INSTRESS

Journal of the Arts
2019

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Instress has been published by the students of Misericordia since December 1966. The word instress was coined by Jesuit priest and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. Bernadette Waterman Ward describes instress thus: "Instress is an action of the will—a moral action, for good or evil. Instress is assent, to use Newman's term, to an inscape. To call out an inscape is a pleasure, though not one necessarily leading to God; . . . But the ability to see and instress inscapes is the imaginative faculty that makes love possible." Instress at Misericordia is therefore an opportunity of the artistic and literary imagination to make possible something—call it love or even grandeur—like the following, from Gerard Manley Hopkins' "God's Grandeur":

. . .
And for all this, nature is never spent;
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
 World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

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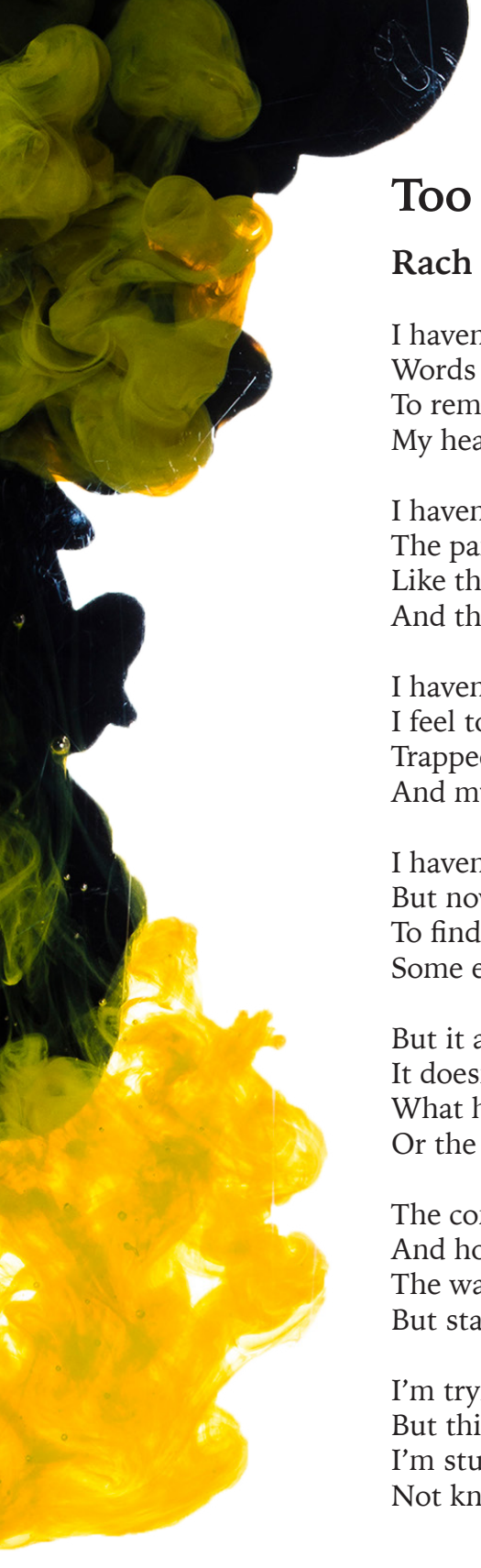
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Too Much to Say

Rach Ahern

I haven't written
Words seem too heavy, so slight
To remotely express
My heart and my plight

I haven't written
The pain is too deep
Like the highest mountains
And the deepest seas

I haven't written
I feel too stuck
Trapped by life
And my mind and stuff

I haven't written
But now I try
To find some words
Some expression that won't confine

But it all holds back
It doesn't even touch
What happened last week
Or the pain in my heart

The confusion in a moment
And how it disappeared
The way everything changed
But stayed the same in here

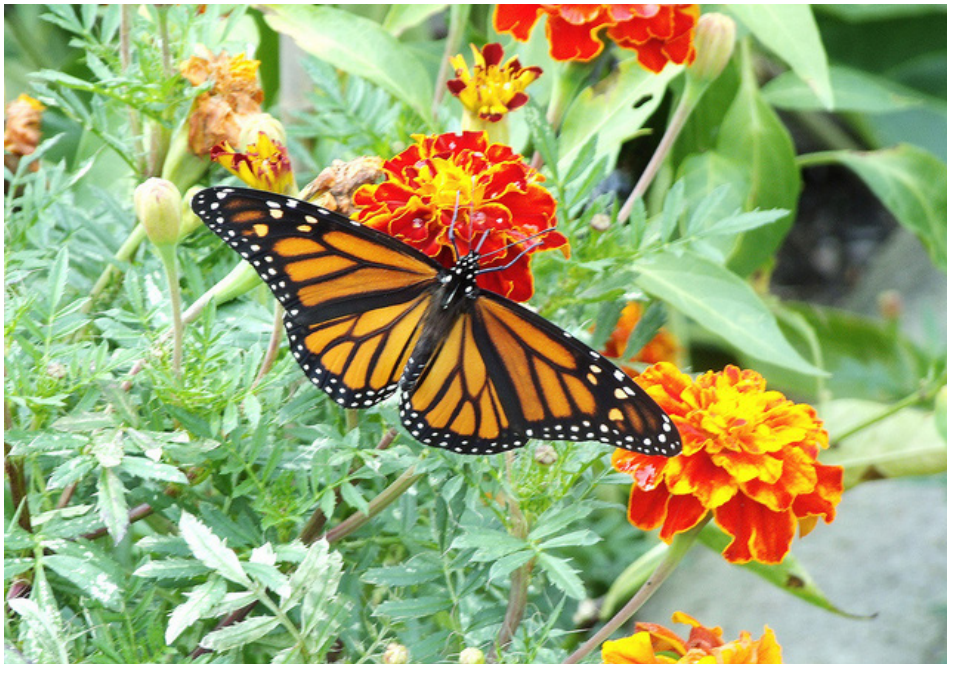
I'm trying, I'm writing
But this is all so weak
I'm stuck here saying nothing
Not knowing where this leads

They'll say at least I tried
But to me that's nothing
Like one step out of a billion
Doesn't feel like much of something

But here I am
And here I lie
Everything feels too big
They call it tongue-tied

It's interesting though
Cause I have too much to say
So I put the pen down
And once again, walk away

Butterfly



Zoe LaPorte



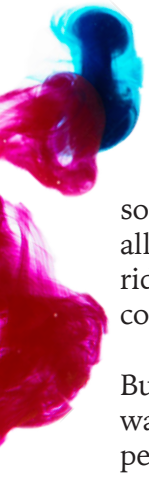
Another Lecture from Underground

Scott Bargisen

Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening my lovely, recently-woken friends. Today, if my ego chooses to leave his hibernative cave of Aristotelian Knowledge, I bring to you all a simple proposition: what is the point of life? Ah, friends, such a question has plagued our kind for millennia; such a question, dare I say (dare, Dare), is the reason for the creation, questioning, and subsequent death of God himself! I know! I know, friends. Such an awful occurrence is unspeakable. But must I name-drop such supposed cynics as Nietzsche the Existentialist, Marx the Communist, the modern facets of evil which include but are not limited to terrorists, Russians, and the political right? How despicable!

But please, dear listeners, I implore you, listen further. Let us start from the beginning: what makes life? Is it dependent on the mathematical concept of the Fibonacci sequence to create perfection? And any discrepancies in said pattern are nature's way of creating individuality in the world? The biological laws of cellular respiration and reproduction utilizing and repurposing the finite and recyclical energies that consequently mold into a recognizable or unrecognizable figure mimicking ourselves, aliens, or God(s)?

Is fire alive as it consumes, reproduces, moves, and produces energy while also destroying it? It adapts in the same expediency as any animal, plant, or fungus: yet, it remains nonorganic as it isn't made up of these pesky "cell" things. And these silly things require water, so therefore, fire must be out of the question. What of electricity? Such charges are what allow life to occur: potassium pumps, sodium pumps, water pumps, pelvic pumps, what have you. What separates electricity and fire from life? Yes, I accept, dear friends; I know how excited you must be. I will be the one to challenge these so-called scholarly zoologists and biologists who question their consciousness. After this little issue, my dear friends, I will take on the established ideas of life and fight for Energies' rights. A Fire Rights Activist of sorts. What did you say? A silly undertaking? Not remotely, friends and listeners. (See, in order to fight for all of you, I must create a more outlandish argument for the bourgeoisie to compare. Brilliant? Yes. Plausible? Not particularly. I am sincerely



sorry that I am your only champion, my sleeping friends.) I shall champion the fight for all fires of all sizes from match to stars, red to violet, sulfuric, carbonic, lithial, tobacco-ridden, cannabis-laden, crack-sugar sprinkled; all fire must be equal beyond our petty comforts such as survival or sensory memory.

But back to the question: life. For we humans, so-called perfectly adaptable species, life was simple enough to just survive and reproduce as every animal has for eons. Currently, people (not you, dear friends) think they are intelligent enough to question the formula! The audacity! Oh, friends, this notion does tickle me the right way! Oh, to share this all with you brings me so much joy, my unmoved friends and comrades. Ahh . . .

For these smart-folk, the best source of action is to either work hard and have children and HATE themselves for decades on end with little reprieve within their weekly bull-expletive; the simple unpublishable improperness that consumes the soul of every man and woman stricken with schadenfreude. I, however, have the cure for these poor souls, my friends, though I have not yet studied enough of the Krishnas, Buddhas, Christs, and Shelleys to aid you all in your respective quests for longitudinal and latitudinal greatness. I bring to thee one word: self-actualization. Yes, friends: it is two words put together to make one great word. The Germans do that all the time (note Schadenfreude) with everything from two-word phrases to complete S E N T E N C E S all the time. Please, refrain your judging souls until you find your version of nirvana. Such nirvana will come when you let go of people and embrace the Essence. The essence being you. You being an ass****. An ass**** being self-actualization. Ahh, yes my friends. I love talking about such things, even if only to myself. Such joys may only come from such quests, but I digress and jest in my quest to suggest for thy best, my friends. Ahh such fun!

