



DWELLING 5:
MONO CREE
APRIL 2021

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TRANSFORMATION BY JENNIFER SHNEIDERMAN.....	4
A FAMILIAR SITUATION BY CALLUM PHILLPOTT.....	5
GAME FOR IT BY ROBIN MCNAMARA.....	6
DANCING INTO A REVOLUTION BY ALYSON TAIT.....	7
WHO I AM TO YOU BY MATTHEW MILLER.....	8
DEAD PIXEL BY MIKE HICKMAN.....	9
MUST LOVE VIDEO GAMES BY KRISTINA SACCONI.....	10
LET'S A-GO! BY JASON DE KOFF.....	11
ADAM MISSED THOSE 16-BIT GLORY DAYS BY DONALD RYAN.....	12
RECRUIT BY XAN INDIGO.....	13
SPACE INVADERS BY LINDA MCMULLEN.....	14
SILENT COMPETITION BY T.W. GARLAND.....	15
MY PERSONAL MARIO KART STRATEGY SUMMED UP IN A SINGLE SENRYŪ BY HELEN BOWIE.....	16
RED PALMS BY KEVIN HARRINGTON-BAIN.....	17
WHAT I'VE ALWAYS WANTED BY VIRAL SHANKER.....	18
FROGGER BY KEREN DIBBENS-WYATT.....	19
REEL TIME BY KIERAN WYATT.....	20
TO LIVE IN LEMON COVE BY PAUL VERACKA.....	21
PAC MAN MANIA BY KEVIN GOODEN.....	22
OH, DID I WIN? BY KALEB TUTT.....	23
THE RISE AND FALL OF DR. WILY BY DONOVAN BURTON.....	24
ARCADE OF MEMORIES BY PRIYANKA SRIVASTAVA.....	25
I FELL IN LOVE WITH PRINCESS PEACH BY ROBYN SMITH.....	26
ODE TO MS. PAC-MAN BY SHELLY JONES.....	27
PEACH FUZZ BY KATHERINE KNIGHT.....	28
BONUS BY BETHANY ROHDE.....	29
TETRIS BY KATIE KEMPLE.....	30

VIDEO GAME GHOSTS BY DYLAN ROCHE.....31

MUSICIAN BY MELISSA ASHLEY HERNANDEZ.....32

TRANSFORMATION

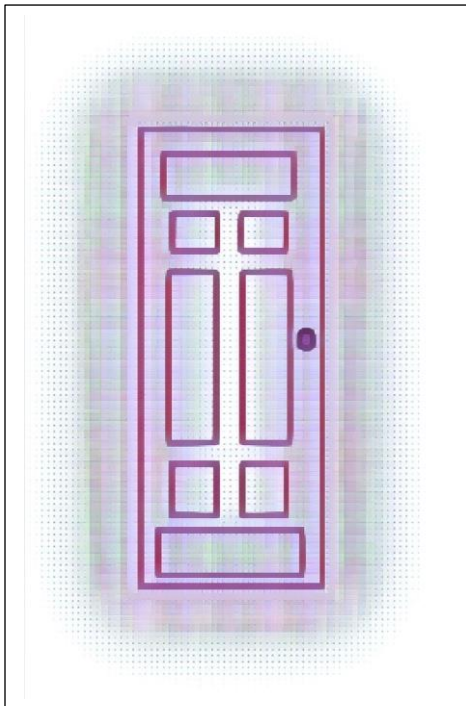
BY JENNIFER SHNEIDERMAN

Jennifer Shneiderman is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker living in Los Angeles. Her work has appeared, or is forthcoming, in many publications, including: *The Rubbertop Review*, *Writers Resist*, *Montana Mouthful*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Dwelling* and *The Perch*. She received an Honorable Mention in the Laura Riding Jackson 2020 Poetry Competition.

Shuttered museums
cordoned off parks
parking lots empty asphalt panoramas
our homes become our entirety
our hallway of family photos, our galleries
our kitchens and restaurants, our cooking schools
our living rooms, our theaters
our kitchen tables, mask-making factories.

We seek out quiet coffee corners, our Starbucks
bedrooms, our classrooms and offices
a skylight, our observatory.

A view through a textured glass shower door pixelates the light
becomes our Impressionist paintings
the world blurs, edges soften, the future remains unclear.



a FAMILIAR

situation

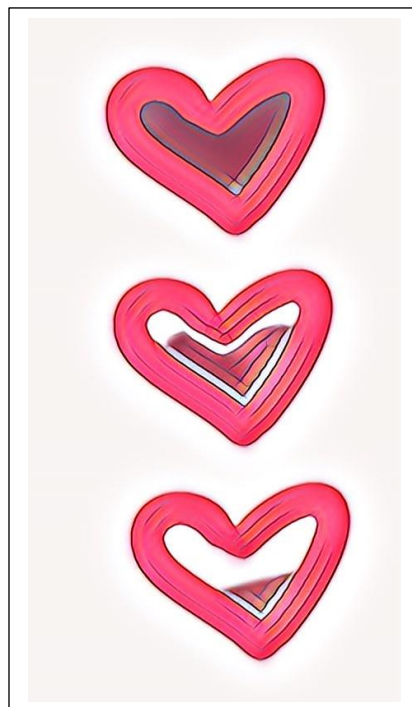
BY CALLUM PHILLPOTT

Callum Phillpott is a writer who tends to write Science Fiction of the Doctor Who related variety. If he were known at all, it is either for writing "Base Named Solace 5" for the free "How to Survive Winter" anthology, or being a writer on an upcoming Chris Cwej book. He can be found on Twitter @MarvelousMop.

Suddenly it's bright, I take in my surroundings. That gorilla sits up on the top of the partially constructed Empire building with the woman I love (I know I love her because when I move near her, hearts appear), I must save her! I begin my climb up the building, when a barrel comes my way; I would jump, but I'm halted by a sense of déjà vu. There's no way something as specific as this happened more than once in my life... what life? Did I have a life? I'm a carpenter right? I think I'm a carpenter, don't remember any training... anything outside of this situation really, who even is that woman? Who's the-

The barrel collides with me and I feel my life drain, I fall back, a halo hovers above my head as it all goes dark. I wish I knew what was going on.

Suddenly it's bright, I take in my surroundings.



