

ISSUE 02 // SEPT 2021

# *warning lines*

**ECHO**

ISSN: 2004-1063



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ISSN: 2004-1063

issue 02, september 2021

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# editor's note

It is finally time. Issue 2 of warning lines magazine is finally here, for your enjoyment. Since Issue 1 came out (and indeed also before that), so many people have supported us, cheered us on, welcomed us into the world of literary publishing. I was already shocked at the amount of submissions we received for our inaugural issue, but this time around the amount of submissions more than tripled!

To all who trusted us with your work: I cannot tell you enough how in awe I am at you, you wonderful writers, you amazing artists, you. All we can do at this little magazine is try our best to uplift your voices, share them with a world that desperately needs them.

To all of you about to submerge yourselves into Issue 2: your hearts will fill with wonder, with dread; your eyes with tears of joy and pain alike. Come, and listen to the echoes that dwell within.

Yours always,

*Charlie D'Aniello*

he/they // Editor-in-Chief

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# Apricot Salad

## Clem Flowers

Crash of waves out on the beltway  
 No time for any  
 Not even frost to settle—  
 Swell of summer  
 Plush hearts  
 Plush hearts  
 Burning a rager thru the suites  
 Back of the car  
 Dreams hang  
 Like cigarette smoke & the headliner  
 In the back  
 of this ragged  
 sidesaddle Saturn  
 Guts all in Christmas light knots  
 From the burnt waves of noise  
 & hot lighting  
 Echoing out alone  
 on our stretch of dead ass asphalt &  
 Telegraph lines  
 Reverberate like a vivisection  
 into the light  
 Heart hums  
 Like old Miller neon signs  
 Alive— alive—  
 alive

# Mojave Dry

Clem Flowers

Out among blackbird lights, burned-out by  
burdens  
of melody & the family line  
snarl of exhaust  
Throttles my lungs  
I've reclaimed the final offerings from the church of the lilac morning  
& wrapped the lavender strips  
around my tired heartstrings  
So I could finally stand the echoes  
again

# Protector of the Realm

Zoe Grace Marquedant

Behind us, wrapped asphyxiatingly in leather, was what can only be described as Gay Slipknot. In chains and various shades of black, three young men hung from the scaffolding that entombed a Christopher Street corner pizzeria. They looked like someone had melted vinyl then dipped them Achilles-style in the resulting goo, hanging them there to dry. As pale as milk and as thin as skeletons, they yowled from their perch. Calls of “suck my dick” coming in two inflections.

The smallest wore a cockscomb fashioned from a straw broom, spanning from the base of his skull to the bridge of his nose. Another had donned a taut helmet that covered his face except where the teeth of zippers opened to expose his eyes and mouth. Their leader dangled between them. He was a mess of lingerie, lace draped like Spanish moss from his spindling body.

These boys caught our ear before our eye. Michele, Mel, and I had bellied up to the barricades to watch the parade. Their remarks, their taunts, their songs like those of stray cats rose above the din of the gayborhood. A dominatrix Greek chorus narrating the procession as it passed. They announced the clubs, support groups, survivors, couples as each drifted past at a pedestrian pace. Hollering, cheering and jeering churches, the Latter Gay Saints, the politicians, the servicemen always in holy unison. Reaching out over the street like unruly branches in a windstorm, blowing kisses, and drawing the cops' attention.

One approached, frowned, and beckoned for the boys to come down.

“You can't climb the scaffolding.” They weren't listening. “It's not safe.” The three fell into a pattern of being told off, making it look like they were receding back to the ground, waiting until the policeman wasn't looking, and then climbing back to their nest. But the NYPD had to make a show of publicly reprimanding them, to prove they had control of the situation. A handle on that youthful mix of dehydration and



Sharpie. So the cop circled, an apex predator in the swarm of lesbians and queers, swinging by enough times in an hour to assert himself. He would've pulled them down, like bad fruit, roughed and cuffed them, but instead he spared them, scared them. Carting three anemic-looking teens away would've broken the careful balance. Everyone was waiting for something to happen. Marriage Equality had just passed.

On the street, newlyweds sashayed by, in matching his & his assless chaps. We stood together, a crowd within a crowd, cooing at the costumes that passed. A t-shirt featured Bingley and Darcy making out. Someone batted a beach ball-sized inflatable nipple. Mel and I were in our Target boys' section best, Michele in a combination of black and purple. Low flying colors. A form of protection in case we ran into certain someones. One of her mom's friends, someone from "back home." Michele and Mel lived together, but in the context of such a small place, they would be mistaken for friends.

Then I noticed across the street from us, a tall woman in full body armor. Not the tactical, SWAT team kind, but its great, great, great, great, grandparent. The medieval equivalent. She was all chainmail and sigils, looking as if she had wandered in from a Renaissance festival. I elbowed Michele,

"Check out Protector of the Realm over there." I gestured towards the woman. An older version of her, could've been her mother, was dressed like a depressed teenager at her side. Or maybe it was a little May and the following December. We giggled.

"Good for them." Michele said. She was right. Pride was for being able to be out and about in whatever you wanted with whomever you wanted. Hence Michele and Mel, Gay Slipknot, and me. This was our weekend.

Above us, the three boys held up peace signs, stuck their tongues out for pictures with passersby. They knew they were a spectacle, but they attracted rubberneckerers on their own terms. I was glad to have them behind us, sassily calling to processors and clawing the air. But then, like someone set a cat amongst the birds, they began screaming.

"No. There! There—" They pointed across the street. A shuffle of limbs blurred behind the backs of onlookers. Even at the distance of the breadth of a street, we could still hear that wet thump of punches landing. I could see two figures bent into one another. A nearby officer ran, trying to simultaneously yell and scale the metal railing, but failing. The fight was unfolding in seconds.

We half expected it. This outburst of violence. Still, confusion, the flash of movement. We yelled in syllables. Then there was a metallic crack. The handle of an umbrella broke like a fish into the air and fell again. The crowd buckled under the weight of the fight, parting and pulling to make room for moving limbs. The line of people opposite that I had spent the past few hours memorizing disappeared into the faceless mass. Who was..? What was...? Why..?

Then everything stopped. A circle opened and at its center the Protector of the Realm crouched, shield held aloft, hovering over a fallen body. Her sword drawn, she trained it opposite. The point kept expertly trained on someone we couldn't see. Her face folded in concentration. Whoever had done the damage was warned off.

The parade resumed or rather it had never really stopped. As soon as it started, it seemed to happen and happen and happen and then oh look the librarians brought little gay lions. Our view of the scene was once again obscured by a wall of bodies watching, waving rainbow flags. A float drifted by, blasting hits from older decades. I looked again for the familiar faces across from us, found the relaxed smile of The Protector of the Realm, tapping the top of her shield along to the beat of "Tainted Love." Gay Slipknot cheer, so do we.

# my husband's touch

Kaedi Love

once (more than  
once) I've jerked away  
from my husband's touch  
(I have so many pains  
inside) and he has stopped,  
unable and unwilling to continue

I don't understand  
because there is pleasure  
in my pain, and it has never  
stopped anyone else before

# Echo and Narcissus

Elizabeth Switaj

Narcissus never loved himself  
I was diving in the pool

libidinal complement to self-  
preservation

I'd struggled with my fins and seen  
how wind would ripple any face  
apart in simulated tides

to reconstruct a Cubist grandiosity  
—who wouldn't want to grasp all their possibilities  
assembled in a mask? Narcissus' mother taught him

not to recognize himself, and so he didn't even then  
but as he wondered at the plethora of eyes  
he saw the wreck I was there to dive

the individual features found  
in many diagnosed otherwise

disordered  
he saw the rotten ribs, ghost nets  
of gowns and drinks—desks without their words,  
tables without meats—I have been him, unable

to speak of love and self, treating my own body  
as the object of desire. When it comes to you  
I'm Echo, too—needing you  
to speak attraction, so I could say it back  
—Who are you

now? Are you suffering as I dreamed?  
Narcissus and I are still down where dancers met the depths  
though I've been diving saltwater since

# Triptych of unlovable hands

## Madeleine Tomaso

I.

What does he have  
that I do not?  
What does he know  
about the way you pant  
into my shoulder after  
I've fucked you  
until my back is covered  
by the grooves of your ring?

II.

I hope it's not too late  
to start anew, perhaps  
we could come back  
one day and dig our  
arms into each other  
and say,  
didn't we do well,  
weren't we okay?

III.

It will stay dark forever  
before it gets any better.  
Do you not see that  
I am drowning?  
Be a good wife to me.  
Do not stray from me  
like this,  
do not shame the  
rotteness of my bones.

## A POEM WRITTEN IN THE STYLE OF A TELEGRAM

Madeleine Tomaso

Success body buried in the sea  
Nobody left only me  
My dearest I will be  
Home soon

# The Contortionist



Perry Gasteiger

# Estimated Time of Arrival

## Beck Guerra Carter

Trapped in the metal box of a Honda Accord  
my mother asks me if I'm happy. Trapped  
in a four-hour drive, trapped in my body

I look out the window and wish I were a grackle  
on a power line. Just another black smudge lost  
in the flock, drawing no attention, searching

for worms. My mother asks me— Are you happy?  
Do you love your body? I watch the trees sprint past  
the stretch of highway and wish I could be rooted

elsewhere. My mother tells me my father  
thinks I need therapy; worries I might remove  
myself from the world. I don't look through the window.

I glare at the glass, at puppy nose smudges  
and dirt. My mother's voice is far away. Are you happy?  
Do you know who you are? I don't wish I were roadkill,

but I envy any other flesh. When I was small,  
smaller than a bird—I tucked my hair into ball caps.  
Stuffed socks into my underwear. Today I tie my chest down,

but my mother can't tell. Or won't say.  
She keeps driving. We're a long way  
from where we need to be.

# Deer Carries the Decapitated Head of Another Deer in its Antlers

Beck Guerra Carter

Once, I ripped another's head clean off  
and kept it for days. Not by choice. A rotting thing  
trapped in the cage on my skull. I wandered

through a thicket of thorny rosebushes,  
face and legs ran red with the effort.  
I emerged. Soft velvet shedding from my head.

The gore of growth fell  
away. Death watched with pale eyes  
and I could not sleep.



