



wildscape.

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TRIGGER WARNING: Some passages within this issue may contain difficult topics, which could be triggering for some people. These topics include but are not limited to mentions of genocide, religion, sexual assault, mentions of self-harm, mentions of suicide/suicidal ideation, abandonment, addiction, and abuse. Please read with caution, and take breaks as needed. Your mental health matters.



editor's note

Lovely Readers,

We meet again-- or perhaps this is our first time meeting (in which case, welcome). I hope you are doing as best as you can, provided all that is happening around us as of late. I hope you are finding moments of rest, peace, and joy with the people you love, as much as you are able.

This is our fourth quarterly issue, and our fifth issue overall. It's hard to believe that we've been doing this for over a year now. I am forever grateful to our contributors (both past and current), as well as you: the reader. Without *you*, this wouldn't be possible. So, thank you for being here. Thank you for coming along for the ride, whether it's your first time here, or your fifth. This started as a daydream in the summer of 2024, and has evolved into the most welcoming, warm, open-minded community. There aren't words to adequately express my love for each of you - those of you who have been here from the beginning, those of you who started somewhere in the middle, and those of you who are here for the very first time. You all matter. You all make a difference, here and abroad. *Thank you.*

When I started *wildscape*, my initial goal was to provide a space for feeling deeply, *safely*. Within this issue (and every issue), I welcome you with open arms to read, feel, and breathe. The written pieces and art ahead are meant to offer you the warmest of hugs, as you briefly leave the the real world behind and walk in the shoes of others for awhile. Please, give yourself the space you need to cry, feel joy, and heal, as you take in these works.

All that being said: Come on in, my friends. I'm so glad you're here. I hope you get from this the warmth, heartache, and motivation to keep moving forward, that I felt while first reading and viewing these pieces. I hope that when you finish reading this issue, you take the deep breath you've been holding on to. I hope you know that you belong here, and you matter so, so much. I hope you keep fighting.

With all the love in my heart,
Ophelia M.



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On Forgetting

KAYLEE WALTON

Losing track of time. The ring from a cup of water left on a bedside table. Clothes stuffed in a drawer you never open. Rotten fruit. Filling your hands and emptying them. Over and over. Medicine bottles that should have been refilled. A dirty mirror. The dripping faucet. Two toothbrushes sharing a single mason jar. Read receipts. Looping the same song. A half empty bottle of perfume. November. Sundays at 6 pm. The harmony of the choir. Uncomfortable pews. Looking at yourself in the mirror and seeing someone you don't like (you were only 8). Goosebumps. Too many cigarettes. Tequila. An empty fridge. Chapped lips. Bloody fingertips. Updated Google Earth photos. Selling the car. Moving boxes. Tattered sweatshirt sleeves. Cracked book spines. Stained carpets. Pens without ink. 46 notifications. Do not disturb. Needing to go home. Failing to remember the address.



TITLE: *Smoke Break*
ARTIST: Jalen Martise Micquiel Williams

*Let's see how long I can get away with
going unmedicated*

VAL MARGOLIUS

my new therapist wears sweaters with geometric patterns
squares in grids and rectangles alternating colors without self-consciousness
mental health magazines sit on the table in the waiting room
like suggested reading for an optional class
because my only framework for life is academia

"do you feel it in your body?"
what kind of fuck ass question is that?
does a sound make a noise?
the only vessel for feeling is this curse called a body
what else would I feel with? my id?

working with middle schoolers makes my hair thin
according to everyone else, that's just another hole in my head
I want to shake their shoulders and yell at them
is there no gentleness in you?
then become a crocheted blanket

when I was eleven I wore sweaters to summer camp
I felt guilt in my gut like a gestating child bride
because my failures outweighed my innocence
and no one else my age was menstruating yet
so I cried for my mom through cramps in the bathroom

(poem continued on next page...)

I was eleven when I first went to therapy
she helped me convince my mom to buy a t-shirt I wanted
but my chest still tightened like a deflating balloon at school
the breaths in me promised no encores
and I threw the shirt out a year later

“you think you don’t deserve to be loved?”
I’m picking up what the rest of the world has been putting down
since I was eleven and liked a boy who was disgusted by me
because feeling wanted is for gentle people
something shaken out of me by my own fists when I was young

and have you ever been promised you will disappoint?
do you miss the daydreams that focused on happiness rather than forgiveness?
I feel it in my curse of a body like I’m eleven and cramping and anticlimactic
like the dredges of softness gathering at the base of a chai latte
when I shake my own shoulders to set my final weaknesses free

New Mourning

ANTINO ART

This was 11:59 p.m. on election night.

This was a red mirage. This was a hypersonic nuclear missile. This was the indigenous soil that soaked up the centuries of bloodshed.

This was a fire. This was Ella Baker's voice on MLK Blvd. This was a black- or minority-owned business that kept bars on the windows to stay open.

This was a speeding bullet at the Moore Square bus stop.

This was a hundred grand of state taxes burned on mulch and a fence for the dogs. This block was affordable before the cranes lifted urban rent into the sky. This was a protest, not a performance. This was a movement, not a marketing plan.

This was every color on one indivisible flag torn apart.

This was a portrait of pro-Black Thought as genius and Blue Scholar work as art. This was #OneNationUnderGuns.

This was a struggle to explain to the children.

This was a school zone before it was a war zone in Sandy Hook / Parkland / Hedingham / Home Sweet Home. This was a blue dot in a climate emergency. This was murder, a suicide attempt, or an overdose. This was a grim statistic. This was a profile shot that kept getting swiped to the far left. This was a tent city that kept getting swept off the sidewalk. This was a gated community with a barbed wire fence. This was what the people wanted. This was hard. This was routine in another country where the regime prompted the revolution. This was history painted over and over.

This was a new morning. This was you, and me, refusing to look back.

NOTE: *New Mourning* originally appeared in a 2025 [Artspace](#) exhibition as the ekphrastic caption for *Hallowed Heart*, a jet-black canvas painted by NC artist [Nik Winghart](#).

Calloused

MAUDIE BRYANT

I used to be tender,
ripe and reckless,
palms up, a mouth
full of yes.

I let the world in—
let it plunder
the soft
 fruit of me,
let it leave bruises.

Now my body, sealed
 in husk,
knuckles hard
 with knowing.

Touch me, and feel
sinew and scar,
a girl who learned
to flinch too well.

TITLE: *The Shape of Holding*
ARTIST: Kendra Sanchez



Render Error

PIP MCGOUGH

Reality loads in layers:
first the sand
then the soldier
then the scream buffering in 4K
delayed just enough
to miss the moment the soul leaves the body.
The air smells of melted tricycles
and the breath of sun-sick prophets.
The drone overhead tells bedtime stories in American English.
"I love you," it says,
and flattens a soup kitchen.
A little girl draws a flower.
Command calls it *symbolic escalation*.
So they take the shot.
Checkpoint Jesus with His Kevlar halo
asks for your papers.
He instructs you not to look up
while the sky decides if you can live.
History loops in war porn.
The desert watches everything.
Its silence:
the only honest story there is.

September First but Not Perfectly

ELEANORE TISCH

Last year's apples and toil, March snow,
new sun, porch swing, sweet tea, leaf rot
at the bottom. I awake an insurrection
& underneath a warning gumdrop stuck
to pillow, expired top sheet shelf-life,
I drink greedily from the cool side of
my chambers. I resurrect a dream
brought along to offer the autumn-spring axis
off kilter or on again or

of The Deep by chance. I think often

of keeping my bed-being but it's just me
running cars off cliffs and returning sideways
through the future, with gumption. What
month is this? Mumble to my cluttered
kitchen, pocket watch molting. Time
tumble-weeding along an inexact equinox,
going somewhere soon. Spontaneous eclipse.
Rarely in a lifetime does one fully get
to fuck

off

kilter or on again or

in a field of their own fallow. I keep often

the thinking of an instruction manual,
a how-to-gamble in the face of certain
crapshoot. It could go either way, this

season, this sleep, this tea-drunk swung
and brung along because I have nothing
else to offer. It is not quite garbage, this refuse
of my slumber. But it does belong to heaping.
I shrug. Smirk. I awake a bet-you-all-my-debt
that it won't get any better

but it could.



TITLE: *Storefront Window*
ARTIST: Janet Cooke

Badger

MANDY LANGE

The road beneath my balcony is deserted, suspicious of invisible contagion, when I spot the ghost fluttering the length of the pavement. I press Joseph's fat cheek into my collarbone and lean over the ledge to follow its wake.

It's gone.

Our formerly vibrant metropolis is a shell of buildings and sidewalks. Even the roof-dwelling crows go silent, eager to expose illegal pedestrians.

My toes curl, craving the assuredness of the asphalt below.

The buzz of Henry's video call interrupts my search. He's still quarantined at work.

"Caseload's too high," he grumbles. Video doesn't dilute the dark cracks beneath his eyes. "You okay with Joe and Rene?"

"Just save lives," I say.

"Two more weeks, then my priority's our family. *You, Badger.*"

Badger is Henry's favorite story to tell at parties- when we used to have them.

"Deadlifting 200 pounds, way more than me. Immediate turn-on." He'd recall the dark look in my eyes that reminded him of some video of a badger biting into a lion's nose. The big cat thrashed but couldn't shake the little beast. "Mara's tenacious like that. Toughest person I know."

I rub a callus on my palm. Gyms have been closed for months.

Rene smacks the door to the balcony, leaving a toddler-sized smudge on the glass.

"One, two, three!" Rene's squeaky voice is muffled by the door.

With a final glance toward the pavement, I go inside.

#

Shadows ripple each time I pass the glass door.

Rene asks for his current cartoon obsession, Lily Leopard's Letters. I tap my old laptop, no longer used to upload my home-fitness programs. Mandatory ads flash: AI dating service, announcements about the illness that cages us. A woman appears, defined muscles flexing as she reaches into a computer-generated sky.

"Positive Palmist harnesses your inner strength, empowering wellness through mobile hand scans and personalized guidance."

This fit woman flashes a coruscating smile. Everything about her is bright. A young child leaps onto her whittled shoulders.

"Positive Palmist helped me understand who I am," she says, manicured fingers raising a phone. *"Let us give you a hand in reaching the bright side. Download the app today!"*

I study my own hands, which bear countless fine lines. Trunks and branches of untaken roads, regrets. Love callused by sacrifice, exhaustion.

Lily Leopard fills the screen. Rene shrieks.

"One, two, three! Special to me!"