GAME for it

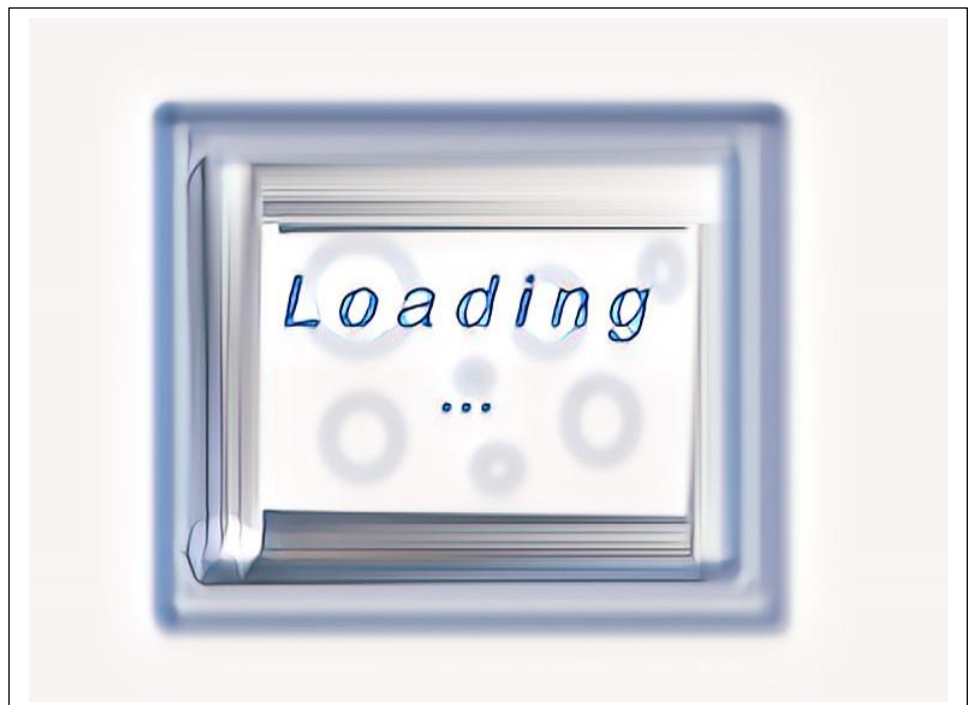
BY ROBIN MCNAMARA

Robin McNamara has over 125 poems published worldwide. A regular contributor to Poetry Ireland's Poetry Prompts. Poems have been placed in Saccharine Poetry, Pink Plastic House, Dreich, Full House Literary Magazine, Dream Journal, & Literary Heist. Robin's chapbook, *Under a Mind's Staircase* is being published with Hedgehog Poetry Press 2021.

The Atari certainly was no Ferrari
When it came to loading.
Although the invasion from Space
Was kind enough to wait till I was ready.
Many hours were gobbled up on a
Saturday night, playing Pac-Man —
Inspired by a pizza, like the one on my lap.

I skipped a generation as I wasn't gone
On Donkey Kong, but I tried to be:
'Steve Jobs' cool with my Apple Mac
Games, playing Prince of Persia when
I should have been doing designs as a
Graphic artist.

Those golden days were the making of
Today's gaming generation. They now
Got better graphics, better stories.
But man, Modern Warfare is taking forever
To load, some things just don't change.



dancing into a **REVOLUTION**

BY ALYSON TAIT

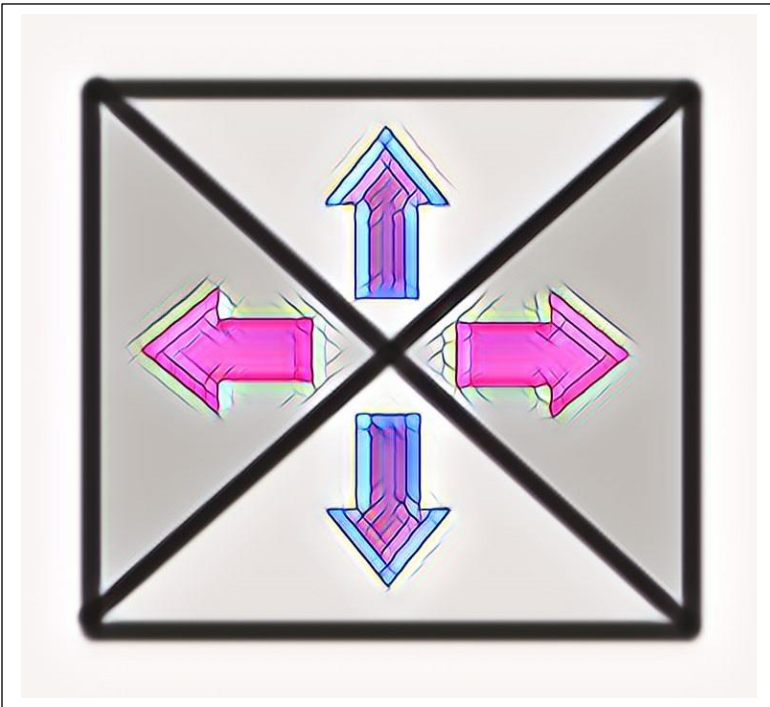
Alyson Tait lives in Maryland where she got married, had her daughter, and began her writing journey. She has appeared in Altered Reality Magazine and (mac)ro(mic). You can find her on twitter @rudexvirus1

Two quarters on the corner
right next to the screen / means I'm next in line / barely able to breathe
I watch the master.

His hair jumps in rhythm,
avoiding his eyes by pure magic / or are his moves so tight that he controls that too?
I can barely control my stomach.

The song finishes.
Mostly perfect scores. / 99 percent / he missed an entire beat... *how embarrassing for him.*
He winks at me, and I choke.

