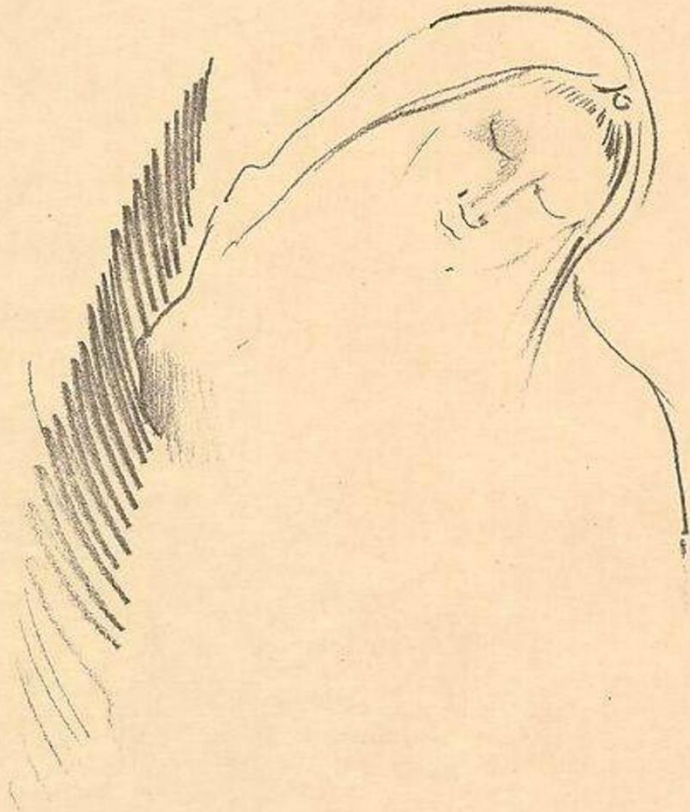


RANCID IDOLS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

SLEEP



avn.

24 HOUR CHAPBOOK
CHALLENGE IV

Published in Northern Ireland by
Rancid Idols Productions

Individual poems copyright © Original authors 2022
The right of the authors to be identified as such has been
asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Design and
Patents Acts 1998. All rights reserved.

This book is made available subject to the condition that it
shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or
otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form
of binding or cover other than in which it is published and without a
similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Cover Image: extract from 'Sleep' (1989) by Odilon Redon

rancididols.weebly.com

Contents:

4. Elizabeth Switaj: *The Fifteenth Morning After*
5. Marcus Keeley: *Stasis*
6. Wendy Sinnamon: *Insomnia*
7. Anna Murphy: *Half-Sleep Dreams*
8. Brian Kirk: *This Time of Year*
9. Michael Farry: *Sleep*
10. Kiriti Sengupta: *Good Night*
11. Stephen Knox: *Dream Sleep*
12. Clark Chambers: *Sleep*
13. Yvonne Boyle: *Mild Sleep Apnoea*
14. Colin Dardis: *Eat. Sleep. Live. Repeat.*
15. Emma Stone: *Never But Always*
16. Wendy Young: *In the Arms of Morpheus*
17. Kenneth Owens: *The Truth of Sleep*
18. Sandee Bree Breathnach: *3am*
19. Sarah McBride: *Restoration*
20. Jacqueline Rock: *Walking on the Pavement*
21. David Braziel: *Cross Threading*

Elizabeth Switaj: *The Fifteenth Morning After*

these days and nights alone, sleep
should come easy—I should
have to scold myself to set alarms
with even midnight streets and shared
hallways forbidden, screams
would soften silence—insistent
steps of axe
wielders and ghouls
silence the approach we've closed all doors against

instead I have ashwagandha, melatonin, fear
of taking Nyquil or turning off
all three livestreams of events as they develop

Marcus Keeley: *Stasis*

Awoke in a shock, fused to the bed.
Tendrils clawing at the covers,
Undulating stingray beats,
Looking to suffocate and comfort.
Time capsule in the dirt,
A time traveller of slumber, of passive existence.
Days ticking, hair on the floor.
A pit of sand, reality washing over
The deep blue heartbeat.
Events in the pull and tide, the tug and pull,
Wondering when the shock
Of drifting will end for you
Or be marked by
Someone else's release.

