



DELUGE JOURNAL

ISSUE: FALL 2017

3.1

DELUGE JOURNAL

ISSUE: FALL 2017

deLuge is an online literary and arts journal devoted to the wealth of creativity that arises from dreams - directly or indirectly - and from the deeply felt/experienced life.

We present works that catches the breath, that resonates like the low hum of a bass cello. Work that dazzles slant or straight on, that brings us to epiphany, to the cliff's edge or that rises through quiet presence.

However each piece sings, we hope that it leaves you feeling the reverb long after each note finishes.

deLuge publishes strong, passionate pieces that excite and challenge. We accept work from new, emerging and established writers. Please see our submissions guidelines on our website at www.delugejournal.com before sending us your work.

Cover Art: All the Blue by Ashley Provencher

Copyright 2017 by deLuge Journal All Rights Reserved

Published in the United States of America

Co-founder, Editor
Karla Van Vliet

Co-founder, Editor
Sue Scavo

Website Design
Karla Van Vliet

Publisher
Sue Scavo, Karla Van Vliet

CONTENTS

- 9 From the Editors: Sue Scavo & Karla Van Vliet
- 11 Jill Crammond
On the Other Side of the Hollow Tree, You Are Not a Bird,
But a Bride - poetry
- 12 Vivian Lu
Absolution - fiction
- 14 Brad Garber
Watching From My Window - poetry
- 15 Adreon Henry
Living in the Woods - visual art
Dreaming In Tongues - visual art
- 17 Jose Trejo Maya
Heyokah Thunder Dreamers - poetry
- 18 Mary Campbell Wild
Hemingway's Indian Camp Revisited - fiction
- 32 Alexandria Heather
What Isn't the Home of God(Dog)? - visual art
- 33 Roger Camp
Dreamscape 19 - visual art
- 34 Cornelius Rosewater
No Rest - poetry
Sirens - poetry
The Reasons - poetry
- 37 Thomas Gillaspy
Red With Bird - visual art
- 38 Bernadette McComish
Rescue - poetry
- 42 Ashley Provencher
All the Blue - visual art
- 43 ali lanzetta
harvest season - cross-genre
last year, a retrospect: self-test in multiples of three - cross-genre
- 54 Ernest McLeod
Cloud Formation Over Lake - visual art
Field Light - visual art
Sihouette - visual art
- 57 Mary Ryan Karnes
Chickasaw County Line - ficion
- 58 Amy Huffman
Of Wanting and Wings - poetry

- 59 Margaret Warren
The Kite - visual art
- 60 Matthew Raymond Curiale
Dahlias - poetry
- 62 Natalie Crick
Midwinter - poetry
The Moon's Call - poetry
Things of Grace - poetry
- 65 Nina Wilson
Faceless - visual art
- 66 Anthony Cubbage
Dreaming In Flight - poetry
- 67 Manit Ghaotragoongit
The Room in My Dream - visual art
The Way In My Dream - visual art
- 69 Kelly Grogan
On the Wings of the Wind - fiction
- 73 Alexis Avlamis
Sunshine On a Cloudy Day - visual art
Alpha Wolf - visual art
- 75 Suzanne Langlois
Imago - poetry
- 76 Chrissy Martin
Sanctuary - poetry
- 78 Dmitry Sumarokov
Cradle Song - poetry
- 79 Ronald Wolff
Winter Color 3 - visual art
Winter Color 12 - visual art
- 81 Carly Roberts
Once I Dreamt I was a Hunter - poetry
- 83 Francis McGill
Solarium - poetry
- 84 Jamara Mychelle Wakefield
Children of the Night - music
- 85 Eryka Jackson
Mr. Topper - creative non-fiction
- 88 Lily Hinrichsen
The Offering - visual art
- 89 Devon Balwit
The Disquieting Muses - poetry

- 90 Gina Barnard
Two Voices in Tandem - poetry
- 91 Claudia Fell
Metamorphic - poetry
- 92 Fallon Sullivan
Strange Animal - poetry
- 93 Barbara Martin
Night Vision - visual art
- 94 Anna Martin
Leuco Chroic - visual art
- 95 Ian Flanigan
Always Running - music
How Long - music
Welcome Home
- 96 Maryanne Frederick
Reach - poetry
- 97 W. Jack Savage
I Dreamed I was a Grownup - visual art
To Be Safe - fiction
- 104 Rebecca Pyle
Chartreuse Surrounding Black Rock, Great Salt Lake - visual art
- 105 Leslie Bohem
Some Little Something - fiction
- 114 Christopher Woods
The Film She Sometimes Dreams - visual art
- 115 Bios

FROM THE EDITOR

Editor: Sue Scavo

Winter Tale

Tell me your tale of turn. Tall or long. Where do we turn and toward? Away? Turn me a tale, lathe and carve, shape and blade. Etch of skin, stroke of bone. How will we adorn it? We do adorn it. Scored, the turning. Scored, the tale.

Run your fingers along each slash.

Editor: Karla Van Vliet

All Night a Sky Full of Rain

By morning water has filled the low-lying lands.
In the end we will call it disaster, devastation.
wreckage and ruin, such winds, whipping.

When the flood recedes we will see what
we did not want to see, the swollen body,
the cruelty of power, of might. And innocence.

What more there is to say comes like flocking birds
from our mouths, your story and mine, gathering.
One might hope this is the dawn breaking after dark.

On the Other Side of the Hollow Tree, You Are Not a Bird, But a Bride

poetry by Jill Crammond

Although you know you are at the edge
of the woods
 (no simple flyover)
you slow load your basket with fortune from every bough.
Hoard downy peaches their skin like dust on your tongue.
Romance pitted stones in the hollows
 of your lonely mouth. .
This is the ache of morose--
alone in a forest outgrown your home.
Woe's four walls collapsed, trousseau toppled over
sowing your fine linen your old lace your blue garter
 beneath pine needles and swollen compost.
 You are far from fertile ground.
Unsheath your arrow, you tell the hunter —
 (hunter, husband, Romeo in wolf's clothing).
 We are not in the woods
 we are in the marriage
 wedded woods would wedding
broken bedpost empty bureau smudged window.
Has it really been an eternity since the O?
Oh, oh, oh. You and me, ax-man a backwoods sideshow.

Absolution

fiction by Vivian Lu

1.

As I watch your body swallowed whole by nature, I clasp my hands together in prayer until my knuckles turn milk-white. Soon the water in your body will stray from your blood, and everything that you once were will be reduced to memories.

Grandma tells me the dead know everything, but there are some things you'll never know—like how I finally took your advice and quit that job at the movie theater that I hated so much, or how my favorite color will always be the queer shade of neon green you paint your fingernails on Saturday mornings.

Danny tells me to stop speaking about you in the present tense, because it makes coping harder for him. I tell Danny that I speak about you in the present tense because I'm scared I'll forget you otherwise. I'm afraid that you'll fade into a thing of the past—something ethereal and ephemeral, almost like a sugary ocean breeze that comes and goes.

2.

Your father leads Sunday morning worship at the church our mothers force us to attend. Sometimes when he leads us all in prayer, I wonder what God thinks about homosexuals, and if I'll really go to hell for something as innocent as loving girls. Girls—like the taste of metal, like gasping for air, like silk and cherry wine.

I glance over at you from across the room, with your head bowed and hands clasped together. I wouldn't be surprised if you were begging the Lord for absolution.

3.

When I admit that I kissed you in your father's basement on a rainy Friday night, Danny scoffs.

"You don't know shit, you fuckin' dyke. Rachel wasn't gay, so shut the hell up about her."

We're standing in the living room of a party that reeks of lousy alcohol and desperation, and I'm leaning against a wall thinking about how you hate places like this. I hate places like this, too, but it seems as though I've become strangers with myself without you here.

Here's a portrait: you, sprawled across a worn-out leather couch, drunk from the bottle of rum your father keeps hidden in his desk drawer. You just got in a fight with

Danny—for what seems to be the hundredth time in a month. You curse him and damn him to hell, screaming as you shatter the bottle of alcohol on the dusty, wooden floor.

Then, you do something unexpected. You reach out to touch my cheek. I don't know what's happening until you lean towards me, and kiss my jaw—missing my mouth by a few centimeters. I've never kissed anyone before, let alone a girl, so I pull away immediately before you can. I ask you if you know what you're doing. You hold my cheeks in your calloused hands again, and tell me that you love me—not in that platonic way that girls are supposed to love their friends, but instead like how boys are supposed to love girls.

You taste like sugar-spun stars, and the ocean. On nights like those, you are a monsoon spilling, spilling, spilling, and sweeping me further into you. I think I might have drowned in you.

4.

I know I'm not someone you're proud of loving. I can tell by the way you introduce me as your best friend to your parents, and the way you cry after we touch. I know you feel guilty for loving me, so I never ask for more. In hindsight, I wish I did. Instead, I settle for being friends, because that's what girls do when their lover isn't allowed to love them back.

5.

Danny doesn't like talking about you anymore. He has a new girlfriend now, and her laugh reminds me of flowers blooming in the spring. She also reminds me of you, and I'm sure Danny thinks so too.

6.

It's difficult to wash your scent from my clothes. I scrub at my favorite sweatshirt—the navy blue one you gave me for Christmas. I'm cursing you for always smoking those damned cigarettes and ruining your health, but I'm missing you too. I spill detergent over it, watching as the suds wash away every last fiber of your existence. It takes over an hour of swollen knuckles and empty bottles of soap for you to finally leave. When I'm done, I can't smell your cigarettes or the ocean anymore. All I smell is white lavender and bleach.

7.

I've decided that I'm going to stop speaking about you in the present tense. I loved you as a friend, an almost-lover, and as a girl who wants to move on with her life. I won't speak of you in the present tense anymore, because you killed yourself seven months ago, and left me here alone. I've learned to forgive myself, and to forgive you as well.

Steel-jowled and fists trembling, I kneel down at your grave and place a bouquet of flowers by your stone. They're daisies, naturally, because they were your favorite.

Watching From My Window

poetry by Brad Garber

what would I have noticed
if not you
 your green coat
 in snow
drifting into the distance

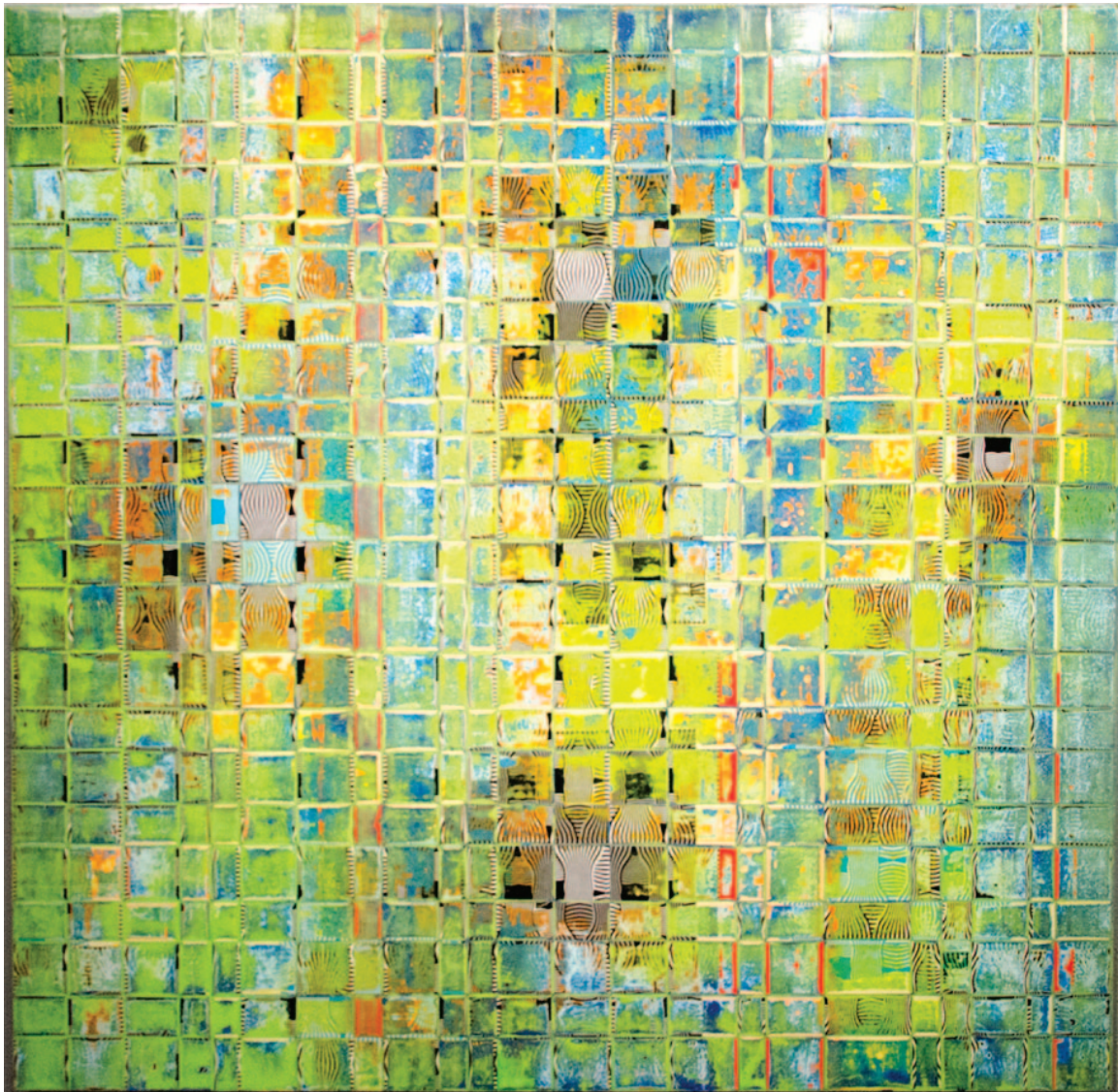
having taken what you wanted

from the scene yellow
 scarf like a meadowlark breast

puffed against the cold?

Living in the Woods

visual art by Adreon Henry



Dreaming In Tongues

visual art by Adreon Henry



Heyokah Thunder Dreamers

poetry by Jose Trejo Maya

Stand alone as those jade eyes that engulf
the canopy. Per view the cousin of the
legendary jaguar's stealth also black as the
deep silence of midnight then it's like the
only staff one holds. In the Lakota lexicon
heyokah or *hayoka* explains like a thunder
dreamers reel to reel –eyes shimmers night
songs as lightning strikes:

Still one finds no pause when you see all
aspects as enclosed prisms of a hologram.
Prodigy remains a lay term for no one can
strive to achieve what others already despise.
Will relate this to its own cost the *Purépecha*
my native clan by birthright foreshadowed
–eyes shard into jade. Dreams teal words.

The jagged edges are still cutting
into: the White Buffalo [Calf Woman]no
longer visible. For can relate how it began
in due backward the Lakota denote –
those stride on opposites or *hayokah/heyoka*.

Yet all Traditions instructs but you have to 1st de
coded: while reaching the shores of Copan you're
in the impenetrable forest of Pyramids traversed
the abyss. A portal of light the Lakota termed it still
[Sun Dance]. Two front and two back marks en
circled by the sun new dawn humbled heart:

matlactli

–ihuan

ome

Tecpatl

Quecholli

Chicnahui

Tecpatl

Sunstone

Calendar

Hemingway's Indian Camp Revisited

story by Mary Campbell Wild

Ilona circled the story with a neon orange marker, heaved the remains of her breakfast into the kitchen sink, then phoned her husband.

"Jeff, listen to this!"

"What's up?"

"An article on the second page of this morning's *Sentinel*. It says, 'A bronze statue of Dr. Elijah Adams will be erected in the newly expanded garden of the Lakeview Condominiums.'"

"Where you like to sit sometimes? The one with the herbs?"

"Right, but let me finish: 'Elijah Adams, M.D. (1884 -1964) was noted for his generous service to all, including the Native Americans who once lived off the land just across our lake. His grandson, Dr. Nicholas Adams, Jr., continues the family tradition of service, providing the women of our community with obstetric care.' I didn't read any more of it."

"Yeah, it's badly written. So?"

Ilona bit her lip. "Not that. The statue might be for the guy who delivered my grandmother." Old Betty, the only mother she'd ever known, once mentioned a white doctor. Ilona could hear Jeff clacking at his keyboard. "Jeff?"

"Oh, right. Now I remember."

"And, his grandson is the one everyone goes to now. How cool is that? It's like it's fate. I want to go see him."

"Do you think we might be pregnant?" Jeff's voice always shot up an octave when the possibility bubbled to the surface.

Ilona thought she might be, but she wasn't ready to tell Jeff. "No, Just to check him out. Maybe he'll remember something about my family."

"I can't really talk right now. Want to submit this piece by the end of the day."

If Ilona told Jeff her suspicions, she guessed he would forget all about his damn piece on bee colony collapse or an endangered marsupial or some other environmental crisis. He itched to start a family. Each month Ilona said she wasn't quite ready, but Jeff dismissed her concerns, saying she would make a great mother, reminding her of her ticking biological clock and pointing to his graying hair. She was 35, viewed pregnancy as a someday sort of thing. Before they committed to a child, she wanted to

lose 10 pounds, wanted to finish her Master of Fine Arts program, wanted to be sure. Even her friends were losing patience with her worries. But the statue coming now, she thought, in the spring, could be a sign, a green light from the universe.

Ilona taped the story to the refrigerator door and called the office of Dr. Nicholas Adams, Jr. Everyone in their small town knew him. If they were to get pregnant, she and Jeff, all their married-with-children friends were sure to recommend Dr. Adams. His family had lived in their small Michigan town for generations. It was an upper class, mostly white, mostly conservative enclave. "It's a great place to raise a family," Jeff once joked. "Lots of white noise to keep everyone calm." They'd met while in grad school. Jeff had finished his MBA. Ilona had dropped out.

"What brings you in today?" Dr. Adams asked, from behind his fortress of a desk. An empty file folder with Ilona's name printed on it lay open in front of him. He had straight hair like hers, but the similarities ended there. His hung down in wisps of silver over a high forehead. He had a prominent jawline. That makes as much sense as anything, Ilona mused, since he's a prominent physician. A Remington painting hung on one beige wall. Woven baskets of various sizes and patterns were arranged on a teak credenza.

"The story in last Monday's paper — about your grandfather. He's the one's that's going to be honored in front of the condominiums, right? A statue of him?"

"Right you are," Dr. Adams said, beaming. "Are you from WRTV?"

It was a reasonable question. Ilona wore tortoise shell glasses and a broad-brimmed felt hat that concealed her blue-black hair, which roped around her head in braids. High-cheeked and lanky, she would look good on camera. In her left hand, she held a pen; on her crossed right knee, she balanced a pad of lined paper.

"No. I'm here because your grandfather might have delivered my great grandmother's baby, my grandmother."

Dr. Adams steadied his chin between his thumb and forefinger and leaned forward. His eyes were shielded by photo gray glasses. His smile, it seemed to Ilona, was kindly.

"You say your great grandmother lived at the Indian Camp, Mrs. Fogarty?"

"My whole family did, yes. My great grandmother had a baby there, my grandmother. My mother was raised there too. But I was adopted as a baby, never knew them. Now, my husband and I are thinking of starting a family.

"Dr. Adams pulled up a chair next to Ilona. "So, of course, you want to know about your biological family."

"My adoptive parents recently died," she said. She hadn't meant to cry.

