

Thimble Literary Magazine

Volume 6 · Number 3 · Winter 2023

Copyright © 2023 by Thimble Literary Group

Nadia Arioli

Agnes Vojta

Clara Bush Vadala

EIC and Founder

Associate Editor

Associate Editor

Cover art: *Abstraction Yellow* by Rachel Coyne

Thimble Literary Magazine is based on the belief that poetry is like armor. Like a thimble, it may be small and seem insignificant, but it will protect us when we are most vulnerable.

The authors of this volume have asserted their rights in accordance with Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the authors of their respective works.

BRIEF GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION

Thimble Literary Magazine is primarily a poetry journal, but we happily publish plenty of short prose and art. We are not looking for anything in particular in terms of form or style, but that it speaks to the reader or writer in some way. Meaning, we're not huge fans of abstractions. When selecting your poems or prose, please ask yourself, did writing this poem help me create shelter? Simultaneous submissions are fine, but please notify us if the work is accepted elsewhere. All material must be original and cannot have appeared in another publication. This includes social media and personal blogs.

Please note: If you have published with us previously, please hold off on submitting to us again for one full year. Tracking the issue number is a good way to know when your window is open. Each year is its own number. So if you appeared in 5.4, for example, you would need to hold off in submitting until we're open for submissions for 6.4.

Poetry: Please send us two to four of your poems.

Prose: Please send a single work of around 1,200 words. It can be fiction, creative non-fiction, or somewhere in between.

Art: Please send us three to five examples of your art, which can include photographs and photographs of three-dimensional pieces. The images need to be as high-quality as you can.

Please submit only one entry per genre, once per submission period. That is, you may submit five works of art, but not three poems and two works of art.

Submissions can be in one document or several. Word, Google Docs, or Open Office preferred. Please include a short bio. Please do not use PFD.

We are a thimble-sized staff. We do try and respond to each and every submission within 75 days. If you have not received a response, please send us an email.

All submissions go to ThimbleLitMag@gmail.com.

USE RIGHTS: By publishing work, Thimble expects First North American Serial Rights. Thimble will also archive all works online at ThimbleLitMag.com and in a print version of the magazine, available on-demand. All rights revert to the writer after work is first published online. We would appreciate it if the writer cites Thimble in all future publications of the work.



Table of Contents

Front Matter: 1
Editor's Note: 6
Contributors' Biographies: 93

Art

Cover: Abstraction Yellow by Rachel Coyne
Small Thing 1 by Rachel Coyne: 23
Small Thing 2 by Rachel Coyne: 26
Landscape 1 by Cyrus Carlson: 35
Landscape 2 by Cyrus Carlson: 37
6444 (untitled) by Chad Hutchinson: 39
5882 (untitled) by Chad Hutchinson: 41
(5916) Reflection (Winter) by Chad Hutchinson: 46
(5989) untitled by Chad Hutchinson: 49
(6073) Teralingua Dinosaur by Chad Hutchinson: 51
Helix by Lorraine Caputo: 57
Synapses by Lorraine Caputo: 71
Tapestry by Lorraine Caputo: 81
Gibbous by Lorraine Caputo: 86

Poetry

- Shelter by Laura Sheahan: 8
Touching Proust by Julia Caroline Knowlton: 9
Ursa by Brice Maiurro: 10
Exodus by Amanda Roth: 14
Las Vegas Lights by Christopher Pellizzani: 16
Longings by Ion Corcos: 17
Deadheading by Steve Deutsch: 18
Octopus Mother by Patrick Johnson: 20
Deodar Cedar by Jennifer K. Sweeney: 21
Brain by Emma McCoy: 24
Henri Rousseau's The Dream by Alison Stone: 26
Death in the Garden of Eden by Linda Neal: 27
And by Alina Frank: 32
In Which I Consider Eggs on the Plate Without the Plate by Sarah Mills: 34
Goose Barnacles in Clayoquot Sound by Suzanne Chiasson: 36
Blind Eye by Cory Carlson: 38
Heiress Vs. Heiress by Kaylyssa Quinn: 40
Waving at News by Karen Bramblett: 47
The Past is the Present by Theo LeGro: 48
Power Thoughts by Bridget Kriner: 50
Ars by Oladejo Abdullah Feranmi: 52
Regarding Shear by Joannie Stangeland: 53
Borderlands No Longer Observed by Thomas O'Connell: 54
Acquisitions by Jim Tilley: 55
Peter's belt by Cate Root: 56
Photographs by Sharon Whitehill: 58
why do i love my baby by Kiik Araki-Kawaguchi: 59
Family Ties by Karly Noelle Abreu White: 65
Radish by Katherine Gordon: 66
The Question of Your Parents' Bowl of Stones by A. Jenson: 68
Oil Painting of a Tree-Lined Path by Laura Grace Weldon: 70
Landing by Kelly Madigan: 72
Identical Twins Roam Surrealism Galleries by Marcia Camino: 74
What we want in the end by Karen George: 78
I'll fly away by Annette Petrusso: 79

triptych of faith by Rina Olsen: 80
Frank Sanderholm's Obit by Cat Dixon: 82
when i turn thirty by Jonny Bolduc: 84
gift by Scott Ferry: 87
No Reason by Anuradha Vijayakrishnan: 91
Still Life in December by Matt Cariello: 92

Prose

The Man in the Baby Blue Pajamas by Kevin Grauke: 15
Breaking Up by Treasa Nealon: 22
Off the Island: Seeking a Brief Escape in 2021 by Heather Frankland: 28
The Anatomy of Grief by Abbie Doll: 42
The Dead, They Visit by C.W. Bigelow: 60
Attending Mass with My 90 Year Old Father by Michelle Reale: 64
Remind Me Again by Megan Wildhood: 76
Things They Leave Behind by Debbie Koenig: 88

Editor's Note

by Nadia Arioli

Dear Readers,

New Englanders believe in seasons—if there's one thing I've learned since I've moved here. I heard someone say “Grapefruit is my favorite winter fruit,” and I was confused by that at first. I mean, fruit is fruit. You can get grapefruit any time you like. But I'm starting to get it.

At the time of writing this, the trees are just starting to turn. At the time of writing this, I've just eaten my first apple cider donut of the season. But by the end of December, by the time this issue launches, I know it'll be different; snows and fireplaces and unbearable allergies. The feel is different. A time for hunkering, a time for cozy anxiety, which is distinct from sweaty anxiety.

The great novelist and short story writer Ali Smith said of “A Winter's Tale” that it has so much of summer in it, and I believe that. A surprising unfreezing, life bursting forth after being stuck for so long.

If you're snowed in often like I am, literally or metaphorically, for now, we wait. Just know that it will happen—miraculous and improbable as a statue coming to life. In the meantime, in the waiting time, we have love for a baby, we have the things we left behind, we have the past in the present.

“What do you do while you’re waiting?” Mr. Rogers asks Daniel Tiger. I remember from almost three decades ago. The question still compels me—you can do, you can make while you are waiting. And indeed, the contributors of *Thimble* have made, in their grief, in their patience, as they await their diagnoses, their parents’ death, in the still life of December.

Mr. Rogers proposes having a glass of orange juice. I’m having grapefruit instead.

That, I think, is what it means to use *shelter* as a verb. We shelter as we wait, using what we have. Won’t you, reader, shelter with us?

Best,
Nadia Arioli

Shelter

by Laura Sheahen

Eden was where we escaped to
Bleeding and breath-choked

Marsh ponds fashioned a poultice
Fine mud and reed down
To smear on our wounds

The trees and plants bent like good doctors
Released spores to calm fevers
And air busied itself
Repairing our lung cells

At night as we slept at stream side
Liquid slid under lids

Water wound through the channels of body
Soft pause at each landing
Its riverboats carried off pain

Touching Proust

by Julia Caroline Knowlton

(Musée Carnavalet, Paris)

Well, it was his desk. An object
he touched thousands of times
though he only wrote in bed,
an imposing ebony wood desk
with twelve drawers into which
he stuffed thousands of pages
dampened by wild, twisting
black-ink river sentences
and the half-opened velvet curtains,
ocean mirrors, torn perfume flowers
of his mind. Nearby, his brass bed
and a glass case holding a sterling silver
nécessaire de toilette, ink wells, pen nibs,
a tuft of pleated blue satin bedspread.
I reached out to touch his bed
but an alarm went off. I had gone too far.
What did my hands ask as they stroked
that desk—a fever memory down the spine?
Melodies? Notions of romance I no longer
believe? Maybe just a new way to grieve.

Ursa

by Brice Maiurro

i would run
all over town,
scraping clean
the aisles of
the grocery
store,

listening to
podcasts
on how to
change the
world,

i'd go
and sink in
to my parent's
couch
chewing on black
and white versions of history,
if it wasn't
for the
bear
that is sitting
at my door.

and this bear,
she is
a big bear,
protective
of the door
as if
it is
her child
and maybe
she is
protective of me
in a way.

at first
i felt an army
of colonial ships
gathering in
my stomach
desperate
to escape
but now
all i want
is to stay.

i lay
on her stomach
and in each
whole breath
i feel a world
being born
and dying
and born
until i don't know
and the womb
is everywhere
and i am in it.

Within the death and birth
and death,
there is a moment
where the sun comes to
find me
through the peephole
of the door
that the bear will not let me
pass through
and the light
it tugs at my shirt
like the loneliest child
or the hungriest wolf
and i can never discern
which it is
or how i feel about the
crying.

the phone rings
at regular intervals
lost in my pocket
and in my message machine
head i can hear them
saying

hey
it's me
i'm calling for you
the day is this
the time is this
i miss you
i miss you
i miss you

to which my
message machine
head says again and again

*i can't come to the phone
right now*

there is a bear at my door
and she is not ready to let
me leave

and the bear
she sweetly says nothing
she just dreams in green
and she dreams for me
wide awake forever
in the small of this house
where i cannot go

and sometimes i wonder
if some night she will claw
at the handle of the door
and float out of the house
born back into the stars
leaving me
with no bear
and all of this door
that opens up
like a mouth with fangs
or perhaps
a sky full of stars
in the morning
of the night.

Exodus

by Amanda Roth

For all the things I carry—forethought of grief, caul
of fury, burst stars in the back of my eyes—
it doesn't take much to wound a woman
like me. My kingdom is a snake field; my inheritance, a tradition
of superstition that says snakes have fangs and fangs
love necks like mine. I found myself facedown in the garden,
ready to be devoured—prey and praying with no one to hear me
scream. I am sick on ancestral venom. There are snakes circling
my feet, snakes soaking in my kitchen sink. They bite
and I bleed a grandmother. Tender this chorus that unskins me,
drains me
of red-fanged fury. For everything I have become,
there is a grandfather spit down the drain; a snake
breaking itself open in a field.

The Man in the Baby Blue Pajamas

by Kevin Grauke

after *Rear Window*

Oh, the fuss made of the man in the baby blue pajamas, especially with now not one but two broken legs! Of course he's a hero. And of course he deserves all the cakes and the casseroles delivered by the dancer and the fire-escape sleepers; had he not been watching from his wheelchair, the sick man above me would've gotten away with it, scattering his poor wife across the parks and gutters of our city.

But the man in the baby blue pajamas is sick, too, you see, though differently. Despite there being nothing lurid left for him to watch, he hasn't stopped watching—at least not me. In fact, he's grown even more observant. I do my best to ignore his eyes, but often I feel them kettle-hot on my skin, magnified by his binoculars and telephoto lenses to the size of inflamed and juddering egg yolks. In my dreams, I puncture them with a flame-darkened needle and squeeze out their juices. Awake, all I can manage are occasional quick glances their way.

