



SUMMER 2023

RemingtonReview

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands writing in a notebook. The person is holding a silver pen and writing on a lined page. The notebook is resting on a ledge. In the background, there is a scenic view of a sunset over a body of water and mountains. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The mountains are silhouetted against the bright sky. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

**A word is dead when it is said, some say.
I say it just begins to live that day.**

Emily Dickinson

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Cover Art: Mirjana M.



Dear Reader,

First, thank you for reading our Summer 2023 issue. We hope it has been a beautiful season for you. For us, it has been a season of unplugging from our phones and spending quality time with our loved ones. Many of the pieces in our current issue are love letters to specific individuals – including mothers, lovers, children, animals, and friends.

Spend time with the people who brighten your days. Spend time with the people who make you laugh, who inspire you to write a poem, and who will happily walk in the gardens with you.

Our Summer 2023 issue is a diverse issue with pieces on love, loss, friendship, motherhood, memories, nature, and poetry itself. We hope by reading this issue that you have a deeper understanding of human emotions and that you will embrace your loved ones.

Thank you for reading our current issue. We hope you enjoy it! As always, we encourage you to interact with the work and our talented contributors. We hope you feel inspired.

Best regards,

Editors at *Remington Review*

First Lines
Richard Luftig

The first line
of a poem

is always
the easiest

to write.
I have it

in my head,
right at the back

of my eyes.
It flows

as free
and easy

as a river,
as sunrise,

moonrise over
a lake.

Calm, so calm
that I might

see fish break
the surface

of the morning.
The first line

of a poem
is always

easiest to write.
Pen gliding

over smooth
paper with a hint

of lilac,
ever fresh,

ever new.
This poem

easiest to write,
because as always,

the all first
lines begin

with you.



The Poem I Just Wrote

Kait Quinn

After Joy Harjo

The poem I just wrote is not real.
And neither is the whale

bellowing in the pink
tides of my lungs. And neither

is the canarian aria slicing
through shadow like a scythe.

And neither are the winding
roads still spined, motor oil

burnt with our slick spit
venom. Neither am I the scapegoat

for sun's somber sigh. Neither are you
buried in the belly of the cicada's drawl.



An Imperfect Cadence

Jan Heininger

I'd seen him many times while walking my dog in the same park he called home. I'd only observed him doing two things: sleeping on his blanket in the shade of a tall pine, and trekking to and from the public restrooms at the north end of the park. Osteoporosis had twisted his spine so badly that his head faced the ground as he walked, his long, gray hair hanging like a horse's mane covering his face. His brown shirt, brown pants, and baggy overcoat were wrinkled, but never dirty. He exuded a certain pride. My dog barked at him once. He barely noticed, never breaking stride as he passed us by.

My next encounter came weeks later when I noticed the sole of his shoe was loosely tethered to its upper, slapping loudly as he approached – head hanging, blind to my existence. I felt I should do something – offer him money for a pair of new shoes, or food. I turned to speak... He glanced back, our eyes briefly meeting. In that split second, I saw both defeat and defiance. He looked back at the ground and continued on as I wondered which of life's cruelties had beset him.

It was early autumn: cool air, warm sun, and white clouds scattered across a blue sky. My dog and I followed our route around the park when a red rescue wagon turned the corner and slowed near the children's play yard. Its flashing lights caused my jaw to tighten. Had a child been hurt, I wondered? I recalled my fear and guilt when my daughter had been injured on a playground much like this one. She was left with a scar above her right eyebrow that eventually faded away. Later wounds wouldn't heal as easily.

When the paramedics exited their vehicle, it was hard to believe there was an emergency from their demeanor. Removing a gurney from the rear of their vehicle, they stopped briefly to speak to a parent who pointed toward a tall tree some 60 yards away. My gaze shifted in the direction of the giant pine. An overloaded shopping cart and a large bundle rested beneath it.

As the paramedics set their gear down under the tree and went about their business, I edged closer, my conscience keeping me at a respectful distance even as my dog tugged me toward the scene. They placed blankets on the ground, lowered the gurney, then rolled a body onto the blankets and lifted it onto the stretcher. Before the face was covered, I saw the long gray mane and recognized the old man.

Joggers, mothers, children, picnickers, lovers, and dog owners all enjoy the lushly wooded park in the warm sunlight, but after dark, an unsettling element inhabits its grounds. This was not the first time a body had been discovered in the park – lives halted with heroin, meth, or other abused substances.

After the paramedics pulled away, I inched toward the abandoned shopping cart – a man’s entire life stuffed into a small metal basket. Glancing over my shoulder, I lifted the plastic tarp revealing his belongings. There were several plastic bags filled with sundry items: a toothbrush and paste, soap, pencils and pens, socks, and seemingly important papers, including a credit card. There was my opportunity to finally learn the identity of the old man, but something else caught my eye; the mottled, black-and-white cover of a composition booklet. After pausing, I removed it. There were more booklets beneath it, their covers frayed and pages worn. Curiosity took over and I began thumbing through the sheaves, unprepared for what I found in them.

It was poetry: sonnets, odes, pastorals – every form of poem one could imagine – all in a cursive hand as proud and defiant as the old man. With every

new page, his words pulled at me. He used language in a fashion that avoided the obvious. Insightful, profound phrases that created images in my mind as powerful as any I'd ever read – unlocking suppressed emotions.

“I have to keep this...!” I thought, again checking for prying eyes. I became nauseous and shame-filled, and my hands trembled as I stuffed the booklet inside my jacket – and I dragged my dog away before the police arrived to secure his belongings.

We meet Thursday nights at a British pub: a group of old friends gathering over a few pints to dissect political affairs and to catch up on the week's events. After a few brown ales, I decided to tell my companions of the old man. I timidly presented them with the book, apprehensive as to what they might think of my trespass into another man's most private domain. But after only a moment's hesitation, they began leafing through its pages. To my surprise, one of my friends suggested that we read aloud from the book. Turning to randomly selected pages, we each took our turn at giving voice to the old man's words, raising our glasses to the virtuoso after each reading.

Walking home from the pub, with the old man's words still lingering in my head, I couldn't help but wonder if our readings had been the eulogy he would have wanted. Rain began falling a few blocks from my house. Its rhythm reminded me of one of his poems, one that my daughter would have found heartening in its cadence.



Dreams Upon
Edward Lee



Blue
Karlie Shay Daly

He wore blue, as plausible as a
phantasm
opera: sheltered in his cocoon of
mama,

palpitating the pacifier, as if worn like a
lifeline.

Kissed, his frayed head --
tethered

from dirty blonde bristles, filming within
paled
baby coos, baby soothes, baby
fantasies.

little one, do you wonder as uncanny as the
sun
that lofts itself from its own brief
setting?

Do you sing song when the
waves
count their blessings upon sunset eyes,
imagining

their calloused shells breaching
daybreak
on a mottled web, found between the
silk

of your baby skin? Or simply, do you conjure
dreamscapes:
safe as this warm touch provided, when the
love

you offer cascades into my own
silhouette?
Toasted enough to call you my little
blue

ocean, full of revelation and rarity: even

when the blues are both a mix of
melancholy, mirth, and all that's muddled
between.



The Assignment

Michael Theriault

From across the kitchen table, paying bills at her laptop, Ana glanced now and then at Andrew working. In almost half an hour, she had not once seen her son's face, but instead his clockwise whorl of short straight black hair, and beyond this his little boy's narrow shoulders hunched in concentration. He had gleaned pieces of cardboard from the recycling bag that covered the hole in the vinyl flooring by the kitchen counter. The pieces varied in thickness and area. Some were corrugated, some not. He had assembled also scissors, white glue, a pencil, a ruler, and a ball of cotton twine. He had produced and laid on the table a rectangle of the thickest corrugated board and was shaping other pieces with the scissors and with some bending, then gluing them to this. Some of the resultant pieces bore on one face fragments of package art or product information.

Arriving at the end of available funds, Ana wanted to be of help. "What are you doing?" she asked.

"Stuff," came the thin treble from behind the whorl.

“A school assignment?”

The whorl bobbed.