Ahh, so yes. Nirvana. Heaven on Earth and such. Yes. Nirvana only comes when you finally realize that all of those around you are not doing anything for your own good. Everyone does something strictly for their benefit. You must take this information as Law, friends. Nobody does anything for you unless it benefits them. Everyone. I learned this, you now learned this. We all now know this. Friends, this is confidential information you must use to do better than me. See? Even I get a sick pleasure out of my own suffering for your benefit! I know I have no hope, as the doctor says. I have these substances, three meals, and a bed. All I need! You, however, can mingle. Can interact, can thrive, can survive even. As in get more out of life than life itself!

What a concept that is . . . I am loving these “placebos” . . .

Yes, back again. So, the point of life . . .



Radek Was Right

Daniella Amendola

My sister told me we were trees once
With white blossoms on our heads.
We shaded all the children once,
And we kept them cool and fed.

Now all the shells and blossoms are dust,
And we shook our roots from the earth.
Our memory is shadow and rust,
From the end winding back to our birth.

Someone blew the dirt from my face,
And placed almonds in my eyes.
Now I struggle to find my place
And I wonder if I should even try.

Where I stand is where I will be,
Consumed by dreams of botany.
You will find me in an almond tree,
And you may call me Daphne.



Annette Ritzko

In the Snow



Oreison

Matthew Hinton

Seen in the Cemetery

Jessica DeRemer

Green grass, brown soil
Lilies, roses, daffodils,
And a gravestone too.

Moonlight

Kayli Boyes

Let's talk of place
That exists only in moonlight
Where danger and safety
Melds as one in the night
The whistling winds howl
A darkness creeps over the land
This change only comes about
When you hold my hand
It's a gamble to walk next to you
With your one hand in mine
While the other holds my heart
The moon making your eyes shine
I find it strange that
We only meet in the safety of the night
And I cease to be yours
The second the sun casts his golden light
I'll see you by chance
During the sun filled day
And only nod
With nothing else to say
Because you only exist in the moonlight
In my wildest fantastical dream
Where the day doesn't limit
My unconscious thought's stream
I know you're toxic in the day
But the cure when bathed in moonlight
So, until I find a better remedy
I'll see you tonight



Three-Year Long Summer

Scott Bargisen

"I don't feel anything anymore."

Sitting on the curb hurts a bit more today. The roads we've walked on since we met crumble more and more as the cars pass us. Just to think all of this was the farmland my grandparents owned; now it's all commercial buildings and Korean-Presbyterian churches. We always walk on Thursdays after dinner, but we only walk around here sometimes because of the awful roads. The places have memories though; she used to always ask about my family and the stuff they would do, what we used to have before the buildings were built, what animals would be hanging around whatever corner we passed. Not tonight though, she was busy thinking about what musical she was going to direct at the school next year. Funnily, I didn't mind the silence then.

"What do you mean?"

"I . . . I just don't feel anything anymore."

Her voice was soft, like that of a mother waiting for the request of her child. In a pleasant way this time.

"What do you want to do?"

"I don't know."

"Do you want a divorce?"

"I don't kn . . ."

The rocking began as if I turned three again: back and forth, back and forth, my right foot tapping at 136 bpm.

"Well, what's wrong then? We can figure this out."

The rhythm picked up and the rocking changed to a different time signature. I felt nothing, except the tearing of skin clinging onto my last bit of love for her.

Once again: "Listen Monkey, I just want you to be happy."

“Happy?” I giggled and sniffled. “I haven’t been happy in months.”

She peered at me: “Months? What did I do?”

“Well Paige, you don’t really treat me like a priority, you know?”

“No Monk. I don’t.” She began to ripen in the face. “I don’t unpublishable know. Tell me how I don’t treat you like a priority. Tell me.”

“Well, first off, do you love me?”

“Don’t change the G— expletive subject.”

“Answer the question.”

Her eyes sharpened at me, and for a moment stared at the pebble her husband kept knocking with his bouncing heel, her lower eyelid twitching slowly with each thought.

“Yeah . . . Yes. I do love you.”

“How so?”

“What the obscene do you mean ‘How so.’ What’s the problem? I said ‘I love you.’ I don’t stutter.”

That petty removed.

“Well, what evidence do you have to show that you love me?”

“See this ring? Have we not been together for seven years?”

“I said evidence, not timetables and trinkets. How do you feel about me?”

“You’re being a removed unwritten at the moment, Monk.”

“I could just give you the explicit papers now if you’re going to keep being a deleted. Answer the question please.”

“Well, I’m comfortable with where we’re at, I guess. Is that sufficient?”

"Not really: I'm not comfortable in the slightest. Neither of us are growing anymore, and I'm tired of being mediocre."

That set her off; that really set her off.

"You serious? *You're* tired of being mediocre? Your *bottom-line* is mediocrity. How can you get better?"

"That's your problem. There is always room to improve."

"Well, how about you tell me how."

"How could I? You've peaked already, no?"

"Don't you revised put this on me that you can't be happy with work."

This unpublishable.

"You think this is about work? Paige, you never come to me for anything except to do favors for your friends' kids; you don't ask how my day is going, instead you just removed and complain about your mild inconveniences like the immature unnecessary you are; you haven't even cooked for us since we got married. It's like you're happy with living like slang-term. What happened to having a family now that we're good financially? What happened to giving ourselves to each other? Huh? That's another thing: how can we start a family when you always happen to be out with your friends when I am home? In the *slight chance* I'm home? How often should I have brought up each individual issue? Is this a good wake-up call?"

Her forehead pulsated with intravascular pressure strong enough to demolish any clotting created from the stress of the moment; her lips rapidly shifting form with her anguish.

"You know what, you're right. I'm a selfish edited. But think about this: you ever for once think I was too busy?"

"Go obscene yourself. I asked you how your day was going before and after every single surgery; I cooked dinner, did laundry, cleaned the house up and down, something damn-near every night whether or not I worked late or lost a patient or what. You ever kill one of your expletive choir students, corrected?"

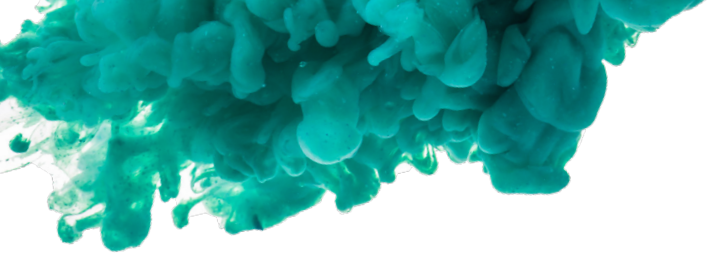
She went blank; her mechanical steps back to the house matched her lack of expression.

By the time I was home, she was pulling out of the driveway. She didn't take any of her things yet, except for a few nights-worth of clothes; she probably went to Gabby's. I can't say I don't feel better after that. A glass of scotch later, I got on the phone with Roger to get the papers together only to be put on hold (Paige called from the car). Guess I'll need a new lawyer. A few weeks later, Dr. Gould diagnosed me with acid reflux: it's probably not chronic.

Lost in Thoughts



Nicolette Bagoly





On Walking in Pére Lachaise Cemetery

Kristen Capitano

The day is hot and bright as tourists and locals bustle along the busy Parisian street, yet just inside the heavy stone walls of the cemetery, noises are hushed. The further in you walk the more the noises of the street recede and the birdsong takes over. The sunlight itself feels tangible yet subdued, streaming down in large chunks through the gaps in the trees, quietly illuminating the dark green moss growing on the old, dilapidated stones. Pére Lachaise is packed with visitors, yet nobody shouts or laughs too loudly. Despite the heavy aura of tourism and the acres of open air, the famous cemetery retains all the quiet dignity of a church.

Fresh from a week spent contemplating life, death, and Hemingway, the dichotomy of the vibrant life of the city and the cold death of the elaborate tombs feels especially jarring. The tombs and mausoleums are aligned along paths like a macabre suburbia, just waiting for someone to walk up, ring the bell, and enquire if anyone was home. Doors are broken and hang permanently ajar, tree roots disrupt the paths, jagged, broken stones hinder walkways, and dusty, withered flowers adorn the gravesites. It feels almost desperate to see the way we've tried to impose living order on the dead, as if with enough remembrances of everyday life we can bridge the divide between the two worlds and maybe even bring our long-gone loved ones home.

Life overcomes, however; moss grows slow and steadily over names and statues, large, gnarled roots crack the stones and make certain passes unwalkable, and birds build nests atop memorials. In the face of seemingly endless paths of graves and sepulchers and with the warm, reassuring presence of my friends around me, death feels like a myth. Yesterday we toasted Hemingway on the Seine, celebrating a kind of immortality, and tomorrow we will go home to our families and tell them what we've seen—these cold stones have no power over us, this other world cannot touch us. In the hierarchy of life and death, it seems that life always triumphs, and we are very much on the winning team.

And yet myth transitions into stark reality as we wander into the newer part of the cemetery. The tombs are newer here, marble intact, and the sunlight shines

Pére Lachaise



Kristen Capitano

down hotly, unencumbered by any trees. Brightly colored wreaths soak up the sun, standing out vividly against their sparkling white backdrops. It is easier to feel death here, where there are so many irrefutable signs of the living. Suddenly, I'm ashamed at thinking that a bridge between the worlds is laughable and that we were so untouchable, but, oh, "isn't it pretty to think so?" We could have no concept of our vitality without such loss, and yet when looking at the orderly mausoleums and the stubborn greenery peeking between the slabs of polished rock, what is death but a part of the cyclical nature of life? There is no hierarchy to this circle, no sides to choose, no start and no end. It is simply a continuation, an uninterrupted process to repeat itself again and again.

