

THE ART & LITERATURE JOURNAL OF

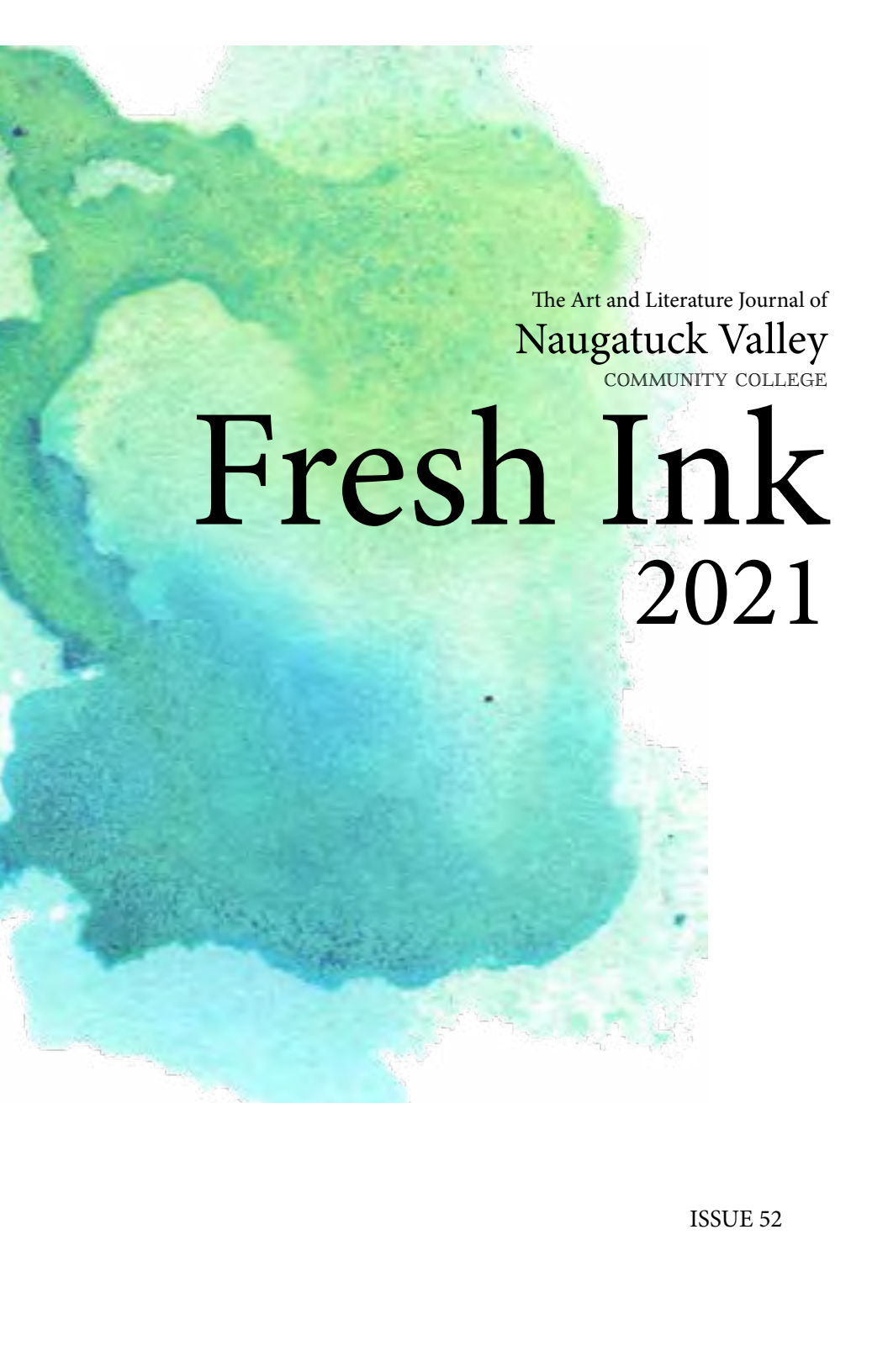
NAUGATUCK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Fresh Ink



ISSUE 52

2021



The Art and Literature Journal of
Naugatuck Valley
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Fresh Ink

2021

ISSUE 52



The 2021 Luke S. Newton Memorial Award

Winners:

Art:

“Still Life with Flowers”
by Charlotte Silver

Short Fiction:

“The Lottery Winner”
by Linda Merlino

Poetry:

“King Crab Queen”
by Kristen Marciano

The Luke S. Newton Memorial Award honors Luke S. Newton, an alumnus of Naugatuck Valley Community College and a lover of great writing.

*

*“The air which is now thoroughly small and dry
Smaller and dryer than the will
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still.”*

“Ash Wednesday” (lms 36-41)

T.S. Eliot

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Friends of Fresh Ink

I hope you enjoy this year's excellent selection of poetry, short fiction and art work submitted by NVCC students and community members.

Special thanks go to those who have helped me evaluate and edit the numerous submissions the journal receives: Wade Tarzia, J. Greg Harding, Sandra Newton, Joe Sainz, Joe Adomavicia, Madeeha Sheikh, Ember Wheeler, Alyssa Katz, Jayanne Sindt and Dante Rojas. I feel proud that we were able to accomplish this task with minimal difficulties using our virtual resources. I also appreciate their conscientious consideration of every submission. I realize this can be a challenging task.

In addition, and, as always, I would like to thank NVCC CEO Lisa Dresdner, Academic Dean Justin Moore, LABSS Associate Dean B.L. Baker, LABBS Administrative Assistant Nancy Powell, Student Activities Director Karen Blake, Student Activities Secretary Alberta Thompson, Digital Arts Technology Coordinator Ray Leite and Art faculty Amanda Lebel for their financial and administrative support of Fresh Ink initiatives. Without this, the quality publication of this journal would not be possible.

Finally, I would like to welcome the new artists and writers who are celebrating their first publications with this edition and to thank those of contributors from the NVCC creative community who have consistently supported this publication with their art, their poetry, their prose.

It is an honor to serve in this capacity.

Jeannie Evans-Boniecki, PhD
Adviser, Fresh Ink 2021

WINTER CARDINALS



Charlotte Silver*

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*denotes an NVCC student author or artist

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*denotes an NVCC student author or artist

MY COVID CLASSROOM



CHARLOTTE SILVER*

SOMETHING COMFORTING -- 1st PLACE

Kimberly Dyer*

There's something comforting about the way the bathroom
lights flicker when the washing machine is running;

Or how the shower water goes cold when someone runs the
faucet.

There's something comforting about the way the sink
cabinets won't stay shut without a hair scrunchie tied
around the knobs;

Or the way that sitting in a room with someone can be
consoling, even when you feel you've lost it.

There's something comforting about coming home during
evening hours to a light turned on in the house
- making you aware that someone is home -

And it's just so comforting to know that when you sleep that
you won't be in the house alone.

There's something comforting about the clicking the house
makes when someone turns on the heat,

The feeling of the uneven flooring against your feet;

And the way I had to stand on my tippy toes to reach the
washing machine door,

And the slight sadness in knowing I don't live there anymore.

THE LAST GOODBYE -- 1st PLACE

Cameron Scofield*

Taylor began to gain consciousness. Where am I? she thought. As she looked around, she found herself encased in glass. She slowly stood up as she regained her balance. She was not sure where she was. Her brain tried to process the landscape around her. What am I doing here? she questioned. With wariness in her heart, she realized she was trapped. With a final glance upward, she noticed it was a bottle.

Taylor pressed her hands delicately against the glass and peered out into the world around her. Everything was big. Or at least she was small. The trees were hundreds of feet taller than her. Even the flowers seemed just as tall. She circled the bottle to take in her surroundings, yet the trip was short. The bottle was minuscule. The only possible escape was through the cork at the top of the bottle.

"I'm far too short to reach that," Taylor stated and sat down in annoyance. "What am I going to do?"

In the distance, she saw movement. Puzzled, she got up onto her knees to get a better look. She squinted her eyes tightly to catch a glimpse of whatever she was seeing. She could not make it out. It was too far, but it was slowly coming closer.

After a matter of seconds, a human-sized leg came out from behind the tall flowing grass. Taylor craned her neck up to get a closer look at the person in front of her. She pressed as far against the glass as she could before she realized who it was. Tyler! Her brother was there to save her! Taylor flung her arms in the air frantically. She began jumping and waving for his attention.

"Tyler down here!" she called, yet no matter how hard she

yelled, he did not hear her. Soon, another figure began to emerge from the tall grass.

“Mom!” Taylor shouted and continued her pursuit to get their attention. To no avail, she began to lose hope. Taylor wondered if she would ever get out of this bottle and back to her family. She began to pace to conjure up a course of action. When Taylor turned back to face her family, she noticed her dad had arrived with some unknown woman. She was stunning, draped in white from head to toe.

“What in the world is going on?” Taylor questioned. Out of energy and feeling faint from her spurt of adrenaline, Taylor quietly watched the scene unfold around her.

“I’m so sorry,” the unknown woman in white said. “We did everything we could.”

Taylor watched her family with a heavy heart as tears began to trail down their tanned cheeks.

“There has to be another way. I know my baby is still in there,” her mom wept.

What is she saying? Taylor thought, trying to refrain from letting the moisture in her eyes past her lashes. It was then that she understood the woman in white was a doctor. The white draped around her earlier was merely her lab coat.

“If you think it is the right thing to do then we will go through with it. We do not want Taylor to suffer any longer,” her dad stated solemnly.

“I do think it is best, but it is ultimately your call,” the woman exclaimed.

After a few moments of silence that felt like years, her

mother took a deep breath and softly said, "Okay. We will do it."

Taylor sat down in the bottle, her mind a whirlwind of thoughts. What is happening? All this thinking was giving her a headache. Now that she thought about it, she had a headache all along. Except this is unlike a typical headache. It was right in the middle of her forehead. A searing pain spread over her head, causing the tears to escape the barricade of her lashes.

Softly, the scene before her shifted. From her bottle, she watched her family and the woman dressed in white stand around a comatose body. Her comatose body as she laid lifeless on the hospital bed. The woman began to shut off the machines around the bed. Taylor breathed out a sigh of relief when the dull ache in her head began to disappear. As she began to lose consciousness, she felt a small smile tug at the corners of her mouth. Taylor was ready for what lay ahead. She got to see her family one last time. She got to say her last goodbye.

KING CRAB QUEEN

Kristen Marcano

little sister stands smiling over a broad, silver bowl
of hot, glistening, orange limbs and claws—
her pale hands crack and pry each piece apart.
she doles out tender slivers of sweet, steamed flesh
and we eat them greedily, like wild animals—
dipping and swallowing, salty butter dripping
down our dancing chins,
smearing mamita's brick-red lipstick,
oiling papito's gray-black stubble.

my sister's steak grows cold on her plate.
soon, she will sit down with us, pick up her knife—
but not yet.

for now, she goes on silently blessing us from above—
pulling strips of meat from prickly, sharp shells
so we don't have to—
her green eyes gazing gently down as we eat.

STILL LIFE WITH FLOWERS -- 1st PLACE



Charlotte Silver*

Winner of the Luke S. Newton Memorial Award for Art

COME RIGHT BACK

Chetaria D. Myers

Yes love, go, run to the store.
It's cold outside, avoid your hoodie,
Walk straight, don't look suspicious,
keep your hands to your side.
It's dark outside, forget the hat.
Go to the store my love,
but please come right back.
Look people in the eyes,
Say "please," say "thank you."
Enunciate your words,
(though honestly, this may not help.)
If you see red and blue lights,
Mama can't promise you're safe.
The cement, your pillow
A knee, your blanket.
Airway suppressed.
Screams of protest,
lulling you to sleep,
Miranda Rights -- your good night story.
So, hurry my love, go to the store,
but come right back.

THE LOTTERY WINNER

Linda Merlino

Dad won the state lottery back in the days when a million dollars made you rich and lotteries were newbies. The winning ticket catapulted our family from blue collar to small town celebrities. Accustomed to working twelve to fourteen hours a day, the thought of quitting his job never occurred to my father. He was a self-described grease monkey and had rolled on his back, under cars, for all of his adult life. Tracks of petroleum penetrated the grooves of his nails and tattooed his fingerprints. Shaking dad's hand was not recommended. What would he do if he stopped working?

The role of sole provider for his family made him proud. My father's customers were loyal, and each one respected him. Dad had friends he knew in grammar school. Being a millionaire felt uncomfortable, placed him in an awkward position where every person he barely knew came looking for a handout. My mother shut the door in their faces and bought us all new clothes. Our house went up for sale. She desired something larger, two towns over where the real millionaires lived high on their trust funds and climbed the imaginary rungs of social ladders.

Mom packed our middle class lives in cardboard boxes and dad cleaned out the garage. We had one of the few homes on the street with detached housing for an automobile. The only car parked there was a 1957 black and white Chevy which dad restored when he was sixteen. Owning a car as a teenager meant he could take my mother on dates. She would sit on the upholstered front seat tucked in close to him, her mini skirt hiked high on her thighs exposing long legs and teenage innocence. With one hand on the steering wheel, dad

wrapped his other arm tight around mom's shoulders; the two made a beautiful couple. They frequented Dairy Queen, parking lots, high school football games, and drive-in movies. In the spring of their senior year my brother was conceived in the back seat of the Chevy while the theme from Beach Blanket Bingo played through the speaker propped on the car window.