# Tears

Joanna Grant

I cry like an old man now  
 perhaps for the same reasons  
 tears stanch'd through the seasons  
 buried out back in the dead of night  
 guilty, guilty, so many secrets given  
 to the earth that takes and takes  
 but finally sighs, finally says Enough  
 then all its will is bent, all the winds  
 all the weathers aimed at that old dirt  
 till each tear like so many rags clung  
 to the shanks of the poor piles of bones  
 in the unmarked grave start to push up, up, up  
 through the loosened topsoil, that tamped-down muck  
 no match, no match for the undammed waves of the past

# sleepwalking

Juliet Rose

when they say that sleepwalkers don't remember/ what they mean to say is that they  
 often can't/a half-conscious brain/cannot form a whole from anything/ if memory  
 exists in the body/and you spend so much time walking/ then remembering is  
 stretching a strained muscle/

your body is trying to tell you something/but you are never conscious enough to  
 hear/ you fill in the gaps with your mother's stories of ghosts/ *I heard footsteps last  
 night/ Did you come downstairs/ No/ there must be ghosts in this house then/she laughs/*

she likes to speak of uninvited guests in the house/she lists her proof/cabinets left  
 open/ mugs moved to a different shelf in the cupboard/ eventually you begin to  
 piece together/ where your body goes at night/*someone left the toaster out/ you did/  
 someone left the stove light on /you did/someone unlocked the front door/ you did/*

your mother tells you of the first time she found you/ standing motionless in the  
 middle of the kitchen/ staring straight ahead/ as if stuck in time/ *it was if you couldn't  
 see me/ she said/ she knew that you weren't awake/ because of how slow your  
 response to her voice/she brought you back to bed and tucked you in/ waited until  
 you looked asleep again/ in the morning she found you on the floor of your closet/  
 you told her/ it was safer in there/*

your brother tells you of another time/ he wakes to you walking in circles in front of his bed/ calling out for Jenna/ *who's Jenna?* / you don't know/ *you said she needed help & you couldn't find her*/ your brother is confused/ scared/ probably says something stupid/ about how weird you are/ looking for people you don't know/ in your sleep/

one morning your mother tells you/*you came downstairs last night and yelled at me/you do not remember?* / you don't/ she says you asked about your father/ *you said that you saw him/ you did/ I told you he's not here/ he is/he was/ you screamed at me/ I tried to calm you down/ but you were so angry/ your brother had to help me carry you back to bed/*

when they say you shouldn't wake a sleepwalker/ what they really mean to say is/ it is often better to delay the shock/ the breaking of the trance/ sometimes it is safer/ to bring them back to bed/ sometimes this doesn't/work/

once/your mother hears the water/running/in the upstairs bathroom/she has to break the lock/open/ with a knife/ she finds you in the bathtub/ yelling that someone is coming/ she tries to get you out/ you hit her/ she has to yell to wake you/ you cry from the shock of the tiled floor/ soaking wet in your pajamas/ for weeks after this/ the doorknob has a large gap in the middle/ a slashed eye/ until your mother finally replaces it/with an unlockable one/

you start taking benadryl every night to help you sleep/ your mother insists you take four/ watches you swallow them/ some nights you take more than that/ you start taking hot baths before bed/ to relax your body/ or to shock your muscles with heat/ to disorient them you think/ the baths are nice/ the medicine thickens the lids of your eyes/ you pray that they shut & stay shut/

some nights they do/ on these nights your sleep is thick/disrupted/you have a recurring dream/ a man with your father's face/ and a smaller body/ the same cancerous shadow in the shape of a squished/spider purpling/above his eyebrow/ he says wants to show you a trick/ he opens a door/ a skeleton on the ground/ your sister's skin in a pile to the right/ as if a costume peeled off/ the man laughs/he says you're next/ you can hear your sister's voice/ or what you remember of it/ he grabs you by the legs/ you cannot move them yourself/ you try to grab the carpet but it rips up like grass/you try to grab your arm/ but your skin starts peeling away like wallpaper/ you wake up screaming/you wake up wondering whose house you are in/ your mom's voice/ a bucket of rocks/shaking/as she tells you *you're alright, it was just a dream*/ later you find shadows of fingernails dug into your arms/ tiny frowns/souvenirs

you struggle to piece together/ what is real/ and imagined/ if you wake with the same fear/as your half-awake brain/ does that make it real/ is nothing real/ at all/ you picture a painting made with string/there is an outline of a shape/as the string is placed onto paper/ but then it is pulled away/colors quickly gaining unintended dimensions/lines curl and bend/ it thins in the middle/ the center is lost/ you are left with wet string/

you begin to think you exist in two bodies/ one that leaves you at night/ and one that returns with scars you cannot remember making/would you rather have the in-between details/ or would you rather just sleep/without fear/ you think you rather/die/

your memory a needle stuck on a record/ scraping the grooves/where sound should come/ out/but has been extracted/ scratched away/ instead an endless static/ gurgling/

# Steps for Falling in Love

## Halle Preneta

I. I feel like I could watch you move around a room for hours. Nothing but you dancing throughout the space, legs jumping, arms flowing, head bobbing to the rhythms of your feet.

II. I love how I can always feel the energy in your words. Each letter breathes life into every word you send. Your sentences plant seeds that grow beautiful flowers. Your paragraphs start whole civilizations. I'll suffocate without your words absorbing new life into me.

III. I want to take you all in. Your flowing hair and emblazoned skin that suddenly glows when you're outside. I want to experience you cranked up to eleven. Your witty jokes, your words that can breathe life into everything dead, your sparkling smile with teeth so white they're blinding.

IV. I want to love you. I want to love you unconditionally. I want you to kill me and then resurrect me. Raise me up from the dead. Raise me up like you always do when I'm sad or depressed or scared or anxious.

V. I want you to keep being you. I never want you to change. I want to keep taking you in, absorbing you until you live in my head and every time I close my eyes, you're there. You're there to comfort me. You're there to make me laugh. You're there, by my side, ready to take on the world with me.

# the time machine of religious trauma

Catie Wiley

You are seven years old, pink plastic rosary in your little hand. After the third Hail Mary, you feel the sweating start. The beads slip around in a makeshift baptism. Your mouth keeps murmuring but your brain goes blank.

+

You see a picture of yourself as a baby: a priest cradling your head over a fountain. Family members crowding around you, all wearing their Sunday best. In the picture, you're crying. A tear merges with the holy water.

Everything merges, after a while. No way to untie it.

+

You're ten years old at church choir rehearsal. You reach down to tie your shoes and lose your place in the rounds of *Dona Nobis Pacem*. You panic and mouth the words. You hope no one notices, especially God. The teachers say that he's always watching.

+

You're thirteen and wearing a scratchy uniform. Your friend grabs your hand because she wants to show you what she brought for lunch. You let her pull you along. A teacher hurries over to separate your hands. "Girls, girls! We don't do *that* here." You don't know what that means, but it feels like a dagger.

+

You're sixteen years old, on the third floor of a building with no AC. The teacher rambles on about sins: venial and mortal, the commandments and the endless ways you can break them. You write out a list of all the reasons you're going to hell. The skin of your legs sticks to your plastic chair like a glue trap. You think maybe this is purgatory. Maybe this is the intro to hell. Maybe this is all there is, all there ever will be.

+

You're nineteen when you decide it's time to unremember. You pull bible quotes out of your mind like a magician pulls out an endless scarf. You keep pulling and pulling: the words of the Nicene Creed, that song about eagle wings, the smell of benzoin&frankincense&myrrh. You can only pull so long before you get tired.

+

You're twenty two and you don't wear any jewelry with beads. Beads bring you back to the bad feelings. You hold a necklace in your hand, just to try it. The texture starts the time travel. You're seven years old again. Your brain goes blank.

# Sleepover Friends

Whitney Hansen

We used to be amateur ghouls  
flashlights under our chins, the only monsters  
we knew resting against our throats,  
conquered by simply flipping the switch,  
palms up & open. Mercy. Static fizzed

across this moment in reverse  
taking it all back, unwinding. Mercy.  
This was years before Father Cimpl  
talked about sin & sinners, how we could love  
one without the other. Mercy. I nodded

but thought about you.

# guthrum i



J.W. Summerisle

# God made me an earthquake

Isabella Dela Cruz

& i shook so loud my bones      dislodged;  
 rattled around my body like coins in a cup  
    a sacrifice/an offering  
    *is my existence not*  
    *enough?*  
 clinging like mould to this rotting rock  
    this flammable/flaming ball –  
*choking on unanswered prayers*  
 if faith is greater than fear then why  
    do my hands still shake around  
    your Word/my World?  
 every seismic shift a lost cause  
 an incoming attack  
 a suicide letter  
 to the girl I'd once been,  
    the girl who survived this earthquake;

*God are you listening to me*  
*God are you listening*  
*God – are you—*  
*God –*

# Inheritance

## Matt Schultz

Remember once stepping on the shadow of a sparrow  
that flew away over backyard gardens and in-ground pools,  
ripples going on forever: a kingdom without end?

It's like that, these contortions that cannot be controlled.  
Repetitive and rapid and unwanted, a coordinated syndrome  
of movement that tics like stones skipping across the water.

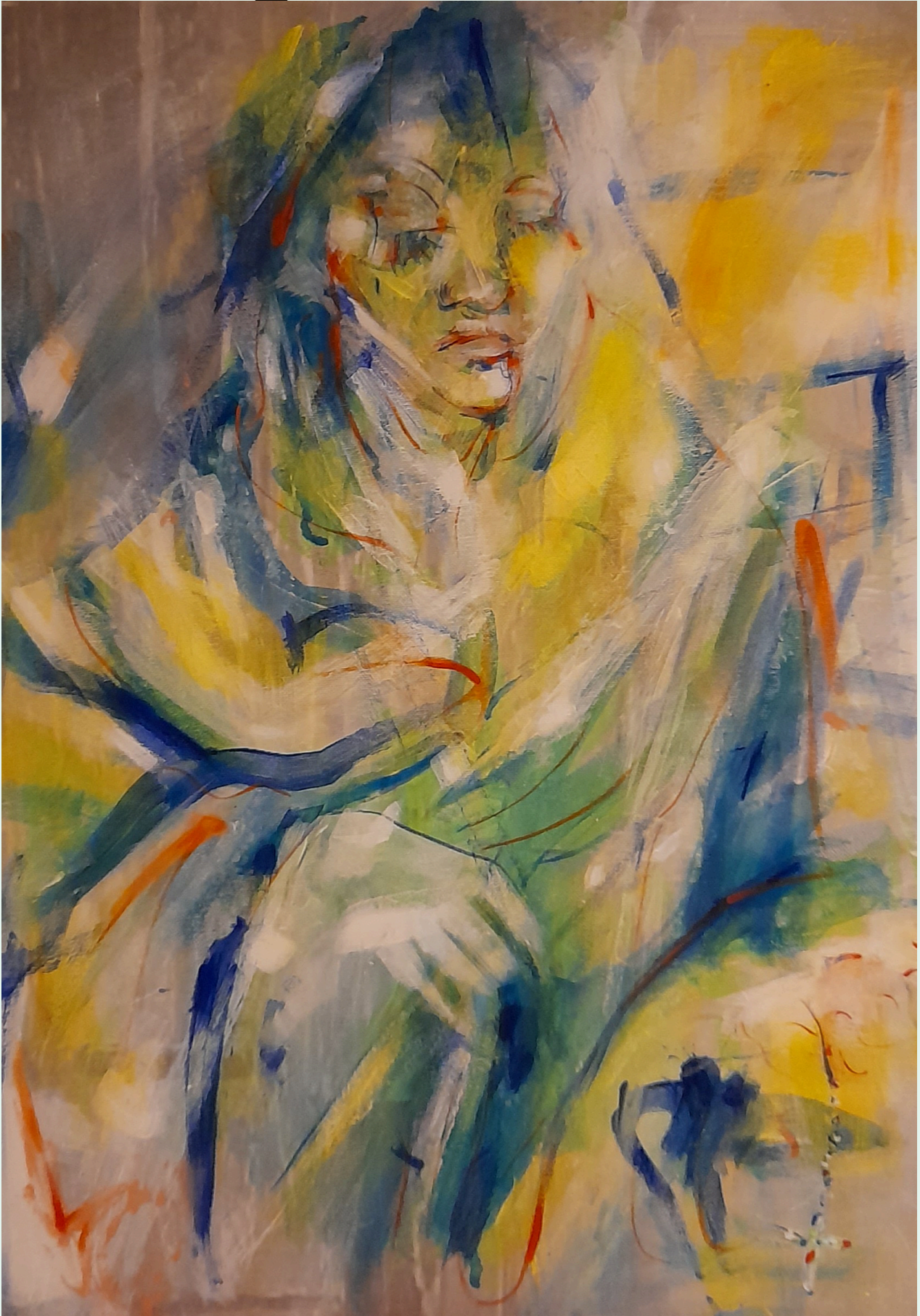
Some small difference in our DNA--a slight re-write obsessed  
with hyperactivity and impulse. Look, our eyes blink in unison  
but yours keep on fiercely flitting until you press them shut

for a brief respite. Which is when your entire head begins to spasm.  
I hold you close, and together we recall the weightless grace of the  
sparrow's shadow, that playful echo of the bird's palsied flight.