My friends are warm beside me and the stones are cold, yet we shiver in the shade and press our fingers to the marble to feel the vestiges of the fading morning sun. After we leave here, we will go to the café just outside of the gates and laugh and drink whiskey and have hot chocolates, but on the plane ride home we will see the tombs of Pére Lachaise and the stunning Paris landscape behind them each time we close our eyes.



Here, Now.

Kristin Kuntzman

What I have learned about people is that we have
the greatest capacity of everything within us.

Everything is there
from the moment we arrive on this planet
to the moment that we leave it.

All we ever need is there
and it is up to you to decide
how to cope with the life
you were given.

It is up to you to decide
what will create
a life worth living.

Everything you will ever need is
within.

An Incredibly Long Journey



Annette Ritzko

Songs of Cheerfulness

Kaitlyn Kirsten

Around the meadow the birds fly free
And sing their songs of cheerfulness.
It's such a treasured sight to see:
Around the meadow the birds fly free
And sing their lovely songs to me.
One can only feel happiness
Around the meadow. The birds fly free
And sing their songs of wistfulness.

The American Dream Isn't Dead Just Yet

Eddie Okeke

The American Dream Isn't Dead Just Yet
Or at least that's just what I tell myself every morning when I wake up
I have to
Or else I won't get out of bed that day

The American Dream Isn't Dead Just Yet
Or at least that's just what I tell myself when it's time to go to work
Or go to class
Or go to hang out with friends
Or was I supposed to go to a meeting?

It gets a little hard to keep track of the things that I try to impress people with
I don't even like my obligations
They drain me
I've been doing it all for 3.5 years now and it's supposed to look great on my resume
But jobs that see my resume aren't calling me back

The American Dream Isn't Dead Just Yet
Or at least that's what I tell myself when it's time to work out
I worked really hard to craft a proper workout plan
I look in the mirror and try to love the person that I see
I've shown myself to a few people recently that didn't like what they saw
They left

I don't want to hold anyone down
I don't have anyone to talk to anymore
I'm alone again

The American Dream Isn't Dead Just Yet
At least that's just what I tell myself when it's time to get dressed
No one even noticed the new thing that you wore yesterday
Why wear something new today?
Why even get all dolled up?

Sweats work just fine
I love my unique clothes more than anything
I hope that wherever I go
No one has seen someone wear those clothes that way before

The American Dream Isn't Dead Just Yet
If I keep telling myself that then I think I will be okay
It's worked out so far



Hope in the Hopeful

Kristin Kuntzman



In My Dreams. . .

Jessica Vera

A bittersweet mirage,
tempting my cold heart.
My thoughts are swirling in circles,
But no reward if I cross the start.

Shadows of what was,
Or what could have been . . .
Still rolling dices,
Trying to uncover the unseen.

Whispers of the past,
Are drawing me in.
Tangles of memories,
Touching my chilled skin.

Cravings, so hard to neglect,
Sleeping to survive.
Just want to close my eyes,
Because in my dreams you are still alive . . .

To: Grandma

Jessica DeRemer

You were first to go
Then the garden died with you.
I died with it too.

Pieta



Matthew Hinton

Morning Flower

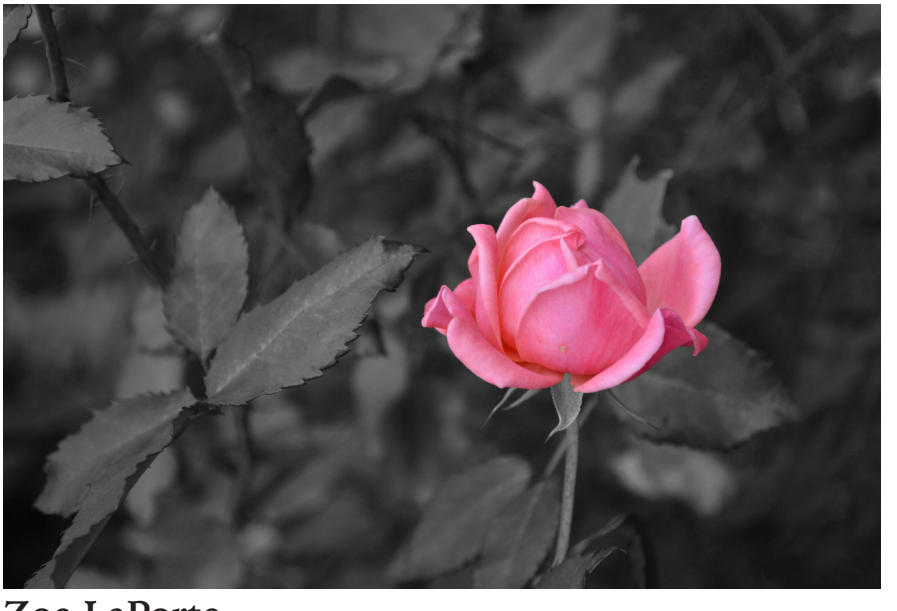
Juliana Cofrancesco

The gluttonous eye of the crow
Pierces weak armor
And wreaks havoc upon the lavender
Mercilessly thrashing the gentle stalk
Until it wilts and bends at unnatural angles
Unwilling to obey
Dew slowly rolls down the soft surface of the bending stem
Droplets picking up speed
Faster and faster they go as the angles become sharper and harder until—

It has no choice, no voice, no thoughts

Its delicate petals slowly dropping
One—by—one—
The flower falls on broken knees

Pink



Zoe LaPorte

Depression

Kaitlyn Kirsten

The Sun is shining gold
In the sky. It beats
Among the clouds
As I lay watching underneath.

In the sky it beats
So harshly and fast
As I lay watching underneath;
The heat soaking in my skin.

So harshly and fast
The clouds take their shape.
The heat soaking in my skin
Not shielded by the shadows.

The clouds take their shape.
I am floating—
Not shielded by the shadows
As I lay in anguish underneath.

I am floating
Among the clouds.
As I lay in anguish underneath,
The Sun is shining gold.



The 11th Hour

Devin Crevani

The 11th hour of the 11th day on the 11th month
Reverberates through the ages
One hundred years later
Today
Only echoes remain
Lessons are forgotten, portraits are faded
Disinterest abounds
And apathy
The clock strikes the hour.

Around me there is no pause in the hubbub of activity
No visible acknowledgement
No bowing of heads or moment of silence
Despite somber ceremony and remembrance in the halls of power
The masses have forgotten, in a twist of irony
For a while the giants in the halls of power
Condemned the masses to death
A century ago,

The masses have forgotten.

Whether by ignorance, indifference, or fatigued amnesia
We have forgotten
The horror
The men of Belleau Wood and Chateau Thierry
Fade from memory
A nation of ideals is now a nation of lies
Dangerous currents, tendrils of chlorine gas
Wash over our principles with suffocating authority
I close my eyes:

I rejoice
I despair
I beware

On the 11th hour of the 11th day on the 11th month
One hundred years later

Change and Trains

Tristan Cragle

The edges of my shoes lined up with the cracks of the tile. This was something that allowed me to know my place. The screeching of brakes against metal made my chest ache. I needed deeper breaths; I could feel my heartbeat within my head. I closed my eyes as the train came to an abrupt halt before me. The cabin doors slid open quickly and many pushed passed me without care. I hesitated and the doors slammed shut as I had missed the chance to get on. I stood then and watched the trains pass one after another. People got on, those far braver than myself. However, I also watched people get off, those perhaps more fearful than myself.

I have several times bought a single ticket to ride. A one-way-pass. Each time I have tossed those tickets aside and waited at the station. Years have passed since I bought that first ticket, and I remember holding it in my hands . . . it had my name on it right alongside the destination. I have never been able to ride the train. It passes me twice a year, once in the spring and then again in the fall. Every time I tell myself, "Next time I'll ride." However, the trains have passed me ten times and each time I wave at those who were brave enough to board.

This autumn I will head to the station for the final time. As I have told myself for those many years, I will not let the train pass me . . . not on this final visit. As time grows closer and another spring will certainly pass me by, I can only think that I may not even head to the train station. I don't think I could even watch those getting on and riding to their destinations as it is something that I will never do, but I *must* try.

Or maybe I'll just stay standing on those tiles, avoiding the cracks, afraid that some change will come.



To Hades, Love Persephone

For Dani

Kayli Boyes



I used to love the heat, my dear.
Apollo helped me make the flowers grow,
While his rays kissed spots from my arms to the tip of my ear.
Mother would plant, trim, and sow,
As I frolicked in the freshly made grass.
The soil dark and soft beneath my toes.
Here I was shielded from all harms, but alas,
The goddess of spring is not protected from her own woes.
The flowers had grown too similar,
Spring's colors were not as bright.
Everything became familiar,
Though I tried to change it with all my might.
Then one day, a chill entered the air,
As I walked through my mother's garden.
I lifted my eyes to see you, eyes dark and skin fair,
As you held my hand tenderly while mother begged for my pardon.

Years have passed and now I prefer the cold, my dear.
The draft gives me an excuse to be wrapped in your arms.
You whisper loving, endearing words in my ear,
And keep me safe from my mind's own harms.
My love, you are no god of spring,
But you make the flowers bloom.
They take root in my heart and make me want to sing.
I keep them in my garden to chase away the gloom.
For when the seasons change, and we are far apart,
I know where to go when I am missing you.

Miss Fisher



Daniella Amendola



I sneak into the garden you have planted in my heart,
Where each flower allows memories to ensue.
The soil is as dark and as rich as your eyes,
And the lilies as bright as your smile.
The petals are as soft as the hair that hangs in your face,
I have come to realize.
Forget Me Nots remind me that it will only be a short while,
Just a short while before I return to you, my king.
My love, my light, my god of my heart's spring.

