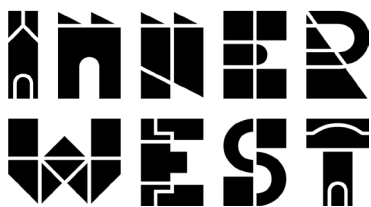


Words of Hope



Funded by



**A poetry Anthology from the live poetry readings
Sponsored by The Inner West Council
Read before a live audience on October 31st 2020
At St Lukes Anglican Church, Enmore.**

The Poets.

In sequence of Readings

1. *Mona Zahra Attamimi*
2. *Charles Freyberg*
3. *Martin Langford*
4. *Anna Kerdyk Nicholson*
5. *Noel Jeffs*
6. *Phillip Hall*
7. *Ray Minniecon*
8. *Mark Marusic*
9. *Norman Neill*



Mona Zahra Attamimi is Arab-Indonesian. She lived as a child in Jakarta, Washington DC and Manila, before settling in Sydney at age nine. Her poems have appeared in Southerly, Meanjin, Cordite, Westerly and anthologised nationally and overseas. She was the recipient of the Asia Link Arts 2019 Creative Exchange, where she spent three months in Bandung, Indonesia.

Betel Nut

The gods do not make great-grandmothers
like they used to. Mine reeked of damp earth, nutmeg,
grew betel vine to feed her habit, chewed and spat
betel-quid till her lips ochered and teeth blackened.

She reeked of damp earth and nutmeg, plucked vine leaves
at *subuh*, wrapped them into quids, chewed
and spat them till her lips ochered and teeth blackened
five times a day, like the ablutions before a prayer.

At *subuh*, before she wrapped and chewed a quid, she
smeared the leaves in lime, spices, nuts and resin. Five
times a day, like ritual prayers, she wrapped, chewed, spat,
to freshen her breath, and purge childbearing and labour pain.

A bitten quid stuffed with lime, spices, nuts and resin gripped
by reddened fingers glided across tawny lips and black teeth
to freshen her breath, purge childbearing and labour pain,
and relax her neck as she read the Quran from right to left.

Red-stained fingers glided across her tawny lips and black teeth.
A loose scarf, draped over her silver hair and yellow skin, shaded
her from the world as she read the Quran from right to left,
and masticated a quid like a gazelle feasting on sugar-grass.

A loose scarf, draped over her silver hair and yellow skin, shaded
her from the brood's glare as she spat black mucous into a tin-can
and masticated like a gazelle feasting on sugar-grass. So much
chomping on betel nut melted her face into a black-bloody smile.

Her brood glared as she spat black mucous into a can. A leaf
wrapped into a quid and chewed, numbed her mind and melted
her wry face into a black-bloody smile. The gods do not make great-
grandmothers like they used to. Mine reeked of betel nut.

Charles Freyberg is a Kings Cross poet, playwright and performance artist. His first book was “Dining at the Edge”, published by Ginninderra Press. His second book “the Crumbling Mansion” will be released next year. His poems are about vulnerability, change and transformation in nature and people. He gives thanks to the beautiful enlivening eccentrics who have inspired him.

AFTER THE BUSHFIRE.

(Bells Line of Road Blue Mountains near Sydney)

Twisting boughs are shadows
against a grey and misty sky.
The ground is bleached and naked,
except for shrivelled leaves,
twigs like bones
raked from a furnace,
tufts of burnt grass
crunch under my boots.
Still the tree stands
a husk
its pitted furrowed trunk
crumbles when I touch it,
hollow dry and drained,
black, just blackness,
and whitened ash under foot.

A thriving canopy,
mottled trunks oozing with moss,
tangled with fern fronds and shrubs,
all wither as the air is sucked away,
then blown back in a scorching bellow
as the whirlpool takes hold,
shattering and flashing,
boiling sap bursts,
leaves budding and opening
in years of slow sunlight
crackle and explode in a moment.

A roar of blinding orange
scours and leaps high,
hurling up particles of ash,
which seethe and gather
into choking palls of smoke,
blocking out the sun
to make a smouldering dusk of midday,
a stinking remnant of the forest's life
blows round the country, round the world.