*[This piece is an echo of "Suburban ADHD", which was originally  
published in Warning Lines Issue 01, Nebulous. June 2021]*



# guthrum ii



J.W. Summerisle

# Nighthawk

## Elyssa Tappero

late at night my ten year old self yells at me, tears in her eyes and hands clenched in fists, demanding “how could you let this happen? how could you let him go?” like I had any control, like eight years difference somehow made me an adult with the power to move stars and blood clots, yet I know she can’t understand something so profoundly wrong when her entire world is built upon the framework of What Has Been Therefore Always Will Be, sure she’s stood on damp porch steps and called desperately for lost cats but this absence is incomprehensible and she feels wounded, betrayed, this isn’t how things were supposed to go at all, and all I can say is “I know, I know, I know”

# Song of the Ocean

Regina Jade

The light of the full moon was dancing along the waves, and the whole ocean was alive with song.

Normally, Tris could lay back and just enjoy the song of the ocean: the crashing of the waves and the humming of the currents, the lullaby that had lulled her to sleep as a baby. Today, though, a thousand of her kin would be adding their own music to the song, and Tris would be one of them.

Tris bid goodbye to her sisters and brothers as they began to swim their separate ways. Adult merfolk tended to live alone, only gathering for big celebrations or war, and it was easier to sing for a mate if your song didn't get tangled up with and mistaken for another's. All around her, mermaids and mermen were darting through the waves, humming as they began to compose their own songs, tails flickering under the moonlight as they ventured into the deep to find their own territory.

As she swam, Tris contemplated what she could sing for. A mate song should reflect whatever the mermaid or merman wanted in a mate: a strong partner to raise young with, a clever confidant to debate with, an adventurous companion to explore with. A few songs were already rippling through the currents, and the contents were enough to make Tris blush at the rather explicit trilling.

Those explicit songs began to soften and fade as Tris made her way deeper and further out. Soon all Tris could hear was the swish of her own tail, the humming of the ocean, and the occasional sea creature startled by her presence. It was peaceful and utterly, utterly quiet.

Perfect.

Tris swam a little further until she found a deep sea cove, one big enough to house at least two merfolk. It would be cozy, but that was fine; Tris harbored no intention of spawning. She put down her bag of belongings and settled at the mouth of the cave, eyes turned upwards to the sky.

When the moon was at its zenith, she would sing, and she would wait and see who would answer her. If anyone answered, of course.

"Positive thoughts," Tris told herself firmly, and closed her eyes to begin composing her song.

###

The rise of the moon came, eventually. Tris could feel the vibration in the waves as her kin lifted their voices in song, channeling their desires and hopes and everything they were into melodies that would carry as far as the waves would take them.

Tris ran her fingers through her hair one last time and opened her mouth.

She sang her mate song: her desire to find someone who would cherish her, her love of old tales and ancient songs. She wove a melody of who she was and what she could offer a potential mate. Most of all, she sang about her hope to find someone who would understand her—and her lack of interest in spawning.

Tris let her voice ripple out across the waves, and prayed it would be heard.

# # #

A mermaid could sing for days without pause. It was as easy as swimming and as instinctual as breathing.

That said, it was a lot easier when someone sang back.

Tris listened to the echoes of her own song bouncing back at her and her heart sank. The moon was sinking now and soon it would vanish entirely, replaced by the fierce bright sun that drove merfolk deep within their homes to rest. If no one answered her, she would spend a year alone, until everyone was ready for the great song again.

She sang a little louder and hoped the desperation didn't scare anyone off.

Eventually, though, Tris had to concede. The moon was almost completely gone. Most merfolk would be retreating for a good rest after such a long journey and night of singing. She was simply going to be alone. Perhaps everyone tonight had been looking for a spawn partner, and no one for a companion to enjoy life with.

Tris closed her eyes. She rolled onto her back and stared at the top of her cave, where moss clung to the walls and little creatures darted in and out. She hummed a little melody to herself, resigned to a year alone.

She was humming so resignedly, in fact, that it wasn't until all the little creatures began to flee that she realized that her song was not alone.

Tris pushed herself outside of the cave. She pinched her tail firmly, but it was no sea dream.

Someone was singing back.

They sang of a long, lonely journey. They sang of hopes dwindled to almost nothing. And most of all, they sang of a desire to find someone who understood.

Tris let the echoes of the other mermaid's song wash over her. It was like swimming in a riptide: exhilarating and breathtaking. This was everything she had sang of, a perfect melody to mesh with her own, a beautiful song she couldn't help but answer.

So answer it she did: Tris poured her heart into her own mate song, and the other mermaid sang back with increased joy. Their songs mingled and wove in the middle, a gorgeous two-part melody that made the waters ripple and churn.

Then, finally, the mermaid who had been singing to her appeared in the distance. She had a lovely tail, purple and silver, and eyes that glowed. She darted towards Tris like a hungry shark, as if she hadn't been swimming all night long. Tris swam to meet her and they circled in the waters, still singing, until at last they were close enough to touch hands.

"Kiara," said the mermaid who had sang of hope rekindled.

"Tris," she answered.

"Mate," they both said, and knew they had found their perfect companion to live the rest of their lives with.

Singing  
in  
Sleepwalk  
Jupiter Vivienne

I heard a hymn under the park bridge  
Felt the call through the fog at 4 AM  
I'm told that my mind drifts too freely  
As though freedom is my curse  
And will come back to haunt me  
Mother always tries to reel me in  
When I fall too far past darkness  
Who could resist God's temptations  
Promised light in a tunnel, a split soul's  
Whole salvation, I have dreams that God  
Is real and loves Satan and as lovers  
Made life just to waken at 4 AM  
Follow the voice of a stranger through  
Fog from below the park bridge and kiss  
When that girl meets nothing but herself  
And her singing in sleepwalk  
To church bells ringing in the distance  
A choir of echoes synchronistic

# guthrum iii



J. W. Summerisle

# Unravel Me

## Lucy Rose

My home is a tired old thing. Patterns overbear my wallpaper. Wallpaper overbears my walls. There is a percussion of clocks ticking through vacant halls and rooms. The world passes us by.

Around my home, trees are sprinkled in abundance. A forest guards us, steadfast and strong. Just beyond, but not too far, a pebbled beach finds a shoreline. On the back of the tide, the sea carries saltwater's breath around the coast. There is a lighthouse nearby, and when dusk casts its shadows across the bay, it floods yellow light across the sheets of my bed. When the flash of the lighthouse finds me, I soak. When it's gone, I search for it, eager to feel its light brush across my skin. Between light, moon-glade drifts across sea foam, and sleepy waves pull tides into a beached embrace.

When I was a little girl, I found a private cove - away from the busyness. Unlike the other beaches, it was topped with pebbles and stones instead of sand. Secluded from the bay, I climbed the rocky crags. They were soaked from the might of waves and crashing up against them. Seaweed draped and cockle shells absconded the sand at their feet. Leaving my shoes and socks in a tired bundle by the waves, I climbed the rocks. When I reached the crag's crest, I found long grass weaving nests from blades of flora. I sat near the brambles and picked at the forming fruit. Right there, I had everything I'd ever need. That is when I knew I would find a way to live by the sea, and I have followed shorelines ever since. Small hands, covered in sticky bramble juice, made that promise. My hands, withered as they are, have known the paramour of the ocean.

I wake to the bitter sunlight scratching the freckles on my arms. Sunbeams beat against the windowpanes as birds chirp to the passing dawn. The sun is warm, swaddling me in morning's light. Summer's warmth is not frail; I lie entwined by the sheets of my bed. My fingertips comb through strands of my grey hair as I reminisce, and sunlight catches the silver and likens it to fishing twine. I've shared this bed with a string of wayward souls; men, women, those in between or not quite sure. I've consoled broken hearts and had mine pieced back together. I've found myself lost between limbs and linens. Lovers and friends have found their way to me, and we have loved in abundance. Yet I am still lonely.

At the tip of my thumb, I notice, lodged between my fingernail and its bed, a tuft of yarn cresting. I look closer. Light breaks through each fraying strand. There's an urge I fight to pull until I unravel wholly - until there is nothing left, but skin and memories spun into spooling yarn.

Heartbeats trail, chasing one after another and my brow births drops of sweat. If it were a scab, I'd pluck at it, hoping to destroy myself completely. My fingers dance atop the fibres. I look to the wallpaper, hoping to curb the compulsion. Patterns wind and flounder where the wallpaper tears itself from the wall. My home grows old at my side, and it has the same compulsions that I do. It has wrinkles of its own, though I cherish its imperfections. I pluck memories from each scuff left behind. I stumble upon stormy nights spent by a roaring fire, catching the lighthouse glinting on the crest of ocean waves. I search from bygone times and friends and lovers, but the yarn holds my attention.

My nimble fingers find the tuft of yarn at the tip of my thumb and give it a light tug. I begin to unravel and I know it is time. My thumb dissipates in the warm sun, leaving only wool behind in its wake. I wonder if I will be found here in my bed, spooling yarn, all tangled up and hiding in amongst my blanket tomb.

Eager for a last brush of ocean spray at my feet, I clamber for the door. Holding my fraying hand close, I protect it from anything that could catch and pull me apart. Following the pattern of fauna with my fingertips, I pass the wallpaper and the clocks in the hall. The painted vines lead me to my door, which swings back and forth from the ocean breeze. Sea air consumes me. I breathe. Roaring waves that brush the cove find me as I reach the front steps. My fingers turn to yarn as the wind plays with my skin. I hope it won't take me away with it to the mainland. The ocean is not far. The bay glitters with all the light that dawn has spilled. The grass beneath my feet quickly falters to beach pebbles, crags and shells. At last, I am on the beach. I am found.