My mother's dream of going to college fell victim to mounting piles of diapers and sleepless nights. Dad went to work for her father who owned a full service gas station on the other side of town. They had three more kids, another boy and two girls, before their twenty-fifth birthdays. Mom became a 70's housewife and the title fit. She ascribed to all things stay-at-home-mothers portended or pretended to do. Dad left the house at six in the morning and returned home to a hot meal somewhere between 7 and 8 p.m. She made his lunch and he bought his breakfast from the diner on the corner. When my grandfather died he bequeathed the gas station to my mother. Dad went on working the same job, the same hours and the same days for his new boss, his wife.

After the lottery win dad had two choices, the first to take a lump sum of money after taxes or to take a twenty-year payout. He chose the latter option. Mom was not happy. She wanted all the money. A twenty-year payout seemed disproportionate to her plans. My father made the financial decisions. He paid the bills. Everything mom wanted, they bought on installment. Our new house had a mortgage, and two new cars owned by the bank. The furniture and appliances were also on monthly payments. Dad refused to pay cash. He liked the idea of watching their money accumulate interest. My mother caved. The plan my father devised had him retiring when the twenty years ended. They would still be young. Us kids would be grown. They would sell

the gas station and the house, buy an apartment in the city, take a cruise and drive across the country.

Two years passed, the neighborhood gossiped behind our backs. A lottery-winning mechanic became the brunt of jokes at the country club. Dad did not play golf or tennis and did not own a suit; he did not care what people said. The women, with their Stepford personas, kept mom at arm's length, viewed her as invisible and managed to ignore her at PTA meetings. We wanted to move, hated our new schools and missed our friends. My mother said no.

One blustery, cold, upstate morning Mom looked out the bedroom window and saw dad's car still covered with snow in their driveway. She put on her slippers and robe and went down to the kitchen. Dad's lunch was on the laminate counter with his keys. The inside door of the garage swung open and shut. Gusts of cold air circled the kitchen leaving a frigid haze on the shiny appliances. My mother called dad's name, once, twice, three times before she stepped on the threshold to the garage. The hood of the old Chevy was up, a towel placed on the fender with a few tools side by side. She moved closer, his name like a prayer left her lips, for there he was legs akimbo, under the driver's side in a death pose.

Brain aneurysm. Sudden. Quick. Painless. Who knew? Death comes despite the best of plans. The thing about the early days of lotteries was corruption. The twenty-year option had a fine print clause stating: in case of the lottery winner's death prior to payout completion, all remaining unpaid funds reverted back to the state.

Winner of the Luke S. Newton Memorial Award for Short Fiction

MANY OF ME -- 2nd PLACE

Maya Guyton*

How many versions of myself are there
How many did I create?

Imagine just every image you had of yourself and every
image someone had of you
Running around
Just as lost as you are
Just as scared

How would you comfort them... you

Remember that time you had your period...and well...you
were just a BITCH
In this reality she exists and there are two
One sad asking for attention
One mad that she's drawing it

They're making a muck of your name

How will you understand her?

Every first impression begging for a second chance
Some loud and overcompensating
Some quiet and shy
And...ha... Remember when you were too high?

Would you change the people you are around?
They are the ones that create these versions of you

It makes sense
Keep around those who praise you, love you, worship you

You would hate you
But you'd be existing big headed and clouded vision
How would you see yourself?
Like a king, a maverick
All your flaws are quirks that make you unique
"You're so special" "Everyone loves you" "You can't do
anything wrong!"

Doing wrong

Of course

We can't forget about insecure you
Annoying as FUCK
Over apologizing
Scared to do anything slightly controversial
People pleasing
Gosh you're 20, just use your words

You'd be sick

There's nothing worse than self projection
How could you want AND avoid attention
Pick one

I'd grab her by her hair and pick her up off her knees
"WE ARE GOING HOME"

"WE ARE ALL GOING HOME"

Locking myself in a room until we all learn to get along

SHADOWS OF THE TETONS photography



Sandra Eddy

A DREAMER

Erika Mattson*

She listens, ponders, often wonders,
And most definitely feels deeply.
Looks at the stars, thinks of love, and her heart
Sinks.

Deeper than a pebble settling in the grains of sand at her feet
Tears well into the eyes, and slowly stroll down her face
Eyes sparkling, hair waving, she yearns to sail
Abroad her own trip

Anchors pin her feet, while her palms float
She feels like drowning, even if she is steadily breathing.
Caught up in webs of lies intertwined with trust
Saltwater rising, there is nowhere to hide from the fuss

Deep blue surrounding, darkness widening
But light pours, soul glowing
The life's journey of
A Dreamer.

DENTAL WORK ON THE FRONT LINE
original charcoal on toned art paper
heightened with chalk



ShawnaLee Kwashnak

HAUNT

Emily Smith*

The floorboards creak beneath me,
I'd prefer if no one heard it.
I chase away the living so I can rest assured that

I can keep this secret
That traps me 'tween two worlds
With no tether, as anxieties continue to unfurl.

Like the dreamer crafts the nightmare
I've become what scares me most;
Although I am alive, I am haunted by my ghost.

EMBER

Kristen Marcano

yes, there's hot sex—but
have you ever sped
down I-80 west
with your top down and the hot wind
unfurling your murky curls
with her deft fingers?
teasing apart each tangled knot of stress
until the silky sunlight
glinting off your kinky locks
is all that lingers?

no, there's nothing like a July road trip
and a velvety soft friendship—
nothing like losing your voice
as five honeyed hours fly away
fast as all the secrets
that keep slipping off your red lips
because there's no need to think twice
about all you say.

THE ART OF THE RELEASE-- 3rd PLACE

Laura Bobela*

I wrote every piece of me
Then crossed it all out
I scrawled my insides in a cursive fury
Then erased the contents of my work with a bonfire

Alphabets are individual interpretations
Giving that swallowed whole feeling
That forces my dejected forehead against the table, again
Until I find a new idea has surfaced

SERVE, PROTECT, AND EDUCATE

Joe Adomavicia

Let us be a guild,
a collective,
acting in the name of justice,
for if justice has failed one,
it has failed us all.
A senseless death dealt by dirty hands,
stained yellow by bigotry—
that bigotry, a virus, human resistant,
seemingly immunized
from the selfless sacrifices
of the not-so-distant past that have slipped through time
dimmed.
Remember!
Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.,
Rodney King, and so many more!
The pain endured!
Say their names.
George Floyd, Trayvon Martin,
Tamir Rice, Eric Garner,
and so many more!
Why?
Why must there be
suffering from the fear of difference?
The stigmatic stench of racism.
Extinguish it, if we are to survive,
more than coexist
an original sin.
Serve, protect, and educate
all the minds young to mature.
Void yourself of the violence brought
into the lives of those undeserving.

Let US serve, protect, and educate our communities.
Let US educate our young minds to abolish racism
existing in the veins of those who were taught hate!
Let US be light, marvelous, and bright,
the brightest voice for the voiceless purging prejudice.
Our so called “leaders” fail us standing for injustice.
Drape the American Flag upside-down
on the new caskets of the murdered.
Our own revolution diluted,
dishonored.
Let us say,
enough already,
we are better than this.
We have gone amiss.
Can we seize the moment,
stop the decline,
this time,
finally.

THE OWL acrylic gauche



Greg Kashuba*

TWO DEAD BIRDS

Gabriela K. Garcia*

Mother, there's a crow
perched in our window. Bending
down to stare

Do you hear? He
says.

Another dead, Mother.

No—don't say it.

I can't breathe.

Another dead, Mother.
Why couldn't
you let him breathe?

REUNION

Paul Lubenkov

My father sits across from me.
Moonlight shadows the valleys of his face.
We observe the remnants of etiquette
And remember the things left unsaid
As we sip whiskey to deaden the pain.
The night has shut its relentless door
As we yearn to remember people we loved.
Little remains but to laugh in despair

And accept the abundance of consequence.

EVENING GOOSE WITH FIREFLIES



Charlotte Silver*

JACKSON'S LAST DASH -- 2nd PLACE

Robert Andreotta*

He didn't know where he was—or why. Confusion was his state of mind more often, but it had yet to become comfortable. The more it happened, the more frustrated he became. He rubbed the sleep from his eyes. Four walls, a roof over his head, a good start. Light spilled in from a gap between the tiled floor and the door across from him. A white plastic table beside his bed held a plastic cup of water. The moon shone in through a window above his bed, its light fractured by wire mesh imbedded in the glass pane. Propping himself up, he swung his legs over the side of the bed, feeling a light cloth robe rustle against his skin. His feet landed on a pair of slippers seemingly made of the same cheap cloth as his robe. Jackson's muscles tensed; his eyes widened. He was back.

He slid his feet into the paper-thin slippers and quietly stood, knowing that silence was his only chance of escape. The moonlight combined with the light from beneath the door to make a soft eerie glow, displaying just enough of the room for Jackson to get his bearings. One foot moved slowly after the other. The rustle of his cloth robe was maddeningly loud to his ears. Every step a resonating beat of a timpani drum. He reached the door and bent to the floor. Twin shotgun blasts went off as his knees cracked and popped. No shadows moved in the hall. His hips popped like the backfire of a car as he stood back to his feet. It was now or never. Holding his breath, and closing his eyes to say a quick prayer, Jackson reached for the door handle and eased it open. The hallway was deserted, and he released his breath in a susurrus sigh.

He shambled along towards the neon Exit sign at the end of the hall, all the while sparing furtive glances to his left and right. The cloth slippers absorbed all but the faintest of sounds

as his feet whispered along the linoleum tiled corridor. An eternity later he reached the exit and freedom was within his reach. He slowly pushed the door open, bracing for the sound of an alarm. None came, and he relaxed. Stepping onto the concrete stoop, he assessed his surroundings.

Topiary monsters loomed around him from all angles. Beasts that may have looked playful in the day were transformed into dark shadows by the light of the moon. He weaved his way through the animals, wary of their fangs and claws, until he reached a sign that was barely visible by the soft fluorescent glow leaking from the windows behind him. Happy Acres, est. 1987 it read. Jackson stopped dead in his tracks as a door opened behind him a mere 20 yards away.

“Ah shit...” muttered an anonymous voice, and then more loudly “c’mon back now.”

Jackson tried to run. His movement was more stumble than step, and after only a few seconds his panting breath was making more noise than the fall of his feet. He sank into the grass with every step and mud gripped at his slippers as he pulled free. Keep going, he thought, keep going. His heart thumped in his chest and his mouth was filled with the taste of pennies. He knew a heart attack would likely hit him if he kept up this frantic pace, but anything was better than being caught. A gasp escaped his mouth as his foot came down on something thin and wiry. Snake was his first thought, but then it snapped. Jackson didn’t stop moving but looked back and spared a single cursory glance. All but the vaguest details were veiled by the night. The rope was frayed, and fibers were pulling apart across its entire length. He thought he felt a puff of dust as his foot came down on it, but surely that was his imagination. Even soaked with rain it was brittle enough to snap at the slightest touch.

He trundled onward and glanced ahead in horror, seeing a chain link fence rising from the ground. Black links interlocked in a seemingly never-ending diamond shaped pattern. Moonlight faintly glimmered off the dark links. The fence rose 6 feet in the air before giving way to the open sky. He continued to stumble forward and immediately stretched his arms out to climb. At his age he knew that he had no business climbing a staircase much less a fence, but what choice did he have? When he reached his fingers through the links, he could feel the black paint flaking off in his hand. It was too dark to see the faded silver beneath the paint, but he knew it was there. His hands felt the occasional cool metal spot, and his nose could smell wet iron in the air. Hand over hand and step after step he climbed. Miraculously he made it to the top and began heaving himself over. Most of his body was over the top before he noticed his landing.

There was no smooth, wet earth to cushion his fall. Rather a skeletal, eldritch tree, stripped almost bare. A branch jutted from the tree, pointing towards the moon. Few leaves remained, and those that did were withered and brown. Vestiges of a summer past, a breath of wind away from their imminent fall. The coarse knotted wood was as thick as an arm at its base and covered with nicks and cuts from nature and man alike. The bark was slick, still damp from the previous night's rain. An oaky, damp smell hung in the air, slightly overpowered by the freshly watered grass beneath it. He held out his hands to shelter his face. In that moment before his demise, his senses heightened, and time slowed.

His hand was falling towards the branch's point with his full weight behind it. His skin was almost translucent in the moonlight. A forest of coarse hairs sprung from the back of his knuckles. Blue veins wriggled as if alive, snakes slithering beneath a tightly pulled sheet. When the fingers moved his age

was apparent. The hand was covered with deeply weathered lines from wrist to fingertip. It moved at an elephantine pace as he desperately tried to pull it away. Each finger its own wrinkled leg, attached to an even further wrinkled body. He was not fast enough.

