



**SAMPLE**

streetcake experimental writing prize  
winners' anthology  
2019

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## Extract from 'Consider an Apartment in Washington' by Sarah Dean

**1<sup>st</sup> place, 18-21 years old, fiction**

There are only three things that matter in this life: chips, money and bubble baths. June's got a new girlfriend, Emse, who looks like a slapped fish. And June wants me to visit, because they want to have a baby, because the baby conversation's still on the table, because June thinks a baby will make Esme fall in love with her. The last time I heard a baby cry, there was blood and wine on the floor, and on my boots, and the house was never the same after that.

I'm living in Washington now, which is different from living in Blackpool, and no one here knows where Blackpool is on a map. They just peg me as a Londoner from the accent and the strong reek of gin. I haven't had good chips since I left Brighton.

Apartment #401. I don't know many people here. I know the Robinsons and their five-year-old Tasmanian devil, who screams like God is after him, who stomps around all night and punches his mum with big, meaty fists.

I know Mr. Addcock, a bloated giant of a man, and his pet parrot, who he's taught to say, "Look at the ass on that bitch!"

And I know old Ms. Creamer who says that there's a demon hiding in the vents of my apartment, that watches me while I sleep and wants to piss in my mouth. She's got thick hair all over her hands.

I know the weedy teenager who lives down the hall, kind of anorexic looking, who is selling drugs. Or exchanging drugs for sex with older men. I know that I'm softer than I used to be, that my hands still shake, and I can't take a beating like I used to.

And I knew Gina, bloodshot eyes and with three mouths to feed, who moved back in with her ex-boyfriend. He cracked her skull open with a baseball bat a few months later. A shotgun would have been kinder. The only things that matter in life are money and bubble baths, Gina said. Used to say.

## 'Kommunikation' by Michael Sutton

**1<sup>st</sup> place, 22-26 years old, poetry**

if you were sensibly cooperative not unreasonable  
we could do business broken tibia fibula radius  
fractured skull I leave you alone  
for a couple of minutes and well if it was for erm  
beneath the cloud encrusted glow of  
moon that clings that sighs that pirouettes  
sure of its own dormant essence same as our Layla  
when she kicks me in the shin but here we are  
in this sacrosanct warehouse when she steps on my toes  
as she slides off the monochrome rainbow  
when we run out of red and yellow and pink and green  
orange and purple and blue wake up  
this is not a nursing home if you were not intransigent  
to this stained glass sine wave  
you would undoubtedly succumb spitting in a bin bag  
I was born underwater in the lost city of England  
I cannot be drowned off the coast of Suffolk  
not meaningful enough for me where goes the extra L  
is it swallowed by the present like time itself probably  
not if you were not so what is in those eyes  
ask the cat on the windowsill  
drenched in the bad spirit of things  
pray for our sinners now celery is the loudest food  
but you get nothing till you erm a visit from G-d  
all options on the table yes the mystical economic  
sanctions they float like an aurora in the night  
and sting like an atom bomb lord make the nations see  
vermin vermin vermin that men should brothers be  
vermin vermin vermin if you were not so recondite  
we could make the news the question becomes  
are you willing to what is this what new thing  
is this doing it must be doing something new  
and I commend this statement to the warehouse

## Extract from 'Vermis-Sanctus' by Ula Taylor-Reilly

### **1<sup>st</sup> place, 22-26 years old, fiction**

I wonder if it likes how I taste and smell. I know what it tastes like, like dust and iron. Sometimes I suck part of it out of my throat up into my mouth, just to play with for a bit. I have to make quite a vigorous regurgitating motion to get the first bit up, then when there's some in my mouth I just suck repeatedly and it comes up really easily. It's such a fine, delicate thread that I can easily hold at least a couple of metres in my mouth. I like to push it into the gaps in my teeth, or roll it into a bolus and stab my tongue into it. Or I shape it into a thick rope and wrap it round and around my tongue, hauling up more length with every twist; it doesn't have enough strength in its body to resist my suction. Then I go still, to let it slowly reel itself back down, like a strand of wool gently being pulled. Once, I had a mouthful of it on the train and opened my mouth to show it to a businessman across the carriage. He probably didn't know what it was. I've been used to feeling it lurking near my oesophagus ever since I can remember, but when I was playing with it one time, I had too many overlapping strands sliding over each other in my throat at once, and I panicked, and just started chewing! Its body gave no resistance, and it was mild in flavour. I swallowed some, snorted some painfully through my nose and spat out the rest of the chewed up worm onto the desk in front of me, a variety of bloodless lengths in a puddle of sputum. They didn't wriggle. The uneven end raced back down my throat, that's the quickest I've ever felt the worm move.

I am located in the upper right quadrant of the house, the hottest organic mass in the building. If I stare down at my body for long enough I can observe rivers of skin gently undulating as lengths of worm get comfortable under the surface. It's occupying the right side of my chest cavity now and filling up my left arm. I'm so used to its presence, but I am still afraid to think of it going to my eyeballs, inhabiting my heart. I wonder whether it avoids those crucial places on its route so as not to injure me. Or maybe it goes to all those bits all the time and I'm just unable to feel it. I wonder if it's touching my brain.