

SPEC*U*LA*TIVE 66

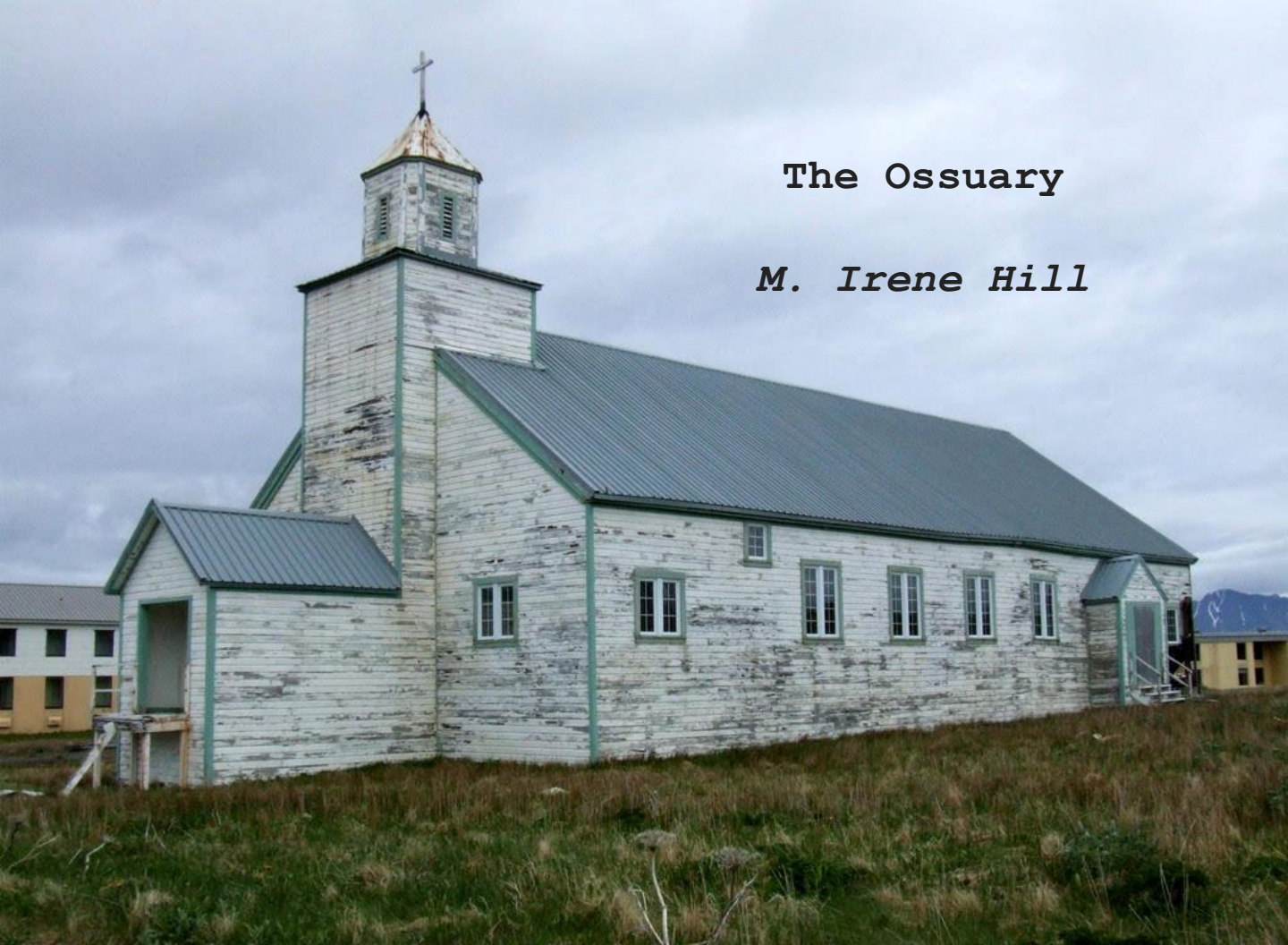
66 words. Endless possibilities.



