

# Battery Pack



VOLUME ONE

# Fruits De Mer

*Henry Northmore*

**The ocean liner** pulled up alongside the drifting lifeboat, and the first mate scuttled down the ladder to hook the small vessel and secure it to the ship. He pulled back the tarp, gagging at the stench - then noticed movement at the back of the boat. Unbelievable: a woman and child amongst the bones. "Look mummy," croaked the toddler, rushing forward, "more food."

@HENRYNORTHMORE

# Birthday Present

*Tamasine Reilly*

**Shiny, blue, the** birthday present sits on the table. Squealing, the child rushes forward. "Be careful Sebastian," warns his mother, barely containing her laughter. With little restraint he tears through wrapping paper, flakes of cobalt littering the floor. Inside, a kitten is mewling. Sebastian's smile shrinks. For a four-year-old he has an exceptional aim. The kitten slithers down the window leaving a yellowish smear. "I wanted a puppy," says the boy.

# Mop Boyfriend

*Jenny Mackenzie*

**Lucy got car-jacked.** Terrifying. They jumped in wearing hoodies. Later, she read about “passenger dummies”, and dragged a shop mannequin from her wardrobe, unscrewed a mop and plonked it on his head. Very Roger Daltry. “Quick spin, babes?” she smiled. She grappled him downstairs and into her new car. That night she put him in her bed. Was that weird? “Night, sweetheart,” she said. “Night, honey,” he whispered.

# Pickaxe

*David Hartley*

**I pause for breath** outside my own nostril. Last night I dreamt you died and the dream clings to my brain like a limpet: my wet cheeks, the embarrassment of my grief. I can't concentrate, I need it gone. So I heave the pickaxe from my shoulder and ready the rope. I'm heading in.

# Missing

*Sarah Butler*

**He left a note:** *gone to buy cigarettes.* And I believed him. Why wouldn't I? He'd been smoking thirty years. We'd had our first together, on the field behind school. He puked. I didn't. I gave up ten years back. He stuck with it. He probably still is - smoking, I mean. He probably still is - alive, I mean. When I picture him, he's both, the smoke curling up so I can't quite see his face.

# Tears Of Eve

*Tracy Fells*

**The white-haired** gentleman held the vial in trembling fingers. Mesmerised, he rocked the liquid, commanding his own miniature sea. "My granddaughter was born after the drought began," he said. "And you say this was collected on the last day it rained?" Eric nodded, his smile subdued. "She's only known synthetic water. I have cash - name your price." Eric was already texting home: *Let's celebrate tonight, Evie. How about fried onions? Lots and lots of onions.*



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