My throat tightens, and I'm unsure why.

#

"Those hacks are killing people," Henry scoffs when I tell him about the palmistry advertisement over the phone. "Inner strength is no substitute for an antipsychotic."

We trade goodnights and I retreat to the balcony. Windows across the street blink yellow and muted blue. Jagged sidewalks thread along the buildings like frayed ribbons that used to snare the wheel of my jogging stroller. I can feel the cadence of my run, breath hitching-

A shadow flits across the gap. My stomach turns in its wake. When I squint, it vanishes.

That night I buy the palmistry app.

#

A balanced hand indicates you are honest. Rely on truth to guide you today!

I stay indoors all day, refusing to chase ghosts. Joseph has a virtual checkup with a colleague of Henry's. I hold the phone camera up to Joseph's dimpled legs and blotchy skin as the doctor fires questions. Can Joseph sit up? How long does he sleep?

"One, two, three!" Rene screeches over my responses. "You're special—!"

I squeeze Rene's elbow and notice I'm trembling.

The doctor laughs. He asks me how my pelvic floor is healing, if I've lost the pregnancy weight.

"Last thing," he says. "Gotta ask. Still in good spirits? Mentally?"

"Yes."

In the corner of the screen, my smile looks credible.

#

***Your prominent heart line pronounces you emotionally available to lovers.
Open your heart to someone you love!***

Joseph refuses to be put down, so I hold him as I swipe a rag across our counter. Henry opens the door, home, finally, after an entire month of work. He throws his duffel and wraps his arms around us. I clench the solution-soaked cloth, brace myself to feel whole.

Fresh stubble brushes against my chin when his lips find mine. The kiss should calm the simmering numbness in my veins.

But I breathe him in-sweat and plastic-and emptiness spreads. The kiss deepens; he's asking me to sustain him, to be his spark. Joseph sags, and I drop the rag.

"Badger," Henry purrs. "You're skinny. Working out again?"

I open my mouth to say *I need help* or *I'm not coping well*.

"Just bodyweight exercises," I lie.

"Bodyweight!" Rene yells, leaping onto Henry. He tickles Rene, tears in his eyes. I hand a squirming Joseph to Henry and retreat, snatching the rag. Dirty water bleeds between my fingers.

When Henry and the boys are asleep, I return to the balcony. I'm convinced I see someone stalking the pavement, and wonder how to join them.

#

***Multiple life lines suggest a strength of will. Harness self-discipline to enjoy
the fruits of perseverance!***

The monitor lights up with Joseph's wails. Henry whips the blanket at me in the dark.

"Can't you go get him?" he moans. "I've worked nights for *months!*"

The movements are hollow, but I continue feeding, kissing, cleaning. I tell myself that love can coexist with the dread in my bones, that dedication will steady me.

"Only another few weeks of lockdown," he says, sprawled on the couch, phone grazing his nose. Joseph dozes on his shoulder. I fold in the sharp edges of my body to lie next to them. Rene abruptly collides with my head.

"ONE, TWO, THREE! YOU-"

Rage detonates. I explode off the couch and out the glass door, crushing palm lines in my fist.

#

You connect with loved ones deeply. Tell them you care today!

My thoughts unravel in the hours between night and morning. I grab my phone, tap the latest Palmist tip, but it's no use.

I delete the app.

Joseph's snoring in his crib. He smells like clouds when I kiss him.

The balcony door glows as I walk into the windless night.

There are shadows below the ledge. Crowds of them, ambling shoulder-to-shoulder. Unknown yet familiar. I ache to go to them. They wave, welcoming me with open palms. Two facts ring rhythmically through my pulse:

I love my boys with every last tendril of tissue I possess.

They would be happier with a stronger mother.

I slide calloused hands along the railing and lift myself up easily. Badger is lighter now, not stronger. My foot hangs over the ledge. The shades below sharpen, become more real than I am to myself, my family.

There's a soft thump, a gentle reverberation of glass. Tiny fingernails slide through a gap in the door.

Rene's eyelashes droop. His belly pops out of spangled pajamas. He likely won't recall these seconds in the morning, the terrible truth of his mother.

There's a moment of hesitation, a tickle of wind on my neck. I imagine falling as the inverse of lifting heavy, muscles squeezing down instead of pushing up. When I jump, it's without conscious thought.

Toes meet rug and I crumple, breathless.

Rene plods onto my lap. He grabs my wrist, pats a tiny finger on my palm.

"One, two, three," he whispers.

I cling to Rene as he drifts asleep. Darkness eases to gray. A bird cries from a faraway sky, and somehow, I find the strength to finish his song.

In advance of apocalypse

CAMILLE LEFEVRE

people I know
are changing
names, pronouns, genders,
bodies in expression
of true nature.

As we're acquainting, the writer asks,
scratching the itch to specify,
"Are you queer?" I am
unfazed — (so relieved, at that) finally
knowing I am only desert
expanses
of red dirt, sandstone cliff, heat-
cleansed sycamore, cat paw
See how

red crust ridges my chest, thirsting
to be watered;
crevasses carve my chin, deepening
with rain;
wind washes my hair, swaying
skeins of bark;
sun waxes my skin, peeling
periderm to bone: My toes
lengthen and curl,
lengthen and curl,
making biscuits in the air.

(poem continued on next page...)

As we're swimming, the girl child wonders,
tapping bristles jutting from my arm, "Something
might be living under there." I am
delighted — by (her knowing) creatures
inhabit
whole biomes on and beneath
the skin are landscapes
of the neither nor, the any all
See how
in advance of apocalypse,
none of this is camouflage;
only bodies erasing difference,
species becoming nameless now,
in adaptation, in expression
of one true nature.



TITLE: *Growth*
ARTIST: Linsey Tankersley

Haibun on a Thursday

BRITTA ADAMS

I am desperate to emulate Mary Oliver: to live in love of experience, inherent value, and indelible curiosity. Not capital. I resist the machine by sabotaging myself it seems. I studied Keats, not architecture, though engineers cannot find work either. I teach first-year composition to do something I can live with (but not off of). Still I'm caught in stagnation: stuck in a river of peanut butter because I trusted the prophets who said *yes* to school and *no* to work. I thought I didn't listen, but ears absorb more than I supposed. I cannot fallback on more school. I've had my fill of stress and investments that turn out duds. Yet I worry every damn day about everything, though none of it really matters to me. Words do. And the kaleidoscope of suburban color painted by the drip of rain on my window. Relationships, too. How my baby blanket wraps me in a final swan song before deteriorating into scraps of meaning. And music—the way it electrifies my despondency. My spouse matters most. And the lasagna left in the fridge. But the pay gaps. The spoiled milk on the counter. I put off babies again. Forget a mortgage. Career paths succumbed to avalanches, so I must fight along a broken trail. I burn out again and again and wonder why I am also so broken. Couldn't get sex to work last night, so I frost in shame, blister in failure. I do what I can: teach, though it's never enough for my students or checking account. I listen to the voice in my head. Buy another coffee and keep going. Die in my dreams and obsessive thoughts but not in reality: a relief and a curse. I swear when I stub my toe—research says it helps. And I collapse into despair, though I try to resist its siren song. I listen to another audiobook and fall willingly into the hole forged by its end. And I wait. Wait for spring. For summer. Fall. Christmas. Rinse and repeat. Maybe

The way is to hike
a sleeve up my arm and sing
as knife kisses skin.

Even In My Sleep

DANIELLE COFFYN

my body bears the burden—
knees knotted with worry,
back muscles dense
as unripened limes.

The days are lengthening. Still,
sunlight does little to deter
the anxiety anchored in the muddy
mind of a millennial mother.

Each morning, I send my son
to school & leave with a bullet
lodged in my throat. I pray
to a god I do not believe in

he will survive lead-painted
walls, sharp-tongued peers,
our family's proclivity
for whiskey.

At night I dream we shelter
in the bathtub from boots & gunfire.
He does not know how to stay
quiet. Even in my sleep,

I know I cannot save him.

*pov: you're playing unpacking on the switch and
somehow you become the protagonist*

VERONICA BERRY-PÉREZ

level 1: moving out (mental prep)

in my childhood home,
i'm taping up a box of prayers
before a bowl of mami's *arroz con habichuelas*.
our fathers and hail marys
close doors to the closet,
but when i ask god about the crosswalk
crack in my spine in free verse,
pablo picasso comes knocking,
asks if i want the door
cracked along with my abstract pain.

level 2: welcome home (my brain still calls me "visitor")

my sunny day melts
the sticky side of the tape.
i peel it from dusty cardboard
strips clinging to the windowpanes,
make murky what was once clear:
the view outside,
where orb weavers crochet messages
between the trees on the lawn of level 1,
out past a mountain of graves.
did those souls pray before
they swirled into the sky?

(poem continued on next page...)

level 3: the master bedroom (where stories are told)

from 1, to 2, and now in level 3
a flood of apologies surges,
the only litany i offer up these days.
sun evaporates the water
where i float with the skeleton i kept
hidden in my closet the one in masc drag
who reminds me i didn't kiss Mami goodbye.
i saw the pipes in His grip,
knew He'd started the flood.
His skull falls off the windowsill, shatters far below.
i'm floating, here and somewhere else,
knowing i can't bear being named
like being holy is my cross to carry
yet still i pray, *somewhere*,
long live the King

On Parade

NICHOLAS OLAH

there's a whisper in the hallway
there's a prayer lodged beneath the tongue
there's a pause after an apology like
 the damning distance between lightning & thunder

 delicate the way two hands hold a half-broken heart

there are songs about this that haven't been written
can you imagine the chords?

 hips on parade swaying to the chorus

like the world isn't burning
like the world isn't burning
like the night sky isn't peeling us apart

in the country that named the gulf of america

KAI THIGPEN

when ICE comes to your door, burrow
or pounce on them. do not slip and
do not push your neighbors
down the slope. keep your pronouns
out of your email signature,
keep your hormones hoarded in the back
of the den. keep extra shadows on hand
to cloak yourself in if you want
to stand in the street and hold a sign
that says something like FREEDOM,
something like LOVE. do not say anything
like love. do not say anything
like palestine. have money saved up
in case you need medical care. do not need
medical care. you may not have
money. believe that a vaccine is fatal
while the national guard is preventative.
believe that it guards you, not the nation
from you. believe that our country
is better than every other
empire. believe in a christian god
who saves the most ruthless
and damns the rest. believe, quietly,
in the food pantry,
the teachers and the doctors
who do not comply, the escaped
detainees, the encampment
organizers. these are
your wise woman herbs. open the door
only to the townspeople you can trust
and those who seek healing. do not open the door
unless they have a judicial warrant
signed by an actual judge. if you can,
be quiet. if you can, be loud.

