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*Rock Gods & Messy Monsters* is both a gory experimental piece and a powerful illustration of dreams that move into the arena of nightmares.

It also, surprisingly, is a story of empowerment, placing the onus on creating these dreams on their maker's perceptions of the world.

Set in the 1990s and revolving around the entertainment industry, *Rock Gods & Messy Monsters* opens with a messy job description: *"The blood didn't bother Alex but cleaning it up made her angry."*

Alex longs for escape, but rampant unemployment makes her one of the lucky ones. Maybe. Because certain aspects of this alternate world belay any thoughts of fortune: *"Alex put her backpack on the floor and unzipped the side of her head. She reached in and pulled out her brain, placing the throbbing gray matter in the customized, faux crystal cerebrum urn Acht Records had supplied her with her first day at the company. She had fought the procedure at first, refused to sign the Cerebrum Extraction Release form, but with times being as hard as they were, and with the knowledge that she had spent over six months unemployed before being offered this job, Alex knew she had no choice."*

One prerequisite for successfully appreciating this story is the reader's ability to move deftly through gory descriptions and scenarios. Another is an appreciation of the satire and parody which is embedded in descriptions of Alex's working world: *"The shock brought her to her feet. Langley had embedded neurological electric shock chips in Alex's body when she first started working for him, so with the push of a button, he could get her attention anywhere in the building. The second jolt ripped through Alex's ankles and nearly toppled her. If she didn't carry out her duty quickly, he would start shocking her all over."*

This wry sense of dark humor permeates the story as its characters evolve: *"I was just admiring your gold and platinum record collection," said Bret Horowitz, e.l., as he pointed to the wall. "Nice to see so many of them are my clients." With lightning speed, Horowitz reached into his inside pocket and pulled out his box of smiles, rapidly throwing on his proud, fatherly smile. He held out his hairy hand."*

The well-done literary devices of humor, ironic social inspections, and atmospheric psychological descriptions also lend to *Rock Gods & Messy Monsters's* consideration as a

sterling example of modern absurdist observation and writing. A host of rollicking, crazy characters permeate a story replete with cultural observations of the entertainment industry's follies.

The result is a literary work that holds the ability to reach into many reader circles with its powerful tale of mutant sea creatures, alternative music, and the injection of money and power interests into a profitable milieu which changes art and economics equally powerfully.

Modern creative writing classes looking for discussion points in experimental literary styles will find *Rock Gods & Messy Monsters* promises many lively debates about the elements of social examination and the impact of truly creative writing.

(Official review will be published October 2022 in the Midwest Book Review)