I had so little time in the end, but I like how a lot of the pages look. Couldn't help going ham on tones, on the other hand!

The placeholder title for this was "in the still of the night," because my brain is burned out on creative titles and because I like the song quite a lot! (Note for editors: Link separate here in case that's preferred: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwbXeB-Hpss) I didn't like it in because it didn't really "fit" the story (or maybe it does, you tell me, readers at home) – and while looking for a public domain picture to use in one page, I stumbled upon the wikipedia page

for a play whose alternative title was *The Bride of the Isles.* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Vampire_(play)) My brain, in a split second of respite, latched onto it so much that instead of outright lifting it and adding something silly like “new”, I decided to combine the theme of the comic with something basic and voila: “A New Bride of the Night.”

Okay, so I still added “new.” But it works, trust me!

Thank you to SSBB for welcoming here! I hope to be able to participate again in the future 😀 Happy 100th!

Puppy, by The Burning King

Sometimes it's good to look at old bones and see what new life I can breathe into them. This was a sketch that I had started on a while back and could never get it to *work*. Apparently what I needed was a big bossy bottom and his even bigger puppy top. The puppy is in need of some house training but he's in good hands.

Issue 100 Cover by cerine

This might be the first cover art I've made where there are zero (0) masks on the parties involved, haa. Rococo vases were in my thoughts when I began thumbnailing ideas, and it progressed from there.

Issue 100 Cover by floremipsum_

Actually just another illustration for *Made of Triangles*.

Issue 100 Cover by Iron Eater

"What am I going to do for the cover?" I asked myself, having pushed my edited manuscript into the inbox in a froth-mouthed frenzy. Mashing terms into a search engine, I decided (for some reason) to go with a Milton Glaser homage, since I could make it look striking without taking too much time. I had an entire novella to illustrate, after all! I think it turned out pretty decent for being a style I'd never tried before. You don't need to communicate the queerness of the depicted genders, or lack thereof, if there's enough rainbows involved!

This image was created entirely in Clip Studio Paint EX, with a few free marbled-paper textures taken from the Clip asset-sharing store.

Issue 100 Cover by melanofly

Every now and then I try to experiment with something I'm less familiar with. In this case it was an attempt at something very close cropped and *less* linework-dependent than usual. The concept was that these 2 people are zinesters reading their freshly printed copy of SSBB 🙂. I really appreciate how long this zine has been in publication and all the efforts that go behind it. I made the cover a bit more generic BL-looking on purpose, since I think SSBB originally started with more M/M focus, but it's great that it's evolved over time too.

Issue 100 Cover by Nero Villagallos O'Reilly

Issue 100 Cover by RunnyCrusty

Issue 100 Cover by serenityfails

Sort of a sexy young Saint Nicholas meets a yassified Krampus situation. You know, traditional stuff.

Issue 100 Cover by Sparrow

Issue 100 Cover by Tamago

These are the creators' notes for Issue 99: 'Til Death Do Us Part

Saint Michael the Righteous, by stills

CW for various types of violence, themes of child abuse, a lot of misogyny, racism and homophobia, unhappy families, some gore, adolescent sexual shenanigans, sex workers having a bad day, cops being bastards, and uhhhhhhhhhh. murder. lots of murder. Enjoy!

Despite the premise, this is noir rather than mystery, but I'm very curious to hear in the comments at what point you clocked the murderer.

Possessive Tendencies, by bajablastd

Two wannabe ghost hunters enter a very haunted house, and then two ghosts enter two very horny ghost hunters.

Dramatis Personae
Rex - she/they
Calliope - he/she
Francis - he
Imogen - ve/she

The Long Dark, by shukyou

I know this is pretty cisheteronormative for a far-future space story, but it's something of a noir pastiche, so please forgive the gender essentialism as part of the genre convention.

There's a little blood. Don't worry, it's not mine.

Rearranged, by juou no zan

Here we have two people who are definitely not on the same page. Or, they are, but they think they're not.

