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# DENMARK

an anthology of writing and art about Eyes Wide Shut

## editor's note

### *Denmark Or Creating An Anthology of Writing About Eyes Wide Shut* by Kristin Garth

I like an arty film orgy as much as anyone – maybe more – but that's not the most fascinating aspect to me of *Eyes Wide Shut*. What fascinates me most about this film is best encapsulated in the book “Eyes Wide Shut: Stanley Kubrick and The Making of His Final Film” by Robert P. Kolker and Nathan Abrams. This book studies the film as an exemplar of what film critic Edward Said defined as the “late style” of an artist,. The book explains that this style manifests itself when “the artist is no longer under pressure to do other than what he or she wants to do.”

For many artists, the beginnings of their careers are plagued with the compromises and negotiations needed to get a foothold into the creative community, the concerns of money and ingratiating oneself with consumers and their politics and desires. In many ways, Kubrick was removed from many of these concerns before *Eyes Wide Shut*. He lived reclusively, cast and fired whom he wanted, made movies seemingly when he chose, taking more time away between projects. During the early part of his career, Kubrick took a couple to a handful of years between projects. He used this time to read, research and fill a warehouse with endless documentation to support his next film.

Kubrick never spent as long between projects, though, as he did between his penultimate film *Full Metal Jacket* and *Eyes Wide Shut*, 12 years. That's an incredibly long time to read and research for a film. It's not even close to what Kubrick actually spent working on this film. According to the book by Kolker and Abrams, *Eyes Wide Shut* was actually an intended project of the director's for almost 50 years. They even quote Kubrick in the book as saying that “All the films I have made started by reading a book.” The book in question that inspired *Eyes Wide Shut* is *Traumnovelle* (or *Dream Story*) by Arthur Schnitzler. The book cites James B. Harris, Kubrick's producing partner as a source that Kubrick had already read the novella when they became acquainted in 1955.

There is another version, online, in *Variety*, of Kubrick's introduction to *Traumnovelle* cited by the actor Kirk Douglas in a story about the making of the film *Spartacus*. Apparently, Douglas and Kubrick argued so much that in an act of desperation they attended therapy together. According to Douglas in this interview given close to his hundredth birthday, it was during one of their therapy sessions that the therapist recommended the Schnitzler book.

Whether we believe it was in 1955 or the Douglas version which would have been somewhere before *Spartacus* was released in 1960, Kubrick had been pondering this book for decades by the time that *Eyes Wide Shut* releases in July of 1999. The book has a lot of the same setup as the movie – a Doctor disturbed by his wife's fantasies of another man wanders off to a night of decadence and masks and sexuality.

An interesting point of note is that the confession of Albertina, the wife in the Schnitzler novella, is about a man from Denmark. This mirrors the password of the party that her

husband obtains from a musician for the debaucherous gathering – also Denmark. In the film, Stanley Kubrick changed this word to Fidelio.

*Eyes Wide Shut* exists on many levels and for much longer in the consciousness than the film version. It has existed since 1926 in print as a novella. It is inspired by so many events that Kubrick knew about including the lavish macabre sexuality of The Rothschild parties with their strange animal masks. The internet is full of documentation of these influences, a Google search away.

This anthology is called Denmark --- the place of Stanley Kubrick's decades-long obsession. It represents a certain state to which we all wander if only in dreams – the fantasy of sexuality which means so many unique things to all of us . As in the novel, even husbands and wives go to distinctly different locations while calling it the same thing. I had thought of calling it Fidelio, which was Kubrick's change, but, like sex, I feel that this anthology is best when it goes deeper. I wanted people to become obsessed with the origins of this story the way that Kubrick was – before Fidelio was a thing. Go back to Denmark, to the source.

Here is a sonnet I wrote entitled Denmark about the source book and the film:

### *Denmark*

You wander into Denmark uninvited  
enticed by naked sounds, my gated grounds,  
aphrodisiac someone recited  
inside a piano bar, staccato sounds  
of penetration with a mask. If asked,  
one uttered word, Denmark, becomes a key,  
to verboten, velvet cloaked sodomy, back-  
bent whores in antique table top orgies,  
a blinded man's prophecy, his proffer  
towards a rotten state made masquerade  
where even a doctor is considered pauper  
trespasser in a billionaire's gangbang charade.  
I am secretly maintained, manicured.  
You can violate me with a word.

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*Eyes Wide Barbie* by Kristin Garth

## *Open Your Eyes* by Reza Inaloo

Here we have our protagonist, a handsome doctor with a beautiful wife and child, lose control after his wife's confession of a fantasy she once had upon a chance meeting with a strange man. Dr. Bill is an all around good guy who starts a one nighter of "where dreams are made of" by visiting a dead patient whose daughter is more than a fan, being seduced by a prostitute and an intriguing opportunity to crash a masquerade ball.

Kubrick sets the pacing to perfection by allowing us to gradually notice the underbelly of the beast, the deterioration of his good guy image. Throughout the film we see Bill proudly throw money just like Egoyan did in "Exotica," five years earlier as a symbolism for power and privilege.

Now he is about to meet the other side. It starts at the Rainbow Room when one crosses to fantasyland. It's a reference to Wizard of Oz: Cowardly Lion, Scarecrow and Tin Man. These characters represent, in this film, power that shapes how the that masses they rule over behave: be fearful, be stagnant and be heartless.