I never see anything but the dark square of his window, but I know he's there, peering from the shadows, nursing unholy rhythms.

Las Vegas Lights

by Christopher Pellizzani

This is the most authentic sunset I have ever seen.
This is God telling me he's still the king of lights.
But Van Gogh went to Arles for God's light and they killed him.
I'm in Vegas for the light of man and to live.
Street light red is unnaturally long here,
so you can appreciate the primary power of red
amongst flashing orange and green.
That solitary red circle.
God's pupil in the flash?
He does not see a suspicious purple
slither away from a building,
a crime scene,
like a murderer
and blend in with the flow of passing humanity.

Longings

by Ion Corcos

(after Patrick Kehoe's *Longing*)

On the grey-blue sea, the water sparkles
like a mermaid's tail, and in the distance,
the Sirens, too far to hear. Rain falls from a low sky.
When my father threw seeds to pigeons

on his balcony, I also saw him stretch his arm
to the sky, point his finger to a bird;
I was caught in his unknowingness.
Later, when he watched the evening news,

I learned that he was trapped by earth.
Waves spill over rocks, and salt air gathers
in corners; *they tricked me*, he wrote
on the back of a receipt. He hung ceramic ducks

on his walls, paintings of the beach,
stored his clay-target rifles in a cabinet.
It is a crescent moon; I will not sail tonight.
The sea is flat, and the Thames is far.

Deadheading

by Steve Deutsch

I woke early
this morning,
took down
the two

photo albums
that bookended
the mantelpiece,
and began

to cut your image
from each
of the photos.
I planned to bury

the remains
behind the old
shed—where
once our tire

swing sat.
But mom
caught me at it
and she hasn't

stopped screaming
since. It's been
a week
and no one

knows where
you are.
Do you?
I cut

the images
using the small
sharp scissors
you put through

your tiny palm
once. One
of our countless
trips to the emergency

room. What was
it you were
so desperate
to say?

Was god so distracted
he didn't notice
the difference
in the clay

he held in each hand—
twins that bear
such little resemblance.
A bubble gum light

cuts through
the house.
An official rap at the door.
You're home.

Octopus Mother

by Patrick Johnson

She clutches her unhatched children,
squeezing into an empty cave.

She hangs her white eggs above her
like nursery mobile bobbles.

She never leaves this sunken crib,
not to stretch, not even to eat.

She caresses them in the dark,
a cool hand on a sleeping face,

and blows air on them
until her last breath

when they awaken,
eyes shining with birth.

Gazing up,
she dies,

and thinks
they look like newborn stars.

Deodar Cedar

by Jennifer K. Sweeney

Native to my shadow
I am all breathmarks
carriage of ether and home
the deep liquid story
of the Himalayas.
Find me bent
toward the soft dun floor,
my habit is weeping.
You. Meet me there.
What is sap but time
slowed to a resin
mist-become-honey
mountain-become-pulp,
aroma of the dead
edging back to life.
I furrow I fold
all the lands in
breathe beyond my borders.
The wind draws you toward.
You taste before you see.
You are already on your knees.

Breaking Up

by Treasa Nealon

The takeout coffee he had bought for himself had long gone cold, but Aine left it sitting on the mantelpiece. She had nothing else of his in her home—not a stray sock, not a phone charger, not a scatter of coins on her bedside table.

She spent the morning since he left hoovering every room of hers he's ever been in. When she was done, she took out the vacuum bag and took a scissors to the swell of it. The dust and hair and bits whooshed into a pile at the bottom of the shower, and she searched through it for some signs of him. A black curly hair or a stubby nail clipping. There was nothing. She picked it all up again with her bare hands and stuffed it in a plastic bag in the hopes indiscernible flakes of his skin were hidden within and would embed themselves into the cracks of her.

She had washed and changed the sheets since the last time he had been twisted up within them. There was no use searching for him there. He never stayed too long to imprint himself on her mattress.

This time he didn't go near her bed or near her. He just stood in her living room like he owned the place and broke her heart again. In and out in 16 minutes. Record time. It is the quickest break up she had ever endured from him.

She wanted to ask if he thinks this woman will last. The one he's

leaving her for her. But he would have laughed, in that awkwardly polite way he does when he doesn't want to sleep with her anymore, and say there is no leaving when they aren't anything.

She wants to text him to tell him he's left his coffee behind but it's been seven hours. He'd probably show her text to this new woman, and say isn't it lucky I met you? Isn't it lucky I got away from this deluded bitch?

She puts her lips to the cup, where his rested to see if doing so reveals something of him to her. She handles it like it is something sacred and fills a freezer bag with its contents. In the winter she imagines she will make a soup out of it and serve it to him. She squashes the cup underneath her bare feet and lets the plastic top tear tiny scratches onto her soles. The remains of it she puts under her pillow in the hopes her dreams are full of them in love.



Small Thing 1 by Rachel Coyne

Brain

by Emma McCoy

They found holes in my brother's brain
last Tuesday.

Not actual holes, the doctor assured us, but the holes
on the scan are where blood flow is decreased.

The film, so thin and powerful,
the film and the space where blood
should be, and the
space

where my words should be.

The computer slide clicks.

Does he have trouble sleeping? the doctor asks.

Yes, my mother replies.

That's this part of his brain.

Oh, she says.

Does he have concentration issues? That's this hole.

Not a hole, I want to whisper. Just a
hole on the slide where the blood should be.

Remember?

*Does he have trouble knowing
cause and effect, result, and consequence?*

He is my brother, I want to say.

The computer screen peels back, all that film underneath
accusing me of not speaking, and I crawl into his

photographed brain. I nestle there, in a not-hole,
and give him everything I see and feel, all the words
and sound and I pour open my veins so he can take
my blood, a libation. I crawl around, finding holes
for God to fill with love and miracle and map it,
so everything I knew is new again—my brother,
his love and movement. Before I leave, I find
the wrinkles of his brain and drop tiny alarms,
rigged with a timer, set to crack open in the grooves
of his thoughts in two days, five weeks, seven months,
four years. That chirp of

I love you

I love you

I love you



Small Thing 2 by Rachel Coyne

Henri Rousseau's The Dream

by Alison Stone

The naked woman's pointing, but toward what?
Does she covet an otherworldly flower, larger
than her head, and is telling the round-eyed,
pettable-looking lioness to fetch?
Serenely, a dark figure in a striped skirt
plays a tune. Some kind of orange fruit hangs,
round as moons. No one asks who moved a couch
into the middle of a jungle or what the furry,
bird-shaped creature in the background means.
Easy to miss, a small elephant blends into the trees.
Plant leaves gesture like arms. A snake starts to make its way
out of the picture, though I'd rather stay here

than in most of the landscapes I dream myself into—
prisons, train stations, dead-end streets. Always somewhere
I'm struggling to get to—no signs,
my ticket lost. Still, I'd trade Rousseau's
luscious greens and the pleasure of the unexpected
for a nightly repetition of the fragment I had once,
five years ago, shattered by a workday alarm—
a plain room with bare, tan walls, my mother
in a frilly bed, alive and smiling.

Death in the Garden of Eden

by Linda Neal

No caterpillar manifested in my fennel last season, and the milkweed failed to host a single Monarch. Is it my garden that fails? Will a hummingbird ever nest again outside my kitchen? Will she remember her babes? How do I measure the small losses that accrue, almost unnoticed? Will the day come when the sky is nothing but gloom. Grey berries scattered over the land, wild mustard taking over hillsides, red algae smothering fish and acid ocean dissolving coral reefs? Now, no swimming allowed at Mother's Beach. Whales wash ashore, up and down the coast. Soon there'll be no one left, begging me to save the orcas and no person left to save, and I ask you: Can burned Sequoias return; what happened to the pines? Bark beetles? Fungus? If it's not this, it's that. Will the wild Nootka rose outlast this plague? Will a lone survivor of our species wander the wasteland, chanting *Om shantih, shantih, shantih*, his boots filling with sand? Human. Animal. Rock. Tree. Paper. No longer a game. Gaia, scissored away by human greed. The sun, barely visible, hidden behind a grey curtain. This play coming to an end, scrim hanging, pall over everything. High up in the dark sky a few trees continue to sway, blossomless, their shallow roots grabbing the dun soil.

Off the Island: Seeking a Brief Escape in 2021

by Heather Frankland

I've been stuck in the house like a word stuck in the mouth.

Months of the pandemic, and I need to get out, be somewhere else than my four walls feeling lonely. I've been good so far. I hope no one judges me. My car stuck in the drive way; its windows dusty, its tires low.

But if I get the tires looked at before I leave, I'll never go. If I focus too much on packing, I'll never leave. I call the hostel the night before, 9 PM, and make the reservation. I can't cancel now. No posting about this on social media, no one needs to know.

3 ½ hours in a car, in my car. Tires so low that I can feel the unevenness of the road. I worry that I'll be stuck on the side, I can almost see it. Phone charged but friends far behind—some in other states and some might as well be in other states, the little I see them or hear from them during this pandemic. Who can I call for help? No one.

Crossing fingers, I sing with the radio. Stations cascade from the small towns before Tucson: the 80s, country, ranchero, a taste of each small town I pass on this highway. Wind pushes the car, rocks it side to side. I see my mountains turn to desert, to saguaro cacti—tall enough

to poke the sky. A sky so blue, so postcard blue—it could melt in my mouth and cause a cavity: sweet freedom.

Still, I hope that I don't get stranded. I desire a reprieve, not a commitment.

I arrive at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum—what I call the Living Desert Museum because it's not stuck in dusty exhibitions; it's vibrant, surrounded by life. 85% or 87% or 90% of it's outside, so it's safe, but I keep my mask on.

All this company:

A coyote walks next to me, matching my stride until he jumps on a rock, joining his mate.

A cougar licks her lips, imagining my COVID-19 extra pounds-body as prey. I feel like prey glancing at her amber eyes—too close, even with the division.

And those rattlesnakes—lazy in their plastic aquariums, They can still get out! I want to shout to the children nearby, the maze of kid-friendly crawling lanes next to and behind these snakes. My heart flips out even at the snake's relaxed rattle tail, laying down by the water dishes. No shake, no tremble, but I shake; I tremble.

At the Living Desert Museum, I read everything—every sign, every note—learn everything, try to remember everything before I need to drive my car to the hostel, which means that soon I'll need to drive that reluctant car home. Its tires dragging—air low—pebble, rock, pebble, crack, can, stone—

Go into the city with care. Make something more of this scandalous visit.

The hostel I go to is like a party. A hostel, yet a bar and restaurant, too. Even locals there. All are outside laughing, telling stories, acting like

like friends—some could be friends—but most seem like strangers made friendly by the warm glow of liquor. My car is in a parking lot by other cars. Maybe it's at a party of its own.

So close to others, I am, that I feel the stiff canvas of my face smile in response. My muscles feel good, being stretched like so. Maybe the laughter could flake off on me like glitter. Glitter can stay on for days—remain in the cracks of skin.

Each person gets a free drink. I take two. The owner seems to flirt with me as we talk, and he walks to sit next to others at a bonfire, but I am so out of practice—this flirting—it's a language I no longer know how to speak or to understand or even to identify.