Trying to research what transition care would have been like in the twelfth century? Nightmare. Clearly my research skills are not advanced enough for this topic. Reasoning out how to explain HRT in the humeral system of medicine? That's what all my years of listening to medical history podcasts is for, baby!

(Un)Familiar Territory, by Cowboy Rider

Lowitt asks his magical associate Rain for help with a demon he summoned and now can't get to leave. Then they (including the demon) have to have sex about it, obviously.

Consider the Ant, by Iron Eater

If you're not cool with (mostly unearned) accusations of necrophilia, maybe skip this one.

This piece was inspired first and foremost by someone in a chat channel on a conspicuously unnamed game talking about how a morgue could serve as an employment office in a world with necromancy in it, all without realizing the innate horror of not even death itself being an escape from labor. As the reader can see, I *did* realize said horror, and then wrote a story with a walking corpse who may or may not sound an awful lot like the Ancient Reptilian Brain from *Disco Elysium*. I mean, surely he's got a different accent, can't possibly be the same voice entirely! That'd just be silly.

The entire reason this story is set in a not-post-WW2-but-basically-post-WW2 not-England is because I'm entirely too enthusiastic about researching food in the days of rationing, also something something imperialism. For clarity: this is not the same setting as the not-Yharnam inhabited by Ward and Wainwright stories. While I'm sure there's some blatant Americanisms that snuck in there, I did try to do my homework w.r.t. researching just how many hours it takes to get anywhere by train. A chipper wartime song about the wonder of potatoes kept me company in my head for some of this.

I am dearly glad I started this one early because good grief, aside from a week-long visit from beloved family we also had an adventure with some leaky pipes that took ages to get taken care of. Turns out loud machinery isn't so good for concentration! Who knew? I also didn't even have an idea for what the endgame would be (aside from Peter's appreciation of a certain new man in his life) until a few days before I finished up. Once again I managed to scrape something together in the eleventh hour. Really wish I could stop cutting it so close.

In addition to the aforementioned voice, Youngblood's design was inspired by Dance with the Dead's video for *Sledge*, though he'd be darker and more bog-body adjacent. The illustration I made of him uses a digital scratchboard technique I haven't played with for years but which can look darn good without too many hours to pour into it. When in doubt, bump up the contrast.

Thanks as always to sparklebeard, my long-term beta reader, for pointing out places in the plot that needed more spackle, noting a pretty nasty plot hole that needed filling, and encouraging a full new paragraph describing imagined sexual acts. You're the best, my guy!

Don't Go Into the Basement, by The Winter Cynic

CW possibly noncon, definitely dubcon, front hole penetration, voyeuristic undead wives

I gave Bluebeard the fairytale a particularly sexy, particularly Bad End. You should really listen to your husband when he says to not go into the basement. This an awful way to meet his ex-wives who are quite undead but are quite thrilled to meet the newest member of the family.

Nothing quite says "til death do us part" like a fairytale, and Bluebeard was a natural choice for me. I chose to go with the version that mentions Bluebeard had 7 wives prior to our protagonist. Kind of shot myself in the foot with that one, but I ended up learning so much about cleverly fitting everyone in.

Our protagonist probably won't die, but I don't think he'll be leaving the basement anytime soon.

Prince of Roses, by RunnyCrusty

Cover, by Riso

Nonbinary (aggressively Agender)/Nonbinary (Whatever lol)

I've planned this cover since last year but scrambled to do it this year. I've been in blorbo hell most of the year so I've been unused to drawing other characters. I think it came out pretty cool though - tried some new things.

These are my OCs, Adri (living) and Den (Dead), where the ghost is more lively than the living guy. They're friends (begrudgingly). I have had an inkling of a story for them but it's been hard to dig that out. For now they are my funny characters that exist because they're trans and look really cool.

Here's what they look like: 1 2 3

Cover thumbnails/drafts (some since last year(2021! Lol): 1 2 3

These are the creators' notes for Issue 98: The Way We (Never) Were.

