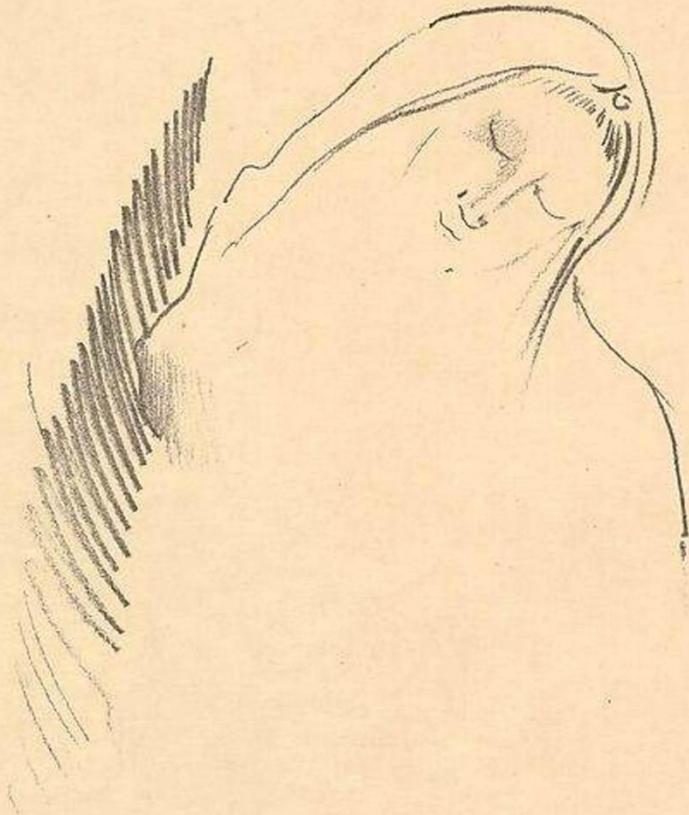


RANCID IDOLS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

# SLEEP



*avn.*

24 HOUR CHAPBOOK  
CHALLENGE IV

Published in Northern Ireland by  
Rancid Idols Productions

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

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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 bear.*

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.