RAGE MANIFESTO

alfonzo solomon kahlil

listen to me, it says
deny me no longer, it begs
with torn flesh in its mouth

let me talk my shit
let me pop off
let me be too much
let me be enough

let me sink my teeth / sharpened meticulously into fangs
into my boss's throat
let the blood that geysers my uniform (my bar code)
be a baptismal
let the cleansed me that emerges / be a beast with maroon-shot eyes
eyes that saw less than i ever felt

let this new spirit be a vanguard / let this new creature be a courier
a bellower / a herald / a revealer / a shaman
some new being that delivers the real good news
a gospel of grief / a choir of sorrow
a young child weeping for a definition of love
they can understand

let it be a roar / a magnificent echo
let it shake every foundation / let it befoul every villain
let it be heard
let it not be stifled / not again / let it ring
let it erupt from my own throat
let it shake off every chain slapped on my wrist / may it break shackles

(poem continued on next page...)

may it be louder than my own
prayers

let it raise the dead
let it not fall on deaf ears / let it not fall

let it raise so high to the heavens
God, finally, hears it



TITLE: *Remember*

ARTIST: Stephanie McKenna

kaddish for little deaths.

ELISHEVA FOX

the car ride is good.
the car ride is quietly safe until it isn't,
like

every houston thunderstorm,
every dog hungry enough to bite a human hand,
every family reunion where all the hard teeth mask
as soft jokes.

dad drives too fast and not fast enough.

we pass through pennsylvania,
by a creamsicle building branded black
over the doorway:

orange blossom laundromat.

as soon as dad inhales, i smell ozone so i

toss my mind out the car window into
some whirlpooling tumble drum,
grit powdered with cheap unclean detergent,
debris from pocket treasures,
dirty dreams.

toss my mind out the car window into
alien wildflowers, dead grass scroll kissing
cursive stains across my knees as i
tongue you into shameless bloom on the side
of this yankee highway.

(poem continued on next page...)

a horn calls me back, and my
mother's filthy question about where we are,
are we there yet?

even though i showed her my map
fifteen minutes ago —

gone.

you're gone.

it's just me clinging just
me with my sticky dyke fingernails
grasping at any coin slot sanctuary

just me trapped in this fucking car

listening to my father try to bleach
blank as my mother's mind
his

good

reasons to vote for a clementine man
who would call this poem perversion
and not just the poem but

also me, and also you,

and also good.

Preschool for Dead Kids

JAQ GREEN

In Gaza, the dogs are eating the children's bodies.

Here, in the sun-drenched classroom we rent from the Baptist church on Main, we're listening to the Wiggles. I step over the kids sprawled on our faded alphabet rug as I clip each of their original construction paper mosaics to the clothesline above us. Pause to remind Asfand that we don't throw gluesticks at our friends. Turn to put the gluesticks away. And there's Badrai, staring solemnly from the corner, chewing on a marker.

Badrai doesn't speak much. Not in English or Pashto. I kneel in front of her and pry the marker from her grip.

"Is green your favorite color?"

She doesn't protest. Just stares at me, eyes all ink and dew, like the tip of a marker.

"This is green. It's for coloring, not eating. Yucky."

I hold out my hand and she takes it. Crayola ink smears between our palms. There's a bathroom down the hall, the grubby beige kind with floral decor only ever found in white churches from the seventies. I hold Badrai up so she can wave her hand in front of the paper towel dispenser. She smacks it, leaving a preschooler-sized streak of green. I put her down, rip off the paper towel, and wet it in the greige sinks.

Badrai's glowering even before I kneel down. I pretend not to notice.

"Wow, you are so messy. You're the messiest kid in the whole world." I put one hand on her shoulder to keep her where she is as the other scrubs her face. "After we do a good job getting messy we gotta do a good job cleaning up."

Badrai's lips squirm ferociously. But she doesn't pull away. She's so patient, for a three year old. Silent even when I'm torturing her.

"Three more seconds, okay? One, two... oh look! There's a beautiful Badrai under all that dirt!"

She sighs and wipes her mouth on her sleeve. It's still stained green.

In Gaza, six-year-old Hind calls her mother from the carseat she can't get out of. Next to her, the corpses of her cousins jerk and shudder as bullets freckle the car. The Palestine Red Crescent Society sends a rescue team in an ambulance. Loses contact.

Twelve days later, reporters find charred EMT bodies and a shell-blasted ambulance within eyesight of Hind. She's still strapped to the carseat.

In my classroom, it's naptime. We don't have enough cots so Badrai sleeps on my jacket, curled beneath the coat hooks. Cheek resting on her green-stained palm.

Across the room, I rub Asfand's back, propping my leg up to block his view of Noor. They've decided they're fighting. My co-teacher rocks Ehsan in her lap, humming absently as she combs her fingers through her dark hair. Reties it beneath her headscarf.

I say, "Amma. Mom."

She nods.

"Abba. Dad."

Another nod.

"Auntie?"

Before she can answer, Asfand kicks Noor. I shake my head at him, finger to my lips. He rolls over.

Across the room, Badrai's eyes drill into me.

In Gaza, four preteen boys carry their friend on a stretcher. His limbs are tucked neatly beneath the dusty canvas shroud. Around them, protestors chant for a ceasefire before Ramadan.

I need to remember to find a picture book about Ramadan. And to ask the parents if any of their kids are old enough for Sawm. Probably not. I didn't fast until I was eight.

Badrai definitely won't be fasting. She's barely knee-height. Devours any snack I give her. Right now it's a granola bar, oats sticking to her grubby fist. She tugs on my jacket with her other hand and stomps her foot.

"I know, baby. We gotta wait for Amma."

Badrai is the last to be picked up. The classroom is silent and dark, the goldfish crumbs vacuumed, the construction paper waving like prayer flags above us. She squeals when her mom turns the corner. Breaks away from me and races down the hall to be swept up in the warm folds of an abaya.

Her mom doesn't speak much English. And I know exactly two words in Pashto. But we smile, wave. She laughs when I point to Badrai's green mouth.

I wonder if she saw the video of an unnamed Palestinian man holding his daughter to his chest for the last time. She looks like she's just about to fall asleep except for the smear of black blood across her cheekbone. And the collapsed, sunken angle of her neck.

Her father is smiling. He kisses each of her eyelids. Lays her in the rubble.

I watch Badrai's mother tuck her into the stroller and try not to think about it.



TITLE: *Las Flores Descontroladas*

ARTIST: Kayla Starling

How to Keep Going When You Can't Keep Going

NATALIA VIOLETTE

Most days, I am drowning
in the warm womb of the earth, inhaling
every reason to stay. For years,
I've taken no notice of how this body weeps

to be witnessed & held in the dark;
how much of my mother still lives
inside this splintered marrow;
how gently this land greets non-believers.

But this morning, my love hands me a rock
because *it's perfect for skipping*.
A kingfisher teases me with hues of heaven.
Honeyed light cascades lazily through my favorite oak.

Even the little girl screaming inside me stops
to savor the smooth edges before the stone darts
atop the silky skin of the river.
It's true, many moments have melted,

making a mess in my hands,
but how foolish of me to leave
this party so soon, when it's clear
I am made of everything here.

Freshman

KAIT QUINN

You wake in a 1997 L-Series Saturn, your skin the same shade of sea green, swing open the creaky door just in time to vomit vodka like acid onto asphalt. Lucky you

mixed with Sprite. Lucky there's nothing in your concave belly to stain the white of your eighth grade cheer

uniform, hugging you now in all the places it sagged at thirteen. Lucky you eventually bud breasts, still less than a handful but dazing boys like headlights all the same.

They all want the drunk cheerleader at the Halloween party except for the boy you want. The boy you fucked over—

couldn't keep your teeth off Chad's lip ring—but who still carries you, crouched like a drunken Gollum in the backyard, to the bathroom you can't puke in. That's what Saturns and asphalt and dorm room

trash cans are for. But back to boys. Back to making out at red lights in Calvin's El Camino. Waking the guys crashed on the living room

floor to a symphony of bed springs in the morning. And maybe you shouldn't have fucked John in the barn, too drunk on Mountain Dew and Crown to remember a condom until he's already inside you—bless

Jess for petting the horses and swelling like a cherry and getting you out of there. You gotta get out of there! You gotta stop fucking Devin—

you have a boyfriend now! But until it's official, you fall asleep to *Young Frankenstein* in his bed, let him take you from behind on his cracked

leather couch, wash your thighs in the shower, buy you blueberry

pancakes at the diner before dropping you off damp haired after dawn.
And soon you'll be nineteen. Soon you'll wear invisible bruises

from the boyfriend you stopped fucking Devin for. Soon
you'll carry your heart more like a splatter than a muscle. He'll cheat,
and you'll never want him more, still more when he leaves you

for another girl. Until then, it's sex in the bathroom at a sophomore's house
party, under the porch's burnt-out bulb, interrupted by his roommates

on the balcony. And it's arm rests up in the movie theater, cigarettes
and "Crystal Baller" in the black Tacoma, one hand on the steering
wheel, one under your sweater. And look how you've grown!—

with your boyfriend, condoms, and monogamy! Such a long way
from drunken hookups, bad mixers, puking on a random street

in the Austin suburbs—until the truck screeches to collision, wraps
itself around a pole, spews black and blue across your bones like bile
on the blacktop, as if to ask: oh, honey, have you?

Questions for My Brother, the Tornado

MATTHEW THOMAS BERNELL

Will you show me the bruise guilt's grip
left when you whipped roofs? Splintered homes?

Dragged the drive-in movie theater
to dust? How often do you dream

of disappearance afterwards? As if crawling
into the calm of a cornfield

glazed with rain? Was your first love
feeling? Or fleeing? Being forced earthward

out of a mesocyclone? The patriarchal
boom of a supercellular yell? Who

taught you to spiral? That the spectrum
between pain and pleasure could be

twisted like two saplings
wired together? And will the light

you have siphoned from this wreckage
ease the ache of your tortured vortex? How could you

circle back for more? How could you? What is it like
when you begin to suck dirt into yourself?

The taste of that new, dark blood?