The arch of my heels relaxes over the stones, cool and doused with salt water. My toes curl. Water brushes over the shore and finds my heels, enough to brush my ankles. I wade until the ocean foam combs my shins. Seawater cradles my skin.

Waves ruminate, pulsing as the yarn from my wrist tousles in the breeze. My hair is pulled about by the wind, as I reach out to the horizon and close my eyes. I think of those who I've lost myself in, and I smile. They were beautiful companions for a short time, but we do not live forever.

The wind tugs at the yarn. Like fragile knitted jumpers, my skin spools into thread. The last of me dissipates, flurrying away. I let the wind take me to open sea. Falling into its embrace, the way we do when we walk into the arms of someone sorely absent.

Warmth finds me. I am an atlas, and though I am lost, the ocean carries me where I must go.



# My Mother's Adolescent Writing

*After Hart Crane*

Lorelei Bacht

There is no moon tonight  
but that of memory – the paper moon  
has room enough for remembrance,

its origami folds  
lightly stained in purple, deep  
indigo ghost of a fountain pen –  
scribbles in the margin: she too  
formulated an intention.

The cover shut, dust-jacketed:  
Where do we go from here?

Day-for-night, blue-tinted, such  
tenderness through the grapevine –  
little constructions of pebbles and sticks.  
We could call it: a letter to the world.

And I wonder:

If not by touch, how could I decipher,  
ascertain a presence – are words  
witness enough? Could I live on  
with her echoed, melopoeic,  
my Jiminy Cricket –

Who will tell me a road?

If I had a bottle of ink,  
I would gladly drop it shattered,  
my veins for all to see – I could say it.

And so, I add a word in the margin.  
And another – every woman this one.

Ever woman a paper moon  
carefully folded forgotten  
upstairs in the attic. Downstairs,  
the children are asking.

# Broken

## Hameedah Aruwa

A barren soul  
i can hear nothing but  
fractured echoes of his lone heart

# Dreams of Kissing Surrealists

N. Taupe

*ii.*

text messages floating in the  
space between Ohio and LA:  
do they drift along I-40,  
grazing the roofs of semi trucks?  
still longing for physical touch  
and real flesh, even asleep,  
our bisexual triad is  
stranded in somnicyberspace.

*i.*

You're the only person I would make myself small for /  
You stretch out on the couch in the bay window of my childhood home, taking up  
the whole length of it with your tall, solid form, maybe four months pregnant /  
Usually pregnancy makes me squeamish /  
The fact that you're a man complicates it further, but by my unconscious logic, it is  
perfectly reasonable, ordinary, familiar /  
Any sense of revulsion is absent as I kneel on the carpet beside you /  
I place my hand on your chest, lean over you, and kiss you /

*iii.*

I held a cup to my mouth,  
whispering in it  
and hearing your voice  
for what felt like hours and hours and hours and hours.  
Was it really communication  
or just an echo? (Am I Narcissus caught up in my twin fantasy?)  
I laid on my stomach  
and in heaven!! as you bit and kissed at the spot where my shoulder meets my neck.

In my dreams, we are always lovers.

# Jet Ski

Kaitlyn Crow

Pieces of her hair tickled my collarbone,  
once. Blowing in the wind. I tasted  
salt for a moment as they whipped  
into my open mouth. The breeze broke  
through the summer heat – my breath, hers.  
A nervous sweat dripped down my calves.  
She had both hands tight on the handles,  
steering. I had both arms wrapped around  
her waist. I leaned forward, skin to skin,  
to feel her heartbeat, a hammer against  
my chest.

I'm sure there's a scientific formula  
that explains the perfect mixture  
of rushing and still air created  
when the wind blows in one direction,  
and we glide against it,  
but I've never been too good at math.  
All I know is that the wind blew her hair  
out of its ponytail, into my face,  
and even though we pushed the speedometer  
to its breaking point, it felt like we weren't moving  
at all.

# Don't Be Surprised

Holly Zijderveld

*[A found poem  
after 'Train Song', by Feist]*

I call out your name, my  
head travelling with the wind but  
the wheels travelling north.

I've learned to find you in  
the beat of the train, in the many  
hundred miles to get to you.

Our love, with no warning,  
can find where I belong. Suddenly now,  
I know where I belong.

# after the flooded house

## Rin Guo

when i was ten i thought that i'd be dead in five years time with all the certainty of a child who knows that santa claus isn't real and that lies are just a part of living.

so i learned how to play a different kind of game in my head, one where a despondent fact of life murders fantasy in his bed. snakes, snakes, never a ladder. a metal slide in a playground that only goes down down down never up up up, hot silver brought to a harsh sizzle by summer. if i couldn't be a light that never went out, i could at least be burnt to death by *the brightest sun, scorching ball of fire, a mercy burning memory.*

still, traces of a dream remain. despite everything i know, i still find myself lying in bed waiting for the tooth fairy to come and collect. i still find myself believing that something, anything, in the world could be freely given without consequence, that there'll be coins under my pillow when my teeth snap under the world's weight. one by one, shattering into silver dust all the while as i scream with a mouth full of bleeding gums.

now the time has long passed and i don't celebrate any anniversaries. pecking friends on the cheek when they remember, arms full of soft toys and well wishes. you only choose to live once in your life. every time that comes after is just muscle memory. riding a bike down the same streets where you were conceived, soft and lonely while the wind whips your hair into your face hard enough to make you cry.

# Chocolate in the Corner of My Cheek

Phoenix Leigh

I had always figured that my love was always going to be unrequited, and for the most part, I was fine with that. I had swallowed most of it down by now, but every now and then you had to ripple through me, and leave me to pick up the ruins.

You were pretty in the way that guys liked; you knew how to twirl your hair on your finger, you knew when to wink. At first, I thought it was envy I had swallowed, so I spit it back up to make sure. I looked in the toilet and sure enough, up staring back at me was love.

You made sure to never treat me with too much kindness. You didn't want to lead me on, and I was thankful for that. Not everyone is kind enough to be cruel. But I always knew you cared, somewhere deep down. When I went to the hospital our sophomore year, you wrote an op-ed about eating disorders and Greek life. In the article, you wrote *I have seen some of the most beautiful, loving, intelligent women succumb to societal expectations that only end up killing them*. I didn't know how to thank you for that, so I never did.

I was on a date when we ran into each other again. My girlfriend at the time insisted on seeing *where I came from*, so we packed everything up and drove, each mile closer to you a memory. *Here is where we went to undergrad, here is where we would drive after theater practices, here is the hotel we stayed at for your 11th birthday*. Everything leading me back home also led me back to you.

*It's so nice to see you, really.* You tucked your hair behind your ear, and then you asked *Can I get you two anything else?*

It was my birthday party, and I could feel the wine buzzing through me. I started vomiting up so many words at you -- I told you how I thought the world of you, how you were going to do amazing things, and how much I loved you. Your eyes couldn't meet mine-- instead, you fiddled around with your jacket zipper. *You think too much of me,* you said, and then you said *I have to go to the bathroom* and I didn't see you for the rest of the night.

You kissed me once. Before you knew, and before I would admit it to myself. It was New Years, and I pulled you in, and the next thing I knew, you were reapplying your lipstick. I try to remember what it felt like, but all I can ever remember is you pulling away from me. I always knew you'd make a better memory than a lover.

We were face-to-face at your favorite Chinese restaurant when you told me. It wasn't Valentine's Day, but a few days after, and I had stuffed some discount chocolates in my purse, and I was afraid they were going to melt. I held them out in my hands for you, and you did that kind of quasi-laugh where you blow air out of your nose, and then you said *I really, really missed you.* I wanted to lasso those words right out of the air, stuff them in my purse, and take them home with me for me to gorge on later. Instead, with chocolate in the corner of my cheek, I replied *I missed you too,* and we went on having lunch. When I got home, I pulled trig, brushed my teeth, and then I cried.



# Potentially Recyclable

Melissa Martini

“She left me for you, you know that, right?” Flynn tilted back the beer bottle in his hand, taking a long, uninterrupted sip.

The beer was bitter and cold, just like the breakup he’d been through earlier that night. They’d gotten in arguments before, sure, but the permanence was repeatedly punching him in the gut and gripping his chest so tight he thought his heart might burst. The more he drank, the slower the punches became and the more the grip loosened.

“If that was the case, don’t you think I’d be fucking her right now, not sitting here with you?” William downed the shot sitting in front of him, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. His throat burned, from the back of his mouth to the center of his chest. He trailed his finger along the rim of the shot glass, cool and smooth against the rough pad of his pointer. “She’s not interested in me, man.”

“Don’t talk about her like that,” Flynn let his head fall into his hands, leaning against the bar. He shifted in the stool beneath him lightly, spinning slightly. The soft glow of neon signs and a jukebox in the corner kept the bar lit amidst the evening darkness outside. Music hummed through the air, the chatter of other men fighting to drown out the songs. “She just dumped me, dude.”

“Sorry,” William replied, awkwardly considering whether he should pat Flynn on the back or buy him another drink. Flynn looked sullen, defeated - his jacket was a wrinkled heap against his back, so William went with the latter option, waving over the bartender, a woman with bright blue hair and a prominent chest. She leaned in to the two men, makeup heavy and slightly smudged.

“What can I get you, boys?” She asked, her voice feminine yet heavy, hanging between the three of them like a spritz of perfume lingering in the air. She smelled of citrus and sweet sweat, like lemonade being sipped on the beach against sunburnt skin.

“What do you want, Flynn?” William nudged Flynn with his elbow, encouraging him to sit back up and look at what was right in front of him rather than dwell on the past. William thought Flynn’s messy mop of dark hair looked even worse without his face visible to compensate.

“Another beer is fine,” Flynn mumbled, gesturing towards the brown empty bottle in front of him. He lifted it and held it in his hand, turning it over and considering it: he related to it, in a silly sort of way - empty, sucked dry, potentially recyclable but tossed in the trash instead. He sighed against the bottle, the glass emitting a soft whistle in response.

Flynn glanced at William as he ordered his own drink, still trailing his lips against the rim of the bottle's neck. William was soft yet angled, his features chiselled yet inviting. His flaxen hair fell to his shoulders and he often tucked it behind one ear, yet still maintained a masculine air to him - willowy and lithe accompanied by toned arms and rough, tired hands.

Snowflake freckles sat upon his skin, as white as a new page. Flynn thought if he touched William, he might taint him as if soiling clean sheets. He decided, if there was ever a man he would've wanted his girlfriend to leave him for, it would be William. The bartender brought them their drinks, to which William held his glass out to clink against Flynn's beer bottle. Flynn obliged.

"Thanks for watching my sister tonight, man," William said, nodding to Flynn. Giggling and delighted screeching could be heard from the next room. "And for bringing your sisters to hang out with her. She could use some friends her own age."