One Day. . . Starts Today

Rach Ahern

My existence is no different
Nothing around me had changed
But everything inside me
Is anything but the same

My ordinary life
My motivation and pride
The things that I dream up
No longer seen to drive

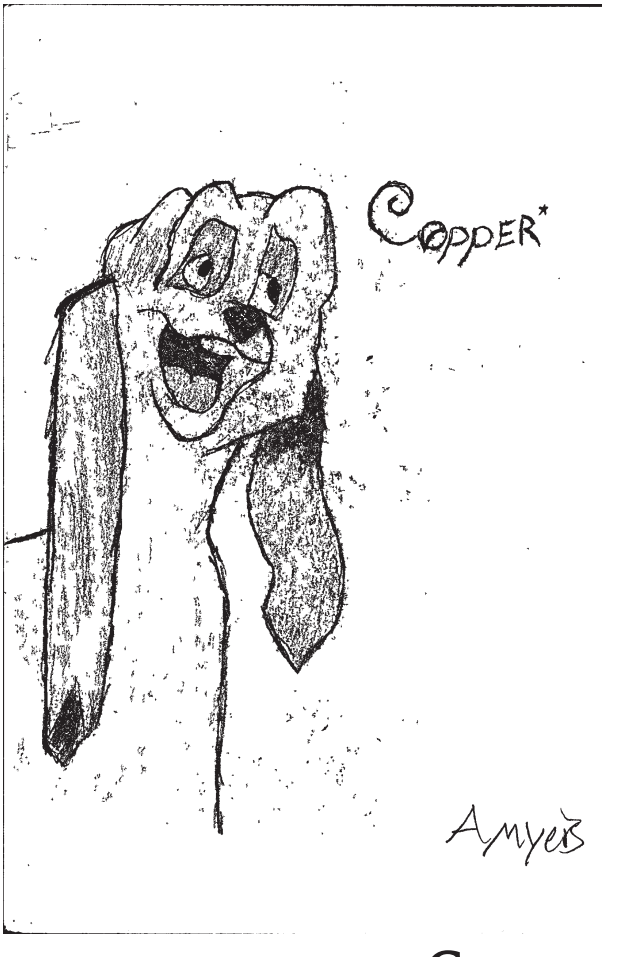
Drive who I am
The reason I wake up each day
The road is so foggy
I feel stuck in one place

I want to keep moving
I miss the one I used to be
The heart full of Hope
With the ability to be carefree

I used to swing on swings
Now I sit by on the rocks
I watch an empty playground
And try to plan some plots

My mind's plots run one track
It tells me just to run
Hop inside your car
And bathe in the bright sun

Go where there are beaches
Go to the happiest place on Earth
Forget about what's happened
Get away from all this hurt



Copper

Adam Meyers

But no matter how far I run
I can never run away from me
So running is a nice idea
When I'm not enslaved by reality

There used to be the days
When reality was better than my dreams
One day I'll get back to that
Even if I'm not the same me

This alerted version of me
I need to get to know
I need to be patient with her wounds
And gentle with her soul

I need to give her a chance
To get back on her feet
If time is what she needs
Then time will be received

One step for the moment
One step then another
The steps will be a new road
And I'll get to know her better

I'll get to know her beauties
The beautiful broken bits
I'll repair the cracks with gold
And accept her heart's new fit

This new beginning is hard
But it will be figured out
I'll take it moment by moment
And allow others to help me out

This healing is so fragile
But one day I'll be okay
One day I'll be stronger
One day. . . starts today



Make A Wish



Nicolette Bagoly

Sanctuary

Kayli Boyes

Lazy afternoon sun filters through the windows,
While the record player hums the vinyl's end.
It is impossible to combat Hypnos,
When you embrace her presence like you would a friend.
Eyes flutter open and fight the urge to shut,
And warm coffee is placed carefully within eye's sight.
The mug was accompanied by a knowing tut,
But a smile appears and makes the room bright.
Some scratchy vinyl begins to croon,
While the couch sinks ever so slightly.
A voice mentions that class will start soon,
And then starts singing with the record so, so lightly.
Get back to class, for this bliss is only temporary.
In just a few short hours, I'll return to my sanctuary.

Clay Pot

Brianna Kominiak

From the clay within the Earth, I crafted you with both of my hands in a desired image. Each aspect and angle designed with a picture in mind. You were my greatest creation, my perfect piece that could not be claimed by anyone. I gave you my love.

I had a purpose for you when I brought you into existence and I wanted you to abide in it. I desired that you hold items of importance or worth. You were meant to shine above others and represent the best of what could be offered, so I placed you on the highest shelf, away from any struggles.

But you did not stay where you were placed. You fell, very far, from your shelf and a part of you shattered. A piece vanished from you and your wholeness melted away. I did my best to mend your cracks. Afterwards, you no longer sat above my other works.

Time after time, you tumbled from where you rested. I gave you treasures of great magnitude and burdensome elements to carry. Still, no matter how light or heavy you always descended to the bottom. And every time I heard you break, I lifted you up and realigned the pieces. I was unable to do more.

Finally, after so long, my child found you upon your lower shelf, scarred from the falls and covered in dust. He uncovered the piece of you that was lost and returned it to its place. You were restored once again and gently he placed you up high. He told me that one day, he would remold you into what you once were and that the breaks would be removed. One day, he said, you would be perfect.





A Thousand Ways to Love

Ayanna Dexter

Today my feelings got hurt and I allowed my heart to break again. I felt the same as I did for any other heart break, but there was just one thing different, it was a girl this time. I had allowed myself to love this beautiful woman that I learned so much about in so little time. Getting used to her being around me every day, showing me attention, spending time with me, and allowing me to make her happy. Deep down I knew that I could never get her to feel the same way that I did. I didn't have the intention of catching feelings and slipping into the wrath of her warm affection; I so deeply yearned for this from anyone that I can feel wanted by. Now that my feelings are hurt, I feel nothing but sadness and regret. Being torn apart, stuck in this ball of confusion. The worst part is that I find myself being locked in my room to pass the time, to pass the feeling that I want to share when she is in my presence. Unfriending her on social media, not texting her, not seeing her face will ease the pain.

For once I am scared to face love.

Love hasn't been an easy thing for me since September 2016. I've been searching for the love of my life with a magnified glass and small map. I'm told by older people that "my time will come," but if they are in their 40's or 50's and their time hasn't come yet, I don't want to be the same as them. I'm not rushing, but I don't want to be alone. I crave the feeling of being loved and wanting to love. I have failed and have become weaker, for each time I thought I found gold, it was just pieces of bronze in disguise. This is all starting to be a game for me. I feel like I'm supposed to be alone, as if I'm unwanted. With the large number of people on this earth, there isn't just one person for me? Am I too complicated for love? I need answers.

Perfectly Imperfect



Rach Ahern

Woman on a Train



Matthew Hinton



Metro Riders



Story of Old

Jessica DeRemer

There is a story long since told,
When people's hearts were made of gold.
Some of silver, some of brass,
Others made of fragile glass.

There is a story long forgotten,
When the clouds were made of cotton.
The skies were always painted blue,
And became a backdrop for birds as they flew.

This is a story I hold so dear,
When everything seemed so clear.
Like the ocean water blue
And the nights I dream of you.

There is a story long since told
When people's hearts were made of gold.
Tarnished silver, tarnished brass
Now just made of broken glass.

There is a story I once knew,
That was when the grass still grew.
Hearts of silver, hearts of gold,
Hearts that have since grown cold.



Unspooling

Daniella Amendola

The photograph was blurry. He leaned forward, itching to touch it, but he was not sure if he was allowed. It sat on the table in front of him, black and white figures shifting out of frame. They were children, he realized. Each child was slouched, faces half obscured by the haze of motion, and they ran forward eagerly. It was a race.

"What year is this?" asked the man across from him.

He tore his eyes from the photograph and focused on the man in the chair.

"The year," the man repeated, tapping the photo. "Come on. You know this."

They always said this.

"Yeah," he said, "I know. I know."

"Then tell me."

Instead of replying, he decided to look around the room. Its simplicity had grown on him, or maybe he was just used to the flickering fluorescent lightbulb and the coffee-stained table. It reminded him of an office. He'd worked in an office once. It had been bigger, but similar in the stagnant feeling that hung in the air. Like perhaps he had been born in this chair and would subsequently die here if he was not careful.

"Hey." The man leaned forward across the table. "Do you wanna stop?"

"It's 1952, okay? I don't wanna stop. I'm just confused."

"Yeah, I know. That's nothing new."

He inhaled sharply, and he glanced down at the photograph.

"Who are you again?" he asked.

The man stared at him. His marble eyes seemed to crumble. "Tommy."

Tommy's voice had changed then. He had a naturally brisk bite to his voice, but when he said his name the edges of the word softened. He was cushioning it with his tongue.

"Tommy," he repeated. "I had a brother named Tommy."

"Oh?" he said, shifting his recorder so it sat between his notepad and the photo. "What happened to him?"

"We stopped talking. Years ago."

"What year?"

"It was a long time ago," he said, shifting uneasily. "Can we talk about something else?"

"Yeah. Sure. Tell me about the photo."

"It was fall," he said. "September."

Tommy's face relaxed. "My father told me about this day," he continued, feigning confidence.

"Your father," Tommy said, looking down at his notebook. Did they all have the same notebook? Would they ever let him read what they wrote? "What was his name?"

"Charles."

"You said his name was Paul yesterday."

"You weren't here yesterday," he snapped. "How do you know?"

"Okay, you got me there."

"Did I say something wrong?"

Tommy glanced up at him. He looked down at his notebook, and then slowly set his pen down.

"No," Tommy said, his voice carrying that same softness as his name had. "No, it's alright. I was just thinking."

"I don't want to talk about photos anymore."



“What do you want to talk about?”

