

the **RAD MAG**



SPOOK

ISSUE #7 | FALL 2022



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What now?



issue created by

Candi Bartlett * * * writer, editor, illustrator

Halloween decorations * * * motivation team



= featured in every issue



Letter from the Editor

I want sweaters. Yes, I am focusing some thoughts on the abundance in my life and considering the winter to come. The time of harvest and hearth is here. Mostly, though, my brain is filled with sweaters. Halloween decorations and snuggling up on the couch for every spooky episode of all of my favorite shows. Vintage pumpkin faces drinking apple cider. Cinnamon everywhere. There is very little I want more.

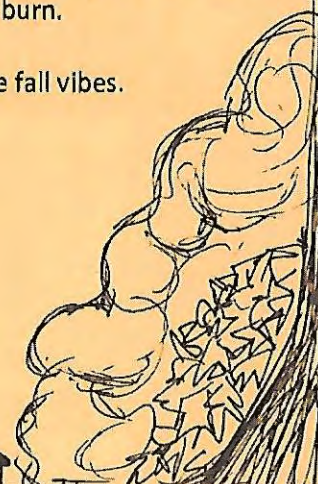
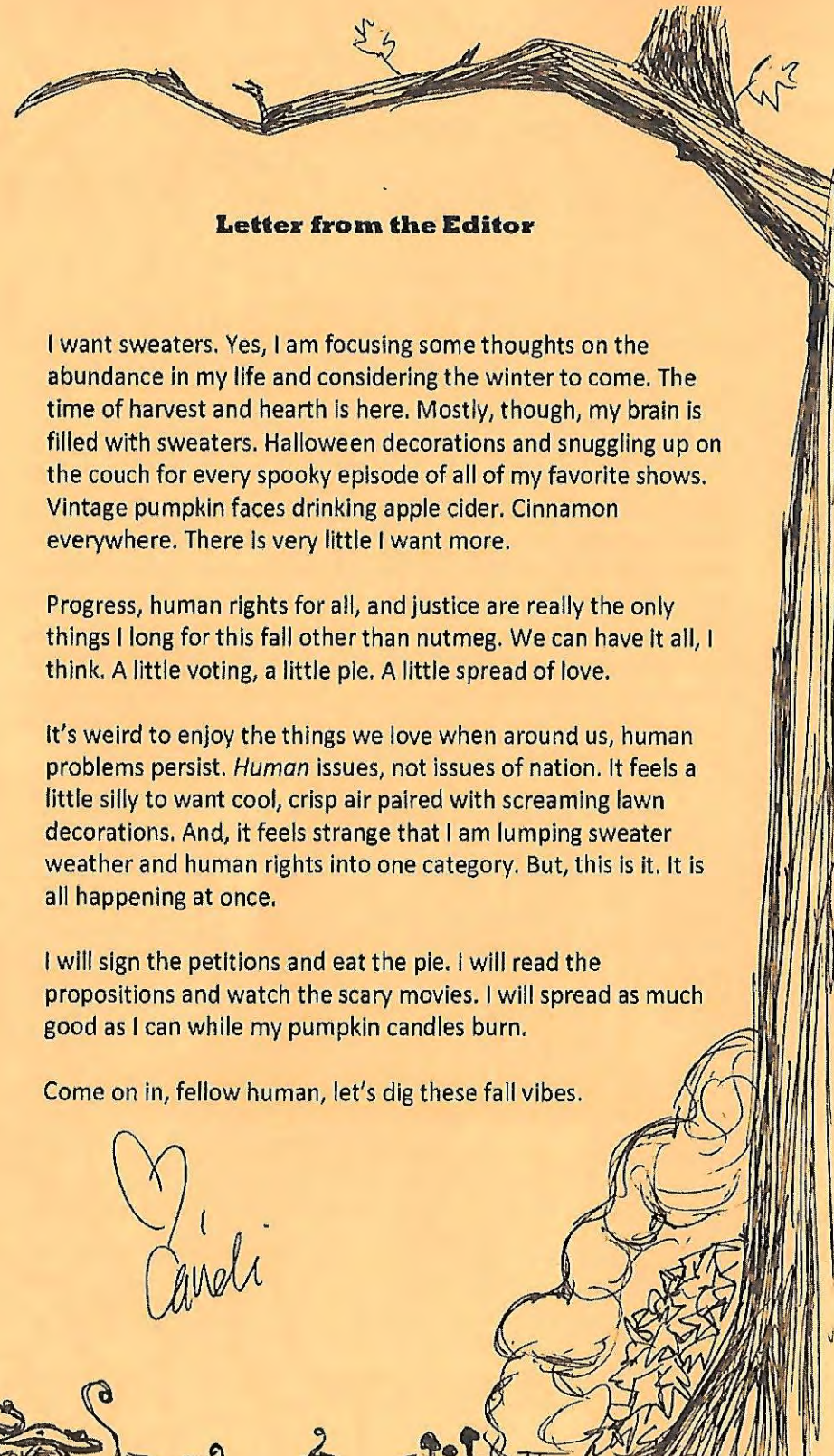
Progress, human rights for all, and justice are really the only things I long for this fall other than nutmeg. We can have it all, I think. A little voting, a little pie. A little spread of love.