When he's gone I stand alone
Staring at the machine / hands sweating all over the metal rails / head dizzy / legs wobbly
I'm wondering
If I could still catch him before he leaves.



who i am to YOU

BY MATTHEW MILLER

Matthew Miller teaches social studies, swings tennis rackets, and writes poetry - all hoping to create home. He and his wife live beside a dilapidating orchard in Indiana, where he tries to shape dead trees into playhouses for his four boys. His poetry has been featured in River Mouth Review, Club Plum Journal, Whale Road Review and Ekstasis Magazine among others. Website: mattleemiller.wixsite.com/poetry

I'm pixelated, always
changing, always on
and off, blinking,
dancing to send
your restless eyes
a flash
of a bigger picture;
but your flickering
fingers have no sight,
and dash by, scratching
the screen, complaining
that my corners
are too square or
my color is fading out.



dead PIXEL

BY MIKE HICKMAN

Mike Hickman (@MikeHicWriter) is a writer from York, England. He has written for Off the Rock Productions (stage and audio), including 2018's "Not So Funny Now" about Groucho Marx and Erin Fleming. He has recently been published in EllipsisZine, Dwelling Literary, Bandit Fiction, Nymphs, Flash Fiction Magazine, Brown Bag, and Safe and Sound Press. His co-written, completed six-part BBC radio sit com remains unproduced but available to interested producers!

One Memory that stands for all memories.

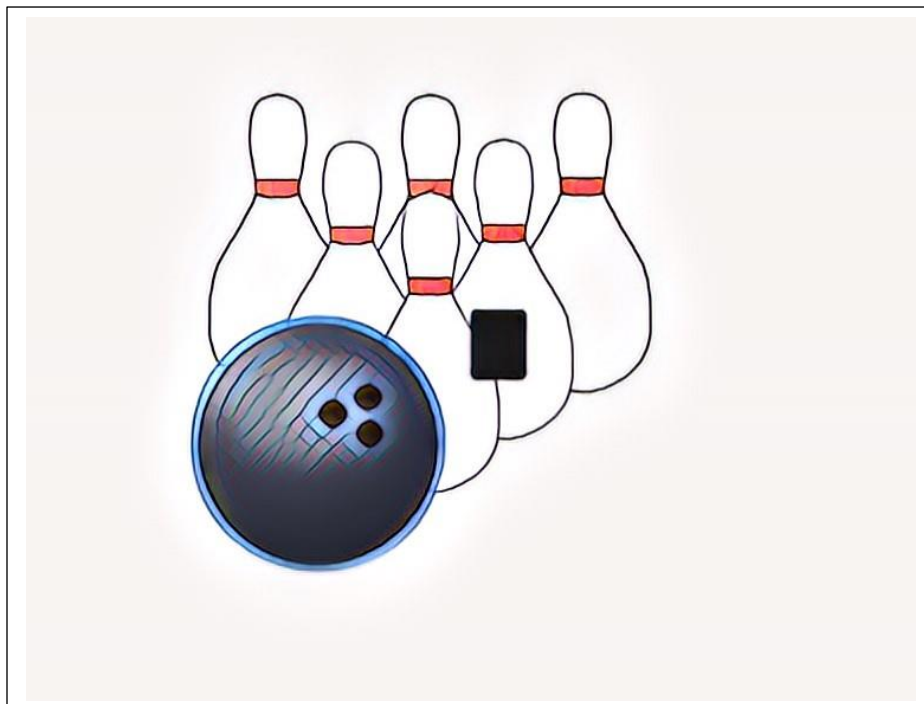
I don't remember much about *Wii* night, except I joined in with that dance game that Lucy loved so much. The video you uploaded on Facebook had my colleagues spitting coffee at my inappropriate, besuited gyrations. Gone now, of course. Although maybe Zuckerberg has a copy.

I don't remember much about the up-late, past-midnight virtual sports. Although I know my aim was off and there'd have been injuries in the real world. I'd have taken out the first row of spectators, no trouble.

But, try as I might, the image that comes back, every time I think of that night, is the dead pixel slap bang in the middle of the screen.

"I hope that isn't a sign," I joked.

One dead pixel. The one memory that stands for all that came next.



must love VIDEO GAMES

BY KRISTINA SACCONI

Kristina T. Saccone crafts flash fiction and creative nonfiction in the hours between logging off from work and wrangling her young son. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Dwelling Literary*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Flash Frog*, *The Minison Project*, *Nightingale and Sparrow*, and *Unearthed*. You can find her on Twitter at @kristinasaccone or haunting small independent bookstores in the Washington, DC, area.

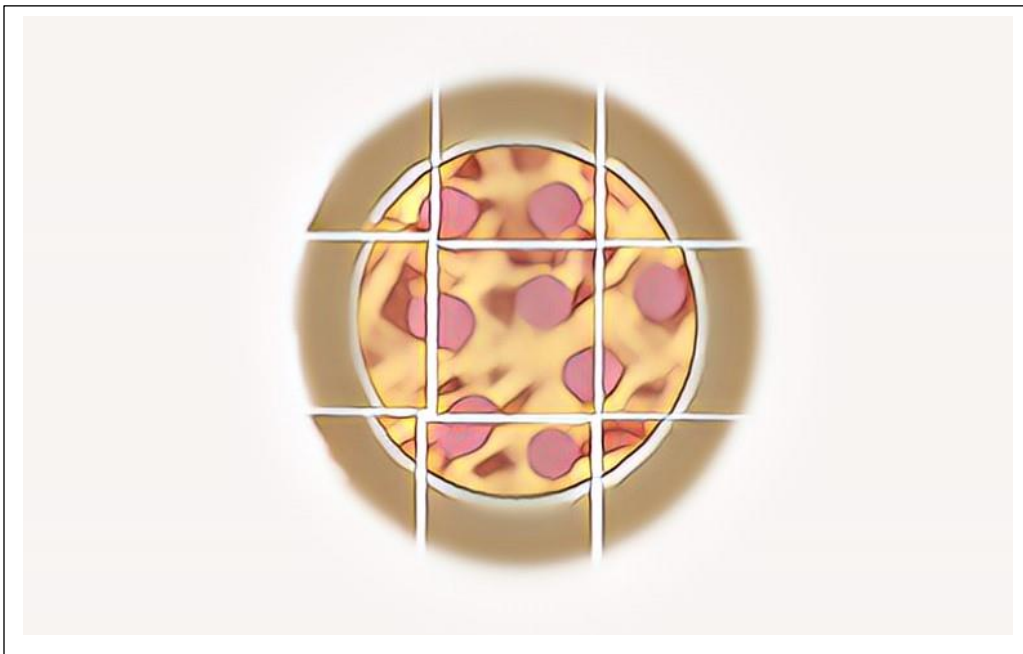
As a 40th birthday present, Jake remodeled his studio in tribute to the pixel games he loved so much. He lined the walls with IKEA's Kallax bookshelves. He found a German oven company that manufactured square cooktops. He custom-built cabinets for the kitchen. Everything from the light fixtures to the cocktail napkins fit the theme.