Spikes of shrubs,
blackened trees like scarecrows
descend into the valley,
then upwards in miniature
on the mountains beyond,
still hazed in blue grey smoke.
A green shoot sprouts
between the burnt stubble of grass,
a fungus feeds on a trunk's soot,
budding with purple leaves,
there's orange earth under whitened ash,
all moistened by recent rain.
The pods on twigs are open,
they've dropped their seeds.
Life is returning.
Vulnerable. Like never before.

ANGEL.

A park by the harbour.
It's midnight.
A breeze chills my skin
through gaps in my coat.
I want to go home,
but somehow you shepherd
the fragments of my yawning senses.
The sky is grey.
The clouds drift.
You want to take me over.
The water flickers with lights on the other shore.

Your head is tilted to the sky.
Your ribs unfold and fill.
I'm no longer beside you.
I'm there within your deepening breaths,
my head hinges upwards like yours,
as the clouds glide unstoppable,
faint puffs sharpen
into vast headless birds,
ripped open pillows trailing fine mist,
spider web threads unravelling
into a slash of greyness,
tumbling into black nothingness.
A low hum of music,
as you whisper "Angel!"
Eyes widen and squint
with dirty cotton lashes,
no iris, just a gaping hole,
tinged with the city's purple light.

"Just clouds at night, just clouds at night."
No- they're something more.
I'm shaking like you.
Tears are running down
the stillness of your cheeks,
you're panting with astonishment,
I'm afraid for you, afraid for me
I shake myself awake, until

..... above our heads a branch,
circling leaves glint silver
as the moon winks
through gaps in the clouds,
a bleached eye
bruised with rust
with thin infected capillaries.
So old,
for a moment defiant,
then slowly muffled
by wandering, monstrous
"Rapture" you whisper.

I break right away.
I look you up and down.
Your head is stretching from your body
like a string is tugging you upwards.
Angels?
You're mad.
The park drains to trees,
blue light on the harbour,
clouds blown by freezing wind.
You want to swamp me,
until there's nothing left of me.
You're driving me mad.
I see the red brick of apartment blocks,
a cackle of boys sculling beers,
lights in a thousand windows across the shore.
This city is so bland.
I look back up again
to find what you see,
searching for your breath's rhythm,
as your trance slowly breaks.
Your smile is radiant.
You've won again.

FOREST ELEGY

Terrania Creek.

I'm poised in my study
searching for a forest
in a scattering of note books
filled with sprawling biro,
repeating, refining
like variations on a violin,
a work without an end.
My dead friend's painting stares,
swirling lines of his satire brighten
the piano slows, the violin sprints
coloured folders open as layers of paper
start drifting in the breeze

I got in a car.
I drove away.
Freeway, highway, town, fields
until a dirt road narrowing
led me to this towering forest.
I searched for a place to enter,
a chink, a path

Leaves tumble down in somersaults
like brown moths tinged with green
a root rests like a tentacle
oozing with moss
fallen branches rot in shadow
the creek rushes and bubbles below.
A trunk is cut with furrows
each gnarl a tangle of splinters,
it splits at random angles
branches reach, splitting again
to a mesh of new leaves
gleaming with sunlight.

The violin meanders
frozen notes on paper writhe,
the painting swirls
a dead writer's bright anxiety,
a moment of shared laughter.

Circles are spinning on the pool,
expanding and vanishing
so quickly they're always there,
a hiss against the water whooshing
through jagged polished rocks.
I follow a tree's gigantic trunk
past staghorns, scars of branches lost
skipping shadows of leaves above.
A bird swoops out of layers of fern fronds
a whip cracks and echoes,
the frogs are burping raspberries.
And like a distant drumming,
the sound of the falls.
The forest voices are bubbling together
like choristers scattered far and wide,
wails, hums and basses
a language that cannot be spoken
but full of such patterns of feeling,
I begin to know what it's saying.
Circles are spinning on the pool
as I sense you beside me
whispering your fantasies,
slowly breathing like me

A wisp of water glares
shattering to a spray
down the long mottled cliff
so quickly renewing
it shimmers in a frozen glow.
The pool bubbles around me
wrapped in layers of trees,
it's like I'm cupped in a gentle hand
reaching into weary muscles,
my skin is now transparent
my body spreads, caressed.
Loving to drift
I savour delight as long as I dare
ageless in my nakedness.

My notes sit calmly.
The hand behind the painting,
with all his quirks and tangents
quietly listens with me
as the violin skips high, then low.
This is my home.
My work is done.