It's weird to enjoy the things we love when around us, human problems persist. *Human issues*, not issues of nation. It feels a little silly to want cool, crisp air paired with screaming lawn decorations. And, it feels strange that I am lumping sweater weather and human rights into one category. But, this is it. It is all happening at once.

I will sign the petitions and eat the pie. I will read the propositions and watch the scary movies. I will spread as much good as I can while my pumpkin candles burn.

Come on in, fellow human, let's dig these fall vibes.

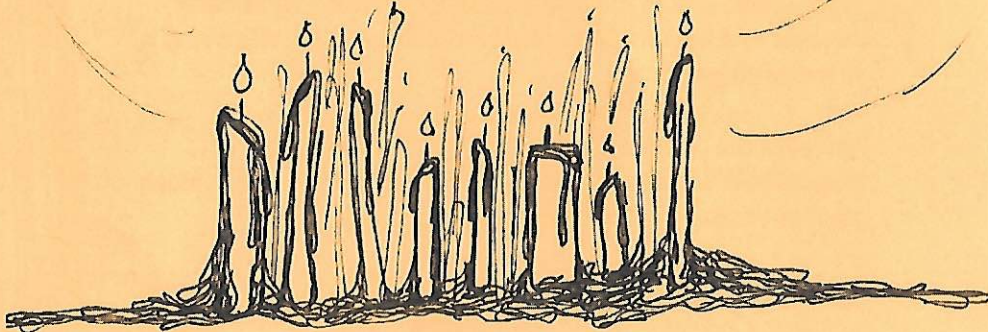
Candi



The Bottom

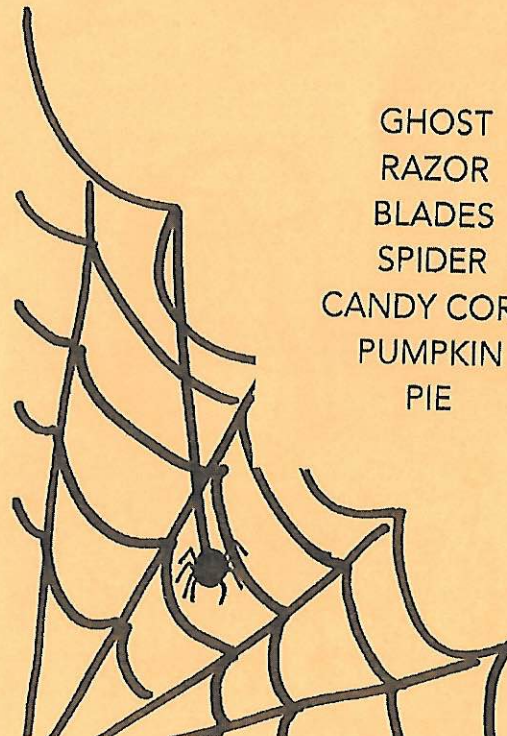
It's so very loud. All the rustling and screaming. Everyone shifts and slides. When we move around the entire group gets a little deeper, closer together. It's impossible to breathe. We can hear them out there. They laugh. They talk. They act like it doesn't matter. Almost like it's a game. "Trick or Treat!" they shout. In the bowl, it's different. There's nowhere to go. No games in here. Just waiting. Waiting and being knocked around, listening to our friends shriek as they get yanked out. Sometimes, we can hear their wrappers being torn, ripped apart in the hands of the humans. They can't even wait to get home before we're devoured. Monsters.