Issue 11

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The Ossuary

M. Irene Hill

Meandering canals. Desolate mud flats and salt marshes. An island of wild overgrowth, steeped in intrigue. A chapel, writhing with vine and snakes. Silence like a burial shroud. A rotting signpost: "Senso Vietato." No entry.

Says who? Ghosts?

Beyond the chapel, fields of the dead. Grasping vine. Human bones crunch underfoot. Centuries deep, these femurs, ribs and skulls. Fishmongers lie with aristocrats - the bones care not.



They said the pool was bottomless. I was determined to find out. When the waters closed over me I saw a vision: of flitting creatures, their eyes glowing like twin moons. Their hands reached for me, and I descended.

At the last a voice cried in my head:
"Eternal life is eternal death!"

I still think of the creatures' faces as I escaped, everlasting and bereft.



Naiad's Bargain

Charles Paul Wallace



Marsupial Monstrosity

S.S. Sanderson

The remains of a mangled, unidentified miner were lifted onto the table.

"Where did this happen?"

"Not too terribly far north of here, at one of the opal mines between Oodnadatta and Coober Pedy."

"You didn't see anything?"

"No. Must have happened at night."

"Very troubling."

"Have you seen bite marks like that before?"

"Afraid so. Seems as if we may have ourselves a carnivorous kangaroo."



Fremd

Kafka Tamra

Late at night I take off my face and unzip my skin. I gaze out the window of my craft at the azure wanderstar whose atmosphere leaves me short of breath and whose gravity interferes with my movement. Sighing through my gills as I absentmindedly scratch at my scales, I try to form foreign words with my tongues. I have grown tired of this method acting.

Strange Lights

Allen Ashley

"There are strange lights in the sky," Jack told Jill. "I'll show you."

Parking at the foot of Talahoopee hill, they climbed up in the twilight. After two hours: at last, swooping craft, saucer and cigar-shaped, performing astonishing aeronautical maneuvers. Then hovering.

"See, I told you," beamed Jack.

Jill ripped off her mask, pulled a gun from her jeans and said, "You know too much, earthling."



Happy Birthday

Robert Conklin

Here rests the stump of my bonsai tree: pruning it, twisting it, wiring it, pulling it, shaping it, trimming it, plucking it for one whole year today into a shape so delicate yet so strong. But this morning, its limbs had been hacked off with a butcher knife and a note left behind: "I'm leaving you, and I'm taking your goddamn pruning shears with me."





FullView 360

@brifrischu

Frustrated, Joe screamed at his screen. He had been the driving force behind the installation of the new security system: FullView 360. It promised eyes and ears on the ground with quick alerts to his security team. But the first images it showed after the introduction showed two hooded guys walking up the camera with a screwdriver and a stepladder before the screen went completely blank.



Where Once Flourished

Kerry E.B. Black

They wormed their way into her brain, the words the bullies said. They hollowed out places within her confidence until, honeycombed with doubt, she shook with indecision. Leeches who sucked her passions until, bloated and flush with their victory, they moved on to new prey. Ironically, they gained nothing of value, but they left a hollowed shell behind where once flourished a beautiful and artistic spirit.

Beautiful

Conrad Geller

I went to a play in an old-fashioned theater
Full of weeping people. You, the star,
burnished the stage, beautiful,
and when you died, the applause
Was like the gurgling of a mountain stream,