Martin Langford has published seven books of poetry – most recently *Eardrum*, a book of poems about music. He is co-editor (with J. Beveridge, J. Johnson and D. Musgrave) of *Contemporary Australian Poetry* (P&W, 2016). An invitee at international festivals, including Trois Rivières, Medellín, Granada and Struga, his work has been translated into French, Chinese, Italian, Spanish and Arabic. He is the poetry reviewer for *Meanjin*.

THE PLAY BEGINS

For the cast of *Così*
The play starts in darkness:
a pregnant blank pit into which
there are only, as yet,
bumpings backstage,
leaks and diffusions of sound.
Somewhere the child-adults wait –
to take on personae
permitting strange presences near –
business and lines into selves
that must take flight or die
amongst Others like them.
Their trust is a gift from the dark –
rippings from vast, black water –
a hand leading outwards
through curtains and masks
to the unsettling warmth of a hand.
Nothing can help them.
The lights are no use –
with their stark and dispassionate gaze.
Cheek-bones and age-lines,
they step out towards
with the courage and blindness of love.

From. *Be Straight with Me*, Island Press, 2000

ARI

Ari is running.
At night, so the locals won't beat him.
To the side, to stay out of the ruts.
He is running because all his people are
are landless and scattered –
or scattered and crazy – or crazy and sick.
His lungs keep good pace,
but his feet are cut badly, and bleeding.
Never mind.
He will walk in the towns.
He is running because
they'll allow him to work as a doctor.
He is running because
he is wearing the cap of the Bears.
He has seen in the films
there are lands full of nothing but cities.
And he knows that the Council of Spaces
takes care of you there.
He will run to the dust-plain of trucks
and seek news of his journey.
They will laugh at his questions, and lie,
but his gods will read well.
He will borrow a ride to the valley of fires.
He will trawl through the smoke
with the cripples the earth does not need,
and hunt ibis and crow.
But he'll be there when men from the ferries
seek look-outs and post-boys.
He will do as they say, to a 't'.
For their needs,
they will teach him the passage.
He will practise his speaking
and make himself small, like a ghost.
He will crouch in a darkness
of engines, and saltwater slapping...
And he will climb ashore
through those shipyards –
because there are people in cities
in whom one can trust.

JACK

i.m. John 'Jack' Adams 1905-1988

He would dress in the darkness,
and make his way down
through the echoes and gleams of the Yard:
climb into floorlessness –
crouch there, aloft and adrift,
while he soldered ships' brains.
Those were the days of class warfare –
of Dads who would not put
one ha'penny down
lest their sons became better than they.
Nothing for tutoring:
You didn't tell me he charged!
Nor for his music:
his Communist father would keep
the piano Jack bought – and that only he played.
So he took on more pupils
while plaster Olympians
frowned at the earnest, wrong man.
And he kept up his speed –
while the metronome laughed.
And he wore gloves at work
so his eloquent fingers
would not be ashamed in clean rooms.
But then war, with its moraines for choices.
And the years, after that, of hard peace.
So he never became a conductor.
How could a dockyardie
ever become a conductor?
All he could do
was to make what he could of it:
leaven – with working-class zen –
his difficult journey to dance-steps –
a progress for grief and good cheer –
like Beethoven's brave allegretto¹.

¹i.e. of the Seventh Symphony – one of his favourite pieces.

From: Eardrum, Puncher and Wattmann, 2020

Anna Kerdijk Nicholson is a poet and poetry editor. Her books are *The Bundanon Cantos* (2003), *What was Lost* (2007), *Possession* (2010) and *Everyday Epic* (2015). *Possession* won the Victorian Premier's Prize and the Wesley Michel Wright Prize. Born in Yorkshire, she now farms on the NSW Southern Tablelands.

Waiting for rain

My shoulders are taut,
sitting on a wooden bench
staring at the fields,

I realise how much I am straining,
willing rain to come.
I decide, instead, to listen.

Near-in to my body,
throat breath,
heart-beat I hear so much these days,

the dog's paw on a gabion,
taking careful steps on wires and rocks,
toenails on wood.

At mid-range, birds:
a lark over our fields,
ravens cawing,

ducks dry crop-futtling, silver-eyes in thorns,
small plovers 'twitting',
galahs' wingbeats right overhead.