TITLE: *Summer Monsoon*
ARTIST: Jo Rohrbacker

Anthology of Small Sadnesses

ÖZGE LENA

Every flower is a sadness now,
take oleanders, for instance, burnt

pink beauties for the bees, both
poison and antidote to the venomous

snake bites. This is the best
definition of poetry I've ever heard

since the sky collapsed and we turned
into insects in our snouted gas masks

after the loss of our small sadnesses.
The word *anthology* comes from the Greek

anthologia because *anthos* means flower
and *-logia* from *legein* is to gather,

so it literally is a gathering of flowers,
how gloomy without the blooms.

I want to be included in an anthology
of little flowers written to legein

all people together, to show them
the half-dead stigma of an almost extinct

anthos, once all blossom and fragrance,
now on the sharp brink of the darkness

without spring, silence without bees,
then a dim future without seeds.

Best

CATHERINE KENNEDY

My friends speak
of the flowers
that have survived best
for them this season, summer
of early rain and late drought—
zinnias, SunPatiens, vincas—
dimple-petaled and pinwheeled,
prismatic and pliant still
among the stiff, flaxen grass
of late September.
Effervescence marks
many a grand finale
when the end is near.

The end is near.
That is, the nights
grow cold and lengthen.
Leaves will purge
their green and trees
will shed their canopies
more quickly. We are one
month and one strong storm
away from looking through
to the neighbor's yard.

Who will we say
has survived it best
when the spring comes?
Who goes into a season
of darkness asking
such a thing?

What's the Craziest Thing You've Seen?

JORDAN COBB

Have you ever known the kind of sobs that bellow through blank walls? That pour from open mouths like broken faucets—a pair of sons who stare as you press the stethoscope to the paralyzed chest of their father, DNR only twenty-four hours ago?

There was a woman who wintered once in the westernmost room where the sun struck through the smudged windows while she 'battled' her illness, her alien invasion. We called it exponential growth when we told her the cells had re-invaded her body.

The symptoms drove her platelets too low, which makes one prone to bleeding; her nose leaked, then gushed, then flowed. A waterfall. Isn't that a cliché to say? Just like everything to do with cancer. I pumped her full of blood products as I perched on her pleather armchair. Tightened three fingers around her bridge bone & squeezed as we waited for things to slow.

& what of the prayers I sent to high heaven? The hands I joined in begging for mercy from gods I didn't believe in. Once, I prayed in French because (I learned) death speaks to us in our first language. In frozen rooms, they reached for me to ask if this is how I'd see the others go.

I know you were probably looking for something with a punchline. Easier to swallow. But none of my stories end with a joke. I scrawled their initials in Sharpie on sticky notes because full names would be a HIPPA violation. The squares hung in my closet next to the black-tie dresses until the glue unstuck.

Pyrrharctia isabella

ANNA GILMOUR

The couple arguing behind me on the bus
is deaf. Their hands speak
in tongues. They may be fighting
about anything—unpaid bills, a death
in the family, the woman reading
the palm of another man.

I will never know, but I find comfort
in the openness of their expressions.
The woman wears pain
on her mouth like a lipstick.
The man's eyebrows are angry
caterpillars. Stinging. Bristled.
I wonder if he has begun to fashion
a cocoon for his heart. If hers
is a moth in his grip. If one
of them tastes like mothballs.

I think I speak metaphor better
than love. I think I speak entomology
better than love. When I fight,
I am loud. Too open. A fresh mango,
pulp stuck in your teeth.

I wonder what it means to fight
silently. I still haven't learned
how not to write about love.
Fuck mothballs. Fuck metaphor.
This morning I woke up, again,
with your name in my mouth.

Gas Guzzler Ghazal

COREY MILLER

Get in the truck, let's pick up some faithfully lost hitchhikers & guzzle gasoline.
Every god consumes ethanol alcohol. Weedwhackers/humans run Marathon gasoline.

Life's left turn lasts 500 years, never righting torn off rear-view mirroring straightforward answers.
We drive to our neighbor's house for sugar because our stuck veins donate gasoline.

Your horsepower is cribbing the gate, backbiting sponsors stickering my windshield.
Evaporate an ozone, power up the brands styling our perpetuated lie: gasoline

will save us all. Breath the exhausted afterlife. Lay aluminum pipe in our mouths, name-dropping
combustion out the other end. Stretching our intestines their true potential. Use me as gasoline.

I'd be more productive minus my reproductive organs, ridding sex from possibility.
Fun sins fester my mind, like nutrients a heart pounding race after midnight for fucking gasoline.

Humans own ignorance we abuse more than our ancestors consumed on a hotbed
I search for glass shards sinking into the reservoir of my eyes, crying premium gasoline.

This deviled leg racecourse has me spinning wheels commuting to work to be able
to live to be able to drive to be able to work to be able to live to be able to grab gasoline

by the horns. Charge an out-of-control future to this credit card debt I'll stave off until
EVs break down emergency equations. Drip out your pysanky eggs empty to wax gasoline

hieroglyphs onto decorated shell. Jewish holidays: They tried to kill us. They didn't succeed.
We celebrate with food & candles. We stand too close, bodies soaked in gasoline.

On my knees, welcoming the last Sunrise, I pray to understand creation of this liquid fossil
scripture fracking fibbed capital evolution. Martyr Magician's act to disappear within gasoline.

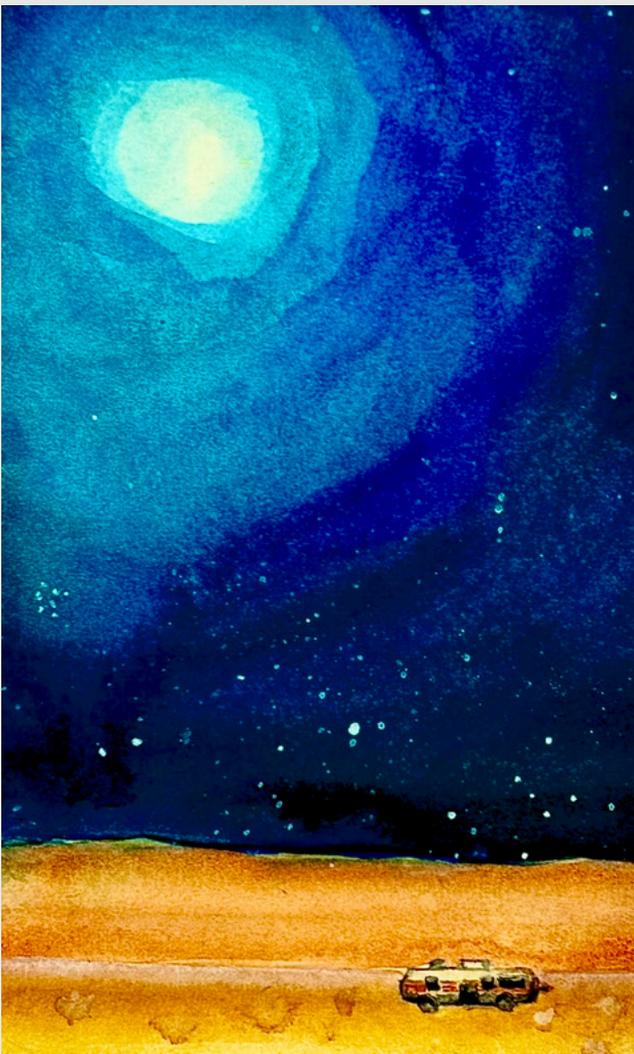
Black ink on bleached paper pressed for information in a refined binding redacts easily.
Burn history like it never existed. Despite batteries 2025 set a record high demanding gasoline.

No surprises when the population grows, dragging middle glass increasing cashflow for the rich.
No need to share your wealth—you own the company. Land stolen to segregate octaned gasoline.

Even the generators don't generate shit standalone, backing that power bottom up.
Cheers! Tipping goblet of ORGANicALLY faIRtrAdE LocALIY SOURceD gasoline.

We transformer cyborg. Gas tank bellies belching dinosaurs. Long antennae necks probing
out passenger windows. Joyride along for the nice age. Before the Rapture, barter your gasoline.

Corey's getting angry. When did our bubbles expand? We are living in a society where mechanisms
only hold retirement at baby bomb bay & I have always loved the smell of freshly picked gasoline.



TITLE:

Two Days From Everywhere

ARTIST: Jo Rohrbacker

Restless

HEATHER EMMANUEL

The bed is uncharacteristically cold when Celine wakes up.

It's not something she's used to. There's usually warmth—a body tucked beside hers, familiar and heavy with sleep. Wedged between the wall and her own, much smaller frame.

It's instinctive. How she sits up a little too fast, squinting through the darkness, at the empty space next to her, as she—

Panics.

She panics. Even when her tired eyes find Marie and the mellow morning light that nestles against her face. Her eyelids flutter, breaths slow, broad shoulders rising and falling with each exhale.

This is it. It's all about the unrequited for them. Those still moments buried beneath the dark. Celine *panics*, because she feels it, seeping through her skin, coursing through her veins like a current. It would only take one laceration to bleed. Profusely, not as a body, but as a being, leaving a wound that will never close.

And that scares her more than she'd like to admit.

What she *can* admit, though? Something about *this*, the curbed confessions and Marie's clear cut gaze, makes her *forget*. She forgets, and it shakes her, because Marie is ethereal and inviting and Celine finds herself thinking—

Maybe this was a mistake.

+

"Are we fighting?"

Celine blinks. Almost jumps. The rather sudden appearance of Marie standing behind her in the bathroom mirror confirms their sporadic sleep schedules. But Marie's voice is *gentle*, drowsy as she blinks through the dark and meets Celine's tired gaze.

Marie is *there*, leaning against the doorframe, nearly six feet of honed strength, functional muscle from years of breaststroke and physics of the water. And yet, softened by lethargy, cheeks puffy, hair ruffled—Marie looks unravelled.

The band shirt Marie wears—the one that actually belongs to Celine—shifts a little. Celine feels herself blink, fast, at the exposed skin of Marie's collarbone. The rampant thoughts that materialise in her mind do not dissolve as swiftly as she'd like.

"What?"

Marie blinks. Then yawns. She covers her mouth and her shirt rides up. Celine pretends not to see it.

"You've been avoiding me," Marie says. Without any malice. "And I've been avoiding you."

"That doesn't mean we're fighting."

Celine opens the tap, waits in silence as the water warms. When she slips her hands underneath, the heat is one degree shy of burning her skin, sharp and fleeting. It rouses her, runs through her fingertips, her knuckles, her wrists.

"We've fought before," Marie continues.

"I know."