She sat a few minutes watching, wanting to help but helpless. Silence was Andrew’s way. He had been early to walk and late to talk. Ana recalled one warm September Sunday, when Alex was still with them and he and Ana had brought Andrew, not a year old, to picnic at the end of the long rough Lindley Meadow lawn in Golden Gate Park. Ana had put Andrew down and turned to help Alex set out the picnic. When she had looked up a moment later, Andrew had been walking down the meadow, short plump arms out from his sides and hardly moving, short legs working stiffly. Ignoring Alex and the picnic, Ana had watched the tiny boy walk and walk. He hadn’t once looked back. It was as though she and Alex hadn’t existed, or at least as though he had felt no need for them. When he had traveled about 50 yards, Ana had remembered the park’s coyotes and sprinted after him. To her surprise, he had come back into her arms without protest.

“Where do you think you’re off to, Captain?” Alex had asked him.

Andrew’s response had been an impassive stare.

The boy had not contributed to the divorce. It had resulted instead, as much as Ana understood, from a cumulative festering of little disputes. Her driving – Alex had called it for some years “old-womanish” and, toward the end, “stilted.” Her insistence that the laundry be done just so, and the dishes, and the carpets – Alex had never seen, or had refused to see, that there was a best way. His growing dislike for her sister, May – Ana had ordained that May would always be welcome in their apartment. The list had gone on, and grown, and at last, had rendered almost noxious the scent in the black hair at the center of his chest and the feel of his hips against hers that had once delighted her.

But neither had the boy held them together. Andrew had in no way reciprocated Alex’s kisses or salutes to the “Captain.” Come home in the evenings, Alex had ever found as alternative to Ana’s swelling angers only Andrew’s silence.

One evening, Alex had announced that his company had offered him a promotion and higher pay, but for work in Austin, Texas; and would she come? Austin was a good town, he’d said; she’d like it. He had known, she was sure, that she would refuse. Not just her sister was in San Francisco, but her parents and two brothers and her nieces and nephews by them and her paternal grandmother, with whom Andrew would often sit wordlessly for a long while in what seemed contentment.

Andrew looked up now from his work. His eyes did not go to hers, but to some point just below them. “Black string,” he said.

She required a moment and another glance at his materials to understand that this was not a statement but a request. “Black string, please,” she said to correct him.

“Black string, please,” he said.

“I don’t have black string,” she said. “I have black thread.”

“Thread is string,” he said, addressing the same point below her eyes.

She laughed, but his gaze remained serious and unmoving. She put the laptop away next to the television atop her dresser in the little dark alcove joined doorless to the kitchen area; the alcove doubled as both the living room and her bedroom in the half-subterranean apartment. From a dresser drawer, she brought him the spool of thread.

He unspooled thread from it without a word.

“Thank you,” she said to him.

“Thank you,” he repeated.

“You’re welcome,” she said.

She went to cook dinner. By the time she returned to set the table, he had brought his assignment to the apartment’s one actual bedroom, which was his.

It was atop his dresser when she followed him in after he had brushed his teeth and dressed in the pajamas her nephew had outgrown. The twin bed was half a bunk bed that had become disposable when a new house gave nephews their own rooms. Andrew pulled the blanket with locomotives on it to his chin. As she bent to kiss him, she glimpsed the assignment. So cursory a look found no sense in the upright stubs of cardboard and the black thread and pale twine crossing among them. She felt that he would be made uncomfortable if she stared at them. Unblinking, his dark almond eyes watched her.

She kissed him instead. She had succeeded in teaching him to return her kisses. He did now.

“I love you, Drew,” she said.

“Love you, too,” he replied. He had replied this so often to her, and even sometimes to Alex, that she could not recall if one of them had taught it to him or if he had produced it from himself, in response to feeling touched somehow. To preserve for herself the latter possibility, she preferred really not to recall. She would certainly never have asked Alex.

She switched off the light on him and the assignment and, closing the door behind her, left him to his quiet.

Ana unmade the futon bed and returned it into a couch and folded the sheets and blankets and tucked them with the pillow into the bottom of the nightstand that served also as an end table. In a few short steps, she was at the kitchen sink and then the two-burner stove. Before seeing this in-law apartment, tucked behind the garage on the ground floor of an Excelsior District home, at the end of the floor that half-dove into the hill, she'd known only four-burner stoves. Two burners were better than

what she'd found in the four in-law apartments she'd toured before this one. One had only a microwave oven, two a hot plate, and the fourth a countertop of which the prospective landlord had said, "It'll hold a toaster oven or crock pot; I don't allow hot plates." These little apartments, illegal, uninspected afterthoughts tucked inexpertly into former storage spaces with windows few, small, and often inoperable, were all she could afford from her employment at the boutique in Noe Valley and from the child support that Alex sent more or less regularly from Texas.

But here, they were a walk of a few blocks from her parents, Andrew's PoPo and GungGung, and from the grandmother with whom he seemed happy to share silence. They were over a hill from May, whom Alex had so disliked. San Francisco was compact, and if Ana needed an hour or three for herself or for an errand on which Andrew couldn't accompany her, May could be there in 20 minutes to watch the boy, and often was.

Ana did imagine better for herself and Andrew, a larger apartment, up from the street, with two real bedrooms and a full kitchen and every room with at least two windows, both of them working.

May had pushed Alex to let Ana go back to school. Alex had balked because Andrew was small and a return to school would have meant the expense of childcare. May had thought this cheap and told Alex so. This had been the first of Ana's sister's and ex-husband's mutual objections. From it, others and a general dislike had propagated.

Now, May said to her sometimes, "Sis, you'll have an almost impossible time getting ahead like this, with the job where they pay you beans and the mouse hole apartment. Move back in with Mom and Dad. They'd love to have you, and especially Drew. You can keep working part-time but go back to school and train for something so much better, and they can watch Drew for you. Make the move now; who knows how long they'll be up to it?"

But May was different and saw differently. Her voice was loud and metallic. She wore her black hair clipped crew-cut short on her left side up to where a left part would be, and from there long and hanging collar-length to the right and streaked often with one or another almost fluorescent color. She favored pantsuits with proportions skewed as dramatically, as sculpturally as her hair; Ana could not imagine

where she found them. She was impatient with employers and moved often between jobs, but, it seemed, always to one better. Ana could not come at the world in May's fashion. Ana told herself that her way was quiet and that this was just as good.

And May didn't see what a failure it would be for Ana to move back in with her parents. She didn't see how Ana, walking her own way, was piecing together a life without her parents to tell her how and to claim any part of her successes as their own. She didn't see the threads of love and determination that tied this life together. Her imagination was not Ana's.

For now, while Andrew was too young to ride a Muni bus to and from school by himself, and while Ana still clung to the job in the boutique, where the proprietor so far had reproached her only mildly when delivery of her son to class had made her late, she would have to content herself with the low pay. She imagined, though, that when Andrew could travel to and from school on his own, she would be free to find something better-paying, and maybe then she could afford a doctor to tell her if Andrew's silences, which did worry her, were in medical fact worrisome.

On one of the burners, she cooked the only breakfast Andrew would ever accept, old-fashioned oatmeal slow-simmered with raisins and chopped walnuts, a

sliced banana mixed into it at the end, and once it was in his favorite bowl a little whole milk trickled onto it. On the other burner, she boiled water for her mug of black tea. While her slices of bread were in the toaster, she went to wake him.

She could not pause as she wanted just inside his door to examine his assignment after switching on the light; his eyes were already on her.

“I smelled breakfast,” he said.

“Well, good,” said Ana. “Get your bathrobe and slippers on and come eat.” She retreated to the kitchen table with hardly a glance at the dresser top.

He washed and dressed himself now and so she had no need or excuse to return to the dresser before they left for the bus and school. When time came to leave, he emerged from the bedroom with the assignment in his hands. His jacket, unzipped, revealed all of the anime robots on the front of the T-shirt that he had made his daily uniform.

“Drew, I’ll hold your project while you zip up,” Ana said.

He shook his head. "I'll be warm."

She did not manage a long look at the assignment here, nor anything but glances in the walk to and waiting at the bus stop.

Every seat on the bus was taken. Ana stood directly before a seated teenage girl and in a voice she believed authoritative said, "Excuse me," to call the girl's attention up from her phone.

The girl looked up as though shocked.

"May we have this seat?" Ana said in the same voice.

This elicited a frown, but the girl vacated the seat.

Obedying Ana's gesture, Andrew sat, the assignment on his lap. He gave all his attention to it. Standing over him, she could, at last, examine it without his notice or objection.