"No problem." Flynn sat at the foot of William's bed, watching as his friend raked product through his hair and strapped on a watch. He looped a belt through his jeans, securing it in the front. William spun around once and adjusted his jacket in the mirror, finally turning towards Flynn and asking, "What do you think?"

"She'll like that one better," Flynn pointed at the worn out leather jacket hanging in William's closet. He hadn't worn it since high school, but kept it around for memory's sake: he bought it on sale at a flea market years ago, his mom egging him on when he hesitated. She convinced him to buy it, even offering to pay for half so he wouldn't need to spend his entire paycheck on it.

"What's wrong with this one?" William looked at himself in the mirror, tugging at the hem of the jacket he was already wearing: a taupe canvas zip-up jacket with three pockets and a fleece-lined collar.

"Dude, did you see her?" Flynn stood up and walked over to William's closet, fingering his way through the clothing hanging up until he reached the leather jacket, which he tugged out and held up. "Her hair was the color of a blue raspberry snow cone. She'll like this jacket better."

"I feel like you're making a huge generalization," William took the leather jacket out of Flynn's hands and held it up to his body. The leather was soft and cracked, worn down through the years. He knew it would still fit like a glove. "I haven't worn this thing in years."

Their sisters suddenly tumbled into William's bedroom as if on a mission like Kamaji's sootballs carrying coal to his boiler. Their giggles were volcanic and contagious as they clung to the men's legs, teasing William for getting ready for a date while simultaneously teasing Flynn for babysitting children on a Friday night. Picking up their respective sisters, they fell to the bed in a heap, a tiny found-family.

The leather jacket lay on the floor, forgotten, and Flynn almost wished William would cancel his date with the bartender to instead stay home and hang with him and the girls. They could watch horror movies, eat popcorn, stay up too late - all of the things he longed to do with someone, an intimacy hard to replicate elsewhere. Eventually, though, William hung the leather jacket back up in his closet and sprayed on some cologne, an oaky tobacco musk.

When he left, Flynn swore he could still smell William's cologne lingering in the air, a fading echo of a scent as he watched the girls play.

# Spillage

after Ellen Bass's "If You Knew"

## Tara Isabel Zambrano

It was a tiny earthquake, you say, the one  
that shakes the ribs but doesn't kill.  
we pick up picture frames,  
cutlery strayed across the room,  
knives in every corner.

on the floor I recall our outline,  
sex—a crime scene long ago.

The fault line between us runs  
to Holiday Inn on my way to work,  
a belt across another man's waist  
my limbs strained and snapped  
because ecstasy is a seism in the body.  
Later, beneath the harsh light  
my hips cold on the toilet seat.

There are still shards on the floor, you claim,  
Even if you don't see them.  
I watch your face—  
lit with the yellow  
reflected from the splinters—  
your shoulders slumped  
from the absence of an embrace.

No one must tell me—  
love assigns to want only one.  
The idea is tiring at best,  
like a kiss crushed in a mouth,  
like dark spots in the sun.  
An impossible escape.

How wide the body must split—to witness  
skin beholden to lust like moon  
obligated to night. What would we look like  
if we never saw as we are,  
covered in dust, bruised and cracked,  
trembling in aftershocks.

# Amalgamation

Sappho Stanley

My fiancée asked when I first wore  
a skirt, as if a need.  
I stared and sat and stood and cringed,  
thinking about the term.

## CROSS DRESSING

“Cross Dressing” was thrown around with  
such ease, it felt malice.  
Like, Buffalo Bill and Dallas  
Buyers, always missing the mark.

“He,” “She,” “Whatever it is” the  
old lady at the host stand spits  
into my face. Pre-e,  
serial killer with a dick. I look  
at her with eyes saying,

“your skin is next.” Then the lady’s  
son reckons his daughter is after her. So,  
we agree that he’ll do he and  
me do me with my tit growing trick.

# The Hatchet

## Alix Perry

He last saw me alive on the day of the pig roast. That afternoon, not a single concern—besides, probably, a dash of hunger—crossed my mind. As we sipped cola and watched other potluckers pridefully place their offerings on the table, he held his hand perpendicular to his brow to block the sun. The shade turned his brown eyes darker, though they still glowed when he curled his arm around my waist. Belief should not be founded on luminosity alone, but I couldn't have known that at the time.

The previous weekend, I was cleaning up the yard of the rental home into which we had just moved. I wanted to plant a garden against the back fence. My nose already tingled, imagining the scent of the beauty bark that I planned to order, and the corners of my mouth turned up, picturing how the burgundy flakes would coat the now-dull ground. Blackberry brambles dominated the area, their plump fruit taunting the previous tenant's attempt to contain them. With repetitive chops of my dull clippers, though, the green vines joined the brown ones beside my feet. Once I'd exposed the face of the faded fence, I reached behind me for the rake and began wrangling the dead vegetation into a compost bag. My arms jolted when metal struck metal.

The hatchet's blade was dull and rusty and the wooden handle was halfway to rotten. Testing its weight in my hand, I noted that the two pieces were still firmly attached. I wondered how many years it took for metal to weather like this. Surely it had been a long time since the tool could have chopped through those sinewy vines. I tossed the hatchet into the long grass behind me and forgot about it.

He had been inside while I worked in the yard. When I entered the kitchen for a glass of water, I found him reaching into the freezer for an ice cream bar. He handed me one when I asked. Minutes later, I returned for a second. Though I was 24, the new presence of testosterone in my body spurred a pubescent hunger.

There'd been a flyer for the potluck posted in some neighborhood coffee shop he frequented. Sunday morning in the community garden. The forecast said 78 and sunny. I'd never liked large groups of strangers, but I supposed it wouldn't be so bad if we went together.

We arrived at the potluck by bus. The whole way, I held my two-liter bottle of cola by the neck, in an attempt to prevent the chilled liquid from absorbing my body heat. He carried a container of mac and cheese in his backpack. With our contributions set on the table, we joined the crowd. I stood by his side as he small-talked two gardeners about available plots. There was one open in the

corner, apparently. In our four years together, I'd never known him to be interested in gardening, so I guessed he might be asking for me. But I already had plenty of space at home.

After the pig was lifted from the earthen oven and then carved, we served ourselves on waxy paper plates. We sat with our backs against the hip-height wooden fence while the rest of the crowd lingered near the food. The meal was delicious, but overpowering. Every sauce I sampled with the meat was too spicy, and I tried and failed to smother the heat by swallowing gobs of mac and cheese. Though it was cool in the shade of the fence, my face turned red and sweaty. I set my fork aside. His hand brushed my chin, and when he kissed me, my mouth forgot its fire. Just a few yards away, we found easy privacy within August-tall corn stalks.

Later, we watched from a distance as a pair of men filled in the oven. Instead of returning their shovels to the shed, they left them laying beside the disturbed soil. Once they departed, we were alone. I felt the descending sun hot on my back as we wandered through the garden, hand in hand. I admired the climbing Chinese long beans, the plump zucchini, the tangles of radish pods. Our backyard garden could be just as bountiful next year.

He stopped us as we passed the corner's vacant plot. "Do you like it?" he asked.

"Sure, but why?" I still wasn't used to feeling the deepened resonance of my voice, and it pleased me to hear a reminder of my transformation. A silence lingered. When I searched his face for an answer, I found it empty.

Finally, he said, "Because if you stay here, I'll never have to lose you." By the force with which he brought the hatchet down against my head, I knew he had never been more committed to anything.

He shoveled the plot's dirt over a body on that new-moon night, but it wasn't me. No amount of soil can bury a story. And I am so many.

I get

flashbacks

of the life I had

before I

lived

and I cry for  
all that time I

wasted

being afraid of my

identity

# A Portrait of Everything

## Robin Williams

Your voice echoes,  
locked inside the mirror,  
and I stand there staring  
at the silver reflecting my body  
reflecting the pain of your wounding  
words.

I leave the camera flash on,  
wait for the click  
and I exhale the breath  
trapped behind my gritted teeth.

Come tomorrow I will twirl a brush  
between my bitten-nail fingers  
and paint a portrait of everything I am  
and everything I am not.

You played me like a game of cards  
made only for your time-passing pleasure  
and I will remain the ace of hearts  
but I will not remain yours.

< Flashbacks  
Robin Williams



# An Autistic Couple Repeats the Word "Leaf" to Each Other for Ten Minutes Straight

David Salazar

Cryptophasia is the language shared between twins  
and idioglossia is the language of young children, impossible  
to parse  
but there should be a word to describe this—  
the language between two autistic adults,  
the words, the phrases, repeated over and over again.  
Echolalia doesn't quite cut it, no.  
It doesn't imply the warmth, the love pouring out of the  
repetition.

Repeating each other's words is  
the same as holding each other's hands.  
The context of the word is long forgotten by the time we get  
here—  
all we have are the sounds it makes, the echo.  
Leaf. Tongue pressed against the roof of the mouth,  
lips pressed together in a symphony only we understand.  
I could not explain why it's this word that resonates through  
our phone call  
but it is—an echo of love and care, leaf leaf leaf leaf,  
until there is no meaning attached to it but warmth.

# DSM-5 as Moby Dick

Zoe Friedland

let the question of death melt  
on your tongue. the sun  
is still in the womb &

the gilled albatross sings  
on its masthead perch  
for the yellow whale.

you dreamt fish had lungs  
and livers, two of them.  
blinking like streetlights.

you dreamt a whale coiled  
in an inflatable pool, inventing  
a paper shredder to feed itself to.

you rushed me into the locker room,  
splashing palmfuls of sink water  
down my throat, screaming

breathe. as if i didn't have lungs.  
breathe. as if i didn't jump.

# ECHO / NARCISSE

Helen Jenks

How soft the quiet chatter of the woods --  
 silent, save but for an echo of my footsteps  
 somewhere deep within the lonesome grove.  
 A trick of the wind, or a companion, but

*I am silent, save for the echo of my footsteps,*  
 as the pathway of trees unfurls into the picture of serenity --  
*a companion, not a trickery of the wind, and*  
 an aquiline pool, gleaming the image of loveliness.

*A pathway of trees in this picture of serenity...*  
 oh, but I must gaze at it -- what mortal could refuse such beauty?  
*This image of loveliness gleaming there upon the aquiline pool...*  
 the maw of my throat constricts and I cry out, ardently,

*what nymph could refuse such beauty?*  
 I love you! I love you -- you, you handsome creature,  
*My throat constricts, and I cry out*  
 let me stare into the umber depths of your eyes, and admire

*You, you handsome thing, I love you, I love you, I love you...*  
 every part of you that gazes back, dew-skinned, dark, and blushing.  
*admiring, gazing, hungering to be seen by the depths of your eyes.*  
 We could stay here forever, just you and I.

*Dew-skinned and blushing, wasting away*  
 there, in the quiet chatter of the woods --  
*just you and I, forever;*  
 mere echoes of memory here in this lonesome grove.