"But not like this." She pauses. Maybe because Celine is drying her hands in the air, looking vaguely ridiculous. Maybe because Marie has to yawn again, not covering her mouth, unguarded.

Or, *maybe*, she thinks about all those other silences. Taut, weighted, lodged in their throats. When words between them are minimal and distance is measured in minutes unsaid, hours avoided.

It's not something that lasts. And that's Celine's fault. Because Celine is always *first*, always the one who crawls into Marie's bed and curls up her legs. And then Marie makes her coffee the next morning, and things are back to being as normal as they can be.

They stare at each other. Because it's all they know, right now. They've been doing this for *years*, they've been in this place for *years*, where Marie is hopelessly in love, and Celine doesn't know how to deal with it. *Push and pull*, Celine thinks. Except, they both pull away, a rubber band that could snap at any moment.

"You *confessed*," Celine says. Eventually. When she's gathered what little she has left of her crumbling resolve. She doesn't mean to hold Marie's gaze through the mirror, but she does.

"I've confessed before, though," her voice is low, honest. Because it *is* honest. Marie doesn't pin her words down with her own hands the way Celine does. Marie confesses when she wants to, never expecting any kind of response. It's how she's always been.

"I know," Celine sighs. Runs a damp hand through her hair, too. This feels selfish. "But that was different."

"Because I cried?"

Yes, Celine thinks. Only because it's what she thought back then, a little over a week ago, when Marie said *I'm in love with you*, and Celine's lungs collapsed at the sight.

"I—yes?" She blinks. "I don't actually *know*."

Marie shrugs.

"You don't need to know."

Marie says it like mercy. But it lands on Celine's skin like a bruise. Guilt presses into her chest.

"You should go to bed," Celine says. Because that's easier.

Marie's smile is lopsided, but notable. Her voice doesn't shake at all.

"Not until you do."

The tiles are cold against her feet as she trudges to where Marie stands, makes the point of not standing too close because they're not quite there yet.

This isn't a fight. Celine knows that. It's not a fight, because there's no enemy. Not here. Feelings are feelings are feelings, and they will continue to exist, no matter how many times she tries to draw herself away.

Celine curls her fingers around Marie's. Hers are still damp, but Marie doesn't seem to mind. She smiles a little, blinks because Celine is always *first*. It's how they work. Marie confesses, and Celine brings herself close. Maybe it is push and pull, after all.

"You think too much," Marie muses. Her skin looks soft, sandy hair falling over her bare face. This feels romantic.

"I know," Celine says. Even though she doesn't. Not because she doesn't try, but because there's too much to think about, too much to know.

And Celine hates not knowing.

But, what she does know is that Marie is there. And Marie is just as scared as she is. Maybe even more. And Marie's fingers are intertwined with hers, giving them a light shake that puts her heart at ease.

They are close together, even like this, and for Celine—

It's always been *a lot*.



TITLE: *Late-April Snow*
ARTIST: Janet Cooke

to the person who will one day die in the same second as me:

afoe

i sink a gray sun from the evening of my mind. another
sort of dream. gunmetal equinox, grotesque
as perfect balances go,
this ticking

tongue is engraved
with a number
it can't count to...

i take a small swig of water, stare
out the window, balmy buildings
pass me, with rain, i remember...

this comfort is so automatic,
i ride the quiet car on an express,
i ignore entire neighborhoods
without so much as a sigh
returning.

does it make you mad, too?
all of this, going away

Abecedarian as Wraith

EMILY CORWIN

Anemic enough for hospitals, but I stood awake, semi-functional.
Blood panel, the results blinging in my Baggu. I skip the meeting, stop for a

Cardamom-rose latte and a moment to finish my audiobook. Look: these
Desiccated prom roses, brought home after we chaperoned. They sag over the

Edge like still-molten glass: sand, soda, and lime unfixed. I began in earnest a
Food diary: more kale, more cashews, blueberries and blue juices.

Getting better feels a lot like getting by. I still sleep these extra
Hours every afternoon, beneath a drop-cloth of dopamine. The

Iron supplements are pale-small as doll shoes, mislaid.
Jean-blue car, I named him "Edward Cullen" and he sparkles. Tonight:

Kimchi Box tacos and red bean buns for a birthday and I'm in the
Lavender haze, a lavender phase. Most weekdays, I am a crybaby and a

Maniac. Ninety degrees mid-June and autumn looks real good right now. A cool
Negroni with a square of ice, a curl of orange rind I could wear as a ring. I go to Target for

Ollipop grape soda and hydrocolloid patches. The AC is broken at the cafe, but
Pistachio latte with pistachio milk and a cloudburst outside, hissing like the cloth of my

Quilted jacket with club soda, after my boyfriend knocked tomato juice on me,
Removing the lycopene, the scarlet. We were flying back from Alabama, from a

Snake in the bird box and espresso martinis. I tally my deficiencies:
Trichotillomania in bouts, hip impingement, joint dysfunction in my jaw.

Underneath an underworld-of milligrams and salts, I keep my
Visit summary for good measure, to measure my advancement towards health.

Where did my gloss go? Who called my bluff? The wilted medical
Exam, its table paper where I laid prostrate,

Your stylus deciding my fate. I didn't water the
Zinnias; I forgot to tend my pieces, susceptible again to wreckage.



TITLE: *The Body Was A Tender Machine*
ARTIST: Brad Rose

A Ring For Your Nose, A Crown For Your Head

ANTON GETZLAF

The room was smudged with orange
From lamps and string-lights
And loud with bearded men's
Overlapping, laughing rants.
The rest, my own friends' distant friends
At best - I was a stranger then -
Sipped pints at pauses, crinkling their cans.
On the speakers, over a piano polished fake,
A boyish singer even in his heartbreak
Showed some smugness.

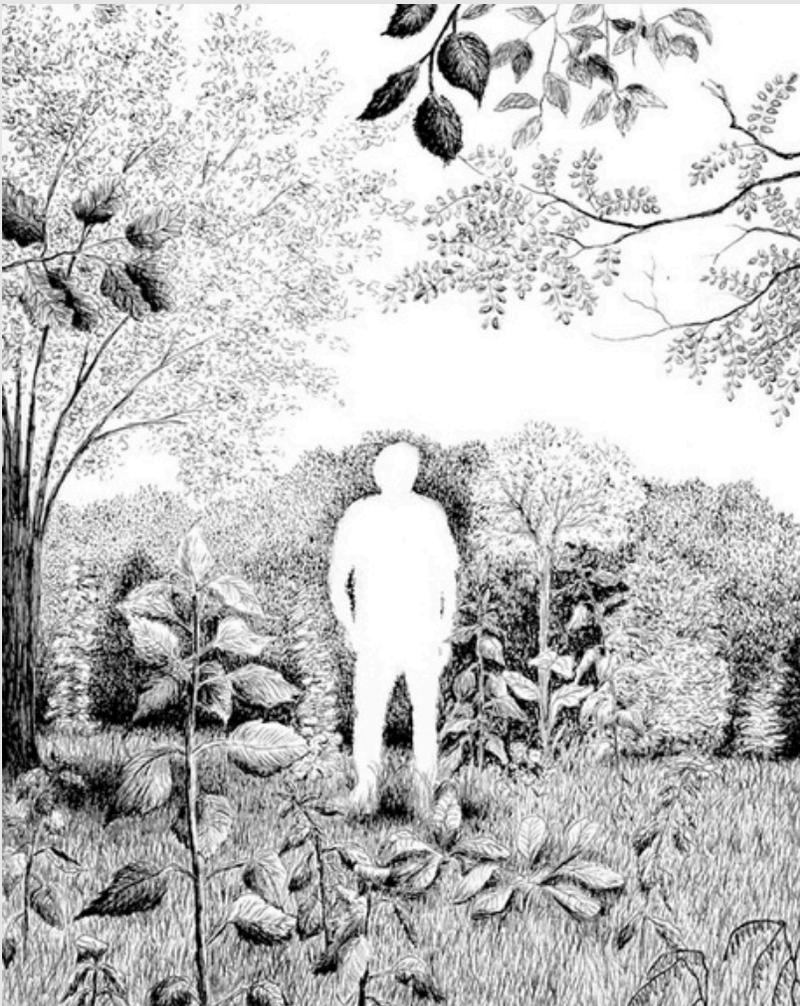
Unstunned, dressed in red and white,
You chuckled to me, heavying the air
With your perfume,
Some molten fruit gone sharp with sweetness,
And with a reach we kissed.
I took you in my arms with that gratitude
That flushes through the hollows of unsureness.
I kissed you and you smelled of honey, milk and figs.

As we pulled apart, I felt myself
Retire into glory. The hilltop pride
Of having been your man one night
Drew out, drew thin for years.
Now my sink is scrubbed to white,
My forearms large -
Confident and scheduled stiff
I have grown hard.

(poem continued on next page...)

A stranger's smile on the bus
Slides by like piles of leaves outside
The window, half-reflection.
I no longer stretch myself
Into the spaces in their looks
And root around behind the eyes.

But sometimes, in the wincing morning
I can hear as I am squinting on the porch
Shouting and giggling at some outrageous thing
That happened while I was asleep
And without will or warning
I stretch myself to meet my neighbors.



TITLE: *The man who owns
the place*
ARTIST: Cécile Gonneau

A Prayer for Birds

EMBER JONES

After Catherine Pierce & Nickole Brown

Near the end, they were on every power line,
every suburban sapling planted too late to slow
the slow ashing of underbrush. Mourning
doves. Crows. Robins. Little titmice,
one gray eye cocked to the movement
on the road, the whoosh of gasoline and tire,

the gentle rocking of branch in the wind. Speckled
eggs in September. Flash of feather in blue,
quick of pinion, crescent wings. Starlings
in all their black twinkle of iridescence
like tar and the shimmer of sunlight
on oil. On the lake, sweet-fingered children

chucking whole slices of Wonder bread
straight from the bag to little brown ducks
cutting a swath through patina of algal
eutrophy. Morning chorus of soft warbling.
Hot sun. Domestic jungle of persistence.
Remember how there used to be more

than the cardinal's vermillion, steel-gray
of pigeon—the woodpeckers, petrels, little
meadowlarks, shorebirds, finches. Remembering
the majesty of eagles. Remembering
its screech, so high in the air, so sharp
it was metallic on the tongue, a spark

for burning dawn's fog. When there were more than just robins speckling carefully-manicured lawns with their fat seeded bodies. When there were penguins to wish upon somewhere up North. When parrots knew their native tongue of clicks and trills.