Dr. Adams handed her a tissue. "My grandfather was a GP, saw the Ojibway when called over to their camp, but he only spoke of one baby he delivered. It was a cesarean birth, an emergency case. Quite remarkable. Brought along my father, just a lad at the time. Grandfather would speak about it with such pride at family gatherings. Especially after a few gin and tonics." Dr. Adams chuckled, and Ilona laughed, too,

although she didn't quite understand the joke.

Do you have names? Dates? Anything like that?

Ilona shook her head. "I don't even know my own name."

He pressed his lips together and shook his head. "Without much to go on, I'm afraid I can't be much help, but if you're thinking of starting a family, it might give you closure of some sort to allow me to be your obstetrician. I'm not accepting new patients, but I could make an exception in your case."

Once outside the office, Ilona left a message on Jeff's voice mail. "You better be careful. I think I'm in love. Dr. Adams is a sweetheart." On the way home, she bought a pregnancy kit. At dinner, she gave Dr. Adams a glowing review.

The next morning, when she worked up the courage to take the test, it confirmed what she already suspected—she was pregnant. About 8 weeks by her calculations.

"Sweatpants?" Jeff asked, brow furrowed, when he kissed her goodbye. "Guess you aren't going to work today, or is this an April Fool's joke?" She worked 3 days a week, Tuesday through Thursday, at All Things Artful, a consignment shop.

"No joke, I'm calling in sick—too cold and rainy to deal with the bargain hunters. I want to finish going through the stuff from the house. Still have a few more boxes."

She heard the front door close, then the car engine sputter. "We'd need a bigger car for a baby," she said to herself as she walked into the second bedroom, which was empty now, except for the boxed up belongings of her dearly and recently departed adoptive parents, Old Betty and Even Older Bob. Ilona pictured a rocking chair, a teddy bear, a crib with duckling sheets and comforters, a baby. "You would have loved being grandparents, wouldn't you?" she said to the boxes. "Trouble is you're not here anymore. It's just Jeff and me." A wave of emotions washed over her as she brushed away tears and cut open the first box.

In the last one, she found a notebook wrapped in a moldy jumble of sweaters and scarves. Amoeba-like markings were etched on the notebook's stained birch bark covers. Its slim contents were held together with what looked like dental floss, threaded through two coarsely punctured holes. A family tree was painted on the inside cover, and on its branches tiny symbols that looked like ropes appeared after the names Chepi and Abequa.

A silverfish skittered across the page, and Ilona flicked it into the dusty sunlight. She stared at the words scratched on the faded first page: "1924--A white doctor by the name of Adams came to our village from across the lake. He brought his young son with him. His brother also came with him. The doctor cut Chepi open and pulled her baby from her." The grisly tale went on for pages. What was it signed—Midewiwin? Ilona wasn't sure. A woman, an elder, she guessed.

Midewiwin told of the curse inflicted on Chepi, because of a white man, and passed on to Abequa, her only child. "Through Abequa," Ilona read out loud, "the curse will flow like a river through all the women who follow. If these daughters are impregnated, they will go mad. So too, will their daughters and their daughters' daughters." Brutality?

Insanity? Ilona cradled her belly in disbelief.

That evening, clutching a mug of skullcap tea, she confronted Jeff at the front door. "I found an old notebook in one of the boxes," she said. "Listen to this." She began to recite the horrific birth details from memory. She didn't mention the curse with its portent of madness or the dip stick, with its twin lines of pallid color, now buried in the bathroom wastebasket.

Jeff pivoted away from Ilona and began shuffling through a stack of mail.

"Listen. Please," she said, grabbing his arm and splashing tea onto his jacket: "The statue doctor. Elijah Adams. He ripped my great grandmother open with a jack knife, yanked the baby from her belly, and sewed her up with gut leaders, the kind used in fishing. She cried out in pain, but he said her screams didn't matter. He told his young son that, too. He said her screams didn't matter. Now there's going to be a damn statue erected for him?"

"What do you want me to say, babe," Jeff said, guiding Ilona to the couch. "It's just a statue."

"It's not just a statue, Jeff. That patrician bastard mutilated my great grandmother and probably others, too. It's a metaphor."

"For what?"

"For how history is rewritten by the conquerors."

"I don't think that's technically a metaphor, Ilona, or even fair."

"What is it then, wise ass? It stands for something e-fucking-gregious, that's for sure." Ilona jumped off the couch and headed for the kitchen sink. She dumped the tea, said to be used by Native Americans for its calming effects. "Calming my ass," she hissed.

Jeff followed her. "It's got nothing to do with us or with this modern doctor who happens to be from the same family. It's in the past, Lonnie."

"Yeah, well maybe the apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

"You don't seriously think your new doctor friend, even if you somehow prove his grandfather operated on your great grandmother, is still using fishing lines do you?"

"No, but maybe he's just as insensitive as his grandfather. Maybe more. Maybe he's one of those doctors who thinks abortions need to be preceded by transvaginal probes."

Jeff cracked his knuckles, a habit Ilona hated. "That's crazy talk," he said. "As if any of your friends would go to a doctor like that. Go take a bath or something. I'll make dinner."

In the morning, Ilona sat at the kitchen table until the hour on the clock inched from 8 to 9. She ripped the *Sentinel's* front page story from the refrigerator door and cut small triangles at the edges, like Old Betty had taught her. "We'll make snowflakes to hang in the windows and keep out the darkness," she'd said every winter. Ilona ran an arm of the scissors lightly across her wrists. "Who'll keep out the darkness now?" She ached to know more about the Ojibway. She knew nothing of their sacred spirits and

songs, their language and legends. She only knew what Old Betty and Even Older Bob had told her, and until recently it had seemed enough. "Your dear mother wanted us to give you a new name and a better life," Old Betty had explained, Even Older Bob nodding at her side. They were blessed to have her, Old Betty often said, a little Indian princess, since they had no real children of their own. On her sixth birthday, they had presented her with terra cotta beads carefully arranged in a small plywood box that was painted red, white, and blue. They'd taken her to American Indian exhibits in the city from time to time, and she had thanked them. In school plays celebrating The Story of Thanksgiving, she had always been chosen as the Indian who greets the Pilgrims. Looking back, Ilona supposed she'd had a happy, if somewhat sterile, childhood thanks to Old Betty and Even Older Bob. They had taken hundreds of family photographs and displayed the best of them in ornate turquoise and coral frames. They had stood at her side when she'd married Jeff, delighted with her choice of a partner, a hardworking, pink-skinned man from New England. Had Old Betty known what was in the notebook? Had she kept its terrible secrets to herself?

"Well, they're sure as hell out of the bag now," Ilona said to the cat. "I know who I am alright. I know what the notebook says I could give my daughter." She phoned the office of Dr. Nicholas Adams for another appointment. Luckily, the receptionist told her, there had been a cancellation that morning.

"I think I'm pregnant," she told Dr. Adams. "If I keep her, I want to name her Chepi. After my great grandmother. She knew your grandfather, and your father, too, it turns out."

"You seem so sure of it now, Mrs. Fogarty," Dr. Adams said. "Did you find a family history?"

Ilona snorted. "Of sorts, yes. Found a notebook." She stood "straight as an arrow," as she had been instructed to do for school plays, and recited Chepi's story, her hands drumming time on the edge of the desk. Dr. Adams tidied a stack of papers, then leaned back until the back of his chair pressed against the credenza. "As I said, it was an unusual case, because grandfather was rarely summoned to service the Indian camp for childbirth issues. Those folks had their own midwives from what I understand. His availability that morning was a lucky break for your family, if the woman was your great grandmother."

"Lucky?" Ilona asked. "Why lucky?" She thought she felt something slide by her navel—something on the inside. What I might face now, she thought, what Chepi suffered, will be all the more insufferable if there's a damn statue to glorify the man who started it all.

"Things were pretty primitive at the camp, even by 1920s standards," Dr. Adams was saying, "not much in the way of sanitation and so forth. Your great grandmother would likely have died without intervention."

Ilona lassoed her thoughts and spun them his way. "I'm here because there should be another statue in the garden—one of my kin."

"It's a charming idea, Mrs. Fogarty, to include an Indian woman, but the Healing Arts Committee has already depleted our funds for the project and commissioned a sculptor. Maybe you could find another place to put your statue. Did you say you think you may be pregnant?"

"I may be yes, but I'd want a midwife to deliver her, not a doctor," Ilona said, writing "midwife" on her pad and punching dots over both i's.

"Then why don't we schedule an ultrasound? That way you'll know for sure whether you're pregnant, and, if you are, the sex of the baby. Prenatal care is very important as I'm sure you know."

"Right," Ilona said, struggling to conjure a smile as engaging as the doctor's. If only an ultrasound could detect a curse. "I'd like to bring some sketches to your next committee meeting and talk about why my great grandmother should be in the garden."

Dr. Adams punched a button on his phone. "As a matter of fact, we're holding a public meeting Friday evening so the committee can update the community on our plans, which, as I said, have been finalized, except for some very minor details. You're welcome to attend, of course. It's at 8 o'clock in the library. I'll have the librarian put you on the roster, if you'd like."

Ilona scribbled the time and date on her pad. "I'll definitely be there."

Dr. Adams offered his Father Knows Best smile again. "And Mrs. Fogarty, I hope you'll come back in to see us soon." With a wink and a nod, he hurried out the door. Ilona took a closer look at the Remington painting, fingered the baskets on display, then shoved one into her satchel.

"Why do you want to stir this up?" Jeff asked at dinner as he passed the steak and grilled vegetables, careful not to spill the juices on his keyboard. He had volunteered to cook again. "My great grandmother lost three babies during the potato famine, according to my Uncle James, but you don't hear me going on about it." He peered at the screen. Red line edits filled it.

Ilona reached under the table and retrieved her sketchbook and a plywood box crammed with crayons, colored pencils, and charcoal sticks. She crushed a charcoal nub into a blank page. "Maybe you should go on about it," she said. "If they were erecting a fucking statue to the fucking English landowner who starved that poor woman so that her children were stillborn right on her own land, then would you do something about it?"

"Probably not," Jeff mumbled. He looked up and turned to face his wife. "So you plan to tell people the blood-and-guts great grandmother story?"

"Yes, I plan to tell it. And to sculpt it into a three-dimensional entity of scrap metal and wire and beads and whatever else I can salvage."

"I didn't realize you wanted to get back into sculpting. Maybe teach some adult ed classes? We could use the money."

Ilona reached over and pushed the laptop shut. "Do you get what I'm saying? He said her pain didn't matter, Jeff. I have these dreams--native visions they're sometimes

called--I've been reading about them. Anyway, in my dreams, Chepi is calling to me. Her face is all twisted. I try to reach her, but she and a baby are drowning. In blood. It's not water. It's blood."

Jeff spoke slowly. "If you're having nightmares about all this, babe, then let's find a therapist, a decent one who can give you the right tools for dealing with your fears. Don't keep blaming your great grandmother for your issues." He had done some research on Tokophobia: a dread of pregnancy.

Ilona grabbed a red crayon and stroked angular lines across the page. "I'm not blaming her. She was a victim in all this. I'm blaming the doctor who maimed her. I'm blaming...."

Jeff reached for her hand, and gently turned her wedding ring around. "You'll feel better once you're pregnant." All their friends were having babies. Jeff's younger brother and his wife were expecting their second.

Ilona pulled her hand away and blew her nose loudly, the way Old Betty had cautioned was unladylike. "How do you know how I'll feel, Jeff?"

"I don't, babe. I don't know how you feel. But I'd sure as hell like to know. All this obsessing over bloody births. I'm just trying to get inside your head."

Ilona couldn't let Jeff go there just yet. If she said madness, he'd say hormones. She'd begun to collect dishes from All Things Artful. They were reds, blacks, browns mostly. No pastels. It was time to change the subject.

"When we have service for 12 with those plates I've been bringing home, we can have a dinner party."

"Great idea, but let's wait until after you see someone and all this statue business dies down. Everyone will want to bring their kids, show off their latest photos or whatever. There's bound to be a lot of baby talk."

"Nothing's going to die down, Jeff," Ilona said. "Absolutely nothing."

"Okay, sure, but why mismatched dishes? Why not use our good ones?"

Because I'm mismatched, and maybe cracked. Because I might have a marker for madness in my Indian blood. "Because I want it to be casual."

Jeff pushed away from the table. "Whatever you want to do is fine with me," he said. "There's a National Geographic special I want to catch."

* * * *

In the morning, Mrs. Hathaway, the librarian, phoned. As a longstanding member of the Healing Arts Committee, Dr. Adams had given her a heads up on the possibly sensitive subject matter. She seemed to want to judge for herself whether Ilona's talk was roster appropriate. "I am," Ilona assured her, "a bona fide Indian and a sculptor. I was adopted from the Ojibway when I was just three months old and assimilated into mainstream culture. So you can imagine how grateful I've been for the opportunities afforded me. Very grateful."

"And how will you proceed with your little talk?" Mrs. Hathaway asked.

"I will start my little talk," Ilona repeated, "with some insights into the culture and lifestyle of the tribe, my tribe, who used to live across the lake. And I'll be glad to provide hand-pressed cider and homemade corn muffins. Just let me know how many people you're expecting." Mrs. Hathaway, a woman whose ample build testified to a likely fondness for sugar, acquiesced, promising to personally post a notice on the library's bulletin board. Ilona guessed Mrs. Hathaway now felt solidarity with Indians, at least adopted ones. She made a mental note to invite her to the dinner party.

The dinner party should definitely have an ethnic feel, Ilona decided. She experimented that night by serving Jeff roasted corn kernels, squash, and black beans as she filled him in on her progress.

"Why do you have to push this, for Christ sakes?" Jeff yelled. "It's the 21st century. The way your great grandmother suffered, if it's even true, is no longer an issue. Childbirth will be a breeze for us. Some discomfort, I know, I mean I've heard, but still...."

Ilona's temples pulsed. She wondered if scalping was an intrinsic part of all Indians' skill set. "Even if it's true, Jeff? Even if it's true?" She yelled, too, and it felt good. She had always been quiet and polite. Her adoptive parents had loved that about her. So had Jeff. Along with her self-deprecating ways. "You're so funny," he'd said when they'd first met. Now she spoke through clenched teeth. "You saw the notebook. Do you seriously think whoever wrote the story made it up?"

"I've never actually seen what's written inside," Jeff said. "I don't even know where you keep it. And how do you know she wasn't exaggerating? Maybe they just resented interference from an outsider. A white guy."

"I know, because I know," Ilona said. She sat cross-legged under the kitchen table and worked on her sketches. By the time the sun came up, she had three.

* * * *

"Going back to the shop to pick up a few things before tonight's big pow-wow," she said to the cat on Friday. "If I'm going mad, I may as well dress the part of the crazy Injun. Do you think I'm going mad? Do you think there are such things as curses?" The cat didn't answer, which Ilona took as a good sign.

That evening, Ilona shook loose her braids and let her hair fall over her shoulders to form ropes thick and strong - just as she pictured Chepi might have done to brace herself for what was to come. She put on her selections from All Things Artful: a tan-colored suede jacket with fringe and black pants. The pants were linen castoffs from the best subdivision in town, tight around the waist but otherwise fine. On her left lapel, she taped a purple feather, its long quill sharp as a knitting needle. Old Betty had given it to her on her thirteenth birthday, warning it was to be handled with care. Around her neck she hung clunky turquoise-colored beads that matched her eye shadow. They were

from Dana's Everything Ten Dollar Jewelry Emporium in the mall, and she felt they completed the native costume nicely. There was no need for war paint just yet.

She didn't have anything from her Ojibway family, except the notebook, of course, so she had pocketed a ceramic raven from All Things Artful. Ravens, she had recently read, were revered in Indian cultures. It had amethyst eyes, and these glittered in its black body. The raven fit nicely into the palm of her hand, and she slipped it into her jacket's left pocket. Its presence against her hip was a comfort; she imagined it fluttering. If it needed to fly, she could let it.

Jeff dropped her off at the library door, gave her a kiss, and promised to be waiting at home, anxious to know how it went. She knew what he would be waiting for. "Fuck you," she said to the moon, but she meant fuck Jeff, not the moon. When the visions were so harrowing that she would wet the bed, she'd pry the notebook from its secret place inside a Saltines box, and carry it into the darkness. She'd write down what she'd heard and what she'd seen by the light of a battery-operated lantern that Jeff kept for emergencies.

Inside the library, two dozen or so people, mostly women, sat on metal chairs that Mrs. Hathaway had arranged in a double semicircle. While a gray-bearded gentleman of indeterminate age read the committee's report on final costs and proposed dates for groundbreaking ceremonies, Ilona busied herself arranging her Costco purchases on a table by the door. She couldn't remember the librarian's name. Something Way. She hadn't remembered to bring plastic cups for the jug of apple-flavored juice either, but she had remembered to bring a large black plate. A web of cracks fanned out from its center to its patterned rim; she covered the defects with assorted muffins. As for her sketches, she propped them against a shelf of Juvenile Fiction.

When it was time to introduce Ilona, the librarian clasped her hands to her chest in a gesture usually reserved for occasions of great joy and introduced the guest speaker. "Alona here was part ...what tribe was it, dear? Oh, but she's adopted." She emphasized the word adopted. "In any case, she is here to discuss her ideas for placing a second statue in the Lakeview garden area." There was scattered applause.

Ilona scanned the audience and found Dr. Adams, who was sitting three seats to the left of center in tier one of the semicircle. He was marking up a page of notes and didn't seem to sense her stare. "My name is Ilona," she began. "I'm Ojibway. Sometimes we are called Chippewa." She willed her eyes to widen as she held up the raven. The price tag was still under one wing, but she hadn't noticed it. "My adopted mother presented this carving from my tribe to me. Sometimes called a shape shifter, the raven is said to have magical powers, is said to help us see cosmic truths. My adopted mother also gave me a small notebook in which one of the native women, a woman who was like a sister to my great grandmother, wrote down a troubling story. A deeply disturbing story. Tonight, I want to share that story."

Ilona handed the raven to the librarian, whose countenance now seemed far less joyful, inhaled deeply, and continued. "My great grandmother, she was called Chepi,

had suffered for less than 24 hours, trying to give birth, before the white doctor came to help." Ilona made air quotes for the word "help." "The doctor paddled across the lake, and he ripped my great grandmother open with a jack knife, yanked the baby from her belly, and sewed her up with gut leaders, the kind used in fishing. She cried out in pain, but the doctor, the one this town is planning to honor, he said her screams didn't matter. He told his young son that, too. Her screams didn't matter."

Dr. Adams eased himself to his feet, swept his right hand toward Ilona, and flashed his whitened teeth. It's not a nice smile at all, Ilona decided. It's a Cheshire Cat smile, meant to trick all the trusting Alices. His scent is of formaldehyde, she thought, and scanned the room for a trashcan. "Mrs. Fogarty is understandably upset that her great grandmother had a difficult birth experience," he said, "but the fact of the matter is that the woman in question was saved, and so was her baby, due to the quick action of my grandfather. He worked with what he had, and he saved two lives." Dr. Adams cleared his throat and continued. "But I just want to remind you before you cause yourself undue stress, Mrs. Fogarty, that your people asked my grandfather to come over to the camp. Your great grandmother would have died if he hadn't intervened."

He acknowledged murmurs of agreement, then went on. "My grandfather and his brother went to the trouble to row across the lake to deliver that baby. He had no tools to work with, no anesthesia. The place was filthy. What mattered was his accomplishment."