The branch impaled him, and he rolled onto the ground. For one brief moment there was no pain, and no blood. His heart thundered in his chest, and he was sure if he looked down, his shirt would be rising with every frantic beat. As he stared at his hand in shock and wonder, the moment ended. Blood welled up around the wound and trickled down his arm. The pain came next. It was immense. It felt as if he was being flayed from the inside, every fiber of muscle and layer of skin screamed out in pain from his fingertips to the crook of his elbow. He let out a choked sob and began to cough as warm blood pulsed into his mouth. He stared at the moon through his tear-filled eyes and gasped his final breath. The fog evaporated above his lifeless eyes. A single tear rolled down his cheek, mingling with a rivulet of blood.

A STUDY OF PEBBLES



Sandra Eddy

I HOPE THIS LETTER FINDS YOU WELL

Maya Guyton*

My Dear,

I have pondered writing you this letter solely based on its necessity to be written, but alas here we are. The more thought put to it, you and I, I can't help thinking that we have never gotten very close hitherto the short time we spent in close proximity to each other. I suppose there's a lot you need to know in order for this letter, and perhaps I should say this essay, to make much sense. Although, how much can I really say; you know more than I credit you for. What is it that they say about the two flames cut from the same wick? Twin flames. Therefore most of this will be redundant, but that's fine because I have always been the one to say more than needed to be said and that will prove itself. Given, you decide to keep reading.

The season needed not change for me to realize my time in the sun came and went. Idealistically, the season not changing caused me to stay, realistically, it was you. The nights we surrendered to the dark rather than to the blue lights caught up with me, they have taken over and I must stop lying to myself, my teachers, and my mom because I can no longer keep up. Not with the work and definitely not with you. I lost my way in the LED lights, my purpose drowned in the drinks, and my motivation faded into smoke. I needed to go home. From long flat roads barely shaded from the sun to large canopies and leaf littered highways. Somewhere I can go and completely lose myself with the comfort knowing that my hometown will search for me, my old friends will find me, and my family will guide me. I can't blame Florida because, well, that seems silly. In the midst of orientations and meeting new people, how could I not feel welcome? The warm breeze never comforted me and the storm closing in over the ocean

kept me awake. I hope you can forgive me for writing this in a letter, forgive me for being so formal, and forgive me for waiting so long.

As soon as I arrived home, the weather was the same as it was in the Southwest, hot. Yet, these Connecticut pavements didn't burn my feet. They embraced my soles while the breeze kissed my forehead. New construction and landscaping in my condo, old friends with new bodies and deeper voices, and siblings who moved and married welcomed me. The disillusion of life going back to "normal" was met with silencing loneliness and unavoidable realizations. I grew up in the center of town, but I lived on the outside. I played soccer for my town when I was younger and the teams filled with, mainly, kids from the public school and me. I drew attention and I loved attention, but I drew attention not because I was somebody, but because I was nobody. (I don't mean to explain things to you as if you do not understand what I am trying to say; however, I believe examples add to perspective.) "Irrelevant," it echoes through my head these days. It's as if walking away from my problems did not work out. I can't help but laugh at that because I suppose that is "learning the hard way." You know my brother, he's always been friendly and his charm played in his favor because I soon became known as "Marcus's sister." It wasn't a bad shadow to live in and you could call me lucky because unlike many siblings I have heard of, he brought me around to parties. Alone in a room full of people is another cliché I learned the meaning of.

Maybe you know what comes next.

I haven't changed my parking space at the grocery store in years. I became comfortable with Marcus being there for me. I am the older sister, but he's my big brother and when I ran through my savings, Marcus came and worked with me at

the same burger joint and argued to have the same schedule with me. My keeper. The day I had to go in without him, my heartbeat was on the highway and my thoughts were on a hamster wheel. That started happening after I met you, more specifically after I stopped seeing you. Do not let me lead you on because this day wasn't miserable...when I reflect on it. In the moment, it was awful and there was this one girl who I just couldn't stand. I had no idea and I was not prepared for the impact that she has on my life. I shouldn't address her as "this girl" because she's not a casualty, she's "Rosangie." A beautiful name, right? The loudest voice in a room, no filter, and unapologetically herself. She was the complete opposite of me, and it made me so angry. Perturbed to a point that forced me to look inward because, truthfully, a person shouldn't bother me that much. I am a calm person, soft spoken, and quite passive. You see where I'm going with this. Intuition told me to look into my youth, where I last remember my most boisterous self. To keep the story short, I found her hiding in the corner, not wanting to draw attention. I thanked Rosangie for causing me to find her, myself. I opened up and no longer needed Marcus to guide me and I thanked him for that. Rosangie slowly crept into my circle, or maybe I slipped into hers. She offered me girl talk and I offered realness; I got it from my brothers.

To the hard part.

I have met someone and he's great. I'm still deciding if I like him or not, but things look good. Tragic, I know. He tells me to stop always apologizing, but it's like second nature now and I hope to grow out of it. I met him through Rosangie and don't ask her about it unless you are trying to hear how much of a matchmaker she is. He's my little fixer upper and I would love to tell you more, but I must let the story unfold.

Sincerely always yours,
Maya

FAKE FRUIT
acrylic



Madeeha Sheikh

SHE FLIES THE MOON ON A STRING

Jeannie Evans-Boniecki

To Honor the Spring Tide's Rescue of the *Ever Given* from the Suez Canal

The Worm Moon, tied by a knot to her wrist,
catches sea breezes, broadside, and tugs
its kite string - unreeling unrestrained.

She shrugs
at the crisis her moon-kite, orbiting through mist,
will cause.

She knows not even a Neptune kissed
could calm the Captains of the struggling tugs
hauling the ship's hull left wrecked on rocks laid bare.

Slick rugs
of sea grass, mattresses for mermaids' trysts,
will blanch, beached by her tethered globe trotting.

A lunar horse, forced by gravity to canter, drags night
and tides' waves to crest and crash,
and then withdrawing
exposes the underbellies of tight
mouthed starfish, anxious, tense,
rent sputtering -

until the Tides rise again in the wake of her kite.

NEEDLE OF REPRIEVE

Laura Bobela*

Hospital. It's a word that incites panic in family members and creates symptoms of anxiety to most. A fluttering in the pit of one's stomach. A sudden pounding headache. Weak legs, ears ringing, shaky hands, speechlessness. An impending sense of doom strong enough to knock Arnold Schwarzenegger to his knees. I expect to feel a mixture of these things when I wake up because I know I'm going to the hospital today.

On the contrary, I feel a sense of relief with only a hint of oh god. Perhaps my lack of anxiety is the result of a year's worth of panic finally reaching the end of that gloriously dark tunnel. Bursting forth into the brightest of daylight with a needle prick at my backside, urging me toward freedom. Each day amongst the public that did not result in fever or loss of smell was a small victory, shot to hell when ruminations for potential delayed sickness without warning crossed my mind. I would lie in my bed each night like the monkey in the middle of a game of catch between relief and worry.

I finally caught that ball four weeks ago when I first felt the sharp prick at my back and saw the tiniest light far in front of me from the prick of the needle as it extended from my chest. It was a speck of light at a distance of four weeks time. That little twinkle was my hope, and I began running toward it. Twenty-eight days of running full speed was tiresome but worth every bit.

Today, I reached the end of the dark tunnel. I woke up and stopped at the edge of darkness to look out into the world I have been missing. It is a world that looks eerily like the past. A time when masks are for surgeons and citizens of Asian countries. A time when toilet paper is abundant and cleaning

supplies are taken for granted. A time when hands are not cracked and bloody from constant attempts to control an elusive microscopic beast that terrifies the masses like the smallest boogeyman known to humans. A time when you can hug your loved ones without a second thought of whether your mother's immunocompromised system is at risk from your love.

Who would've thought that love for your elderly parents could be dangerous or deadly? Who would've believed that one day, holding the door open for a stranger would be frowned upon? This had become a world I never would've believed could exist. Yet here we are, almost 365 days in and my hands are bloodier than ever.

Could we ever get back to the old days? Would we be forever changed by this era of panic? Maybe the eleven-month-old baby shut away from the world due to parental fear of an insufficient immune system will suffer attachment disorder. Or obsessive-compulsive disorder born from observational learning by watching her mother clean and clean and clean while she bounced and bounced in her high chair.

Have kids forgotten how to converse with their friends? Have they become lazy without the option of joining school sports teams? Have those who work from home come to find they prefer not to wear pants because of a conviction that wearing pants inhibits their productivity?

I pull into the hospital driveway. Left for the emergency room, right for all else. I fight the urge to go left and turn right. It's a worldwide pandemic, everything feels like an emergency. Inside the converted conference room, I fill out the final bit of paperwork that allows me to become a bit safer to the world. The only impending doom I feel comes

from the knowledge that I will feel like crap tomorrow.

I hear the nurse with a name tag that reads Hilda discuss with another nurse the weather and how that may affect the daily turnout for vaccinations. She consults her clipboard and shakes her head, “We already had three cancellations, if we have another two cancel Jerry’s going to be pissed.”

The other nurse matches her concerned expression. “We’ll do what we have to. I’ll call Allie and see what she wants us to do. I wish these vacc—”

“Are you ready?” A young man in blue scrubs appears from the cubicle in the far left of the room disrupting my eavesdropping.

Yes, I am. I take a deep breath and stand up. Walking through the double doors I imagine myself stepping into the sunlight. The visions of normalcy are here with me but out of reach. They are a distance of a few months away, but they look glorious and bright. I’ve missed them terribly, but I don’t want to smother them or scare them away. Like a cat that stretches with a large yawn and outstretched toes beams and then bolts when hands wrap around the furry face for a quick soft smooch.

With the absence of a pointed instrument at my back, I leave my anxiety in the tunnel. I think I’ll walk this time.

AUDREY HEPBURN AND COSMOS

pencil sketch



Audrey L. Finn

RIPPLES AT TURTLE MOUNTAIN

S.E. Page

For some reason, today
I can say things by this lake
that I couldn't tell you for years—
Mama, I'm sorry.
I'm sorry I wasn't a better
daughter or friend
while we still shared
the same plane of being.
Maybe it's the ragged abandon
of all the weeds, the wild cry
of loud waters, or how daisies
line the shore, swaying
like so many little stars
in the breeze, a galaxy
scattered on the ground—
I feel you close again.
Perhaps we were gifts
to each other, from each other:
always bound to be broken
by time, undone yet remade
in the same wave of breath.

THE HOLLOW MAN

Ivan de Monbrison

Un-death of desire

This dead body lying on the ground is not mine nor is it yours

In the alley of innocence you don't know where to walk to
escape your fate thus you start to take the shape of a man

You watch this man like a tiny Lilliputian and you put it in your
pocket and it grows out of you as if it were a mannequin of dust
as if the sole trace of any personal thought tells you to continue
your journey on this path leading nowhere

I have never seen you though walk away without having your
own shadow strapped to your back and if it could it would talk
and say all the grievance you've been through all the pain the
suffering the desire to be left alone once and for good

You can close the door now and forget it all and start another
life made out of nothing but the blueness of regret and the
longing to change your identity

You remain there in the center of a painting sewed to yourself
by your skin like a bag of flesh

A hollow bag made of nothing but thoughts

And this is why I pity you in spite of me

You throw your own shadow on a pond and it stays floating
there like the obscure reflection of your own mind

You see the cat on this roof grabbing a star with its mouth and
dragging it away to its den where it's going to devour the shiny
flesh like glass and the cat will turn to glass too after this process

You think she's beautiful like a figure of marble

She's more statue than human and that is why you love her

You hate the flesh in man you wished you could be made of
pure thoughts

Tomorrow will be much better

You keep saying this sentence as a mantra as to avoid the
certainty of death in the flesh

Thus there is nothing to regret

Your feminine lookalike might leave you alone at any time
now that you have walked out of your own house to stay out
at dusk and watch the sky on this summer evening as the clouds
slowly when away over the horizon

The cat jumps off the roof and lands on its four legs

You pick up a mirror and you look at your own face closely as
to see its flaws

You wish you could take off your face from your head as if it
were a simple photograph and replace it by another photo-
graph that you would have taken in black and white

The cat comes near you and lies down at your feet and starts
purring asking for caress

You can't touch the cat as if you were to do it you would be
erased from the painting where you have been standing all this time

She's wonderful she's wonderful you say quietly

The crenels of the castle of innocence are covered with black
crows now

They all speak a human language

I think that they speak Italian as the painting was painted
during the Renaissance

Even though it was painted several hundred years ago the paint
is still fresh on the canvas and the clothes that you're dressed
with are themselves made of oil painting and if you were to turn
your head you would see the painter (is it Leonardo?) sitting in
front of the easel

The cat leaps back to the roof as if to catch now a white bird
there and you scream as if to prevent this murder and the
painter falls from his stool in awe and all the crows on the crenels
fly away

Fortunately thanks to your cry the cat has narrowly missed the bird which is now standing on the branch of a hackberry and the cat walks away a little disappointed

You pick up your shadow still floating on the pond as you're about to resume your journey within Time but doing so you are still somehow kind of wary that Oblivion might take you by the hand any time and make you forget that you were painted inside a colorful painting once several hundred years ago by the hand of someone who could have very well been your late father if he had dared to think himself as an artist
Like that funny kid he was in a photograph in black and white that you have torn away for no real reason

The crows have resumed speaking in Italian now that they are back on their perch on the crenels of the castle
The painter adds a star to replace the one that the cat ate before on the upper right corner of the canvas with a very thin brush

You need to resume your journey within Time at all cost and leave the cat resting on the roof with one open yellow scary eye piercing the darkness

It makes you think of Innocence in youth that's gone forever white as the bird that the cat missed before
The bird has flown away in the meantime

Dressed with oil paint dripping from your clothes you step out of the painting

You sit on the stool you pick up a blank canvas and you start to paint randomly a scene populated with grotesque figures that look as if they had come out of Dante's Inferno

We have sinned and you have lied
We must repent
And bleed forever simple words on sheets of water

Amen

WINDOW AT DEAD HORSE photography



Sandra Eddy

SUN AND SHADE

Martha Phelan Hayes

The ripe September sun, plump
and heavy, is slung low over
his house, the roof's peak shadowed
onto the summer seared lawn.