I imagine a younger-me, the former-traveler-me, like she is a wisp of a memory. That-me would have sat around the bonfire with him and the group, and something may have happened or nothing—but that-me would have laughed loud enough to join the rest. That-me would have had a story to take home and keep her warm in the months that were lonely. But that-me has faded, and this-me can only tell a small joke and leave for the solitary room.

That solitary room. That solitary bed. That solitary television. That solitary table in the corner. My solitary car in the parking lot, surrounded by others, but still alone.

Was this trip worth it?

Pulling back the bedspread, I see pubic hair from former occupants and brownish-red stains. Maybe it was worth it for them, I suppose.

The next morning. Little sleep. Only sleeping on the pristine portion of the bed, above the covers, I get my stay for free after I tell the owner about the bed.

He tells me I look younger than I am, younger than him. I feel old, my hair whiter than before. He worries about my tires, tells me where to go to get them checked, and then to call him later to let him know

how they are and how I am. I feel almost cared for.

And I do call him later to let him know that I am all right. He sounds relieved, like he had been waiting for my call. It feels almost familiar, this kindness. I invite him to visit me. I imagine it happening, how it could change the day, but know it won't.

Then it is back on the road through storm and sun until home sits there—empty and waiting and opening its mouth wide.

What freedom is this? What freedom can this be?

I'm alive, but I miss living. I should be thankful, I am thankful, I must be thankful.

Pebble, rock, pebble, crack, can, stone, uneven road—my tires may have improved but I still feel everything.

I hope when the time comes, I can take off this heaviness. I hope I can let my layers stay in closets, and I can bring out the summer dresses—musky but pretty. I hope that they still fit. Oh, how I've missed them.

And

by Alina Frank

I.

Yesterday my old beagle almost found a dead rat
with his young nose.
Flattened in the middle of the road, a dried husk.
Aged pancake with shrivel tail. Rodent jerky.
And so forth.

II.

The silent heart monitor glued to my sternum tracks life.
A minuscule button to push when things don't feel right,
an invisible report transmitted to those who suppose they
know my heart better than I.
And so forth.

III.

My digital photo album dings, reminds me of what once was.
Or twice was. Today a picture of Miss-Miss pops up.
Right before, and then during. Can death be during?
The IV still stuck in her furry leg. Her soft-soft swollen body
on a blanket nest. My daughter's fingerknitted preschool scarf
wrapped around her neck, token for safe travels.
Her face puddled by gravity. A wet puddle in my lap, now,
when I think back.
And so forth.

IV.

Last spring, the peach tree of succulent velvet fruit, it up and died on me. One week an explosion of blushing pink-blossom fireworks. The next week, a shrivel, a drop. Complete surrender. Soil nematodes, I found out much later. Sudden peach tree death.

Lucky thing, I don't believe in bad omens. Or good ones. My husband went into surgery the day the first bud opened with a spring in its petals. Chapters later, on our sunshiny porch, feeding tube wired into his gut, pain meds on board, when the baby peaches started falling like confetti. And so forth.

V.

I tell my beagle, *leave it*. No good, that crass carcass, that shrunken bag of something or other.

I yank him home on the leash and hand him a good, good treat. Tell him about Miss-Miss.

If one had to write a poem about sorrow, her eyes would have been the opening line.

Fuzzy infant peaches cut off from mama tree one at a time. Fetal-positioned leaves that let go and accept the fall from grace. If now isn't during, then what is?

Through the recovery tunnel, my husband can still see dogs that are and the ones that were.

On my cracked chest, the monitor beeps out life's rhythms without sound.

VI.

And so forth.

In Which I Consider Eggs on the Plate Without the Plate

by Sarah Mills

after Salvador Dalí

A therapist once told me *you're basically just existing*. That was after the break-up but before I cried, sliding down the wall over-easy

onto the floor. *I will not cry at the gym*, I said today. *I will not cry at the gym* but then images of the earth on fire and my organs thaw.

Tell me what I'm supposed to do with this fork. These hands. You know how you can spend decades trying to escape from a black

hole because every mile traveled is replaced by three more? When I was a child, my shadow went for a swim in the night sky,

doggy paddled with Canis Major, tightened Orion's belt. I feel her absence when I walk in the sun, stretching my arm to see

if she's returned. To others, it looks like I'm reaching for something. I used to say *I love you to the moon, but not back*—if I made it

all the way to the moon, I'd just stay. So I get it. But maybe in an alternate universe, things worked out between us. Right now,

it is morning, and the sun's yolk suspends from the sky as if by string.
I am making her vegan eggs. We're eating them off the table

with our fingers, laughing until we cry about how messy life can be.



Landscape 1 by Cyrus Carlson

Goose Barnacles in Clayoquot Sound

by Suzanne Chiasson

for Krassimir

He takes me to the wildest part of the coast
shows me how to fry an egg in a vat of fat
in a trailer while Penka pours the coffee

I stir in Coffee-Mate with fishermen
who nod even though I'm not a man
or a refugee

He takes me in the boat to the rocks
where the goose barnacles are scraped off
to ship to Spain
explains that if we don't watch the tide
we could be stranded overnight

Seems crazy to me, the risk
even crazier to eat barnacles
but I understand
scraping
together
enough

Moored by shore
he spends hours fixing the motor
I swim in cold, clear water
under the eyes of eagles

And for a handful of days
at the edge of this land
he has nothing to run from
but tides



Landscape 2 by Cyrus Carlson

Blind Eye

by Cory Carlson

I can almost see the string wrapped around the belly
of the wasp hovering in the heat, at night I waste wishes

on city-sky satellites. I believed they were stars back then,
men full of absence or violence, I kept repeating *father*

until it no longer held meaning in my mouth, like a comedian
rehearsing a bit to keep from laughing on stage, my father

hugged me once after my cousin killed himself, everyone
crammed in our house balancing styrofoam plates buckling

under sloppy joes, my dad swishing white trash bags past card
tables and folding chairs in the living room, picking up empties

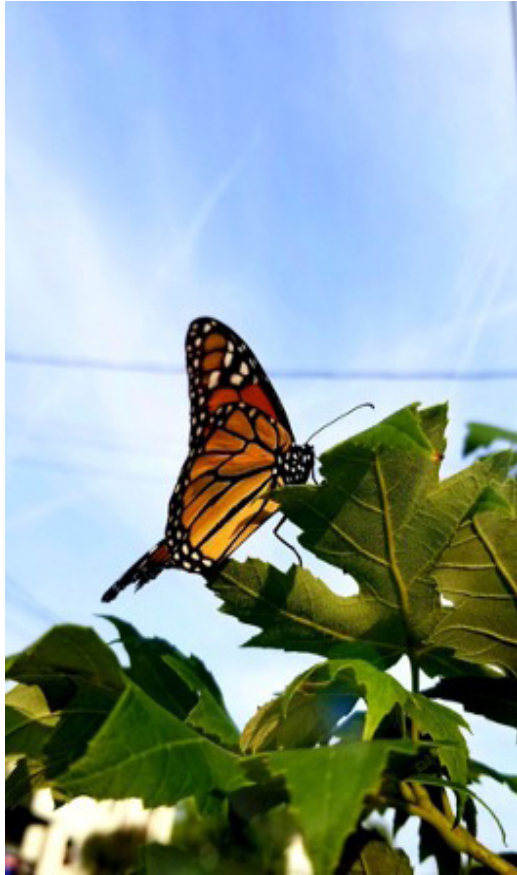
like lab specimens, rattling each can—*this one dead? this dead?*
dead? Our embrace was brief and backslapped as the light slipped

between us, seventeen and running to my mother—*Did you see?*
Dad and me? Years later grocery shopping with my mom, a little

boy cries reaching out to a nickel gumball machine, tugging at his
father's flannel who yo-yo's him back behind his checkered curtain

to give him something to cry about, the boy emerges holding hot pink cheeks, eyes like crushed cans. In the car my mother's gaze floats

through the windshield, paces an empty field, her teeth still together, fists whitening in her lap—*Did you see that? That awful man?*



6444 (untitled) by Chad Hutchinson

Heiress Vs. Heiress

by Kaylyssa Quinn

Casey Johnson 1979 – 2010

If I'm a bridge I'm a bridge of diamonds in continuous motion, a bridge of diamonds in the shape of a best friend. I bridge two ideas like the idea of a Cambodian daughter and the idea of Marilyn Monroe. There are rules to this. I flash my dimple to compensate for my languishing tiger eyes my eyes cold as canary diamonds and my hidden fangs. Within my dimple is 1 long secret fang pointing straight at my pancreas. I want to tell you how to talk to your child about diabetes and when I call you on the phone I want you to pick up. I want Milla Jovovich to tell me I'm an It Girl. We are going to a wonderful new lounge. I could take you there if you would just. I want to hear you say my name, weave my name in your double kiss, tape my name with the wristband and let me in. When Nicky lends me her Louis Vuitton clutch I sign for it in blood. This is a transaction, my blood for the purse and your purse for my daughter. I am not a bridge I am a Band-Aid, I am the Band-Aid Heiress, I am pink and supple and you need me when you've made a mistake. I have never made a mistake, I have never worn stockings in winter, not once, never. I have never begged like a petstore puppy for you to pick me up. In California I collect chihuahuas German Shepherds and daughters. I yank a curtain of lavender and bougainvillea over the 100-lensed Argus hiding in the bushes across the street. Tila as Hermes, here to help me, here to get my dog, here to cry as TMZ cameras extend their long

dripping tongues to lick the tears that are their power source. Who needs power when it's so cozy here in the dark and so calm. I wonder what kind of car we should get next. I have a daughter so it should have

four

doors

at least



5882 (*untitled*) by Chad Hutchinson

The Anatomy of Grief

by Abbie Doll

The day father died we all got ice cream. We had a history of grabbing cones on special occasions, but this one hit different.

We got our treats right before we went to see him—well, what remained, anyway—and lingered in the parking lot outside the funeral home delaying the inevitable, shuffling our sneakers through a sea of gravel and sweating in the sweltering summer sun. They were standard wafer cones, nothing out of the ordinary, but our fingers clutched tight—choking these flimsy things until a steady trickle of chocolate-vanilla swirl dripped down, down, down...gluing us to this muggy moment.

Forever, it seemed.

He'd asphyxiated in his sleep—unexpectedly, some might say, but one of us saw it coming in a dream a few months prior. It didn't change anything in the end, but she saw it anyway.

The decedent, as stiff society called him, had been fairly young, middle of the road really, but such statistics hadn't mattered.

We felt ourselves asphyxiating now too. Our lungs were still functioning, but we couldn't breathe in this hellish heat, couldn't tread water amidst this colossal loss. Despite our troubles and struggles,

though, our lungs continued to inflate. On an arbitrary technicality, perhaps, but no matter how reluctantly, that was the brutal fact of the matter. perhaps, but no matter how reluctantly, that was the brutal fact of the matter.

We were still alive.

Our timing wasn't great. Well, neither was his, but it didn't feel fair to blame him, this man who was already dead; it couldn't get much worse than that, everyone agreed. Our complaints seemed so minor in comparison.

The funeral home was closing soon. In a matter of minutes. It was now or never, mouthed the undertaker glaring at us from behind some gaudy doily lobby curtain. He made an exaggerated effort to check the oversized watch colonizing his pale wrist, and collectively, we sighed at mean ol' father time breathing his rampant rancidity down our necks.

Get on with it. Come in and see him. Then kindly get the fuck out.

Okay, he didn't really say that, but his impatience with us was palpable. There was already this heap of guilt crowding our chests; we didn't need more. Survivor's guilt settled in the second we got the call; it had already burrowed deep within our ribs and guts and wouldn't be going anywhere anytime soon.