Every dawn the sun is serenaded into horizon by birdsong, but it's the same birds every morning and there is no migration, no star-tracking to find the ancestral path, no plucky mating dance all frills and pomade and rhythm, no knotted nests of pine and mud. There is just crow and robin

and whispered prayers that, Lord, will these of your creations just stick around a while longer, please let us keep these little feathered blessings, please let their bellies be fat from insect and berry and seed—anything, Lord, not to lose what little we have left

to the swallowing place where the orioles went, the cranes, buntings, our falcons, salmon-pink flamingoes and silvering vireos. Deliver our birds back to us on storkwing or Amazon one-day shipping and let us raise them humanly, held close to our breast, hand-cupped and mouth-syringed

to be set free to the world we have built for them of industry, ammonium nitrate, rubber, and sequins and they will have blue seaglass for eyes, polyester and spandex for feathers, and a little fiberglass heart the size of a breath, all prickly and still beating.

2am at the veterinary emergency clinic

FRANKIE SOTO

This looks very concerning, nothing ever feels as concerning as when you hear it from a woman wearing black scrubs and red crocs with a terrible poker face. Her smile widens to distract the crack in her voice, you are such a good girl, it's going to be okay sweetheart. Nothing ever feels okay when the emphasis on *okay* is elongated, heavy, a departing hug at the airport.

We need to run more tests, nothing ever gets tested more than once unless the initial result is of concern. There is that word again rearing its worrisome head out the way. I hear nails tapping outside the door. My ears know that clicking well from late nights of trying to sneak into the kitchen for a snack.

We need to convene to go over possible next steps, you are such a happy doggie, oh yes you are a pretty girl, everything is going to be okay. There is that word again, compassionately white lying its way out the room.

We wanted to bring her something to eat, do you guys need anything? Water, coffee? Puts down a burger in a bowl, a small cup of hershey kisses. I am not thirsty, but I am starving for the truth, my stomach is eating itself from the inside out from guilt, I want to say these things but only answer, *I will take a water please, coffee will only make me more anxious with the caffeine.* I nervously end on a punchline and awkwardly giggle to try to avoid the hit this is about to knock me out with.

I'm sorry, sedate

I'm sorry, infection

I'm sorry, was bad

I'm sorry, sepsis

I'm sorry, kicked in

I'm sorry, your heart

I'm sorry, won't be the same.

A Stew (Wincing Instants)

COLIN GRIFFIN

A young person told me
today how she feels
like one of those worms, half-
alive, dried up, stuck
in the middle
of a ~ driveway
and her day
has been full of
scooters

Scooters?

Yeah, you know
like little kids ride
scooters up and d

o
w
n

the driveway

Mr. O'Shaughnessy is a scooter
Amanda is a scooter
That algebra test

scooter

I felt this

(poem continued on next page...)

But I also thought
of that wincing instant
when your little
 semi-desiccated cylinder
feels contact
and you aren't sure
if it's the rubber wheel of existence
 or
curious feeling fingers
pinching you up
to drop you back
into the still-damp grass



TITLE:
The Slow Archive
ARTIST:
Brad Rose

WHAT LUCY DID

PATRICIA CANRIGHT SMITH

WHERE LUCY WENT

Pinckney Wildlife Refuge. The thick dark enveloped her as though welcoming her home, and her mind quieted. Without light, she could smell: pluff mud's salty sparks, shell road's chalky cornstarch. At Ibis Pond: grassy tang, earthy algae, something ammoniac; fresh water's clean scent, and, barely discernible beneath piney loblollies and eggy bird shit, the faintest note of dry old lady—her Irish grandmother!

No: feathers.

She'd made it to the roost.

WHAT LUCY DID

Lucy killed her husband.

WHY LUCY DID IT

Because he threw pecans at Morgan le Fay, the feral tabby; because he was the *important cardiologist* with insufferable silver curls; because he moved them to a *plantation*—South Carolina's gated communities were called plantations; because he flaunted his smile-so-white, including into mirrors; because he was unencumbered by self-doubt; because he always walked in front; because he chewed *so loud*; because he patronized Lucretia; because he insisted he didn't snore; because he played bridge, played tennis, played golf, and sailed; because he was a liar and a bore, and he was not funny; because he peed on the toilet seat; because, when Lucy was doing it, *thinking* was deemed *overthinking*; because he hacked up star jasmine and crepe myrtles before they could bloom; because he took impediment as *personal affront*; because he treasured an entitled, suboptimal penis; because he fed marshmallows to alligators; because he shot bee-bees at wood storks; because he greeted his rich-friend cohort—*Sir!*—in that hearty manner; because he'd *rowed crew for Princeton!* back in the day; because he cheated: his partner, his nurse, at golf,

on taxes, on Lucy; because he conflated serving as Commodore of the Carillon Pointe Yacht Club with serving his country, and wore the brass to restaurants; because he signed all the petitions—*against* the removal of Confederate statues—*against* critical race theory—*against* religious sanctuaries; because he did not give a shit when every bay tree on the Island—every. single. one.—died during the drought, insisting that “global warming” had nothing to do with it, seeing as how “global warming” wasn’t scientifically proven—and then he sneered that *she didn’t know what the fuck she was talking about*—
she stabbed him.

WHAT LUCY DID NOT KNOW

That shock can trigger cardiac arrest.

WHAT LUCY DID NOT DO

Lucy did not call 9-1-1.

HOW LUCY BECAME UNHINGED

She read *The New Yorker*.

If humans stopped spewing pollutants into the atmosphere tomorrow—fat chance—global warming might—might—be maintained at or below one-point-five degrees Celsius, which meant melting ice shelves; rising sea levels; heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, extreme weather events; degradations in food security, human health, the environment, and development. Mass extinctions. Like a giant ship, it would take time to turn things around—30 years. And one-point-five for 30 years was a best-case scenario.

Two degrees would mean even more melting ice, even higher sea levels, even more extreme storms, even hotter heatwaves, even longer droughts, even more devastating wildfires, even more starvation, degradation to the environment, etc. etc. etc.

Three degrees “will stress our civilization to the point of collapse.”

WHAT LUCY DID DO

Lucy laid the knife in the sink, stepped onto the verandah, removed her rings, and tossed them into the pond. She hoped the alligators wouldn’t eat them, but no matter; when they pooped, the rings would sink to the bottom where they belonged, blood diamonds in the muck.

She took a moment.

Then she grabbed her purse, grabbed a Cucinelli hoody, and took off out the back gate.

LUCY'S DELIBERATION

Not Insanity, not Intoxication, not Mistaken Identity, not Factual Impossibility, not Automatism, not Entrapment, Not Citizen's Arrest (Preserving the Peace), but YES Duress, YES Provocation, YES Necessity, Reasonable Excuse, Killing in the Heat of Passion, Killing in the Name of Duty, Self-Defense and Defense of Another. Also, technically it was an Accident—the death part anyway.

LUCY'S CONCLUSION

Nix Accident. Go with Self-defense and Defense of Another—the *Planet*. Killing in the Name of Duty. Necessity: Someone had to do something. He and his degenerate, ravaging cohort had to be stopped. She could afford the best lawyers; she would take it all the way to the Supreme Court. Like MeToo, it would explode.

WHERE LUCY CAME TO REST

Sitting on switchgrass amidst feathers and bird shit, she wrapped her arms around her legs and laid her head on her knees. Without light, she could hear: a splash, a chirr, a rustle in a nest; the metallic clack of palmettos, something snuffling dry leaves, and the faint scuttle of crabs on the move. And she could feel: coarse prickles on her bum, gentle breeze on bare arms. Atmospheric shifts at the roots of her hair and in her chest: the vast expanse of salt marsh was *breathing* her.

Lucy raised her head.

Come and get me.

Reports of a Centaur in Central Illinois

PIP MCGOUGH

I remember that day well. We'd argued about history.

You said:

"History is the legible stench of incalculable extinctions."

I said:

"History is what the survivors are permitted to say."

We let the matter rest, though it didn't.

Then the news: reports of a centaur in central Illinois.

The girl who saw it first was aged ten, and playing alone in a soybean field.

She had a glass eye, and no sense of metaphor.

The experts didn't see the centaur.

They assured the viewers that centaurs were invented
thousands of years ago

to explain desire.

The police concurred,

but warned people to avoid speaking classical languages near the crops.

The anomaly was seen again in Taylorville
passing through town like a Greek participle—
untranslatable, yet necessary.

There were hoofprints, and photos of hoofprints.

Could have been a centaur, could have been a horse
(their tracks are identical).

I can't tell you if any of this actually happened.

Reality is a cracked bell,

and this might be the sound it made.

What I can tell you however

is that I've encountered other myths woven into the air like radio waves— invisible, but quite capable of burning your ears. So when you tell me centaurs are impossible, I will say: There are lots of things that shouldn't be happening in America. And yet they are.



TITLE: *Escape*
ARTIST: Jolie Ruin

Adding to the Collection

CANDICE M. KELSEY

of bug bites, I leave the farmhouse
like a white-tailed deer darting
from honeysuckle. Thunder, the white
underside of tail. Flash! I serpentine

the gravel to Firefly cabin, an old
chicken coop surrendered. It's my

first writer's residency, Eastern
Tennessee, where I ride pillion over
the Appalachians on a white pine

saddle porch, well-oiled in warblings.
All sweat and legs, I am siren song

to ill-mannered ticks, mosquitos,
and fire ants. Six feet from the '78 VW
Scirocco junked in the switchgrass
like a giant Moroccan-spiced carrot
over parsley. Found oozing Za'atar car.

Can I too be abandoned, just read?

Or is the expectation that I peel out
and burn 2000+ words a day? I know this
week's about adding to my collection,

(poem continued on next page...)

like a fresh set of bites. Bugs make
it happen by surrendering to the urge,
a primal thirst for plasma proteins.
I discourage them, *there's nothing too
special in these veins*. Try to reason,

*just sloppy white cells from Slavs
who fled the Holodomor*. They don't

buy it for a second. Blackberries
remind me to check for ticks, a body

of crevices empty as a phone, no word
from my mother. No tweezers to fire up
and grab hard-bodied blood-suckers
determined to remain attached. Free
of her abuse, no contact is a bitch.

Once I sat on a dock with a woman
I secretly love. Hours of dipping toes
into the canal. I should have taken her
hand then, traced the curve of each nail.