Wendy Sinnamon: *Insomnia*

The night hums
the night hums
the stars, pin-prick kisses

Ahab takes the helm.
White whale rumours abound
 a ghost,
slipped in between the ocean's folds.

Dawn is poised,
a silent spear
but not yet,
not yet.
Tonight we roam,
the tides are unforgiving.

Anna Murphy: *Half-Sleep Dreams*

Behind my window the wild wind whines,
and a black moon observes my half-sleep night
of weeping for my hungerous loss,
tired sheets so cold on your side of the bed.
In my dream Odilon Redon sketches
half my body in soft strokes of charcoal—
Can he make me immortal in this noir?

My hands quiver as I squeeze your pillow
and pray this wicked war soon withers—
As young men run to luminous brides
I'll wait for your train, wear my tangerine coat,
we'll spoon together in our lovers' boat
and when we awake to robin's rapid tweet,
in Odilon's sketch I'll be complete.

Brian Kirk: *This Time of Year*

Too much of a good thing is not so good,
they say, but who says how much signifies
excess? This time of year we exercise
our right to gorge on alcohol and food.
It's Christmas after all and we must brood
on failures and successes of the days
and year just past. Strong liquor bolsters lies,
but the fibs we tell ourselves are like rich
grub that keeps repeating as the day declines.
Night comes and sleep is flicked on like a switch,
yet still the mind keeps turning over signs;
the nightmares come until sleep breaks, you twitch
awake and count the meals, the beers, the wines.

Michael Farry: *Sleep*

That nightly punctuation
where you pause after a sentence
which almost made sense on its own;
either a comfortable semi-colon connecting
two related but independent clauses
or a restless colon introducing
new ideas and information, adjusting
the whole complex syntactical structure.

Lately you have found the value
of inserting an afternoon comma
a soft pause, a splice in the series
of conjunctions, interjections and moods
as you negotiate the subject-verb agreement
on the way towards the full stop, period.

Kiriti Sengupta: *Good Night*

As I reach a man-sized mirror, I find nobody.

I see sleep sitting idle both-side beneath my eyes — tired — exhausted — upset, like the defeated tigress rubbed with injured pride.

I want to hug her —

You've come a long way; a few steps more.

Sleep won't speak.

I called out again, *Can you hear me?*

She looks at me, smiling — coming up from its corners.

As sleep embraces me, we are locked to each other.

She talks ceaselessly, but it's soundless. Her lips vibrate, moving up and down. I plead, *Do you want to say something?*

I still can't hear.

There are just two of us in the room for one.

Stephen Knox: *Dream Sleep*

I love the promised peace of sleep
folded in my bed,
my pillowed head warm and deep
then to the half-known led
through the book of billowed thoughts
tossed into my dreams,
uncontrolled and overwrought
edging to extremes.

Sometimes I want to live there,
sometimes desperate to escape,
now, comforted by healing care.
then, relieved when I awake.

Tonight when I close my eyes
what muddled journey underlies?

Clark Chambers: *Sleep*

Casting clouds on my waking and sleeping, downstairs life.

Sometimes something grabs me, but floundering, foundering.

I reach for a knife, to cut the threads of the line and hook that
has me where it wants me to be.

25 years or more? Can't I please just see there is more to me
than waking sleep? Barely conscious thought though?

This will remain to be seen, through the opaque veil that is
somnambulistic, life, and death.

Yvonne Boyle: *Mild Sleep Apnoea*

At night I'm breathless - it's sleep apnoea
as being large affects my trachea!

I took a test with a strange machine.
'Apnoea: mild - you need better sleep hygiene!'