Most women didn't seem to get it.

Julie, though, called herself "a self-professed SNES nut" when they met online. After a couple good dates at 1UP, Jake decided to invite her over, with a warning about his preoccupation. He'd line up some classic games, and she would bring the food.

At the door, Julie said, "I brought pizza." Her eyes twinkled as she opened the box. "Custom cut," she said. It was sliced into squares.

That night, he gave her his heart.



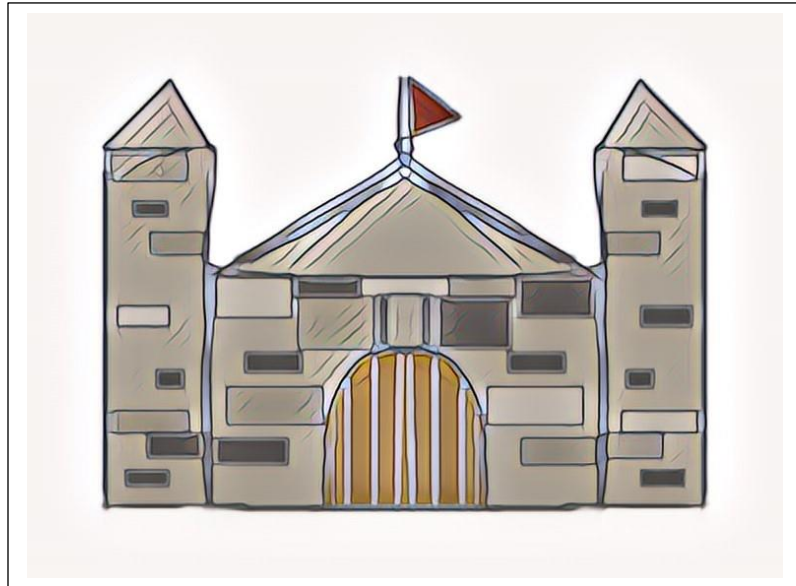
LET'S a-go!

BY JASON DE KOFF

Jason de Koff is an associate professor of agronomy and soil science at Tennessee State University. He lives in Nashville, TN with his wife, Jaclyn, and his two daughters, Tegan and Maizie. He has published in a number of scientific journals, and has over 60 poems published or forthcoming in literary journals over the last year.

(read to the theme music of Super Mario Bros.)

I can't get
on Yoshi's back
and he's running around like a maniac.
If you see
him please let him
know that I'm on my way to the castle.
I could really use his help fighting
Bowser's familia (please hurry Yosh!).
He can eat all the berries he wants to
after we're done.



adam missed those 16-bit **GLORY DAYS** BY DONALD RYAN

Donald Ryan writes. @dryanswords

Adam missed those 16-bit glory days. Gripping joy out of sticks and smashing A/Bs. Now his daily screens and keys were dull figures and pre-signed emails under the threat of boredom—which he was. Antsy to spin in his office chair and let his tie sail. But to avoid the unprofessional eye he sat straight backed, fingers tapping the keyboard for the clack without actually typing. When the ding came in. An email he should get into. So he pressed ctrl plus + + + + until he couldn't + anymore, the screen taken over by distorted, single colored squares. He rolled back and saw the bigger picture, the desk, the cubicle, the tiled ceiling. This world was pixels coming at him. But these days, here, there was no glory. He spun, leveling up, and left for sharper graphics.



RECRUIT

BY XAN INDIGO

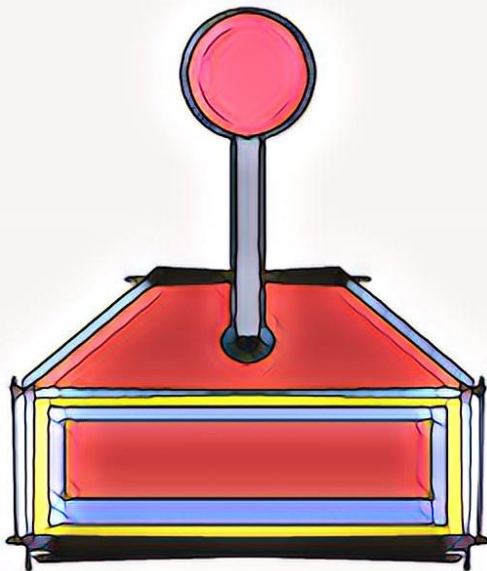
Xan Indigo is a rogue astrophysicist with an overactive imagination and a mixed up cultural background. Recently, they mostly spend their spare time cooking delicious things, drinking too much tea, and attempting to turn their apartment into a tiny rainforest.

With adrenaline numbed fingers, she hammered the buttons. Ignoring sweat in her palms, she clutched the joystick in a steely grip, wielding it with forceful, graceful accuracy. She barely noticed the small crowd gathering around her, bubbling with barely contained excitement. Could she do it? Would she be the first?

Her tiny, pixellated spaceship was badly damaged, under heavy fire. Sweat beaded on her brow. The final combatants closed in. The elite. They fired. She dodged. With surgical precision, her plasma cannons picked them off one by one, till there were no more.

The word CONGRATULATIONS rolled slowly down the screen. She grinned breathlessly, slamming her palms down on the arcade machine, as cheers all around drowned out the electronic victory music.

High above, in orbit, an onlooker smiled. "Contact central command. We've found the one."



space INVADERS

BY LINDA MCMULLEN

Linda McMullen is a wife, mother, diplomat, and homesick Wisconsinite. Her short stories and the occasional poem have appeared in over seventy literary magazines, and she received Pushcart and Best of the Net nominations in 2020. She may be found on Twitter: @LindaCMcMullen.

It's only a slight exaggeration to say that my parents fell in love over pinball. My father invited my mother out to talk over the old times they didn't have. But he taught her to drive an 80-gram steel ball where she willed it. And together, despite a budget denominated in cents, they navigated minefields of pixelated aliens. Challenged the enemy within their lanes. Vanquished them beneath their bumpers. Together.

Their talent changed the machine's tune – from the plodding march greeting any novice to a symphony that lauded its masters.

They earned endless free games, the machine tintinnabulating beneath their fingertips, until forced to part when the arcade manager announced closing time.

They enjoyed the low-key dates, not comprehending the game's power over them...