At the costume shop, we see another door with a rainbow neon sign crescent above it. Once we go inside, we find two naked men with the owner's daughter who, we will discover as the scene plays out, is a good side business for daddy.

The good doctor enters a purgatory he didn't know existed or had ignored to live his comfy life. That is just the beginning. The masked ball portrayal is Kubrick's portrayal of what goes on in the lives of the rich and the filthy. The working girls represent exploitation and truth that the world revolves around female bodies and affections. Ugly powerful men desire and purchase beautiful women and consider them disposable (hence the death of the woman who redeemed Bill).

Kubrick's genius is that on the surface we're enjoying a tale on a difficult phase of an upper class family. He even infuses the real life dysfunctional marriage of Cruise/Kidman. Even the rumors of Cruise's homosexuality are alluded to in the film in a scene in which he gets bumped and slurred by a couple of homophobic hooligans as he wanders the streets. He also confronts the double standard informing the absurd belief that men cheat but women don't.

In *Eyes Wide Shut*, Kubrick really depicts the decline of our civilization and how rotten we all could be given a slight chance. There are some who say that the ending of the film was done after Kubrick's death. There are others who say some scenes after Bill's confrontation with Victor before he returns home are missing. These assertions remain conspiracy theories among many others surrounding the making of the film.

I love Kubrick's styles and approach to filmmaking in general. Even though, as a rule, I detest remakes, I do wish a capable female director would do another version of Eyes Wide Shut.

## *Cruising* by Harrison Foster

“Ladies, where exactly are we going....*exactly*? ”

*Eyes Wide Shut* was made during a time of Kubrick’s career when he would maintain a Malickian distance of time between films (about a decade for each of the last few). With his god-tier unreasonable expectations of how he could mold reality, I suppose this isn’t surprising. What’s surprising is that he was ever able to crank them out the way he had done in the past. *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *A Clockwork Orange*, and *Barry Lyndon* were all released within a span of years that was fewer than the amount of time between *Full Metal Jacket* and *Eyes Wide Shut*. It didn’t always take Kubrick epochs to churn out his epics.

Whether Stan’s slow down was due to the lack of uppers on film sets relative to the *M\*A\*S\*H* era of Hollywood, his increasingly bizarre and reclusive temperament, or just good ole fashioned old age, the world into which *Eyes Wide Shut* would eventually be released was a bit different from that which enveloped its inception—namely, fucking Alec Baldwin and Kim Basinger were the original “Hollywood sexy couple who regularly made headlines” to star. And of course, the version we all know and obsess over came of age during the reign of Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. The starchild made it back from beyond the infinite in less time than the space between these two eras.

My head has learned and understood that this was the original casting for *Eyes Wide Shut*, but my heart has always refused to accept it. And that’s because everything about this film is clearly about Tom Cruise and Nicole specifically. This is the story of a closeted gay man, deep in denial and on a mission to prove and perform his cis-heterosexuality and traditional masculinity when he is confronted with the fact that his wife is out of his league and has sexual desires he can’t possibly fulfill. And it is about his interest in a deranged secret society that came THIS close to destroying his marriage and completely subsuming his identity.

There was always something comically desperate about Tom Cruise’s attempts at masculinity (probably perfectly crystalized in *Top Gun*’s legacy, which basically every serious contemporary kinophile at this point considers to be a heavily homoerotic romp in the sand). And we could have a lot of fun programming an entire festival of films that unintentionally lampoon Cruise’s “man’s man” (indeed) character tropes. But with *Eyes Wide Shut*, I find it impossible to accept that it wasn’t Kubrick’s conscious intention to publicly disrobe, reveal, and scrutinize Cruise (“You will kindly remove your mask....remove your clothes” Kubrick’s longtime assistant demands of Cruise in front of an audience of anonymous spectators), partially because it just seems so damn obvious and partially because, well, I don’t believe Kubrick had unconscious intentions.

Once you open your eyes to this frame, the evidence is everywhere. Some of it is remarkably overt — in one scene a chorus line of unironic frat bros chants anti-gay slurs at a desperately trying-to-escape Cruise. Does he know that this is the sort of rhetoric that many in the world lob at him? I recently rewatched some of Tom’s more tempestuous press clips from the

infamous *War of the Worlds* circuit, and, if we are to take him at his word, he is adamantly ignorant of what the rest of the world is thinking about him and saying about him. He is sheltered from it. Protected from it.

Kubrick found a way to put Tom out (put intended) in the open, to say all of the things that everyone has been suspecting. And I don't think Tom ever for a second had any idea what was happening. I think Nicole did, though. And it's not a huge mystery to me that their marriage fell apart shortly after the film's release. I think Kevin Kline's relationship in *In & Out* lasted longer after Matt Dillon outed him at his Oscar acceptance speech.

People don't say no to Bill Harford (or to Tom Cruise). People don't tell them the truth. They pass through rooms, flashing their smile, shaking hands firmly, and making self-help-book-tier eye contact. Bill whips out his doctor's license throughout his journey as if it's an omnipotent get-out-of-jail-free card (and he's not wrong). You could play quite a drinking game to the number of times he shows his proof-of-being-a-doctor papers (fyi another good rule is whenever Cruise repeats the last thing someone says to him).