No one is safe at the bottom of the bowl.

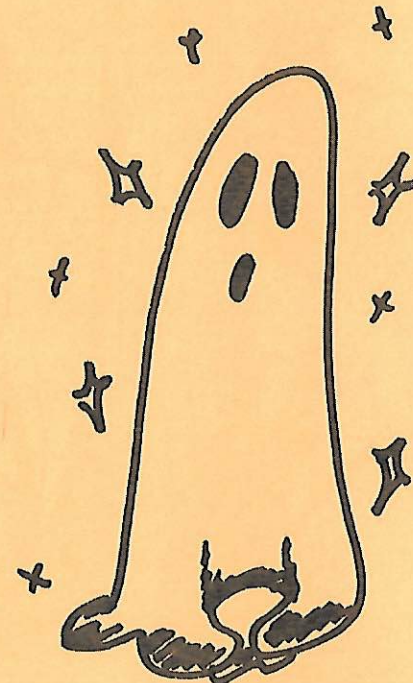


WORD SEARCH

B	G	T	I	K	O	P	L	N	P
I	H	J	M	Q	L	D	R	A	U
E	O	S	A	V	O	O	A	U	M
N	S	D	H	J	C	E	Z	L	P
U	T	C	K	Y	X	Y	O	W	K
S	P	I	D	E	R	O	R	D	I
H	E	N	P	F	T	P	I	E	N
K	A	E	B	L	A	D	E	S	O
C	R	G	S	R	C	E	O	P	X



GHOST
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BLADES
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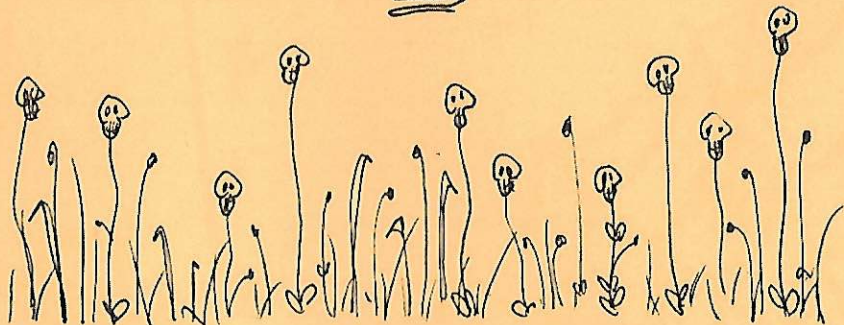
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The Cleanup Man

by Candi Bartlett

Donnie was not a fan of processing day. It's not horrible, he had *definitely* had worse details, but processing day was long. And boring. And maybe just a fancy way to say "more paperwork". Tom seemed to love it. Twice a year, a team of so many agents and techs were chosen, supposedly at random, to work the day.

In a long, brown room, Donnie and Tom sat at a long, brown table. A handful of techs had a few small stations on the opposite wall. One door in on the left, one door out on the right. The room smelled like coffee and there was a spectacular bagel tray. Definitely worse details.

