

BLACK

Virgin Slate

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About VirginSlate

VirginSlate is a group of amateur writers, based in Cork.

We provide a forum for amateur creative writers to practice their writing and to get feedback and constructive criticism.

Every two weeks we publish an online magazine with submissions from each member on a common theme. We also meet to discuss our work and to choose a topic for the next issue. New members are welcome to join us anytime.

There are no fees; we're just in it for the fun.

Email us at: virginslate@gmail.com
Or follow us on: [facebook.com/VirginSlate](https://www.facebook.com/VirginSlate)

Musings on Black

I remember hearing somewhere that it's supposed to be the absence of colour, black that is, while white is the simultaneous presence of all the colours. I sit here now and look out into a night that is the colour of the absence of colour and I wonder what it all means, presence and absence and the various shades in between. I'm sure there's a story I'm meant to be telling you, some tale of shifting shades. But for now all I see is the absences.

The bad guys always wore black. Traditionally the bad guys always wore black and the good guys wore white. Now it seems that the cool guys wear black and the bad guys wear suits. Come to think of it I wore a suit for a time. The leopard doesn't change his spots. I suppose that's what makes man such a dangerous animal – his ability to wear disguises and assume roles – so you never really know what you're dealing with; what colour he is inside.

Yes, it seems to me that there's a story to be told of colour and intention, of weakness revealed and trust abused, of character and its flaws. Such sadness there would be in the telling.

Leonard Cohen at the Isle of Wight, the Indigo Girls; I fill the house with noise and light, the vast denials necessary to survival.

- AC

Black

Her hair was still dripping after the shower as she sat painting her nails a shiny black. She blew on them lightly so that they would dry that bit faster, then reached for the hair dryer. It tended to make her hair extremely fluffy, but tonight that was the point. Next she gently pulled on her new stockings, the nice ones with the lace at the top, careful not to rip them. The matching black underwear came after that. She grinned as she posed in front of the mirror, she knew she looked good. Then she glided into her new LBD, tight in all the right places.

She hated hairspray and the damage backcombing did to her hair, but she suffered on until she got the right look. Make-up was the next stage. No blusher over the pale foundation tonight, but she allowed herself the heavy dark eyeliner, smudging it a bit under her eyes. She smacked her lips as she painted on the dark lipstick, grinned to herself again as she grabbed her black stilettos and tiny black clutch.

Tonight would be the best Halloween ever, she thought to herself as she danced off into the darkness, oblivious to the dark stranger pulling out of the shadows to follow her....

- DS

Black

The preparations had gone exceptionally well, the venue, dress, the flowers, the cake; all had been planned meticulously and lovingly. When they faced obstacles, they quickly overcame them and often whispered to each other “as long as love each other so passionately and intend to spend our life’s journey together, growing in, and sharing our love, nothing else matters.”

They had grown up together, in the same neighbourhood, gone to the same school, had mutual friends and were childhood sweethearts. He was never any distance from her thoughts or she from his. Even through the formative and challenging college and career world, their love and loyalty never wavered.

When friends heard of their forthcoming marriage, the only comments were “inevitable”, “kindred spirits”, “soul mates”, “a marriage made in heaven”, “with those two love birds, it was never a matter of ‘if’, but ‘when.’”

It was mid-June; she had watched the evening sun sink in a golden red blaze beneath the western horizon. “A red sky at night, the shepherd’s delight”, yes, she mused excitedly, “even the heavens are confirming and blessing our lifelong union of love; another omen if omens were needed.

She noted down a few “must dos” for the big day tomorrow, just hair, nails, collect flowers and then, she thought excitedly, her lifelong dream of perfect love would be consummated and continue “forever and ever amen”.

As she sat dreamily, in the hair salon, the butterflies of excitement, longing, desiring, overwhelmed her. In her glorious reverie, she hadn’t heard the phone ring, but felt a tap on her shoulders. The tall, dark, sophisticated beauty-attendant, now ashen-faced and drooped, bent over her and uttered or mumbled the dreaded phrase – “There has been an accident”.

Before she could hear the rest of the sentence, a cold shudder ran down her spine and an image of the movie she had watched last year on the Horror Channel flashed before her. At the time, she remembered thinking how gross, how macabre, how tasteless, the title was “The bride wore black”.