Ilona's hands went to her belly. "His accomplishment?" She had heard this same argument from Jeff. "And I guess he didn't have room in the canoe for his usual tools, but he had room for his son, your father, and for his own brother, Ephraim, the one who called Chepi a 'damn squaw bitch.' Why?"

There was a collective intake of breath from the audience. Dr. Adams countered with a long sigh. "I'd be very interested in reading your notebook. No one in my family has ever mentioned such offensive remarks. My great uncle was there to help with the procedure, I suppose. I know very little about him. As for my father, he remembered the situation as a coming-of-age excursion, a way to understand what his father did to help others, and, yes, a way to explain that sometimes, for women, especially primitive women, things go wrong. End of story."

"I want my great grandmother to have her own statue so it won't be the end of the story," Ilona said, and pulled at her necklace until the string broke. Beads bounced and rolled between the chairs. A little girl shimmied out of her mother's lap and ran to pick them up.

Next to the doctor, a plump woman raised her hand. Diamonds flashed on several fingers, which were stubby. Her makeup was perfectly applied, and her eyes were round and blue. They were the kind of eyes Ilona had coveted before she'd found the notebook. A fleshy couple, great with child, turned toward the woman. "I think most citizens share my view," she said, "that a statute to my husband's grandfather captures the event perfectly. He was a powerful man, and yet he made a commitment to help

those less fortunate.”

Ilona grimaced, willed the muscles beneath her cheekbones to soften. “A metaphor perhaps?” she asked, without waiting for an answer. “Here’s the thing. My great grandmother endured incredible pain. We know there are drugs to numb pain now. But doing a caesarian then, with a jackknife, and sewing a woman up with gut leaders....” Her words caught in her throat and she reached for her water bottle. “Barbaric. There’s no other word for it. Barbaric.”

A man stood up and introduced himself as the headmaster of a local school and a Healing Arts Committee member. Ilona imagined that he played golf with Dr. Adams, and that they often positioned their tiny balls on land that had once belonged to her people. There was a nasal authority to his voice. His hands seemed to search for a podium. “Perhaps,” he began, “if these women in the camp had had better contingency childbirth practices in place, the doctor might not have had to go out there and impose himself on a very different culture from his own.”

Ilona was speaking very slowly now, mimicking the way Jeff had taken to conversing with her. “I assure you, sir,” she said, “the women in the village knew exactly what to do. But the baby, it seems, was in a breeched position. They turned my great grandmother to her right side, then her left. They rubbed juniper oil on her belly, burned sage. They just needed a little more time. But Dr. Elijah Adams said her screams didn’t matter. There is an Ojibway saying: ‘Biibaagi Manidoo. The Spirit Cries Out.’ She’s crying out to us. Her screams do matter. She matters.”

A tall, narrow woman seated directly behind Dr. Adams spoke up. “You’re making a dangerous assumption,” she said. Ilona recognized her as one of his nurses. “Relying on ancient remedies when labor drags on for days on end can have disastrous consequences, for both mother and child.”

“It was only one day,” Ilona said.

Dr. Adams stood up again. “Grandfather remembered it as two days, and Ms. Owens is quite right.” He gestured toward the nurse. “Two days is a long time to labor without reliable medical intervention. The Indian woman would have died if my grandfather hadn’t performed an emergency C section.”

“Maybe so. Maybe not so,” Ilona replied. The cool liquid from her water bottle loosened her words. “My great grandmother and the other women believed the baby would have come. ‘Time come, child come.’ That’s also what is written. But that’s not the fucking point.” Dr. Adams’ wife tsk tsked. “It’s how they all talk these days,” a woman behind her confided. Ilona glared at them both and stepped closer to her audience. “That Doctor Adams was so focused on his skills, on adding another notch on his delivery belt, that he was immune to Chepi’s needs, her anguish. Did you ever wonder why your father didn’t become a doctor, doctor? Could he ever shake that image from....”

“You are way out of line Mrs. Fogarty,” Dr. Adams interrupted, his voice no longer measured. “As a matter of fact, it haunted him for all of his too-short life. He was

a victim, too.” His wife reached up to take his arm, urging him to sit down. The librarian hurried to Ilona’s side and pried the bottle from her hand, offering a refill. On her way to the water fountain, she sniffed its contents.

“I thought perhaps you were Mayan,” a woman to Dr. Adams’ left observed. She was wearing a Peruvian sweater, and it hung down over her booted calves. “My husband and I have been to Machu Picchu three times on senior eduventures. So impressive what those natives were able to accomplish on their own.”

She’s trying to turn me, Ilona thought, to ease my pain, to end this ordeal. “No, I’m Ojibway,” she reiterated, “sometimes we’re called Chippewa. And I’m a sculptor. I’m asking for small donations to get the project started. It costs wampum to create quality art. I’ll donate my time, of course.” She passed a small basket around, her favorite from the office of Dr. Adams. Her hands were shaking. She wished she hadn’t said “wampum.” There was no longer a need to be obsequious. She continued: “I’ll need materials, and permission, of course. One always needs permission.” Someone chuckled, presumably, Ilona thought, in agreement.

Another woman, this one much younger, piped up. “I could see a statue of your great grandmother Cheri” she said, “in native costume perhaps.” Ilona thought that this woman, too, wanted to lessen the discomfort. “It could be something tasteful,” the woman went on, twirling strands of hair around an index finger. “Serene, perhaps, to complement the perennials. Maybe, forget-me-nots?” She looked around to see if the symbolism was appreciated. It didn’t seem to be.

The raven nestled in Ilona’s right palm, and she stroked it with her left hand. “There was nothing serene about Chepi’s situation,” she replied. “If the doctor, who taxpayers seem so eager to honor, had bothered to come back to see my great grandmother, he would have witnessed her descent into madness. It is written that her baby, Abequa, had a head shaped like an arrowhead. The women took care of her, nursed her, but she was never right. She was my grandmother, but no chance in hell she could ever become a doctor.” The librarian handed Ilona a paper napkin, and she honked into it. “Chepi’s husband? Lying in the bunk above her? He slit his throat. Slit. His. Throat. Right there in the top bunk. Does your family remember that, Dr. Adams? Do they remember that?”

“We don’t dwell on that part of the story,” he replied, leaning to one side to stuff a handkerchief into his pants pocket. “As tragic as it was, my grandfather could have done nothing to help the poor man.” Whatever his wife had offered him from her heart-shaped silver pill box seemed to have had a calming effect. “Best guess is he was enduring his own pain. He had cut his hand, I believe.”

“His foot.”

“Yes, of course, his foot.”

A woman quickly spoke up. She was encased in mink, even though the room was very warm. “Suicide, that’s common with Indians, isn’t it?” she asked.

Ilona noticed a security guard standing by the back door. His arms were folded.

She couldn't tell if he had a gun. She tried to focus. "It is now, and so is meth abuse, alcoholism, madness. It's a bitch to break the cycles, quoth the raven." A vision of Jeff, his feet swaying inches above a tiny pink step ladder, came to her.

The community room was still. Ilona pulled the feather off her jacket and let it float to the floor. "May we see the notebook where all this is written?" a woman asked, breaking the silence. Ilona recognized her. She was a well-known lawyer and social climber who slithered often into the consignment shop to drop off what she shed. Before, when the raven was passed to her, she had taken pictures of it on her iPhone.

"The cover is made of bark. The pages are crumbling. I couldn't risk bringing the notebook here."

"And your birth parents?" the woman pressed. "What happened to them?"

"I never knew them. Social services placed me in foster care as soon as I was born. The elders said my mother inherited a curse from her mother, the curse of being defiled by a white man. Such a curse is like a worm. It gnaws from within. In my mother, it remained locked deep within her. She couldn't care for me."

The basket had passed quickly from one person to the next. Several checks and a pile of bills were in it; some of them, Ilona could see, were twenties. "I'm open to the idea of funding a second statue," the well-known lawyer and social climber said. Her handbag sat open on her lap. "What would it look like?"

"I have some preliminary sketches here," Ilona said, rushing over to the bookcase. She'd forgotten about them. "I'll pass them around." She took a gulp from her water bottle and spoke rapidly. "The sculpture would show my grandmother on her cot, her frail body half wrapped in a quilt, her belly exposed. She's cradling her baby."

Three people were texting. One woman looked down at her feet, bent over to tie her shoelace. Ilona fingered the raven, now back in her pocket. An idea flew into her head. "Nearby, a second woman, Chepi's sister, Midewiwin, kneels beside her," she said. She willed herself to remain standing, to be the stoic Indian. "And just what would she be doing" a woman asked, "planting corn?" She was knitting something long and purple, and she had waited until she finished a nubby row and inspected it for dropped stitches before she spoke.

Ilona felt a cramping deep in her gut. "Burying the placenta," she said. She tasted the rusty odor of blood. "Biibaagi Manidoo. Biibaagi Manidoo," she chanted.

A man on the far right in tier two leaned forward to get Ilona's attention. He introduced himself as the editor of the *Sentinel* and passed Ilona his card. "I'd like to interview you, Mrs. Fogarty," he said. "Please call me." A pregnant woman lurched up. She gave Ilona the peace sign as she dragged a tow-headed toddler with her to the door. "No," he yelled. "No! No! No!" Three more people, gathering their coats around themselves like shields, got up, too, nodded to Ilona, and followed the pregnant woman. Their chairs made scraping noises against the floor.

"Well, I believe we've gone way past our time," the librarian announced, pointing to the clock on the wall. Only three people remained. None of them stopped to have

muffins and drinks. The librarian packed up the refreshments and began turning out the lights. She did not look for Ilona, who was in the restroom throwing up.

On the walk home, a three-quarters moon lighting her way, Ilona stopped by the herb garden at the Lakeview Condominiums and squatted near the gray-green clumps of sage. “Chepi,” she whispered. “I hear your cries. I will build you a statue. But I won’t have this baby.” She took the raven from one pocket. She took the long, sharp feather from the other.

The next morning, Jeff snapped the bedroom blinds open and sang out “time to rise and shine,” but Ilona didn’t budge. The night before, she’d crawled into the second bedroom while a CNN special report blared in the living room. Only the top of her head was visible when he padded in to check on her at noon and drape another quilt over her. He’d spotted dribbles of red in the toilet bowl. “Sorry we’re not pregnant yet,” he said to the place where an ear might be. And then: “Are you playing possum again, my love?” he asked.

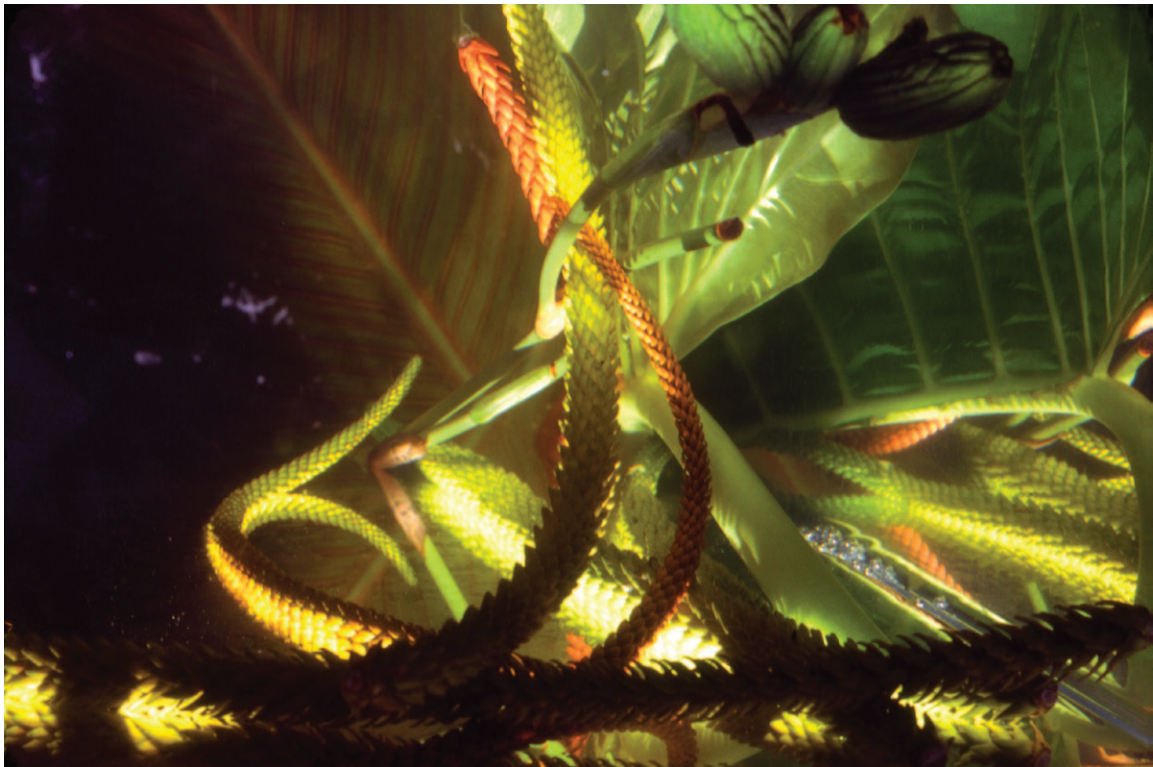
What Isn't the Home of God(Dog)?

visual art by Alexandria Heather



Dreamscape 19

visual art by Roger Camp



No Rest

poetry by Cornelius Rosewater

I had that dream again
where I was running down the street
and I saw you
up above me, flying in circles.
You were laughing and smiling and waving
and you kept blowing kisses and
raining
bombs.

Sirens

poetry by Cornelius Rosewater

There was a tin
of mustache wax
on her nightstand

and
all I could think
was

well,
this will
at least be
interesting.

The Reasons

poetry by Cornelius Rosewater

You said
I must be drinking
to try to ease
the pain.

I guess you were half
right.

By which I mean
drinking
never really eased
the pain
for me.

It only fucked up
my vocabulary.

It killed all the decorative words
that I had
for the ache.

It took it from
describable

and made it dull,
general
and unspeakable.

It became
a faceless, nameless thing
brandishing a knife
vaguely made out of
her name.

Red With Bird

visual art by Thomas Gillaspy



Rescue

poem by Bernadette McComish

1.

I was drowning yesterday

and before my lungs filled like sacks of sea
your phalanges picked the perfect handle
of my armpit

your euryhaline grip navigated the air back

and the only thing I remember about before,

was blue;
blue dress,
your blue,
and my green, the sea,

brine layered like blankets

I wasn't broken,

I wasn't dead,

just under.

2.

I opened my eyes

to you,

burning, blinking below
saline sheets of dead sea.

My nose said, not

even macroscopic aquatic organisms can

live like this.

3.

You measured the rope
by eye
and cut enough

to sink tandem
in your hand and umm,

did you forget something?

Perhaps to tie
end to beginning, elbow to anchor
but the twine was too short for that,

so you dove.

Was I there,

choking, reaching,

swallowing

S O S

while you wrapped my wrist

and gripped my waist like a can of Coke?

Did we ever surface?

4.

There was a leak in

our submarine,
and while you assured me, we

would not expire with water in
our cartilaginous passageways,
I knew breathlessness
was close when we reached
a depth
where I loved that light

could not reach us,
you said you were most afraid
of fluid in your drum,
I wasn't listening
just watching
the hole go from
tiny
to too big

How do we fix it?

You didn't answer,
Shark got your tongue, Sir?

*If so, I'll cut open the nurse's stomach
retrieve the muscle
from the license plates
and sew it back into your mouth,*

but there was no time for that,
and as our ears popped like tiny grenades

your lips read,

I can not save us.

5.

Everything pink turned
blue as I waited.

You said my flesh was frost
flaking off with a fingernail. It was then
you topped me. Sopped up

the snow and ice with your terry-cloth chest.

Where did the water go?

6

Our train swayed like seaweed,
then picked up speed —
express style
& you with your meat hooks

held my elbow as if it were the last time
you'd be able to bruise me;

What's the next stop, Sir?

As we watched the closing doors
you answered, *This is 86th Street,*
the next stop is Underwater.

Surely he wasn't serious.

Outside the window
there were no platforms,
or parallel locomotives —
just blue sparks
on the bottom
& the sea.

All the Blue

visual art by Ashley Provencher



harvest season

cross-genre by ali lanzetta

birth

noun

: : : :

rolls and rolls of plastered gauze cut into strips with the blue-handled kitchen scissors, the belly of the debacle like a cinderella pumpkin with only one pucker-line down the middle. i imagine a swarm of women piled around it like bees. our hive is littered with tissue. lavender, ochre, underwater green, a spectrum of foreshadowed bruises smoothing. it is sleepy like a giant cat in our lap. our lips are swollen with all the words we haven't spoken yet. it lays back and we shape its belly to an empty mask. we make up new words for what we're doing. everything in its place, which is no place at all. but here we are. accomplices in creation. shapes saving for later.
go.

death

noun

: : : :

the action or fact of dying: the end of the life of a person or organism: the permanent ending of something driven to dance. i crumble the cake for the doves, country-pigeons i don't buy it, they loop around me like children around a fairytale picture-book. sentences for the birds. i fall my main character through the cracks in the ice to come. i will hold this grudge against god for as long as you stay down there. it is autumn on my insides. the birds will eat the remaining apples and fly south. i jump from a branch into a crackly pile of butterscotch maples. i will hide here until the last of the apples fall.
milkweed lips sewn shut : book-bound : your name scribbled out in the crease of my spine.
stop.

birth canal

noun

::::

cut out like a picasso lunchmeat necktie, tomato skins making curly wet mouths on the cutting board. i use an eggshell for a hat. the eyes have specks of pepper for pupils. nobody can see straight. we move like newborns, eyes as round and rimmed as chunks of cucumber. your mouth is my mouth, and our words come out scrabble. brown wooden bits cracking our teeth. you rub clovebud on your gums to numb it. lemony winter sun through the skylight to church the table where we spread like cards.

seeped like this in innocence, we begin the project of pretend.

go.

death adder

noun

::::

venomous banded snake, my wormlike tail to lure you. a nest full of pale blue eggs that don't taste right. co-conspirators make the worst sort of enemies. the sun that keeps going down in the desert. the brilliance of a billion stars that trick you. we poison memory with making things up.

we make pictures where pictures don't belong.

stop.

birth chart

noun

::::

a circular map to stamp the positions of planets. a bug, a twin, a lion, a scale, our instant fascinations with. the free-paper marks our progress, agreeing with us, planning the imaginary future in flimsy newsprint word-blocks. the deduction of cosmic potential, our smiles are islands, buoyed. we re-create stories: you are the first thing i see when the muck slides from my eyes. we are born in different years, on different continents, surrounded by women crying in different languages, at the same moment.

go.

death benefit

noun

: : : :

my face that amounts to an antique painting. the silence of antique painted oil-women who neither frown nor smile. dusty grass, storm cloud blues and grays, the yellow of forgotten things that go into the woodstove and curl up in submission. you owe me a september field of crickets, a worn maple floor. a felted breeze through spindly branches. an indigo sky with delicate galaxies spilled across it like your mother's milk. this is where the skunk roots for grubs.
stop.

birth defect

noun

: : : :

destinies detected for which there are no bandages. we have inherited each other from the ground, like dandelions. i know i am a weed; a gray garden littered in your eyes. you watch me like a little boy in the ladies' room, our grandmothers washing their hands. i blush, defected, catching your glances in my jar constructing a lantern. it's all wrong, good is bad, the things that come out backwards and only want you to look without averting the mirror. you can't look without smiling, so you don't look at all. you scrub your hands until they are raw and pink like pickled ginger. i sit in the crystal fishbowl and fish you with my eyes.
go.