All morning, Tom was happily greeting people and spreading general pep. Which was great. It still surprised Donnie now and then. Seeing behind the scenes. All the layers of Tom. Sometimes, it seemed like being let into the group was more than just a new assignment. More than a promotion. Then again, the world's longest day of license renewals and passport applications felt not so very special at all.

Their last case before lunch was a lady with the foaming mouthed dog. Tom assured Donnie the foaming was not due to anything contagious. Just a side effect of the woman's top secret work with biological toxins. At least she brought brownies and even with the foaming, the dog was pretty damn cute. The lady told him to save the brownies for later, but Donnie popped one in his mouth after lunch because dessert. By the time he got back to the long, brown room Donnie understood why those were at home treats. The door slammed shut behind him and everyone looked up.

Tom watched Donnie very slowly get a cup of coffee and smiled. The kid ate a brownie. They really should start handing out instructions with Millie's baked goods.

A red light at the top of the entry door lit up again. Next in line was ready. Donnie took his seat and Tom went to the door. A paper file popped into the box on the wall. Donnie didn't know where it came from but they were the best little dosslers ever. Each file had the applicant's information neatly summarized. Name, age, registration status, country or planet of origin. Some came with species bio-class origin.

"Well, I'll be!" Tom shouted. The techs all looked up and smiled then went back to their work. They sort of did it in unison. Tom opened

the door quickly. "Dan and Heidi! How have you been?" A young couple walked into the room and right into Tom's waiting arms.

Tom ushered them over to waiting chairs. "Donnie, this is Dan and Heidi."

Donnie stood and put his hand out. "It's nice to meet you." They were both gorgeous. Flawless skin, sort of blue. Their hands were very dry. Donnie gestured to the chairs and the group sat. Tom sat on the table.

Dan pulled a large, yellow envelope from his messenger bag. "I think everything is in order." He was a little nervous, shifting in his seat. "We really need this vacation." He put his hand on Heidi's knee and she squeezed it.

Tom was concerned. "Is everything okay?"

Dan shook his head. "The last couple of decades have been pretty hard."

Donnie looked over the application. It was perfect, every item completed. Reason for trip - they hadn't left the country in more than 75 years.

"Excuse me, there is a typo here. It says you haven't left the country in 75 years?"

Heidi nodded. "That's right." Her hair gave short, brittle bounces.

Donnie looked at Tom. "What am I missing here?"

Tom was totally cool. He smiled warmly. "Dan and Heidi were on their way out of New Orleans some time back when they fell victim to a series of unfortunate events."

Donnie waited for more. Tom thought about the details. A gnat landed on Dan's eyeball.

"They were caught in the wave of a Class 4 magical event."

Donnie flipped to the main page in their file. LIVING STATUS: DECEASED. He raised his head to Tom who nodded, then looked to the couple and raised his eyebrows.

"Yes, but only a little dead," Heidi said.

"It's really just the biggest inconvenience," Dan added.

Tom was reassuring. "The supernatural division is working on it."

Heidi started to cry. Little whimpering sounds came from her mouth. Her eyes stayed dry. "They've been working on it forever."

Dan put his arm around her. "We've lost everyone, now," he said. "Even the tortoise has finally passed. We just really need to get away, Tom." He looked to Donnie. "You think rest would come easy to the dead." He gave a tired smile. "The anxiety really sticks around."

Donnie had never thought about it, but he was suddenly very worried about forever. Worry made him think about snacks. He wondered if the couple was hungry. Then he wondered if they ate at all. By the time he decided to offer them something everyone else was standing.

"You go. Take some time in a new place. We'll be here when you get back." Tom gave Dan a hug. "We won't stop looking."

Heidi popped up on her toes and gave the corner of his fluffy mustache a short kiss. "Thank you, Tom. We love it when you work processing day. It's always so nice to see you."

Tom blushed. "Heidi, you are the highlight of my year." He stamped their application approved and handed the file to them. "Take this over to the techs and they'll get you all scanned and setup with your travel documents."

He sat back down on the table by Donnie. "You know, they say if you eat one of Millie's brownies you can see the future."