... never dreaming that they'd later welcome two space invaders of their own.



SILENT competition

BY T.W. GARLAND

T.W. Garland lives with a stack of Victorian novels that taunt him with their unbroken spines. His stories have appeared in Dash Literary Journal, The Daily Drunk Magazine, Dark Dossier, Schlock! and a variety of anthologies. Twitter: @TWGarland

On long journeys, we each held one side of the LCD console. A simple brick game, ancient even when we got it, but a two-player. Hidden from Mom as she concentrated on the road, we indulged in silent competition.

College, marriage, jobs, kids, divorces, two decades and Mom's death built five states between us. Silence without the competition.

The console lay waiting, batteries removed, under the accumulated debris of life. Bricked into the back of my garage. A summer of sorting, trips to Goodwill and several cans of garbage returned it to me.

At the kitchen table, I switched on the game. This time, I turned on the sound and listened to the tinny warnings and chiming celebrations.

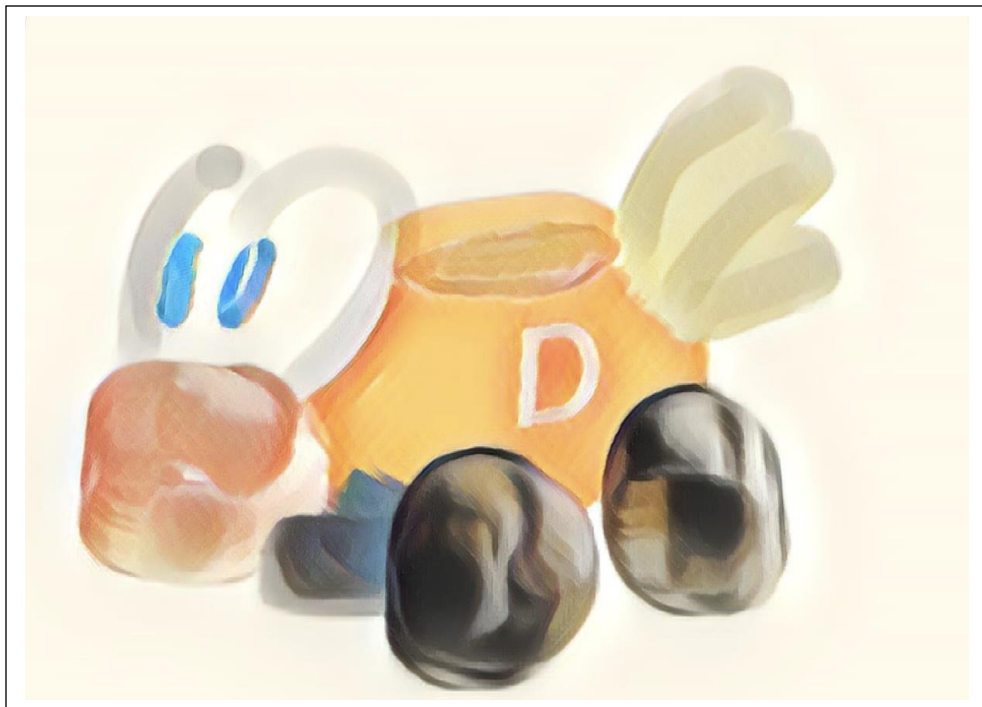
Trusting you would select the two-player option, I picked up my phone.



my personal mario kart **STRATEGY** summed up in a single senryū BY HELEN BOWIE

Helen Bowie is a writer, performer and charity worker based in London. Her work has featured in Off Menu Zine, Queerlings and Dust Poetry, among others. Helen has very mixed feelings about what it means for the world and her youth if a game first released in 1992 could count as vintage, and plays Mario Kart as Baby Daisy because no reasonable person would want to overtake a baby, surely...

Baby Daisy speeds
through moo moo meadows. Baby
mindin' her business.



RED palms

BY KEVIN HARRINGTON-BAIN

Kevin Harrington-Bain lives in Dallas where he writes, makes comics, and reads on a park bench every Friday morning. He's mostly there to see the dogs. He has written for eritasdaily.com and you can follow him for more @kkevinhb on Twitter and @iamkevinhello on Instagram.

"The faster you spin, the faster you go," announced the robot from his UFO, summoning a crowd for the next round of Spacey Racers at the center of the arcade, the giant machine displaying no pixels, but four plastic aliens on tricycles on a race track.

I stepped up to the trackball, sacrificed two tokens, and sized up my competition: mostly teens with bigger, stronger hands than mine. I tried to wipe the sweat from my palms on my nylon pants that had so confidently zip-zopped up to the massive machine. The droplets slicked right off.

A Countdown.

Sci-fi sounds from a 50's drive-in.

Vicious slapping on the trackballs.

"A photo finish!"

My stinging hands glowed red as, peering over the prize cabinet, I emptied them of my tickets and filled them with parachute men and Lemonheads.



what i've always **WANTED** BY VIRAL SHANKER

Viral Shanker is currently pursuing his master's in applied mathematics. He spends his free time playing games, working on data science projects, reading, and writing.

When I was a kid, Gengar was my favorite Pokemon.

I spent countless summer days sitting on the terrace, searching for one but to no avail.

A few months later I sat slack-jawed in an internet cafe when I finally learned the only way to get a Gengar: trade with another player.

No one I knew owned a GameBoy. Mine was a gift from my uncle who lived in the States.

It is a decade later in the States that I load up Pokemon on my computer. A menu here, a command there, and the game bends to my will. I can have anything and everything that I've ever wanted.

And yet I find myself searching old suitcases for my game instead.