From a distance
it comes on gently,
trickles off roof to tank,

plips a water-level sonar,
wetting us as we sit,
glorious, slow rain.

Noel Jeffs is an Anglican Friar and originally from Gippsland and sometimes student of Kate Lilley and others for a Master of Creative Writing at Sydney University. I am a disabled person who lives alone and enjoys conversation and silence with a master's degree in Mental Health also trained as a trained psychotherapist.

Her song-lines

1.

She appeared on earth and lived with human kind.

Her sighs are too deep to read, searching always for
food and a refuge to stay.....the song of a homeless
person with her grief so loud, even too loud
to be heard. Now every stranger deserves a name or
is a will of the wisp.

2.

I saw her spot on a bus stop, her pile
of rugs, her air BNB hidden in the vein of a street
or the couch surfer at my knees, somewhere
somebody had broken the glass of her home-stay
and said she only had need of a grave.

Does wisdom matter in this world of age?

3.

Pension's play is a redemption and need, a greed
for the task is to keep us all warm and safe
and who will say where her home is and growl if

she is too long in searching now for the grasp
of that milk of human kindness.

Under the meridian of sky and darkness frightening,
Was she sent a home to die in?

4.

it could come close to all of us and without the
wag of a puppy dogs' tail and has the tide, a light
gone out? Who will stay in her grief and power,
labour dignity and humour, a discarded
human trust, what do you value most as a refugee?
a sanguine soul or a reckless rover like me
Laugh with me now, I know you are without sin
even just a person and pile tormented by time. Please
sing my song and continue to reach my country.
[.... the hate that has befallen that woman.....]
for her space is in between, and like none other.
Is she dead now? if she were dead now who haunts
my night and can I tell it without fear or favour

10.08.2019

Borders we can transgress

word of mouth; a way is made.
No greater friends than these
for a greater good he has gone.

I await all your fears
I have survived in loneliness
and, it is necessary to have dreams

and fears and outings, and the post
-man knows my voice. Heroic in
a different way,

let us go, let us see
this is a post-colonial age of doubting.

18.07.2020

Black on White

[I began this poem thinking of the world of white privilege
and power and ended it to give thanks to indigenous culture and the
contribution gratitude can make to our lives after reading "Sand Talk"]

Sorry you have had to wait for me
Have you waited long enough?
I have waited too long,
—things are never over

The trials of our bondage are
our sand-talk here, domination ties,

we're derailed we are just colonial
wearing. Listen now to

our handprints on the rocks assailing.
silence please, and we are staying,

gleaning in every instalment of our
ties to time and our country

Wearing our souls on our arms
doubly, longing to be set free

of the caprices of white or black
and our own privileged coat-tails

and the laissez-faire of our race
The fantails of the black-cockatoo

perhaps extinction in the tribes
and tragedy of external bushfires

Stuffed shirts extolling our enabled
economies and beliefs of enlightenment

a radiance; can now be intellectually
disregarded by words of sand-talk

We are devoured in the imperfections
of our modern world and the fear of the other

The white-face is like an anxiety
in the blackness we smother first languages

or second languages, we creep through our
vineyard of blackened soot and fire

Eden, trampled by the forearm we have
Created. Do you take my hands to

talk and remember and trivialise
exploitation and surrender, dance

now to the words of Mother Earth
to make friends, neighbours and habitat

as we mellow in the words of life.
We have sailed to this different shore

to release the white prowess from its
cupboard and diminished it in our sprees

We cannot go back to Terra Nullius
and do shake your hands and

don't look into your eyes now;
but treat us with your mind-space also

custodians of country and land
writing out of a timeless-land and

its deep imaginings, a country dark-in-heart,
messages the eternal where my own place

is poetry and being a song. It is time to
give thanks to the custodians for this grace.

18.01.2020

Phillip Hall lives in Melbourne, where he is a passionate member of the Western Bulldogs Football Club. His publications include *Sweetened in Coals* (Ginninderra Press, 2014), *Borroloola Class* (IPSI, 2018), *Fume* (UWAP, 2018) and (as editor) *Diwurruwurru: Poetry from the Gulf of Carpentaria* (Blank Rune Press, 2015). He also publishes the e-journal *Burrow*: <https://oldwaterratpublishing.com> & his forthcoming collection is *Cactus*, to be published by Recent Work Press in September 2021.