Donnie giggled into his coffee. Then he got sad. "Tom, why haven't we been able to help those people?"

"Because magic is more powerful than technology. The real practitioners have been hunted for a long time so resources are scarce."

Donnie sighed. "I think we should have given them some brownies."

The red light came on again and Tom went to answer it. He came back to the table with a fresh file and a short man. The man wore black glasses and a cardigan and carried a gorgeous plant in an ornate pot. He gently placed the plant on the table.

"I need to renew my carnivorous plant license. Please be careful when inspecting her. She hasn't been feeling well lately." He took off his glasses and looked at Tom. "Human flesh is her favorite, but it doesn't agree with her." He gestured with a hand covered in bloody gauze bandages.

A tech came over with a thick, hard case. Tom opened it and pulled a pair of long, chain mail gloves out. Donnie flipped through the file. Planet of origin for the human, Earth. The plant, Gwen...

"Elsewhere?" Donnie asked.

Tom nodded.

Donnie rolled his eyes. "If this thing bites me, I quit."

Tom laughed. The man from Earth laughed. Gwen laughed.

Donnie put on the gloves and gave that plant the most thorough exam he could think of.

The red light blinked again.

Tom and Donnie finally made it out of the long, brown room and into the main rotunda. It was almost as good as being outside. It was dark outside, middle of the night dark, but inside the large hallways, home base bustled. Donnie could not wait to get outside, then into bed. Probably a pizza first. Probably a pizza in bed.

Jennifer met them with an armful of files and tablets. She was so put together about it. If Donnie was carrying those things he would not look so smooth.

She took one look at Donnie's glassy eyes. "Millie was in this year?"



"Yes. Donnie's first time."

Jennifer nodded. "Ah." She pulled an accordion file out of her stack. It came out of nowhere, like extra scarves up a magician's sleeve. "Tom, here are the rough stats from today. There's a tablet and a few files. Let me know what you want to focus on for the final numbers."

Tom smiled. "Thank you. I am going to get a few hours on this before going home." He smacked Donnie on the shoulder. Donnie jumped. "Kid, get home safe." He laughed. "And get some damn sleep." Tom disappeared into the bustle.

"He's going to put in more time? I need a refresh just to get home."

Jennifer shuffled through her items, trying to figure out which stop to make next. Someone better have saved her a brownie. "It's his baby. He always puts in extra time on processing day."

Donnie knew he was stoned and exhausted, and the lights were messing with his brain, but he was mostly sure they didn't see any babies. "What about a baby?"

She looked up. "He created this program. Processing. The whole *process*. A way for all of us to live, work, and travel together within our special knowledge-of-the-universe bubble. A way to make sure everyone is accounted for and taken care of."

"Why didn't he say anything?"

She hugged the files to her chest and thought about taking her shoes off. "You know he's not like that. He just wants to be in the field."

"Jennifer, does someone look after Tom?"

"We do."

Donnie gave her a goofy grin.

"What?"

"You're a nice lady."

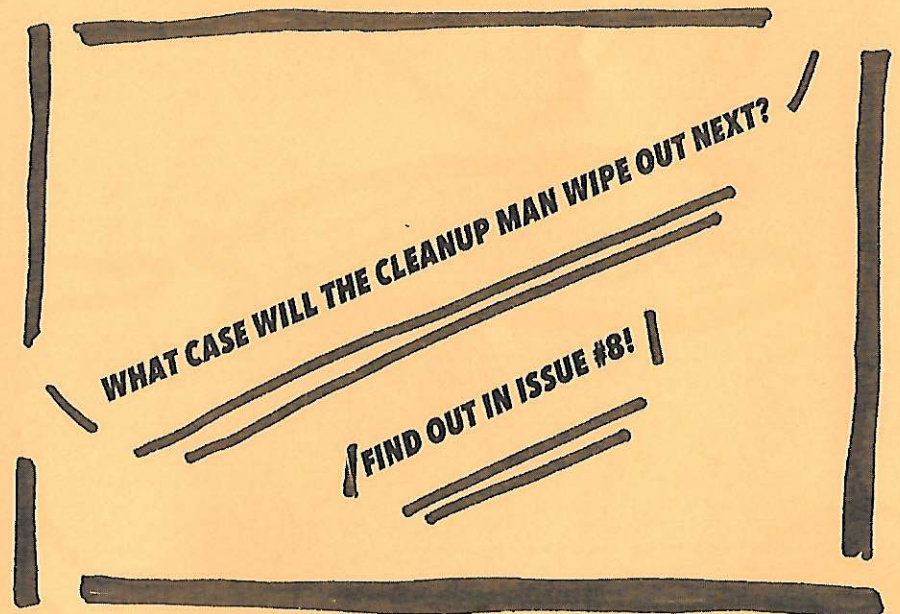
"Donald." She smiled ever so slightly. "Go home."