FROGGER

BY KEREN DIBBENS-WYATT

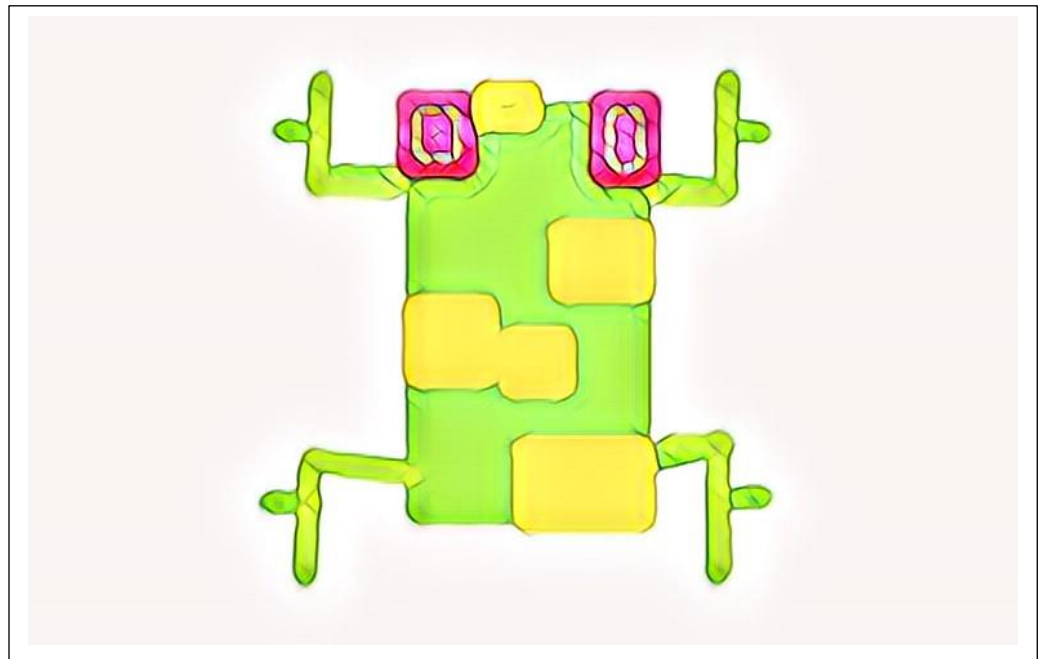
Keren Dibbens-Wyatt is a chronically ill writer and artist with a passion for poetry, mysticism, story and colour. Her writing features regularly on spiritual blogs and in literary journals. Her latest book is *Recital of Love* (Paraclete Press 2020). Keren suffers from M.E. which keeps her largely out of the trouble she would doubtless get into otherwise.

A little croaking critter just trying to get to the other side. Not one chicken to help or explain the mystery of zebras or pelicans. No boy scouts, no guides, no way to head off-road. This way or the highway. Animal crossing old school.

An all or nothing rush across the carriageways, dodging the traffic and undoing all of Tufty's hard work. The Green Cross Code Man nowhere in sight, Lollipop Ladies gone to the ice cream van. SLOW FROGS! not written on the back.

Take your small chance against the juggernauts and loggers of the world. Run out into the fray and find a way forward, don't look back, and never ever stop, look or listen.

You won't have time.



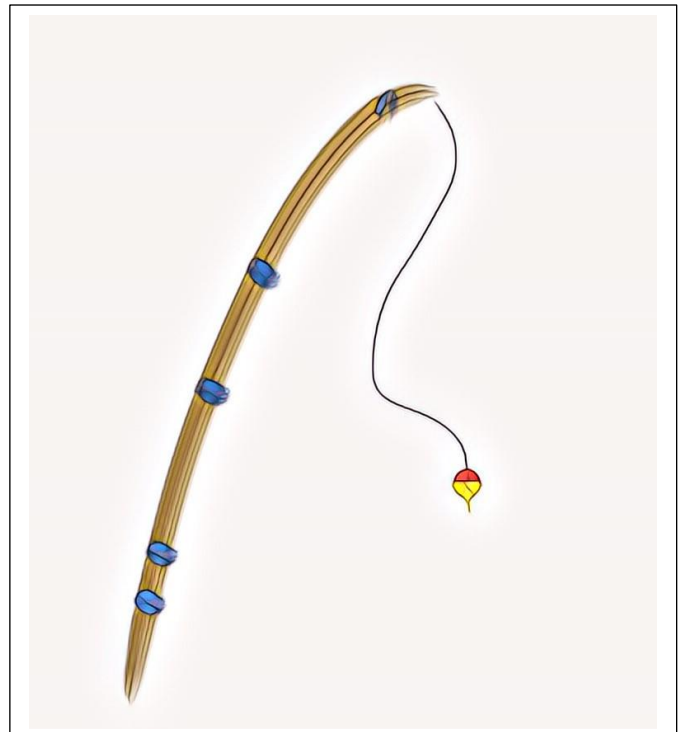
reel TIME

BY KIERAN WYATT

Kieran Wyatt lives on the Fylde Coast. He is co-chair of GenSex (@GenSexResearch), an interdisciplinary research group, asking probing questions about gender and sexuality. His work has been published by a variety of publications, including Eunoia Review, The Art of Everyone, Small Leaf Press, and the Minison Project. He graduated from Edge Hill University in 2018 with honours in Creative Writing.

I fish for bells
To buy more
Clutter
For my second home,
My better home,
The home I visit on my commute,
On the Northern service
To Blackpool

Bitterling
In the rock pool
Oblivious and slick
Before I know it,
Five real hours have passed.
Switch off



to live in LEMON COVE

BY PAUL VERACKA

Paul Veracka (he/him) writes poems in D.C. When he is not running a classroom with very young people, he may be watching old concert footage online.

While hitting every rock in town can
Conjure a serious profit
There is something far more rewarding
Seeing Jacques the bird belting it alone
In the outdoor restaurant cradled by Zen Fencing
And even if Peck is the third muscley-masc villager who's moved in
It is absolutely melting to see him running around with his wings behind him, just living
That island life we all came for
But what takes the cake is Flurry, a hamster
Sending me a Valentine that genuinely moved me irl
Even though I hadn't visited for months
And let the weeds surround her cream house by the water
The card hangs on my antique mantle
I read it when the debt is too much to handle



pac man MANIA

BY KEVIN GOODEN

Kevin Gooden is a writer from British Columbia, Canada. His varied works include poetry, humour, horror, sci-fi, and literary works. He often writes for the daily word prompt #vss365 on Twitter, and appeared in Dwelling's first issue.

Of course you're a circle
When you just eat dots

Getting chased by ghosts
That act like bots

Inky and Blinky
Pinky and Clyde

Make you swerve
Make you hide

Till a Power Pellet
You do munch

Ghosts turn blue
Eat 'em for lunch

Simple game was the rage
Munch all the dots, finish the maze



oh, did i know? BY KALEB TUTT

Kaleb Tutt is an author and poet from south Louisiana. He currently lives in Rhode Island. His debut poetry chapbook "ir / rational", which is based on fears and phobias, is out now with Roaring Jr. Press. Grab a copy at <https://www.roaringjunior.press/product/ir-rational-by-kaleb-tutt>. Find Kaleb on Twitter at @KalebT96.