You play a game, the repetition
making it easy to keep under cover
your ruminative thoughts: the grief
you carry, the friend whose cells
are misbehaving, the wars
and famines and natural disasters.

Your words rattle in your mouth,
but you steady your voice, lift
the end of each sentence to cue
the joke. He laughs harder
and harder with each refrain.

When he has had enough,
he grabs his big yellow Tonka
truck. He loves trucks and baseballs
and hockey pucks, boy things
he can hit and push and make
move. He wheels it back
and forth, under sun, into shade,
towards you, away from you.

You envy him.

He's yet to notice contrast,
the ebbing of time, the arable
promise this season has made
to finish itself off.

BATTLE STRIPES

Joe Adomavicia

Life flows steadily
then suddenly
it will tug, push, and pull
with the power of white-water rapids.
Keep your head above the water,
get back to shore,
and then claw back
with the power, toughness, and conviction of a tiger
fighting for its cub's meal.
It's life or death
from first to final breath.
Scarred, tired, and tested,
you earn your battle stripes.

SMOKE SIGNALS

Martha Phelan Hayes

My mother had a rough week:
another UTI, an overnight
in the hospital.
She had phoned Monday morning,
only half awake and sounding
as if she had a mouth full of marbles—
what my siblings and I have come
to describe as loopy and out of sorts.
We get calls like this a lot these days.
But now she has rebounded,
and she wakes my brother
with a break-of-dawn ring.
He clutches the phone, still
smelling smoke from the last crisis,
and mutters an apprehensive hello.
He can see his whole day smoldering.
But my mother tramples right
over his words. Her eye makeup
on and scarlet lipstick applied,
she sits in front of the delicate vapor
that wends its way up and out
of her morning tea, ignores
her crumbling body: the finger
she cannot straighten, her swollen
ankles, the summer-old
wound on her shin.
Without any sort of greeting
and with more than a hint of impish
pride, she bursts her breathy
Vivian Leigh voice at him.
The rhinestone words dazzle
as she enunciates each syllable:
I feel wonderful,” she gushes,
“ab-so-lute-ly wonderful.

SELF PORTRAIT acrylic



Audrey L. Finn

ON MY CONVERSATION WITH DEATH

Simone Swart*

He was a slight man. If a common punctuation--such as a question mark--took on sudden, personified form, he would be that. I found it ironic, yet I kept it to myself. I kept silent. I felt that he was judgmental, that he would morph into an outburst of anger at even the slightest of things. I felt that he would not consider witty things witty.

He sat on my brother's piano bench. Nevermind. He knelt on my brother's piano bench, as if he was about to give prayer.

"His name is Elio, is that correct?" His first words to me. I flinched, as I had no intention of waking up my family, yet he seemed to. His voice was too cavernous. I instantly hated it.

"Elio, no. Elliott, yes." I sighed quietly. "Why are you here, precisely?"

"Precisely," he mocked. He outstretched his hand, which was lean enough to clearly see the composition of bone underneath his skin. It was perfect, as it matched the sleek strut of his cheekbones, and the finite edges of his jaw. "Do not be stupid. Have you not gathered your thoughts together as to why I am here?"

I must have been gaping, albeit unconsciously. I held firmly to the doorknob, too firmly. My palms would smell metallic soon enough, tainted by the verdant of copper.

"Oh, come on now. You are not truly stupid, are you? Look at me." He gestured rather fanatically at his body, clothed in a suit that emphasized his slenderness. I swallowed down the urge to laugh, as he looked like a young, cumbersome boy. He was so very reminiscent of Elliott himself. Handsome naïveté and all. Even the same ruthless curls, except his were light and Elliott's were dark.

"I never said that I was stupid. I just do not understand your intention of why you suddenly came knocking on my door so late in the night."

He stood up, and I quickly, mentally calculated his height. Perhaps 6 feet and several inches. Maybe more.

"I had something to tell you. That is why I came." He crept closer to

me. If I felt fear or intimidation, it was invisible. I only felt calm.

"Tell me, then," I muttered. "Please."

He slid his hands onto my shoulders. "Time is your confidante. It is not your brother's, though. I am very sorry, sweetheart."

The usage of sweetheart sickened me. It congealed heavily in my throat, and I spat at the floor. "Do not call me that. What are you even saying, you stranger? Leave. Go back into the night, wherever the hell you came from."

"All right, whatever you insist then." He held up his hands in defeat, casting etched shadows across my brother's bed linens, strewn in youthful haste. He began the journey of creeping back to the piano bench, which was situated rather far away from where I stood at the door. It overlooked the window, which in turn overlooked the orange trees that wept their pleasantries of sweet fruit.

"Wait," I said.

He glanced at me, with a sort of unknown fervor in his eyes. "Yes?"

"I do not want to make any wrong assumptions but are you...."

I paused, my thoughts and my tongue hesitant. I knew I was dreaming, yet I knew I also was not.

"I am." He answered before I could even properly finish, and he left before I could even properly comprehend. The only thought that swam around stupidly in my mind was Write this down. Tell Elliott later.

Hours later, after dawn had fully risen, I awakened to the haunting chaos of my father's yelling. A singular porcelain plate, speckled with blue and white flora, was on the floor next to my nightstand. Bread, with orange jam. I suspected my mother had brought it up minutes and minutes ago.

Elliott had been found. Not alive, but somewhere in between.

He had been correct.

I remembered how I had--unknowingly--trained myself to dream, lucidly, as a young child.

I found it ironic, yet I kept it to myself. I kept silent.

THE OTHER SELF

Ivan de Monbrison

Un-death of the mind
to walk the thin line of the horizon without ever falling on the
other side
bright summer Sun
we can't think
we can only walk the winding road
down to the end of the pier
where seagulls come falling one after the other into deep sea
painted in blue
tiny clouds hung above it like linen on a string
we turn back to watch the old city slouched against the hills

I never used to think of death as a child

we turn back we climb on top of those cliffs
we could jump and try to fly for one last time before drowning
we could try to turn into birds for one last time
hovering above the city

I turn back
I cross the small cemetery
he's buried somewhere
but I can't remember the exact spot where his grave is

you start to scream
but nobody can hear you
someone has closed the door behind you
someone has put some tape over your mouth to prevent you from
screaming
so you draw a face in the sand
that the waves will soon erase
just like Time will erase the figure of your own body lying down on
the sand

wind and waves
suppressing it all
it's time to go now

to cross the old graveyard the other way
to walk the thin line of the horizon as if it were a road leading to
nowhere
but you are already dead
you are still unaware of it though
and donkeys and cows start following you on their way to the farm
and you can hear a lonely child crying behind a low wall bordering
the field
you raise up your head
and already you can watch the tiny yellow stars coming out in the
sky
right above the line made by the tree tops of a nearby wood

life unreal
we shall forget it all
we shall redeem
our coming to this world half humans half beasts
half alive half dead
animals with brains
we have lost our fur though and thus our reality
we have lost our instinct
thus our intelligence

so you decide to once more walk between the dunes
down to the sea
to crouch on the sand and listen to the sound of the waves licking it
to listen to forgotten voices
so you lie down you close your eyes and you see you own past
as vivid as if you were yourself a child once again
even though you've started balding and your skin is wrinkled now
buried deep down inside you a child is still alive
invisible

and even though your father died thirty five years ago you still
dream of him
from time to time
but these are more nightmares than dreams to you

so it's time to get up before turning to dust
it's time to walk back to the busy streets of the city
and find a young woman who might agree to warm you up
maybe
with her soft arms and chest
it's time to watch the colorful crowd coming in and out of the shops
frantically before Christmas time
you will not go to church as you don't believe in God anymore
you might buy a present or two for the people that you love
though
you will go to visit your best friend and pet the white Bengal cat at
her place and play with
it for a while
as to forget it all

the death the doubts the abomination of it all

life invisible
hidden under the bark of trees
like the silent flight of bats over the river at dusk
that the passersby can't see

only sure of
the certainty of Death
and the echoing of the footsteps in the empty corridors
of a deserted subway station
as you try to run away from yourself
like in some sort of a maze

finally

you find your way out of the subway to the open air
with your eyes fixed now on the everlasting traffic
transient lives of fleshy creatures caught into the net of modern life
the cars zooming by toward a black hole
hidden somewhere at the end of the night
so you hurry back alone to your small apartment
before darkness covers you completely

now you're alone

you can lie down on your couch
you can hear the noises of the neighbors
faint clues of life somewhere hidden behind the white walls
with your paintings on them leaning slightly to one side or the other

you

close your eyes and take a deep breath
as to erase in you (in vain) all the shadows hidden there
you kind of fall asleep
and you see your own body walking a tightrope
like a mimic
set in a silent movie in slow motion
making grotesque gestures
as if you were to try to catch evanescent figures
or translucent animals running away

you're back on the beach again

you don't know if it's still a dream or reality
you see your own father as a kid sitting on a boat
in a black and white photography that you
have destroyed for no reason a while ago
because it was unbearable maybe for you to watch it
so you only have this image of him as a kid
stored in you like a unique trace of what life was once for him
before you were even born

standing on the shore you take off your shirt
you watch the waves rolling on the sand
then turn around
to see if anyone might have come behind you on the winding path
hidden between the dunes that you have trodden so often
you're a bit cold standing bare chested there
as it's already fall and winter will come soon

you close your eyes again
and then you find yourself at the same time standing on this beach
walking in the streets of Paris
lying down in your small flat alone or squeezed in the subway
it feels like in some sort of cycle
whirling constantly on itself
little by little you disappear like caught by some quick sands

now there's nothing left of you on the beach anymore
but the traces of your footsteps
and maybe
some other self to be
this other mind
a lost memory of a dead man
a lost photography
this other self in me

MAN'S BEST FRIEND charcoal



Greg Kashuba*

SHADE

Ryan Garesio

There are roots that run
Deep beneath the earth
A child born out of wedlock
A physicist in Geneva
A star basketball player

trying to earn
his way through
community
college

An elephant

stalking its lunch
on the savannah

A canary
A man in jail for murder
A god
A godless man

burning churches
to the ground and

walking upright
in liberated zest

A boy from chicago
A gang from chicago
A policeman with no parents
A wrong look in the wrong direction
A fire and a church on fire
A woman

crying out for her
boy

The one who used to steal from the corner store
To give his mother a nice dinner
Under the moonlight
For once in her life
There are roots that run
Deep beneath the Earth
The boy on one end
And the godless man on the other
The world is one
If you think about it
The oak in the field

Giving shade to
the slaves

That work
In its shadow
The beech by the sea

Harboring men
home from Hell

The maple in the meadow
Carefully

keeping watch

Over his children
All children
The great ash in eden
That bore us all
The boy

laying dead in the
street

And the man

lying dead to the judge

Have met eyes before
Under the shade of the earth

No Muse

Gabriela K. Garcia*

You asked how much I love
But I had to carry you
And you pushed me down
into gardens that don't grow

You wouldn't have, you couldn't have
ripped the soul out of somebody
who wanted you more

I asked how much you love
But you dragged my fingers across the sky
And anchored my feet
into places without light

SMITTEN
acrylic



MADEEHA SHEIKH

DUCK, DUCT, GOOSE

Mary Tetreault

Down the chimney came the weirdest sound! Like a bird, or a mouse, or a whisper...but not.

A bat?

She panicked first, of course, running around in circles, chasing her mind....

Then wildly looking for a something to cover the rickety, ill-fitting fireplace screen, she kept her head way down for fear of what might be coming at her!

Over there! The red plaid throw would do...and duct tape. Blankly she tried to remember where she kept the tape. Finally after walking backward to keep her eye on the sooty sender of the scary sound, she found the big black scissors - and under them in the drawer was the tape!

There was the usual fight to start the tape with her fingernail and then keep it rolling as she yanked it with one hand and smoothed it with the other.

The bricks were hot, but thank goodness the fire had burned out! While holding the screen tightly against it with her knee, she sealed the blanket to the top of the fireplace opening. There wasn't even a inch of space for whatever it was to come out and get her!

Still holding the screen with her knee, she argued the tape down both sides and started on the bottom. Having three strips of tangled tape along the hearth she somehow managed to slow her breathing and stop the heartbeats throbbing in her ears! Maybe she could think now....

Oh! There was a terrible clatter as the scissors dropped just as she finished one leg of a huge gray X over the center of whole mess! While she scrabbled for the scissors, of course the tape started pulling off the roll skew-gee, sticking to her fingers in gobs. Swearing a trembling but well-used string of words, she freed her hand and cut off the giant knot of tape, managing to save enough to finish the last leg of the X.