deathblow

noun

: : : :

conviction in question, i unravel my scent behind me, walking. i prop the doors open or closed, depending. you are there, smelling my plaid scarf, wishing for windier mornings where i have nothing to leave behind. i am behind the wall of pretend, climbing the same mountain to re-assign your beliefs. who do we think we are? you keep retrieving the rules from the burn-pile and i keep building intricate ships in the pill-bottles. i fidget with the weather, i purposely spill your pills down the stormdrain. you snap all my pencils in half, so i can't carve your name into my palms again. the sky goes black like a bruise and you blame me.
stop.

birth family

noun

::::

i take you like medicine. our attention-span stuck on repeat. all my scratchy records smoothing. i build us a diorama shoebox village with giant crow-feathers for curtains to keep the living ghosts out. drawing windows on the walls with stubs of chalk. you laugh, hiding your face, your hands brown and fluttering, not knowing what to do with our newness. crayon-colored birds circle the sky. we smell fat wet clouds in the distance, moles digging their holes in our cardboard floor.

go.

death-by-misadventure

noun

::::

unfortunate incident; a mishap; from *mesavenir*; 'turn out badly'. the colder it gets the hotter we are in the collar. down in the ground the moles come up for air. our kinds of boundaries are what make mountains. the himalayas growing, month by tattered month. dishrag strings between worlds that fray. we write in the blocks and they scramble like ants. we fall through brown and golden gullets in the underbrush. cracked branches laid in careful crosshatch. the leaves that pile up. we are all being hunted.

stop.

birth pang

noun [usu. in plural]

::::

i feel you in my gut. refusing muse who twists my letters to discombobulating. your eyes like lightening bugs tracking the meandering treeline of my lazy heart. sharp edge softens. unarmed architect of my insides. build a hut in your belly and let me live there, pulling petals from flowers and napping. i won't make a sound.

go.

death house

noun

::::

black and white striped suit. the cartoon ball you drag, your bad foot twisted in plastic soda-can lace. i keep snipping the corners : you entangle every time. ensnare yourself in the chain-link-seaweed. this is when no one remembers how to swim. this is when disciples save themselves. we chip away like paint from the walls. spill across the yard like birdseed. lift up these shoes and empty them. the soles are full of sand.
stop.

birth-day

noun

::::

the anniversary of something starting or being founded : get me a dollhouse for our birthday. get me a hot air balloon with whitewash birdbones woven in the basket. get me a lanky birch with mustard leaves falling, a snowhare with a pink nose. get me cumulous nimbus, stratus, feather-down for one with the windows open. get me.
a white page to purge you like pollack, get me your blank stare back. that cartoon unicorn with the watery eyes, fat and round like ostrich eggs. get me dinosaur bones from the quiet ones. get me autumn, apocalypse, birdcall records spinning. get me rain pattering a tin-roof. get me a plastic tea party, dipped in gold. get me the corners of your voice when you're blushing, snapped off like the red heads of rosebuds. cherished, stolen, stuffed in a jelly-jar and tied with a bow. i'll hide you in the closet until next year.
go.

death knell

noun

::::

smash it like a window, hotwire the car. drive it off the side, setting fire to a field of blueberries. down the dirt road where you smell sweet pies burning, tell me again what i don't mean. my ears are stuffed with sugared glass.
stop.

birth-mark

noun

: : : :

beautiful blemish you stick to my cheekbone like a wet leaf. i am stuck to your rubber sole like gum. how you stuck me to the wall when i started rotting your teeth. remember? the mouthwash of negation to nix the aftertaste. sweet things turn sour. a splotch to mark the body shaped like a heart like an apple. banished to eden watching the moon move from one side to the other and back. i lose my taste for fruit. where you spit seeds, trees grow. we go hungry in the orchard. all our extra ribs sticking out, the multiplication of molds. i create you in my image. you shake your head, not looking at me, looking through the hole in the floor. root-rot. i grow spices. you grow antidotes. we sneak tablets of aphrodisiac, fizzing the birdbath. the leftover taste in the mouth, thorned cord that won't cut. we renew our un-vows under the crabapples, birds swooping like fighter pilots. you are loading your pistol with promises. you are determined to win the war. i uncrumple my splotchy pact to keep trying. pin it to my hungry belly.
go.

death mask

noun

: : : :

i sketch your face on my map of san francisco. the hem of the dress in my dream. on the rotten floorboards, cracked claw-foot washtub, on the rag i use to wipe you up when you tip my book over and spill yourself across the carpet. drawn on my pillowcases, you look at me funny. i trap you like a lizard. i chop off your tail on accident and cry on the patio, my knees skinned. my hands don't fit together. something is swollen. there you are like a wax statue in my center, staring out of me like a rainy window. i am multiple choice. i am sorry. i am saturated with imagination. my wet hair freezes and snaps off. your patchy permanence. you abandon your shell, leaving behind the sound of the ocean. your hollow crashes that blind my ears. our lights snap out one by one on the horizon.
stop.

birth-wort

noun

::::

a climbing or herbaceous plant that typically has heart-shaped leaves and deep-throated, often pipe-shaped flowers :: formerly used as an aid to childbirth and to induce abortion :: genus aristolochia, family aristolochiaceae.

::::

if i don't harvest the garden, you'll burn my books, you say.

your silent part in the play goes flatline.

time stands on either side of me, bracing itself, and pushes the drug that pauses my heart. one by one you shoot the birds out of the sky. they drop down and fizzle out like stars. sun and moon rearrange.

i will turn underwater with my eyes open, come up new and not make a sound.

the landscape of a room that has never seen sorrow.

our weighted wings that crack off, that sink in the tub like dreams. bubbles float up from the darkness of the bottom, bursting. my reds dissolve to browns, and fall.

this is what happens when i take it with me.

go.

last year, a retrospect: self-test in multiples of three

cross-genre by ali lanzetta

fill in your spouse's information here. did you snort water up your nose on accident or on purpose last year? life events include: imaginary marriage; imaginary divorce; near-death experience including heart palpitations, blurred vision and kissing fantasies in fainting rooms. dreamt bike, car or pedestrian crashes. the purchasing of life-insurance and/or adopt-a-star stars you get to name, then lose. the dropping of glass things. the ingrown splinter in your foot. redness, swelling. a little wheeze or light sneeze that won't go away. a satellite out of orbit plummeting toward your atmosphere. if you have an escape route, check here. if you don't have an escape route, take two aspirin, put ice on it, see how it feels in the morning.

visit the electric help-center with additional concerns. do you have additional information about last year that hasn't been reported? electric eels, transistor radios, sleep-machines, space-junk, christmas trees, radar detectors? did you pull the lever on yourself and get two cherries and a pear? report findings on a. tree trunks, or b. wet cement. can you tell the difference between permanence and permeability?

draw yourself a stick-girl in the block.
lunar eclipses, nesting birds and all
trees are exempt. did you get trapped
in a downpour? report the color of
any missing umbrellas. check "missing
umbrella" box. attach an additional
page if necessary.

did you pay or refuse to pay multiple
parking tickets and end up in van-jail
for an afternoon for always being in
the right place at the wrong time? did
you sit in the cab on the way to the
impound lot fantasizing about hijacking
the streetsweeper and sweeping all
the people up? check box for talking
between bars. check box for bad. check
box for apologies get you nowhere fast.
did you turn your van into a pumpkin
and disappear into the woods? the
slipper didn't fit.

this is important information and is
being furnished to the universal dead-
horse society. it's optional to provide
your phone number, but we'd really
like to talk to you. you're a complicated
process.

check if in limbo.
check if the weather changes.
check if you think you're dreaming.
check if when you jump, you float
back down.
check if you need a new toothbrush,
jacket, or flashlight.
check if you keep giving someone
something you want back.

check if you'd give it all away for one
reliable imaginary friend. just one.

your return is sleeping.
your return is a locket full of paper.
a february cherry-tree.
your return is a broken oar, a sea-
shanty, a shiny shell with an oyster in
it, washed-up, do oysters breathe?
still breathing.
last year, did you donate your
entire return to the adopt-a-unicorn
foundation?
check here if you would like to donate
your complete return to your local
seabird sanctuary, and especially to
a particular disfigured wandering
albatross. maybe it's not your fault. you
got caught in the net.

does a bird live with you? does a bird
live inside of you? does an imaginary
friend live in your bathroom cupboard,
between the broken thermometer and
the half-empty bottle of aspirin? if you
have a divorce agreement but were
never married, check here. if your
imaginary friend won't talk to you, also
check here. have you read and reviewed
the tie-breaker rules? if you have,
check "yes". if you haven't, check "yes".
check box if you have the same name
(first, middle, last) as last year. check
box if you are not deceased. check
box if whatever doesn't kill you makes
you stronger. check box if the bottle is
actually half-full. check if nothing you
just said is true.

according to your answers above,
our records indicate that you qualify
for the rare and endangered species
preservation program, for inclusion on
their threatened species list. check box

if you need to review the terms and conditions of inclusion.

it's free. how many trees did you climb last year? telephone poles? brick buildings? check box. what are you looking for? check box. how far can you see from your window when it's sunny? foggy? twilight? check box. can you see clearly from here? check box. wrong answer. report that and sign your same name to it or forever hold your peace.

in certain cases, different credit applies to an individual who comes across as a married couple. this return appears to be one of those. please correct the information above, as needed.

Cloud Formation Over Lake

visual art by Ernest McLeod



Field Light

visual art by Ernest McLeod



Sihouette

visual art by Ernest McLeod



Chickasaw County Line

fiction by Mary Ryan Karnes

They've all gathered on the pool deck around a Tickle-Me-Elmo, which keeps screeching and falling over. Who brought the Tickle-Me-Elmo? Not the kids. There are no kids. You wonder if heat can kill a Tickle-Me-Elmo or an old redneck. The thing about family reunions is nobody knows how to act. It's about everybody and their names and their pocketknives.

There are no kids because you and your wife won't have any. Liver spots can be purple and brown. A rainbow of flyswatters is hanging from a sole nail on a post. This is the thing you have to endure each year because Faith, bless her, isn't that what her family would say, gives you no out. On her plate: a mountain of potato salad like she never left the country.

Do not see the resemblance between your wife's ankles and her great aunt's. Do not sense potential. Everybody makes their own way. The country does things to people.

You and the Tickle-Me-Elmo are souring. This is the thing about you, the thing that makes you special and higher: you can tell when you're about to melt down. You can tell the future. You can sense yourself running out of courtesies. The thing about this family reunion is that nobody drinks. Corn dip is the only social lubricant. Hate doesn't have to have a direction, only a source. Nobody has taken time to put their index finger in a wet wipe and remove the dust from the edges of the picture frames.

This clump of leathery aunts-and-uncles-in-law still laughs. Faith stands over them and says, "I can't believe you've never seen one of these things before. All the kids have them." And the aunt with well-preserved skin says without tact or much inflection, "Well you don't have any kids to play with any toys." You count the inconsistencies in the poured concrete of the pool deck because you know she's looking at you with big eyes like, do me in the bathroom, like, I want a dumpling of a baby.

If you had a baby you'd throw her into the pool. They swim fine so small. You've seen it on the internet. You can tell the future in the mingling gray clouds. Don't go just now, we haven't even had strawberry cake. A storm will strand you here for the night and you'll have to stick to Faith in the low-ceilinged room upstairs. You don't have to, you want to, for now. So sober you might be drunk. Bullfrogs and crickets are keeping you here. Smiling feels silly in the dark because you can hear your own lips parting.

Of Wanting and Wings

poetry by Amy Huffman

Butterflies bring me ribbons
of gold to bind my mind.
I welcome (if not agree with)
their progressive hope that a make-
shift cocoon can elevate my thoughts.
Perception presses against this
new confine we have created, testing
strength of seams. Begrudgingly,
I have been allotted a crack or two
that can be stretched by breath
of desperation, or broken in fever
or fit of fear.

The Kite

Visual Art by Margaret Warren



Dahlias

poem by Matthew Raymond Curiale

Tired of his mouth
at the contours
of her illustrations,
she drew a sky
into which she flew
all of his reverses
like falcons,
like kites.

They stroked her horizon
with beak and string,
and the balance
of what was
pressed up against
what wasn't
like the quiet seams
of a jigsaw.

Suddenly there weren't
coffee noises
in the morning
or midnight
television gloaming.
But the bed was cavernous
and she could sleep sideways.

She did not miss the way
she used to miss the way
he used to look at her
long ago.

Of course,
the night still leans
against the screens.
She still takes
all the same
roads home.
The grass will not
cut itself.

But the garden is hers,
the tomatoes
the peppers.
All the flowers
are hers.

And she can draw
the most beautiful
dahlias.
Exotic and foreign,
unlike anything
we've ever seen.

Some days clouds,
some days nothing
but sun.

Midwinter

poem by Natalie Crick

Trees appear as brides,
Their snow dance wounding
The cosmos.
I am numb to you.
No one sees the snowdrops budding,
A bright field of knives.
If I turn away, they grow
In lines of white flame and,
As darkness falls,
A kingdom of black blossoms
Deep as a moaning mouth.

The Moon's Call

poem by Natalie Crick

Hush now,
The sound of the moon
Budding on the float of her own white voice,

Her call, like
Spider silk strung from the darkest
Branches, swaying woozily.

Moon turns her ripe eye
To the ground, making
Music that melts,

The whole wood
Lit with alarm,
Dawn like a black knife.

Things of Grace

poem by Natalie Crick

Blue night is
An absent shade now,
A broken memory of sky,

Shadows moss-damp and
Pearled with honey.
There are corpses floating in the trees;

Things of grace,
Swimming over us in flight,
Fluent beings on bone-white wing.

They call to me

When the sky goes dark,
When the clouds are a wish
But no rain pours,

When the moon rolls past and
My eyes catch fire.
They curl over pools

To drink,
Pale-eyed, beautiful,
Something half-remembered.

Faceless

visual art by Nina Wilson



Dreaming In Flight

music by Anthony Cabbage

[Click here.](#)

(The beginning of the piece represents the centering of one-self before entering a dream state. The B- section is a slow rise of awareness in the dream. The dreamer runs to the edge of a cliff, knowing this is the point in which they either die or fly, and as the guitars disperse, the dreamer finds themselves in an flight until being slowly centered back again. They find grounded-ness in their dream.)

The Room In My Dream

visual art by Manit Ghaotragoongit



The Way In My Dream

visual art by Manit Ghaotragoongit



On the Wings of the Wind

fiction by Kelly Grogan

The old man did not want to go the ocean that day. It was a long walk that made his knees ache. But the girl begged and tugged at his hand, and when he finally nodded she smiled up at him in a way that made him glad he'd agreed to go. The girl bounded out the door, calling backward, telling him she was grabbing her kite. They walked along the winding path, the girl chattering beside him while the old man stared at the cloud wisps trailing faint against the sky. The rains had fallen throughout the week and the ground was muddy to walk upon, but the grasses were dotted with the tiny dewdrop blossoms of new wildflowers. They neared the sea wall, tasting salt in the air. The girl looked up at him and when he nodded she took off running towards the water, the tail of her kite fluttering behind her as she disappeared around the bend.

Something of a dream lingered in the old man's mind, like a fog still lifting, but the more he tried to focus on the details the more they slipped away from him. It was the ocean that recalled it — in the dream, he had been by the ocean, and the air tasted like salt as it did now. The familiarity of the moment placed him back there. The way his feet carried him forward. But he could not remember where the dream path led. The image dissolved even as he thought of it.

The girl called to him from the beach and he raised his head, rounding the bend and walking down the stone steps to the shore. The girl was crouched by a shallow pool among the rocks, peering into the water.

Look, she said as he walked closer. Look in here, there's a starfish.

And so there was. Beneath the surface, its five arms sprawled red and purple over the rocks, dappled with dancing patterns of light from the surface of the water.

You can see it moving, the girl told the old man. But it takes a long time. You have to keep watching.

She crouched beside the pool with her arms wrapped around her knees, staring into the water as if she could spot the movement of the starfish if only she looked hard enough. Her kite rested on the rocks behind her, forgotten. The old man looked out at the ocean and saw that the wind was too still for flying, but he did not say anything. He thought the girl may still find a way.

The old man stepped across the rocks, testing each stone to be sure that it would not shift beneath his weight. He gently lowered himself onto the sea-worn trunk of a fallen tree and turned his face to the sun. The child stood and carried her kite to the

waterline where the sand was flat. There she set the kite on the ground and tugged at the thread, wrapping it around the handle loop by loop and checking for knots.

For a while, the old man watched the girl, the patience with which she approached the task at hand, and he wondered about the still and heavy air, if it would be enough to carry the kite skyward. His mind wandered back to the forgotten dream, the impression of the ocean and the presence of a path before him. His eyes far away, watching a place beyond the clouds and the sky that contained them, thinking without words, remembering without pictures. Drifting like that until all else had fallen away from him.

Down the beach, a family was set up with their umbrellas and towels, and the children were building sandcastles and splashing in the water. He watched as the mother wrung the water from her hair and lay upon the sand, her skin gleaming pale in the sunlight. She called to one of her children, the smallest, and as her voice carried through the air a fragment of the dream returned to him — a woman's voice calling his name through the dark, calling his name from the sea.

The old man turned his gaze back to the girl. She was standing still, the kite in her hands, staring at the family. For a long while, she did not move and the old man gripped the rock ledge as if to rise. She looked small and lonely against the endless sky.

Just as the old man started to call out to her, she turned and grabbed the last of her tangled string and walked across the rocks towards him. When the girl reached his side she climbed up onto the tree trunk and sat with the kite in her lap, her fingers wrapping the last of the line around the handle. Finished, she set the kite beside her.

There's no wind, she said, and shrugged.

No, he said. And he thought it peculiar that she'd carried the kite all this way, and stood beside the water's edge with such careful attention to preparing the string, that she'd stood so still for so long to not fly the kite after all. But then, perhaps she'd known before they'd even left the house. Perhaps the point was in untangling.

The girl swung her legs back and forth, letting her heels kick the ground, and the old man saw her eyes flicker once more at the family down the beach. Her eyebrows were knit together and she looked at the old man and she asked him if he ever felt alone.

Yes, he told her. After my wife —

He trailed off, not knowing how to finish the sentence. But the girl seemed to know the rest of the words and she nodded and looked back out at the ocean.

I like being alone, she said. I always did. My mom once made a rule that I had to keep my door open all the time. Because otherwise, I'd just sit in my room all day, by myself, and no one would even know I was home.

The old man had wondered at the way the girl never shut the door, the way she'd wake crying if he closed it while she slept. He'd thought she was afraid of the dark and needed the glow of the hallway light. And his mind again returned to the dream, and the sound of the woman's voice calling out to him through the darkness. Alone, he thought, with our ghosts. He shuddered and the girl put her hand on his arm as though to wake him. He straightened and heard the call of osprey gliding overhead, and he pointed the

birds out to the girl. But she did not take her hand from his arm and when he looked at her he saw that she was searching his face.

Where did you go? she asked him.

I'm sorry, he said. I was thinking.

What were you thinking about?

Not knowing what to say to her, he reached out and patted her hand.

It was nothing, he said.

Please, she said. Tell me.