The news set off this catastrophic earthquake within us and left this hideous fault scarp to demarcate the divide between before and after. Now, anything we did would wind up juxtaposed with the definitive inactivity of the dead. The constant comparison was our new go-to instinct.

All a corpse can do is rot, everyone knows that, but our brains couldn't digest this meteoric lump of change. The impact was too great; we all gawked at the massive crater encircling us wondering how we still stood.

Certainly not to lick sticky fingers.

We were a downright mess—both inside and out—disheveled hair, sweat swamping our pits, wouldn't be surprised to learn we'd left our shirts back home. None of us were there, no one was present enough to focus on practicalities. Logistics. Our bodies were running on an all-too-faulty auto-drive.

When the ice cream ran out, as it always does and we knew it would, we watched in dread as our one excuse for staying outside rolled over and died.

The time had come.

We weren't prepped for the shock of death. No one ever is.

We tiptoed in—terrified to disturb the dead. Ashamed of our late-to-the-party timing. Entering a building that houses death felt wrong. Who were we to waltz in and gloat? We could never hide the life evident in our veins, but did we have to be so repulsively brazen about it?

Nothing about that ice cream was sitting right. It was wrong, wrong, wrong. The second we crossed that threshold, we were dying to bleach the splotchy stains of lingering sweetness off our tongues.

The same impatient man who'd been not so subtly eyeing us from his perch at the window guided us to the back corner of the building where our father's body was on display.

The room felt like a shrunken post office; metal doors covered the walls, but the comparison stopped there.

None of us addressed the gigantic elephant in the room. A trunk could've trumpeted, sprayed us with a shower of hot shit, and we still would've continued our efforts to ignore.

This figure we'd known from birth had been reduced to this motionless fixture in the center of the room—propped up on a stainless-steel table and covered by a thin white sheet that reduced the familiar topography of his body to vague impressions.

No one spoke. The air smelled too sterile. A forced attempt to conceal the disturbing purpose of the room.

We paused there, holding our breath without any such intention. We'd never slurped such silence. Each of our hammering heartbeats, each reluctant swallow, each lump stuck in our cramped chimney throats resonated loud—thunderous drips upon a floor that was no doubt spotless prior to our intrusive arrival.

We weren't left to stew in the speechlessness for long though. A murder of crows sliced straight through—their deafening caws flapping around the room in a jarring commotion, demanding our immediate attention.

Like the ruckus of a construction site roaring to life at dawn, the clamor woke us up. Brought us back to our senses.

And then we did the inevitable.

We made ourselves look.

We had to.

There he was. Hair too long, skin too yellow, body too dead. It was him but it wasn't. More like one of those wafer-thin cicada shells ditched to cling to the trunk of its tree.

None of us said anything.

What was there to say?

Our grim faces marked by muted disbelief, we stared at this crowded cloud of sorrow being belched from our chests, buzzing around the

room like a god-damn swarm. Horrified, we watched one after another emerge from our ribcages, watched them march out and colonize the empty space in the room. Our lips parted—as if to speak—but in lieu of words, the cicadas continued to crawl out on our red-carpet tongues. They slid out our eye sockets too, shoving our eyeballs aside. They had this fierce determination to get out in the open. To be born, we supposed.

We stood there crying, spitting, bleeding cicadas. They slithered across the room's every surface, painted it with their bodies until it was all one black wriggling mass. We bore witness to our grief as it hatched into this uncontainable series of buzzes, clicks, and alien grunts—a deafening reverberating roar that flooded the void.



(5916) *Reflection (Winter)* by Chad Hutchinson

Waving at News

by Karen Bramblett

It was a day unlike any other—the hour was green, my toes laughed,
and my skull broke
into a blueberry bouquet.

(The days before, our chalk hearts crumbled into an ocean of tears in
the closet.)

We begged the news to feast with us. It ate everything in sight, down
to the last cracker, ounce
of cider, and house nail.

Now, from a lean-to by a stream, we wave at news from a distance.

This morning: fuchsia rhododendrons, some tinged with brown, and
the sky.

The Past is the Present

by Theo LeGro

If I stay alive long enough
to write this life into something

less tragic, more tragic,
would it earn me those apples

skinned and sliced and faceted
into jewels? My mother gave me

everything she had: half her nose.
Her bowstring mouth. Her goddamn

when I drop something. Her skipped
articles when I think in a language

I can't speak. Even her silence
is a gift. How she waited up for me

with the wrong cigarettes and I smoked them
anyway because they came from her.

The proof of me scrawled into her belly
like a will, and she didn't even get mad

when I bled on the carpet, drunk off a nightmare
I was exactly who I was. The difference

between a miracle and a cataclysm. The typhoon
out of season she can't believe she lived through.

Could there be more to this life than holding
what she had to carry? Even if it hurts,

and it hurts. How could I tell her it's too much?
How could I tell her it's not enough?



(5989) *untitled* by Chad Hutchinson

Power Thoughts

by Bridget Kriner

—“The way to control your life is to control your choice of words and thoughts.” Louise Hay, *You Can Heal Your Life*

Louise says, it's only a thought & a thought
can be changed. I think about giraffe babies
without spots, birth in captivity, how I don't know

what I'd change them to. Louise says,
my happy thoughts help create
my healthy body. I wonder why dental floss

has an expiration date, visualize
microorganisms breaching my cupid's bow.
Whatever I need to know is revealed to me

at exactly the right time, but I am googling
these same words in every possible syntax.
ductal. carcinoma. lymph. metastasis. Every thought

I think is creating my future, but the singular thought
mastectomy sticks even in my interdental spaces,
will not yield. Wellness is the natural state

of my body. She says, I am in perfect health. I am pain free & totally in sync with life. I am beautiful & everybody loves me. It is safe to look within.

Louise says I need to let go of the thoughts that led me to dis-ease. Louise says her anger was a cancer & rape was the virulent core she released

so love could flow through her body, vanquish all squamous cells from her cervix. She says my actual ill is not saying no enough, allowing resentment & fear to ferment

in me, forgetting that I do not fix problems. I fix my thinking. Then problems fix themselves. The past is over. My life gets better all the time.



(6073) *Teralingua Dinosaur* by Chad Hutchinson

Ars

by Oladejo Abdullah Feranmi

And you think that is the end
of summer until the flowering trees
die to bud again. You do not need
new buddies or the old bodies
you have worn until they brought you
here until they wore out and
all that is left may be the night
clothing you. But that is all you needed.
Nothing. And a bookshelf of grass
in your room for the days you might
need the world, and its dew and its touch.

Regarding Shear

by Joannie Stangeland

That a roof over every head shelters.
That stresses compress or tension the trusses.
That inspection figures the load, the bending.
That a shear diagram and a moment diagram
are not the same as living in the moment.
And this shear has nothing to do with sheep,
the wool shaved off the body.

That *shearling*

means not just shorn but *skinned*, the way wind
can skin the roof off a house. That it depends
on pitch and howl, the wind wailing.
That every hurricane has an eye, and I watch
the tallest trees nervously.

That architects

calculate wind loads, snow loads, dead loads,
which are not the same as the sound of a fir
falling onto the house.

That I do not name

my stresses but am bent invisibly, bent
and waiting for my moment.

Borderlands No Longer Observed

by Thomas O'Connell

My daughter has befriended
The little girl who died
In the movie
Drawing pictures of her, asking

For two glasses of water
In the middle of the night, and
Protectively buckling the seat
Belt around nothingness.

They share secrets and whispers,
Her teacher wondering
Why she sits to one side
Of her chair, an extra pencil

Lying on the desk; watching her
On the playground pushing
An empty swing, which jerks
And sometimes bumps into her

Shins. These are the things
You do for friends
Even, or perhaps
Especially, dead ones.

Acquisitions

by Jim Tilley

For years, Paul inhaled the freshness of fruit
while stacking Romes and Fujis
at his miniature doorways to the Louvre,
oriented red, yellow, and green peppers

to highlight their sensuous human curves
as his mind snapped black-and-white
glossy photographs for exhibition at the Met,
arranged clusters of glistening grapes

beside a bottle of burgundy and plate of brie
on the table in his studio without windows.
At lunchtime, he tears a few leaves
from a lightly misted head of Romaine,

rinses off some organic cherry tomatoes
and gently wipes down a waxy cucumber.
Nineteen years of working in that gallery
built habits he simply couldn't change

when they painted a new sign over the door
he walked through for the last time
the day they terminated his guided tours
through the neighborhood grocery store.

Peter's belt

by Cate Root

A clown goes on a podcast about grief
He's Catholic as Catholic can be, the youngest of eleven children
When his mother died, the first object of hers he claimed was a
 crucifix
That had hung on her bedroom wall

He quotes Tolkien, "What of God's punishments are not gifts?"
He calls his grief his tiger
A dangerous pet to keep in your house, a pet you would not choose
But his nonetheless

He spoke of being the last one left, who
When asked whether a funny story is true, says, I don't know
Anyone I could ask is gone

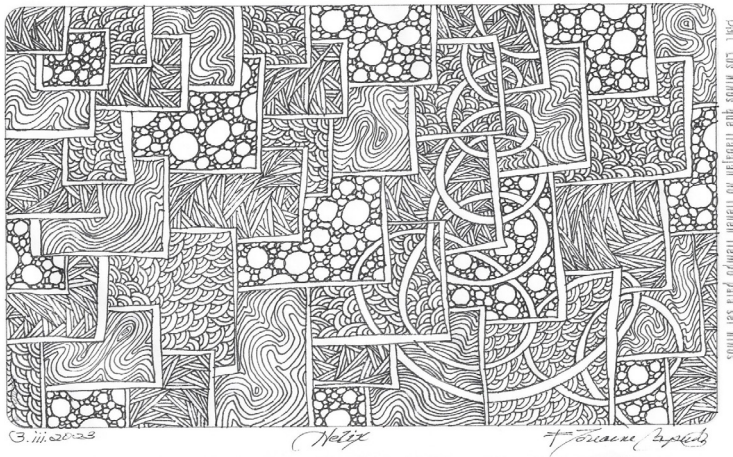
The keeper of the heap

The clown's son needed a belt, and the clown said, I have one for
 you in my closet
His son's name was Peter
When the clown gave Peter the belt, Peter asked, whose is it, and the
 clown said

Peter's

But it was the other Peter, the one the clown hadn't seen in forty years
As he shuffled from place to place, carrying his dead brother's belt

I could pretend here that the belt would leash the tiger
But we all know that would be a lie



Helix by Lorraine Caputo

Photographs

by Sharon Whitehill

When a spring snowstorm turned the world white on the day of a wedding, the light from the windows illuminated a guest with flamingo-pink hair. A wavelength of color, a beautiful hue, that emerged in the photos as garish hot pink, seducing the eye of the viewer away from the bride. In some pictures of me with my children, I paper-punched my face out, each perforation the ghost of an unlovely likeness, leaving a scatter of Os in the album, a series of moms with no vowel. On my first wedding day, a freak snowstorm with thunder and lightning: weird weather, we joked, that must be a sign from the gods. Perception is fickle. In my forties and fifties I harangued myself as not slim enough and already grown old, whereas what I see now in photos of me are dark brows on the wing above eyes the rich brown of a newly turned field, and lips, then despised as too thin, fulsome with laughter and speech. The yellow O of the sun in drawings of children belies its true color, white, as revealed in the prismatic light of the rainbow. A mirrored reflection, however pleasing, is of the moment, while photos make permanent every unflattering angle and grimace. No color at all at my wedding, only a black-and-white snapshot of us as we stood, he trim in his Air Force blues, I in my too-tight dark dress, on the sidewalk in front of that midwestern courthouse, before the storm.

why do i love my baby

by Kiik Araki-Kawaguchi

O why do I love my baby
Is it because she swallowed
All the minnows is it
Because when we spilled over laughing
Dolphins emerged from my mouth
Is it because she went swimming naked
With the sirens and came home
Covered in sea snakes
Is it because she screams
If zucchini touches her plate
Or if I say zucchini
Or if I hide in a basement closet
And think of a zucchini
Is it because she recovered
A severed foot from the wreckage
Is it because she dances like she has 3 feet
And 9 arms
And sings like she has 12 voices

The Dead, They Visit

by C.W. Bigelow

“The damn post office makes sure the dead don’t disappear,” Gray mumbled as he dropped the stack of today’s mail on the kitchen table.

