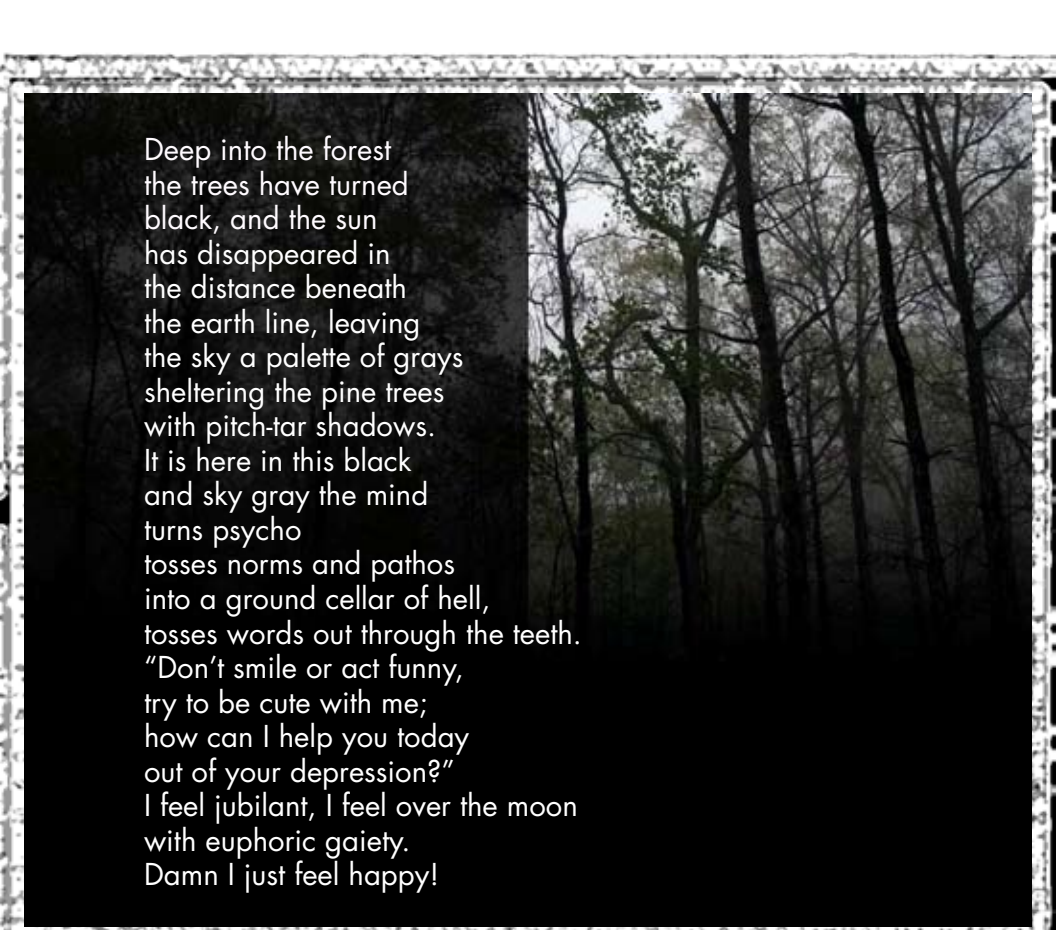


**MANIC IS THE DARK NIGHT**

*Michael Lee Johnson*





Deep into the forest  
the trees have turned  
black, and the sun  
has disappeared in  
the distance beneath  
the earth line, leaving  
the sky a palette of grays  
sheltering the pine trees  
with pitch-tar shadows.  
It is here in this black  
and sky gray the mind  
turns psycho  
tosses norms and pathos  
into a ground cellar of hell,  
tosses words out through the teeth.  
"Don't smile or act funny,  
try to be cute with me;  
how can I help you today  
out of your depression?"  
I feel jubilant, I feel over the moon  
with euphoric gaiety.  
Damn I just feel happy!

Back into the wood of somberness  
back into the twigs,  
sedated the psychiatrist  
scribbles, notes, nonsense on a pad of yellow paper:  
"mania, oh yes, mania, I prescribe  
lithium, do I need to call the police?"  
No sir, back into the dark woods I go.  
Controlled, to get my meds. I  
twist and rearrange my smile,  
crooked, to fit the immediate need.  
Deep in my forest  
the trees have turned black again,  
to satisfy the conveyer-  
the Lord of the dark wood.