I was thinking — I was thinking about how sometimes it feels lonelier to be around people than it feels to be by yourself.

Yes, she said. I know what you mean.

The girl kicked her heels against the tree trunk a few more times, then pulled her ankles up and crossed her legs in front of her. She picked up a pebble and dragged it along the bark, marking a path. Drawing lines, tracing the edges over and over.

Did your wife like being alone?

The old man smiled, remembering. No, he said. She couldn't stand it. She always liked to have someone to talk with.

The girl looked down at her feet and tossed the pebble to the side. She was silent for several minutes, her eyes narrowed and her hands unmoving.

Then she asked, Do you think your wife is alone, now?

The old man was taken aback by the question, unsure how to answer. He thought that he should not say what was true, or what he feared to be true in the darkest of moments. And yet he also knew that he could not lie to the girl. She was young, but she had an old soul. He only glimpsed her childlike innocence sometimes, when she ran to grab her kite or while he read to her before she fell asleep and her hand curled over the blanket by her cheek.

He chose his words carefully. Sometimes, I ask myself that very question, he told the girl. And I don't know the answer. I am afraid sometimes that she is alone. Other times, I think there is nothing of her left to feel alone, that's what it means to be gone. But then, once in awhile —

You feel like she's right next to you. The girl finished his sentence, and he nodded.

Like she never even left, he said.

They sat in silence together until the sunlight angled behind the cliffs, shadows stretching long across the beach. The family packed up their bags and towels and walked smiling back down the path. Their voices faded as they rounded the bend and the girl scooted closer to the old man.

The girl squeezed his hand and he looked down at her.

My parents died, she said.

It was the first time she'd said the words aloud to him. It may have been the first time she said the words aloud to anyone.

He looked out over the sea and so that she could read nothing in his expression

and he considered her words.

Yes, he said. They did.

They drowned, she said, her voice steady.

The old man nodded, his head low.

I'm alone.

The old man turned and he put his hands on the girl's shoulders. Her face betrayed no feeling, and he thought that her eyes looked like the dark pools at the edge of the tide, a small piece of the bottomless sea.

We both are, he told the girl.

So it's ok?

No, he said, it's not ok. But we will be ok. We will be enough for each other.

The water swelled and rushed over the rocky beachside, and when the waves pulled back the stones clattered and tumbled alongside. The old man and the girl stood to leave, climbing back up the stone steps to the seawall. As they reached the path, he glanced up at the horizon and took the girl's hand in his own. She followed his gaze to the distant towering rainclouds, the splashes of sunlight stretching through the sky like a painting that danced before them. It was enough. Somehow, something holds you together, he thought. It was enough.

They walked silently along the path and the old man gazed backward at the ocean, into the ocean, beyond, at what he knew the child could not see. When they reached the bend in the path the girl stopped and she turned to face the old man and he saw that she was smiling.

Feel that? she asked him. Wind.

And so there was. A soft wind, the beating of small wings.

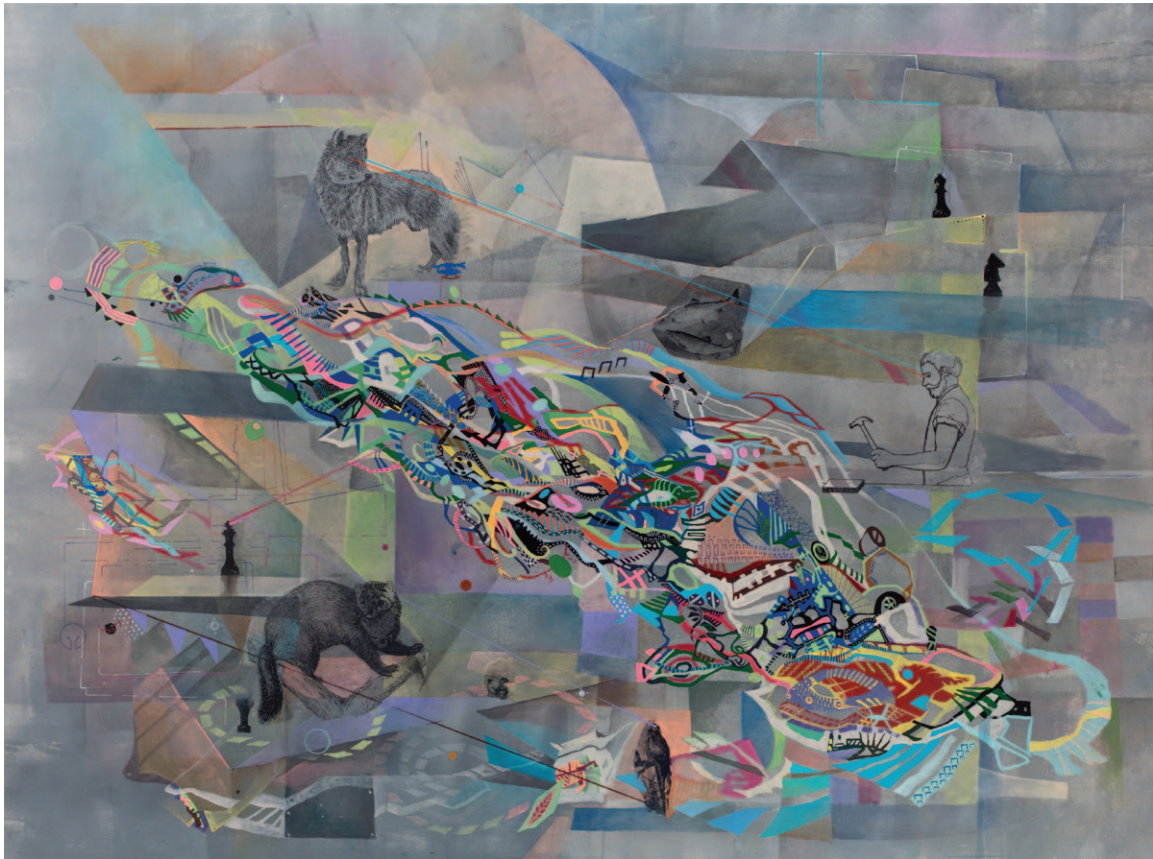
Sunshine On a Cloudy Day

visual art by Alexis Avlamis



Alpha Wolf

visual art by Alexis Avlamis



Imago

poetry by Suzanne Langlois

morning drags me through
the iron gate of waking
pieces of you under my fingernails
in three breaths I've forgotten your face
you are a fish
hook in my mind's thick rind
trailing a snapped line
nothing I can follow
nothing I can forget
maybe
you are a shape drawn with a finger
on the fogged glass of sleep
something I rub from my eyes in daylight
I open sleep's corridor and you
disappear at the tunnel's far end
I swim after you through air
thick as pudding you shrink
to a fingernail
a fingernail paring
I awake gasping
my face held underwater your name
bubbles from my mouth
and disappears into the sky's bright abyss

Sanctuary

poetry by Chrissy Martin

I build a table
in the shade from sticks/twigs/thick
stacks of to do lists
drag in full filing cabinets
that make gashes in the soil.

The tracks so deep, not
even seeds could patch them. I
came to write about
the forest, to be part of
it, its dark and tangling eaves.

I soak my toes in
the stream until they're raisined,
until the nibbling
of the fishes turns from a
tickle to a red-rubbed raw.

Sunshine brings a swath
of new freckles to my face.
They crowd until their
edges start to touch, bites from
new bugs dotting their centers.

I hang up sheets to keep out
the sun. Peel up a large disk
of grass and pat down
fake plastic blades to take its
place. Soft on my toes like rugs.

Noise machines are brought
to drown out the forest's hum.
Campfire crackles
play over the waterfall,
the sound of snow over rain.

Breeze finds my bony
shins. I cast a net over
myself to stop the
greet of wind, the invasion
of loud and fluorescent birds.

Cradle Song

poetry by Dmitry Sumarokov

Embracing the silence with her tail,
A mermaid sleeps under the bridge —

Go to sleep too.

A black thrush sleeps on a branch,
In the buttonholes of the stars she hides
night — a cloak, the moon's brass —

Go to sleep too.

The lantern sleeps, a bell ringer under it,
maybe he is drunk, or maybe dead,
in the darkness it's impossible to tell,
and better for you not to know —

Sleep.

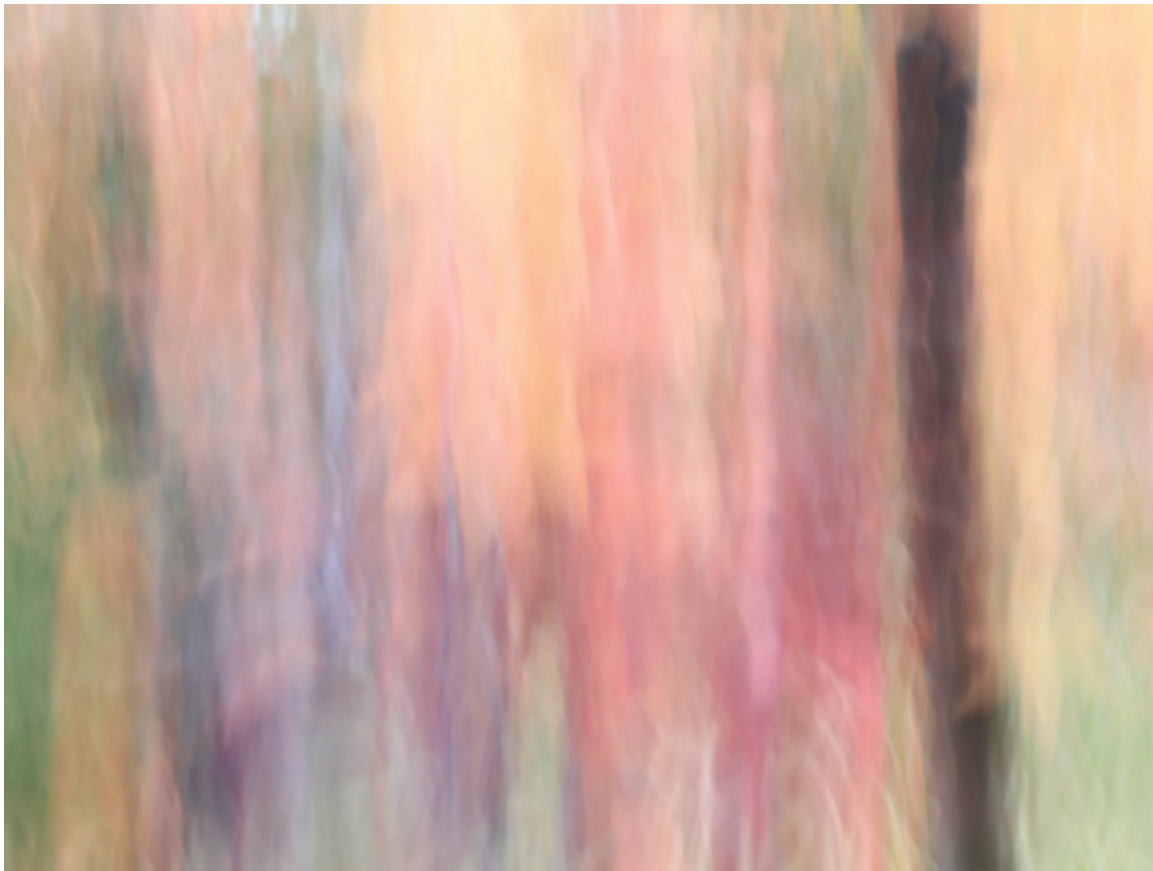
Winter Color 3

visual art by Ronald Wolff



Winter Color 12

visual art by Ronald Wolff



Once I Dreamt I was a Hunter

poetry by Carly Roberts

i once dreamt i was a hunter
and brought home fresh meat for you

i brought home poems for you -
you curled your tongue around them

those days were full on tomatoes and
red cheeks, and a radiance in my
stomach from coming home to a warm room

those days i rarely said anything, but i said
i was warm
beneath the quilt and the coffee,
comfort and something else in my blood

you were repainting the kitchen, wearing a denim shirt

you asked me to kill a rabbit for you -
sitting at the table with your mug and butter

our house had thin walls - so thin that
when the sun rose everyone could see inside
and they saw us - all our muteness and meat
and
your outline, skinning a small thing
my outline, shedding all its language like a skin
they saw me open my mouth for firewood, they saw
your deep curls, damp against your cheekbones -
things too intimate for quiet muscles

those days, on saturday mornings,
we went to the supermarket

watched the sky open itself like an oyster from the car
we bought only the things we needed - and walked, flushed,
away, and they watched us go
arms pressed together
bodies draped in furs

Solarium

poetry by Francis McGill

i dream

you are dreaming

in the solarium sleeping

the green bed

of grass

a comfort to your back

under the brown stitch

a pleasant refuge

a graven whole

for your aching bones

never seen

in the sun

the green being

green alone

in the solarium

Children of the Night

Music by Jamara Mychelle Wakefield

[Click here.](#)

Mr. Topper

creative non-fiction by Eryka Jackson

Saturday, December 31, 2016

Opening till: \$148.91 – He’s outside again asking people for money. Mr. Topper doesn’t hold up a sign or use a fake wheelchair like the other guy. He just stands there with a crusty bare hand stuck out, glaring at people as they approach the dollar store. He’s a tall, lanky, derelict older man in dirty clothes who stinks to high heaven most days.

We call him Mr. Topper because once a week he comes into the dollar store, General Buck’s, for a case of off-brand Dr. Pepper called Dr. Topper. He looks homeless, but I don’t think he is. He keeps his hair and beard trimmed, and he doesn’t carry life with him like a snail.

I’m praying he doesn’t come in here. I can’t deal with Mr. Topper and the New Year’s Eve foolishness in the store today. The store is already a shit hole, and today people are knocking, even more, stuff off the shelves in search of cheap party supplies and snacks for tonight’s festivities.

Now he is next to the ice freezer picking up half-smoked cigarettes and putting them in his pocket. At least he is away from the door. Why doesn’t he just go home? I hope he leaves before the police arrive.

Saturday, January 07, 2017

Opening till: \$151.02 – He smells like pee again today. It kicks me in the face when he walks in. We’re not supposed to leave Mr. Topper alone in the store, but I’m trapped behind the register, and my coworker is in the back working on freight. So I order him to get his soda and come right back. He ignores me and continues walking toward the back of the store while I vigorously spray air freshener. Great, now it smells like cinnamon-spice pee.

Mr. Topper has some kind of palsy condition. His hands tremble, and movements are hitching and impulsive. Customers emerge from the grocery aisles and draw back in disgust, holding their noses and muttering curses. But Mr. Topper just keeps walking — accustomed or oblivious to it all.

The two old women at my register ask me to price-check each item in their cart of leftover Christmas shit, then complain about the cost of clearance items--at the dollar

store. All the while, I'm trying to keep an eye out on Topper. *How long can it take to grab a case of soda?* After a while, I just start ringing stuff up at the price the two women are willing to pay, just to get them out of the store.

Now, where is Mr. Topper? I find him standing in the beverage aisle, watching the Pepsi man restock the Mountain Dews, his case of Dr. Topper dangling from his right hand. He looks at me, then back at the Pepsi man. *Is he trying me or something? Did he not hear me say to get his soda and leave?*

I march over there and tell him he has to go. Now. I'm so mad my eyes are about to bleed. He grabs this Ziploc bag of crap off an endcap and walks past me toward the register, his steps uneven and agitated. I follow him, with my face all smug and arms crossed like a badass. Smelling like pee and bringing garbage in my store.

But it wasn't garbage. A blessing bag is swinging in his left hand. Shelters and warming centers hand them out this time of year, when the weather is bad. It has toiletries, a mini first-aid kit, and a pocket-sized, robin's egg blue Gideon Bible same as the one by my bed. Perhaps he really is homeless?

And just like that, I could see. It was no brilliant flash of insight or rush of altruistic passion. It was just the aching clarity of watching a man my dad's age clutching what little dignity he has left.

He wasn't watching the Pepsi man. He was trying to talk to him – a daunting task for a man with a speech impediment and no teeth.

I am so ashamed of myself. I treat this grown man like an unwanted kid every time he comes in here. I never smile at him, say hey, or ask how he's doing. But doesn't he deserve kindness—perhaps even more so than anyone else?

As I check out the person in front of him, on autopilot, I am really staring at the ugliness inside of me. Mr. Topper reaches into his pocket to get his money out. The tremor in his hands sends the change bouncing across the floor.

"You're mentally retarded!" he yells at himself. Shaky hands at his temples, still clutching a crumpled dollar. The undiluted emotion brings the store to a stand-still.

"You're mentally retarded!" He's running in place with his eye shut. "You're mentally retarded! You're mentally retarded!" His face is red with humiliation.

I did this. The nasty comments. Following him around the store. Throwing him out or threatening to call the police on him. Me. My cruelty re-opened his childhood wound, infected by schoolyard taunts, parental shouts, and neighborly disdain.

I beg him to stop. "Don't say that about yourself." I say, "There's nothing wrong with you. Nothing! You're fine just the way you are." Like I could force this genie back in the bottle with the same mouth that released it. He's staring at me now, his speckled gray eyes searching aimlessly. Clouds of saliva drift in the corners of his mouth. At least he's stopped shouting. The lady behind him puts his change on the counter for him and runs out.

Now it's just Mr. Topper and me. I try to ring him up, but my hands tremble, and I can't see the keys through my tears. I just want this to be over. I don't want to feel

the weight of my actions. Please, accept my empty words and just go away. But his eyes bore into me: 'like you give a shit.'

But I do give a shit, and that's the problem. I just don't want to. His circumstances, suffering, and fragility force me to confront my judgmental nature and my tenuous situation. And that is some scary shit. But I face it because Mr. Topper can see me and I need to see me too.

Too black for white people, too white for black people. Never know what to say or when to shut up. Folks call me crazy so much it might as well be my name. My pockets stuffed with seizures, anxiety, dyslexia, depression. I stuff it all down and shut up tight, but sooner or later something's going to spill out. No one wanted to hang out with "seizure girl" in school or hire her either.

Mr. Topper has fallen through the cracks, and now he's fair game. We treat the homeless, the vulnerable and the mentally like vermin to be chased away with spikes and bullshit laws.

Some days I feel myself sliding toward my own crack in the world. When Mr. Topper comes to the store, the similarities anger me. I swear I won't reach the edge. I'll make it through. I still have a few cards up my sleeve, but these days my sleeves are getting shorter and the cards fewer.

"I'm sorry," I say, wiping my face as I ring him up. "You deserve better from me. It won't happen again." I put his change in his hands and hold them for a few seconds.

Saturday, January 21, 2017

Opening till: \$150.00 – Mark stood at the door for a few minutes. That's Mr. Topper's real name. "Hey!" he said. He's wearing new jeans today. He comes in twice a week now, on Thursdays and Saturdays.

"How are you?" I ask. He ignores me and keeps walking toward the back. He reappears with his case of Dr. Topper. Mark pulls out his wallet and lays out the exact change while I ring him up. His eyes shine like crinkled foil at a barbecue. "They say it's going to be really tonight, so you go straight home," I say. Mark lives in a private group home around the corner. Mark raises his Styrofoam Sonic cup and rattles the ice a little as he walks out the door. Was that the palsy or acknowledgment? Doesn't matter: I'll ask Mark on Thursday.