He had cut the cardboard into strips more or less rectangular, all of different dimensions. He had bent one end of each strip into a short tab at approximately a right angle to the rest of the strip, then glued this tab to the large flat rectangle of thick corrugated cardboard, so that the strips all stood near-vertical, at near-perpendiculars to it. Ana saw no pattern in the varying sizes of the strips, nor in the angles their vertical planes took to each other, nor in their distances apart, nor in their groupings. Andrew had made no attempt to cover the fragments of art or information on the strips cut from commercial packaging. The fragments offered no sense beyond hints of what they had once served: Large “T” in Kelly green; on the strip adjacent to it, part of what may have been an “R” in a darker green; hind leg and paw of a brown-furred cartoon animal; segment of a column of percentages, severed from any application.

The black thread and cotton twine brought her almost to tears. Andrew had run them across the tops of the strips with such care, here looping thread through a hole he had pierced in a strip-top, there fixing twine to one with a drop of glue hardened now into a tiny milky jewel, and the arrangement said nothing, nothing at all, or at least nothing within her imagination, nor, she assumed, within the imagination of the teacher to whom Andrew would present it, probably with pride.

Ana glanced at the passengers nearby to determine if any of them was looking at the assignment. Most seemed high school students and too intent on their phones or each other to give it any but the briefest attention. Down the row of seats, though, an older woman stared from aqueous blue eyes in a doughy face under a scarf and frowned. She seemed to Ana to have no notion that the stare was rude. Ana glared at her. In the jostling of the bus, the woman's stare bounced briefly up to Ana's eyes. Ana was pleased that she seemed frightened by them and that she turned her attention instantly and blankly forward.

At their stop, Andrew stood and Ana, once more in the voice she hoped was authoritative, said, "Excuse us, excuse us" to the press of high schoolers, which somehow then divided into two tighter masses to let her and Andrew and the assignment disembark. On the sidewalk, he walked, holding it stiffly away from his body, as though in formal procession. Although he seemed to watch only it and not his way, he didn't stumble once on the concrete's breaks, dips, and rises. At the school steps, she did not insert herself between it and his face for their usual kiss. She delivered one instead to the black whorl.

"Have a good day, Drew," she said.

"You too, Mama," he replied, as always.

None of the students milling on the steps addressed him as he climbed. None ever had, in any of her deliveries of him there. Again and again, she had been obliged to conclude that among them, at least, he had no friends. Today, his only attention was to the assignment, not them. Ana watched until he turned down the corridor inside.

Then, she continued to watch, or at least to look.

May might not see how Ana would get to a different life for him and for herself, but Ana was sure they would, because she had imagined it so vividly: The larger apartment, then maybe even a house; visits there from his friends (he would have several), their loud excitement, their free boyish laughter; graduation ceremonies at which they would call his name and cheer and applaud as he crossed the stage; a young woman or young man on his arm, and their side glances and quiet laughter at things only they knew to be funny.

At the same time, Ana feared so much that what Andrew imagined would never be commensurate with the world in which he lived.

A woman gathered the last of the students on the steps into the corridor. Before closing the door, she seemed to remark Ana standing on the sidewalk and looking at nothing in particular. “Is everything all right?” she asked.

This brought Ana to. “Yes, yes,” she said. “Have a lovely day.” She spun on the ball of a foot and started quickly back toward the bus line. She looked at her watch. This would be the latest she had been to work. The boutique’s proprietor had children who were grown. Ana imagined that he would yet again tolerate her tardiness, even as great as it was, because he would understand what she had in hand: A child was an assignment you couldn’t shirk or shortcut.

She imagined everything would be just fine.



A Poem for Mom's Freckles
M.R. Mandell

My finger follows them
over her shoulder, around
her elbow, down her hand,
where her gold wedding
band used to be. I lose
count as I circle back
up to her cheek, hover
above the star-shaped scar
on the point of her chin.
As I wish it away, she pops
awake. I stop, lean in to kiss
the freckle on the tip of her nose.
Her glasses resting on its bridge,
I catch my reflection in a
lens, skin blank, and new,
fresh paper longing for ink.



Gifts for my mother
Heather Ann Pulido

For sweeping my dolls
off the crummy floor,
my mother gave me stars
with glossy-page faces
and cardboard bodies.
I hid them in a drawer,
and laid them out for counting
whenever I remembered.

For not saying
more than I had to,
my homeroom teacher
gave me a baby blue ribbon,
which I pinned
to my mother's chest
even if her laughter clanged
like spoons on tin plates.

For writing the right
letters in the right order,
most of my teachers
gave me gold medals
with my name etched on them.
My mother kept my
prizes in a box that
grew wider and deeper.

For now and ever,
I tinker with phrases--
rearrange, pack, and unpack them.
I touch my mother
beneath an engraved tile,
and press my unearned ribbons,
my unpawnable medals,
my innumerable defeats.
I give her, for the first time,
the gift of myself.



Her Closet as She Left It
LindaAnn LoSchiavo

Deprived by his wife's absence, grieving guts
my father. The cremation over now,
her ashes urned and glowing with repose,
inspection of her closet is the next
unmaking, contents intimate, perfumed.

Attired in nightgowns longer than a year,
my mother needed nothing stored inside:
Complacent church clothes, pastel linen sheaths,
insomniacal sling-back heels, upright,
attentive, waiting for the toll of tread,
accessories forgotten, unloved, cold.

Sharp hangers await uninvited guests,
prepared to fight. Should caretakers encroach,
conspirators rise: boucle knits scratching,
steel eye-hooks, belts resisting, stuffy air
redolent of her scent, almost forcing
the trespasser to leave belongings there,
mourned privately by what caressed her skin,
the nude audacity of death dismissed
as long as things remain, her door pulled shut.





Trifecta
Liz Nakazawa

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

I am trying to strike a balance between accessibility for the viewer and uniqueness in the shots. I go back to the same subject many times in different light. Sometimes, I fail and sometimes I succeed, but I'm always learning.

Left Behind

Jonathan Chibuiké Ukah

When a bird perches on the branch of a tree,
its breaking noise reminds me of your sniffing
when you had a catarrh in the Harmattan.

When a leaf falls from the stalk of a tree,
its thudding noise reminds me of your cough
when you are feeling cold in the rainy season.

When the fowls cackle in the sunflower garden,
their chuckling noise reminds me of your laughter,
when you are hysterical about my touching you.

I could go on and on about the sweet memory
of those lovely days and nights of messy joy
which suddenly ended when you rose to go.

Even then, my stomach rumbles and tightens
each time I think of the thousand ways
your presence was like oil in my hot blood.



Mourning My Dog's Passing

Diana Raab

We don't mourn lemon trees
or miss rotten fruits falling to our ground

or those picked up by dogs
who remove their peel

as they wander gardens looking
for playmates now gone from old age

like my seventeen-year-old Maltese
who died in my arms yesterday--

oh, that last breath which I shall hear forever
even after I get a new dog and many suns set.

We needed one another
more than the sun needs the moon

or I need a fur coat on a crisp winter day.
I knew that one day he'd be taken from me:

those are the side effects of old age
and incurable pneumonia.

I wish he didn't suffer in the end:
labored breaths and refusing

liver pate, his forever favorite.
I will never forget how he looked at me

with his glaucoma-filled gray eyes
and waited by our back door

until my Chanel perfume entered his nostrils
and a special calm came over him--

Mommy is home and that's all
that mattered in his entire universe.





The Crash
Cyrus Carlson

This Night Is for You and for Me

A.J. Alastairs

“I’m being buried, I think, under all this rubble,” is what I say to her. She nods like she understands but I don’t think she does. I don’t try to elaborate.

“What’s the rubble made of?” she asks instead.

“Bricks and concrete. Stone. It’s made of heavy things with too many sharp edges. As rubble is wont to be.” We’re in her room, but she’s hanging out the window, smoking a blunt. I’m still star-fished on her bed, staring up at the faded and half-stuck glow-in-the-dark stars. They’ve been there since before I was born, I think. “How’s Amy?”

“Don’t know, don’t care,” she says, into a ring of smoke.

“So, that’s how it is, now.”

“Yeah, that’s how it is.”

“Shame. I thought she was nice.”

“So did I,” is slammed down with the window, the blunt a flickering ember in the Dark Somewhere. It seems like a fine thing to be—a flickering ember. I might want to try being one someday. I say as much. She looks at me like I’m crazy.