Hounded

for Charlie Brown, my first rescue greyhound

I was the dregs hitting the floor but still
I could cup the palm
of my hand over your cranium, fingers scratching
that spot
behind your ears, courting for you
a ceasefire in this alien
space of comfort & love & treats

What mass grave
of neglect might have been yours
after a life racing, when camera/lights/action
are whittled down to a concrete pen

You came to me biting
yourself, your face a host of tics & yawns, afraid
of shadows, too scared for outside
a trace of misuse

And yet, in saving
you, our self-harming is more or less
unneeded
& in my townhouse turned kennel
we are becoming
safe

Sir Jay Jay Raids Rich

for Billy Blue, my second rescue greyhound

Raced for the punters
a homebred genuine stayer hooked
out wide for speed star spoils

& his trainers manage the racing
agenda after deep pockets fracture
his accessory carpal bone

to get him back
on track surgeons amputate
front right toes

Sir Jay Jay is out there
a distance superstar rent asunder
from the field

but a hundred grand in prize money is stillborn
when it comes to post-racing care so a hobbled
champ is up for grabs

as Billy Blue he is my knight
in shining brindle
velcro-hound snoot to snoot limping from

treat to soft toy squeak
these new-fangled lures lugged to a den
now his snooza snuggler

long-haul dog-love redeeming Charlie & me

Pastor Ray Minniecon is a descendant of the Kabi Kabi nation and the Gureng Gureng nation of South-East Queensland. Ray is also a descendant of the South Sea Islander people with deep and abiding connections to the people of Ambrym Island.

Energy.

By Sterling Minniecon.

Silver, silhouettes, of pure energy.
Sheening, probing, pulsating, filling, covering all.
Invisible, innumerable vibrations on call.
The cobra strikes, the victim falls.
The falcon swoops as the big cat calls.
The bear strikes deep. The salmon leaps;
A scintillating shower of energy's fire.
The marshes boil, the Anaconda coils.
A snapping of jaws as the crocodile rolls.
A shrieking roar, the avalanche breaks.
The great whales leap, symphonies of power.
Bubbles burst in a dazzling array
As the 'great white' hones in on its prey.
A sun-lashed sky at close of day.
The dolphins dance to the melody of winds.
The albatross soars on tireless wings.
The lion roars from within his den.
The tiger leaps, claws like rapiers for the kill.
The elephant trumpets defiance from the fen.
Deep thunder and fire, the jet streaks by.
Thunder, fire and smoke as the rocket cleaves the sky.
Energy, released energy, displayed.
On and on through endless days.

(The International Library of Poetry.

The best poems; and poets of 2003.)

Mark Marusic is well known for organising a monthly poetry meeting at Petersham Bowling club. He has published 2 volumes of his own work. He explores environmental issues, the notion of home and various interpersonal issues. His most recent book is called *Iconoclastic Journeys*.

CULTURE AND CLIMATE

the heat slows down one's thoughts
is this why Australia's said to be
unconducive
to culture and ideas?
a climate suited
to cricket, racing, drinking beer
but does an outdoor life
shut out all thoughtfulness?
does brightness only thrive
in weather cold and damp?
could not open spaces
unclutter minds,
bushfire
scorch away
sterility of vision,
hatch long dormant seeds,
constant sunshine
nurture creative flows?

INNER LIGHT

You're standing in the garden
before the frosted window.
I'm on the other side
next to the fridge.
Somehow we know
there's just this pane between us.
It scatters the light,
not passing it through.
But the light within us
still can reach each other –
even if this window
was all bricked up.

TIANANMEN

Plastic bags,
full of shopping,
homeward journey
interrupted
by tanks their bearer
encountered in the square -
menacing fellow folk
out to make a stand.
Instant solidarity.
The contents of these bags
now will have to stay uncooked,
such steam inside himself.
Domestic evening plans held up,
could be blown away -
the price for instant fame
in a single party state.
A poise more eloquent
and elegant
than that of those who strut
through our media-filled lives.
A gesture of defiance,
without rehearsal,
that could inspire us
in freer countries
to stand up to our despots -
though velvet gloved
same fists beneath.