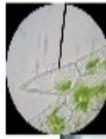
But this agency is an illusion. Every time Cruise "succeeds" is a benevolent gift from the cartel that controls every detail of his life, and possibly all of our lives. ("If I told you their names, you probably wouldn't sleep so well at night.")

At the end of the film, Tom and Nicole (or "Bill and Alice," I guess) decide to choose the reality of their marriage and not indulge the inchoate nature of the nightmare cult which may or not be controlling everything from the shadows. They simply decide it didn't really happen and instead re-consummate their marriage and buy their daughter some oversized stuffed animals at one of these ludicrous New York City department stores during Christmastime (this film is the perfect death knell for that hackneyed 90s trope, and possibly for all hackneyed 90s tropes).

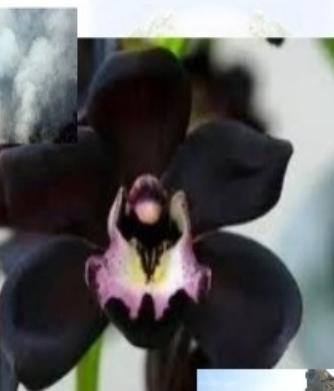
Of course, we all know that in real life, the nightmare cult secret society won. Tom and Nicole's marriage was destroyed. He is firmly in the grasp, and it doesn't seem as though they will ever let him go. More so than ever, Tom seems to be on a mission to unironically promulgate his masculinity. Gone is the whiff of spiritual introspection we got here and in P.T. Anderson's *Magnolia* (released the same year!). And did it even happen? It's amazing that this was even allowed to occur at all. Only Kubrick could get away with being so obvious. And I still wonder how many were in on the "joke."

So many questions. But for now, I'll give up my inquiries (which are completely useless).

# Orchid



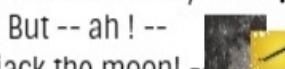
A chill triumvirate of diadems,  
Amid pirouettes of billowing mist,  
Lit only, by black-laced thread.  
Rememberance, the nightly detour  
Of obsidian osmosis.



Watching your sweet heart palpate  
Away, in dank, black uncelebrated shades.



Regret stands on every altar. We shiver together prone



But -- ah ! -- and naked in the wind...



Hijack the moon! -

You are my first and last



soliloquy.



As a monsoon lifts her ankles,  
And begins to waltz across



the skies.



Without lustre, lacking liberty,  
Lanturne of laconic intermissions.



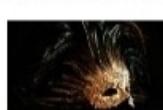
Listen! There flits a dragonfly,



On its way to the stars. Tears of crystal, only friend.



Lo! A maniacal masquerade.



**Poetry Not Pills**  
**About the**



**author:**  
**Wear.**  
**A.**  
**Fucking.**  
**Mask.**



The play of the sleepwalkers,  
Ghosts, with coffee-ed out souls..



*Eyes Wide Shut* by Max Lewy

## *What a Dream Triggers* by Emma Lee

Men fear laughter from a woman, their wife  
above all. High profile jobs lead to distance,  
a dimming of lust. The consequence,  
a search for passion, retreat from married life,  
a desire to be desired, feel skin  
on skin, sensual touch, luxuriate  
in sensations, turn ons, caresses sate.  
No strings, weight of commitment, only sin.  
The trigger, her confession of of a dream:  
a military man, rigid, a uniform,  
an archetype, an idealised man's form.  
He can't follow through his half-baked scheme.  
In dreams, death is the end of a chapter.  
He can still be his wife's only lover.

## *Tonsured Rabbit* by Tom Snarsky

Sean Gunn wakes up to a world  
where he's playing Bill Harford, Marvel  
twist on the Harrison Ford impulse——

the night stretches ahead  
like the stretcher Mandy didn't need  
then (offscreen, maybe, later) did. Gunn

is well-suited for the role. He runs  
lines with Natasha  
and it's a little weird, but her training

in biology and experience with  
sustainable design have prepared her  
for cults, for a proliferation of masks.

The rehearsal tape clicks forward——  
o breakdown, o purple purple pillow.

## *Stanley Kubrick Directs Bernie Sanders* by Justin Karcher

*What you seek is seeking you,* Bernie thinks

as he walks the streets of America alone at night  
everyone behind closed doors wearing plague masks  
and watching the same news clips over and over again  
an unemployed orgy of paranoid-schizoids while billionaires  
are still fucking other billionaires in wilderness  
bunkers the size of basketball arenas, social distancing  
does not apply to the ruling class, Bernie's eyes

have never been shut though, they have always been wide  
like a fisherman's net, catching everything  
that crosses their path, the plight of the addicted girl  
the plight of the disappearing boy, the plight of the  
working class, our autobiography, what it's like  
to desperately want a piano but you can't afford it  
so throughout your life you've been collecting piano key

after piano key in the hopes that one day your descendants  
will unite your broken parts and make beautiful music out of them  
that hopefully those symphonies will free the boisterous bloom  
from your bleak bones, all the feelings you've bottled up  
all these years, maybe then all this will seem worth it  
if real change happens, if all the secret societies  
fall in on themselves and there are no more conspiracies

if they only knew how much we're sweating  
on the inside

maybe then will these struggles seem tolerable  
that they were the spark that led to something better  
how we persevered and took up arms against  
a bevy of beasts, how their music was just one long  
jagged repetitive sound that caused us to risk everything  
for revolution, impossible sex in what seemed like a bedroom  
of no possibilities, Bernie peering through our windows

and watching us cry, then muttering an aphrodisiac prayer  
and suddenly our teardrops have minds of their own  
how they meet in the middle of all this emptiness  
and fuck one another so hard they turn into bullets  
the staccato undone, they look for their guns

## *Tango on a High Wire* by Karlo Sevilla

No safety net beneath,  
but the tension  
must suffice  
for our combined  
tiptoed weight  
as we swirl  
and lunge  
in shifting  
configurations  
of oneness.