Could this really be happening? Could she be the real life bride, who wore black and would continue to wear it forever and ever, as in the film?

But as the old adage goes: “fact is often stranger than fiction” and so it was with our heartbroken bride.

- MB

Blackness.

She creeps in silently.

We do not feel her, smell her, taste or hear her.

This entity that encompasses, silent and clever, she remains,
her cloak wending and weaving her way about all she encounters,
in her lonely invasion.

Night in the city, settles dark and mute.

Shadows lengthen and then disappear.

Gentle folk toward their castles go and leave the streets to darkness,
and to fear.

Trains and trams, buses and cars desert the roads and rails.

And leave those still abroad to tread their weary ways,
to meet with husbands, wives and those they love.

Black is the night that follows day

to bring the racing hordes to stop, to think and reminisce at what's
been done.

To plan and organize what will be done tomorrow.

When the blackness will reluctantly give way to morning breaking.

Our troubles and our toils again renewed.

Our happiness and cheer again pursued.

- CF

The Black Post Box

There is a place up in the mountains where nobody ever goes. Nobody ever goes there, because nobody has ever found it. Nobody has ever found it, because nobody has ever looked for it. That's what I've heard anyway. Up there, in a narrow valley between two high peaks, there is a forest where the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow. There are no deer or foxes or rabbits or mice in the forest, there are no songbirds in the trees. Sometimes there are owls, but that's a different story. There are some bats and there are some spiders, but I don't know what they eat, because there are no flies. All there is in the forest are the tall still trees and the dry grey ground and a little path. The little path leads to a large square clearing where a black picket fence surrounds a well-kept, but very sombre park. I don't know who keeps it, because nobody ever goes there, but it is well-kept. The path leads through a gate in the fence and in a very straight line to the centre of park. Small smooth black rocks line the grey slate of the path. At the end of the path is an old-fashioned post box. A black post box.

I don't know how they get here, but this is where all the nasty letters come. When you write a letter to Santa to complain that he didn't get you the right doll for Christmas, that you wanted Milly and not Molly, and that you had made that *very* clear in your letter and that if Santa couldn't give you what you asked for what was the point of Christmas at all; this is where that letter comes. And before Christmas, when you know your little brother has asked for a drum kit, but you don't want him to get a drum kit because it will be all noisy and annoying, and you write to Santa to tell him that your little brother doesn't really want a drum kit and that he wants a 1,000-piece jigsaw with a picture of beans instead, or a new dressing gown, or maybe a Milly doll (*hopefully you can get it right for at least one of us*); that letter ends up in the black post box too. And when your friend wakes up on Christmas morning and there is a lump of black coal in their stocking, well that comes from the black post box.

When your boyfriend leaves the toilet seat up once too often and

sprinkles while he tinkles and you silently wish the seat would fall on his wobbly bits they next time he cocks his leg, put that silent wish on a postcard and send it to the black post box. When your mother asks you again if you're (finally – she doesn't say it, but you hear it) bringing someone to Christmas dinner this year, and you want to scream at her to mind her own bloody business and that if she asks you again, you'll become a lesbian and *never* give her any grandchildren, when you hang up the phone, take a fancy fountain pen and a nice piece of writing paper and send your silent curses to the black post box. If you think that your neighbour's kid is sub-normal on multiple levels, that he is set to grow up as an obese sex-pest and criminal, and that he very much takes after his mother, but you're much too nice to say so, pull up a chair, type up your thoughts, seal it up in an envelope and pop it in the nearest post box with this address: The Black Post Box, The Dark Park, The Grey Forest, The Shadowy Valley.

As old-fashioned as it looks, the black post box is also fully online. I don't know how it happens, but emails, IMs, posts, threads, tweets and tags can all be addressed to the black post box. Two of the main sources of incoming mail are unsigned resignation letters and those angry email replies that you type, and then count to ten before deleting.

If you want to communicate with those who have left us forever, to tell them for example, that your inheritance was woefully inadequate and that you wished they had died earlier, the black post box can take care of that for you. Even more fun: send all your best kept secrets to the post box *before* you die, how often you cheated on your wife, how smelly you thought her mother was, how ugly her new haircut was and how you really wished she had brushed her teeth more often and the black post box can deliver it for you after your death.

- DM