The whole thing looked kind of like a kindergartener's tape-and-construction-paper greeting card for Santa – certainly not strong enough to keep her safe from ghosts, mice, barn owls, squirrels or bats!

Having worn her adrenaline down to a manageable quivering jelly, she escaped through the door, slammed it and went upstairs to bed. Taking a chill pill, she promised herself she would never admit that she had almost gone through the identical kitchen door by mistake and would have had to curl up in Ginger's big LL Bean dog bed and cover herself with a tablecloth! No way could she have come back through the room where the panic had overtaken her!

She really missed Ginger right that minute; her husband Pete had dropped him at the groomers and would pick him up on his way home around noon. Ginger would have protected her somehow!

No, not really. If the truth were known, he was the biggest, laziest, most chicken-hearted dog that was ever rescued from the Last Chance Dog Shelter! But Pete had fallen in love with the darned dog and promised to take care of everything involved in keeping him presentable, and so saved Ginger's life.

The next morning, after taking the long way around Job's barn, Sally got the key from its hiding place in a bush and entered the kitchen to fix some soup for lunch.

About eleven thirty, Pete and Ginger were in the driveway – both came into the kitchen searching for cold water and human kindness. They just weren't world travelers – and had missed Sally and home!

Ginger was all slobbery and drooly – Pete was just thirsty and glad to be back sitting at his own kitchen table. He noticed Sally's hug seemed to be a little shaky and pulled her onto his lap. Halfway through her tearful telling of last night's horrors, he burst out laughing.

"Sally, you silly goose!" Don't you remember when we bought this house? Before we even moved in, that was one of the first things I took care of! Remember? The chimney guy replaced a couple of bricks and put in a new screen so nothing could come down into the house?"

I bet you heard a mourning dove up there – they sound kind of like, "coo, coo, coo" he whispered eerily into her ear. Then he laughed himself silly, trying to hide it but not succeeding.

Ginger came over to see what all the laughing and crying was about. He wanted to know what a goose was and if he could chase it, or if it would chase him! Sally gave her husband a feeling-darn-silly hug . She was so beside herself with relief and embarrassment that she forgot herself and gave Ginger a hug, too.

A GIRAFFE IS BORN IN NEW ORLEANS

Roberta Whitman Hoff

On an April Monday a giraffe was born into this world.
Imagine the hours-old calf feeling her legs, learning to stand.
Each of us alone beneath a sun that shines on everyone.

In an empty park in grey morning light a giraffe is born.
In the quiet the mother reaches down, her long neck bends.
Each of us alone beneath a sky who belongs to no one.

The land is still. All the people are home.
In the hush the sun sets and the old wise trees just stand.
Each of us alone beneath the moon who belongs to no one.

At night the mother whispers her child's name in an ancient
hum.

The leaves softly join the humming chorus with the gentle
wind.

In spring in New Orleans a baby giraffe is born

In a zoo during the pandemic while the people stayed at
home.

The humans named the giraffe child Hope.
Each of us beneath the stars who belong to no one.

Mother is nuzzling the wide-eyed newborn,
Cleaning the sweat of labor in the comfort of hay and home.
In April a perfect giraffe was born into this world
Beneath the stars who watch over every one.

THE SISTERS

Emily Diaz*

We were laying on my sister's bed with our dog, Snow, and my sister was begging me to let her boyfriend come over. Our parents went to a play in NY and wouldn't be back until the next day. My sister had been begging me for an hour to let her boyfriend come even though our parents specifically told us we weren't allowed to have anyone over. I finally gave in and told her it was ok. She went to call her boyfriend and take a shower and I went downstairs to let snow outside. After I let snow outside, I went into the kitchen looking for a snack and that's when I heard the door. I figured it was my sister's boyfriend, so I opened the door only to find Snow dead on the front porch. I started to scream for help when a man came out from the side and covered my mouth and held a knife to my neck.

As we passed the stairs into the living room, I saw my sister coming down the stairs and when she saw what was happening, slowly she went back up the stairs. The man told me to sit down on the couch and asked if there was anyone else in the house and I said No. He then asked me to take him to where my parents' safe was located. I slowly got up and went up the stairs to my parents' bedroom and into the walk-in closet to where the safe was. He yelled at me to open it and threw a black bag at my feet telling me to put all the money in the bag. Little did he know my father had kept his gun in the safe.

I turned around to see if my sister had followed and she was right behind him. I asked him do you want everything in the safe or just the money and he said put everything in the bag. I pulled out the gun and pointed it straight at him and as he stepped back my sister held a pocketknife at his throat. He

froze and begged for us to let him go that he wasn't going to hurt us.

He chose the wrong house though because we're a family of cannibals and he was going to be our next meal. So, we tied him up and started to cut him up in the kitchen starting with his arms so that he could watch us fry and eat him. My sister took out a large pot and added the oil while I seasoned the meat. We put one of his arms in the pot to boil and he started to scream so we duct-taped his mouth. When our food was done, we sat at the kitchen table with our guest and asked him if he wanted some. One bite and he passed out. He tasted delicious and was the easiest catch we have ever had.

There was a knock at the door and my sister went to open it. It was my sister's boyfriend, and she took him straight to her bedroom so he wouldn't see our dinner in the kitchen. I finished dinner and placed the man on the table and began to cut him up to put the meat in the freezer. I started to walk into the living room and when I looked out of the window, I saw my parents' car coming up the road. Now we would have to explain why my sister's boyfriend was in the house, why Snow was dead and why there was another dead body in the freezer.

COPY OF VAN HUYSUM'S "STILL LIFE WITH FLOWERS AND FRUIT"



Emily Schneider*

IN THE BELOVED LAST MOMENT

Roberta Whitman Hoff

Death is a soundless maniac of stillness
hiding like a shadow in the rumpled sheets.
Here, this young woman, her husband gazing at her with eyes
blue
as a scarf of silken sky blinking with a glow that says he's hers,
she's his, kindred souls holding hands, palm to palm
touching --- there is no other, but death will roar its appetite
taking the Beloved into thin air; the wind beats
at the windows, the cancer and the treatment
has burned the cavern of his body from the inside,
stomach, intestines, lungs like a fire
and his breath heaves out of his throat and the wind whips
and thunders as if an army of horses rides on the storm
to carry him away on the riderless one galloping to the glass
right before the soundless absence
and his blue eyes turn to stone.

THE FINAL CURTAIN

Christian Rodriguez*

Harsh sunlight pierces through the canopies above, the heat so unbearable that it buzzes. Water is heard trickling down a nearby stream with birds performing an orchestra on the branches. The wind is not strong, but it does make the trees and plants dance to the whistle it makes. Just before the forest can complete its last scene, the play is interrupted by travelers stepping, crunching, and slashing through. No respect for the performers and a distraction to the audience.

“Daisy, pull out the map. I think we are getting closer to that treasure; I can smell the gold rings and disregarded jewelry from here.”

Daisy struggling to follow behind, rolls her eyes pulling out the scroll that was attached to the back of her backpack.

“Sure Garner, its not like you have been saying that for an hour straight and quite frankly, I’m worried we might have lost our way back.”

Garner hacking and slashing away at the dense shrubbery pays her sarcastic tone no mind and responds in a confident tone, “I’m sure we can go back anytime we want, my dear. But of course! That would mean losing out on this awesome loot.”

“But Garn, we would have found it by now by the looks of the map, are you sure there is anything even in this forest?”

“Well yes, I overheard the people at the Inn saying there is treasure to be found in here somewhere. Just gotta push on through until it presents itself.”

The harmony of the forest was being torn apart with every hack and slash Garner did, but the adventurers do not know this. They push on forward looking for the promised treasure that the drunk dwarves talked about. You see, Garner didn’t wait to hear the rest of their comments about the forest, he bolted out at the mere mention of treasure to be had.

Bustling of people can be heard inside the Inn and an upbeat fiddle is played in the background. Dwarves laugh and cheer at a

round table sharing stories and folktales they have heard around town. One dwarf with braided hair continues sharing a new rumor he has heard so much of...

"I bet you brothers haven't heard of the forest nearby that locals talked about."

One red haired dwarf sways his head side to side, clearly showing he's had way too much mead for the day.

"Well bloody hell out with it! I've been itching to know what this boring town is hiding from me."

"Calm down, Ornn! I'm getting to the details! The locals have said this forest does wonders. Like, it speaks for itself."

Dramatic, exaggerated gasps are heard from the table. The braided dwarf continues, "They have said this forest has beautiful harmony like no other. Yet, the adventurers don't become tranced, instead they ruin it. The forest gets mad."

He is suddenly interrupted by two travelers that burst through the front door of the Inn that clearly don't look they are from around here. They head towards the Innkeeper. The dwarves all stare but eventually focus back to their discussion with the braided one taking lead.

"As I was mentioning, the forest does seem to contain treasure in the end. Somewhere deep within its vast orchestra of trees and animals."

One of the previously mentioned travelers overhears the dwarf's conversation and stops talking to the Innkeeper. He is seen shaking a girl holding onto a map with excitedness before bolting out the door of the Inn with the girl chasing behind.

"But of course, brothers we have all heard this rumor all too well. I don't believe this forest has any treasure at all...."

"Daisy, I think we are here! There is an encampment here that looks recent and a sign pointing towards the cave right there."

"I don't know Garner; this is definitely a stupid idea of yours. Are you sure there is treasure in the cave? All you said was 'in the forest'."

"Daisy, Daisy, Daisy," he puts his hand on her shoulder and lifts his eyebrow. "When have I ever been wrong?"

The Innkeeper chimes into the dwarf's tale and speaks his knowledge, "You are right. No adventurer has lived to tell what's inside the forest. The rumor about treasure is started from the mischievous kids trying to trick friends into going inside. The forest is famous for its songs it plays but is known to be alive with the music it plays too."

The travelers head towards the cave but are stopped by the shaking of branches nearby. The trees dance side to side as the chirps of bird's progress into hisses and growls of other animals the closer they approach the cave. The sunlight begins to fade as the canopies mystically move to cover the light it provides to the careless travelers. Daisy panics seeing the forest change mood so quickly, she drops the map and bolts towards the way they came. It is too late, the forest is demonstrating its last scene of the play.

"You're a fucking lying Innkeeper! A forest does not live! It doesn't make music and it doesn't speak."

The Innkeeper, unfazed by the drunk red-haired dwarf, folds his arms and says in a matter of fact tone, "Well I don't need to tell you when it can show you itself. It seems the two travelers that came by earlier were so eager to venture it, they didn't want to heed my warning."

The Inn begins to shake from a distant vibration of what can only be explained of animals growling, chirping, and the wind picking up. The Innkeeper and Dwarves shocked, run outside to see the forest in the distance, shaking aggressively with the changed weather and grey clouds pushing wind in its direction.

"Daisy! It's so dark! Where are you?"

Nothing responds back and all is heard is an orchestra of the many noises the forest plays normally; except this time, it has about had it with the disrespectfulness it has received thus far.

After minutes of aggressive shaking is done, the canopies open back up to let in the sunlight again. Garner and Daisy, I am afraid, could not stay long to request an encore. But at least they got to see the final curtain drop before them.

AND SO ON AND SO ON

Paul Lubenkov

Before we gave names to the days of the week,
The sun was as easy as yesterday's friend,
And the moon came and went whenever it pleased.
We knew all about the design of the stars,
The cadence of trees, the shape of the seasons.
Even the homeless were lovely to see
As we spent our time carousing with saints.
And so at the end if tomorrow never comes
And meaning gives way to precious moment,
We can wait for the darkness that follows the light
And dance with the rhythm of the shifting wind
As we listen to the songs that must be sung.

CREPUSCULAR photograph



Sandra Eddy

DISEASE

Ryan Garesio

The migrant mother

The leftover bread
stale and turquoise in
the corner of the room
with no air conditioning

The pocket change for a one-way
bus ride

The desperate manager counting the ways
in which more customers can buy cigarettes

The sweat

The dread of going back home
to where the air is wet and tastes of
senseless murder

The cracked steps in the concrete
to the nineteenth floor

The door with no name
just a number: 19D

The child inside
waiting for a chance to explain

The panic that sets in after
the realization that the succulent
in the corner of the room
has rotted away

And is broken

TWO D2



Stacy Kolbig

MY LITTLE GIRL GOT A CAMPER

Mary Tetreault

My little girl got a camper
To pull behind her little red Jeep,
With special bed linens ordered online,
And it is filled with her dreams.

The girly girl will pull into a campsite
And hop out – all nail polish and bracelets,
And hair down her back.
She will set up the pop-up all by herself.

Surprise – Camper Guys! She is capable of
Doing it all - whatever needs to be set,
Hooked, unhooked, pounded, and carried.
She'll smile as her dream unfolds.

Then she will grab a towel
And zip down to the water for a swim.
By lantern light, she'll put your basic hot dogs and beer to
shame
With the scent of a great stew and unburned coffee.
And, of course, Some-Mores!

She sure is a girly-girl - with turtle bracelets and diamond
earrings
That glow in the firelight; as she gets out the bug spray
There's a sweet-woman scent underneath.
My little girl's got a camper! I'm so excited for her!