“What’s the weather like?”

“What, today?”

“Yeah, today. Is it snowing?”

“Snowing,” Tommy repeated, his brow furrowing. “Why do you think it would be snowing?”

He didn’t know how to answer that. It had been snowing. There were scuffs on his shoes from the slush on the sidewalk at the entrance of the building. He remembered that clearly enough. “It’s cold,” he explained. “It’s December.”

Tommy stared at him as though he were not truly speaking. Maybe he was just a child’s doll with a speaker in its mouth. All of his words felt rehearsed, and he could not keep from going through the same motions each and every day. It was maddening.

“It’s December,” he said, his voice breaking as Tommy looked away. “Isn’t it December? It was December.”

“You remember that?” Tommy snorted softly. “Damn. Of all the stupid things to remember, you remember that?”

“It’s December,” he said. “Right?”

“Sure.”

“You’re just saying that,” he gasped, his gaze flickering feverishly over Tommy’s face. He watched it crumple, like his words were causing him pain. “Stop lying to me.”

Tommy gnawed on his pen, looking much older very suddenly.

“Tell me about your brother.”

“No.” He pushed the photograph across the table, knocking the tape recorder to the floor. “I don’t wanna talk anymore.”

“It’s not over. You have to talk.”

“I don’t have to do anything. I don’t even know you!”

Tommy gazed at the fallen tape recorder. The ribbon inside the cassette skipped offbeat before halting altogether. They both watched it in silence.

“I’m sorry,” he said, slipping from his chair and bending down.

“Hey! Don’t. . .” He lifted the recorder back onto the table. It had stopped recording. “Don’t,” Tommy said feebly.

His finger lingered on *rewind*. The ribbon yelled in a garbled tongue as it zipped itself from one strip to another. The cyclical motion of it gathering on one side, spooling in a circle like thread on a loom. It stopped with a click.

The choice seemed impossible, like he had his future weighed before him. He could push the recorder back toward the man, this nameless, faceless man, who seemed to know all and nothing. Or he could press play. He could listen.

A little triangle could sing his song, or maybe it could end it.

He heard the ribbon inside his head, winding back, whirring softly. It was the only indicator that time had passed. If he sat in this room for a hundred years, he was not sure it would make any difference. It would still be December, and the person across from him would still be nameless.

In the silence there was nothing if not time, and he knew that it would not matter if he started the tape at the beginning or the middle or the end, because it was all the same.

“I wanna go home.”

The man across from him looked at him like he was some pitiable creature. A dog on its side blinking guilelessly toward its owner while the needle came from behind.

“Soon,” the man said.

“Where is my wife?” he asked. “When will you let her in? I want to see her.”

“She’ll come tomorrow, if you want.”

“Good.” His finger trembled against the button. “I want to see her.”

The man nodded, his head bowed, and his shoulders sloped. He stared at his notebook. There were patches on the page where the ink had smeared. Round discoloration. A droplet hung at the point of his nose.

“Your wife,” the man said thickly, “what’s her name?”

He opened his mouth to say.

Only that seemed impossible. It stretched out before him, just out of reach, and he felt it forming behind his tongue, but it got caught inside his throat.

“Her name—it’s—” He stared ahead. “It’s . . .”

“You see now, don’t you?”

The absence of sound made him feel helpless. There was no name, so all that he could physically dispel from his mouth was a small, garbled noise. His mouth remained open, like it might catch her name between his teeth if he waited long enough.

“I have to go home,” he whispered.

“You will,” the man said. “I promise. But before that can happen, you have to remember.”

“I don’t understand,” he gasped, “remember *what*?”

The man before him said nothing. His eyes were glistening in the pale, flickering light. He tapped the edge of the photograph.

“Who is this?”

If he searched his brain, searched all of the knowledge that had accumulated inside his skull, maybe he could guess. After all, what was this if not a series of guessing games? His confusion and despair were just data scribbled on a yellow page.

When he did not answer, the man sighed. He slid the picture across the table and grasped it, gazing at it forlornly. This man was old enough that he could be a father. His father, maybe. He thought to maybe ask his name, but he could not find the words, so he held his tongue between his teeth and stared.

The man tapped the edge of the photo against the linoleum tabletop, and he smiled.

“This is a picture of us,” the man said. “It was your birthday. Remember?”

“That doesn’t sound right.”

“It’s true.”

“Listen,” he said, leaning forward, “I don’t know you.”

The man shook his head. His eyes fluttered shut, and he rested the heel of his palm against his forehead.

“Damn it,” he said softly. He dragged his hand down his face, his fingers trembling over his nose and his mouth. He lifted his eyes, and again there was nothing and there was everything. “Damn you.”

The photograph wobbled between his fingers. He reached into his pocket and withdrew a matchbox. For a moment they gazed at each other tiredly before the man turned the photo over and tapped it twice against the table.

“Who is in this photo?”

He sat in silence. He knew it had been September. Half the children were caught in a blur, their features distorted by the motion. Wherever they were rushing to, he hoped they’d gotten there.

The man’s jaw twitched. He nodded slowly, and he popped open the matchbox. Once he struck the match, the room was filled with a familiar scent.

“This was your eleventh birthday,” he said. “I was eight. I broke my leg— slid down a hill and into some rocks. I thought I could beat you, but you were always faster.”

The flame was edging down the matchstick. Black ribbons of smoke rose into the air.

“Goodbye.”

He rested the corner of the photograph against the flame, and they both watched it catch with a sick sort of fascination. The man snuffed the match, and they sat and let the memory burn.



You Were My Life Vest

Peyton Ross

I lay on my back and look at the stars,
they don't shine as bright tonight.
The waves beating against the boat rock me
close to sleep, I'll be alright.

The wind wails and shrieks, and the waves grow high;
the stars' despair is glaring.
A tear rolls down my cheek, I feel their pain;
my heart is slowly tearing.

A wave crashes, I'm falling with no end.
with cold arms wrapped around me,
I look to the boat, I see how it laughs
as it sinks beneath the sea.

It drags me under, I look to the stars
they're gone, not at all distressed.
My lungs burn and I inhale.
Oh, the irony of drowning in a life vest.

Secret



Ethan Hunsinger



The House of Virtue

Kimberly Kowalski

There is a home, not made of beams and banners, walls and white lights, windows and waste-baskets, cupboards and kitchen corners, but of friends. It is a house, a home, of individuals who come together as they are, and work together, and sometimes alone, towards something greater. A home of friends who have become each other's family. Of brilliant brains: educators, social workers, philosophers, students, caretakers, writers, readers, actors, dancers, fighters, peacemakers, travelers, dreamers. A House of Virtue.

These men and women, these dreamers, do not feel virtuous, and frankly, they would scoff at the idea of being called a House of Virtue. From their lewd and crude remarks, to late nights sharing a bottle of whiskey for dinner, these individuals see their behavior as anything but righteous, anything but good. They see their scars, their downward spirals, their petty fights, their late-night mistakes, their bad habits, their broken bones and hearts, and their missed chances. One wishes she had the confidence that others believe she owns and commands; and yet with no shame she'll compliment and boost the esteem and confidence of her friends, and even strangers. One rearranges the furniture constantly because he needs to keep changing or else, he will get bored of the mundane, and he worries he will lose his zest for life; he never says no to an adventure with his friends, even one to the grocery store. One frets over a patchwork heart, wondering if any will come to make it whole; she still reaches out to those who pass her by, offering them kindness, compassion, and warmth when they share a seat on her bed or the stairwell. One sits at the counter and schedules every second of her day because she fears the lack of control she has from the monkey wrenches life may throw; she drops her plans at any given second to be there for the people she cares about. One will not shed a tear because she wants to shut down all of her feelings; she offers her ears and a seat next to hers so that they can tell their story. One finds solace in the tales of heroes, taking from them the courage that she herself does not think she possesses; she shares these stories with others, that they might be as inspired as she was. They see their insecurities—lack of confidence, fear of failure, physical and mental disabilities, worry of being enough, anxiety over intelligence or lack thereof. They are all broken, some shattered into fragments and slivers, but they are all healing. Some of them heal through tears, some through cheap drinks, some through just not talking, but each in their own way they heal and they help each other.



In the House of Virtue, "virtue" does not mean someone who is innocent and pure. No, here the word "virtue" denotes those that are not perfect, but want to make a change in the world. And in this House of Virtue, with these people who think themselves misfits, liars, failures, and so many other untrue things, these people give the most love. These men and women have dedicated themselves to teaching new generations, to opening up the conversation about injustices in our world, to breaking down old and outdated ways, to inspiring others through words and actions, to speaking up for those who cannot, and in short, changing the world. The House of Virtue is filled with dreamers and doers, scholars of mind and body, who have become a (dysfunctional) family, and this is their home—my home.

An Orthodox Rebel

Jacob Schweiger

Life rushed forth from the Word
And love sustained all,
But recent falls conceal,
For liars hide from love

Distraction cannot diminish
The sun nor the Son,
Rebellion has begun,
And the thurible has been filled

Darkened curtains have been torn
By word and scent and song,
Prolong this morning's blessed mourning,
It is joy to have a home



Whiskey

Chase Shustack

The whiskey was warm. He didn't care. Whiskey was whiskey. It burned his throat as he swallowed it. A dry, slow burning. The glass made a low thud as it hit the oak of the counter; droplets of whiskey splashing against the surface and dripping off the edges. The bottle-once-full was now half empty. It wasn't a very expensive whiskey. Cheap stuff. You could buy it from the local liquor store just off the highway. That's what he liked about it.

Whiskey was whiskey, after all. The bar scene was empty. The only evidence of life mingling about the bar were a few smoking cigarettes shoved into an ashtray and a tipped over barstool laying out of place.

With his trembling hands, he raised his glass to his dry lips and quickly drank down the liquid. The burning he had become used to by now.