"You're a nice lady and that was lovely."

"Okay," she said and turned around. She called back over her shoulder, "Good night, Donald."

"Good night, nice lady," he said and turned in the opposite direction.

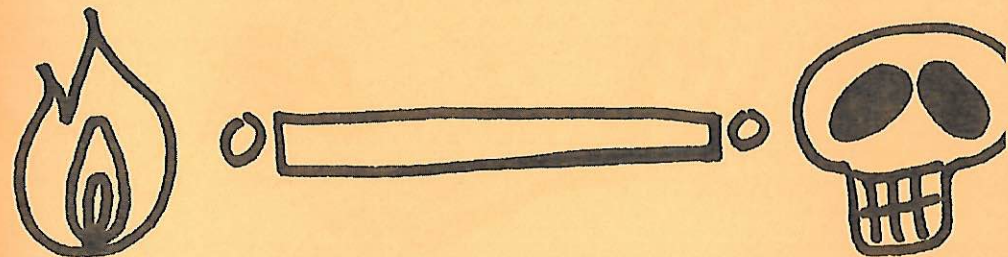
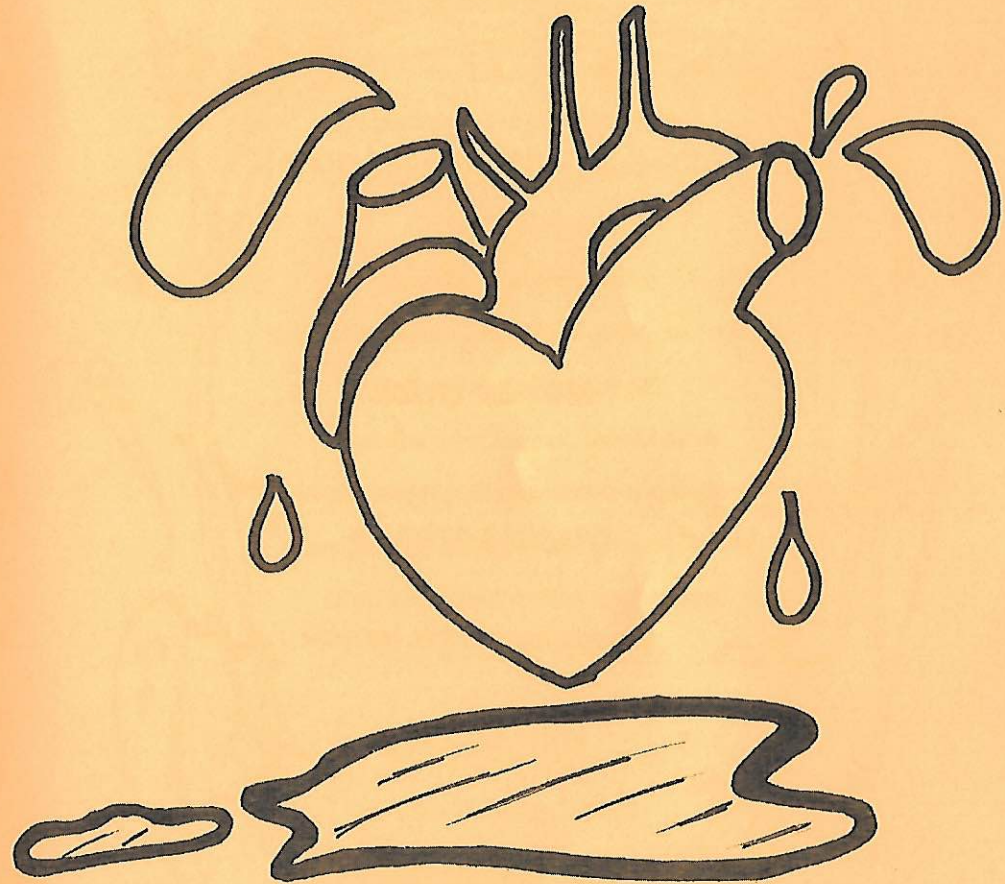
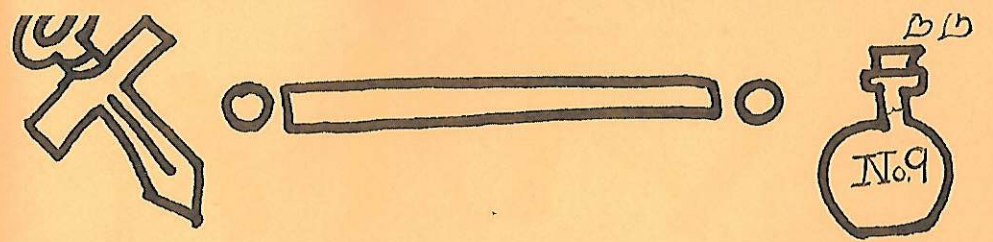
The cool night air blew over Donnie's face and the door gave a comforting whoosh behind him. It really was a successful day and Donnie certainly had not been bored. He left work with a smile on his face, a pocket full of brownies, and wearing only one small Band-Aid.