“What are you grumbling about,” Ann asked.

“How long has she been dead?”

“Your mother?”

“Six or seven years, now?”

“Seven,” she sighed, joining him in the kitchen as he held a catalogue up to her as evidence.

“Doctor’s Graham and Rose,” he snorted as he paged through it. “Pet paraphernalia addressed to Mom!” He spread it out on the table and recited, “Custom costumes for any pet! Delivered in 24 hours, no less!” Shaking his head at the imbecility of the concept, mimicking a phone in his hand, he cried, “My dog has just received an invitation to the Annual Costume Ball downtown. I need this clown costume on page 2 in your May catalogue post haste!” With a sullen shake of his head, he walked away mumbling, “She hadn’t even had a pet since we were kids. Not since Wimples the cat.”

“Isn’t he the one that never came home?”

“Yes. Went out and never came back.”

“I don’t understand the market for all these types of products,” Anne chuckled as she paged through the catalogue. “Look at all the shapes they have for rawhide chew toys.”

“I don’t understand mailing lists.”

“They sell them. Guess no one worries whether the person is alive. A name, dead or alive, brings bucks.”

“The last known address is added and increases the advertising revenue.”

“Bet the advertisers don’t ask how many on the list are dead.”

“They don’t care—if the address is valid, someone will receive it and look at like we are now. If we had a pet...” She threw the catalogue onto the recycling pile and said no more. She understood the real reason he was anxious and on edge. The pressure was beginning to show on his face, in every expression—the tension, the lack of color and grimace. It wasn’t how he wanted to appear during the interview, but she wasn’t about to bring it up for fear of igniting an explosion. She wished his mother was still around. She would have known how to manage him.

The night was painted with thunderstorms and driving rain. Gray tossed and turned, slipping from one dream to the next. He was a dream solver—any current problem, work related or otherwise, integrated into his dreams, wrapping him with anguish so strong, he couldn’t shrug it, couldn’t decipher the reality of it, until he climbed from bed and faced the darkness with a clearer head. It was then, and only then he could climb back into bed and fall into a deeper, clearer sleep. But since he lost his job, his dreams were haunted with hunger and panic, keeping him from wanting to try and sleep.

Wimples bounded across the dark, hardwood floor, anxious to go out, even though lightning flashed across the cliffs at the edge of Lake Michigan. A mixture of white, gray, and black fur, thick and fluffy with penetrating eyes that laughed at the world, he looked more like a ball than a cat.

“Are you sure you want to go out?” Gray asked as he opened the door onto the driving rain, just as the explosion of thunder cracked the night. He fully expected Wimples to turn up his nose and do an about face and was shocked when he slipped through the thin opening and dashed into the darkness. A flash of lightning lit the sky illuminating Wimples as he disappeared into the forest.

“I can’t believe he wanted to go out on a night like this,” his mother sighed as she joined him at the door.

“Must have had something important to do. Maybe a hot date,” Gray laughed as he shut the door.

“Did he dress properly?”

He nodded. “Now that you mention it, he did look pretty sharp.”

“Wearing his party togs, huh?”

“As a matter of fact...”

“Maybe we should have ordered him a costume from that catalogue. We could have insured his success,” she giggled.

“Dress for success and all that, I suppose.”

“The best dressed man gets the chicks. You ought to know that,” she reminded him, reaching out and pinching his cheek. “In fact, the best dressed man gets everything he wants. Remember that. Gives you an edge.”

The alarm shattered the dream and Gray stumbled to the shower. The remaining clouds from the storm were moving on, and the sun was spilling an orange light over the horizon. His dream hovered hazily as he climbed into the hot shower spray. Since her death she had not appeared in any of his dreams.

“What time is your interview?” Anne asked as she walked into the bathroom, hiked her nightgown, and sat on the toilet.

“I forgot about it for a moment.”

“That’s weird,” she cried over the roar of the shower. “I figured you’d be tossing and turning all night.”

“Were you able to pick up my suit at the cleaners?”

“Yup, and your white shirts.”

“Thanks.”

“So what time is it?”

“Ten.”

“Glad the rain stopped. Wouldn’t want you venturing out into a storm trying to look good,” she remarked as she walked out of the bathroom.

Attending Mass with My 90 Year Old Father

by Michelle Reale

We genuflect and then slide into the last pew. My father reminds me, as he does each week, that he cannot kneel. I nod. He sits and leans back, crosses his legs at the ankles and folds his hands in his lap. Leavened each week is his belief that every day might be his last chance. It bakes and rises. It is nurtured with furtive prayers. This much I know. Every word he attempts to confide in me comes during the hour in that pew each week. I wait for him to unlock a mystery I have wanted to know for my entire life. But every time he opens his mouth, what follows is a series of false starts. He is the patron saint of duty. He will show up as long as he has breath. God reads his mind and reads his heart, but I can know only what he will tell me. When he rises to receive communion, I walk behind him as he heads toward the altar unsteadily, and with great effort. He holds out his large and gnarled hands to receive his Sunday bread. After Mass is over, he tells me that he sees so many people he doesn't know. *Why is that?* he asks. He adds that he couldn't hear a single word that the priest said. *Or didn't say.*

Family Ties

by Karly Noelle Abreu White

Wonder what went through Isaac's mind
As he walked back down the mountain
Did he glance sidelong
At his father's face
Did he wake that night
Heart racing
Sweat pouring down his brow
Imagining the light glinting on the knife
And the rope at his wrists

When his own sons were born
Fighting in the womb
Did he think,
I may pit them against each other,
May tell that soft and sensitive one
To man up like his brother
But at least I never did that

Radish

by Katherine Gordon

It should come as no surprise
that your name, at root,
means *root*, you radical sprout
with your leafy snoot
and trailing rat-tail reach.

Dependable, you do
just what the packet
says you'll do: run
seed to fruit
in under a month

while the rest of the garden
warms its bones
in the cold porridge light
of March. Staunch.
You never miss a day.

Cooped up all winter
with catalogs
of heirloom seeds
for sale, we want
neon, technicolor,

five-dimensional hues;
we want the architecture
of a garden in full bloom:
trellises bunting-ed with sugar snaps,
swept streets between carrot rows,

the strawberry's incessant
urban sprawl; those
squat cathedrals –
the beefsteak tomatoes –
with heft and somber grace.

But it's bare soil we get
in the garden plot.
We rootle about, with
bulbs and trowel,
trying to remember

the dance we do
with frost and rabbits
each spring. *It's all
in the timing*, you grin,
your chapped-red mouth

working its way up
through the ice and slush
to speak to us
in that old man's
throaty croak. We kneel,

closer now, ear to soil,
Come again? we say.

The Question of Your Parents' Bowl of Stones

by A. Jenson

We're at that age when we discuss our parents dying
Together, the way we once discussed favorite books
Tentatively
Tenderly
A little terrified of what might be said

So one day at Scarborough Beach
I ask about your dad and the rocks

What will you do with them when he's gone?

He is some twenty paces ahead
Walking with your mother
Tracing the flirting edge of water

You think for a while
Long enough that I know the weight of the question has fallen
(Like so many dusty dishes of stones)
Onto the floor of you

*I'll pack them into boxes, I guess
And I'll bring them back here.*

Some twenty paces ahead, your father bends, aching
Your mother stops to see
Another rock is brushed clean; is pocketed;

is landing heavily.

Oil Painting of a Tree-Lined Path

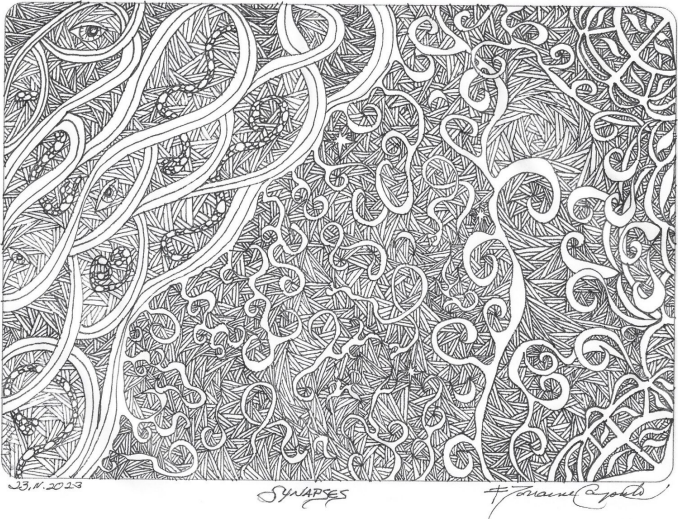
by Laura Grace Weldon

The old landscape painting near our bed
reveals hidden images
as we lie awake most evenings, talking.
Sideways shadows show
a frail woman wearing a bonnet,
child's face tipped up,
old-fashioned baby carriage,
but mostly animals –sleeping bear,
grinning raccoon, and what looks
like a cartwheeling squirrel.

The images keep shifting,
so we can't find the bottle
with an elaborate stopper
we saw last week, but there,
can you see it, a whale with
a pensive expression, and over there,
in the corner, an elfin creature
peeking from behind that branch?

Until you, I saw pictures no one else did.
One day the speckled Formica table
of my childhood kitchen might reveal
a man carrying an urn on his shoulder,
arm raised to steady it. The next day
I couldn't find the man or urn
but saw a camel, arched doorway,
downturned face, twisted tree.

Growing up, I saw my wished-for
pet in a bedsheet's clumped folds,
the nativity in a just-flipped pancake,
equations yet to be solved in a cracked plate,
a mountain goat in our windshield's frost
just before the wipers scraped him
with a whoosh right off the edge.
I am grateful you and I both see
such pictures, never mind there are so few
photographs of us after all these years.



Synapses by Lorraine Caputo

Landing

by Kelly Madigan

Fifth grade science classmates
observed my first faint
and I *came to* looking at the bottom
of my wooden chair
from the waxed floor.

Before memory
could reassemble itself,
the world was made
of fractured shapes
erased of meaning.

Only seconds
on the world clock
but the detachment, the perfect
role of observer, resounds
like a cello note played long
and low under the years.

I don't remember
falling, and I was not caught.
But I awoke unaware,
with danger fully swept back. Here
I could fall endlessly
and never fear landing,

noting the instruments,
the children's owl faces
peering down, the funny angles
of light, without self
consciousness, without a story
insisting on being told.

I have been a thin wire of watching
as the world blinked into being.
This is how swooning
taught me to believe
in an afterlife.