*Trysts with another  
shouldn't matter,  
should they?*

The tipsy dance  
at the Christmas party  
could have led  
to somewhere else.

You could've  
played Domino  
to her last tile,  
and I, to the last sailor  
on Cape Cod.

*Stolen moments  
are cheap, anyway.*

And ultimately,  
they wouldn't matter,  
would they?

## *LEAVE U ON RED* by MICHAEL CHANG

In this dreamy grotto

corn chowder in a bowl

Are you terrifying b/c you are perfect

or perfect b/c you are terrifying

Take a screenshot of what I said

To remind yourself exactly what you are

Panther in a cage

You say things that make ppl forget

Unwitting they come closer

O my

What big hands you have

You take a swipe

Practice your falsetto

O my

What big teeth you have

Pussy willow

Be in my movie

I'll mess up my lines

Screw up the make-believe

So I can kiss you again & again

Yes

I want to smell heavenly

Please gamble responsibly

## *night games* by Maureen Foster

here  
where the outcome of a dream  
or a fantasy

is as powerful as the effect of what is

real

then how is that dream or fantasy not

real

and it doesn't make any difference whether  
you forgot it or  
you never knew it

## *But You Know That, Don't You?* by Matthew King

(after *Atheist Barbie* by Kristin Garth)

**Nothing** happened? You're awake? Look through her -  
**is** she that transparent? Naught you'll find is  
**deeper**, doctor errant, nothing truer  
**than** that the dead-last thought on her mind is  
**sex** - the first one, too. You're caught, she's penned in,  
**not** unwillingly - you vowed it wasn't,  
**even** though your fake charade will end in  
**death**. That's life - it goes on till it doesn't.

**But** how life goes unshrouded, woken, things  
**you** knew so well - your wife - you now must ask -  
**know** this: the spell is broken on the **rings**  
**that** hid you like some talismanic mask -  
**don't** panic? Don't let fucking dreams undo  
**you**? Something happened. She knows that. Do you?

## *MY 1999 GF* by Jesse Hilson

"If they show Nicole Kidman's  
ass one more time,  
I'm storming out of here  
and getting  
my money back,"

my 1999 girlfriend said in the movie theatre.  
She also told me there was no way  
that was  
Greenwich Village.  
She didn't recognize it,

no way would those guys  
on the street verbally harass  
Tom Cruise for being gay.  
"In fact it would  
have been the other way around."

It would not help to explain that  
nothing's real.  
The movie was a heightened prism  
where everyone  
wants to fuck:

A sexual gestalt-blanket world  
more overlaying than even our own.  
Sex: a portal to grief in many of his films.  
Is it in ours?  
We might be mindless. You tell me.

I guess I knew that he fabricated everything on site,  
he had US soldiers fight the Vietnam War  
in a British gasworks.  
My 2016 girlfriend's father, a writer,  
had helped Kubrick with that one.

The 1999 gf, though, there was a flooding river  
behind her house that summer.  
We swam out there, let it take us. That was real.  
We fucked in the enormous water as it propelled us  
downstream, feet not ever touching the bottom.

## *My eyes have seen* by Michael Martinez

My eyes have not seen the glories  
of the maidens holding hands  
dancing around old oak trees  
etched hearts withering on the bark.

Instead one is hopefully led astray  
outside the circles of discretion  
drifting down dark alleys:  
Stanley's obsessive leering eyes.

Take the longer way, meandering,  
getting lost amongst neon lights:  
playacting and projecting  
and parodying and pretending.

Inviting lusting fearful glares  
as if opening scenes of nudity  
on film-sets with naked actresses  
surrounded by glittering masks.

The strange boring lives we inhabit -  
predictable emotional states  
and standardized inhibitions -  
that we dream ourselves out of,

perhaps

# *I didn't mean to tell you that* by Madison McSweeney

*After Alice's scandalous confession*

Staggered out into the world on my new-foal legs  
stripped, scrubbed and scoured  
of all my secrets  
my sweet secrets that used to be mine  
that I used to think about in the quiet  
satisfied, private  
looking at you

I didn't get the reaction I wanted  
And now I feel I've lost something

I punished myself for telling you that  
Did I tell  
you that?  
Walked off my hangover in the rain until I felt  
nothing at all

Do you remember that day?  
It was December  
the freezing rain stung like whips  
I let it scourge me  
and I admired  
the Christmas lights