Anachronism, by Hiwaru Kibi

I love the idea of a time machine rental agency that's like, ugh, fine, you *can* fuck with the timeline, but we're just going to have to go in there and fix it after, *and* we're going to charge you extra for making us do it. That's okay, though. What matters is that Mimi and her unnamed narrator girlfriend had a good time.

Corvus, Cancer, and Other Constellations, by Togi Kayako

A story about helping a friend through a difficult time via the medium of ridiculous self-insert AUs. Fair warning, there is cancer, but there's very little medical stuff on-screen and everyone pulls through okay. This piece is largely sweet, goofy, and deeply self-indulgent. To steal a phrase, "I wrote this for me, but you can read it if you want."

Thanks to my husband for beta reading and emotional support, and a special thank you to W2, who I inadvertently tormented with formatting (again).

Good Chemistry, by shukyou

This is not the story I had planned to write for this round, but it is the story I *did* write for this round. Teachers need all the support and appreciation they can get! Sometimes sexily.

As I never address what happens when you take off Jamie's pants, you are welcome to imagine that he is cis or trans, as you prefer. I was thinking the former, but the text will not contradict you if you want to believe the latter.

Lou, as always, being a last-minute superstar with the amazing art.

Exciting New Levels of Heresy, by juou no zan

Sometimes the unfair expectations placed upon a child by their parents is a gender, and sometimes it's a mythic destiny. Either way, if it sucks? Hit da bricks!

A single line in a video game once again distracted me with its implications so much I had to write a whole novella about it, although this time I did eventually cut it down, since I didn't know where I was going at first.

I did so much research about medieval and early renaissance machinery for this story that ended up entirely cut. RIP, lengthy internal debate about how best to power a sawmill. (A lot of it

might have gotten cut from the final story, but Mara's joking "surprise" at the idea that Nic thinks about things other than building and making shit is honestly totally fair.)

Once again finished a story between issues and used the opportunity to learn something new with the title card/illustration/end card. Mostly what I learned is that calligraphy styles for the Latin alphabet and for kanji and kana are very different and it is hard to make them look cohesive, especially when you do not routinely use one of them.

Men of Business, by stills

Ask me about early Victorian textile mills! I now know more than my fair share.

You know how slash fic takes place in a universe identical to our own except that rimming is always squeaky clean? This is that universe except for we've scrubbed out child labor, worker exploitation, and cotton lung in favor of sex and romance. Is there something profound to be said about class struggle in the premise I created? Yes, and I'm not particularly saying it.

Also I know audits don't work like this. We're pretending they did in the 1840s. Shush.

What started as a fairly silly premise (enormous bonus points to anyone who can spot the original, much-mutated fandom origins) took on unexpected personal significance as it took shape. Huge thanks to spitkitten for inspiration, encouragement, and ultimately betaing. This would not, obviously, have been written without you.

Duel on Ganryujima Island (巌流島), by TOFU+BEAST

I normally don't draw twinks, but I've drawn a lot of horny pictures of ya boi Miyamoto Musashi, and I just recently learned that Kojiro Sasaki died due to a deep puncture wound in his left lung and ribs, and I just think that just adds another layer of ero to the infamous Musashi v Kojiro duel. Just a hunk gettin' stabbed, how romantic. Kira! KIRA!!

When the Cat's Away, by Iron Eater

It's an *Edwardian* setting this time, not pseudo-Victorian, thank you very much. I wanted to try to fill the background with as many distinct elements as possible instead of my usual abstract voids. I think it turned out okay! The older maid in this image was also referred to as an "Edwardian fujoshi" by parties who shall not be named (they know who they are), so now everyone else reading this has experienced that phrase, as well.

This piece was created entirely in Clip Studio Paint EX.

Quiet, by The Winter Cynic

Sword lesbians, swords not pictured. They definitely have done boy drag and I'm a little sad that, like swords, boy drag is not pictured.