Identical Twins Roam Surrealism Galleries

by Marcia Camino

We don't care if we talk or not
peanut-shaped faces on a steam engine train
lugged by conductor with gilded eyes
glued to the back of his head.
I go where you go, right
nude atop dome holding snakes holding pose
everything closed is open again
includes breast and belly slide-out drawers
this and that and nothing more but twice
one's tear's, joys, leads to the other's—
what images glean you when you
hit that darkroom after hours
and I think of that as sonnet—
under winged derby hat, acrylic
amoebic man flat abs holds to railroad ties
under a thick starch cloud sky, come here
frosting-gauche, inserted knife
baby doll mobile. Why include a pipe?
Penguin, sanguine, skates colored ice.
I don't get why all the blood.
Tableau: a cozy fit for queens
on crooked thrones sipping neon tea...
sister, that's we.

And of those old-timey, dripping clocks
we will forevermore have to see
the moon long ago wolf-howled
their purposes away, aweigh all hands go
ticking no moments
to create what we have
some relief, some new day
while the gallery guard in deep-less thought
whistles over us when he sees us shoulder up
for a couple
of selfies.

Remind Me Again

by Megan Wildhood

Before the summer of 2019, you could shout your phone number from across the room at me and I could recite it backwards to you six months later. Even if I never called you, which I wouldn't because, let's be honest, it shows just a tad too much sincerity to actually *call* someone these days. If there was a contest for reciting every word to a song you only heard once 20 years ago, I'd win it every time. It might seem like a neat party trick to have superpower memory, but it also makes you the one responsible for ensuring shit gets done. My friends, my ex-husband, coworkers, everyone got quite used to outsourcing the job of remembering their commitments to me. Even after years of sufficient technology for everyone to have a prosthetic memory, if I don't remind certain people about the promises or plans they made, they literally do not happen.

Which means now, that stuff just doesn't happen. I don't even know how much because I can no longer remember every single thing I heard, most things I read, every cellular position of every feeling I've ever felt. I suppose it's what I prayed for. Well, technically, I prayed *to not be the only one who remembers everything*. But I guess joining the ranks of the typically forgetful is one way of answering that prayer. Just like God to respond in ways we never expect, though sometimes I wonder if God responds contrary to what we expect because it's contrary to what we expect.

Why are you upset ask my friends when, after three years, I voice my fears about memory loss. You're basically normal now. It's like they're happy that life has finally Whack-A-Mole-d me back to their level: I'm not myself anymore, but at least I don't show them up by showing up to things they don't remember saying they'd be at, even invited me to. At least I now longer have the ability to hold anyone to the "too-high" standard of keeping their word on their own without prodding. At least they don't have to feel like crap for not remembering basic stuff—it's just me that feels like crap for not remembering now instead of being the only one who could recite a random phone number in reverse order months later.

But that also meant I was the only one who believed you could only mean what you say *if you remembered saying it*. The only one who didn't need a calendar to keep track of my schedule. The only one who thought that having to remind someone multiple times of a commitment they voluntarily made was nagging as well as a sign that maybe their commitment wasn't as voluntary as they were projecting it was.

Of course, there's one situation now where I hope I'm the only one: the one where I'm the only one who doesn't remember what happened in the summer of 2019.

What we want in the end

by Karen George

is often softness. Fabrics: a silky, warm scarf
snugged around your neck, a fleece nightgown,

velvety sweater, the supple nap of flannel
or cotton sheets, fluffy blanket. The sooth

of beauty, kindness of color: a bouquet
of purple, robin's egg blue, orange; your nails

manicured a pearl-white polish. The pleasure
of wearing your favorite jewelry: wedding rings,

handed-down four-leaf clover earrings. The solace
of memory: the loose waves of your mother's hair,

her tender blue-gray eyes,
the fine wrinkles of her hand.

I'll fly away

by Annette Petrusso

Wrens gather in the shrubs at sunset
to perfect the pattern / so no one gets lost /
so everyone knows the plan / so they make it
to Mexico in time to rest.//

They fly together from bushes to nearby trees and back again /
surrounding me as I walk and survey the sky /
and the shadows / of their feathered bodies
against the waning sun.//

I am an object that the flock avoids /
never hitting me / affirming my presence /
by this action / as I watch their dance as a grounded
mover / grasping the last flutter of twilight.//

trptych of faith

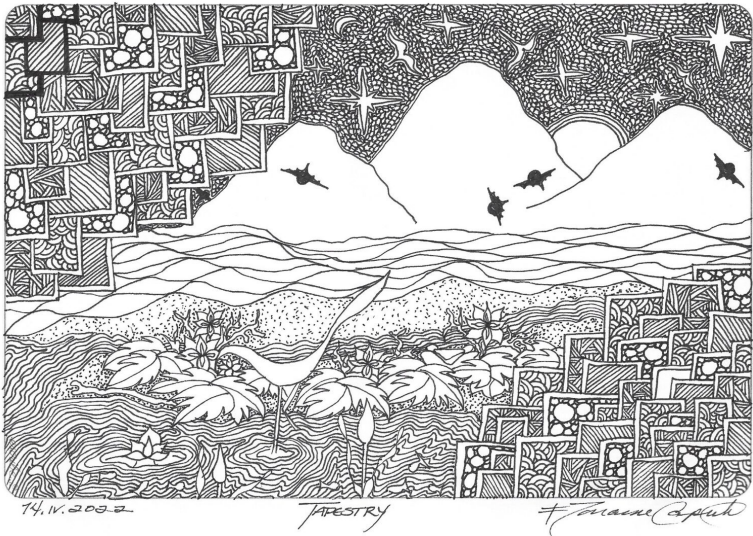
by Rina Olsen

i once picked up a dime in the shampoo aisle of an
nyc drugstore. several streets later, when i
discovered bethesda fountain for the first time, the dime
burned a hole into my pocket and slipped through
the net of charred & smoking threads
into a portal of ripples. since then i have not stopped

believing in the sting of itching ointment. believing that
emma stebbins must have been thinking
of a lover when she creased eyelids into the
angel of the waters. believing that this was the only way
she knew how to say *i love you* to this
conversion of the sabbath, same as how the only way
i know how to say *i love you* is to roll up your
violet-speckled pajama sleeve and rub itching ointment

onto your mosquito bite under the warm orange umbrella
of the lamplight. somehow the sculptor must have known how to
take the stone from the human and cast the human in the stone
yet here i am, still trying to tease the venom from the
lump of bitten-fruit flesh. that afternoon, i thought i saw the shadow
of the angel of the waters peel off the concrete, dust itself
off, and stoop to drink from the pool that churned
with the echoes of each drowning wish, an *i love you*

carefully sewn onto the rim of each splash. when i squeeze another dollop onto my finger, you roll down your sleeve. you say it's fine. if that were certain, i wouldn't have scribbled my whispered wish against the stone pedestal of the fountain with this itching ointment. but of course i do not say this. i smear the ointment on my own skin instead. it does not itch, but i wished for that, too.



Tapestry by Lorraine Caputo

Frank Sanderholm's Obit

by Cat Dixon

We lost you 13 years ago. Life is hard without you. The loss has changed us all. I just wish things had worked out different for you. We will always love and miss you forever."

– published in the *Omaha World Herald* on 7/8/2022

Dear Frank,

Despite having never met you or your family, this note grabs my attention as I eagerly browse the daily obits online to find someone with my birth year, to discover a lucky escapee.

Do ghosts read newspapers? Why announce to Omaha that 13 years have passed without you? Why broadcast that you're missed as if you're passing the days in a park on a bench with a coffee, unfolding and folding the paper, balancing it on your knee, searching for your name, for this plea?

Do you feel lost? Do you need
a reminder of their names—
the people who loved you—
of the city that once held you,
of the things that didn't work out
and the number of years
your dear ones have struggled?
I doubt your ghost reads the paper,
but what do I know?

when i turn thirty

by Jonny Bolduc

don't let it happen. don't become worse.
wait.
revise. edit the statement.

let it happen. become worse.

easy. i can do that.

maybe
this is razing something to build it back up. maybe
this is burning the manuscript
to write the novel.

a mantra for each day;
Monday: there is no magic and everyone must die,
Tuesday; eventually the furnace sputters and the house gets cold.
Wednesday; i can't keep waiting for the holes in the drywall to fill,
or for the mold on the baseboards to be scrubbed clean.
Thursday: i have to do it myself.
Friday: all my problems stem from the way i think;
Saturday: get a therapist.
Sunday: therapy is bullshit.

why do i think i'm different? Why do i think my
narrative arch is more gilded than
everyone else's?

what is latent, gradual, building,
like a hot wind sweeping across the grass?
what fires will catch?
what will fizzle out into ash?

why is there a
stranger in my bathroom?
why is he clutching his chest like
he's having a heart attack?

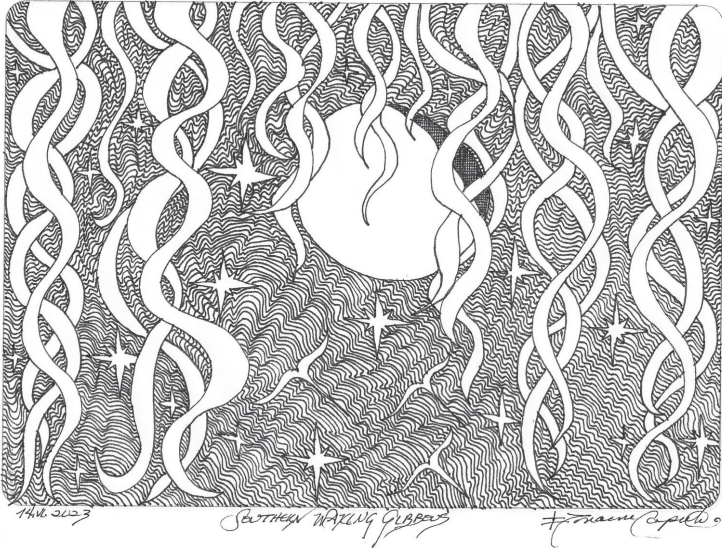
look, man, i tell myself, if you're not
going to kill yourself, you have to
do something. you can't just wait around
for another ten years. you can't just take a nap
in a car that's plunging down,
you have to break the window
and swim out.

why not, i answer? why not sleep if i am tired? why
not shatter if i am broken? why hold myself up for
another decade?

because, my friend, this is the door and
you have the key in your hands. because this is the
window and you have the brick. just because
time is a puncture wound letting your blood, just
Because your bones are glued to the floor, just because
you left your mind out in the cold and you dog chained your
soul and you are empty, you still have the key and

there is still
a way out.
so what if it's worse.

when i turn thirty
I am going
To find
A way out



Gibbous by Lorraine Caputo

gift

by Scott Ferry

i have given my daughter the curse of thinking / intrusive thoughts
which grind down the asphalt / / her quiet place on the airport
runway has been reserved / genetically / my sister my cousins either
on ssris or self-medicating / i have decided to take the pills so i don't
weep or scream / i deserve this / my family deserves this // but my
daughter thinks about death when she doesn't want to think at all / i
feel responsible for giving her these lifelong passes to the 3d horror
escapade / stomach acid and future doom sequences en masse / she
paints pools of blood but also young women in dresses and spring
blossoms / and not together / she knows the rusty wheels and the
chains of the night / she also has a supple voice which can sing and
laugh over the jetnoise and sirens / i have hope for her / i hope her
demons are kind to her / that they adopt her / that they become the
faint ghosts i now hear in the halls

Things They Leave Behind

by Debbie Koenig

1983

“Veronica, chérie, we’re here.” Papa nudges her sleeping head off his shoulder, sweeps the hair from her face, flicks open the porthole shade. Veronica’s eyelids glow pink with pale winter light. “Come, come. Your mémère will be waiting.”