She's had it all planned out – everything light-weight;
Pounds and ounces pared down for gas mileage.
Dishes, one pan, bedtime treats, bacon for tomorrow.
She is away to be with herself – to enjoy the peace of the
night.

ZAHIDA
drypoint



Madeeha Sheikh

ANDROMEDA

Christopher Boniecki

So far in the distance
So beautiful and magical
A silly idea to think it could be reached
Filled with unthinkable colors and sights
It makes the colors around me all fade
Into less distinct hues
The shapes around me lost their dimensions
It became a sketch

Andromeda was A Starry Night
A masterpiece of endless spirals
Fractals of supernovas
Worlds spread above like conch shells
The concrete I stood on felt unimportant
The cracks in the sidewalk, imperfections

I thought I could reach out and put it in a jar
So I could always see it
Even if the evolving browns and greys
Became too bland to handle
But when I went to grab it
It crumbled into dust and gas
Only held together by fallacies
The Browns and Greys became all there was
Surrounding me and swallowing me
Until I was writhing among the formless depthless canvas
Of my nightmares
The dream that had held them back
Had become a heap of waste by my feet

Slowly any sense drifted away
The Browns and Greys were all there was
And so I too was just another blob
Gyrating among my fellow blobs

Andromeda had been conquered
And its beauty stripped away.

“THEIR DAD’S IN CANCUN....”

Elise Dawn Evans

Young kids, hearts drawn and quartered, get mad quick --
Turn to their new live-in sitter screaming
With frustration, hyperventilating
That that’s not their toothpaste. It makes them sick.

Wild brown eyes groan when she doesn’t know they
eat Skittles for breakfast; Dad says it’s ok....
Twinkies for dinner: “The soup is too thick...,”
The child pouts, drags a chair to fridge, balances
On its arm.... The sitter copes with ambivalence
As she holds *Ninja Boy* and blocks his kick
Meant for his sister’s *vagina*, now turned six
At last week’s no-mom b-day party. What a fix!
Not knowing whom to trust or what love to pick!

**SWEET HAPPY CAT IN SLUMBER:
a Pandemic Demo
original oil**



ShawnaLee W. Kwashnak

SIMPLE IS COMPLICATED

Kim Laughlin

Preface: I initially wrote this in December 2018 when the world was profoundly different. Our “past” is no longer the past; it’s “pre-covid.”

#####

The world is cluttered with intelligent people capable of creating intricate machines and tools all for the purpose of making our lives simple. Ironically, I find there is nothing simple about any of it.

“Alexa dim the lights.” “Alexa what does complicated mean?” What is so straightforward about this new device called “Alexa”? Sure the commercials portray it as a cinch. All you do is speak a command and magically your wish is answered. My mind immediately goes to the complexities of installing this woman in a shiny silver lit up tube. (She might just be someone’s best friend during self-isolation. A seemingly other human in the house to interact with.) There has to be wireless remotes and intricate wiring diagrams to make her work. Not to mention the computerized part of the whole set-up. I have yet to meet anyone who owns this device to confirm what a nightmare or waste of money it actually turns out to be. (It might be embarrassing to admit that some of us in isolation have taken to talking to a robot.) When did flicking a switch on the wall or opening a dictionary become such a hardship?

Another seemingly effortless activity that is used by a majority of the population is online banking, bill paying, and shopping. (These remote capabilities are no longer a nice convenience, they are a port in the storm.) The concept does reek simplicity. From the comfort of my home or office (or home office), I can, at any hour of the day, see my money, pay my bills, or shop for just about anything. No more driving to the bank or the post office. No more lines to stand in or humans to deal with

(oh how nice it would be to see another human). Also simple is the ease with which technical savvy criminals can acquire my financial and personal information. I have a one hundred page manual given out by my bank with step-by-step instructions on what to do if your computer gets hacked and your identity stolen. I did myself a favor and read the whole manual. I am convinced there is nothing simple about it. In a matter of seconds, “easy” can turn into complete chaos. (Our lives are dangling out on such a vulnerable limb.)

Just take a walk through the grocery store (and don’t forget to follow the arrows) to see how desperate we are to simplify our lives. We can choose from the manual labor food i.e. “fresh foods” and the pre-cooked, pre-packaged, frozen, and prepared foods. For the sake of simplicity, we are willing to pour inhuman amounts of sodium, sugar, and preservatives into our bodies. I have lived long enough to know that there is nothing simple about diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, e-coli, and yes lets just say it shhhh “cancer.” I don’t know why we feel the need to whisper the word “cancer.” Maybe because it’s really scary. (The new scary is “positive covid test.”) If you listen to the news it seems like everything gives you cancer. My generation of baby boomers are the guinea pigs to it all and we are just now seeing the results of all the junk we consume. (Speaking of guinea pigs - can anyone say “vaccine”?) Let’s explore household appliances. Gone are the days of scrubbing our laundry on a washboard. No longer do we have to carry blocks of ice to a box to keep our food cold. What a blessing it is that we can push a button and get a safe clean heat source to cook our food. If we want to cook over an open fire we call it camping. Over the decades, these appliances have turned into technical monsters. We have washing machines with dryers built in, refrigerators that have computer screens built into the doors, and stoves that can cook using microwave, convection, air fry, and plain old heat all in one unit. My father used to say “the more gadgets something has the more things

to break.” I too agree and he taught me that simple means “less is more.” (An added bonus to the complication of broken appliances is the health risk of the repair person coming into your home.)

What fuels our insatiable desire to simplify our life? Obviously, it starts with a need due to something feeling difficult or tangled. “Necessity is the mother of invention” (Zoom). I often find myself jumping to what appears to be the simple solution without thinking through the long term effects of how simple could turn complicated. For instance, I do not own a smartphone. I have a simple flip phone with no internet capability. I decided when smart phones first came out that I didn’t want to be connected to everyone and everything all the time everywhere. How can I enjoy keeping my head where my feet are if my face is constantly staring into a device in my hand. How does carting around this device simplify my life? Why is isolating myself from human contact (life or death necessity) simpler than face-to-face interaction (social distancing)? If I have faith and hope that most people I know have the capacity to take care of themselves, why do I need to be available at all times?

#####

Fast forward to present or “post covid.” In March 2021, much has changed in my world. My flip phone was starting to act up 2 months prior to the pandemic. Something inspired me to cave and purchase a smartphone. Unbeknownst to any of us, two months later came the pandemic and I realized that this smartphone was no longer a fun convenience, it was a necessity. If I had kept the simple flip phone, “simple” would have turned very complicated. I am now part of the majority and I can navigate this complicated world simply through my once complicated gadget.

Yikes!

OLIVE painting



Lydia Temple

MUSCLE CAR MEMOIRS

Kenneth DiMaggio

#1

Racing towards a rusted
hub cap of a moon

Whoever wins the race
between the bowling
alley and the giant
fiberglass statue of
a lumber jack in front
of the abandoned
sawmill gets the prize:

a couple of minutes
of infamy where the
good girls wish they
could get into your car

while the bad girl
who does
comes back to you
several months later
with a surprise

*

#2

Cigarette
and gold
First Communion
crucifix

You hoped
to wake up
in Heaven
but in your Camaro
with your Star-spangled

bandana wrapped around
the rear view mirror
you didn't want to see
any churches
Marine Corps recruiting
offices
or jail cells

--And don't need
to see any weddings
babies
and baptisms
--added the girl
who was taking
this infamous ride
with you tonight

Even if it was just
to a chicken bone-littered
beach
you could still hear the
waves while you talked
& told things you would
never tell anyone else
but to this woman
in whose arms
you would wake up

*

#3
A gallon of gas
and a magnetic
statue of the Virgin
Mary atop the dashboard

--hope she doesn't mind
late night FM radio with all
that hell-billy and death-zeppelin
stuff

"Whatsya name?"

"Where'd ya go ta school?"

"I'll tell you if you get
inside."

"Okay but my friend's
coming to!"

Pop! Pop! Pop!
from their bubblegum
before they get into the
Camaro for an illegal
maybe reputation-ruining
ride

But just like their driver
will wisely race away from
the patriotic recruiting
of the Marine Corps

so won't these two underage
girls avoid the early but
lifelong suffering
motherhood
of their moms & sisters

*

#4

Checking in the rearview
mirror to see if her lip-
stick is brighter than
the neon beer sign in

the bar they are about
to go into

Combing a little more
gel into hair that will
hopefully make him look
old enough to be a Marine
on leave and old enough
to drink

--or maybe not

And as they drive away
from a night where they
were almost about to pretend
they were happy & wise like
their moms and dads

she takes his star-spangled bandana
from his pocket to wipe away
her lip paint

briefly holds out the window
this stained banner she is not
ready to pledge to

then lets it go
into a quick whirl that
disappears into a no
longer framed
neon night

#5
Engine idling
Gasoline headache
When you finally
wake up
it is to a rosary

hanging from the
rear view mirror
Luckily
there is enough stale
beer in the bottle on
the dashboard
for breakfast

“Don’t come home until you
ack like a human being!”
you read as you again
fold out Mom’s misspelled
note

You’ve been here before
This morning it’s a beach
with dive-bombing seagulls
who already shit a load
on your car

What was her name
before she slammed
the door and hard
enough to rock
your Camaro
--don’t worry

There’ll be another girl
to tell you to grow up
or drop dead

★

DREAMING OF IMMORALITY

Laura Bobela*

I've got a monkey on my back.
It speaks to me in whispers of riddles
both helpful and wildly useless.
It idles in a state of hope and emergency.
365 days in a hospital to cure the past of its wreckage
like a vaccination of chicken soup for the soul.

I'm talking moral dilemmas.
The kind that compromise my integrity
Regardless of the right choice.
But that's kind of the point, right?
Our morality varies like
Arnold Schwarzenegger's career path.
Will I hand the stray ball back to the rich kid with cancer
or give it to the poor healthy kid across town?

Will this tunnel of integrity ever change?
Will this need for a perceived vision of humanity
ever cease to project a sense of urgency on my soul?
I've been fighting the back pain for a while now.
It seems the monkey gets heavier with each passing year
and I'm tired.
It might be time to try a more ruthless approach
so I fold my hands in contemplation.

FIN

Ryan Garesio

someday the
universe will
tell us
its secret
why the
earth stares
toward the
sun and
we labor
in its
presence slaves
to its
glow and
greed why
sometimes love
takes longer
than we
thought to
manifest into
a million
little pieces
of starlight
why man
has given
himself to
labor over
radiance why
thoreau lived
quietly in
the woods
searching for
life within

why the
rainforests are
dying away
why people
have given
up and
swooned home
to their
shadows where
light hides
and thoughts
sit like
cast iron
on a
shelf in
the refrigerator

TWO D1



Stacey Kolbig

REVELATION

Ryan Garesio

Love is not just a home,
nor is it the sun.
It is the desert and it's bitter cold;
The blood on our fingers,
the blisters on our soles.

IN A HANDSHAKE

Roberta Whitman Hoff

I stood by the door and his hand shook mine,
his hand like a bowl or a crystal ball,
my palm to his, warm as a gentle sun
where the sky opens up
and I am on a mountain
where I hear his voice say
God Bless, I return without hesitation
God Bless, even though
I am no longer a believer,
and for a moment all beauty is real,
God the Bless and I am on a mountain
beneath the open sky as the sun sets over the world.

This man is from Ireland
with a brogue I know so well,
he knows the town where my mother was born
and a nice man named Canny my age.
I have so many cousins I've never met
and this one like me has fallen on misfortune,
painfully knowing love then death too soon.
There is a strength in this Irishman's eyes
as if he's weathered the world as strong as a rock
as kind as a dove holding the Irish skies
in the palm of his handshake I am on a mountain
watching the glorious sun set
over ridges and valleys far from where I stand.

His handshake has brought me to God Bless
so pure in the sunlight of his palm,
as if hypocrisy never existed
and the world be so gentle and kind,

the sound so aery as if his brogue came out of the sky,
as if he held me in a blink of time
in the palm of his hand
and I were on top of a mountain
and God's loving voice rang like a bell
in the sparkling ridges and valleys.
God Bless, nothing more, nothing less.

A COPY OF DA VINCI'S "MONA LISA"



Emily Schneider*

WE GOT ALONG

Madeeha Skeikh

like a house on fire,
twin flames burning
bright, scarlet and amber against
the ash-grey sky.
suffocating, black smog billowed in my
lungs until the raging blaze died down.
there is no semblance of the house
left in the foundation where I am buried,
tiny buds peek out of the scorched earth.

THOUGHTS FROM A BUMBLEBEE

Elizabeth Schneider*

Came a garden visitor one fine day.
I almost collided, and so chanced to delay.
“Hello, dear Bumble, what’s the news?
All this coronavirus is giving me the blues.”
“Ah... bzzz...ziz,” he chanced to say
“I was wondering what you do all day.”

“I don’t know,” said I, “Go ask some other.
I don’t know one flower from another.”
But he answered me, and decided to stay,
“I came to say hello to you today.
Where is your basket, and where is your brush?
You must have come for a visit all in a rush.
Pollen is stuck to you from head to tail,
I would give you a bath but t’would be no avail.”