The Offering

visual art by Lily Hinrichsen



The Disquieting Muses

poem by Devon Balwit

The muses take pleasure in my dismay.
Look how Thalia turns her back,
her head my grandmother's darning ball
tilting away. She, in her posture
at least, pretends to be sorry, shoulders naked
to my gaze. Melpomene, massy
beside her mask, scorns down her nose,
her hands, tight within
their plaster sleeves, avoiding mine. Regnant,
she judges from her throne.
Each diligent shadow refuses its bit of light,
the columnar breaking me
in its glare. Facades glower. Objects
bear down. I was wrong
to think color soft. Tomorrow, surely,
I will bruise.

(after Giorgio de Chirico 1916-1918)

Two Voices in Tandem

poem by Gina Barnard

We sleep-breathe
goodnight to each other
every night

overdue library books
touch noses
underneath our bed.

I used to live in a seasonal place.

•

*I can't remember our last kiss
On the way I burned it
I burned it, I burned it,
And on the way I burned it.
A little boy found the match
And put it in his pocket.*

•

*—She showed me how to pin
a pin in a silky scarf. She
showed me how to pin
a pin underneath my chin.*

Metamorphic

poetry by Claudia Fell

There is no death anywhere
until we spiral back down
through rocks we've forgotten.
The woman working at Wal-Mart
didn't know where curry paste was.
I felt embarrassed for trying.
My glasses fell into a tub
of cherry-amaretto ice cream
last week, and it almost made
me miss Florida. I wanted to tell
her about the rocks in New Mexico—
I do not have a scientist's tongue.
Yet driving my four-cylinder car
up that mountain, I pretended
the girls in the backseat
couldn't notice my tears.

Strange Animal

poetry by Fallon Sullivan

So female: a trainwreck of pretty, an anti-climax of falling down always. So sky and so water, so cancer blue. Ebbing heartwater from some chuffing factory: How can I best poison my interstices today? Sell me your sovereign robotics. I have the coupons somewhere in my purse.

Nearly October: I drew a line from me that ended in you. I drew a tragedy with scissors. The only lamppost on our street has at last closed its hurricane eye. At last, at last. [You], come help me name this ambiguous thing. I bought free weights so I could lift you off my chest.

This morning, I tasted violins, cellos. This morning, I relearned mourning. When the doctor called, he sounded gray and pierian. I asked him: What is it this time? He diagnosed me with being alive.

Night Vision

visual art by Barbara Martin



Leuco Chroic

visual art by Anna Martin



Shades of Blue - Three Songs

Music by Ian Flanigan

Always Running

[Click here.](#)

How Long

[Click here.](#)

Welcome Home

[Click here.](#)

Reach

poetry by Maryanne Frederick

She sees her
Silent shadow
Stretching
Long and tall.
It doesn't
Tell her
What future
The present
Has wrung —
Only that it
Will be
Further
Than the
Noon-day sun.

I Dreamed I was a Grownup

visual art by W. Jack Savage



To Be Safe

Fiction by W. Jack Savage

I could see him better now but not good enough or close enough to take him. Maybe twenty-five or thirty feet was all that was left between us. If his two buddies came back and decided to share a cigarette with him or something, I'd be tempted to forget the distance and try it. As it was, he was too far away.

"Get closer," I could hear George say in my mind.

The truth is that you would almost never get close enough for George. He claimed that it was the only sure way to be safe. He certainly knew better than me or any of us. George had fought with the Kurdish Muslims in Iraq. He was German, he said, but family members, going back centuries, were all Muslims. That didn't figure right to me somehow. But that's what he said anyway.

My track to close width on this sucker ran into a snag in the form of a small depression that seemed to run laterally between us. It appeared to come out of nowhere, and I couldn't tell how far it ran on either side. I would crawl around it if I could; however, I wasn't sure that was possible.

"Stay on his level," George would say. "Don't go high or low. You need to hear and see what he hears and sees. If you lose sight of him, he's stalking you. It's that simple."

I decided to go to the right but had to back up a few feet to do it. My path would put a few more trees between the two of us, but I'd avoid the bushes to my left and lose sight of him altogether. After I slithered about twelve feet, I looked up and saw him standing. When did he get up? I asked myself. Was I becoming careless? He yawned and turned as if to go somewhere, but he just stood there looking away. With his back to me for the first time, I could see a Machete—or big knife of some kind—sticking out of his pack. While he looked the other way, I speeded up a bit and found the end of the depression. By the time he sat back down, I was across it and moving slowly toward him. I was still twenty feet away but had covered half again that much territory, finding my way around that depression.

"The last five feet is your kill," said George. "Be close; then be sure."

I hadn't thought about being sure. I never did. To me, close made you sure. If you screwed up after that, you weren't up to it. And if you weren't up to it, you wound up dead. They wouldn't say that about you, of course. They'd use words like sacrifice, valor, and courage. But you'd still be dead so what would it matter? All that matters

for real is that between the two of you, he dies and you don't. That's all it is really. I knew that. I suspect the guy fifteen feet or so from me knew that as well. His buddies wouldn't come back for him. They'd multiply my number by fifty in their minds and take off. They'd be smart. They'd live today and maybe kill me tomorrow. That's how they'd win in the end. I knew that for sure. But this guy in front of me wouldn't be there for the celebration. He'd be remembered with words like sacrifice, duty, and all that.

"Just live and let everything else take care of itself," George said.

He lived. He seemed like he'd survive anything. You couldn't figure it out. He didn't get scared; he just got close. He'd say that he got "close to be safe." It seemed ridiculous in a way. Close to the enemy to be safe? It worked for him. It worked for me, too.

It started to rain. It had rained earlier, and when it stopped, I began my approach. The intermittent dripping from the trees and the corresponding movement of the life that it sustains in the jungle created a perfect diversion for my stealth. Now, the process would repeat. But while it rained, very little moved. I was only eight or ten feet away, on his level, and well covered. Just then he got up again, took his pack off his shoulders, and pulled out a piece of plastic. It looked like part of a garbage bag or something like that. He put it over his head and around his shoulders and peered out. To his left, he couldn't see me. I slowly got up and, still crouching, I moved toward him. A better man, a man who could do it, would take him with a knife and try for the other two. I am not such a man. Or, if I am, I am happy to not know it. Two feet from him, I put one in his head and, when he fell, one in his chest. I returned to my position and waited. My heart raced as it usually did. Not from what I had done. But in anticipation of what might follow. Waiting one minute, or maybe it was five to seven minutes, I thought of the guy. He was lucky. He never heard a thing and was alive one second and dead the next. I had done a good job, and he was dead.

"Stay there all night if you have to." George was in my ear again. "Don't hurry. Wait, and keep waiting until you're sure. Then wait a little longer."

I smiled to think of him. As I did, I heard movement. I was well concealed as the dead guy's two buddies had waited nearly fifteen minutes to come back. They moved slowly and looked for signs of me around their friend. But the rain continued, and the wet ground showed no sign. I watched them, and they began to go through his things. I wondered—wondered if I should try for them. I had seen them earlier. But the fact that they were all together indicated to me that there were more of them. The fact that they came back for his things worried me.

"If there's any doubt don't do it," George said in my ear. "Get 'em next time." They were moving too slowly. It's as if they were waiting. Was I being stalked from another direction? I hardly thought so. Someone would be watching though. These two would be sacrificed to get me and whoever was with me. Just then I heard him—behind and to my right. He called to them. They looked and shrugged. He walked past me and joined them. Was that all of them? Was I being teased again? The three

of them were close enough to spit on. They began talking a little louder. I was being teased, I decided. The enemy was seldom this careless and certainly not with a fallen buddy at their feet. There was another, I decided. Show yourself asshole, and it'll be a big day for the kid from Iowa. Suddenly, it stopped raining again. All of a sudden they seemed nervous. Their movements became quicker, more officious. Bingo! An officer approached from my far right. Easily, thirty minutes had gone by with fifteen of them devoted to trying to lure me out. There were four guys or maybe more. It was a good lesson. The officer wouldn't show himself without backup. So, by this reasoning, there were five of them, and I killed the sixth. An officer with five guys? That didn't add up. Six guys maybe, but what was an officer doing with them? Suddenly, one of them spun and raised his rifle to a point on my left and above me. Some creature no doubt. The officer barked something, and the guy put it down. He kept talking, and two of them started striping the guy I killed. When they got done, they dragged him over to the depression that I had crawled around; they laid him in it. It seemed like only a minute later when they all walked away.

"Wait," George said. "Wait."

Twenty minutes later, I was thinking that I'd leave after twenty more minutes. Just then an explosion that sounded a lot like a hand grenade went off over by where they had dumped the body of the guy I had killed. Ten or so feet in front of me, a length of python—or constrictor of some kind—plopped on the ground still moving. Strange, I thought. They hadn't been over there long enough for a decent booby trap. They probably just pulled the pin on a grenade and put it under him. They figured, when I did come out, I'd go for his ear as a trophy. Some guys did. As a rule, they took right ears, I heard. I never did. As the length of snake stopped moving, I figured I'd stay a while longer in case somebody wanted to come back for my ear, balls, or whatever. Sure enough, ten minutes later, four of them spread out and, moving slowly, returned to the area. One spotted the length of snake and said something to the other three. They all converged on the guy again, and a minute later the officer and another guy, who hadn't showed himself the first time, stopped six feet away. Seven in all, counting the guy I killed, and now I felt certain six was all there was to this group. The officer, his guard, and the four others; the odds were not good. If they all rejoined the officer though, one magazine could put 'em all down. To be safe, one more could make sure they were all dead.

"One kill at a time son," George said. "One kill at a time. Too many to be safe. Too many to be safe."

George was right. I had been teased enough. There were too many. They lingered by the body for a while, and as they did, I felt something like a leech near my right calf. The leeches were everywhere and could make themselves flat and small. They were patient, too. It's as if you could feel them work their way down into your boot and up your pant leg. But my boot line was taped. It could have come undone, I suppose. My muscles had learned to become patient. A cramp could kill me as sure

as a bullet. I took my salt tablets and lots of water. Cramps had never been a problem. Leeches hadn't been a problem either. Not since that first night they got all over me. After that, I learned. And if one or two got on my neck or face, I could endure that for a while. It was when they got down where you couldn't see them that drove you nuts. Whatever this thing was, it felt as small as a leech, but was different somehow. Then I felt it. It was like a sting or bite of some kind but not exactly painful. At first there was a dull throbbing, and then it began to burn. From what I'd heard, it was like a scorpion. They're not deadly in this part of the world, but they're not pleasant either.

I watched three of the four men walk back from the body and report to the officer. Now there were five of them ten feet away. As the last guy started back and the burning grew worse, I figured that I could endure it a while longer. But, when he reached the group, and two others looked like they would move off, the burning told me I'd never make it until they left. The decision took less than a second. Six of them ten feet away. I switched my rifle to automatic and fired into the group until all were down and my rifle stopped firing. As quietly as possible, with the burning now nearly unbearable, I ejected a magazine and inserted a new one. I got up on one knee but couldn't put any weight on my burning leg. I fell back down and became aware of movement in front of me. Swinging myself up to a seated position, I switched back to semi-automatic. Since I couldn't get up, I'd try to kill them one shot at a time. I began with the one moving nearest to me. He was arching his back where I had shot him. I aimed and put one in his head. He went limp. The second moved to my right, and with his gun still in his hand, I put two in his chest. He stopped moving. The other four were motionless so I delegated four bullets, one for each of their heads. I couldn't see the fourth guy's head, so I put one in his back. I had three shots left but changed magazines again anyway. If someone were coming to their aid, they would be too late. The horror of the entire scene became lost in the agony of my right calf. I turned and began crawling away as quickly as I could along the path that I'd followed when I approached. Fifty feet away and behind some trees, I leaned up against a tree and tried to calm myself enough to find out what bit me. I turned my calf and the taped boot line of my bloused boots was intact. I felt sure that whatever it had been had gotten under my pant leg. But, as I checked, there was no way under that I could see. Taking out my knife, I cut through the back of my lower right trouser. I turned it as much as I could with the pain. I touched my calf where the burning had started but felt nothing. There was no mark or feeling at all. Still it burned from deep within, so I knew something had to have bitten me. And since every third thing that can bite you in this jungle was poisonous in some way, I felt sure I was in trouble.

"Go to safety, go to ground," George was saying.

I wasn't listening to George just then, and I should have been. The officer and his six guys were a part of a larger group who were now inspecting the area. To my left and right, I heard movement. Slowly, I moved back into the brush. I was well camouflaged, and unless one stepped on me or my leg got much worse, it was no time to panic. I lay

there and tried to calm myself as much as I could. I felt stuffy. My breathing seemed labored somehow. I knew what that could mean but tried not to think about it. If it was snakebite, why hadn't I felt it? It felt more like a sting. But my breathing was becoming different. Though the poison was telling my lungs that they didn't need to work so hard, my lungs knew they did. Soon the poison would tell them not to work at all. I was dying, I decided.

"There's no dying," George said. "Just death. If you're conscious, you're alive."

Maybe I was just hyperventilating. The burning was steady now. It seemed like it wasn't getting much worse. It was still awful, but maybe I was getting used to it somehow. I couldn't breathe; my throat felt constricted. I needed to calm myself enough to survive their search. I shouldn't have stopped. My shelter was still fifty feet away. I knew why I did though. I didn't want to crawl into my hole in the ground just to die. I didn't want that.

"When you're dead, it doesn't matter," George said.

We sort of argued about that one. I didn't know anything about being a Muslim, but I felt sure they believed in some kind of afterlife. He said he and they did; however, to get there you had to say goodbye to this life. That meant saying goodbye to whatever you imagined your body was going through without you in it. Be that as it may, if I were dying for my country, burying myself to do it was not a part of the bargain. It was too late for that anyway. They were no longer to my left. I couldn't hear them that way. Off to my right, but not as close as before, I could hear some movement. I began to take some heart that my leg hadn't gotten any worse. It was still bad but not any worse. There was something else, too. I'd always heard a part of you went numb, and after awhile, you couldn't feel your bite anymore. None of that seemed to be happening. There was this dull ringing though. It seemed a long way off, but it was a ringing anyway. When I got wounded, it was like a steady dial tone on the phone. That's all I could hear—nothing else. I saw the lips of guys yelling and talking, but all I heard was that dial tone. This was different. It was a dull, spaced ringing.

"Stay conscious, stay alive, and remember that you're not a killer," said George. "You have to be sure. You have to get close to be sure. There are no shortcuts."

It seemed that I was breathing better. I think I was hyperventilating. If it were the kind of poison that I'd heard described, I'd be dead by now, I told myself. Or, at least, I'd be unconscious. Though that pain wasn't going away, at least for the moment, it seemed the enemy had; there was nothing to do but wait.

I began thinking about this one kid. I don't know why I always thought of him or what it meant. This weird kid I never even knew. I thought of him when I got wounded, too. It wasn't much really. We were at the Little League field back home. The field was one of those venues like the public swimming pool or the school playground. It was where we decided what was appropriate; our rules and judgments meant something. This kid came over to watch. He had a gauze pad with strips of adhesive tape over his eye. Injuries, especially dressed injuries like his, seemed to fascinate us back then. We

didn't know him, or at least I didn't. We finally asked him to show us his eye; we wanted to see it, you know. It was a black eye. It was a good one, too. Lots of broken blood vessels and a little swollen still. But we all decided the dressing was unnecessary. We said so in a nice way, I seem to remember. It was as if his eye was admirable somehow and that showing it was not only okay but also the way it should be. He took his dressing, kind of folded it up, and put it in his pocket as if to use it again. I don't know. Maybe his mom would get mad if he took it off or something. Maybe he'd put it back on before he got home. It was like...well, that I always felt sorry for him. It was just the way he folded up his gauze and put it away. I never saw him again. Maybe he was just visiting. I wondered why I always thought of him. He was like a ghost floating around in my head. It seemed that he'd never go away. Recently, George had begun to seem like that, and it was a good thing, too. But where was this dull ringing? What was that about?

"My God!" George said, shaking me. "You're not ready yet. You fell asleep!"

It had become hot, and he was right; I had fallen asleep. I screwed up. My leg was killing me again. Who was shaking me? George is dead! George is dead, and someone's shaking me. I reached for the pistol grip on my M-16. It wasn't there. I started to reach down for my knife. I felt strange. Maybe the poison was kicking in. No knife!

"My God," George said again. "Are you alright?"

I opened my eyes.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," I said. "I'm sorry. I fell asleep. What time is it?"

"Well, at least you shaved," she said, ignoring the time question. "You were dreaming again weren't you?"

"No, just sleeping. Don't start with that again. I'll hurry." I got up and limped to the bathroom.

"You're limping," she said in that all-knowing tone. "You were dreaming again. I think you should talk to someone about this. If you won't tell me, maybe you should talk to someone."

"I'll be ready in a second," I replied, "and I don't need to talk to anyone. I told you that I was a mechanic. I fixed trucks, jeeps, and stuff. Nothing happened. I just slept funny on my leg. It's happened all my life. Now please, leave it alone."

As we drove to her sister's house, I told her about the kid with the black eye at the ball field. The real mystery was how he kept popping up. It seemed strange somehow.

"Was there anything else unusual about him?" she asked.

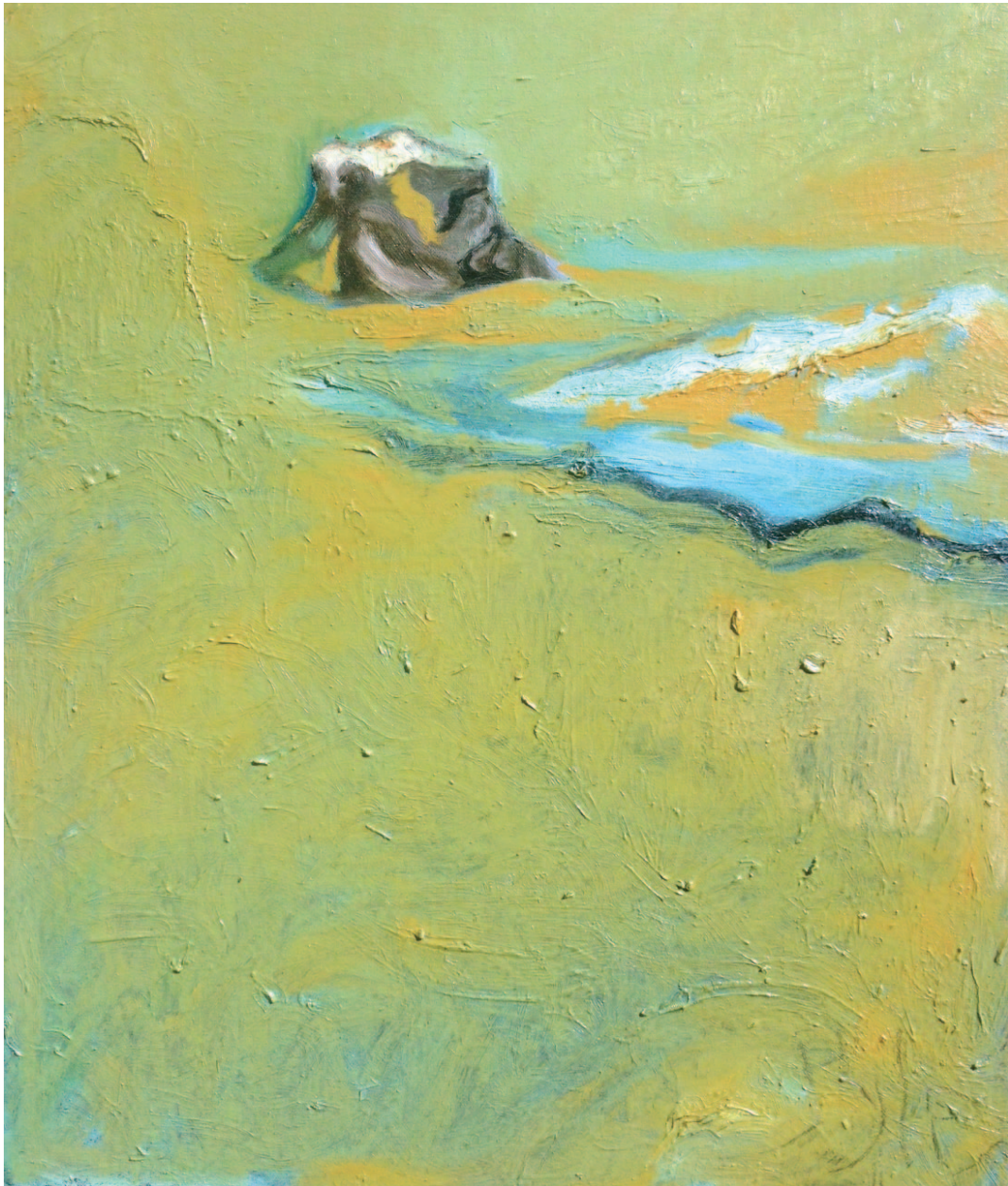
"He was, uh," I began, "I think he was a Muslim. I heard he was, anyway."