Am I alone in desiring small things?
Sun glinting the water, her lovely name

a ruby dew. I extract a poem, droplets
of verse from this heat dome summer
where we exist a menagerie in the shed

of some god pawing at his collection.
Hope he knows what the fuck he's doing.



TITLE: *Starry Night Sky*
ARTIST: Jalen Martise Micquiel Williams

On Remembering

KAYLEE WALTON

The sweetness of tomato sauce. Warm blankets draped over your shoulders. The crackle of the fireplace. Static electricity. The dissonance of being an oldest daughter. White rice. Revelations during a sleepover. Summer rain. The ballad of bullfrogs. McDonald's on Sunday mornings. Pretending to like coffee. Eventually liking coffee. The space in the bottom of the bookshelf for all your old textbooks you refuse to get rid of. The gold brilliance of his urn. Medicated chapstick. 21,830 moments saved to an external hard drive. September. Closing your eyes to see him again. The crack in the sidewalk shaped like a smile. The way he pursed his lips as he read. Knowing all the words to a song you haven't heard in three years. The creak of your wicker laundry basket. Love letters scribbled on overdue bills. A farmhouse sink. The gentle taps of paws across the hardwood floor. Puppy breath. Watching the snow fall outside your bedroom window. Being scared to dance. Finally dancing.

[contributors]



afoe // Genre: Poetry

afoe (he/him) was raised in Kentucky and currently lives in Brooklyn, NY.
Instagram: @robertosnaps



alfonzo solomon kahlil // Genre: Poetry

alfonzo solomon kahlil (they/he) is a poet, playwright, and performance artist, raised on the W(b)estside of Chicago, who believes whatever doesn't kill you, makes for great art. alfonzo holds a BFA in theatre from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and is represented by Stewart Talent. They were previously seen in *Measure of a Man (Perceptions)* *The Island (Court u/s John)*, *HOLD UP*, and *CHICAGO FIRE*.
Instagram: @alfonzokahlil



Anna Gilmour // Genre: Poetry

Anna Gilmour (she/her) is a queer psychologist revisiting non-academic writing after a long hiatus. Her work has appeared in *ONE ART*, *New Feathers*, and *Nowhere Girl Collective*. She lives, laughs, and loves in Colorado with her partner and their menagerie of pets. Almost all of her poems include birds.
Instagram: @annagilmour

Antino Art // Genre: Poetry



Antino Art (him/clan) writes ad copy to feed his daughter and poetry to feed his spirit. From South Florida by way of the Philippines and based in Raleigh, his voice was once featured at the Green Mill Poetry Slam in Chicago, and his words are probably on a billboard somewhere. He's the author of *Postcards From NowHERE* (Bottlecap Press, 2024), Co-Founder of Third Angle Poets, and the Co-Director of Poets' Playground at Boxyard RTP, a poetry venue made of refunct shipping containers in the Raleigh-Durham area.

Website: AntinoArt.com
Instagram: @FatherofNali

Anton Getzlaf // Genre: Poetry



Anton Getzlaf (he/him) is a poet living in Portland, Oregon. He works as a school custodian.

Brad Rose // Genre: Art



Brad Rose (he/him) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, working across sound, visual art, and writing. His work listens to relics of place and ecological change, weaving sonic and material traces into spaces for ritual, reflection, and collective dreaming. Shaped by Oklahoma's shifting landscapes, his practice invites shared authorship and speculative storytelling. He is the founder of Foxy Digitalis, co-founder of The Bird House micro-gallery, a 2024-25 Fellow at the Oklahoma Center for the Humanities, and a MAP Fund grantee. Across two decades, his projects have built bridges between grief, imagination, and the landscapes we carry forward.

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Britta Adams // Genre: Poetry



Britta Adams (she/her) is a poet living in Orem, Utah with previously published work in *Exponent II*, *Soft Union New Literature*, *Boats Against the Current Magazine*, and *Tipton Poetry Journal*. In addition to writing, she has a passion for bingeing documentaries, playing video games, and taking long walks.

Instagram: @britta.kadams

Camille LeFevre // Genre: Poetry



Camille LeFevre (she/her) writes poetry and creative nonfiction. Her essay, "Body Topography," published in *The Dodge*, was nominated for Best American Nature Writing and Best American Essays. Her work also appears in *Hydration*, *Metphrastic*, *Fugue*, *Unleash Lit*, *Electric Lit*, *Brevity Blog*, *Bridge Eight*, *Poets for Science*, and *Feral: A Journal of Poetry and Art*. She teaches arts writing at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe. She lives on the unceded lands of the Hisatsinom, Yavapai, and Apache in Northern Arizona.

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Candice M. Kelsey // Genre: Poetry



Candice M. Kelsey (she/her) is a poet and educator living in both L.A. and Georgia. She's developed a taste for life's absurd glow, long skirts, and juicy opera podcasts. She roasts vegetables like it's a sacred ritual and wears mostly black because her late father-in-law said it's not her color. Somehow her work has received Pushcart and Best-of-the-Net nominations, and she woke up one day as the author of 8 books.

Instagram: @feed_me_poetry

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Catherine Kennedy // Genre: Poetry



Catherine Kennedy (she/her) studied creative writing and poetry as an undergraduate at Denison University and is a former children's publishing editor. She splits her residence between Columbus, Ohio, and St. Simons Island, Georgia. Catherine draws inspiration from place and nature, which reflect her midwestern and southeastern roots. Her work has been recently published in *Amethyst Review* and *Macrame Literary Journal*. Learn more at www.catherinestewartkennedy.com.
Instagram: @catherinestewartkennedypoetry

Cécile Gonneau // Genre: Art



Cecile Gonneau (she/her) is a French illustrator who likes to create intense and mysterious black and white landscapes fulfilled with enigmatic ghosts.
Instagram: @cecile_gonneau
Website: <https://cecilegonneau.com>

Colin Griffin // Genre: Poetry



Colin Griffin (he/him) is a musician, writer, and artist from Buffalo, New York. He was recently published in *Primer*, *the engine(idling)*, *Cool Beans Lit*, *Anti-Heroic Chic*, and *#Ranger Magazine*. He has forthcoming publications in *JMWW* and *The Minnesota Review*, and is considering emerging further.

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Corey Miller // Genre: Poetry



Corey Miller's (he/him) writing has appeared in *Salt Hill*, *Booth*, *Pithead Chapel*, *Smokelong Quarterly*, *X-R-A-Y*, and elsewhere. He has received support from Literary Cleveland's Breakthrough Residency, Vermont Studio Center, and the Kenyon Review Writers Workshop. When Corey isn't brewing beer for a living in Cleveland, he enjoys taking the dogs for adventures. Follow him on BlueSky @IronBrewer Instagram: @IronBrewed or at www.CoreyMillerWrites.com.

Danielle Coffyn // Genre: Poetry



DANIELLE COFFYN (she/her) is a Belgian-American poet and writer. She is the recipient of a Pushcart Prize and author of *If Adam Picked the Apple*, released with North Meridian Press in 2025. Her poems have appeared in the *Eunoia Review*, *Anti-Heroic Chic*, *Litbop*, the *North Meridian Review*, and others. She currently resides in St. Louis, Missouri with her partner, son, and pup. Instagram: @daniellecoffyn Website: www.daniellecoffyn.com

Eleanore Tisch // Genre: Poetry



Eleanore Tisch (she/her) is a writer, educator, and artist originally from Chicago. She holds a B.A. in Writing and Literature from the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa University, an M.A. in Education Foundations, Policy, and Practice from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and a newly-minted MFA in Creative Writing and Environment from Iowa State University. You can find more of her published work, or get in touch, at eleanoretisch.com. Instagram: @eleanoreality

Elisheva Fox // Genre: Poetry



Elisheva Fox (she/her) is a poet with roots firmly planted in Texan soil. A finalist for the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Prize, she has also been nominated for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize; her work has appeared in *Rust + Moth*, *Paper Brigade*, *Strange Horizons*, *Salvation South*, and *Lavender Review*, among others. *Spellbook for the Sabbath Queen*, from Belle Point Press, is her first collection of poems, and was selected for Jewish Women's Archive 2023-2024 Book Club Picks.

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Ember Jones // Genre: Poetry



Ember Jones (she/her) is a writer from Durham, North Carolina and a student of ecology and conservation.

She currently serves as the Editor-in-Chief of Appalachian State University's student literary magazine, *The Peel Review*. Her work seeks to blur the lines between natural science and art. She is always either thinking about, writing about, or doing research with birds.

Instagram: @ember.nj

Emily Corwin // Genre: Poetry



Emily Corwin's (she/her) writing has appeared in *Salamander*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Passages North*, *DIAGRAM*, *Ninth Letter*, *New South*, and elsewhere.

Her books include *Marble Orchard* (University of Akron Press, 2023), *Sensorium* (University of Akron Press, 2020), and *tenderling* (Stalking Horse Press, 2018). She lives and works in Michigan with her husband, Joe and her very pretty cat, Soup.

Instagram: @exitlessblue

Frankie Soto // Genre: Poetry



Soto (he/him) is a 2x winner of the Multicultural Poet of the year award. He was the 2024 Spotlight Poet for the New York Times. *Petrichor* was a finalist for the Sexton Prize in London. *Petrichor* won book prize w/ Tolsun Books in 2024. Soto has keynoted at 500 + Colleges/Universities/Schools across the country.

Instagram: @frankiesotopoetry

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Heather Emmanuel // Genre: Fiction



Heather Emmanuel (she/her) is a writer of contemporary lesbian literary fiction and prose poetry, exploring the complexities of human relationships, self-discovery, and the quiet moments in between. You can find her at heather-emmanuel.com or at @heather.emmanuel8

Jalen Martise Micquiel Williams // Genre: Art



Jalen Martise Micquiel Williams (he/him) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Greensboro, North Carolina. Born in February 2004, Williams was raised in rural North Carolina, later in life residing in urban North Carolina. In his upbringing, Jalen was always intrigued with the arts throughout his childhood, exploring it through multiple disciplines. This sparked an early thirst for creativity and experimentation within visual arts for him.

Instagram: @Marty_micq

Janet Cooke // Genre: Art



Janet Cooke (she/her) worked at a major book publisher in sales and strategic planning for many years, before retiring to pursue her dream of becoming an oil painter. Inspired by the beauty, tranquility, and serenity surrounding her home in upstate NY, Janet's expressively realistic canvases are a testament to her love for evoking emotion. She is a member of the American Impressionist Society, Oil Painters of America, and the Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council.