In the aisle, Mommy yanks items from the overhead bin, fiddles with the fancy scarf around her neck. On the loudspeaker, a lady says something in French. Veronica gets a skippy feeling in her chest when she hears “Joyeux Noël.”

“Put your coat on,” Mommy says. The words come out tight, like she doesn’t want to talk. “And don’t forget Loulou.”

Veronica turns around, frantic until she spots the bunny. She grabs a fuzzy-rough ear, breathes in the familiar, sour scent. Loulou smells like home.

At the gate, Mémère scowls and kisses Papa and Mommy on both cheeks. Mémère is a little scary.

“Véronique, viens!” She draws Veronica into an embrace, envelops her in the enormous coat she wears. Veronica pets the soft fur while

her father and grandmother speak French over her head.

At the baggage claim, Loulou has vanished.

1993

Mom's earring back skitters under the bed. Clutching the diamond stud in one sweaty palm, Veronica drops to the floor in pursuit. The floaty overlay of her dress catches under her knees; its delicate fabric tugs at the shoulder straps. She rakes her fingers through the carpet, whispers, "Oh come on, come on." Her bare arms prickle. Any moment now, her mother will walk in, a cloud of Arpège and bitterness.

2003

Veronica wanders the gallery after the last guest leaves. In three years working there, she's found a dozen pairs of underwear, wisps of lace she leaves for the Honduran girls to sweep up. Several baggies of coke, which make her the hit of afterparties in grungy lofts. A melted pint of Ben & Jerry's, plastic spoon perched atop the rubble. Once, a Gucci wallet cleared of everything but ID. Poor Edward Cunningham.

Red dots mark the wall beside several pieces, cheap stickers Dario has her buy at Staples. She takes home the slippery sheets of blue and yellow dots, layers them on found objects to make her own art. Dario critiques them while he fucks her, her hands braced on the thrifted enamel table, his belt buckle clanking against the metal leg.

2013

"Where did this come from? It's amazing." Dario stands at the foot of

their bed, holds a Missoni sweater by the shoulders. Its multicolored chevrons vibrate. Veronica sees Papa wearing it, maybe on the plane that last Christmas.

She untangles from the sheet to show Dario her mother's note. His thick brows pull together as he struggles to read the cursive English, not his native tongue. "Wait, she just found this? For eight years, it's at the back of her closet?"

Veronica shrugs and holds out her hand, gimme-gestures with her fingers. "More like twenty-eight. I think she hid it after he left."

When Dario hands over the sweater, she buries her nose in it. She expects to smell Papa, but inhales the kerosene scent of dry cleaning.

2023

Finn wails on the kitchen counter, her finger sliced open on a plastic chef's knife advertised as child-safe. Veronica wads paper towel and presses it against the cut, has Finn grasp it with her unscathed hand.

"You're OK, Finny, you're OK. Stay right there." Heart pounding, Veronica rifles through the cabinets for the first aid kit. "Hold it up, sweetheart! No, higher, above your heart. Where. Is. It."

Finn removes the paper towel to examine the cut. Blood gushes. She shrieks and topples off the counter. Veronica darts back to catch her. Their scramble spills Finn's OJ onto the stack of bills.

The medicine cabinet has a few Band-Aids. Veronica hefts Finn onto one hip and hauls her into the bathroom. Pushes aside tubes and canisters and the bottle of Arpège fucking Dario mocked her for. Aha! She grabs the bandages and knocks over a cup. Something gold clinks onto the floor, rolls a few feet and topples flat. His wedding ring.

Neosporin. She needs Neosporin.

No Reason

by Anuradha Vijayakrishnan

A small cat attacked a small boy in the community today for no reason. It was an orange cat with blue kittenish eyes and no hint of malice in its plump body, sweet fluffy neck or claws that raked the child's skin for no reason. The child was simply playing running over beetles with his scooter in that adorable way we love in children.

Two mynahs mauled a baby sparrow as we watched saying shoo, shoo. We watched the sparrows build in the soft crook of an oleander, knew mynahs to be clever, occasional takers of ripe fruit. The baby lies in crushed bits and bloody filigree of bones on our grass, nest is in shreds, the oleander has shed pink flowers all over.

The boy's mother is angry and swears she will kill any cat that comes near her home, her pretty garden. We swallow guilt, add our fear of small quick cats and vile vicious birds to the list tucked into our palms. The world has become dangerous for no reason.

Still Life in December

by Matt Cariello

There are some things I know for sure:
sunlight on bricks, bricks burnt pink
and orange, sunlight on the floor
bleaching wood, dead moths on the sill,
wings divided to crystal wings,
month of dust on the glass,
cracked window left hanging.

“There are always problems” my father says.
His cigarette smoke curls around the phone.
“We lost another tree last week. The oak.
Come and help me cut it up.”
Evergreens blaze in columns,
leaves piled by a fence hold out,
and winter apples wrapped in paper
fill the cellar of my father’s house.

Contributors' Biographies

Karly Noelle Abreu White is a latina writer from Southern California, whose work has been featured in various publications such as Fathom Magazine, The Pomona Valley Review, Wayward Literature Magazine, Atlas + Alice Literary Magazine, Alternative Milk Magazine, and Writers Resist

Kiik Araki-Kawaguchi is the author of *THE BOOK OF KANE AND MARGARET* (FC2 / UAP)

Nadia Arioli is the editor in chief and managing editor of *Thimble Literary Magazine*.

After receiving his B.A. in English from Colorado State University, C.W. Bigelow lived in nine U.S. northern states, before moving to the Charlotte NC area. His fiction and poetry have most recently appeared in *The Blue Mountain Review*, *Midway Journal*, *The Write Launch*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Ponder Review*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Hole in the Head Review*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, *Remington Review*, *Last Leaves*, and *Hare's Paw*, *Red Weather* with a story forthcoming *Backchannels* and a poem forthcoming in *New Note Poetry*.

jonny bolduc is a poet from maine and yes he is sad.

Karen Bramblett is an MFA candidate at Lindenwood University. Her poems previously appeared in *Eclectica Magazine* and *Ascent Aspirations Magazine*. She lives in a valley near the rugged Northern California coast.

Marcia Camino is a writer, yogi, instructor, and trainer. Her creative works have appeared or are forthcoming in *Prairie Margins*, *Permafrost*, *Blue Unicorn*, the *Literary Cleveland/Cleveland Public Library Neighborhood Voices Anthology*, and *Thimble Literary Magazine*. She is author of *Crayzee Aayzee: A Poetry Abecedarian*; *Oomee Boomee: Space Yogi*; and *The Pink Lotus Yoga Professional and Yoga Teacher Training Program Manual*.

Lorraine Caputo's artwork and photography are in private collections on five continents, in the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Chachapoyas, Peru), and has been exhibited in the US and Ecuador and several publications, including *Thimble Literary Magazine* and *Ofi Press* (Mexico). Her poems and travel narratives appear in over 400 journals on six continents and 23 chapbooks – including *In the Jaguar Valley* (dancing girl press, 2023) and *Caribbean Interludes* (Origami Poems Project, 2022). She has done over 200 literary readings, from Alaska to Patagonia. Ms. Caputo continues journeying south of the Equator. You may view more of her work at *Latin America Wanderer* <https://www.facebook.com/lorrainecaputo.wanderer> and <https://latinamericawanderer.wordpress.com>.

Matt Cariello's most recent book, *The Empty Field*, was published in 2022 by Red Moon Press. His first two collections of poems, *A Boat That Can Carry Two* and *Talk* were published by Bordighera Press. He's had stories, poems, haiku, and reviews published in *Bennington Review*, *Voices in Italian Americana*, *Poet Lore*, *Ovunque Siamo*, *Evening Street Review*, *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, *The Heron's Nest*, *The Long Story*, *Indiana Review*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Italian Americana*, *Modern Poetry Quarterly Review*, *Typehouse*, *Sheila-Na-Gig* and *The Journal*. He's currently a senior lecturer in the English department at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.

Cory Carlson is a Minneapolis-based emerging poet and stay-at-home dad working on completing his manuscript this year with The Loft Literary Center Apprenticeship Program.

Cyrus Carlson is an abstract painter from the Midwest, US.

Suzanne Chiasson is a poet and fiction writer with a background in theatre and odd jobs. She currently lives in Vancouver, BC, where she coaches a lot of youth soccer in the rain. Suzanne has an affinity for the ocean and underdog stories. Her debut novel *Tacet* was published by Guernica Editions in the fall of 2019.

Ion Corcos was born in Sydney, Australia in 1969. He has been published in *Cordite*, *Meanjin*, *Westerly*, *Plumwood Mountain*, *Wild Court*, *riddlebird*, and other journals. Ion is a nature lover and a supporter of animal rights. He is the author of *A Spoon of Honey* (Flutter Press, 2018).

Steve Deutsch is poetry editor of *Centered Magazine* and is poet in residence at the Bellefonte Art Museum. Steve was nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize. His Chapbook, *Perhaps You Can*, was published in 2019 by Kelsay Press. His full length books, *Persistence of Memory* and *Going, Going, Gone*, were published by Kelsay. *Slipping Away* was published this spring. Brooklyn was awarded the Sinclair Poetry Prize from Evening Street Press and has just been published.

Cat Dixon is the author of *What Happens in Nebraska* (Stephen F. Austin University Press, 2022) along with six other poetry chapbooks and collections. She is a poetry editor with *The Good Life Review*. Recent poems published in *The Book of Matches*, *North of Oxford*, *hex*, and *The Southern Quill*.

Abbie Doll is a writer residing in Columbus, OH, with an MFA from Lindenwood University and is a fiction editor at *Identity Theory*. Her work has been featured or is forthcoming in *Door Is a Jar Magazine*, *The Bitchin' Kitsch*, and *Ellipsis Zine*, among others. Connect on Twitter or Instagram @AbbieDollWrites.

Oladejo Abdullah Feranmi is a Writer, Haikuist and a Veterinary Medicine student from Nigeria. A Thomas Dylan Shortlist and A Pushcart Nominee, He reads submissions at Sea glass literary magazine and edits for the incognito press. His works are published in Gone Lawn, Hooligan Magazine and more. He tweets from;@tinybecomings

Scott Ferry helps our Veterans heal as a RN in the Seattle area. He is the author of 7 collections of poetry, the most recent being each imaginary arrow from Impspired Press. More of his work can be found @ ferrypoetry.com.

Heather D. Frankland holds both an MFA and a MPH from New Mexico State University and a BA from Knox College. She was a Peace Corps and Peace Corps Response Volunteer in Peru and Panama. She has been published in the ROAR, Plane Tree Journal, Sin Fronteras Press, Sweet Lit, Slippery Elm Literary Journal, and others. Her poetry chapbook, "Midwest Musings," will be published by Finishing Line Press in Fall 2023. Originally from Muncie, Indiana, she currently lives in Silver City, NM.

Karen George is author of three poetry collections from Dos Madres Press: Swim Your Way Back (2014), A Map and One Year (2018), and Where Wind Tastes Like Pears (2021). She won Slippery Elm's 2022 Poetry Contest, and her short story collection, How We Fracture, which won the Rosemary Daniell Fiction Prize, is forthcoming from Minerva Rising Press in January 2024. Her work appears in Adirondack Review, Valparaiso Poetry Review, Cultural Daily, Salamander, and Poet Lore. Her website is: <https://karenlgeorge.blogspot.com/>.