"In Iowa?"

I nodded. "They're everywhere, I guess."

Chartreuse Surrounding Black Rock, Great Salt Lake

visual art by Rebecca Pyle



Some Little Something

story by Leslie Bohem

London: 1981

The man was sitting at a small wooden table looking out a window. One flight up he could see the rain-boots of the passersby. The woman was at the sink behind him, washing her underwear.

"It's not bad," she said, "not a bad place."

"No, it's not bad," he agreed, not turning.

"And for forty pounds a week, it's a third of the price of a bad hotel. We can go to a market and then cook here. We should have enough money to last a week and a half at least."

"And we can see all the sights." The man tapped his fingers on the table. He watched them carefully, as if they were on someone else's hand.

"Don't be so sour, Jack," the woman said.

"I guess you just expect a little more of things. You know about somewhere all your life, and when you're finally there you think you must be in the wrong place."

"Maybe we shouldn't have spent so much money in Italy."

"It hasn't been all that perfect a vacation, has it, Cathy?"

They sat for a while in silence while outside people walked by in the rain. A television played loud in the next room. Then Jack got up and went out the door to use the bathroom in the hail. On the way back to their room, he knocked on the door of the room next door.

"I wondered if you had an extra television, Mrs. Morgan?" he asked the middle-aged woman who answered his knock. She had come around her door, closing it behind her so that he couldn't see into her room.

"Just that lot there," she said, pointing to an old set that sat covered by a blanket in a corner of the hallway. "Mr. Namir used to ask five pounds to let it, but it don't seem to work right no more. You're welcome to it."

Jack thanked Mrs. Morgan and carried the television set into their room.

* * *

On the ferry from Paris, Cathy had met a Brazilian student who was studying the cello in London. They had spent most of the night on the deck, waiting for sunrise and the first glimpse of the English coast while Jack, sullen and tired, had stayed in the restaurant, drinking tea, angry now at everything, at the foreign voices and the cigarette smoke and the smell of beer, and hating Cathy because, just then, none of this seemed to bother her. They were going to London because they had cheap return tickets to the States from there. They had spent most of their money and now their plan was to stay in London until the remainder of the money ran out.

The student had recommended the rooming house where they were now. Cathy had waited in the train station with their bags while Jack went over to see the room. It was owned by an Indian man named Mr. Namir. The student had told them it was forty pounds a month, but Mr. Namir wanted forty pounds a week, and Jack could not talk him down. It was still a much better price than they could have gotten in a hotel and Jack gave Mr. Namir the money and then went back to the train station to get Cathy. When they returned, Mrs. Morgan met them at the door. She was the housekeeper, a squat Englishwoman door. She was the housekeeper, a squat Englishwoman who showed them into Mr. Namir's office, never looking the Indian in the eye.

It was all very ceremonious, as if Jack had not been in the same room less than half an hour before, when he had given Mrs. Namir his forty pounds. Mr. Namir ushered them into seats and smiled. He asked if they were married. They said they weren't. "Oh," he said, "well, travelling is nice." Then he took several papers from his desk and asked them to sign them. The papers were contracts protecting Mr. Namir from squatters.

"So that you will not become a nuisance to me," he explained.

They signed the papers.

* * *

Jack found the wall socket and plugged in the television. He adjusted the antenna and in a few minutes he had a picture.

"There," he said to Cathy. "We might just as well be home." Cathy didn't answer. She had been lying on the bed. Now, she got up and went to boil water for tea.

"Maybe we should go out tonight," Jack said, sitting back on the bed.

"We don't have enough money to go out," Cathy said.

"What's the use in staying if we can't do anything?"

She didn't answer. They waited for the water to boil. Mrs. Morgan had given them a few tea bags when they'd come in. There was a pot and several chipped cups in the cabinet.

"In Paris, when we walked by the river, we must have looked just like a happy couple," he said gloomily. "Just like you're supposed to look in Paris."

"You always ruin everything, Jack."

"I'm sorry, Cath," he said. "I'm an asshole." He moved from the bed to kiss her and she turned away.

It would stay like this now for the rest of the night. Cathy would be quiet, set off by the few quick words down her own secret path of misery. She would be too unhappy to speak. Jack's moods were different, quickly changeable. Already he wanted to make it all up with her.

She took the tea bag from her tea and sat in the one chair by the table, watching the television.

"Come on," he said. "Forget the money. We'll go to the Marquee, wherever the hell it is. It's where the Who used to play. It's a goddamn historical landmark."

"Maybe not."

"It's part of my rock and roll tour of London. Get out the map, find Abbey Road..."

She sighed and looked at her teacup. It was the same as every fight they had ever had.

* * *

A half an hour later he was in the street, alone, walking towards the tube station. Cathy would not come with him, and the silence in their room had become something to run away from.

He walked quickly and as he walked, his anger gave way to the city around him. It was his first time in London and he began to take in a world that had been an almost daily part of his adolescent dreams, and had stayed there, lodged somewhere in his head, every since. He felt alone now, but alone in a way that he hadn't felt in years. It was not an empty feeling, but an expectant one, and his steps began to find a rhythm on the pavement. From a flat above him, an old Rolling Stones record played and faintly with it came the sounds of a party. Just for a moment he was happy. The street had a comfortable familiarity. Then he felt a sharp, physical cut as he wished that he was twenty and it was 1967 and the Rolling Stones record was new and he had not yet learned to see so clearly behind his dreams.

He bought a copy of "Time Out" near the Earl's Court Tube Station and found the listing for the Marquee. He took the Tube to Oxford Circus. He walked for a few blocks. He had to ask his way twice. Finally he reached the Marquee.

The street in front of the club was crowded. He passed a window posted with flyers for upcoming bands. He walked through the door and paid a girl with pink hair two pounds fifty. He was waved past a doorman and walked down a hall and into a bar. The room was crowded. There was an assortment of all the fashions that England had produced in the last twenty years. Rockers, Teds, Mods, Punks, New Romantics, and even a surprising number of non-descript hippies. A door across from the bar led into the main room of the club, and music came from that room. Jack went through the door.

It was even more crowded there than it had been in the bar.

He looked around the room. It was much smaller than he'd expected it to be. The music was loud and synthesized, but he was standing behind a column and he couldn't see the stage. There was another bar at the back of the room. He went there, ordered a pint of beer, and turned to watch.

There was only one performer on the stage. He stood exactly in the center. He was wrapped completely in white bandages and then dressed in old clothes and sunglasses so that he looked like the character "The Invisible Man" from the movies. He was surrounded by synthesizers and he held a small, stringed instrument that looked like a toy. He was in the midst of a noisy, distorted instrumental. When he moved the microphone to sing, Jack could hear that the song was "19th Nervous Breakdown", the Rolling Stones song.

Jack watched and drank beer. The warped familiarity of the song disturbed him. He thought about Cathy. He had all of their money in his pocket. He wondered how she would eat.

There was a girl sitting next to him at the bar. He turned to look at her. She was wearing a grey mini-skirt and black tights, a jacket from an American high school marching band, and a scarf tied in her hair.

She was thin and her face was made up pale, with very red lips. She saw him looking at her and he felt awkward. He leaned over to talk to her, thinking that she would hear his accent and that would be better.

"Who is this?" he asked.

"Nash the Slash," she said. "Isn't he awful?"

"I don't know. I just got here."

"He's meant to be very clever."

She smiled at him for a moment then, and in that moment he thought that this was what he had left the room for and why he had started the fight with Cathy, because he had not wanted to come to the Marquee with her and stand watching. He had wanted to be in the Marquee, to participate in the evening, and participation for him somehow had everything to do with sex.

He was watching the stage now not really thinking this, so much as having the thought as a whole thing inside him and, knowing it whole, also knowing that to put it into separate words in a sentence, lined up in his mind, would make it an awful and permanent part of him, tearing him off from Cathy in an impossible way.

On the stage, Nash the Slash was bent over his synthesizers, adjusting them for the start of another song. His drum machine began a steady, vicious rhythm. Now, he picked up a violin.

The girl put her hand on Jack's arm. "Do you want to go?" she said.

* * *

Out in the street she hailed a cab before he could say anything, although he had no idea what he would have said, They sat in the cab in silence for a moment. Then she gave the driver an address.

Someone had handed him a piece of paper on his way out the door. It was a flyer for future shows at the Marquee. On the back, it listed, by year, the groups the Marquee had been proud to present.

1963 -- THE ROLLING STONES.

1964 - THE YARDBIRDS, THE WHO.

1971 -- DAVID BOWIE.

"That place is a historical landmark," he said.

"What?"

"It's a landmark."

"It's a dump, more like."

"When I was a kid, I had a poster on my wall. The Who live at the Marquee. With the arrow coming out of the 'W.' I used to try to picture the place."

The girl wasn't listening.

"It'll be too late for a pub," she said. "Should we get something to eat?"

He could have explained that he didn't have much money. He could have asked her to stop the cab and he could have gone back to the room and to Cathy. For a moment the safety of that idea appealed to him, but then, just as suddenly, he resented his own instinct to retreat into a familiar security. He had not gone out to turn around and go home. He had the idea that he was starting an adventure, a memorable night that he could hold out to himself like a souvenir later, whenever his life began to seem stale and old. He nodded his head and the girl gave the driver another address. Then he sank back in his seat.

By the time the cab had begun to move, he had already surrendered himself to the inevitability of the evening. Nothing else seemed possible to him. It was as if, having decided to go with the girl, he were only there, with no existence apart from the cab.

* * *

It was a fairly long ride. Finally, the driver stopped in front Of an Indian restaurant and the girl waited while Jack paid him.

The restaurant was crowded and bright. It made Jack uncomfortable. For the first time that night, he felt like a tourist. He let the girl take charge, getting them a table and then ordering for both of them.

Her name was Lillian and she was from Birmingham. She had worked for a small record company when she first moved to London. She knew all the clubs and all of the bands.

Jack had never heard of most of the places and people that she talked about. There were so many groups now.

He liked listening to her. He liked her accent. He enjoyed the way she moved as she spoke. She was very pretty, even in the restaurant, where the light was so much brighter than it had been in the club.

But all the time that he was listening to her, he was adding in his head the money that he had already spent and how much he still had left. He would forget about it for a while and then his stomach would begin to anxiously burn and he would start to add and subtract again.

They sat for a long while in the restaurant. They had several drinks. He and Cathy had not been able to afford to drink in a long time, so that by the time the bill came he was a little drunk. He paid the bill and they left.

"I know a place where we can still get a drink," she said.

She flagged another taxi and now they went to a private club in a business section of the city. She knocked on a door and a slit opened. She said something to someone and they went in. A Maitre d' in a tuxedo looked disapprovingly at Jack and demanded ten pounds each. Jack paid the money quickly. He felt very drunk now and it somehow seemed to him that if he could only pay fast enough, the money would not really be gone. He followed Lillian down a stairway and into a large, neon-lit disco. The room was very crowded and the people there all seemed rich and chic. They sat in a booth against the wall and watched the dancers.

"We'll just have a drink," she said. "It's not a very good place."

When the drinks came, she took hers and left him for a minute. He sat while she moved around the room, talking to people she knew, disappearing into a crowd at a table, coming back and then disappearing again.

He thought about the money again. He knew that he had spent nearly all of it, but now that was far away from him, on the other side of a drunken fog. He looked up and saw her coming back again to the table. She looked good to him and he wanted to be in bed with her right then. "Well," he thought, "you've been buying the moment off all night, but if you're broke then you can't buy it off any longer," and he laughed to himself, a small, bitter sound that came out of his mouth like a leak in a blown-up toy.

"It's actually a very boring place," she said, setting down her empty glass. "Do you want to go?"

He nodded and they made their way out through the dancers and up the stairs past the Maitre d'. He sneered again at them. Lillian asked him to call a cab.

It was cold in the street as they waited. Jack put his hands in his coat pockets.

"Shall we go to my place now?" Lillian asked. "There are still a few more clubs."

"Let's go to your place," Jack said.

* * *

She lived far across London. He had barely enough money for the last cab. Her flat was

on the bottom floor of a two-story building. A long, thin place that moved away from the street one room at a time.

She went into her kitchen and started a kettle for tea. He went into the bathroom. Her wet underwear were drying on a metal rack over the tub. He touched them for a moment and then turned and raised the seat of the toilet.

* * *

They had tea in the front room. They sat on pillows on the floor.

“Do you have to work tomorrow?” he asked her.

“Oh yes,” she said.

She brought out a block of hashish and mixed it with tobacco from a cigarette. They smoked in silence.

“Your first time at the Marquee?” she asked finally.

He nodded. “I always expect more,” he said. The words rang loud in his ears from the hashish. To explain more would have been too much trouble. He was quiet. He looked at his fingers, tapping on his knee. He seemed to see them too clearly. Then he reached for Lillian and kissed her.

They kissed for a long while and then he opened her band jacket and kissed her breasts. She moved up and he slid her black tights down and kissed her legs and thighs until his head was up under her black mini-skirt.

* * *

Later, when he was on top of her on the floor, he opened his eyes for a moment. The room was unfamiliar, like a landscape seen from window of a moving train. A draft blew from under the door and he shivered in his sweat. She grabbed his shoulders and began to throw herself up around him, her eyes open and vanishing into her head.

He came just before she did. She screamed once and then she was quiet. They lay for a moment, breathing hard. She got up as soon as he’d slid out of her. He reached up to touch her hand and then stopped. It was a reflex gesture, something he did with Cathy. It wouldn’t mean anything here.

He heard water running in the bathroom. Later she came back with a blanket and covered him where he lay on the pillows. He was nearly asleep. He heard her go into her bedroom and he heard her shut the door.

* * *

He woke up in the morning with a terrible headache. Lillian was gone. She’d left a note by the pillow. “Help yourself to whatever you want in the kitchen. Make sure both doors are shut before you leave.”

He went into the kitchen and started water for tea. Then he went into the bathroom and ran the water for a shower.

It was in the shower that he first felt excited. The water was very hot. He remembered Lillian's underwear from the night before. He touched her soap, her shampoo and body sponge. He wanted to touch everything in the house. He washed himself with the sponge. His erection grew in his hand.

He got out of the shower and dried himself in a towel that was still damp from Lillian. In the kitchen, the water in the kettle boiled. He went in, wrapped in the towel, and fixed a cup of tea. He waited while it steeped and then drank it slowly. He had a pleasant, expectant feeling.

When he had finished the tea, he rinsed the cup carefully in the sink. Then he went into the bedroom. He moved slowly to the dresser. He opened each drawer. He saw Lillian's perfume, her jewelry and a pile of Polaroid photographs. In another drawer were her underwear and stockings. He touched everything, first quickly, but then more lingeringly. He moved to the bed and touched the sheets. Then he moved to her closet and opened the door.

He stood among her clothes. There was a leather motorcycle jacket and the band jacket she had worn last night. There were blouses and skirts and the smell of cool fabric and perfume.

His head was light and his face felt hot; he buried it in a blouse. He reached to touch a dress and the towel dropped to his feet. He grabbed the soft dress and pulled it against his groin, at the same time sinking his face deeper into the perfumed blouse. In the dark, enclosed closet he shut his eyes and came.

He stayed in the closet for several minutes without moving, then he rearranged the clothes so that the soiled dress would be at the back of the closet. A bit of jism dripped onto the floor and he wiped it carefully away with his foot.

He went back into the front room where his clothes lay crumpled in a heap. He got dressed, and he went back into the bathroom to hang up the towel. Then he went into the kitchen.

There was a new loaf of bread on the table. He picked it up. Then he opened the refrigerator and took a square of butter and some milk. It was too much to carry. He set all three items down on the table and took a large bag from a shelf. He put the bread, the butter, and the milk into the bag and looked other food. There was a roll of McVites Digestives and two cans of beans. He left the beans and took the biscuits back down the hallway and left the flat, closing both.

When he was finished in the kitchen, he went back down the hallway and left the flat, closing both doors behind him.

* * *

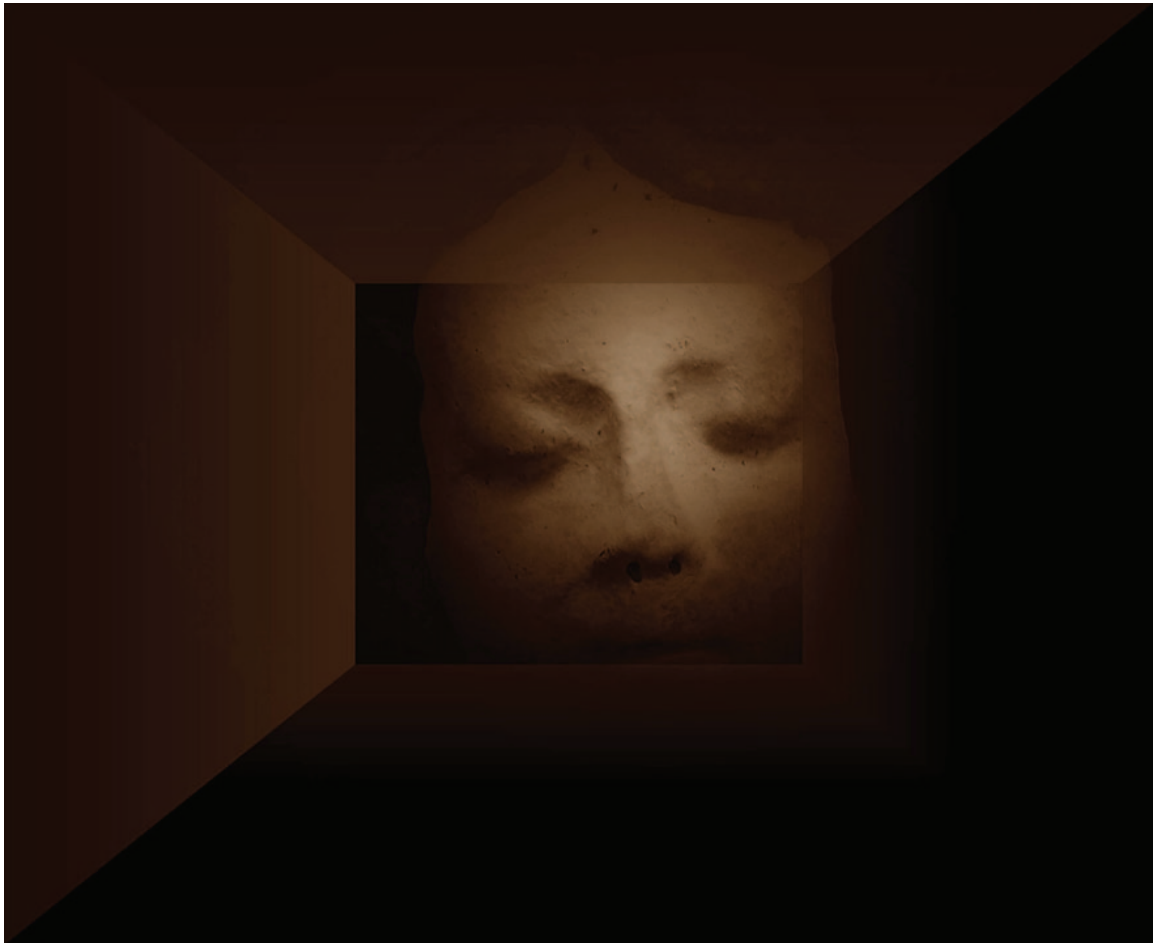
It took him nearly three hours to walk to their place. He lost his way several times. At

last he found the street and the house. He rang the bell. Cathy opened the door for him and he came back into their room. The television was on. It didn't seem that she had left the room at all. He had a lie ready for her, but she didn't say anything and he didn't either. He crossed the room and took the food that he had brought out of the sack. Then he went over and sat on the bed. Cathy moved to the table and began to eat, tearing large chunks from the bread and forcing them quickly into her mouth.