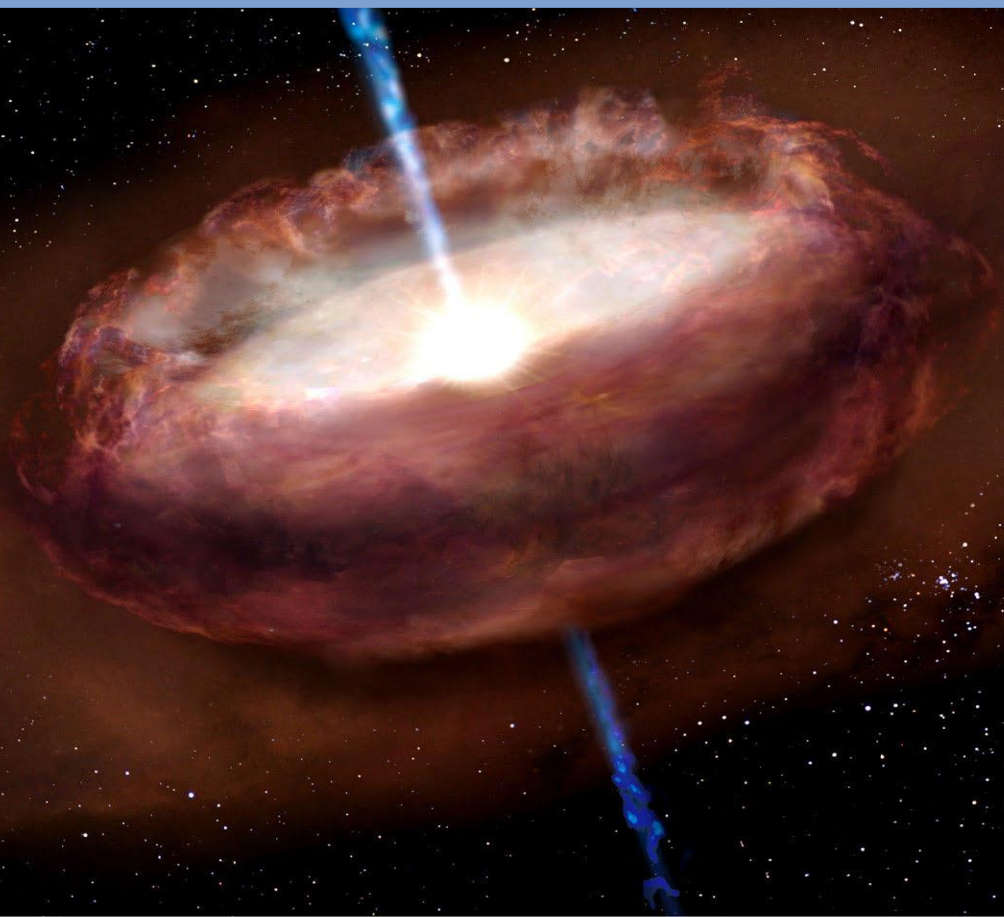
but louder. The review I wrote was vicious, condemning
the lighting, the actor who played your former lover,
everything but your costume, the same dress you wore
One sparkling winter night, beautiful.



Rinse, Repeat

Kenny A. Chaffin

Stellar evolution is a product of the bicameral mind, an interpretation of reality drawn from foggy neurons. Akin to the birth of your daughter. Twenty-seven hours of labor and finally the star emerges. The center of the solar system, a black hole of cash twinkling down the rough sidewalk, into the world, to eat worms and dirt and fuck men to create stars of her own.





Rolling Stock

Len Saculla

I always wanted a job on the railways. Loved the tube map, busy stations, diesel, electric and steam.

City kept growing. Population exploded. They reopened and upgraded all the lost lines; brought the old rolling stock back into use. Had to. Once the virus hit, there were needs, opportunities...

Later in life than I'd expected, I got my boyhood wish. Chugging coffins along the Necropolitan Line.

Childhood Sweetheart

Philip Berry

While you sleep in fake blue light I draw lines over your silvered skin, between freckles, hairs and the scars of forgotten injury. The combinations are infinite. With straights, curves and neural curls I spell words that become the thoughts that guide you. Flights of fancy I consign to dreams. Only there do I appear, where you disregard me. But I live, truly, in your actions.





Home at Last

Herb Kauderer

The Bent Forks Hotel was next on my list, but I hardly cared. I was just too tired to find somewhere else to sleep. The bar was advertised as a place where stage magicians hung out. It looked the part, kind of hokey and hyped.

But just when I thought I was headed to bed for the night, I realized I wasn't the only telepath there.

Temporal Science

Jonah Newton



Let us consider the difficulties of our primeval ancestors. The sun rose and set. Each hour, each minute passed - and time progressed without question. Words which were spoken could not be retracted.

But now, we have mastered Temporal Science we can adjust and re-adjust our own pathways of existence. No longer do we need to be accountable to each other. We can, without question, please ourselves.



Getaway

Susan Cornford

'It won't be an obstacle,' Steve said, grinding gears.