I find the blunt on the sidewalk when I walk home the next morning. It’s not actually there, anymore, but the mark it left is.

“The rubble is still there,” I say to her three days later. “I’m still trapped.”

“Then dig yourself out,” is all she says.

Dig myself out. I carve it into a brick and add it to the top of the pile.

“You’re just hiding behind metaphors, Danny,” she says to me one night. “It’s the writer in you. You writers are always so fucking dramatic.”

“I have nothing else to be,” is what I don’t say. “Maybe you’re right,” is what I do.

“How long you got left?”

“...Five weeks.”

“A damn shame,” she says, like she doesn’t care. I really don’t think she does. “Is it really that bad? The rubble, I mean.”

“I’m being buried alive. A whole building’s collapsed on me and no matter what I do, it’s never enough to escape. I’m trying really hard to make it enough. But it never is. And for every piece of rubble I clear away, ten more take its place. I’m drowning in a lake of bricks. And I’m tired. I’m so tired. I just want to sleep.”

“You shouldn’t.”

“Don’t worry,” I smile, though it’s dulled by the weight of the rubble. “I’ll be gentle when I wake up.”

She’s quiet for a long time. “Five weeks isn’t very long.”

“It isn’t.”

“Your birthday’s in six.”

“You should get new stars,” I say, “these ones are falling.”

“Maybe I’ll do the constellations this time.”

I smile. “You should do Orion. Orion’s my favorite. Make sure Betelgeuse is orange.”

“I will,” she says.

“What’s the rubble made of now?” she asks, four weeks later.

“Flowers, I’m hoping.”

“What kind of flowers?”

“Lavender and lotus flowers would be nice, I think.”

“But not lilies?”

“No, not lilies. I don’t like the way they smell.”

“Lavender and lotus flowers it is, then.”





Flower Girls
Amy Marques

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

The flower girls were created using pantry items (tea and coffee) and the vestiges of an end-of-semester bouquet.

The Music of the Stars

Sherri Moshman-Paganos

To my brave friend Natalie, now beyond the grave
who fought and never complained
about the indignities of her disease.

The mail brought me today your book of poems
you sent to me before you left this world.

Entitled "Husband," your poems soar and sing

with your love for Yosif, your Joseph,
whose soul wandered to the furthest stars
just a few months before you. If I could only

tell you what a beautiful book it is. Images
that didn't dissolve but drifted up and dispersed
in the stratosphere. On Earth, Nature surrounds

your old Cretan house. White hibiscus blossoms,
bushes of bougainvillea with purple papery
flowers. Red pomegranates bursting on the trees,

you're no longer there to taste and see.
Photos in the book of a young dark-haired
Joseph grinning, with a willowy Natalie

in braids and a polka-dot two-piece of the time.
One photo, you both so sleek and tanned,
perfect earthly bodies of 50 years before.

We follow your memories of different cities.
In St. Petersburg, you walk in a heavy downpour,
feel spray from a waterfall in Munich.

Harvesting grapes, cooking in Iraklion, Joseph feels
his Sephardic past. Emerges fresh from the sea deep,
but stumbles on city streets. Most comfortable

studying his near and distant galaxies.
Both of you now on heavenly beams
or parts of the air, the sea, one spirit

slumbering "under our bootsoles."
The moon shines over the earth
as together you lie for eternity
obeying the music of the stars.



Like Beatrice
Madeleine French

I will weep a while longer

freely

just long enough

to remember
a candle splashing green wax
on her trompe l'oeil table

to smear
the words on this page

to delight in
her triumphant smile, glowing
like the jewelry show beads in her hand

to conjure up
her voice, syncopating my name
in two-and-a-quarter syllables

to reflect on
hydrangeas in her crystal vase, when
a ray of sun flashed between the stems

reminding me

to be grateful
I knew an artist
who painted a friendship

48 with me.

Tea Time

Suzanne Cottrell

Addie sipped her cup of hot green tea. She asked, “Emeline, did you get your hair done?”

Emeline reached her hand up and fluffed her pewter hair. “No, not recently.” Soft waves framed her pale face. Make-up caked in her crow’s feet. Her cheeks blushed like ripened peaches. Emeline reached for her cup of steaming chamomile tea. Her right hand trembled. She placed her left hand on her right hand to steady it. Clink. Her cup sat askew on the saucer.

“Are you all right?” asked Addie. She had asked Emeline that question many times over the years. At age 12, both girls signed up for horseback riding while attending a summer camp in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. On one trail ride, a shiny piece of aluminum foil at the base of a tree, probably blown there from a nearby campsite, spooked Emeline’s horse. Her horse reared, and she tumbled off. Thud, she hit the dry, ground hard. “Are you all right?” asked Addie.

“I’m fine,” Emeline said. She dusted herself off and insisted on remounting her horse, but Addie saw her grimace as she slipped her left foot in the stirrup and hoisted herself up into the western saddle. The camp counselor shortened the ride. When they returned to camp, she asked Addie to escort Emeline to the camp nurse. Emeline held her left arm close to her body. From the swelling and pain, the girls figured she had broken her arm.

Addie had taken another sip of tea. “Are you sure you’re all right? Maybe I should call 911.”

“Really, I’m fine, just like the night you stayed up with me after my Charles passed away.”

“You nodded off several times when we were telling stories and looking at old photos,” said Addie.

“Well, Dr. Reynolds did give me some medication to help me sleep.” Emeline said. She rubbed her hands. “Last night I worried...” Her voice faded.

Not wanting to stare at Emeline's hands, Addie looked out the window of the café on the corner of 4th Street and Independence Boulevard. A siren blared. Addie hugged the porcelain cup with her twisted, arthritic fingers. The warmth eased her pain. "Emeline, what's wrong?"

Her voice quavered, "I have Parkinson's Disease."

Addie touched Emeline's hand. "I'm here for you."

"I know. You always have been," said Emeline.

Emeline nodded and smiled. "My doctor told me about a boxing program..."

"I've heard about that," Addie said.

"To help me with my coordination and balance," said Emeline.

"Emeline, remember when we took tap dance lessons?" Addie tapped her spoon on the saucer. "You were right on the beat, and I was always one step behind." Their eyes twinkled, and they giggled.

The bells on the café door jingled. A young woman wearing a navy blue suit approached their table and asked, “Excuse me. May I join you? This seems to be a very popular place.” The woman scanned the café to make sure she hadn’t missed an empty seat somewhere.

Addie said, “Why yes, dear. My best friend, Emeline, and I meet here every Tuesday afternoon for tea. The owners reserve this table for us.”

As the woman pulled out the wooden chair across from Addie, she explained, “I’m here on business. My two-hour meeting was rather intense with discussions of upcoming deadlines, so I thought a nice, hot cup of tea would help me relax before catching my return flight to Chicago.”

Addie nodded. “I find hot tea soothing.”

“How long have you and Emeline been friends?”

“We met in second grade.” Addie dug around in her oversized, leather handbag.

“That’s a long time,” replied the woman. 52

Addie looked up. “Today’s special. See.” She held out a photograph of a baby. Addie grinned, “My first great-grandchild; her name is Emma.”

“She’s adorable,” said the woman. “That’s exciting news. Will Emeline be joining you soon?”

“What dear?” asked Addie. She stared at the photograph for a moment and pointed to her great-granddaughter’s smile before she placed it back in her handbag. Then, Addie took another sip of her tea.

“Will your friend be joining you soon?” she repeated.

Addie took a silk handkerchief from her pocket and patted her eyes. Then, she took another sip of tea. “I come here every Tuesday afternoon for tea. I talk. Emeline listens, somewhere.”

Previously published in *Flash Fiction Magazine*, July, 2020



Morning
Jan Wieszorek

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

Creating an impression of our world is a time art. It involves thinking, selecting, observing, and image-making set in time and motion. What develops is nature-sent, not a gift of the hand, but of spirit.



Mango Season

Rumaisa Maryam Samir

I peel the sun-gorged mangoes.
There's something to be said about the intimacy of cutting fruit
but I don't know what it is yet.

The knife grazes my hands. The red cuts water.
My fingers are webbed with juice.

What I can say is this:
I remember afternoons where the sun choked the sky
with stifling heat. Afternoons where my mother
stood at the kitchen sink,
knife in hand, fingers sticky-webbed, palms nicked.