“Buzzz...zzz...” answered the Bumblebee
“It seems that you must be a little wild like me.
Your hair is uncombed, your shirt needs a duster.
Your shoes are untied, and your coat lacks some luster.”

“It’s quarantine,” I said, “and there’s nothing to do.
I’m bored and I’m tired, how about you?”
The bee buzzed busily up from the ground.
“I never get bored, and I never leave town
Flying is fascinating; flowers are nice.
And when I’m done, I’ll be back in a trice
To the hive when the other bees are waiting
For nectar and honey, they are creating.”

Continued the bee: "I am glad to see you and when you have time,

You can write all of this down in a rhyme.

Don't sit and wait for quarantine to be over,

Sit and be thankful for blessings like clover."

I won't forget you little bee.

Thank you so much for coming to me.

I will take your advice, small fuzzy friend,

And I will go and sit, and a peaceful time I will spend

For things to be thankful, I can't find an end.

THE RAINBOW

Elizabeth Schneider*

“It looks like a space station.”

That was the first thing that came to my mind, as I was wheeled in by the lady with the pointy hair. The walls and doors were layered on each other, to give the impression that the hallway never ended; but the hallway in fact was round and circled the floor of the building.

I was conscious of a general feeling of wobbliness, as though with a single nudge, my whole world would fall apart and go splintering into pieces. The lady was trying to get my attention. My attention cracked and wavered.

“I can walk fine,” I insisted, as the doctor seemed to be asking me to get up for the wheelchair I was sitting in. Even my legs were wobbly, as though my feet had forgotten what the floor felt like.

Being at a psychiatric hospital was not where I would have thought I would have been going three months ago. My mind had been working okay for the most part up until a month ago—it was my body that had seemed to be rebelling.

I was wheeled over to a room where other patients were doing scrapbooks. Everyone was cutting out pictures from magazines. The room had dusty purple couches and a greenish-gray carpet. The late afternoon sunlight was slanting through the huge floor-to-ceiling windows and making my eyes hurt. I tried to kneel on the carpet, but my wobbly knees wouldn’t bend right. I sat on the sofa instead. Somehow I hadn’t felt very lonely until that moment. This activity seemed to be part of the normal routine, but I felt left out, and I was glad when it was over.

The whole thing seemed to be like something out of a bad dream—a normal bad dream though, not like the dreams I had lately, where headless people floated in a sea of green or strange people in space suits tried to take me away. The emptiness was puzzling, when the hospital I had just left was full from morning till evening with doctors, nurses, hospital workers and families of patients crossing and re-crossing the hall, sometimes with balloons, sometimes without. People were always coming in, to ask if I wanted to color pictures or pet the therapy dog. But things here were so quiet.

I hated the silence here.

I woke to the sound of the lady with the blood-pressure machine that sounded like an elephant. It was only just after 6 am. As the machine vanished down the hall, I heard a clacking noise. That was the employee with the high heels who pushed around a shopping cart, apparently for no reason. I wished I could stay in bed longer, but I didn't want to get into any more trouble than I was in already. I dragged myself into the required hospital gown and then down the hall to be weighed.

"Hi Elizabeth!" the beautiful employee in the flowery dress greeted me on my way back from dozing over breakfast. "Are you ready for a walk?"

I watched the other patients as we all crossed the lobby on our usual circuit. They didn't look like they had eating disorders—most of them didn't seem especially fat or thin, even though that was what we all were here for.

After a round of activities meant to help create mindfulness, I was tired. Back in my room finally, I propped up my feet on a suitcase, turned up my CD player, and tried to draw a picture that would get my mind off the silence. This silence took me

back to all the times that I had ever felt lonely. In a world that seemed disconnected from me, drawing was the one way I could express my feelings. I needed to remind myself who I was.

I wished so much that I could say what I really felt. I was afraid I would never be the person I once was, who was always talking about whatever to whoever would listen. The girl with the black-and-white striped leggings had been so friendly to me, but I had been too tired to talk. I hoped giving a drawing to her would make up for my lack of a proper greeting. I heard the girl with the noisy flip flops—sounding like she was bent on a mission, as usual—followed by pit-ter-pattering noises that must be the little girl with the fuzzy blue slippers. I was always missing out on everything.

I wanted to be free like the butterflies that I drew. I tried to handle my emotions, and not focus on myself too much, but I would always just dissolve into tears, like when my hair got too snarly or my necklace broke. Crying and pacing in circles was not allowed, but I did it anyway.

Sometimes, other patients would leave little notes under my door, which made me feel like at least they noticed me, and wanted to be friendly, but mostly I was jealous of the girls without thin, wobbly legs and falling-out hair.

Part of me wanted to close in, and not care about anyone other than myself. But I drew a gigantic orange butterfly for one girl and a brown horse for another girl. A little girl who always was followed by an IV stand gave me a coloring book picture. And I finally asked the boy who drew cartoons to draw me a squirrel. Somehow, I really began to care about the little girl with the vacant stare, her face a frozen mask of fear.

I didn't really want to go to the chapel downstairs, until the tall lady with the brown hair suggested it—and even then it seemed like a strange thing to do. Only the other patients from my floor were there. The tiny chapel was off the hall next to the cafeteria. The cafeteria was big and empty and echoing. The toasters and orange juice squeezer (I think that's what was on the counter) never seemed to be used. The chapel had rainbows all over the ceiling somehow. It must have been some sort of special lighting, but I didn't wonder about it at the time. I felt out of place in this beautiful room, with the new leather kneelers and the gleaming white floor with shiny silver specks in it.

The first week, the minister went on and on—something about the Old Testament that I couldn't understand. The second week, I sat down, not expecting anything out of the ordinary. A different minister hit play on a boom box on the floor. Then suddenly, like a rainbow after a storm, the words of a song unexpectedly shone bright into my heart. "God has been faithful, he will be again, his loving compassion knows no end..." All at once, I knew God was answering my unspoken prayers. Trusting him through the storm was still worth it.

I see myself a year later, laughing in the rain and chasing my sister down a path in the woods. I could run and jump again; the clouds of sickness thinned until they would blow away all together.

Looking out my own window, I enjoy this silence. I know for sure that I will never be left out; God was with me the whole time. And I know, as I sit here, that I am not alone.

THIRD GENERATION GROCER PANDEMIC FRONTLINE HERO original charcoal portrait



ShawnaLee W. Kwashnak

AM I REALLY AWAKE?

Jayanne Sindt

Your wokeness makes me weary
Projecting your guilt and shame
We are in agreement really
Why are you entrenched in blame?

How about some radical kindness?
With a spirit of compassion
Utilize reason and mindfulness
Instead of emotional reaction

To truly be enlightened
Requires some humility
A self-reflection that is heightened
Rather than judging those you see

Before you cancel another
Take a long look within
In standing up for each other
This is the place to begin

If you condemn someone else
Part of you is punished in the end
Get to know yourself
Become your own best friend

Practice self-love and care
Recognize what is good
Make wokeness Self Aware
Not criticizing others with "should"

Our goal is full acceptance
To be wholly forgiving
not filled with hate and repentance
This is enlightened living

**CELEBRATING WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE STILL
HELD BACK WHILE MOVING FORWARD**
original oil on birch board



ShawnaLee W. Kwashnak

THE OPEN GATE

Elizabeth A. Schneider*

“Shut the gate!” I shouted, to no one in particular. I had just gotten back from a very trying day at work, to see my bay quarter horse/Arabian cross swishing her tail at me from inside her enclosure. Somehow, the gate was wide open and swinging in the wind.

“Don’t move!” I shouted. But somehow Clover got exactly the opposite idea. She neighed and tossed her head and I watched with dismay as she bolted out of the gate, and my last sight was her hindquarters vanishing down the bottom of the hill. There was no way I could run after her, with my sprained ankle that still hadn’t healed all the way.

I thought of my neighbor. Her son had an ATV. No one answered, so I left a message “Hi, this is Crystal, your next door neighbor. My horse has just gone down to the trail behind the pasture. Please let me know if you see her, or are able to look for her.”

I drove to the road nearest the back of the field and waited. I looked at my phone. Suddenly, there was Clover. I called the number on the post. “She’s scratching her back against my children’s swing set,” said the neighbor.

But of course, when I got over there, she was gone. I looked out at the gray cloudy sky, and the grayish green winter fields. “Where could she have gone?” I thought to myself. I wasn’t exactly good grazing this time of year, so she probably hadn’t gone to the neighbor’s field like last time. I thought of all the things my horse liked. Horse treats, little children, and dogs, especially Lola, my terrier mix.

I tried getting Lola to find her trail, but she just whined at

me. On a whim, I drove down to the elementary school. Sure enough, Clover was sticking her head over the fence for all the little children to pet her. Cover enjoyed being the center of attention and also being on the outside of the fence for once.

I stopped my car “Clover!” I called. She turned her head and looked at me. She neighed and smiled a horsey smile—and galloped off again. The playground monitors looked on in surprise.

My neighbor called me back—but I explained that my horse was all the way down to the elementary school, and the ATV wouldn’t do any good. “Don’t worry, we’ll help find her,” my neighbor said. “We’ll think of something.”

Half an hour later, I got a call from a parent whose child I used to babysit. “Is that your horse, running down Main Street? You’re the lady with the horse, right?”

I drove as fast as I could down to the center of town. Clover was walking right down the sidewalk, as nice as you please. While I was stuck at a red light (the only stoplight in town) she increased her speed and disappeared around the corner, into the open door of the feed store.

“I’ve got her now,” I thought. All I needed to do was shut the door, and she would be trapped. But as I got out of my car, I saw a pair of hindquarters emerge from the door, and the new guy that worked there was backing Clover slowly out the side door, “What ever made you think that you could come and eat up the entire supply of horse biscuits?” he was saying.

Horse biscuits! I should have brought some. Of course, Clover trotted off again, making a clip-clopping noise with her newly shod hooves. Maybe it was the farrier that left the gate open.

Almost out of options, I called the police department. They

said that they were not sure how they could help me, as stealing horse biscuits was not exactly a serious crime, and the horse was not a threat to the community.

Almost out of options, I called the police department. They said that they were not sure how they could help me, as stealing horse biscuits was not exactly a serious crime, and the horse was not a threat to the community. I was glad at least no one had called them about a runaway horse that was scaring the children at school..

I had to catch Clover soon. She might get a stone caught in her foot and get lame, walking on all the loose stones by the roadside. Or she might get scared by a wild animal and run off to the next county.

I sighed. Maybe I should call the “dog pound” as the local animal rescue service was called.

“Yes, there’s a horse here,” the person on the other end of the line said indifferently. As I drove up, I got a glimpse of Clover out by the dog kennels. She certainly did seem to have an affinity for other domestic animals, especially dogs.

I called to her, but she didn’t seem to hear. I felt betrayed, as though she didn’t appreciate her home and her stable.

But suddenly I gasped. Two people were sneaking up on her with a loop used to catch stay dogs. They must not be used to horses. One person got the loop over her head, but the second person came up from behind and scared her. She leapt forward and the rope broke. She took a wide jump across a ditch and galloped off.

She was headed toward a construction site. “Don’t get lame, please don’t!” I thought to myself. She couldn’t get lame now, not with the cross-country riding competition in less than a

week. Maybe she was doing this on purpose, to get back at me for making her keep jumping those same boring fences over and over.

Suddenly my neighbor drove up. "Well, I guess Clover is getting her romp in," she said.

But I was almost in tears, "She could get lame in two minutes, if she gets one of those sharp stones in her foot." It was also getting cold out, and I pulled my thin jacket tighter.

"You look like you need some coffee," said my neighbor, so I persuaded myself to be led across the street to the diner.

As we were drinking our coffee, suddenly I saw a whiskery face appear at the window. It was Clover. I ran as fast as I could over to the door.

"I don't care!" I called to her retreating back. "Get lame or whatever you want to do, someday you'll appreciate your nice barn better!"

I finished my coffee in silence and bought a doughnut from the counter. I thanked my neighbor and slowly got in the car next to Lola.

As we pulled in the driveway, Lola whined. "What is it?" I asked. Thinking that she had to use the bathroom, I took her out across the yard. She started running toward the barn. "What is it?" I asked again. Lola ran into the yard, and I shut the gate behind me, thinking that it would be good for Clover to feel what it was to be locked out for once.

But then I heard a noise. In the doorway to the barn I saw a head with two pricked-up ears. "It can't be," I thought to myself.

It was. It was Clover, waiting for her supper.

**COPY OF VIGEE LE BRUN'S "SELF PORTRAIT
IN A STRAW HAT"
2nd PLACE**



Emily Schneider*

SCENES FROM A BAPTISM

Kenneth DiMaggio

(#1)

The D'Agatas were
ready to sit down with
the DiMaggios the same
way oil sits with a fire

"If my son wanted a Show
Girl he coulda gone to Vegas
or Atlantic City instead
marrying one!"

"My daughter didn't marry
your boy for five minutes
before he was back to his
mother like a baby
for his breakfast!"