# I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED BUGS/

Jack Hartley

since walking, like / I read bug encyclopedias cover-to-cover as bedtime stories loved bugs, / as in INSECTS OF NORTH AMERICA: / A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE encyclopedias, / COMPREHENSIVE like / it reports the exact length in millimeters / of a bush katydid's antennae on average loved bugs / and it's important to the story / that I did not just love their flat / paper selves but also the act of finding them / in liquid flesh in many-legged shells in earth / and it's important to the story / that at the time I was a delightfully weird / little girl, dirty pigtails & broken / glasses & not yet desperately visible in the closed / theater of my backyard, which was certainly open, actually, / but again I was not craving / eyes yet & that was something beautiful, / and this was my stage, where I / snapped my steel from trees / became knight to myself only & runaway / prince to myself only & noble to myself & underdog / turned hero only.

Not yet desperately visible, then, so / now I imagine myself a Narcissus: / his reflection is instead a man-shaped pile / of objects and symbols and sometimes he is falling / apart & I must tack something new on / to hold him together, / exoskeleton identity; / Echo with pigtails.

I have always loved bugs /

when I peeled up a pale log in crushing / buzzing sunlight I met a pill-bug-killer spider which / seemed in the dirt like a severed finger, the tan / abdomen of it swollen and the rest red and angry / spilling out /

INSECTS had not taught me his name, / because spiders are not bugs after all, and yet / I knew we were natural enemies; / the back of my neck burned / & the log limped to earthworm back over him in my hands / and I knew something else, then: / the audience.

I have always loved bugs, / loved cabbagewhites in their / bareness, loved grasshoppers to locusts in their frenzied crowds / so unlike me, loved mantids in their pious / hunting, love now the paradox of honeycomb earrings and heart-in-throat flight / from nests.

I have always loved bugs the way / I have loved myself: simply, and then with / latent fear.

# Seeking (Crying Out)

Astrid Bridgwood

**“Stay away from the ones you love too much. Those are the ones  
who will kill you.”**

— DONNA TARTT, *THE GOLDFINCH*.

I cannot look a lover in the eyes. Sight stuttering over your form  
Marble-steady, Grecian heroic. Glance frantic; fractured glimpses  
Of divinity: wrists to torso to neck. The bodily truth of you  
tips me into frenzy, Pygmalion’s hands faltering over ivory Galatea  
No Venus to temper this want raw-desperate, seeping from my stare:  
I wear longing eagerly without disguise. It ruins me.

Sweet-sorrow stained lips, I beg answer: how to veil my eyes  
without closing them completely? I fear desire naked on my face  
The desperate hunger of skin starved years of wanting.  
My reflection mocks me with tender eyes, raising her hand delicate  
to push back my hair, face open reveal a curving mouth  
My wishful smile and broken teeth. Meet the open eyes of affection

See reaching hands mirrored: me, in my pupils, palms open for yours  
Desire held like a gasp. I’ve killed every lover in dreams of red flesh  
ripe fruit. I love you with teeth tearing at your throat.  
Blood in my mouth as I wake, my own cheek bit to ribbons bestial  
Love like the shadow of a predator. I taught myself shame young  
Now I name loneliness appetite repulsive. Breathless night wrath-split.

Here is your body next to mine on the sand, your heart sweating  
in my palm. Open-mouthed morning damp and angry.  
Our souls mix irrevocably discordant union I cannot bear.  
I take after my father: control in every gesture to the grit of his teeth  
Body a prison of feeling; expression hedonism I will make it pristine  
Eyes and mouth a monastery. Longing replaced, stomach full of God.

Every new love a bacchanal: fingers dancing at your collarbone  
 leaving nail-print half-moons on your forearm, gripping at godhead.  
 Wine-dark mouths and black teeth: you grinning like love is so simple  
 To be writ on flesh without violence atonement scars.  
 Love is rage is everything you cannot keep trapped with breath  
 in your chest. Is the raised palm the stinging slap, the bruise.

Love: the hand held in shock, the kiss to the wound and forgiveness  
 Always forgiveness with the promise of hurt. I am terrified  
 To arrive open at your heart-door, lay bare my body and her grief  
 a disgraced dog limping into your arms. Each thought of you turned  
 Over in the palm of my mind, river-smooth stones worn to sand.  
 You slip through my fingers: another body lost to my graveyard of want.

Desire is shame is appetite is bandaging broken fingers. I am pious  
 dedicated observation of hunger, eyes fastened steady to shattered sky  
 shamed into silence like a child's first Sunday. When will I learn to love  
 With the truth of my body barefaced unrepentant staring.  
 The honest grasp of my starving eyes feasting  
 Damn the shock in your returned gaze.

# Mélange

## Percival Kish

A mélange is defined as a mappable unit of rock, too muddled to identify.

By the process of existence, in some way, every rock is a confusion. The earth, a body of moldable clay, from millennia of breaking and folding and smashing itself back together.

I follow the lines and the folds and the fractures where I can see them along the shore, marking off what I understand in my maps. In the early morning darkness a single line of light peaks over the horizon and the seabirds begin to scream. I ask myself, staring at a definition on a page, if anything was worth it. Months of work hunting for each and every part of a mountain where it was exposed underneath tree roots, or where roads were carved into it.

A map of a thousand-thousand years, twisted and churned at the place where the seas meet the land, a mountain pulled from beneath the surface of deepest trenches and all that is left is fractured and muddled beyond recognition. A landscape of pulverized scars.

Is classification futile? Why search when the answer is a beautifully dressed question mark? No past remains, only sand and mud.

# Kayleigh Sim

## in parallel 平行

when i was younger  
 i believed in 天堂, heaven &  
 i told you that i believed  
 in some shade of salvation, that  
 i am on the wrong side of a parallel universe.  
 imagine: a world where we don't stargaze,  
 & things don't die in the hands of us.  
 when i was younger  
 i believed in 魔术, magic &  
 i told you that i believed in disappearing acts.  
 in unspoken things that were there all along.  
 we become lies & promises that we  
 paint white & pretend that we are beautiful.  
 we start & we are long dead,  
 bleeding hearts & black spades as if we could  
 unearth our naïve youth & bury it back again.  
 love is our fire & our fire escape:  
 we dream in oblivion as our city burns,  
 inside out & back again.  
 i ask you if you believe in 平行宇宙,  
 & i imagine asking you if you'd love me still,  
 of course, you say.

you once asked me if  
 i believed in death, 死亡.  
 in our ungodly sins,  
 in a dream where mortality is not how this ends,  
 tell me: would we still break the sky if i said  
 stars gaze at us like the gods,  
 in our own unmaking.  
 you once asked me if  
 i believed in miracle rebirth, 重生.  
 i am still captivated by a magician who speaks  
 in such parallel lines that  
 snap like flowers at the stem.  
 we are everything & nothing, hide & seek:  
 we kill flowers like souls,  
 spill our blood back into empty organs,  
 profess: we wish for too many second chances.  
 & we are the hands of our own unmaking,  
 remind ourselves of how we die & reincarnate,  
 we are cruelly ephemeral.  
 parallel universes:  
 in another life &  
 in this life: we are gone & back again.



# halving

## Sal Kang

*i touch you, straighten the sheet, you turn over  
in the bed, tender  
sun comes through the curtains*

*which of us will survive  
which of us will survive the other*

*- margaret atwood*

//

it all starts with a few strands of your hair  
in the bath. a sock, all linty & you-hued,  
lost in the couch crevasse. i sneak a few  
fingernails into your bag to reciprocate.

//

there are infinite answers  
to what went wrong but  
the one i like best involves the game  
we always used to play at camp  
where two teams flip a bunch of cards  
to get them on the side showing your color.

i reorganize my vocabulary around your catchphrase. flip.  
your favorite smells are also mine now. flip flip flip  
it's so cute that you know me like that ha ha— wait.

//

all of our friends  
are really your friends; love  
always has a favorite.

everything i like doing these days  
i learned from watching you.

when we first shouted a sentence  
in perfect unison, you laughed

as i stood there, debrising before your eyes

//

our mouths macraméd so pretty at first i forgot  
we might need to untangle someday i forgot

i was just a spool of possibility once

//

all this while my life  
was gently quicksanding into yours.

when we stand behind a lens  
my figure automatically blurs.

how can i go to sleep knowing  
you could roll over  
& extinguish me?

# like the river

Hudson Hess

**My name is Hudson.**

*Why?*

**Because Coral didn't feel like me anymore. Coral hasn't felt like me for a long time.**

*Why? It's such a beautiful name.*

(Have you ever worn shoes that were gorgeous, stylish, sleek - but just weren't 'you'? This is what I wanted to say, but I don't want to talk about this with you.) **I just feel like Hudson suits me more.**

*I don't understand.*

**That's okay. Please, just call me Hudson.** (I found myself in a time where you can't see my face, and I can't see yours. We only have voice and texts to go by. I can't see your confusion any more than you can see how much I want to move on.)

*Why Hudson?*

(Why do you keep asking why?) **I wanted to keep the feeling of 'Coral'. It's an unusual name, but not so unusual that you have never heard it.** (Most importantly, it's ambiguous, which I say to some but not all who ask. I can tell my friends, but I can't tell the conservative mother of an 11th grader who's struggling with her SATs.)

*So, why not just Coral then?*

**I just feel like Hudson suits me more.** (Shouldn't that be enough?)

*Well, congratulations!*

(Everyone says this. Sometimes this feels genuine. Most times, they don't know what else to say.) **Thank you!**

*Yes, I like Hudson.*

**Me too!** (I laugh every time as I add: Which is good! No one else ever laughs.)

*Man, I've been curious about hormone therapy.*

(I have too. I understand why you say this: it's the same reason why you told me about your one queer experience in college when you met my partner. You want to seem like you understand. Like you're accepting, open-minded. Understanding why you're saying it, though, doesn't make me feel any less cornered when you do. It feels like an assumption. Even if it's the correct one, it's my call, not yours. So I just smile and wait for you to move on.)

*So, what do you know about binding?*

(I resist the urge to bite my cheek.) **Nothing. I don't know anything.** (I've considered top surgery. I want to say this, but not to you. I don't want to open the door to more questions. I don't want to talk to you about how I want to do it, but I hesitate for the pain, the cost, the other medical needs weighing down on me, the fear that any job I look for after this one will be colored by the lack of sagging lumps of flesh on my chest. I've been turned down for refusing to wear make-up: what will this mean for me? What will people assume about me?)

*So, Coral -*

**It's Hudson.**

*Right, I'm sorry. So, Ms. Kopetz -*

**I changed my last name, too. It's Hess now.**

*Why? Did you get married?*

**No, but I'm engaged, and I don't want to change my name twice.**

*Oh. (That's an easy pill to swallow. So why not Hudson?) So anyway, Ms. Hess -*

(I cringe.) **Please, just Hudson.**

*Justin? Hurston?*

**No, Hudson. Hudson, like the river.**

*And Coral, like the reef?*

**No, not anymore. It's just the river now.**

*Carl would've been easier.*

**I didn't want Carl. Carl isn't me either.**

*Well, why not?*

(That's easy to say when you've always been you and you've never looked in the mirror and struggled to see yourself.) **I feel like Hudson is me. Please, use Hudson.** (I say it so many times, I almost say Hurston. The letters lose meaning.)