## *Daddy's Little Girl* by December Lace

Daddy doesn't know how I like to play  
one flight above the dresses on display.  
Foreign businessmen- my invitation.  
Me being so young, no explanation  
needed for them at least, sharp suit and tie.  
We hide from Daddy Dear, His watchful eye.  
Takeout strewn over glass, wigs tossed on floor,  
Midnight pleasures cease, cannon fist on door.  
Bestial daddy finds the makeupped men,  
swears in Old Country, breaks off deals again,  
seals up my lovers, brings forth a new guest-  
curious and handsome- Father knows best

## *Reverie* by Marisa Silva-Dunbar

*Dr. Bill Harford: Now, where exactly are we going... exactly?*

*Gayle: Where the rainbow ends.*

*Dr. Bill Harford: Where the rainbow ends?*

*Nuala: Don't you want to go where the rainbow ends?*

He thinks he is the only one  
who can journey beyond  
the mirror to Wonderland, or Oz—  
frolic with nymphs, and revel  
like lusty satyrs on plush red carpets,  
leather sofas, and mahogany tables.

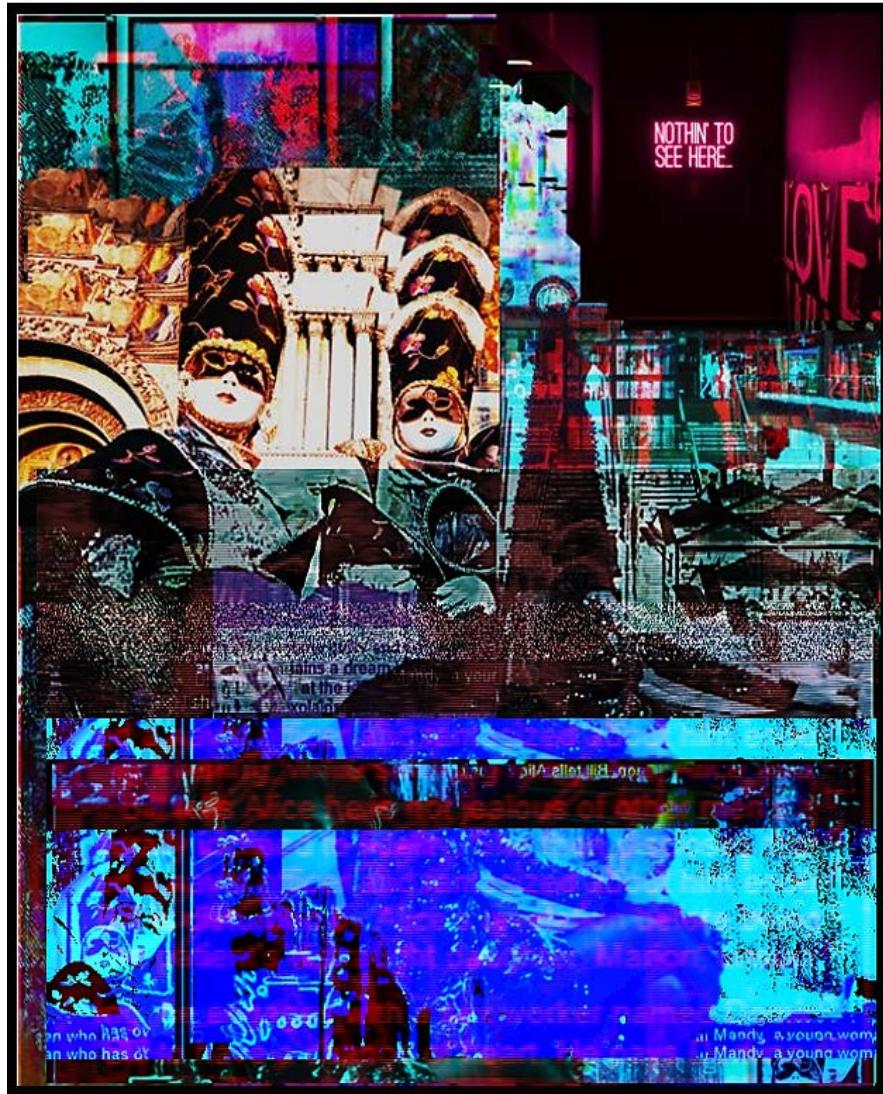
He is compelled to indulge in the feasts  
of the flesh—lick sweat from the collar  
bones and navels of naked women writhing

He feels safer as the voyeur.

NO DREAM IS EVER JUST







*No Dream Is Ever Just* by Kenneth Cale

## *Dancing with Dracula* by Chad Miller

Paprika curls pinned off her alabaster neck. A backless gown—sheer black bodice with a sweetheart neckline over an empire waist. Behind her lights strung and hung for the holidays. She escapes her husband who spots an old acquaintance at the piano. The beauty, Alice Harford, unknowingly walks my way.

Another Christmas party at the Ziegler's. The tasteful white card for this gaudy affair came by post; a secret invitation to the orgy coded into the filigree border. *Victor and Ilona Ziegler cordially invite Sandor Szavost to attend.* Sandor Szavost. Lord Ruthven. Earl of Marsden. Orlok.

I have worn many names like a mask, slipped into high homes by such biddings. Some believe I require it. But, no, I am already inside Alice's home, already corrupting it, and her.

She swallows a flute of bubbles on her way to the bar and the bartender replaces it. She loathes it here. Who can blame her? Centuries of parties. They suck until they don't. She sets her glass down on the table and I save another wife from an unhappy life.

“I think that’s my glass,” she says.