Norm Neill arrived in Australia in 1960 as a ten-pound migrant from the UK. He worked in many jobs in both city and the bush, went to night-school, won a scholarship to university, and became a high-school teacher and then an historian. He was made redundant, and later worked part-time at the National Maritime Museum. Norm's poems have appeared in anthologies, literary journals and newspapers. His best competition success has been third place in the Fish Poetry Prize in Ireland. He started the weekly Wednesday Night Poets workshop group in 2002. The group has been communicating by email for the past six months. He is also a member of Youngstreet Poets.

aged four

We didn't really know what war was; we just presumed
that everybody had one. We weren't quite sure which way
was east or west but knew exactly where the planes
that grown-ups called the bombers flew. We listened
to the sirens wailing in the nearby town and counted time
between the bangs. We didn't understand why people
said we shouldn't wave to soldiers dressed in long grey coats
passing by with others dressed in brown and holding guns,
and did it anyway.

According to the time of year,
we built fat snowmen, danced around a maypole, plaited
daisy chains, picked blackberries on the edges of a field
or jumped on piles of swept-up leaves. And then one day
the bangs and wailing stopped and men appeared in houses
where they'd never been before and children had to call them
dad. We grasped that life had changed, promised to be friends
when we were sent to school and, in our special corner
by the chestnut tree, we talked about the good old days.

repudiation

Twenty years ago, I ran
up flights of stairs.
Last week a doctor diagnosed
aortic insufficiency, alleviated
only slightly by both mild
and need to keep an eye on it
as guarantee
of no immediate mortality.
Today I used the lift
– so what?
I wear red spectacles,
striped top and faded jeans
to re-create myself
as fifty-five again.
Tomorrow I will dye my hair.

cbd

The early-morning hum of cleaners swells
to fitful choruses of snarling engines,
clattering construction sites
and shuffling grumbles of the workers' feet
that echo from the cliffs of glass that glint
like waterfalls snap-frozen overnight,
their chill intensified by keening
sirens and the silent blinking lights
until the sun warms tiny yellow flowers
glowing in the cracks in Hosking Place
and a cellist with a purple beanie
busking Ode to Joy by the Town Hall steps.

VE Day

London, 1945

The locals pack the street to cheer war's end
but I stay silent, fearing to offend
the revellers by asking if we've lost
much more than we have won. What was the cost,
dank shelters, profiteers, black market thugs,
three Thompson sisters killed by doodlebugs*,
the friends and families all grieving for
the blighted hopes of prisoners-of-war
like Harry, caged behind barbed wire for years,
and mothers forced to cope with children's fears?
We've lived with shortages and rationing,
kept calm, made do and mended, fashioning
our lives to suit, and singing in the choir
on Sundays, hoping music might inspire
with rousing choruses and hymns of praise
the courage to endure our lonely days.
But will I find that Harry's changed, and will he
light that magic spark to rouse the thrill we
celebrated once as newly-weds
in rented furnished-rooms with lumpy beds?
For now, I ache to know which aerodrome
will bring him back for me to greet him home.

* Pilotless flying bombs

jazzfather

Once, I heard Kid Ory play – who'd played
for troubled cornet-master Buddy Bolden
sixty years before in New Orleans.
And I was young and he was old and drunk
but still his trombone stirred the ancient tiger,
snarled and roared through High Society;
and though long past his best I didn't care
because, just once, I'd heard Kid Ory play.

eruptions in our lifetime

revolution
nuclear bombs
krakatoa
but more likely
boils

farewell

The rain began to fall just as I heard
that you stopped breathing, peacefully, asleep,
apt comment as we part without a word
and only memories remain to keep.
It's customary to say that much was left
unsaid, too much regretted or not done;
all this is true for those who stay, bereft
of parents but with years of life to run.
We know, of course, the memories are mixed
with seven children plus the one who died
at birth, but now remembrances are fixed
and mostly good, we must be satisfied.
You lived a life of which we can be proud;
in time of sadness, modest pride's allowed.

Poetry of Hope

A live poetry reading

**[https://www.stluksenmore.org.au/
poets/words-of-hope.html](https://www.stluksenmore.org.au/poets/words-of-hope.html)**

**Venue: St Luke's
Anglican Church, Enmore
11 Stanmore Road**

**Date: Saturday October 31st 2020
commenced at 2pm**

**Lucky-door prizes donated by
'Better Read than Dead'
Bookshop, Newtown**

Coordinated by Noel Jeffs

**Master of Ceremonies:
Father Jeffery Parker
and Thor Blomfield**

**Anthology by:
Halyucinations Studios**

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