I remember afternoons where the sun poured its oil over new skin.
Afternoons in the garden, before we knew
how to use knives. My mother chased us down,
buttery fruit on a blue fork pressed
to small sticky mouths.



Prayer for the Fallen
J.D. Gevry

Lush, engorged as
sweetness pumps through flesh.

Fruit ripens on the vine
before it rots.

Time—sun—air
forge fate.

Collapsing, withering skin,
wild fruit striking ground:

*May it nourish the roots
beneath our names
on this, our wounded tree*

*and linger in the leaves
under which we once
sought shade.*



Just Green
Madeleine French

I stepped away
to find you
under the gypsy moon
to feel your hand
stroking my cheek
in this warm breeze.

You belong
with this crowd—
poems
and conversation
float from
a travertine terrace
across smooth
green water
to emerald trees
along the bank

(reaching
their leaves out
to catch the words).
In a minute,
I'll go back
as soon as
I hear your voice:
Verde que te quiero verde
and the bayou's
answer
a solitary drop, then
a smooth, slow ripple
like an etching
on polished jade.





Brick and Bougainvillea
Oormila Vijayakrishnan Prahlad

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

I work primarily with acrylics and gouache, and I draw inspiration from everyday scenes and sights. My studio is filled with ephemera that I have been collecting over the years. I use these found materials extensively in my mixed-media work, exploring the possibilities of collage and assemblage.

she did

Geoffrey Aitken

she flew my kite
with girlish insolence
on that summer beach
along suburban pathways
through long days
and lasting nights,
fed line
to peck Heaven,
dance the moon
and
scuttle shipwrecked clouds.

she beat my heart
with her avenue eyes
fixed to mine.

she didn't have to
but
she flew my kite.

First published by Ginninderra Press, "The Crow," edited by Joan Fenney, September, 2020.





Emergence
Mirjana M.

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

"Emergence" is a mixed-media digital collage piece, inspired by the vibrant colors and sceneries that Spring in full bloom bestows upon.

Satori

David Mampel

I will walk
to the rose again,
smell raspberry taste,
stars shining
in the tunnel
of closed eyes,
new vistas
dancing
next to singing birds
on a fennel bush.

I've stopped
trying to figure everything out

for one breath

on the cedar path,
a red carpet welcome,
joy breaking
where it always

was

under

sunbeams

of open arms

hugging gray clouds

like an old friend

come to visit,

picking up
where we left off.





Neon Pink Sunrise

Ell Cee

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

I create one-of-a-kind pieces whose vibrancy and glow inspire joy. My joy embraces color and movement, showcasing the beautiful ways that they can interact. I draw inspiration for my art from stories, fairytales, mythology, song lyrics, and nature. I use recycled materials in much of my art, such as cardboard boxes, packaging materials, repurposed labels, and even discarded library books. My art ranges across mediums, from watercolor markers, highlighting elements, paints, pencils, photography, mixed-media, hand lettering, pen and ink, and high-resolution image conversion processes.

Blue Symphony

Brandon Shane

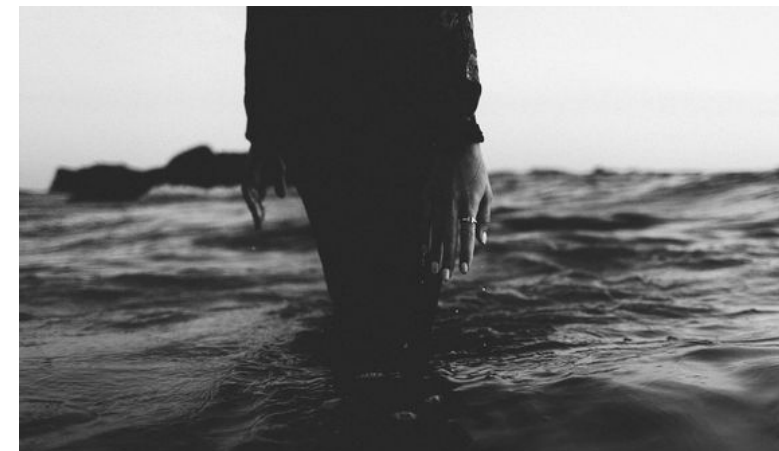
The ocean rests tonight,
stars but roosting stalagmites,
amidst a bruised plum sky; the Spanish coast
tide upon a neon night of Barcelona dance,
bay in tranquility; ships swayed to sleep,
the bejeweled moon laminates darkness,
yet the caverns and sparrow-eyed cliffs
and water-blached land hides treasures
for explorers searching for them still.
Ponder the whiskered sea lions roars,
as they lie plump on rocks perfectly big,
sharp enough to carve Galleons to relicts,
it draws in dirt and driftwood, salt and sand,
flowing to land in a musical cadence,
seaside bliss; an eternal note.



Water Is Also a Body That Holds Me

MJ L'Esperance

We will chase the sunrise on the water with vats of coffee and *chocolatines*. We will stop to take pictures of every barn we see, always finding the right light and the perfect angle. We will drive aimlessly with the same song on repeat, all the way through the night. We will not be scared - and if we are, we will hold hands over the gear shift, barefoot and screaming. We will go to the sea to dip our toes into the current and feel the sand swallow our feet down to the center of the earth, anchoring us. We will pick up rocks and empty conch shells, pressing our ears to the eternal. We will marvel at the colors and the shapes and the beauty of things that are dead and left behind. And when the pain wave hits us high, we will walk deeper in the water, and walk and walk and walk until seaweeds hold our bodies in a tight embrace and the hollows of our bones become weightless skipping stones on the surface.



That's Just How It Is *Bill Kurz*

Under the wide cuneate shade of eastern hemlock whose branches curled skyward like dire hands, the army-green water blended with emerald as the wind pulled the water like a drove. It sparkled and stirred in the sunlight and settled in the center of the lake. Scott stood with one foot on the rim of the boat, looking into the water while his daughter, Dana, trolled along, her arachnid hands with freshly painted lilac nails gripping the wheel. She didn't like fishing if she didn't get to drive.

Scott's wrap-around sunglasses and long hair that Dana called "the mullet" warbled in the mossy water. Scott pointed for her to turn the engine off next to some submerged logs and weed beds near the edge of the lake. The engine ticked and hissed as it winded down. Water lapped against the side of the boat as it splashed against itself. The turbid sound echoed in the hull.

He handed Dana her left-handed pole and briefly checked the line as she held it. Dana laid the pole against her lap and didn't get up from her chair. She looked at her father with one eye closed, staring into the sun.

"Dad," she said in her uncertain inflection that Scott dreaded. "Miss Caroline says Troy Balmer's still missing." The fall field crickets cut the silence into a thousand pieces. "Is he dead?"

Troy lived down the hill where the street began to fork between Dalton and Leavell Road. A sweet kid, always gentle with his two sisters. He was the only boy Scott allowed his daughter to play with their first few years in town.

"Looks that way," Scott answered quickly, looking into the water as if unfazed by the question. He began to gather himself and turned his head in Dana's direction. His chest still faced the water. He cleared his throat.

"I would say he is," he said more slowly, giving small affirmative nods. She stared at him with a furrowed brow. Dana's eyes almost welled as she looked away into the water and dug her thumbnail into her index. She did not begin to cry.

Years ago, before Dana was born, Scott was still struggling with his addiction. Sometimes, he sold oxycontin and fentanyl to whoever wanted amped. Sometimes, he sold to people who had no business getting mixed up like that. And sometimes, he sold to kids. Years later, the faces still came back to haunt him, sometimes in his

dreams, sometimes when awake. He hadn't killed Troy, but likely Troy OD'd, part of a cycle maybe Scott started. He cast his line into the water, trying to keep his mind occupied.

"But why?" Dana asked.

He winced and tugged at the brim of his cap. "Because there's evil in the world." He jigged his pole. "An' I don't mean like it's just a word, or we imagine it, or make it up, I mean it's *really* real." He looked over to his daughter to make sure she was listening. "It's like gravity or time. It's interwoven into what makes our world and we can't separate it or get rid of it, or make it just go away." He paused. "It's always going to be around no matter how hard we try to get rid of it, that's just how it is." He looked over at his daughter. "But we have to try," he said.

"Try how?"

"It's about finding your place in the world." The water shimmered off Scott's sunglasses. "Your role in it."