I have to go at the same time to bed
and reduce mobile usage to help my head.

It seems my cholesterol is gradually rising.
The need for more exercise is not surprising!

Another reason 'to be tired'
but in depression I'm not mired.

Glad to get whatever oxygen I can
A good laugh stops me being thran!

Colin Dardis: *Eat. Sleep. Live. Repeat.*

Eat. Sleep. Live. Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Exercise. Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Read. Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Worry. Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Go to the doctor's. Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Take your tablets. Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Live with the side effects. Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Exercise to counteract the sudden weight gain.
Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Read online about alternative medications from
unqualified but enthusiastic survivors. Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Worry that you're not doing enough. Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Go to the doctor's and up your dosage. Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Take your tablets morning, noon and night, at least,
when you remember, and consider double-dosing when
you forget. Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Live out your best life through an Instagram filter
and never mention the depression. Repeat.

Eat. Sleep. Exercise rarely. Read less. Worry. Worry. Worry.
Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.

Emma Stone: *Never But Always*

Mythic Morpheus wakes to walk
In dreams, self-secrets steep
Selene's chariot skyward stalks
Yet, I do not sleep
The Sandman sprinkles golden dust
Silence whispers, shadows creep
All surrender in slumber trust
Yet still, I will not sleep
Fears fret which are by day oppressed
With counted sheep, darkness is knit
I cannot sleep. I cannot rest
Our little lives are rounded with it
But while light reigns I daily weep
For each Dream lost to waking sleep

Wendy Young: *In the Arms of Morpheus*

Solemn deprivation arises
Appears in a thousand guises
Self-chastisement
Deep scars open
Tendons clutched in cramping nothingness
The kind where limbs are dead
Numbed into paraesthesia
Shaken to wake - from deadly sleep
Dreaming always of the past now present
Passed away loves
Old friends who now aren't
Drowning – teetering on the precipice
I am lost to the wilderness
Morpheus descending - damned by Hypnos

Kenneth Owens: *The Truth of Sleep*

Forget night-donned black:
sleep is a lover's white veil
cast over your troubles.

Sandee Bree Breathnach: *3am*

what scratches there beneath the bed?
pillows try to smother the sound
endless ticks of clocks you didn't wind
wet handprints on the wall won't be erased
 with a swipe of eyelids
 it's still there
the frosted windowpanes and wind-shed screaming
counting sheep and footsteps and frantic heartbeats
 you wait for it to pass
 it waits for you to falter
sleep won't consume you a second time
 it already has
 and now you cannot wake

Sarah McBride: *Restoration*

Dust in a fragment of sunlight
room dark as onyx
thin shreds of mellow gold and heavy searching eyes

the loaded canvas ripped
too much paint piled high, past and future,
the Buddhist teacher said only this moment
is life

so drift now and soften, be!
Distant voices soar,
deeper drowsy breaths, only here only now
quiescence and quietude

painted fragments realign,
all becomes clear.

Jacqueline Rock: *Walking on the Pavement*

Streetlights eavesdrop on a fighting heart and mind.
I look for a home as my sky falls apart and the moon is
swallowed by the ocean.

Brown bricks and white framed windows stand guard,
I am no threat,
I am walking on the pavement.
Shutters clatter in the wind
I hold onto these moments when elements duet with the
man-made.

A dry corner invites me to rest
Curled into my coat I feel my mother's warmth
My eyes dance with the glitter of stone walls until
I sleep on the pavement.

David Brazier: *Cross Threading*

Most nights I long to disentangle into sleep,
but lie awake instead to pick at the threads
of the day, trying to find an end, pull stitches
that knot and bramble-snag until, too slow,
the fibres finally dissolve into liquid dark.

Once, long ago, I could unravel on a breeze
Spend nights knitting elaborate worlds from scrap
before snapping awake fresh-aired and tangle-free.

Now mornings find me wool-tongued, wild,
and scrabbling to regather the snagged
tufts of myself from midnight hedgerows
and nightshade thorns.