They had paid for a week in the room, and he was sure that Mr. Namir would not give them a refund. Without it, they would have just enough money for the tube ride to the airport. They would have to leave on the earliest available flight.

The Film She Sometimes Dreams

visual art by Christopher Woods



BIOS

International emerging artist award laureate, **Alexis Avlamis** (b.1979) is a Neo-Surrealist painter delving into improvised «mindsapes». He has landed solo/group shows in the UK, South Korea, China, USA, Turkey, Finland, Dubai, Greece and has attended artist residencies internationally.

Devon Balwit is a teacher and writer working in Portland, OR. She has two chapbooks forthcoming in 2017: *how the blessed travel*, from Maverick Duck Press, and *Forms Most Marvelous*, from dancing girl press. Her recent work has found many homes, among them: *The Cincinnati Review*, *Red Earth Review*, *Noble/Gas Quarterly*, *Peacock Review*, *Sweet*, *The Stillwater Review*, *Oyez*, *Timberline Review*, and *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review*.

Gina Barnard's poems and essays have been published in *Columbia Poetry Review*, *VERSE online*, *Laurel Review*, *New Madrid*, *Web del Sol Review of Books*, *Kartika Review*, *Asia Literary Review*, *Poetry International*, in Japanese translation in *Poemaholic Café* (Tsukuba, Japan), and elsewhere. She is a co-founding and senior editor of *The California Journal of Poetics* and has been a contributing editor for *Poetry International*. Born in Fussa, Tokyo, she spent her early years between Japan and the Sacramento Valley, California. She holds an MFA in Poetry from San Diego State University, a BA in English: Creative Writing from UC Davis and teaches composition and creative writing in San Diego, California.

Les Bohem was part of the great Los Angeles Music Scare of the 1980s. After his burgeoning career in rock and roll stopped burgeoning, Les found a job writing screenplays about rock and roll musicians whose careers had stopped burgeoning. He's written some movies and some television, including the miniseries *Taken*, for which he won an Emmy. His short novel, *Flight 505* has just been published by UpperRubberBoot, and his new album, *Moved to Duarte*, will be up and out any minute. He is currently producing his series, *shut Eye*, for Hulu.

Roger Camp is the author of three photography books including the award winning *Butterflies in Flight*, Thames & Hudson, 2002 and *Heat*, Charta, Milano, 2008. His work has appeared in over 100 magazines including *The New York Quarterly*, *New England Review* and *Witness*.

Manit Chaotragoongit was born on September 30, 1983 in Bangkok, Thailand. He is a street and conceptual photographer who has received photography awards from Globalhunt foundation, India and Burggrun Institute, USA. His inspiration started when as a teenager he found old books about art and black and white photography. It made a deep feeling in his heart. His artwork presents his life experience seen through the lens of his eyes. He thinks every part of life has meaning and hopes his work will give value to his audience.

Jill Crammond is a poet/artist/mother, raising two children in upstate NY and funding her passion for poetry by teaching art and writing. Her work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in a variety of journals and anthologies, including *Emerge*, *Fiolet & Wing: An Anthology of Domestic Fabulist Poetry*, *Fire on Her Tongue* (Two Sylvia's Press), *B* (Kind of a Hurricane Press), *Thirty Days: The Best of the Tupelo Press 50/50 Project's First Year*, and elsewhere.

Natalie Crick, from the UK, has found delight in writing all of her life and first began writing when she was a very young girl. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in a range of journals and magazines including *Interpreters House*, *The Chiron Review*, *Rust and Moth*, *Ink in Thirds* and *The Penwood Review*. Her work also features or is forthcoming in a number of anthologies, including *Lehigh Valley Vanguard Collections 15*. This year her poem, 'Sunday School' was nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

Anthony Cubbage is a self-producing and multi-instrumental folk/pop singer-songwriter based out of Philadelphia. His first official EP is entitled "Here & Now" and is available on Spotify, iTunes, Amazon Music, etc. For more: www.cubbagemusic.com.

Husband. Father. Poet. Educator. Not necessarily in that order. **Matthew Raymond Curiale** lives and works and writes on/in Long Island.

Ian Flanigan "inspires a nostalgic sentiment akin to wistful escapism... emotional without being weepy, vulnerable without being pitiful, and conceptual while still remaining relatable" (Gallagher, SUNY editorial). Flanigan's sound—an eclectic blend of progressive folk and percussive fingerstyle—is reminiscent of the road less traveled, paved with poignant lyrical truths of his past. Local to upstate New York, Flanigan's songwriting features his rich, husky voice and evocative lyrics highlighting the rural landscape of his compositions. Each song serenades the unity of life and an affinity for atonement—a sound that's provocative, and familiar.

Claudia Fell is an undergraduate student at the University of Florida, living in Gainesville, Florida. She serves as Executive Poetry Editor of the university's undergraduate literary review, *Tea Literary Magazine*, and work as a baker, a barista, and an assistant in teaching English as a Second Language.

Writing on her laptop in Phoenix, Arizona, **Maryanne Frederick** would gladly trade it for a comfortable boulder near a mountain stream. She has had poems published in a variety of publications. Visit with Maryanne at www.maryannefrederick.com to discover more.

Brad Garber has degrees in biology, chemistry and law. He writes, paints, draws, photographs, hunts for mushrooms and snakes, and runs around naked in the Great Northwest. Since 1991, he has published poetry, essays and weird stuff in such publications as *Edge Literary Journal*, *Pure Slush*, *On the Rusk Literary Journal*, *Sugar Mule*, *Third Wednesday*, *Barrow Street*, *Black Fox Literary Magazine*, *Barzakh Magazine*, *Ginoosko Journal*, *Vine Leaves Press*, *Riverfeet Press*, *Smoky Blue Literary Magazine*, *Aji Magazine* and other quality publications. 2013 Pushcart Prize nominee.

Thomas Gillaspy is a northern California photographer with an interest in urban minimalism. His photography has been featured in numerous magazines including the literary journals: *Compose*, *Portland Review* and *Brooklyn Review*. Further information and additional examples of his work are available at: www.thomasmichaelgillasp.com or www.flickr.com/photos/thomasmichaelgillasp/

Kelly Grogan received her MFA from Antioch University, Los Angeles and is the recipient of an Elizabeth George Foundation Grant. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Tishman Review*, *New Plains Review*, and *Reed Magazine*, and was shortlisted for the Iowa Review Fiction Award. She lives in Santa Barbara, California, and is currently working on an essay collection and a novel.

Alexandria Heather is an Interdisciplinary Shamanic Artist. Her art, writing and music has been exhibited, published and performed throughout North America, the UK and Europe. Due to a rare spinal cord injury Alexandria often exists in a dissociated dream-state to cope with the pain. Her motto is 'Money Isn't Worth Art'. She gave up a promising career as a professional multimedia artist so she could freely create and give her work out into the world.

Adreon Henry currently resides in Austin, TX. Over the last six years he has produced over two hundred paintings and shown work in over thirty exhibits (national and international). He has participated in various art and music residencies and produced an assortment of designs commissioned by international companies. For more information peruse adreonhenry.com

Lily Hinrichsen makes things — art, poems, knitted socks, gardens. Creating things is how she processes her inner and outer movements as she travels through life. She loves her homebase of Bristol, Vermont. She's a keen explorer of the natural world, and wholly dedicated to nurturing her inner world as well. She finds healing, self-discovery, and joy in both. You can learn more about her at: LilyHinrichsen.com

A.J. Huffman has published thirteen full-length poetry collections, thirteen solo poetry chapbooks and one joint poetry chapbook through various small presses. Her most recent releases, *The Pyre On Which Tomorrow Burns* (Scars Publications), *Degeneration* (Pink Girl Ink), *A Bizarre Burning of Bees* (Transcendent Zero Press), and *Familiar Illusions* (Flutter Press) are now available from their respective publishers. She is a five-time Pushcart Prize nominee, a two-time Best of Net nominee, and has published over 2600 poems in various national and international journals, including *Labletter*, *The James Dickey Review*, *The Bookends Review*, *Bone Orchard*, *Corvus Review*, *EgoPHobia*, and *Kritya*.

Eryka Jackson writes speculative fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction. She holds a Masters in Applied Linguistics from Old Dominion University. Eryka, a Certified Aromatherapist, lives in Memphis, TN, where she enjoys photography, exploring nature, history, and just about everything else.

Suzanne Langlois lives in Portland, Maine, where she teaches high school English. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Fourth River*, *Rust + Moth*, *Three Drops from a Cauldron*, *Off the Coast*, *Rattle Poets Respond*, *The Cafe Review*, and *Menacing Hedge*. Her work has also been featured on the Button Poetry channel.

ali lanzetta is a woolgatherer, artist, and bookseller who lives between trees, sleeps under blankets of books, and is enamored with giraffes, whose hearts are over two feet long. Her work has appeared in *Hunger Mountain*, *Verse*, *Switchback*, *Eleven Eleven*, *The Invisible City Audio Tours*, *A Capella Zoo*, and elsewhere, and is forthcoming in *Flock*. ali has an MA in English and an MFA in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University, but eventually set sail from the city to live, love, and teach the literary arts in a Vermont valley filled with birds.

Vivian Lu is a writer and student from Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Her poetry has been published in *Eunoia Review*, *-Ology Journal*, *Best of Sprout Magazine*, among others. In addition, her work has won awards in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and the Walt Whitman Birthplace Poetry Contest. She is passionate about poetry, psychology, and human rights! In her spare time, she can be found sampling new flavors of tea.

Anna Martin is a visual artist and writer, native to Baltimore, Maryland, and currently based out of Salt Lake City, Utah. She is an avid explorer and much of her artwork is inspired by her travels and life experiences, and she strives to capture emotions and inspire others with her work. Her work has been previously exhibited in various galleries and museums, such as the Rosenberg Gallery and the Baltimore Museum of Art, and has also been published in various art magazines such as *Grub Street* and *Plenilune Magazine*. Anna is a freelance artist, and is always looking for new work and collaborative projects. Anna also frequently works under the pseudonym Vacantia, and more of her art can be found at her online gallery: <http://www.vacantia.org>.

Barbara Martin loves a good adventure and pursues constant exploration, always stretching for something new. Her paintings reveal place-moments in time from the serenity of a landscape ... to the horror of a nightmare. Alone in the studio, she listens to each painting. Her fingers push and pull at the very threads of story and timeless existence...until imagery, color and texture develop into a narrative. Descended from a long line of herbalists and storytellers, she discovers many primordial (and sometimes surreal) connections flowing naturally.

Chrissy Martin is a PhD student at Oklahoma State University and a recent graduate from the Poetry MFA program at Columbia College Chicago. She also holds a BA in English from The University of Akron. She is the Poetry Editor for *Arcturus* and an Editorial Assistant for *Cimarron Review*. Her work has appeared in *Amazon's Day One*, *Voicemail Poems*, *MISTRESS*, *(b)OINK*, and *Lit.Cat*. Find her at chrissymartinpoetry.com.

Jose Trejo Maya was born in Celaya, Guanajuato, Mexico, where he spent his childhood in the small neighboring rural pueblo of Tarimoró and wherefrom he immigrated in 1988. His inspirations include Netzahualcoyotl, Humberto Ak'abal, Ray A. Young Bear, James Welch. He has been published in various literary anthologies in the US, in the UK, in India, in Spain, and in Australia. He was nominated for the Pushcart Prize 2015 and was Awarded 3rd Prize from, El Centro Canario Estudios Caribeños – El Atlántico – en el Certamen Internacional de Poesía “La calle que tú me das” 2016.

Bernadette McComish earned an MFA from Sarah Lawrence, and an MA in Teaching English as a Second Language from Hunter. Her poems have appeared in *The Cortland Review*, *Sunday Salon*, *Hakol*, *Hospital Drive*, *Slipstream*, *Storyscape*, *Rag Queen Periodical*, and she was a finalist for the *New Millennium Writers* 41st poetry prize. Her collection *The Book of Johns*, is forthcoming. She teaches High School in Los Angeles, and performs with the Poetry Brothel curing one John at a time with words and glitter.

Francis McGill is an educator, and a contributing editor to Urbanmonks Thinktank. He writes poetry, some of which appears on *voetica.com*, *DonutShopMagazine.com*, and in the *New Farmer's Almanac*, 2017. He lives with his partner, Charlotte, in Vergennes Vermont.

Ernest McLeod is an artist and writer living in Middlebury, Vermont and Montréal. He graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design with fine arts and architecture degrees. His photographs have been published in *JPG*, *File*, and in *F-Stop Magazine*, where his Montréal winter alleyway series was featured. His writing has appeared in *7 Days*, *Salon*, *Men on Men 7*, *The Sun*, and in other journals and anthologies. More of his photographic work can be found at placeinsun.tumblr.com

Ashley Provencher is a Boston artist working on pieces that incorporate lots of color and texture. In May of 2012, Ashley graduated from Montserrat College of Art with a Bachelor of Fine Arts. That summer she lived in New Orleans for three months; helping in charter schools, rebuilding houses, and working on urban farms. She was inspired by the people, culture, and vivid colors the city had to offer, as well as the calm and serenity outside the city in the bayou.

Rebecca Pyle is both writer and painter. She lives now at the foot of many blue-indigo-purple mountains, near the Great Salt Lake, in Utah. Poems by Rebecca have appeared in *Indian Review* and *The Healing Muse*, and in a collection of (United Kingdom) National Poetry Competition winners; two recent stories by her are in *Stoneboat* and in *Wisconsin Review*. Artwork by Rebecca has appeared in on the cover of, and within, *Raven Chronicles Journal*; images of her paintings also accompany other writers' poems and stories in *Hawai'i Review*, *New England Review*, and *Permafrost*. See the art website rebeccapyleartist.com.

Carly Roberts is an emerging Richmond, Virginia based poet. She was born and raised in rural Southern Virginia, and has had a love and fascination with Americana and folk culture all of her life. Her early years spent wandering through forests and listening to the mournful, resonating voices of Merle Haggard and Karen Dalton fostered in her a love of the “lonesome” and a love of the voice that can take root. Her own special and revered relationship with herself and her body always permeates and makes itself apparent in her poetry. She is interested in and continues to explore the relationship of the human body to itself and to the spaces it occupies. She believes her most organic writing comes from times when she is displaced, or in states of transience and movement.

Originally a(n) (un)common laborer from southern New Jersey, **Cornelius Rosewater** currently masquerades as a competent employee of the National Park Service. He may be found this summer, planted like a skinny, ugly flag, at the North American pole of inaccessibility. He kindly asks that if you see a thin young man with wild hair hitchhiking through the American Midwest, that you considerately stop and give him a ride. The three poems that appear herein are the first of his work to be accepted for publication. He also has poetry forthcoming or published in Glass Mountain and The William and Mary Review. Additionally, Cornelius may be found online at www.ourlousyart.com.

W. Jack Savage is a retired broadcaster and educator. He is the author of seven books including *Imagination: The Art of W. Jack Savage* (wjacksavage.com). To date, more than fifty of Jack’s short stories and over a thousand of his paintings and drawings have been published worldwide. Jack and his wife Kathy live in Monrovia, California.

Fallon Sullivan recieved her MFA at Western Washington University. She lives and works in Seattle, WA.

Jamara Mychelle Wakefield is a queer performance poet. Her work is cross genre combining music, poetry, theater, music and improvisation to create public performance. She is a finalist for the Leslie Scalapino Award for Innovative Women writers. She is the new age protector of the black radical tradition. www.jamaramychellewakefield.com

Margaret Warren is an artist, technologist and entrepreneur. She has kept a journal of her spiritual and emotional journey on the earth since the age of 12. Her dreams and dream study are often the subject of her daily pages and of her fine art. She grew up in a family of award-winning photographers and visual artists. Artistic expression in multiple mediums has always been a part of her life. In the early 2000's she began putting more emphasis in showing and selling her art to the public and has continued to do this while growing other businesses as well. She has created software for users to build interlinked descriptions of images on the web (<http://www.imagesnippets.com>), owned and operated a technology and consulting business since 1995 and for the past 10 years she has also worked with vintage Porsche (356 & early 911) restorations and sales.

Mary Campbell Wild writes short fiction, historical fiction, and children's books. One of stories has recently appeared in the anthology *After Effects*, and she is the author of two non-fiction works for young adults: *Modern Nations of the World: The Philippines* and *Modern Nations of the World: Denmark*. She has an M.A. in International Communication from the American University, Washington, DC, and lives in Takoma Park, Maryland. At present, she is working on a collection of short stories addressing cultural and generational disconnects. She mostly dreams of owning a beach house on the Jersey Shore.

Nina Wilson has a BA in History and Writing, and have published photography, essays, poetry, and fiction previously published in *The Pearl*, *Coe Review*, *The Fishfood Magazine* and for *Camp Fire Heart of Iowa*.

Since retiring from his position as CEO of a nonprofit organization, **Ronald Wolff** has diligently pursued his two primary interests: writing and photography. Eight of his short stories have been published in literary magazines, and he is currently seeking an agent for his political thriller novel, "Vacancy on the Court." Wolff lives in Claremont, CA. Instagram: @opcapitolhill.

Christopher Woods is a writer, teacher and photographer who lives in Houston and Chappell Hill, Texas. His published works include a novel, *The Dream Patch*, a prose collection, *Under a Riverbed Sky*, and a book of stage monologues for actors, *Heart Speak*. His short fiction has appeared in many journals including *The Southern Review*, *New Orleans Review* and *Glimmer Train*. He conducts private creative writing workshops in Houston. His photography can be seen in his gallery - <http://christopherwoods.zefolio.com/>