I chose Princess Peach, pink dress
chunky blonde hair.

I could have been a swordsman,
slicing metal through air

or a magician, casting spells of fire,
my tome of protection

or a demon in your pocket,
electric body, controller of gravity, of sleep

but I chose Princess Peach, because
when I am her, she is me

confident, a menagerie of weapons at her disposal:
iron frying pan, titanium golf club, metal tennis racquet;

golden crown, her hands, her hips;
fresh turnips that form black holes-

magic.

I chose Princess Peach,
for when I am her, so she is me.



the **R I S E** and fall of dr. wily

BY DONOVAN BURTON

Donovan Burton is a perpetually tired computer science student and writer from South Carolina. His work has appeared in The Daily Drunk, Versification, Second Chance Lit, and more. He likes classic literature, pro wrestling, and proving people wrong.
Twitter: @ManofPixels

There once was a doc named Wily
who thought of himself quite highly,
until a blue bomber appeared,
made his bots disappear,
and tossed him in jail quite wisely.



ARCADE of memories

BY PRIYANKA SRIVASTAVA

Priyanka Srivastava is a writer based in Singapore, her poems are often about her life in India and Singapore. When she is not lost in words, she loves to read specially non fiction books. She also loves to play with colours.

Her memories were trapped in that slow video game
The pink snowflakes and the princess waiting to be rescued.
The rainbow which would rain down points on the screen.

Her dreamy eyes were swamped by the mesh of neon colours.
She could see the prince holding the vintage map.
Her childhood was made up of that fuchsia pink and candy purple,
she rattled the marbles quietly in her mind.

The floor looked like a map of some unknown city.
His lego pieces had left a trail leading
to that Hogwarts castle which he was making.

She picked the lego Harry Potter and pulled herself back.
Her son was trapped in the same wonderland.
The story was the same, the characters were different.
They both were creating an arcade of memories to walk again.



i fell in love with PRINCESS PEACH BY ROBYN SMITH

Robyn Smith is a writer and editor based in Queens, New York. You can find Robyn's written work in BUST Magazine, Business of Home, The Washington Post, Animal Literary Magazine, and more. Find more of her stuff at robynleesmith.me and follow her on Instagram @bobyynns and Twitter @bobyynn.

when I was five years old.
Her glorious pink gown
enveloped me,
her long blonde hair showered me,
and a rush came to my cheeks
as if a friend was brushing my hair.
Her laugh,
oh, her sweet laugh!
I wanted to put on overalls
and win her heart.
We could float in the air,
Under her parasol,
then drift back down to Mushroom Kingdom,
and live happily together forever.

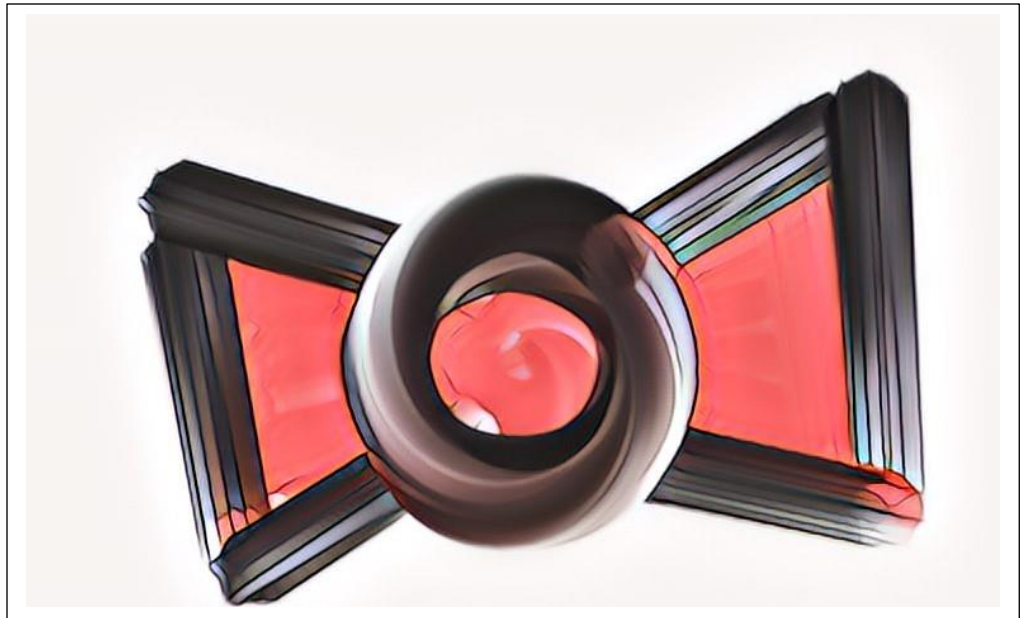


ode to MS. PAC MAN

BY SHELLY JONES

Shelly Jones, PhD (she/her/hers) is an Associate Professor of English at SUNY Delhi, where she teaches classes in mythology, folklore, and writing. Her speculative work has previously appeared in *Podcastle*, *New Myths*, *The Future Fire*, and elsewhere. Find her on Twitter @shellyjansen.

Who is this hero with the red
bow chased by ghosts,
relentlessly following,
skittering around corners,
haunting every level
of her labyrinthian life
until, emboldened, she turns
on them, devouring specters,
spectators of her many pasts,
and begin her adventure anew.



PEACH fuzz

BY KATHERINE KNIGHT

Katherine Knight is a recent Classics grad and librarian living in Cambridge, UK. She is a columnist at The Daily Drunk Mag and hides at @codaevermore.

I am ten (my cousin eight) when I first beat him at Brawl, with a bubblegum-pink princess who plucks turnips and yells 'I-ca-CHA! as she strikes with her hipbone. I am ten when I pick her ironically (because she is pink, and pretty) and eleven when I change to orange (because blonde becomes dumb) and fifteen when I study the skillset (ears pierced, post-ironically), and it is 03:15 and I am twenty-two (under-covers, summer vacation) when the internet gospel anoints her an A-rank fighter.

I am twenty when I realise I don't know how else to play -
- just that this alone is natural.

I am ten (my cousin eight) when I last beat him at Smash, and I remember the look of awe as I draw Link to sleep, and a sky still sweet with peaches.