*Okay. I'll spread the word: I'll make sure other people know.*

(A tiny gesture that goes a long way: my boss never knows how many of these looping conversations he has spared me. He calls me 'king' for the first time instead of 'queen', and I smile.)

*I think Hudson is a great name for an author.*

(My heart swells.) **Do you think so?**

*Did you name yourself after Hudson from Gargoyles?*

(I laugh every time someone asks.) **No, no.** (I'm not lying. My partner and I laid side by side in bed, winding through names at the ends of her painted nails, resolute to find the one that fit. Aidan, River, Ronan... Hudson. Perfect. Still, when asked, I think back to Ed Asner's voice rasping out of the gargoyle's throat: 'Must you humans name everything? Nothing's real to you 'til you've named it, given it limits. ... Does the sky need a name? Does the river?')

'The river's called the Hudson.'

A long, enduring sigh. 'Fine, lass. Then I will be the Hudson as well.) **But I don't mind sharing with him.**

*I nearly named my daughter Hudson, you know.*

That's nice. (That's the point. Hudson can be a daughter, a tiny pink baby: Hudson can also be a grizzled old gargoyle covered in scars voiced with Ed Asner. Everyone knows the river first. Flowing. Fluid.

Me.)

# JANUS SAVES

Nicks Walker



# Summer 2007

Perry Gasteiger

We were 10 years fresh,  
young and free still running the streets  
in bare feet and bedsheets,  
all rosy cheeks and lost teeth,  
playing in the garden, laughing at  
hummingbirds and bumblebees, and  
scraping palms on climbing trees,  
racing the wind down the familiar streets —

Do you remember?

The look in my eyes when you told me that  
nothing in this world comes for free and we're just  
floating, trying our best to be happy and  
would you be happy with me —

I remember  
trembling as you touched my cheek  
holding your gaze as your hand  
dropped to my knee, "Do you trust me?"  
then playing jump rope and eating ice cream,  
and weeping to myself, wondering  
is this what it means to be happy?

# enola ton era ew

Nicks Walker



WE ARE NOT ALONE



# The History of My Hands

Max Turner

He played his hand over mine and I sighed at the touch. Not a sigh of want, though the touch was pleasant, but a sigh of regret that my hands were so unlike his. I watched his strong, thick fingers slide between my slender ones. The back of his hands always lined with veins.

A taunt of masculinity.

“Such cute hands,” David said, bringing one of my hands to his mouth and kissing the back of it. I drew a sharp breath and felt hollow.

“What is it?” He asked me, following in a scolding tone when I didn’t reply, “Mitchel, what is it?”

I pulled my hand back from his and rolled over in the bed, muttering “nothing,” against my pillow as I swallowed the sadness that had overwhelmed me. The sadness he’d never once tried to understand in the long months we’d been together.

“Fine,” David muttered and I felt him roll away from me.

It was already coming to an end, and I could do nothing to stop it. And that was okay, it was time to let it end. They all ended eventually.

#

“What are you doing?” Jenny chuckled, looking past me as I opened the door to my apartment to let her in. I moved immediately back to my small dining table where my sewing machine was set up.

Her laugh hid something deeper, it wasn’t amusement.

I had heard this half scoff, half disgusted tone many times in my life.

I had hoped never to hear it from her.

“Just hemming some new pants for work, I need to take them up an inch.” I told her, ignoring her tone and the incredulous gaze.

“Oh,” she replied, a genuine, if small smile starting to spread on her face. She composed herself and realised her error. I always tried to be so manly around her, and this was the reminder she needed that I wasn’t like the other men she’d been with.

It was something that hung over me constantly.

She moved over to me and kissed my cheek, admiring my handy work for a minute before finally saying, “your hands are so dainty, I bet you have no problem threading a needle.”

It was clearly meant as a compliment but all the same my skin prickled and I felt a cold chill in my chest. An itching in my brain telling me my hands were wrong.

No matter how much I bulked up, no matter how well I could now grow facial hair. No matter how deep my voice was, my hands gave me away.

I pulled them back from the machine and out of my sight. Not that it helped, they would still be there even long after this thing with Jenny ended.

#

“Damn, that was good.” Tony stretched out on the bed and hummed his pleasure as I moved to lie down next to him.

He was right, it had been good.

It often was with strangers, no expectations beyond the evening’s enjoyment. They knew what to expect from the app, and then had a chance to turn back once we met for a drink. By the time I was in their bed I felt so wanted, even if it was only for one night, because they could have turned back at any time.

Tonight it was this man.

“It’s Mitch, yeah?” he asked me and I nodded.

“Tony?” I grimaced slightly as I said it, hoping I hadn’t gotten it wrong. The bar had been loud and we hadn’t spent all that much time talking.

“Toby,” he corrected with a chuckle. “So Mitch, you want to stick around for a bit and go again?”

His tone was teasing and his grin broad and infectious. I liked the way he made me feel good about myself. As nice as it was to feel that way, it had to end. Sticking around meant more chance for it to go horribly wrong.

More time for my dysphoria to sink its deep tendrils into my brain and find every flaw that made me less of a man than I was.

“I should go,” I replied.

He nodded his understanding, but then pulled me back against him anyway, muttering words against my short curls.

“Of course. But maybe we can do this again sometime?”

I shivered at the words, and at his fingers trailing along my side in a gentle caress.

“Maybe,” I agreed without meaning it.

One night stands were great for the fact that they could be perfect and self-contained. No follow ups to ruin it.

We lay there for a few minutes and I knew I should get up and go, but it was pleasant as he ran his hand down my arm and then took my hand in his.

“No pressure,” Toby added. “Just wanted to put out there that I’m interested in doing this again if you are.” He let out a sigh and held up our joined hands, looking over them. “I love your hands.”

I blinked and swallowed. Preparing myself for what came next, the ‘compliment’ about how feminine they were.

“I love strong hands,” he clarified, smiling sweetly at me. “Love feeling them all over my body, rough and manly. I don’t know,” he shrugged and looked a little embarrassed as I continued to stare at him.

“I don’t want to come off as some superficial jerk, or like I have a lumberjack fetish or something.” He continued, now rambling as he filled the space my words weren’t taking.

“Okay,” he smirked, “I do totally have a lumberjack fetish. How do you feel about plaid shirts?”

At that I couldn’t help but let out a bark of laughter.

“I have a few in my wardrobe,” I confirmed truthfully.

Toby rolled his eyes in an imitation of ecstasy.

“Why didn’t we hook up at your place!” he moaned dramatically, pulling me against him as he sank into the pillows.

We chuckled together and I found myself replying, “next time, my place.”

“It’s a date,” Toby grinned at me.

#

I looked in the mirror as I fastened the buttons on my plaid shirt. Watching my hands as they moved.

Was it my confidence that made them seem more manly? More me?

Had they always looked this way? Had my dysphoria been playing tricks on me when my confidence was low and my self-esteem battered?

I finished buttoning my shirt and then held out my hands to the mirror, turning them this way and that and seeing their reflection.

A reflection of a man’s hands.

I smiled and looked at my whole reflection.

Maybe I would see Toby again, maybe I wouldn’t. Maybe he had simply been the right person and the right time to say the things I needed to hear. The things I needed someone else to affirm, to help me accept that I am the man that I am.

Hands and all.

# Passing Through

Jade Braden

I have been dead for many years. Living tenants come and go many times over and I forget their faces and the sound of their footsteps. There is no permanence beyond the land and the air. The foundation sinks, the walls sigh, and I trace the same paths through the house.

In the comings and goings, two women move in. They bring with them sparse furniture and a cheap, wall-hanging clock. The gears are loud and tick throughout the house. I have no use for keeping time, but I notice when the clock breaks shortly after they become settled. The second hand begins to stick, only every once in a while, only briefly.

One evening, the taller of the two stands before the stuck clock and taps its face until the second hand resumes.

*It's a ghost, the smaller says.*

The taller nods, *What do you think they want?*

*Probably just to say hello.*

The clock continues to halt sporadically. The women grow into the habit of looking into the room and saying hello in turn. It is a joke between them, and they smile quiet smiles to think of their imagined companion. But as time goes by, they acknowledge it in earnest, with familiarity.

One morning, the tall woman drinks tea while the other is out of the house. The clock stops. She looks up from her papers.

*Good morning, she says.*

I am at the stairs, away from the clock.

*I hope you don't mind us being here.*

The clock resumes and she nods, not at all in my direction.

But they begin to greet the space after time away, both women: drawing the curtains, opening the windows, whispering that they hope I wasn't too cooped up in the dark. When they leave, they ask me to take good care of the house. Each time the clock pauses, they are sure to pause as well, just to say hello, to say I'm welcome to sit with them.

I only ever pass through. We are not for each other's time, but briefly, we inhabit the same seconds.

We grow accustomed to this routine, repeat it many times over—over years perhaps—until it is time for them to leave for good.

They pack the furniture, the decorations and the clock, and finally the house lays empty. They walk through a final time, sigh and linger in the doorways. Without the clock, the house is quiet and unmoored, the stairs creak poignantly beneath their feet. I am unhappy to think that soon they will know the clock was broken, that I had not been their ghost. They will laugh and decide I never existed, perhaps I am already half forgotten.

As they stand before the open front door, I am across from them in the kitchen.

*We'll miss you, they say.*

For a moment, I grieve their impermanence, or perhaps my own fixedness. It was brief, our time, so brief. If the clock still hung on the wall, I would pause the second hand myself. I would say goodbye, like people often do.

The taller leaves, while the smaller takes a final pass through the front room. I watch each step from the doorway. I want to walk in stride with her, just once, to remember the feeling of such company. I cannot remember how, cannot remember the feel of body.

The taller returns, pauses in the front door. The smaller stops at the window and smiles.

*You're too sentimental, she says.*

*It's a gift.*

She places the clock on the floor beneath where it used to hang.

*The next tenants will just throw it away.*

*So be it.*

The clock stays on the floor and they go. The lock clicks and I cross to the clock. It counts the seconds of their absence. I stay in the room until the second hand sticks for a second, two seconds. I stop the clock so it will never sound again.

Their faces will someday be lost to me, but I let the echo of their steps replay in empty space—the sound of the clock and the sound of pause. I savor the silence, permanent, an elegy of our brief seconds, saying hello, hello, goodbye.