Instagram: @janet_cooke_art

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Jaq Green // Genre: Creative Nonfiction



Jaq Green (they/them) lives with their polycule and menagerie in the New England woods, traditionally Quinnipiac territory. They spend some of their time teaching preschool and the rest of it finding strange adventures. Their work examines memory, beauty, and identity and has been featured in Pinky Thinker Press, Hindsight Journal, Death Wish Poetry Magazine, and others.

Instagram: @eatpastaraw

Jo Rohrbacker // Genre: Art



Jo Rohrbacker (she/her) has lived in Flagstaff, Arizona for over 30 years and attended college at NAU. When she earned her degree in fine arts, her goal was to teach knowing she could be an artist without a college education. It was important for her to create safe environments for other creatives to discover their own passions knowing an artist's process can be so humbling and empowering in equal measure. Although her comfort zone lies within the medium of painting, she has always loved telling stories. She hopes to create children's books in the near future accompanied by her watercolor illustrations.

Instagram: @jo.paints

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Jolie Ruin // Genre: Art



Jolie Ruin (she/her) is a mixed media and collage artist. She has been doing art since 2010. Her inspirations include feminism, riot grrrl culture and comedy. She writes and publishes her own zines, which she has been doing for over 25 years. She runs Riot Grrrl Press with her husband Jamie. They sell zines, books, t-shirts, pins, patches, feminist art and lots more.

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Jordan Cobb // Genre: Poetry



Jordan Cobb (she/her) is a queer American poet raised across the south & Midwest. Previously an oncology nurse, she is currently completing her MSc in Creative Writing at the University of Edinburgh.

Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Shore*, *Rise Up Review*, *Outcrop Poetry*, *Chouette Literary*, *Gently Mad Literary Magazine*, *Wrong Directions*, & the 2024-2025 edition of the anthology series *From Arthur's Seat*.

Instagram: @on_the_cobb

Kai Thigpen // Genre: Poetry



Kai Thigpen (they/them) is a therapist, poet, and human who was raised in France, Sweden, and occupied Turtle Island. They now live in Lenapehoking, erroneously known as Philadelphia, with their partner and two fluffy cats. Kai is the author of a full-length poetry collection, *heart of us*, as well as of a chapbook, *habitat*. They were nominated for the Best New Poets anthology, and are pleased to be a poetry reader for *The Adroit Journal*.

Kait Quinn // Genre: Poetry



Kait Quinn (she/her) is the author of five poetry collections, including *Blue Rose* (2024), *I Saw Myself Alive in a Coffin* (2021), and *A Time for Winter* (2019).

Her work has appeared in *Anti-Heroic Chic*, *Exposition Review*, *Full House Literary*, *wildscape.*, and elsewhere. Kait is an editorial associate at Yellow Arrow Publishing. She lives in Minneapolis with her partner and their very polite Aussie mix.

Find her at kaitquinn.com.
Instagram: @kaitquinnpoetry

Kayla Starling // Genre: Art



Kayla Starling(they/them) is a mixed-media artist from Central Florida whose abstract analog collage works seek to explore the wide and ever challenging spectrum of grief, nostalgia, and hope. Combining surrealism and maximalism through 2D collage, they urge the viewer to embrace their most existential thoughts with an open heart. Kayla knows we will see a free Congo, a free Sudan, and a free Palestine.

When Kayla is not making art, they can be found working as both a landscaper and professional chef.

Instagram: @decaf.collage

Kaylee Walton // Genre: Poetry



Kaylee Walton (she/they) is a special education teacher and writer based in Richmond, Virginia. She wants you to know that the only way out is through.

She wants you to forgive your hands. Her work has appeared/is forthcoming in *Sundog Literary Magazine*, *The Scarred Tree: Poetry on Moral Injury*, *Rawhead Journal*, *RVA Magazine*, and *Pearl Literary Magazine*. Dwell with her on Instagram

@cicagagospel.

Website: <http://cicadagospel.squarespace.com>

Kendra Sanchez // Genre: Art



Kendra Sanchez (she/her) is a multidisciplinary painter with over a decade of professional practice. Her work explores the tension between vulnerability and agency, utilizing traditional mixed media while pushing beyond expected approaches. Kendra is steadily building a body of work that reflects her belief that art should not just be viewed but felt—an encounter rather than an observation. Her practice is fueled by reverence for the art of creating and a commitment to making space for complex, embodied experiences.

Instagram: @kendrasanchez.art
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Linsey Tankersley // Genre: Art



Linsey (she/her) is a printmaker with a Bachelor of Fine Art degree from Grand Valley State University. She is a teacher, artist and mother. In this body of work, she explores the themes of life systems, life cycles and rebirth in the natural world. She shows her work locally. Her piece recently received a first-place award, category: printmaking/drawing in the MAAC Box Factory for the Arts Regional Competition. She is beginning to explore the realm of publication in hopes that all eyes that have an interest can view her work.

Instagram: @linseytankersley
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Mandy Lange // Genre: Fiction



Mandy Lange (she/her) is an award-winning writer from Michigan. She moonlights as a homesteader, but her goats would tell you she should stick to writing.

Instagram: @m.m.lange
Website: mandylange.com

Matthew Thomas Bernell // Genre: Poetry



Matthew Thomas Bernell (he/him) is an emerging writer from somewhere near the banks of the Wabash River in Indiana. His work has appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *Pithead Chapel*, *New Ohio Review*, *North American Review*, and elsewhere. Currently, he's pursuing an MFA in Warren Wilson's Program for Writers. You can find him on Twitter @ImmanentFlux, where you will quickly learn that he is a big fan of the slam dunk.

Instagram: @matthewthomasbernell

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Maudie Bryant // Genre: Poetry



Maudie Bryant (she/her) is a multidisciplinary artist and Pushcart-nominated poet based in Shreveport, Louisiana. Her writing explores the thresholds between grief, healing, and the metaphysical, often tugging at the unspoken edges of the human condition. She holds an M.A. in English from the University of Louisiana Monroe, and her work has appeared in *Progenitor*, *Welter*, *3Elements Review*, and other journals. Maudie is also the founding editor of *Audi Locus*, an online poetry journal. She balances her creative life with full-time work and motherhood, creating from the margins and making meaning from what lingers there.

Instagram: @maudiemichelle

Natalia Violette // Genre: Poetry



Natalia Violette (she/her) is a poet, eco-somatic practitioner, and nature-loving copywriter. Her work explores grief, sensuality, and spirituality through a feminist, earth-bound lens—writing toward healing, reclamation, and the wholeness of being human. She is the author of *Bring Me Back My Wild*, her debut poetry collection, self-published in 2023. After surviving cancer at twenty-eight, she now devotes her days to helping others reconnect with themselves, each other, and the natural world.

Instagram: @natalia.violette

Website: www.violetteinkcreative.com

Nicholas Olah // Genre: Poetry



Nicholas Olah (he/him) has self-published four poetry collections, *Where Light Separates from Dark*, *Which Way is North*, *Seasons*, and *You Are Here*. Olah's work appears or is forthcoming in *Humana Obscura*, *The Poetry Lighthouse*, *Thimble Literary Magazine*, *Moss Puppy Magazine*, *Door Is A Jar Literary Magazine*, and more. Olah's poem, "On the Drive Home", won third place in The Poetry Lighthouse Prize in spring 2025.
Instagram: @nick.olah.poetry

Özge Lena // Genre: Poetry



Özge Lena (she/her) is an internationally published poet whose work has appeared in *The London Magazine*, *Modron Magazine*, *The International Times*, and in numerous magazines across multiple continents. Her ecological themed poetry earned Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominations and was shortlisted for Oxford Brookes International Poetry Competition, The Plough Poetry Prize, Ralph Angel Poetry Prize, and Black Cat Poetry Press Nature Prize. Özge's poetry appears in many worldwide anthologies and was showcased at Barnes & Noble for Poetry Month.
Instagram: @lenaozge

Patricia Canright Smith // Genre: Fiction



Patricia Canright Smith (she/her) is an old writer and visual artist living outside Seattle, a retired psychotherapist with advanced degrees in psychology and art. Her work has appeared in numerous literary journals, including *Shenandoah Literary Magazine*, *Quiddity Literary Journal*, *Calyx*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Catamaran Literary Journal*, and others, garnering Pushcart and Best of the Net nominations. The essay, "83 Problems, A-Z" was a Notable Essay in *The Best American Essays*, 2014. Recently, she's been collaborating with the Seattle composer and jazz musician, Paul Finley, to create audio duets with prose and piano.
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Pip McGough // Genre: Poetry



Pip McGough is a UK-based freelance writer whose output explores the uncanny intersections of myth, memory, and the modern world. He blends lyricism and political commentary with dark humour, often drawing on folklore, religion, and metaphysics. At present, his work is necessarily preoccupied with the issue of Palestinian liberation. His writing spans poetry, children's fiction, and surreal short forms, frequently invoking landscapes as witnesses and the body as metaphor.

Instagram: @manifest_gothic

Sheena Graham-George // Genre: Art



Sheena (she/her) is a visual artist based on the Orkney Islands off Scotland's most northerly coast where the Atlantic Ocean and North Sea meet. She works in text, film, camera-less photography, sound, painting and journeying and holds a PhD from Glasgow School of Art and a MFA from Southern Illinois University. She has been the recipient of many grants, residencies and prizes.

Website: <http://sheenagrahamgeorge.com>

Stephanie McKenna // Genre: Art



A graphic designer, botanical illustrator, and budding garden designer, Stephanie (she/her) is a 10th-generation colonizer descendent on a journey to reconnect with her Northern European ancestors by studying heritage traditions and the craft of weaving. She is a lifelong guest on the ancestral lands of the Ohlone people (now known as Oakland, California) and is exploring what it means to be from a place you aren't actually "from."

Instagram: @steph.kenna and @bowerbirdatelier

Val Margolius // Genre: Poetry



Val Margolius (they/them) is a researcher and a fan of black licorice. Their work can be found in *Willows Wept Review* and *Last Leaves Magazine*.
Instagram: @valmargolius

Veronica Berry-Pérez // Genre: Poetry



Veronica Berry-Pérez (she/her) is a queer creative writer and editor from metro Atlanta. Manager of *The Headlight Review*, she is pursuing an MA in Professional Writing from Kennesaw State University. She also has a BA in Asian Studies and a minor in Japanese from the same institution. Veronica finds joy in bolstering the voices of marginalized writers. You can often find her singing, crafting, and contemplating the myriad beauties of life.
Instagram: @readwriteleadfight