BONUS

BY BETHANY ROHDE

Bethany Rohde's writing has found homes in such places as [Tweetspeak Poetry](#), [Mothers Always Write](#), and the e-book, *Casual*, published by T.S. Poetry Press. A Poetry Barista for Tweetspeak Poetry, you'll find her on Twitter at @BethanyR__.

for Mark

Remember moving to that house with a rec room?

Its dark veneer paneling, turn-knob TV,

Where desert temps dropped, and sibling chatter would spritz

like the sound of ginger ale just after opening—

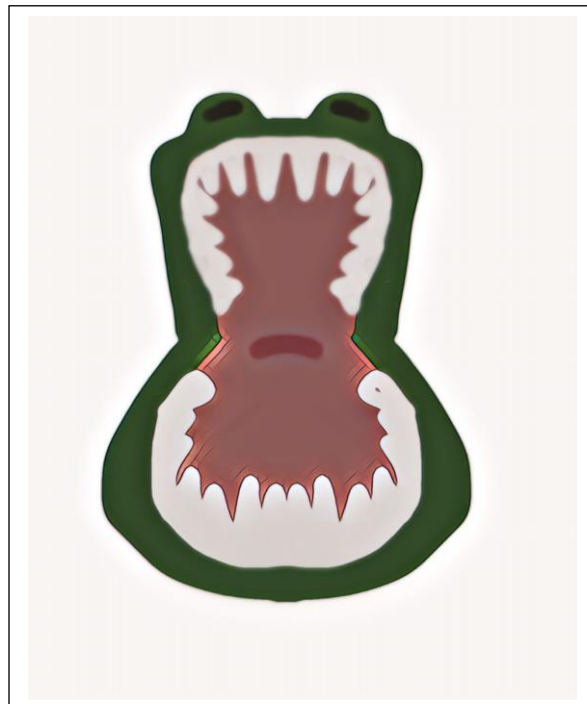
We'd take up the joystick, Morse code on the button,

brave tar pits, water pits, and croc mouths that opened

Eventually I learned how to dodge the white scorpion,

time my falls and master my jumps—

Just wait for the vine to come to you



TETRIS

BY KATIE KEMPLE

Katie Kemple (she/her) writes poetry, freelances, and helps raise two humans, an elder pug, a carnival goldfish, and a clew of compost worms. She's married to the love of her life. Her poetry appears on small pieces of paper.

Hold my hand, I'll take you there. The old desk,
our parent's home office. A bulky grey
computer, two tween-age kids navigating
the landing of colorful blocks, so slow

at first, an easy task. But their reward
is fast, so fast. The lesson is don't try
too hard, at anything unless you want
to drown in work. The reward is more, and—

We're home alone again, our parents at
school cleaning up for tomorrow's lessons.
My sister and I take turns playing Tetris,

and completing math or English essays.
We eat popcorn, watch TV. We have it
easy for now, our blocks still fall like snow.

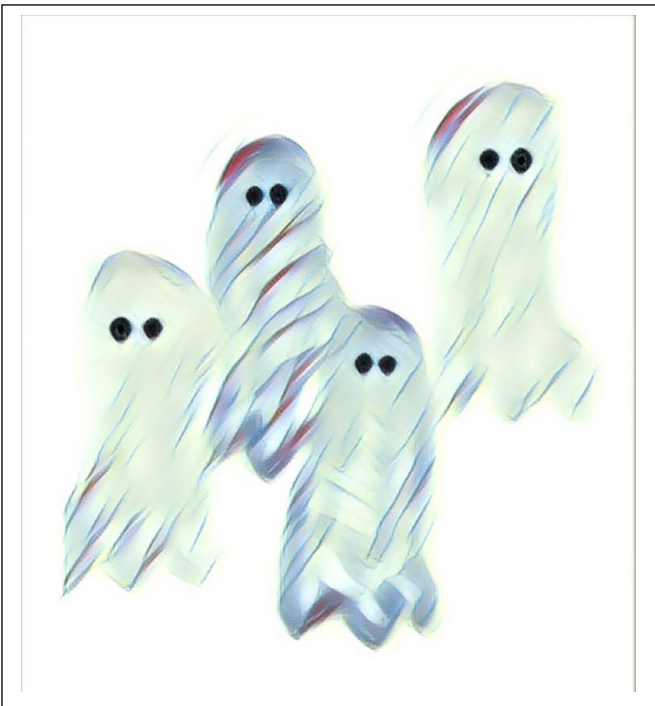


video game GHOSTS

BY DYLAN ROCHE

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It wasn't the kind of brush with the supernatural any of them expected. Then again, what about the weekend had met expectations? Their group arrived to find the AirBNB outdated, not like what was advertised, cramped and poorly furnished. A storm was brewing, so they would have to hold off on exploring the woods and lake. Instead, they unpacked and gathered around the clunky CRT television to play a classic game of Pac-Man, the only cartridge in the basket beside the dusty Nintendo system. That was until the power went out. "Let's have a séance," someone said. Why not? In the dark, with candles, it seemed like fun. Until they summoned the ghosts. First came the beeps and flashes, and there they were — Pac-Man's pursuers — Blinky, Pinky, Inky and Clyde, summoned straight out of the video game. Yes...even the hauntings failed to meet expectations.



MUSICIAN

BY MELISSA ASHLEY HERNANDEZ

Melissa Ashley Hernandez is a Latinx writer and the author of *The Love in Between* (2021). She is the founding EIC of *The Minison Project* and you can find her poetry in *Versification Zine*, *The Daily Drunk Magazine*, and *Fahmidan Journal*, as well as *The Minison Zine* and forthcoming in *Bandit Fiction*. Her short story, "The Rum Keg Girl" can be found in *Paranormal Contact: A Quiet Horror Confessional* published by Cemetery Gates Media, and her short story, "Lady Killer," can be found in Volume 4 of Kandisha Press' *WOMEN OF HORROR Anthology*. You can read her work and find her socials here:

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Sitting on your bed
my back against the wall
your head against my chest;
I play with your hair
as you play your guitar,
Jack Johnson songs.

With each chord I hear
rainy Sunday mornings
making banana pancakes,
reading limericks in silly accents
before bed, winter nights
warming ourselves with gold
from your whiskey cabinet.

You *must* be a guitar player,
the way you strum my heart strings.