'It WILL,' Lily replied, mopping blood from his wounded thigh.

'Roadblocks can't keep us from going where we want to go.'

'Why do you always have to argue, even now?'

'It was for MY birthday present we risked it, so humor me.'

Sirens grew louder. Gunfire caught up, fatally ripping flesh.

They awoke as their avatars died.

Poor Receiver

Ryan Sonnevile

The machine's receiver failed to see the truck barreling towards its tattered hull. Years of work and abuse had left its parts threadbare and fickle; rarely did the droid process its surroundings upon first inspection.

It continued to roll but could not escape its impending fate. In the seconds before impact, the machine frantically attempted to transmit its final message, inopportunately failing due to antenna error.





Death Drives a Mustang

Joshua Scully

The same faded Mustang had followed him since he passed through Oklahoma City.

The country between Amarillo and Albuquerque was lonely, often allowing the trailing vehicle to be the only other car in sight. He stared at the Mustang through his rearview mirror.

Just outside of Tucumcari, the corner of his eye caught a skeletal hand extend from the driver's side window and offer a wave.



Devourer

Alice Cox

Age-long and aeons dead
it stalks the swamp's
bestial innards,
hunting the isolated
in the wilderness

The terrible phantasm,
full of brutal hunger,
creeps breathless under the
flaking boughs,
hidden in mist,
listening for the throbbing
heartbeat of those still
lost in worlds of dream

Rarely do they open their eyes in time,
but those that do...
I shudder to think
the horrors they must see

The Eyes Have It

Sam Smith

Ever since he'd read about it on some godforsaken website, he would scrutinize them in the mirror every day.

Today was not Tony's day. Bloodshot, yes. Enlarged irises, yes. Follicular damage, yes.



All signs pointed to him having somehow contracted Screaming Eye Syndrome.

There was only one thing for it, he thought, as he rummaged through the cutlery drawer for a fork. They'd have to go...



Crow

Danny Beusch

The girl waded into the sea of trees
And soared, feather-light, through layers of
leaves
To a crow.

Perched regally on top of the oldest oak,
He wrapped her in his jet black cloak.
'Mine,' said Crow.

Together forever: he had staked his claim.
She screamed; no sound came.
Lost to crow.

One look down and off they fly,
Painting stories across moon-drenched sky.
Two crows.

Con*trib*u*tors

Allen Ashley

Allen Ashley featured in "Speculative 66" issue 9 with "Security Tagged". He works as a creative writing tutor with five groups running across north London, UK. He is a committee member for the British Fantasy Society. His most recent book is an updated, revised version of his novel "The Planet Suite" (Eibonvale Press, UK, 2016). He is the sole judge for the British Fantasy Society Short Story Competition.

Philip Berry

Philip lives and works in London. His speculative stories and poems have appeared in *Metaphorosis*, *Nebula Rift*, *Chrome Baby*, *Backhand Stories* and *Ellipsis* among others.

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Danny Beusch

Danny (@OhDannyBoyShhh) reads a lot of Margaret Atwood and Joanne Harris. He lives in Birmingham, England, and has recently discovered the joys of writing flash fiction.

@brifrischu

As a PhD student Britta writes about the "What is...?" of technology during the day.

At night she writes about the "What if...?"

Follow her @brifrischu

<https://www.wattpad.com/user/brifrischu>

Kerry E.B. Black

Kerry E.B. Black lives in a swamp in Pennsylvania, though neither Shrek nor Fionna visit. More about the author can be found at www.facebook.com/authorKerryE.B.Black and Twitter @BlackKerryblick

Kenny A. Chaffin

Kenny A. Chaffin writes poetry, fiction and nonfiction and has published poems and fiction in *Microfiction Monday Magazine*, *365 Tomorrows*, *Speculative 66*, *101 Word Stories*, *James Gunn's Ad Astra*, *Star*Line*, nonfiction in *The Writer*, *The Electron*, *Writers Journal* and others. He grew up in southern Oklahoma and now lives in Denver, CO where he works hard to make enough of a living to support two cats, numerous wild birds and a bevy of squirrels. His poetry, fiction and other work is available at Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/-/e/B007S3SMY8>. He may be contacted through his website at <http://www.kacweb.com>.