As the feeling of pain rolled away, he glanced slowly around the bar.

"Bar . . . barkeep!" He shouted, words slurring slowly from his mouth. "More . . . more . . . God . . . juice this way!"

The barkeep turned around. "Right away!"

The barkeep reached up, turned the TV down a bit and looked up. He had a warm smile on his face, bright brown eyes as large as the rim of the glass.

"So . . ." He said in a cheerful tone, yet sounding questioning. "What's your story?"

"Story?"

"Yes. Why are you here?"

That sounded like a stupid question. "To drink and get away."

The barkeep seemed puzzled. His cheerful expression turned into a confused stare. "Get away from what?"

Quick. Think of something fast.

"Ah . . . life, you know. Real busy out there."



“Rat race, huh?”

He faked a smile, sipping down the bourbon. “Yeah . . .”

“Where are you from?” The bartender said, resting a shoulder on the counter.

“Wh . . . what is this? Twenty Questions . . .?” He slurred, drops of bourbon spilling from his lips. “Say, what’s my tab?”

“Tab? Oh!” The barkeep pulled a list out of his pocket. “Says here you owe . . . uh . . . let’s see . . . about $346.00.”

“Whoa I just said to add up tonight’s tab, buddy.”

The bartender simply stared.

“Listen . . . listen . . . I just need some more time . . .” He said, fumbling for an explanation or some kind of excuse. “I have no money on me at the moment and . . .”

“Do you have a job?”

He sighed, slumping forward on the table. “No . . . never needed one . . .”

“Really?”

He didn’t like the bartender’s tone. Especially the way he was pestering him for information. Normally, with the bar being this empty, he would have slugged the bartender off his feet. But, tonight . . . well . . . he was either too charitable or too plastered.

“Stuff . . .”

“How did you get all this money in the first place?”

He grimaced at the bartender with a cold stare, doing his best to not seem as drunk as he was. “Well . . . my old man’s dad, see, he was a rich guy . . . owned stock in some computer company out in New York. He died about, jeez, five years ago . . .”

The bartender nodded his head, listening to every word. The TV was off now, leaving the only source of sound in the dead empty bar was the man’s slurring mouth.

“When he kicked the bucket, he left my old man roughly . . . ten thousand dollars in his will.”

“How was your father?”

“Eh. Strict, for a better word. Never let me do anything. No parties with friends. No hanging out after 10 . . . man, he was a . . .”

“Just keep going . . .”

“Where was I?” A jigsaw puzzle of words constantly rearranging themselves in his head.

“Oh yeah . . . my dad knew we were going to college soon and gave us a cut each to get started, my brother and my oldest sister.”

“Your siblings? Where are they?”

“Oh, my brother went off to some fancy-ass college or something and my sister was . . . well . . . an artist, sort to speak.”

He set the bottle down on the counter, shaking his head. He closed his eyes and took a deep exhale, the smell of liquor and cigarette smoke wafting from his mouth.

“I came out here to college undecided.”

“Free-thinker, huh?”

“I guess . . .” his eyes rolled back and forth as he spoke. “I had a ton of money and nothing to do with it.”

“Which brings me back to the question at hand . . .” The bartender said. “What happened?”

“Met a couple of guys off the campus. We went to bars, got drunk off of cheap swill, spent the summer nights driving around the city. No purpose. No idea. Then, the trouble started. One time, we ran up a tab of over 600 dollars in one night . . . heh . . . but I always bailed the tabs out. Slid a little interest to cover up tracks if we needed to.”

He got really quiet for a minute, eyeing the glass and bottle as if they were temptations.

“My old man found out from some old swell-jockey in a dive bar.”

“Oh.”

“He called me back home. I drove the 2 hours back home and it wasn’t exactly a happy reunion.”

He swallowed hard and stared down at his folded hands. “I said some things in an argument . . . pretty rough things . . . got mad, punched a hole through the wall . . . can’t recall the rest, guess I stormed out.”

There was an eerie pause. Tension filled the room, ready to snap at any time.

“Came back . . . stopped outside this bar and . . . well, here I am. Sitting in some backwater dive, choking on swill . . . erm no offense.”

“How long was this ago?”

“Give or take a year. I never called. He never did. And it stayed like that.”

“Why?”



“Why what?”

“Didn’t ya call?”

“What? Call him up and try to blow over something like that? Huh, good luck with that, buddy.”

“How do you know he wouldn’t get over it?”

“I know he will be. Broke, jobless, alone. While my brother builds computers and my sister makes art.”

The bartender got up, looking at him confused. He got up and walked back to the office in the back. He returned, holding something under his arm.

“How long has it been since you went to church?”

“I dunno.”

The barkeep nodded. “Do you know Luke 15?”

“No.”

“Ah, I see. Do you know the parable of the Prodigal Son?”

“Maybe. Jog my memory a bit.”

“Well, to sum it up in layman’s speak, it’s more or less about a son that spends his father’s estate money in wasteful ways. Drinking and whatnot. There is a famine and the kid, who lost his money, begins to starve.”

“Why are you telling me this?”

“He knows he has to go home but fears his father will be angry when he learns what he’s been doing all these years. He then goes home where the old man welcomes him back and throws a feast to celebrate.”

“What? Again, why are you telling me . . .” His voice dropped as the words fell together.

“Ohhhh no, you won’t” he hissed coldly. “No way am I going home and facing that old nutcase. Not after what I did.”

“How do you know?”

“I just . . . just do!” he slammed his fist down on the table. The glass clattered against the oak in an unsteady rhythm. The barkeep sighed and opened the Bible he had tucked under his shoulder, laying it down in front of him. “Here, man. Read it over. I won’t bother you with it anymore. Your choice, my friend.”

He began to walk away, slinging the rag over his shoulder.

“Hey? Where . . . where are you going?”

“Back room. Call me if you need anything”

He sighed at the response. Thank God. Peace and quiet at last.

He reached for the bottle, hoping to polish off the rest. The thumping in his head was back again.

But he couldn’t.

It was some odd feeling deep in his stomach. He looked down at the Bible, noting the stained pages and smell of beer from the cover. He opened to Luke 15.

He sighed and began to read it over. At first, the words seemed to slide together and make bizarre new phrases in some long-forgotten language. Then, it got easier. The haze of which he had been seeing slowly lifted.

He looked back down the counter. A small payphone was there, rigged against the wall. The back-office door was open. A white apron laying on the floor. The exit door didn't seem open. Like the guy just got up and vanished into thin air.

With a gulp of confidence and footsteps of lead, he sluggishly walked over to the payphone, fumbling the change in his pocket.

He held the receiver to his ear as his fingers carefully dialed the number. The numbers seemed to pop off the buttons. The ringtone was a comforting noise of endless dull beats.

In the empty bar in the empty street, the sun rose from the horizon. Streaks of red-orange lining in patterns across the mountains. The last stars faded away into the black night.

And in that empty bar that sat lonely and still under the rising sun, two soft hellos from one to another broke the silence.



Eyes Like Galaxies (Or Something Like That)

Briana Scorey



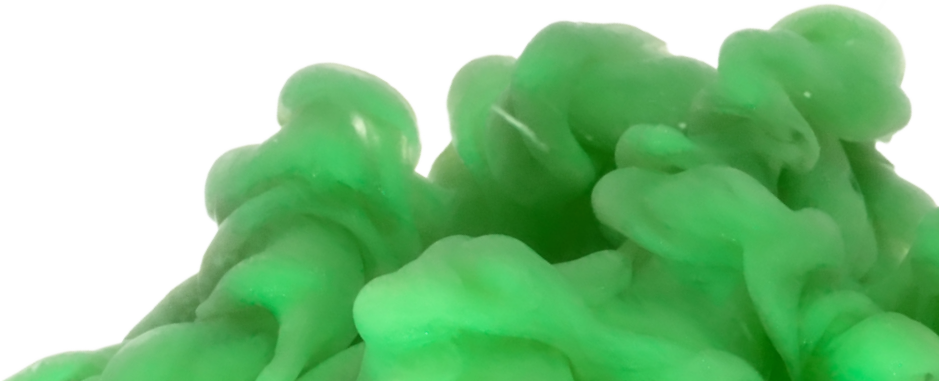
I could write this like a pretentious teen,
One who imagines himself as a Shakespearean bard:
"Those celestial orbs that radiate like ten thousand burning suns,"
Or maybe "those beautiful blues as deep as the endless ocean,"
Yada, yada . . . and all that jazz.

Instead, I'll show you what I really see—
Not a perfect vision,
Not some ideal that no beloved could ever reach.
No— I'll show you the little ways to glimpse infinite love
In the everyday hues and peculiar smatterings of browns, greens, and blues.

Eyes have this wonderful tendency to hide more than they show;
Lucky lovers discover their details in the stolen glances and affectionate gazes,
But also in each up-close confrontation and search for a prodding eyelash.
In fact, that magical glimmer may just be a glaze of tears;
A true lover knows its value anyway.

She describes her eyes as "brown as mud"—
Like the puddle that wins the battle with a young girl's favorite polka dot rainboot.
But he reminds her of their warmth,
The way the subtle greens compliment the life that grows inside.
Brown is not a dull color.
It's the color of the soil that nurtures a college student's succulents, perched on the windowsill,
And it's the surprise discovery of candy in a coat pocket, eliciting an irrepressible smile.
Brown is that all-engulfing hug your mom gives you when she can tell you're holding back tears.
It's the girl looking at her past, present, and future with wide eyes and a soft, vulnerable heart.

His eyes may be blue, but he knows that they sure aren't the blue praised in the country songs—
She sees the beauty in their subtlety anyway.
Up close, in the early morning light that falls through his window, there's a pale golden core—
Like a sunflower a teen girl paints on her jeans, yellow-brown bleeding into a sea of denim blue.
Blue need not be bright to be bold.