“Oh, I’m absolutely certain of it.” I drink it down. A trick I learned from Ovid’s *Ars Armatoria*.

“My name is Sandor Szavost. I’m Hungarian.” By way of Romania after a cousin’s betrayal. I feel homesick because of the holidays. The rot-rich soil through my paws. Flying through the stripped winter forest.

I bring her hand to my lips. I kiss a vein.

“Are you here with anyone tonight, Alice?” I know the answer. He’s too short for her.

Needs a haircut. I’ve already set my sisters upon him. He’s the reason Alice is here. She would rather be home with her daughter Helena. I see her daughter in her mind. As beautiful as her namesake. “I’m sure he’s the sort of man,” I say, “who wouldn’t mind if we danced.” The rest of the conversation goes to plan. I ask her occupation. Failed gallery manager. I cast aspersions on her marriage, marriage in general. She rebuffs my argument but pulls closer as we spin. I tease. She laughs. She sees Bill with my weird sisters. I test her anger and try to peel her away from the herd. Bill is called upstairs to attend to my evening appetizer in the lavatory, another redhead. I suggest Ziegler’s Renaissance bronzes in the sculpture gallery.

Alice resists though we both admit to adoring the period. I let her go and she leaves believing she left me. I see the naval officer our encounter makes her recall, taste her unquenched thirst for him. It would have only taken a word to steal her away from her husband then, and now, if I didn’t prefer my method.

\*

I see Bill at the orgy. Awkward, as I have his wife by my side. I wear a mask with a tricorn hat to scratch Alice’s naval fetish. She wears a mask with a teardrop on her cheek for mine. I nod hello to Bill from the balcony. Smell the woman on him. A child too?

Another Ziegler orgy. A Prussian czar threw parties like this in the woods. With the chanting. The smoking thurible. They wore animal heads. Stags. Goats. A bear. The last

party the czar arrived under the head of one of my sisters. I was in disguise myself until then.  
Red fed the earth.

I met Victor at a hunting lodge in Africa. He caught me feeding on a guide's wife. He wasn't scared but thrilled. His kind comes and goes and comes more often it seems today. The excitement over my violence, however, has since turned into a satisfaction in how he can employ me. I can't bite so it looks like an overdose.

Alice doesn't know where she is. She's nude in a field by the woods. She gives and enjoys her gift. We watch Bill as he's scolded and unmasked, and when he's asked to disrobe but is saved by my snack, soon meal, I allow Alice to see the scene as she most desires. Bill hides his nakedness with tiny hands and his wife, here and at home in his bed, cackles.

I tell Victor Bill is here. I enjoy destroying the marriage. So simple really. Fragile as it is, under attack by those inside it. Bill won't let Alice's confession go. They fought about me and then about the naval officer. Bill can't stop thinking of the officer with his wife. That other timeline. It's a porno flick in his head. He can't appreciate Alice. Can't understand a woman's heat and light.

\*

I sleep through the day but see Bill again the next evening. My dog, the guide whose wife I mentioned earlier, tailed Bill. First, he searched for the pianist who spilled the news about the orgy, then returned to a costume shop, and next visited a woman for sex. Poor Alice. My dog says he came down only five minutes later so he must have been sent away. Then Bill spotted my mutt.

Victor summons Bill to his house and I hide in plain sight. There but unseen. Victor needs Bill distracted so my dog can slip into Bill's house and lay his mask on the pillow next to Alice's sleeping head as a final warning against further investigations. Alice dreams about her daughter. Her daughter asks for her father. He is lucky to be alive.

"Those were not just ordinary people there," Victor says, waking me from Alice's reverie. Bill has been to the morgue, has seen the woman who saved him cold on a slab. Stupid dog. "If I told you their names—I'm not going to tell you their names, but if I did—I don't think you'd sleep so well." Victor teases me as much as he teases Bill. Men have too much power. Too many illusions. Perhaps, I should remind him how easily they gush.

## *Trauma Novelle* by Tex Gresham

Like a half-finished dream, I remember the theater.

A small one, maybe six screens. This was where we watched movies -- my mother and I.

She took me there one summer day and said: "You get to go see your movie on your own. I'm going to see something you can't see."

I probably saw something like *Austin Powers 2*. Can't remember. But my mother, I'll never forget, disappeared into Theater Six: *Eyes Wide Shut*. The purple lettering, the image of two close bodies, the title -- it all screamed **THIS IS FORBIDDEN**.

Guess my mom didn't know the movie was over two and a half hours because I remember having to wait on a stiff plastic bench outside her theater for over an hour. When she emerged, something seemed off. Like she was sick, fevered. She didn't apologize for being in the movie for so long, didn't even talk to me. I followed her zombie-like walk all the way to the car.

On the way home, she mumbled to herself, chuckled in an unfunny way. I asked, "How was the movie?" and she looked at me like she didn't know who I was.

Because my father always worked, I spent most days in the company of my mother, who didn't work. A housewife who used to be an artist or something. These movie trips were our thing during the summer. Once every week, sometimes twice. So when she said to me the next day, "Get ready, we're going to the movies." I wasn't really surprised. Always something to see.

I didn't notice the notebook in her hand until we parted ways and she entered Theater Six.

Again I waited for the movie to end, for our silent car ride home. This time she seemed focused. Working in her head.