Katherine Gordon's work has appeared in publications in the US and UK including Beloit Poetry Journal, Arcturus, and Arkansas Review. Katherine can be found either teaching, writing, or wrangling unruly plants in the garden.

Kevin Grauke has published work in such places as *The Threepenny Review*, *The Southern Review*, *StoryQuarterly*, *Fiction*, and *Quarterly West*. He is also the author of *Shadows of Men* (Queen's Ferry), winner of the Steven Turner Award from the Texas Institute of Letters. He's a Contributing Editor at *Story*, and he teaches at La Salle University in Philadelphia.

Patrick Johnson is an emerging, Queer poet from Queens, New York. He is a public school science teacher and labor union advocate. His poetry draws from many themes, often inspired by human history, loss, and family. He facilitates a bi-weekly poetry workshop, and enjoys supporting other poets in their artistic journeys.

Chad A. Hutchinson is a mixtape chapbook artist. "A single man in his 40s with no kids or pets, he travels, he sees live music with the fervor of someone half his age. And sometimes he does nothing. With a string of side hustles from census worker to substitute teacher, and even appearing as an extra in *Friday Night Lights*, Chad has largely avoided the 9-to-5 trappings that most would consider hallmarks of adult success. He's what some might call a *bon vivant*, a man about town. A guy who lets the good times roll." – MSNBC

A. Jenson is a trans/non-binary writer, artist, and farmer. Their most recent work appears in issues of *Swim Press*, *Pile Press*, *Ouch! Collective*, and *The Bitchin Kitsch*. Between long days of harvesting shares and replacing irrigation connections, they are revising a fiction manuscript.

Julia Caroline Knowlton is the Adeline A. Loridans Professor of French at Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, where she also teaches creative writing. Recognition for her poetry includes a Georgia Author of the Year award (2018) and an Academy of American Poets College prize. She was a finalist for a GA Author of the Year award in 2022. Kelsay Books has just released her third poetry chapbook, *LIFE OF THE MIND*.

Debbie Koenig is a writer whose fiction has appeared in *Mom Egg Review*, and whose nonfiction work has appeared in the *Best Food Writing* anthology, *The New York Times*, and dozens of other publications. She lives in Queens and Narrowsburg, NY, with her husband and their rainbow-haired teenager, and is seeking representation for a novel, *Hands Free*.

Bridget Kriner (she/her) is a community college professor in Cleveland Ohio. Her work has appeared in *Rattle* (Poets Respond), *Book of Matches*, *Shelia-Na-Gig*, *Whiskey Island* and *Split this Rock*, where she won First Place in the *Abortion Rights Poetry Contest* in 2012. She published a chapbook, *Autoethnography*, with *Guide to Kulchur-Green Panda Press*, a local project in Cleveland in 2014.

Theo LeGro is a Vietnamese-American poet who has received a *Pushcart Prize* nomination and fellowships from *Kundiman*. Their work appears or will appear in *Brooklyn Poets*, *diode*, *Frontier*, *Raleigh Review*, *SARKA*, *Variant Lit*, and elsewhere. They live in Brooklyn with a cat named *Vinny*.

Kelly Madigan has received a *National Endowment* for the Arts fellowship in creative writing, and the *Distinguished Artist Award* in Literature from the *Nebraska Arts Council*. Her collection of poetry, *The Edge of Known Things*, was published by *SFASU press*. She teaches creative writing workshops with an environmental focus through *Larksong Writers Place*. Her work has appeared in *32 Poems*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Terrain.org*, *Puerto del Sol* and *Plant-Human Quarterly*.

Brice Maiurro is a *Pushcart Prize* nominated poet from Lakewood, Colorado. He is the *Editor-In-Chief* of *South Broadway Press* and the author of four collections of poetry, including *The Heart is an Undertaker Bee*. His poetry has been featured by *The Denver Post*, *Boulder Weekly*, *Suspect Press*, and *Twenty Bellows*. You can find him on Instagram at @maiurro.

Emma McCoy is a poet currently pursuing an MA in Writing at PLNU. She is the Assistant Editor of Last Syllable and a poetry reader for Whale Road Review and Minison Project. Her debut chapbook is “In Case I Live Forever” (2022), and she has work published in places like Flat Ink, Cosmic Daffodil, and Jupiter Review. Catch her on Twitter: @poetrybyemma

Sarah Mills is a freelance writer and editor. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in SoFloPoJo, Beaver Magazine, Ballast, Pensive Journal, Miniskirt Magazine, Anti-Heroine Chic, Rogue Agent, Third Wednesday, and elsewhere. You can visit her at sarahmillswrites.com, and on Bluesky- @sarahmillswrites.

Linda Neal is a psychotherapist, writing teacher, thirty-year kidney transplant patient and Pushcart nominee with an MFA from Pacific U. Her poems have been widely published (Calyx, Chiron Review, Gyroscope Review, Prairie Schooner, Tampa Review and elsewhere). She was featured in the on-line journal, Cultural Weekly in May of 2021. She lives and teaches poetry in Redondo Beach, CA. She two full collections, Dodge & Burn (Bambaz Press, 2014) and Not About Dinosaurs (Bambaz Press, 2020).

Treasa Nealon is a writer, theatre creator and playwright based in the North-West of Ireland. Her plays have been produced in Ireland, the UK and the US. She has had writings published and to be published in The SLAMinutes Goes Mental, The Art of Being Dangerous: Exploring Women and Danger through Creative Expression. Recesses Zine and Razur Cuts.

A librarian living by the banks of the Connecticut River in Springfield, Massachusetts, Thomas O’Connell’s poetry and short fiction has appeared in Jellyfish Review, Blink-ink, Live Nude Poems, Hobart, and The Los Angeles Review, as well as other print and online journals.

Rina Olsen, a rising high school junior from Guam, is the author of *Third Moon Passing* (Atmosphere Press, June 2023). She is an editor for the teen literary magazines *Cathartic Youth Literary Magazine*, *Polyphony Lit*, and *Blue Flame Review*, and she was invited to be an instructor for *Polyphony Lit's Summer 2023 writing workshop Around the World of Poetry in 80 Days*. Her writing has been awarded by Guam History Day, the Sejong Cultural Society, and the Walt Whitman Birthplace Association, and she has been published in *Okay Donkey*, *The Hopper*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Lumiere Review*, and elsewhere. Visit her at her website: <https://rinaolsen.com>.

Chris Pellizzari is a poet from Willowbrook, Illinois. His work has appeared in numerous literary magazines, including *Hobart*, *Slipstream*, *Soflopojo*, *One Art*, *Third Wednesday*, *Gone Lawn*, and *Not One of Us*. He holds a BA in history from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is a member of The Society of Midland Authors.

Annette Petrusso is a poet and, by profession, a writer/editor based in Austin, Texas. Her poetry is inspired by cinema, art, popular culture, and the unforgettable details of everyday life. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in the *Pomona Valley Review*, *The Raw Art Review*, *Black Moon Magazine*, and *Concision Poetry Journal*.

Kaylyssa Quinn lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Her poems have been published in *Capsule Stories*, *Mineral Lit Mag*, *perhappened mag*, *tinywords*, *Furious Season*, *Six Sentences* and in *Hades Wool's Inner Privacy* collection.

Michelle Reale is the author of several poetry and flash collections, including *Season of Subtraction* (Bordighera Press, 2019) and *Blood Memory* (Idea Press), and *In the Year of Hurricane Agnes* (Alien Buddha Press). She is the Founding and Managing Editor for both *OVUNQUE SIAMO: New Italian-American Writing* and *The Red Fern Review*.

Cate Root is a poet in New Orleans. You can find more of her work at cateroot.online.

Amanda Roth (she/her) is a mother, writer, and folklorist living in Central Texas. Her work can be found in *Portland Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Literary Mama*, *Jet Fuel Review*, *Five Minutes*, and elsewhere. Follow her at <https://msha.ke/amandarothpoetry>

Alison Stone has published eight full-length collections, *To See What Rises* (CW Books, 2023), *Zombies at the Disco* (Jacar Press, 2020), *Caught in the Myth* (NYQ Books, 2019), *Dazzle* (Jacar Press, 2017), *Masterplan*, a book of collaborative poems with Eric Greinke (Presa Press, 2018), *Ordinary Magic*, (NYQ Books, 2016), *Dangerous Enough* (Presa Press 2014), and *They Sing at Midnight*, which won the 2003 Many Mountains Moving Poetry Award; as well as three chapbooks. Her poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *Barrow Street*, *Poet Lore*, and many other journals and anthologies. She has been awarded Poetry's Frederick Bock Prize and New York Quarterly's Madeline Sadin Award. She was Writer in Residence at LitSpace St. Pete. She is also a painter and the creator of *The Stone Tarot*. A licensed psychotherapist, she has private practices in NYC and Nyack. www.stonepoetry.org www.stonetarot.com. YouTube and TikTok – Alison Stone Poetry.

Joannie Stangeland is the author of several collections, including *The Scene You See* (Ravenna Press). Her poems have also appeared in *Meridian*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *Whale Road Review*, *The MacGuffin*, and other journals. Joannie holds an MFA from the Rainier Writing Workshop.

Jim Tilley has published three full-length collections of poetry and a novel with Red Hen Press. His short memoir, *The Elegant Solution*, was published as a *Ploughshares Solo*. His poem, *On the Art of Patience*, was selected by Billy Collins to win *Sycamore Review's* Wabash Prize for Poetry. Four of his poems have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His next poetry collection, *Ripples in the Fabric of the Universe: New & Selected Poems*, will be published in June 2024.

Laura Grace Weldon lives in a township too tiny for traffic lights where she works as a book editor, teaches writing workshops, and maxes out her library card. Laura served as Ohio's 2019 Poet of the Year and is the author of four books.

Sharon Whitehill is a retired English professor from West Michigan now living in Port Charlotte, Florida. In addition to poems published in various literary magazines, her publications include two scholarly biographies, two memoirs, two poetry chapbooks, and a full collection of poems. Her chapbook, *THIS SAD AND TENDER TIME*, is due out winter 2024.

Megan Wildhood is a writer, editor and writing coach who helps her readers feel seen in her monthly newsletter, poetry chapbook *Long Division* (Finishing Line Press, 2017), her full-length poetry collection *Bowed As If Laden With Snow* (Cornerstone Press, May 2023) as well as *Mad in America*, *The Sun* and elsewhere. You can learn more about her writing, working with her and her mental-health and research newsletter at meganwildhood.com.

Anuradha Vijayakrishnan is an Indian writer and business professional living in UAE. Her work has appeared in *Magma*, *Kenyon Review*, *Acumen*, *Ice Floes Press & Stand Magazine*. Her writing has also featured in anthologies including the *Yearbook of Indian Poetry in English* series. She is the author of a novel, *Seeing the girl*, and a collection of poetry, *The Who-am-I Bird*, which has been translated into Arabic.

Alina Zollfrank from (former) East Germany loathes wildfire smoke and writes to get out of her whirring mind. She cares for two teens, a husband, three rescue dogs, and countless plants in the Pacific Northwest and finds inspiration in the lightness and heaviness of this world. Her essays and poetry have been published in *Bella Grace*, *The Noisy Water Review*, and *Last Leaves Magazine*.

Cover Artist: Rachel Coyne is a writer and painter from Lindstrom, MN.