A Blue Heron crooked its head and Dana's line reeled. She let the fish run and used the rod to pull the fish back. Scott proudly watched her. She reeled the fish

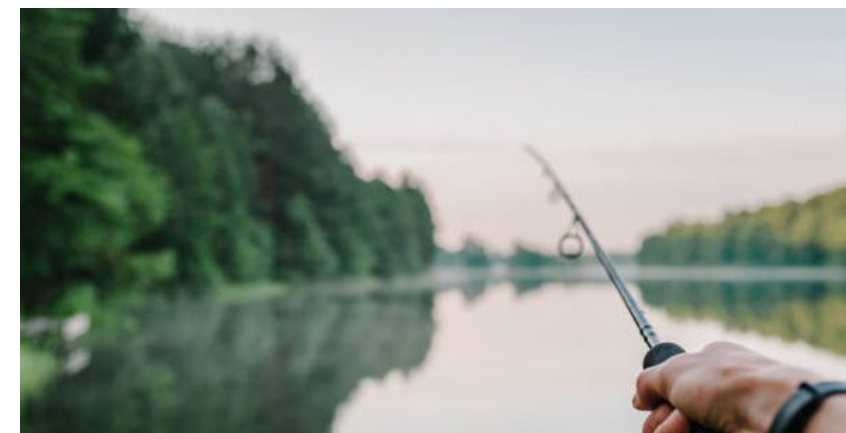
beside the boat and Scott lifted it with a landing net. He grabbed the pole from her hands and held the net over the boat.

“Nice catch,” he said. The fish fluttered in the net, slinging water on both of them. Dana had both elbows flexed defensively, grimacing.

“Can we throw it back?” Dana asked. Scott raised his eyebrows; he thought of trying to change her mind.

“Is that what you want?” he asked. Dana nodded her head, unable to look at the fish. Without hesitation, Scott pulled the hook from the fish’s mouth. He gently released it into the water, watching it find its way back into the lake.

Scott’s reflection continued to shimmer in the dark water. The clouds drifted slowly over the sun and a flock of mallards landed on the lake.





Raining Sideways
Jenny McKinnon Wright

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

Cold, blustery rain was blowing in my face as I painted this piece under a bit of shelter on the dock at the river basin in Southport, North Carolina. Miserable conditions, but I was determined to capture the colors and mood of this moment!

Rain Shifts

Suzanne Cottrell

storm intensified
bone-chilling, blustery winds,
sheets of rain blew sideways,
I shivered, fought to steady my hand,
oyster paint streaked the canvas.

dark clouds spat in my face,
water droplets blurred my vision
like fog settling in,
heavy rain, menacing clouds
masked Oak Island Lighthouse.

its faint, far-reaching beam
penetrated briny air,
winds stirred tidal waters,
disturbed Cape Fear River,
I blended shades of gray

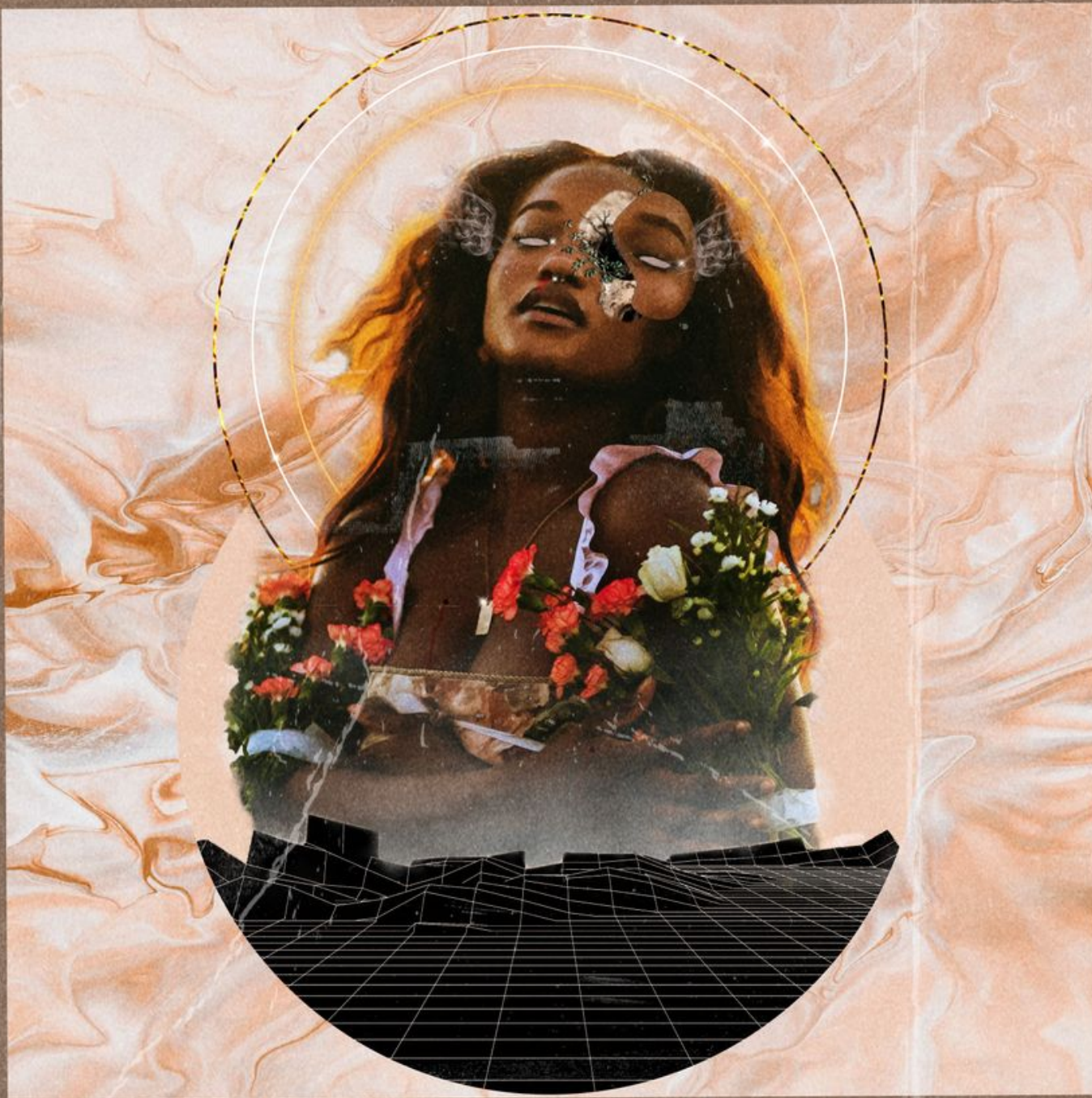
while waves charged the shore,
battered salt marsh grasses
clung to waterlogged soil,
sulfurous vapors
permeated my nostrils.

melancholy day
weighed on my paintbrush
as I struggled for balance
between gloom and beauty.

Originally published in "Feral: A Journal of Poetry and Art," October, 2021.

Written to accompany the painting "Raining Sideways" by Jenny McKinnon Wright (Pg. 75).

Bleed
Morganite



Chanson de Departie *Tony Abbott*

In the afternoons
you may remember
we sat in the shade
waiting for him,
and talked of nothing
and everything.
Long seasons of meadow
grass and racing
horses, the beauty
of an arrow's arc,
dustless noons
and cool evenings by firelight.
Some far lyre twinkled
and a voice
called from a balcony.
That was my temple,
our two chairs set
that way, those hours,
a hinting melody,
small words, you.



Niagara Falls
Carla Schwartz

I dream about us meeting there--
the lights sprinkled
through the falling water.

When we were young, you had mentioned listening
to Bach--a cantata and a picnic,
I'd thought the sound of the water would be enough.

How do we bridge the decades-long rift
between us with a border as fixed
as the 49th between us and Canada?

What would it take to bring you here
to see me when you live in western paradise
with me, fully ensconced in the east?

Did your husband convince you
to promise not to be my friend
even after he died?

Come on, for old times' sake,
let's roll the papers, light the match,
watch the soaring bouncing mist

mingle with the smoke
while we settle in
to the lament of strings.



Haydn's Farewell Symphony
Richard Luftig

At the end
of the last
movement,
each musician,
one-by-one,
blows out
their candle,
takes their
instrument
and exits
until the last
leaves the stage
all in the dark.

If only.