It's that softness of snug, worn-in jeans that have lasted longer than some relationships,
And it's the smell of lilacs in church on a rainy Sunday morning in April.
Blue is that dazzling glare of fresh snow just after it has settled.
It's those jitters of facing the unknown with the calming—if sweaty—hand of a partner in tow.

Two pairs of eyes mean much more than grand metaphors:
They mean the daily sensations that make life real.
They take in the world and then reflect it back.
Eyes are a reminder that you are both the galaxies in our universe and the galaxies
of cream in your coffee cup as you rub the sleep away.

Isabel



Annette Ritzko



Letting Go

Taylor Baloga

Standing here today in this driveway takes me back to a time when life was simple.

An innocent little girl, spending most of her days under the care of such a remarkable woman. A retired nurse, who was as tough as nails on the outside and full of compassion on the inside.

Going on walks in the sticky summer heat, reading books, and always reciting prayers. Teaching the fragile little one life lessons along the way, eventually molding her into a confident young woman.

Although she didn't know it yet.

Good old 201 was always up kept to a "T." Friday mornings spent laboriously scrubbing the kitchen floor on hands and knees. On frigid, bone chilling winter days, outside shoveling the heavy snow and chopping the thick ice.

Now I know why they called her "Iron Betty."

Just as the little girl started to spread her wings, a coldhearted thief robbed Betty's sense of being. Her mind slipped away, like an hourglass slowly running out of sand. First went her precious memories that had been made, then her ability to walk. This once strong woman now only left with a blank stare on her face.

Standing here today in this driveway, I am forced to let go. Realizing that a house is not a home without love, family, and memories. The house may be empty, but my heart is full of treasures that can never be taken away.



Dear

Noni Silas

Dear,

I never meant to be your disappointment, I never meant to be stuck in this house. The world is so big, and I just. . . I just feel scared; scared to do it alone. Maybe I'll find someone to see the world with, or maybe I'll have to learn the hard way and walk out on my own. And yeah, I'm terrified but it is something I must do. . . in order to grow. So here I take my leave, hoping it will lead me to where I need to be and the person I need and want to become.

Love,

One More

Juliana Cofrancesco

Just one more time, I promise myself as I enter the world of vivid beauty and life. Colors swirl past me in a rhythm all of their own. All is good in this world; life is great. Just as quickly as I emerged into this distant land, he quickly appears by my side. Smiling as I gaze into his twinkling eyes, I begin to dance with the unknown man as we descend from my windowsill and head toward the town square. Everyone is elated and full of a joy that is practically tangible to all the senses. Slow smiles creep upon each face as they gaze on our intertwined hands. Basking in the glory of the day, we hop across the grass and dance to the tempo of our pulsing blood. The longer I dance, the lighter I feel as if a great burden has been lifted from my fragile shoulders. Suddenly, goosebumps take over my body while I spin into the man's warm embrace. Ignoring the sharp chill, I continue to focus on the dance. Round and round I go as the beat gets faster and wilder. Faces dart past me, and whispers, almost like a chant, begin. I feel ill and I try to tell the man to stop, but my voice is trapped within myself. Just as I feel myself about to give out, everything stops.

Just one more time, I promise myself. I can hear the beating of wings as I walk along the skyline. The man arrives just in time to watch the sunset. His smile is a little tense and he grasps my hand too tight. Little crests appear on my hands as his nails dig further into the soft flesh. Staring blindly into the red sun, my eyes water and my mouth goes dry. It feels as if my throat is full of cotton, and one wrong move will have me gagging for air. We stand stagnant on the earth, watching the sky bruise. He begins to shake in horrid tremors. I try to ask what's going on, but I choke on the cotton. Realization floods over me as the man languidly hits my back while I cough up nothing. The tremors were coming from me.

Just one more time. Cold stone sends a striking chill up my feet as I wander through the garden. Lost. I cannot function. The man is back, but he seems colder. A silent fury is brewing from within. I try to walk a distance away from him, but somehow, we end up side by side. I must get some air. The garden is a maze and the walls grow ever higher with each step I take. My heavy breathing resounds against the dark stones that record my every move. He walks as my shadow and faithfully follows my small frame. The air is bursting against my ears. I hear the flowers wail. The garden is full of rotting plants.



No Name



Megan Oldak

Just one more. I hear the darkness. I see silence. The man approaches me with sharp strides. My world is cracking. His gaze is no longer gentle. Heaving in and out I wonder, "Am I dead?" His touch is poison. It burns my skin yet I cling to him for dear life. Red. I see red. I see red in the eyes of the townspeople. They hunger for new minds to feed upon. I see red in the sunset. Its blood dripping thickly into the water. It swirls around me like a hurricane of lustful need. I see red in the rose garden. The putrid smell skinning flesh and cutting bone. I see red in my veins as my blood becomes unbearably hot. It boils from within. I fear for my life. I hate that I am weak. He knows that I am weak; he is stronger. I am consumed in a fiery burst of light. I see red.



Summer



Zoe LaPorte

Burning

Peyton Ross

Strike!
Like a match,
Two flames dancing together,
Sending black smoke into the already black night;
Yet lighting it just the same
Like a torch.

Oh!
Two fireworks
Flying straight up, side by side.
Up, up and exploding into each other's arms,
Sparkling before their eyes,
Falling back.

Pow!
A bullet
Exiting a gun with no
Intention to kill, but intention to ignite
A revolution of love
Between us.

Bang!
We erupt,
Molten lava on the floor
While we float safely in the middle, unharmed by
The burning, our love being
Our guide home.

Safe.
Not on fire,
Just two arms protecting me
And while we may burn with passion and love, we are
Cold and vulnerable, we
Are night lights.

Safe.



Rebounding Perfection (Praying to O)

Scott Bargisen

Lying on the once-lice-ridden floor
of my once-prospective fiancé's apartment,
I only found comfort in your poetry.
I want my work to be copied in italics
by my future students as my works were required texts,
Strictly because I would find it funny.
I want to barge into the bathroom during her shower,
dry her face, pretend to propose,
only to watch it be wet again.
Because I am a prick. A piece of s— as some would say.
And I love it as much as I love you and once loved her.
Such schadenfreude should only be brought out to one's dearest,
so I confide this in you.





Afraid to Love Again

Ayanna Dexter

I want to be selfish with you but I'm afraid that you don't feel the same.
If it's not me you're wanting to be around, then it's your friends.
They can't love you like I can and give you a chance to be a man.
I want to open my heart to you, but I'm afraid to let you in.
I spend my time thinking of you and I don't know if it's mutual.
How I wish you would understand that my love takes some getting used to.



An Accurately Inaccurate Series of Events That Lead to the Infamous Forehead Scar

Jessica Vera

Once, I was old enough to dance but young enough to wear white stockings that contrasted against my shiny, black flats, that squeaked when I would scuff them together. My soft, brown curls bounced about under my silken red ribbon that helped highlight my naturally blushed cheeks. I remember my poofy dress being black with tints of silver glitter sparkling all over the felted material. My entire family was there to witness my twirl, especially my grandmother whose smile lit up the room. We spent most of our days together laughing at everything from the extra bubbles she would add in the bathtub, to help with my exotic hairstyles that would stand out with an edge to the girly gossip of dress-ups. Her wooden furniture smelled as old as her perfume, but I didn't care . . . I couldn't watch Telemundo any other way, but today was a celebration of sorts.

The weather was hot, the family was over, the smell of food lingered in the air, and the Salsa music that sang loud from the speakers controlled everyone's body without a fault. On occasions like this, my uncle loved to roam throughout the house with his camcorder, recording the smiles and laughs that would mark this day in our memories forevermore. When the camera showed its spotlight on me, well . . . I couldn't just pass up an opportunity like this to shine. So, I let the music spin me around over and over again. The bliss on my face showed brighter as the chorus of my family in the background clapped my name. "Jessie. Jessie. Jessie!" The excitement pushed my spins faster and faster so that my hair flew in the air in sync with the same rotation as my dress. Suddenly, there was a sharp squeak that sounded from my black, shiny shoes that alerted a trip and tumble.

Everything from then on happened so fast.

They said, my forehead met with the edge of the wooden couch. They said as it happened my uncle dropped the camera. They said all you could hear were shouts and screams. . . But that videotape in question has never been found. All that was left from that memorable day, is the dent in my skull and the scar on my forehead.

Friend



Ethan Hunsinger

Dinner After Mass on Sunday with My Roommates

Annette Ritzko

Ethan!

Your burger's almost done,
So come over here and grab a bun.

Oh. I rhymed.



Second Beach



Megan Oldak



Finding My Name

Jacob Schweiger

I am weaker than my namesake,
And Your Angel proves it so
Oh God of Israel,
God of mine

I toiled as he stood
Unshook by my protestations,
But not unfeeling toward my sentiment,
For pride is not easily struck from man's heart

"Read, boy"
I heard,
What irony that these words
Should give me rest

The path is much gentler than out there
In the dark wood,
And where Jacob did limp,
On my knees I follow

When Times are Desperate

Adam Meyers

It started while watching another episode of the six o'clock news after a hard day of work. The story was about two teenagers who were murdered because they would not give their big-name sneakers to murderers. After hearing this, I took a walk in the local park to clear my head. While I walked through the basketball courts accompanying the park, I saw a group of teenagers that I always saw playing basketball. As I watched them, I noticed they would always wear the same shoes, same shirt, and same shorts. I asked to join their game to see if I can still play with the "young bucks."

We played until dusk when the park closed. Afterwards I talked to the group. It wasn't about the same clothes that they wore, but about basketball and the genuine love of the game. One kid stood out to me. He said he idolizes Ben Simmons of the Philadelphia 76ers. He loved his style of play, would write letters to him, and would comment on his social media account. He asked for his jersey for Christmas (he really loved the throwback style), but his family simply could not afford it.