Safe Mary

It was an accident, you see, when Mary - the most level-headed girl you could meet - raised that entire cemetery. She tried to keep it small, bring her neighbor's dog back was all, but her power was so big and her heart so filled with care, that her magic sort of went everywhere. It ran down the street and struck its way straight across town, just as Mary's neighbor's frown turned upside down. Her favorite friend, the only one she really had, wagged his tail and raised his head. But not so far away, headstones shattered and the ground bulged and swayed. Old friends of the town, some the folks will wish had stayed, clawed their way out of the ground. Soon, small Spot, his fur newly fluffy and hot, would fight to save his favorite human from the accident, you see.

She did not mean to raise them all - smart, safe Mary.






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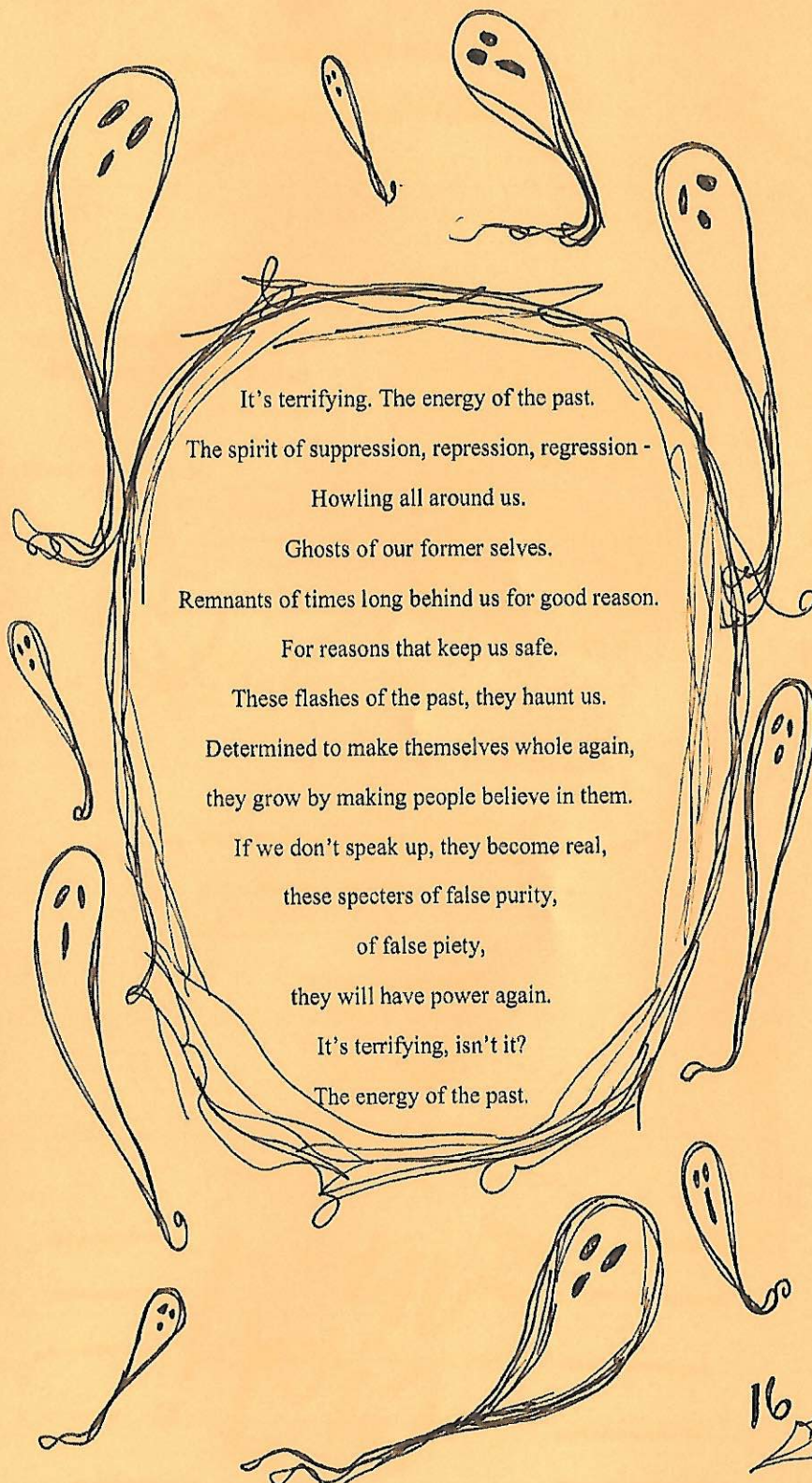
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It's terrifying. The energy of the past.
The spirit of suppression, repression, regression -
Howling all around us.
Ghosts of our former selves.
Remnants of times long behind us for good reason.
For reasons that keep us safe.
These flashes of the past, they haunt us.
Determined to make themselves whole again,
they grow by making people believe in them.
If we don't speak up, they become real,
these specters of false purity,
of false piety,
they will have power again.
It's terrifying, isn't it?
The energy of the past.

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EARTH TRANSMISSIONS



Holy shit, really?
Demon
Daemon



Right click squiggly line auto correct.



OooOoooo, I see.



That is sexy, though



It is. Makes me want to fondle old books bound in human skin.



Yasssssssssssss.



COME BACK EACH ISSUE FOR
THE STRANGE AND UNUSUAL!
THE PROVOCATIVE AND PERVERSE!

What now?

Another paper product has come into the world.
Before this super sweet zine ends up in the trash, or recycling, or compost heap
(not recommended: soil that will be used for growing foods)
the Rad Mag suggests:

Sharing it with a friend

Using the pages as fun crumpled packing material

Turning it into a scrapbook: tape or paste your pictures and fun clippings
using *the Rad Mag* as sweet background graphics!

Folding the pages into creepy little paper boats for your Halloween décor

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