I might
do the same
with my poems,
watch as
they disappear
from their
assigned pages,
exiting in
exact order
of creation
until all,
author
included,
simply fades

to white.

Previously published in *Front Porch Review*.





Valley Falls
David Summerfield

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS:

At the beginning of the day comes a brilliant sunrise you've traveled many miles before dawn to catch at precisely the right moment. Mist covers an open field along a winding country road, then you descend along a mountain road to a vista called Valley Falls. You return to a high mountain plateau where on a mirrored lake two Mergansers are living their best life. Evening comes and you are lost in a blue muse. It's been a good day.

Raking
Mark Belair

Spread in a circle
beneath their branches, magnolia blossoms,
delicate as doll teacups, rock
in a cool breeze, pear and cherry blossoms,
white and pink confetti on the barely green grass
around the graves, the forsythia bush
that rims the old city cemetery
yielding sprays of yellow buds
to the swirling wind while
the groundskeeper, bundled up
against the spring chill, rakes, with
brisk sounds, all these bright colors
into waiting piles, making it seem, within this
timeless place, autumn still.



Contributors' Notes:

After beginning his writing career in poetry, **Tony Abbott** wrote novels for young readers, and is back writing poetry for adults. His Twitter address is @tonyabbottbooks.

Geoffrey Aitken writes in Adelaide, on unceded Kaurna land as an awarded poet whose industrial minimalism communicates his “lived experience,” difficult to accept for publishers both locally (AUS) and internationally (UK, US, CAN, Fr and CN). Recently, his work has appeared in *Stepaway Magazine*, *The Closed Eye Open*, *Polestar Writers Journal*, *Oxygen*, ~~unusual work~~, and *The Canberra Times*. He was nominated for the annual Best of the Net anthology in 2022.

A.J. Alastairs has a BFA in Creative Writing from Southern Oregon University. They have several pieces published in *Main Squeeze Magazine*. In their spare time, they crochet and bind books by hand (each one blessed individually by the paws of their cat).

Mark Belair's poems have appeared in numerous journals, including *Alabama Literary Review*, *Harvard Review*, and *Michigan Quarterly Review*. He is the author of seven collections of poems and two works of fiction: *Stonehaven* (Turning Point, 2020) and its sequel, *Edgewood* (Turning Point, 2022). He has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize multiple times, as well as for a Best of the Net Award. Please visit www.markbelair.com.

Cyrus Carlson is an abstract painter from the Midwest.

Ell Cee (They/She) is a lifelong artist, as well as a member of the LGBTQIA2S, genderqueer, and disabled communities. They create one-of-a-kind pieces whose vibrancy and glow inspire joy. Cee uses recycled materials in much of their art, such as cardboard boxes, packaging materials, repurposed labels, and even discarded library books. Her art ranges across mediums: from watercolor markers, highlighting elements, paints, pencil, photography, mixed-media, hand lettering, to pen and ink, and high-resolution image conversion processes. Cee draws inspiration for their art from stories, fairy tales, mythology, song lyrics, and nature. Her art embraces color and movement, showcasing the beautiful ways that they can interact. They live with their dogs, assorted woodland creatures, and possibly bigfoot – but the pictures always come out blurry. Cee's art has been published in *Remington Review*, *The Cold Mountain Review*, *Pink Apple Press*, *On-the-High Literary Journal*, and as cover art for author James Jacobs. Find Cee's art online at <https://linktr.ee/EllCeeTheArtist> and in-person at Inspired Art Gallery and Aspen & Evergreen Gallery, just outside of Rocky Mountain National Park.

Suzanne Cottrell writes poetry, flash fiction, and creative nonfiction, which have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. She's the author of three poetry chapbooks: *Gifts of the Seasons, Autumn and Winter*; *Gifts of the Seasons, Spring and Summer*;

Scarred Resilience, and a hybrid book, *Nature Calls Outside My Window, A Collection of Poems and Stories*. She is an outdoor enthusiast and retired teacher who enjoys reading, writing, knitting, hiking, yoga, and Pilates. Learn more at www.suzanneswords.com.

Karlie Shay Daly is soon to be published in *Brushfire Literature* and *Cosmic Daffodil*, has self-published five poetry collections via Amazon Kindle Publishing, and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Studies from Western Governor's University. Daly is active in posting her poetry on Instagram @karlie.shay consistently. On an ordinary day, Daly spends her time relaxing with her beloved family members in her cozy home, located in Central Texas.

Madeleine French lives in Florida and Virginia. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *Door Is A Jar*, *Quartet*, *Hyacinth Review*, *Dust Poetry Magazine*, *West Trade Review*, *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, and elsewhere. You may find her on Twitter @maddiethinks.

J.D. Gevry, MPH (they/them; he/him; fae/faer), is an emerging poet whose writing is influenced by their experiences as a queer, polyamorous, non-binary trans Vermonter with a disability. Their work has been, or will be, published in *The Bitchin' Kitsch*, *Spillwords*, *Querencia Press*, and elsewhere; won the 2023 Hale Education Poetry Contest; and was longlisted for the 2023 erbacce-prize. Find faer on Instagram at @jd_gevry_poetry or Facebook as @JD.Gevry.

Jan Heininger is a Los Angeles-based writer with years of experience writing spec screenplays, episodic TV (*Highway to Heaven*) and Special Class television, for which Heininger received a Daytime Emmy Nomination. Heininger also has extensive experience creating advertising and promotional copy for numerous well-known national brands.

Bill Kurz is a writer from Wayne County, Indiana, USA. He has been published in peer-reviewed journals, such as *PLOS One*, and received multiple awards for his work in philosophy.

Edward Lee is an artist and writer from Ireland. His paintings and photography have been exhibited widely, while his poetry, short stories, nonfiction have been published in magazines in Ireland, England, and America, including *The Stinging Fly*, *Remington Review*, *Skylight 47*, *Acumen*, and *Smiths Knoll*. He is currently working on two photography collections: *Lying Down With the Dead* and *There Is a Beauty in Broken Things*. He also makes musical noise under the names Ayahuasca Collective, Orson Carroll, Lego Figures Fighting, and Pale Blond Boy. His blog/website can be found at <https://edwardmlee.wordpress.com>.

MJ L'Esperance is a writer from Montréal. She writes about identity, disability, loss, and lust. Her work can be found online (*Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Sledgehammer*), in print anthologies (*Pear Shaped Press*), and scribbled in the streets of her city. In her spare time, she likes to run after cats in back alleys and walk barefoot on the grass. She's on Instagram @mj.lesperance.

Native New Yorker, **LindaAnn LoSchiavo**, a four-time nominee for The Pushcart Prize, has also been nominated for Best of the Net, the Rhysling Award, and Dwarf Stars. She is a member of SFPA, The British Fantasy Society, and The Dramatists Guild. Elgin Award winner of "A Route Obscure and Lonely" and "Women Who Were Warned"; Firecracker Award and IPPY Award nominee for "Messengers of the Macabre" [co-written with David Davies], "Apprenticed to the Night" [Beacon, 2023], and "Felonies de Se: Poems about Suicide" [Ukiyoto Publishing, 2023] are her latest poetry titles. In 2023, her poetry placed as a finalist in Thirty West Publishing's "Fresh Start Contest" and in the eighth annual Stephen DiBiase contest. Find her on Twitter: @Mae_Westside.

Richard Luftig is a former professor of educational psychology and special education at Miami University in Ohio and now resides in California. His poems have appeared in numerous literary journals in the United States and internationally in Canada, Australia, Europe, and Asia. Two of his poems recently appeared in *Realms of the Mothers: The First Decade of Dos Madres Press*. His latest full-length book of poems is available from Unsolicited Press.com.

Mirjana M. are a digital artist and writer from Belgrade, Serbia. Their work focuses on exploring the juxtaposition of various elements through mixed media of photography, double exposure, textures, and light. Their work most often explores concepts of duality and has appeared in *Gulf Stream Literary*, *The Good Life Review*, *waxing & waning*, *Vocivia* magazines, and other places. You can see more of their work

at their blog olrielmoonshadow.wordpress.com and <https://ello.co/olriel>. Get in touch on Twitter (@selena_olriel). They are also the creator of *Suburban Witchcraft Magazine*.