And while the priest tries to
remind both families that
this is the St. Ann's parish
hall and not the Third
World War

the new parents enter
with a baby dressed
in a soft satin white tuxedo
that gets everyone cooing
and genuflecting
and unknowingly all
coming forward to briefly
hold kiss and pass along
as one family

(#2)

Already drunk
before the food is served

“Ya know you’re at an
Italian baptism when the
women pou-ah on the perfume
like a who-ah before the
next trick.”

And as his ex-wife yells
at the waiter to shut him off

her ex-husband tells
how he knew over ten
thousand people in his
eighty year-old life

From mobsters to politicians to
great drinkers like Billy Pastorelli
who drank enough to sink
a battleship but—

“If ya tried to fit ‘em all in
this room today there wouldn’t
be any space for this little guy
who just got baptized.”

A baby who already looked
too big for the tiny satin tux
he recently got anointed in

An infant regarding this
crowded banquet hall as if
they are already familiar
pieces of a dream he will
later have but fail
to identify

★

(#3)

Cooing crying wiggling

the babies

we Godparents

held before their

baptisms

as the priest

instructed us

for which we

Godmothers & Godfathers

would soon unwrap

their blankets

for them to receive the water

that would protect them

against the evil

we tried to forever

hold them from

★

(#4)

Don't cry

--because the priest

just blessed you with

holy water

You don't have to be

afraid

--because your practical

and experienced Godmother

is holding you instead of your

dreamy poet of a Godfather!

Let them cry

--the old aunts uncles grand-

mothers and fathers in the

nearby pews

(for today you are spared
in knowing how an Aunt named
Lorraine or a Grandpa called
Sebby will briefly lie in front
of this church to receive
their final blessing)

Ahhh! You're still crying!
--so here let me hold you

And when I can no longer
there are aunts uncles cousins
and a mother and father

There will always be hands
that yours will soon grow into

Hands that will be there to teach
you how to love and to hold

★

(#5)
Sometimes getting drunk
is good
(if it wasn't Sebby wouldn't
be hugging his ex-wife Lorraine)

Sometimes religion can be fun
--if we were all at'eists we wouldn't
be stuffing in this unhealt'y pasta
and drinking this Chianti in
the St. Ann's Parish Hall

Sometimes getting married and
having kids can be great:
for the celebrations like this
because where else are you
going to see an old Uncle pop

his glass eye out into a ginger-ale
filled cup after his hearty but
no longer estranged son gives
him a strong vigorous hug

And as two young parents
together hold up their baby
dressed in a white bow-tied
satin tuxedo the hall comes
to a hush

--is the baptism over?

For at least another few
months and no more than
a year

Just has to
Can't help but
keep it going
the same as wine
is best drunk with
family in celebration

★

**COPY OF CARAVAGGIO'S "BASKET OF
FRUIT"
3rd PLACE**



Emily Schneider*

BELIEVE

Joseph R. Adomavicia

May we believe in one another,
may we unite as the name of our country insists.
To be a unit of unification living unfettered by restrictions
within various states, cities, counties, towns, and reservations.
A representation of people peacefully coexisting,
withstanding difference of opinion or belief
within the melting pot that is America.
May we act not only for ourselves,
but what is also good for our neighbors as well.
For, if we continue to neglect acceptance,
what then, is there to genuinely believe in?
On Ellis Island, Liberty Enlightens the World.
A 24-carot-gold gilded torch is held upward and proudly in a
Patina hand.
Shall Lady Liberty's torch be doused out?
Shall her 7-pointed crown fall to the ground
next to the broken shackles at her feet
or shall the flames in the hearts and eyes of her people ignite
the flame everlasting?
May we believe in one another,
may we unite as the name of our country insists
because as is, is not good enough.

REMEMBER ME

S.E. Page

Sometimes I feel
like a candy wrapper—
scrunched up shiny trash
still holding the indent
of a chocolate heart
stolen from inside me.
Can you remember
my shape, my velvet core?
Remind me again
the way I used to be:
dark deep delights beyond
the savor of memory.

OVERRIPE MANGO

Ember S. Wheeler

Soap-scrubbing coffee kisses off faux granite
and shouldering crumbs onto white tile below,
I napkin off a place to eat and
I grab the sharpest knife that I see and
cut into red wrinkled fresh to peel back the
gold beneath and
sink my teeth into nectar-dripping shag-skin.

GENTLE

Roberta Whitman Hoff

Gentle with the body.
In the deli the thin elderly man
holds the table so he can sit down
carefully. He smiles. He is fragile
with a long life lived,
with his soul gleaming
like a candle in the bustle
of cultural capitalism
where young folks clutch
toxic jobs to make a meager living.
I watch from my table
this dear old man who
reminds my heart of my father
long gone to the other world,
his voice missed, missed in
my memory, lost in the tangible air
for the rest of my life, my soul
trembling, longing to appreciate all,
to escape the pain of daily needs,
to just wrap the soul with kindness
in a field of wheat with the sun shining,
the clouds casting playful shadows,
the winds whistling and tickling
our bodies, our souls with song
natural and ancient:
Be gentle. Be gentle.

BLUE JAY



Charlotte Silver*

THE LORELEI'S LURE

S.E. Page

Mermaids
In my thoughts,
Mermaids
In my genes—
Why else then
My thirst
For deep waters
Chilled and glinting,
Aqua-play,
Me in it,
That tumult of light,
Liquefied.

I desire
To swim in the wet skins
Of cloud,
Fresh sky on my tongue,
To wear mist-suspended veils—
Gems melting into oceans,
Me with them,
Melting topaz-silver
Dropping
In winged tears.

I want to fly—
Soar with the waves,
Foam with the breakers,
Even,
Sing with the mermaids.

GARDEN PARTY

Martha Phelan Hayes

For Julie – 1957-2007

One year safe from the shock,
we dare to reminisce: your innocent
love of hard candy and opera.
How you slow danced with Jimmy
Peters at the junior prom.
And then, of course, the food is gone,
its ability to keep our mouths busy over.
We pry free another cork.
Someone is bound to bring it up,
how quickly you seemed to fall.
The danger of such a mishap
muted by the slow infusion of
alcohol, while ineluctably
our cells are splitting and dividing,
growing older and older and older.
We all know how it could happen,
how any one of us might topple,
like a bottle of wine, full
and heavy, knocked down
onto a white linen tablecloth,
spattering red into a stain, at first
appalling but in time fading
to a faint blush of a night
we shared together.

DEAR LANDLORD

A year ago the branches bowed with the weight
of a thousand tender peaches gleaming and rotting;
this year the branches were barren-
harsh spring, maybe, left still the ghosts
of last year's lynched pits.
we only have another six months in this place
there's a new yorker coming for this land
and i hear my momma crying
over more than just skinny trees.

SUNSET SUNRISE

S.E. Page

For Dad

The water waits for me—
Lapping starlight speaks my name
Loud with sparkles.
I follow my own sunset, sunrise.
I open my eyes to blue
Sea as far as I can see, and sky
Wider than the embrace of earth.

Meet me here, beloved—
Where hearts are reborn and stone
Becomes copacetic star.
Meet me where rivers laugh
With human tongues and willows bend
To blithe breezes of the soul.

Meet me where we may
Clasp and grow shared heavens
In our own hands,
Where there are no
Semi-precious endings,
But infinite bright
Beginnings.

*Dedicated to my father, who passed from Covid-19 complications in 2020, twelve years after my mother's passing.

HOW TO BE A TIME TRAVELER

Elizabeth Schneider*

I just put on my suit and helmet. Today, I decided to go to New York City at the turn of the 20th century. I have to be very careful, because I'm told it is very busy and dangerous there. I have planned my route out very carefully. I don't want anyone to discover who I am.

Time traveling outfits are easy to find these days, but it pays to be careful. One person I met was shocked to find out that their grandfather had been adopted—all those stories he'd told about family who were heroes had been made up. Another person went crazy when they saw how they used to process meat. It's not just being killed in a train wreck or being trampled by horses that's dangerous about going back to the past.

So as my plan that was zipped in the pocket of my suit dictated, I did a double check over all my gear. I had written it in Russian, and memorized it, to be doubly sure. I really should tear it up into a million pieces in case I am followed, but I'm not that paranoid. I like to read spy stories, but everyone thinks I'm crazy. Ever since people started time traveling, no one reads anymore, It is just not exciting enough, now that it's the year 2903.

I took a deep breath, and stepped though the mirror. I felt myself whirl through time, and as I was beginning to see again, I felt my face brush against a coat. So far so good. I had planned to come out in a closet. This way, I could put on period clothes, so as not to attract attention. I could have just brought clothes, as most people did, but there was always a question of the zippers and the elastic, and the polyester lace, and all the things that looked perfectly right, but would never have been found on an old-fashioned costume in a million years.

I struggled out of my suit. Luckily, it was quiet, and all I could hear was people talking in the street below, and was sounded like a mouse crawling through the wall in back of me.

Hopefully, I could hide my suit somewhere and find a costume that fit me. I tried on several skirts before I found one that fit me. If I hadn't I would have had to go back again and try a different closet. People seemed to be much thinner in the old days, I thought, as I struggled into the matching shirtwaist. They must have been shorter too, I thought as I saw my legs in black stockings that I had brought from home sticking out from beneath the skirt.

This would have to do for now, I thought, as I pulled on a pair of hobnailed boots. Now I was ready. I slowly opened the door of the closet, turned the bolt of the family's apartment—I did leave some money in exchange for the clothes, and tiptoed down the dusty steps of the apartment building. A very upset baby was crying somewhere. It seemed very loud, but it was not as loud as when the full force of the noise of the street hit me.

At the last minute, I remembered to look around and memorize where exactly the apartment building was. That way I could get my suit back later. Next, I thought of the other addresses I had memorized. Maybe eventually I would try to call on my ancestors.

But first, I wanted to look around a little. Someone was selling baskets of enormous cauliflowers. I asked the old man behind the cart how he got them to grow so big, but I couldn't understand what he was saying. I could definitely win the prize at the country fair with a cauliflower that big—if people ever started doing fairs again. I bought a hot baked potato from a vendor and tried to move to the other side of the street to eat it.

It smelled so much here, for some reason. "It must be the fish" I thought, as a vendor with a whole cart full of fish, fresh and not-so-fresh rolled past. Hopefully, there was such a thing as drains and sewers here, although I did see an outhouse. I finished my potatoes, but I realized the smell was coming from a dead horse in the corner. Didn't they have humane societies? I thought.

A driver of a fancy-looking carriage shouted at me to get out of

the way. Four large black horses with black feathers sticking out of their head pieces pranced by. I hurried down the street.

There was a factory here; maybe I could look inside. Those factories in the early 20th century sounded exciting. I peered into a window and watched as women in ragged dresses operated some huge machines that banged and rattled.

“Sophie, get back to work!” someone shouted at me.

“Oh dear, I could be wearing Sophie’s dress, for all I know,” I thought. A woman grabbed me and shoved me into the building. “Go to the loom in the corner,” she shouted.

“This can’t be too hard.” I watched the woman with the loom on the other side of the room and copied what she did. I was going along fine, until I began to run out of thread. There was a clacking, and a rattling, and something in the machine banged angrily.

“Help!” I shouted. The people in the factory looked at me, like they liked to have me arrested or worse, so I ran out of the factory as fast as I could. I ran and ran, and gradually the footsteps that seemed to be pursuing me faded, and the street was empty when I looked back five blocks later.

I stopped to catch my breath at the end of a side street. Suddenly, it hit me—time traveling wasn’t as simple as I had thought. No one will ever be glad to see me here. If they were, they would think I was someone they knew, someone else that wasn’t me. Back with my family, in my own time zone, I could actually be me. Here, I was only an imposter. With a feeling that was more relief than regret, I turned around and headed back the way I had come.

It must been market day. People with pushcarts were shouting as loud as they could, to try to get people to buy what they were selling, and buyers, mostly older women in skirts like me, were looking around at the produce. I tried to remember what was next on the list that I had made that was still upstairs in the closet, zipped into the pocket of my suit.

PHARMACY TECHNICIAN FRONTLINE HERO

original charcoal portrait



ShawnaLee W. Kwashnak

Submission Deadline: March 1, 2022

Fresh Ink 2022

NVCC's Art and Literature Journal

will accept works in three categories:

Poetry

Short Fiction

2-D Art

- Up to five (5) individual works will be considered from each writer or artist.
- Each prose and poetry piece cannot exceed 1250 words in length.
- Only electronically submitted text documents in .doc, .docx or .rtf formats will be considered.
- 2-D representations of any art genre should be submitted in hi-res .jpg or .pdf format (300 dpi)
- All graphic submissions will be considered for the cover design.
- All entries must be submitted via

FreshInk@nvcc.commnet.edu

- Each entry should be submitted separately as an attached file.
- Each file name should be the work's title.
- No author's or artist's names should appear on the submitted attached works.
- Authors' and artists' names, emails and mailing addresses should be included in the body of the corresponding email.
- Only works from self-identified NVCC students will be entered in the NVCC Poetry, Short Fiction and Art contests. All works will be entered into the Luke S. Newton Memorial Contest.

For further information contact Jeannie Evans-Boniecki, PhD,
Fresh Ink Advisor at JEvansBoniecki@nvcc.commnet.edu.



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Front Cover: "Smitten" by Madeeha Sheikh
Back Cover: "Olive" by Lydia Temple