He started to talk more about basketball and how it is a good distraction from life. The street where he lived is notorious for crime and theft. After a good talk, I finally asked what his name was. "Clarke" he said, "Clarke Benson."

"Benson" I wondered. *One of the victims on the news last night was named Benson.*



As I glanced once again at Clarke, he seemed like a spitting image of the victim. My mind froze at the thought of what he was going to go home to. I was holding back tears of anguish when we all walked back to our cars. Right before he opened his front door, Clarke received a call from his family. In an instant, his phone dropped, streams of tears hitting the floor. My prediction was true. Steven Benson, one of the boys that was killed in the murder, was Clarkes' brother.

I offered him a ride home in fear of what he might do to himself alone. Police cars were lined all alongside Clarkes' driveway, encompassing his whole house. I could only notice the distraught faces of Steven's family caused by the calamity; a sight that will forever be etched in my brain. I was soon escorted out of the crime scene by a police officer and rode back home in total silence. Only two thoughts entered my mind. One being that some people actually kill others for the clothes on their backs, and second being that anyone will do anything if they are desperate enough.



Uppa Roo

Juliana Cofranceso

The room was quiet for the most part, but every once in a while the man in the bed would sing, “Uppa Roo, Uppa Roo!”

“What the hell is he singing?” the woman wondered as she stroked his hair. “No, my silver fox, I don’t understand you. Who taught you this song?”

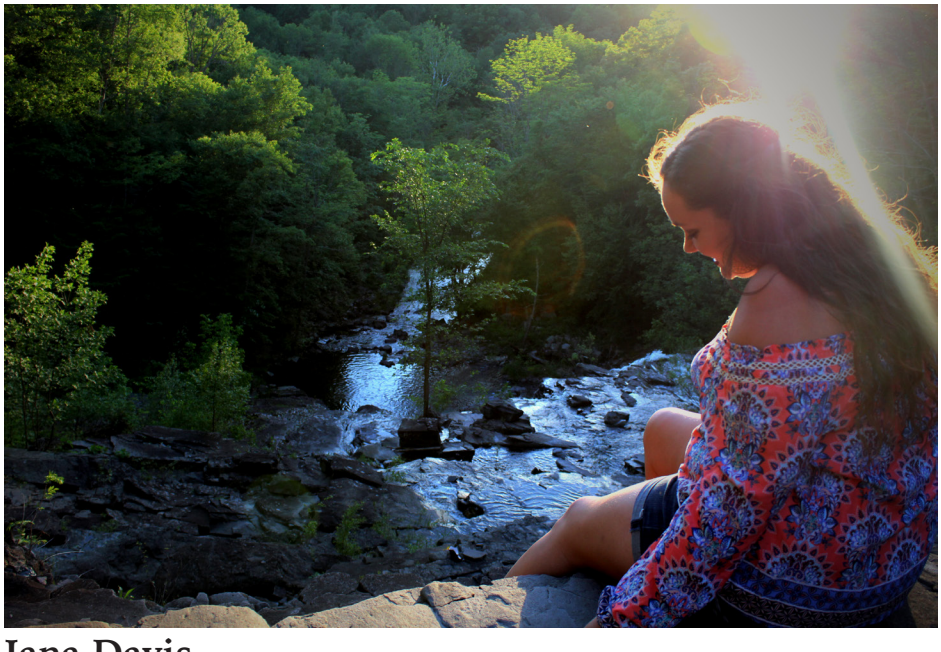
“Maybe it’s the drugs.”

“Maybe it’s his brain.”

“No, no, no, I *know* he’s trying to tell me something.” And as she paced she found a Father. Of course she did. There’s only so much space in the world before two beings of holy worth collide; like magnets.

“The Book, madam!” the priest cried out. “Look to the Good Book!”

Beyond



Iana Davis

Realization hit her, and finally she understood the man's words. She laid her head on his chest, comforted that she knew that he knew where he was to go.

As the days passed, the world then grew silent as the smell of flowers grew tenfold. She could no longer hear him.

Looking out from the Uppa Roo, he wishes he could talk to her, but he knows the rules; no direct contact once you're in the Uppa Roo. Sighing where he stands, he decides to talk out as if she can hear him. "I've got to tell you, it's beautiful here. I get to see my brother, my mom, my dad, your mom, your dad, and everyone here is so caring. But," he interjects himself, "all the angels up here are nothing compared to you."

"Alright!" a woman shouted, "Who's next in line?"

The man walked over, feeling no pain. "I'm next!" he exclaimed, excited to find out what was about to happen.

The woman took one look at him and smiled. "Sir, unfortunately there is no partner for you here at the moment." Her eyes glittered with ancient knowledge.

"What do you mean?" The man felt deflated. "It seems that everyone else here has a partner. Is there something wrong with me?"

The woman gave a cryptic look and began, "Everyone on earth has someone special watching over them. You may know them by their mundane name: guardian angels. Usually, the angel is in Uppa Roo waiting for their partner. But you, sir, are a special case. You and your guardian lived during the same time on earth. It's quite odd, this rarely happens."

Feeling hope rise within him, he knew in his soul who his partner was, but just to make sure, he decided to ask, "Who is my guardian angel?"

The woman looked out from Uppa Roo and the man followed her gaze to a house he had known for most of his life. Inside, an old woman slept in his chair, wearing a blue robe that will always be too big for her and her crooked fingers clutching half of a stone cross. The man had never seen someone so beautiful in his life. Taking his half of the stone cross out of his pocket, his bushy mustache rose as his lips twitched up into a blissful smile.

"Like I said, my love, the angels up here are nothing compared to you."

WINTER'S TALE PART II

Peter H. Bloom

The Winter's Tale is in two parts
The first of which is tragedy
The second half, we'll visit now,
An unabashed comedy

The scene's a feast of shearing sheep
12 Bumpkins dressed as Satyrs gambol
Their acrobatic goat-man dance
In truth is a chaotic scramble.

Invited to croon and entertain
Gold voicéd peddler Atolycus arrives
He tries all maidens to be swain,
A cheat, a thief, by crime he thrives.

Espying a chance to fleece the rubes
His sack of merchandise, he brings
As sundry wares he wave about
An advertising song he sings.

"Gifts, for your girlfriends, you should buy"
"White lawn, black cypress kindly ponder"
"Stomachers to boost the bust"
And things revealed by double-entendre

One shepherd, he, two girlfriends has
And needs a gift to both amuse
And so from printed broadsides, cheap
A lit'ry masterpiece they'll choose.

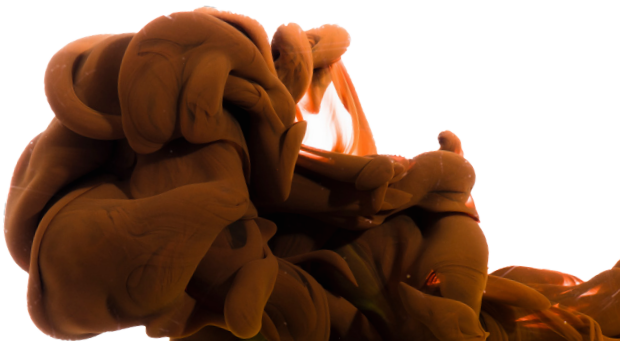
There's one that they already know,
Calléd "Two Maids Wooíng a Man."
That three voice ditty is right for them as
Read, they cannot, but sing *it* they can.

Two lasses and the peddler chant it
(And each one's sole concern is ME,)
Burçu, today, our singer solo
Shall, for THEE, in voices three.

-P.H.B. April 4, 2016

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Peter H. Bloom, flute (at the National Gallery in London)



Robert Bigio

Peter H. Bloom, flute, performs in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and the Far East; is featured on 45 recordings; and is a winner of the American Musicological Society's Noah Greenberg Award. He has concertized with chamber ensembles in London, Bangkok, Canberra, Wellington, Ottawa, and other world capitals, and in hundreds of cities across 40 states and four continents. His career spans chamber music from the Renaissance to the 21st century, as well as jazz standards, blues, bebop, exploratory jazz and free improvisation. He has given lectures and master classes across the globe, and has served as historical performance consultant to The American Museum in Britain, The New-York Historical Society, The American Antiquarian Society and The Museum of Fine Arts Boston, among others. Mr. Bloom is contributing editor for Noteworthy Sheet Music. He holds an MM in flute performance with distinction from the New England Conservatory of Music and a BA in philosophy from Boston University.

In September 2018, Bloom performed at Misericordia University with Ensemble Chaconne in a concert of Music from Shakespeare's Plays. He introduced the music from The Winter's Tale with a lively reading of his poem The Shakespeare concert showcased Bloom on renaissance flute. He also performs widely on baroque flute (shown in the photo), and on modern concert flute.

Coda—Le Pèlerinage: Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France*

Matthew Nickel

I hold her hand as waves wash over our feet
singing loud *Salut, salut, O Saintes Maries*
her eyes sing aloud the depths of the sea

dark gypsy hands reach up the boat is high
gray eyes chant—*Vive Les Saintes Maries*
Vive La Sainte Sara—waves lift us to sky

she dances in water weaving light
we reach for the boat and touch fingers
her voice edges the sky around the saints

we look at each other say nothing waves
lap our bodies and sand is in our hair away
bishop robes over dunes *gardians* trot out the day

procession vanishes into carnival a man ratchets
a hurdy gurdy you picked *a fine time to leave me*
suddenly we are not alone we see familiar faces

though we do not name them gliding beside
compound of sea and sand eyes like a friend
or some long lost mother for whom we cried

we step infinite and slow until a fish leaps
into the chaos of sun windless over a wide sea
we sing harmony on forgotten beaches

with voices out of the irredeemable past present
only in hymns over water and the steady vibration
of hearts together mounting wind over sand

*This poem was first published in *The Route to Cacharel* (Five Oaks Press 2016).

Palm



Kaitlyn Kirsten

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