David Mampel is the primary caregiver for his parents, a former minister, semi-retired clown, and artist. He writes fiction and poetry to bring a little sun to the rainy darkness of the Pacific Northwest. His work has appeared in *Copperfield Review Quarterly*, *The Aurora Journal*, and *Remington Review*. Follow his work online at www.davidmampelwriter.com, Instagram @davidmampelwriter, and Facebook @DavidMampelWriter.

M.R. Mandell (she/her) is a poet and photographer based in Los Angeles. A transplant from Katy, Texas, she now lives by the beach with her muse, a Golden Retriever named Chester Blue (at her feet), and her longtime partner (by her side). You can find her work in *Boats Against the Current*, *The Final Girl Bulletin Board*, *Dorothy Parker's Ashes*, *JAKE*, *Roi Fainéant*, *sage cigarettes*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Stanchion Zine*, *Fine Print*, *unstamatic*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Olney*, *The Cherita*, and others.

Amy Marques grew up between languages and places and learned, from an early age, the multiplicity of narratives. She penned children's books, barely read medical papers, and numerous letters before turning to short fiction and visual poetry. She is a Pushcart Prize, Best Small Fictions, and Best of the Net nominee and has work

published in journals and anthologies, including *Streetcake Magazine*, *MoonPark Review*, *Bending Genres*, *Gone Lawn*, *Ghost Parachute*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, and *Reservoir Road Literary Review*. You can read more at <https://amybookwhisperer.wordpress.com>.

Morganite is an experimental young digital artist and graphic designer from Ghana. Her work focuses on bringing retro designs to life in a modern world, but she describes her work as afrosurreal and afroexperimental – how she views the world through her perspective. She is mostly inspired by the fashion, music, and lifestyle of the 20th century, and is fueled by the works of David Carson and Paula Scher to broadcast her love for retro design.

Liz Nakazawa has edited two collections of poetry by Oregon poets: *Deer Drink the Moon: Poems of Oregon* and *The Knotted Bond: Oregon Poets Speak of Their Sisters*. *Deer Drink the Moon* was selected one of the Best 100 Books about Oregon of the last 100 years by the Oregon State Library. Her own poems have appeared in *The Timberline Review*, *The Poeming Pigeon*, *Willawa*, *Turn*, and *abundredgourds*.

Sherri Moshman-Paganos is based in Athens, Greece. A retired educator, she is a writer and poet, as well as an avid traveler, and publishes a monthly travel blog. She has had poems included in *The Little Magazine*, *Foliate Oak*, *GW Review*, and *SNReview*. She has published a poetry collection entitled *Wanderings: Poems of Discovery* and a memoir, *Step Lively: New York City Tales of Love and Change*.

Oormila Vijayakrishnan Prahlad is an Indian-Australian artist and poet. Her art has been featured on the covers and within the pages of several literary journals and anthologies, including *Amsterdam Quarterly Yearbook*, *The Storms Journal*, *Stonecoast Review*, and *Pithead Chapel*. She lives and works in Lindfield, on traditional Gammeragal land. Find her on Twitter @oormilaprahlad and Instagram @oormila_paintings.

Heather Ann Pulido is an indigenous author from Baguio City, Philippines. She writes to grow both roots and wings. A longtime student journalist and content writer, she is a returning literary artist. Her poems are published or forthcoming in *Moss Puppy Magazine*, *Sage Cigarettes*, and *JAKE*. When she's supposed to be writing, she's on Twitter (@heather_tries).

Kait Quinn (she/her) was born with salt in her wounds. She flushes the sting of living by writing poetry. She is the author of four poetry collections, and her work has appeared in *Reed Magazine*, *Watershed Review*, *Chestnut Review*, and elsewhere. She received first place in the League of MN Poets' 2022 John Calvin Rezmerski Memorial Grand Prize. She enjoys repetition, coffee shops, and vegan breakfast foods. Quinn lives in Minneapolis with her partner, their regal cat, and their very polite Aussie mix. Find her at kaitquinn.com.

Diana Raab, MFA, PhD, is a poet, memoirist, blogger, speaker, and award-winning author of 13 books of poetry and nonfiction. Her writings have been published and anthologized world-wide. She blogs for *Psychology Today*, *The Wisdom Daily*, and *Thrive*

Global, and is a guest blogger for many others. She frequently speaks on writing for healing and transformation based on her book is *Writing for Bliss: A Seven-Step Program for Telling Your Story and Transforming Your Life*. Her latest poetry collection is *An Imaginary Affair: Poems Whispered to Neruda*. Visit dianaraab.com.

Rumaisa Maryam Samir was born and raised close to the sea in Karachi, Pakistan. She first discovered poems were fun at the age of eight. Now 19, she wishes she had more time to write in between juggling school and internships. Find her and more of her work on Instagram (@discardedfirstdrafts).

Filmmaker and photographer **Carla Schwartz's** poems have been widely published, including in *The Practicing Poet* (Diane Lockward, Ed) and in her collections *Signs of Marriage* and *Intimacy with the Wind*. Her CB99videos YouTube channel has 2,400,000+ views. Find her at <https://carlapoet.com>, <https://wakewiththesun.blogspot.com>, or on Twitter and Instagram @cb99videos. Recent publications appear in *The Ear*, *Channel*, *California Quarterly*, *Cutthroat*, *The Poet's Touchstone*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Inquisitive Eater*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *Verse-Virtual*, and *Leon*.

Brandon Shane is a Japanese-American alum of California State University, Long Beach, where he majored in English. He's pursuing an MFA while working as a writing instructor and substitute teacher. You can see his work in *Acropolis Journal*, *Grim & Gilded*, *All Existing Magazine*, *Bitterleaf Books*, *Salmon Creek Journal*, *BarBar Literary Magazine*, *Discretionary Love*, among others.

David Summerfield is a graduate of Frostburg State University, Maryland, and a veteran of the Iraq war. He has been an editor, columnist, and contributor to various publications within his home state of West Virginia. His fiction, poetry, and photo art has appeared or is due to appear in *In Parentheses Literary Magazine*, *Night Picnic Press*, *New Square Literary Magazine*, *Just Good Poems*, *Literary Heist Magazine*, *Amphora Magazine*, *The Journal of Expressive Writing*, *Door Is A Jar Literary Magazine*, *Carmina Magazine*, *The Rye Whiskey Review*, and *El Portal (EUNM) Literary Journal*.

Michael Theriault has been an Ironworker, a union organizer, and a union representative at various levels. He published fiction in his twenties, half a dozen stories in literary magazines, but abandoned it for decades to support first a family, then a movement. In his recent return to it, he has been published in *Pacifica Literary Review*, *Overheard*, *Erato Magazine*, and *Livina Press*, and accepted for publication in *Iconoclast*. Popula.com has published a brief memoir of his time as an Ironworker organizer. He is a graduate of St. John's College, Santa Fe and a native and resident of San Francisco.

Jonathan Chibuike Ukah lives in London with his family. His poems have been featured and will soon be featured in *Atticus Review*, *Remington Review*, *The Pierian*, *San Antonio Review*, *Ephemeral Literary Review*, *Compass Rose Literary Magazine*, *Shift Literary Magazine*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, etc. He is a winner of the Voices of Lincoln Poetry Contest in 2022.

Jan Wiezorek paints and writes from the inspiration of southwestern Michigan's flora. Wiezorek wrote the eBook *Awesome Art Projects That Spark Super Writing* (Scholastic, 2011). His own published artwork first appears here in *Remington Review*. He received a master's degree in interdisciplinary arts education from Columbia College Chicago.

Jenny McKinnon Wright is an award-winning artist who believes that working on plein air allows her to “capture the emotion that only painting in that location can offer. Something catches my eye—the light, composition, the colours that I actually see. To portray that momentary connection with nature on canvas is the challenge.” She leaves it to the viewer to imagine stories about the scenes she paints. Wright started her art education at her watercolor artist Aunt Sarah's side, then earned an art degree at ECU and followed with graduate work at Georgia State University. Her work appears in various galleries, private collections, and *The Broken Plate*. Find more: <https://www.artofjmw.com>.





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**"EITHER WRITE SOMETHING
WORTH READING OR DO
SOMETHING WORTH WRITING."**

Benjamin Franklin

*you have not a single expression in
writing, that I do not
have your daily experience and had in the
will wait longingly for the next letter from
of the Powers longingly. The fragrance of
of the scent of the big wide world and
for it.*

successful, are you now