We went back the next day, the next, and almost every day that summer. My mother grew more overwhelmed and jittery. Always looking around, over her shoulder. Looking inside her mind. Never at me.

The only time she ever spoke during all our trips to the movies was after an early morning screening. She came out of the theater seemingly rejuvenated, lively. Almost angry. She knelt down, looked in the eyes, and said, "He died six days after finishing this movie. That isn't something that just happens."

I was happy to have her attention, even if I didn't know what it meant.

The last time we went to the theater was on a day of apocalyptic rain. She had her notebook, creased from all the times she sat in Theater Six nervously wringing the notebook. Rain came down like a grey sheet we could barely see through. Anyone else would've turned around. But my mother had a determination I couldn't understand. We drove past an overturned semi and the six-car pileup it caused.

Like a ritual, she gave me my ticket and entered Theater Six.

But instead of seeing my own movie, I waited. Twenty, thirty minutes. And then entered Theater Six. Quietly, I ducked down and stayed that way, watching from the floor of the back row. I spotted my mother, five rows from the front, her head looking at the screen then down at the notebook. Up and down.

I had no idea what the movie was about. It was dark and everyone seemed so serious. There were masks and people in cloaks. Women stood fully naked, unashamed. Men and women had sex -- this made me feel excited but embarrassed.

Then she spun around, looking at everyone in the theater. I watched her lock eyes with someone sitting in the adjacent row. Through the darkness of the theater, I could see how afraid she was. She jumped up and hurried up the aisle. I stood and said, "Mom?" When she saw me, it wasn't anger that came over -- she was terrified.

She grabbed my arm, yanked me out of there. I was too big for her to carry, but she had me tucked under her arm like a purse as she sprinted across the lobby, out the doors, and all the way to our van. It wasn't until I was in the front seat and we were zooming out of the parking lot that I realized she didn't have the notebook.

She said, "They know I know that sunflowers are the key."

And then we crashed. I don't remember it. But I know that when I woke up, my mother was dead and I had a scar running down the side of my face. That's what happens when your mother dies -- you get scars.

In the hospital, I started having this dream. Every night. Each time more revealed itself to me until the dream added up to this.

I'm in the theater. Now closed for many years. Abandoned. Like a passenger, I find my body guided there. A lighter in my hand, though I've never smoked. The flame guides me to Theater Six. The plastic bench is still there. On the marquee above the door to Six -- *Eyes Wide Shut* in faded purple. I enter.

The darkness is ultimate. The flame does nothing against the deep space zilch surrounding me. I walk down the aisle toward the screen, not really knowing why. No, that's not true. I want to stand in the last place my mother sat. A part of me's afraid that whoever my mother saw in the theater that day is still here, waiting for me to return.

My foot kicks something. I bend down, breath stuck in my throat. Bring the flame closer, heat from the lighter burning my finger -- evidence that maybe I'm not dreaming. Maybe this

is a glimpse of the future.

My mother's notebook is on the floor. Creased, waterlogged. I don't want to pick it up, but I do. I don't want to read, but I open it and see this:

*what will happen to my son?*

All I can do is mutter a single word that always wakes me:

“Fuck.

# About The Contributors

**Reza Inanloo** is a VFS graduate with a diploma in filmmaking and low-budget producing. He's worked for VIFF and volunteered for many movies and writers festivals. He is in industrial sales and currently (re)viewing candidate screeners for program director of local filmfest.

**Harrison Foster** is an actor, writer, bodybuilder, and math tutor. He worships the ground Kubrick steadicammed on. He was a producer and host of the Berkeley community radio talk show *Film Close-Ups* and is the author of an upcoming collection of film essays "Kino Speaker."

**Max J. Lewy** (1983-) was born in the ex-coal-mining area of the South Wales valleys, U.K. to a Jewish father and English mother, and is now a recovering patient of Mental Health System abuses. He studied Philosophy at Warwick University, undergoing a spiritual transition & potential breakthrough which was aborted and derailed by misplaced 'treatment'. He spent 6 months living on the street as a runaway from NHS 'services' in Brighton. He self-published his first book of poetry, "Madness: a form of love" in 2018, detailing his ordeals as a form of therapy (#PoetryNotPills #MeditationNotSedation) and defence, and is the winner of RealisticPoetry's 2018 "Perspectives Of Love" Poetry Contest for the poem "River Of Eternity (For R. W.)". While currently spending his time writing poetry and philosophy about Mental Health, he is also considering re-training to work in the field of Artificial Intelligence (although, as he says himself, his intelligence is already highly artificial!). In his spare time, he plays tennis, drinks pure cacao sweetened with Manuka Honey, a long with various other herbal remedies and holistic health rituals, and avoids Dr.s at all costs. He is currently working on his next book.

**Emma Lee**'s publications include "The Significance of a Dress" (Arachne, 2020) and "Ghosts in the Desert" (IDP, 2015). She co-edited "Over Land, Over Sea," (Five Leaves, 2015), is Reviews Editor for The Blue Nib, reviews for magazines and blogs at <http://emmalee1.wordpress.com>. FB: <https://www.facebook.com/EmmaLee1>. Twitter @Emma\_Lee1.