Robert Conklin

Robert Conklin's literary hero is the whimsical postmodernist short story writer Donald Barthelme, and he aspires to craft similar stories that reflect the absurdity of the human condition. He lives, writes, and works, in this order, in Columbus, Ohio, where he helps his spouse macromanage their three kids, who are determined to take paths less traveled.

Susan Cornford

Susan Cornford is a retired public servant, living in Perth, Western Australia. She has pieces published or forthcoming in *50-Word Stories*, *Antipodean Science Fiction*, *Ghost Parachute*, *Subtle Fiction*, *Switchblade*, *The Fable Online*, *The Gambler* and *The Vignette Review*. She now considers herself an emerging flash writer.

Alice Cox

Alice Cox is a slime failure located far from the sun. She lives surrounded by plush toys, chocolate, underwear, and occasionally her friends and family. She writes weird things such as intergalactic porno screenplays and also poetry and also not poetry. So far she's been the only one foolish enough to publish her messed up creations. If you wanna see the monstrosity first-hand you can find her at @alice_L_cox or her [itch.io](https://alice-cox.itch.io/) page: <https://alice-cox.itch.io/>

Conrad Geller

Conrad Geller is an old poet, widely published both electronically and in print. He is a Bostonian now living in Northern Virginia.

M. Irene Hill

Irene lives on the Canadian Prairies doing good things and growing her cat collection. Her stories and poetry have been published in print anthologies and online at 365 Tomorrows, Flash Fiction Magazine, Speculative 66 and Poetry Soup, with an upcoming bite-sized flash in Serious Flash Fiction. Follow her on Twitter @_Irene_Dreams_

Herb Kauderer

Herb Kauderer is an associate professor of English at Hilbert College and a recent winner of the Asimov's Readers' Award. His recent book *Flying Solo: The Lana Invasion* is available from Poet's Haven Press. More about him and his writing can be found at HerbKauderer.com

Jonah Newton

Jonah Newton is a UK-based Technical and Creative Writer, with a combined background in the Sciences and the Arts. Over the years, his work has appeared in a number of online and hardback publications (e.g., 'Writers Muse' and 'Dream Catcher' in the UK and 'The Journal of Irreproducible Results' in the USA). He is continually enthused by the wealth of wonderful stories which are told by people every day. Examples of his stories can be viewed on his website: www.jonahnewton.com

Len Saculla

Len Saculla lives in London, UK. He has been a Pushcart Nominee. He has previously been published in British publications such as "Theaker's Quarterly", "BFS Journal", "Unspoken Water" and "Wordland"; as well as several American anthologies from Kind of a Hurricane Press. His story "Quiet Neighborhood" was in issue 8 of "Speculative 66".

S.S. Sanderson

S.S. Sanderson (@SSSanderson2) writes flash fiction and lives a life that looks better on paper. He resides in rural Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

Joshua Scully

Joshua Scully is an American History teacher from Uniontown, Pennsylvania. His fiction can be found at www.jjscully.wordpress.com or @jojascully.

Sam Smith

Sam Smith is a former Creative Writing and Scriptwriting student, and has previously dabbled in both community radio broadcasting and stand-up comedy. His preferred genres of writing are sci-fi, horror and comedy. His stories will make you laugh and think, and he enjoys experimenting with convention to create offbeat scenarios and characters. His work has been featured in Maudlin House, Lit Cat, Two Words For and Visitant Lit.

Ryan Sonneville

Ryan Sonneville is a writer and teacher residing in California's Bay Area. His work has appeared in Flash Fiction Magazine, The Evening Theater and Fictional Pairings.

Kafka Tamra

Kafka Tamra goes by many names and is just trying to get a good night's sleep. They tweet at @kafkazor.

Charles Paul Wallace

Charles Paul Wallace is a stranger in the strange land of rural Kent, UK, where he writes when the mood takes him and the auspices are fair. His peripatetic lifestyle has previously taken him from the mean streets of Chicago to the less mean streets of Tokyo via the not-paved-with-gold-after-all streets of London. Currently he's happy breathing the country air, and has resolved to keep it that way.

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