**Tom Snarsky** is a high school math teacher who writes poetry. His book *Light-Up Swan* is forthcoming from Ornithopter Press.  
Twitter: @TomSnarsky

**Justin Karcher** (Twitter: @justin\_karcher, Instagram: the.man.about.town) is a Best of the Net- and Pushcart-nominated poet and playwright born and raised in Buffalo, NY. He is the author of several books, including Tailgating at the Gates of Hell (Ghost City Press, 2015). He is also the editor of Ghost City Review and co-editor of the anthology My Next Heart: New Buffalo Poetry (BlazeVOX [books], 2017).

**Karlo Sevilla** of Quezon City, Philippines is the author of the full-length poetry collection “Metro Manila Mammal” (Some Publishing, 2018) and the chapbook “You” (Origami Poems Project, 2017). Twice nominated for the Best of the Net, his poems appear in *Philippines Graphic*, *The Daily Drunk*, *Parody*, *Little Old Lady Comedy*, *The Asses of Parnassus*, and others.

A Lambda Literary fellow, **MICHAEL CHANG** (they/them) was awarded the Kundiman Scholarship at the Miami Writers Institute. A finalist in contests at the Iowa Review, BOMB, NightBlock, & many others, their poems have been nominated for Best of the Net & the Pushcart Prize. They are the author of two chapbooks (one of which won the Bateau Press BOOM Chapbook Contest) & their full-length collection is forthcoming from Really Serious Literature. Other projects will soon be announced.

**Maureen Foster** is an author and poet living in Los Angeles. Her most recent book is *Alien in the Mirror: Scarlett Johansson, Jonathan Glazer, and Under the Skin*.

**Matthew King** used to teach philosophy at York University in Toronto; he now walks a rope bridge between the neighbouring mountaintops of philosophy and poetry in “the country north of Belleville”. Eyes Wide Shut is the only movie he has ever deliberately gone to see the day it came out.

**Jesse Hilson** is a newspaper reporter living in the Western Catskills in New York State. His work has appeared or will appear in AZURE, Maudlin House, Déraciné, Pink Plastic House, Close to the Bone, Murderous Ink Press, and elsewhere. His novel WET UP will be published by Close to the Bone in April 2022. He can be found on Twitter and Instagram @platelet60

**Michael Martinez** lives in the UK and has self published two short collections of poems - ‘Coventry, Spain: Poems for a Darkening Age’ and ‘Mesopotamia: The evolution of movement and the evils of water’. The poems concern, amongst other things, identity, migration and memory. See <https://www.writeoutloud.net/profiles/michaelmartinez>

**Madison McSweeney** is a Canadian poet and horror author whose writings have appeared in *American Gothic*, *Zombie Punks F\*ck Off*, and *These Poems Are Not What They Seem*. She blogs at [madisonmcsweeney.com](http://madisonmcsweeney.com) and tweets from @MMcSw13. Her favourite Kubrick film is *A Clockwork Orange*. Twitter: @MMcSw13

**December Lace** is a Best of the Net nominee, cosplay pinup model, and former professional wrestler from Chicago. She has appeared in *The Chicago Tribune*, *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*, *Twist in Time*, *Pink Plastic House*, and *Coffin Bell* among others. She loves Batman, burlesque, cats, and horror movies. Handle her @TheMissDecember.

**Marisa Silva-Dunbar**'s work has been published in *Pink Plastic House*, *IceFloe Press*, *Mineral Lit Mag*, *Rising Phoenix Review*, *Ghost Heart Lit*, and *Chantarelle's Notebook*. She is a contributing writer at *Pussy Magic*. Marisa is the founder and EIC of *Neon Mariposa Magazine*. She has work forthcoming in *Sledgehammer Lit*, and *Better Than Starbucks Magazine*. You can find her on Twitter and Instagram @thesweetmaris.

**Kenneth M Cale** is the author of two chapbooks, *Midnight Double Feature* (Sweat Drenched Press) and *elsewhen* (Ghost City Press), both published in 2020. Recent work can be found (or is forthcoming) in *The Babel Tower Notice Board*, *Petrichor* and *surfaces.cx*. Twitter: @kmcale81

**Chad Miller** is a queer writer and visual artist living in Austin, Texas. His work appears in *No Tokens*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *Columbia*, *Jellyfish Review*, and *Electric Literature*, among others. Visit him at [www.chadrobertmiller.com](http://www.chadrobertmiller.com).

**Tex Gresham** is the author of *Heck, Texas* (Atlatl Press). His work has appeared in *Hobart*, *Rejection Letters*, *X-R-A-Y Lit*, and *HAD*, among other places. He's on Twitter as @thatsqueakypig and online at [www.squeakypig.com](http://www.squeakypig.com)

# ABOUT THE EDITOR

**Kristin Garth** is a Pushcart, Rhysling nominated sonneteer and a Best of the Net 2020 finalist. Her sonnets have stalked journals like Glass, Yes, Five:2:One, Luna Luna and more. She is the author of 20 books of poetry including Candy Cigarette Womanchild Noir (Hedgehog Poetry Press), Flutter Southern Gothic Fever Dream (TwistiT Press), and Girlarium (Fahmidan Journal). She is the founder of Pink Plastic House a tiny journal and co-founder of Performance Anxiety, an online poetry reading series. Follow her on Twitter: (@lolaandjolie) and her website [kristingarth.com](http://kristingarth.com)