# Contributors

## **Clem Flowers**

Clem Flowers (They/ Them) is a soft spoken southern transplant living in spitting distance of some mountains in Utah. Maker of a fine omelet, but scrambled egg game needs some fine tuning. Nb & bi, they live in a cozy apartment with their wonderful wife & sweet calico kitty. They can be found on Twitter at @hand\_springs777

## **Zoe Grace Marquedant**

Zoe Grace Marquedant (she/her/hers) is a queer writer. She earned her B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College and her M.F.A. from Columbia University. Her work has been featured in Olney Magazine, the Cool Rock Repository, and Schuylkill Valley Journal. She is also a columnist and contributor for Talk Vomit. Follow @zoenoumlaut

## **Kaedi Love**

Kaedi Love is a writer and editor who works at the intersection of poetry and philosophy. Her epilepsy has lately influenced her writing the most. She currently reads poetry for Five South and Passengers Journal and writes a blog at [linebreakscontinuations.wordpress.com](http://linebreakscontinuations.wordpress.com). Other than her college student journal, she is previously unpublished as a poet.

## **Elizabeth Kate Switaj**

Elizabeth Kate Switaj (she/her) and her formerly feral cats live on Majuro atoll where she works at the College of the Marshall Islands. She is the author of one book of literary criticism (James Joyce's Teaching Life and Methods, Palgrave, 2016) and two collections of poetry (Magdalene & the Mermaids, Paper Kite Press, 2009; The Bringers of Fruit: An Oratorio, 11:11 Press, forthcoming 2022).

## **Madeleine Tomaso**

Madeleine Tomaso is a writer from Jakarta, Indonesia. They have been featured in Functionally Dead, Severine Lit, Querencia Lit, and WryTimes. They enjoy watching cars going around in a circle. Twitter: @madeleinets

## **Perry Gasteiger**

Perry Gasteiger is a queer, non-binary poet. Their work focuses on the mundane darkness of our everyday world using juxtaposition between the real and the abstract, the beautiful and the deformed, the congruent and the disordered. Perry aims to see the easily unnoticeable in an evocative and empathetic way.

## **Beck Guerra Carter**

Beck Guerra Carter is a queer poet from Austin, Texas. They are currently an MFA candidate in Creative Writing at Texas State University. They have been published in Lavender Review, Q/A Poetry, and Odes and Elegies: Eco-Poetry from the Texas Gulf Coast. Beck currently resides in San Marcos with a tiny dachshund named Cookie. Beck's pronouns are they/she.

### **Joanna Grant**

Joanna Grant is a bisexual and neurodivergent writer who teaches American servicemembers overseas for the University of Maryland Global Campus. Her poetry and prose have appeared widely.

### **Juliet Rose**

Juliet Rose (she/her) is a senior at SUNY Geneseo studying English/Creative Writing. During the past couple years she has worked as a preschool teacher full-time on Long Island, while returning to finish her degree remotely through Geneseo. As a preschool teacher she understands the magic in what a child collects and saves in their pockets, the frustration that -c and -k words sound the same, and the necessity of questioning everything. In her poems and essays Juliet explores her own questions relating to the complexities of memory, lasting grief, and mental illness. Juliet currently resides on Long Island and will be returning to Geneseo in the Fall to finish her last semester.

### **Halle Preneta**

Halle (she/her) enjoys writing short stories and poetry and gets her ideas from random life experiences. When she's not writing, she's either watching YouTube or playing Animal Crossing. Her Twitter handle is @YaTheatreNerd. You can check out more of her work here: <https://sites.google.com/view/halle-preneta/home>

### **Catie Wiley**

Catie Wiley (she/her) is a lesbian writer from Maryland. She's a contributing editor for Story Magazine and a poetry reader for the winnow magazine. Her work appears in Stone of Madness Press, Southchild Lit, and HAD among others. Find her on twitter @catiewiley or at [catiewiley.wordpress.com](http://catiewiley.wordpress.com)

### **Whitney Hansen**

Whitney Hansen (she/they) is a Midwestern writer and teacher who would fight God for half a sesame bagel. Their work is published/forthcoming in Olney Magazine, Variant Literature, Nightingale & Sparrow, Sledgehammer Lit, Warning Lines, and more. Twitter: @whitneyhansen\_

### **Isabella Dela Cruz**

Isabella (she/her) was born in The Philippines but raised in Singapore. She now has two places that she considers home. You can find more of her words (or just say hello!) on her Instagram and her Twitter at @isabelladelacruzwrites and @isabelladwrites respectively.

### **Matthew Schultz**

Matthew Schultz (he/him) teaches all sorts of writing at Vassar College where he directs the Writing Center. He is the author of two novels: On Coventry and We, The Wanted. His poems have recently appeared in Rust + Moth, Thrush, and Juke Joint. Twitter: @eireprof

### **Elyssa Tappero**

Elyssa Tappero (she/her) is a queer ace lesbian and pagan witch who writes fragments of prose and poetry about mental illness, the gods, the agony of writing, and how it feels to be alive for the end of the world (which is pretty not great) in hopes of touching others who might feel the same. You can find more of her work at [www.onlyfragments.com](http://www.onlyfragments.com) and follow her on Twitter at @OnlyFragments.

### **Jupiter Vivienne**

Jupiter Vivienne (she/her) is an Oregon-based poet and student. Her poem "A Dream Garden's Gates" was published in the "Man's World" edition of the artist Marina's Marinazine. You can find her at @jupitervivienne on twitter or email at [jupitervivienne@gmail.com](mailto:jupitervivienne@gmail.com).

### **Lorelei Bacht**

Lorelei Bacht (she/they) no longer aspires to be a nymph. Her recent work has appeared and/or is forthcoming in The Inflectionist Review, Proem, Harpy Hybrid Review, The Inflectionist Review, Visitant, Quail Bell, The Wondrous Real, Odd Magazine, Abridged, The Riverbed Review, and others. She is also on Instagram: @lorelei.bacht.writer and Twitter: @bachtlorelei



### **Hameedah Aruwa**

Hameedah Aruwa (she/her) is a sprouting writer from Nigeria. She writes poetry and prose. Her works appear or are forthcoming in Praxis Magazine, Sledgehammer lit, Eboquills, Afro lit mag, All ears & elsewhere. She can be reached on twitter @Ugbede\_Aruwa.  
& on Instagram @\_aruwa\_hameedah

### **N. Taupe**

N. Taupe (they/them) is someone's pseudonym. They are a queer/disabled/trans/nonbinary person. Their work has previously been published in Pollux Journal and hyacinthus mag. You can find them @taupe\_n on Twitter.

### **JW Summerisle**

JW Summerisle lives in the English East Midlands. They took up painting in April 2021, having previously been published as a poet in various journals. They may sometimes be found on Twitter @JWSummerisle

### **Kaitlyn Crow**

Kaitlyn Crow (they/them) is a queer poet based in Richmond, Virginia. Their works have appeared or are forthcoming in Apeiron Review, COUNTERCLOCK, and Open Minds Quarterly among others. They serve as an Editor at K'in Literary Journal and Chaotic Merge Magazine. Find them on Twitter @queeryeehawpoet.

### **Holly Zijderveld**

Holly Zijderveld (she/her) is a writer and an Anthropology student, currently living between the UK and The Netherlands. She is the Editor in Chief of journal of erato, and also writes for Ice Lolly Review and GENCONTROLZ. Follow her on Twitter @hollyzijderveld.

### **Rin Guo**

rin guo is a poet and artist. they have a pet, who may or may not share a species with the zodiac animal of the year they were born. rin can be found trapped in the vicious cycle of high school exams, for the foreseeable future.

### **Lucy Rose**

Lucy Rose (INFP/T) (she/they) is a prose writer and an award-winning writer/director. She is a charity shop addict and can be found drinking copious amounts of tea. She has a BA (hons) in Film and Television Production and is currently studying her MA in Creative Writing part time. Her most recent film, She Lives Alone, was financed by the BFI Network and is currently visiting festivals, a number of which are BAFTA & Oscar-qualifying, and was acquired by ALTER. Lucy's feature film, A Man at the Window, was selected for the EIFF Talent Lab Connects in 2021.  
@LucyRoseCreatesa

### **Phoenix Leigh**

Phoenix Leigh (they/them) is currently studying Creative Writing at Eastern Michigan University. You can find their work in Versification, Stone of Madness Press, and The Daily Drunk Mag. You can also find them on Twitter @phoenleigh.

### **Tara Isabel Zambrano**

Tara Isabel Zambrano is the author of Death, Desire And Other Destinations, a full-length flash collection by OKAY Donkey Press. Her poems have been published in Hayden's Ferry Review, Rogue Agent, Moon City Review and other literary venues. She lives in Texas and is the Fiction Editor for Waxwing Literary Journal.

### **Melissa Martini**

Melissa (she/her) received her Master's degree in English with a focus in Creative Writing from Seton Hall University. Her fiction has previously appeared in Zanna Magazine, Jalada Africa's "Bodies" anthology, Camas Magazine, Analogies and Allegories, Pretty Owl Poetry, Bandit Fiction, Heartland Society of Women Writers, and Dime Show Review. Her poetry has appeared in The Confessionalist Zine, Zanna Magazine, and The Daily Drunk. She currently serves as Prose Chapbook Editor, Prose Reader, and Newsletter Creator for The Winnow Magazine.

### **Sappho Stanley**

Sappho Stanley (she/her) is a trans woman and Senior at East Tennessee State University. She is working on her English undergraduate degree as well as two minors in Creative Writing and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She is also writing two trans literary studies articles as part of the McNair Scholars ARI Program. You can find her work elsewhere in Black Moon Magazine, The Mockingbird, and LUPERCALIA's VULCANALIA. She grew up in a small town in Southwest Virginia named "Pound." Currently, she lives in Mount Carmel, Tennessee with her cat Kevin. You can find her Instagram and Twitter accounts @sapphostanley

### **David Salazar**

David Salazar (he/xe/she) is a teenage writer from Chile. He describes himself as a butch bigender bisexual and is autistic and mentally ill. She is in her senior year of high school and plans to be a psychologist/writer/weirdo. You can find him on Twitter at @smallredboy and on his website, <https://davidvsalazar.weebly.com/>.

### **zoe friedland**

zoe friedland tweets @chalcidoidea and lives in seattle. they like the sound of the word connect in their mouth, especially repeated in succession.

### **Helen Jenks**

Helen Jenks is a queer history student and poet based in Dublin with a nervous disposition and a fondness for jumpers and other knitted things. She enjoys writing about the sublime, mythic, romantic, and nostalgic -- poetry from life, in all its many forms. When not writing, you can find her hosting tea parties with her stuffed animals, who are all very polite and supportive of her work, or working on The Madrigal, her own poetry journal. Her work has been recently published in The Martello, Eucalyptus & Rose, Poetically Magazine, Spellbinder, and Seedling Poets, and she can be found on Twitter at @rosemaryandwool and @madrigalpress.

### **Jack Hartley**

Jack Hartley (@jackpollyharts) is a trans bi poet and writer who asks that you pretty please look up the masked hunter bug, just for him, because it's rad as hell. His work can be found in perhappened mag and not deer mag, among others, and is forthcoming in wrongdoing mag's thorns issue.

### **Astrid Bridgwood**

Astrid Bridgwood (she/they) is a nineteen year old poet from North Carolina whose work has been called 'visceral and frightening.' You can find her featured in All Guts No Glory Mag, Not Deer Mag, and Olney Magazine, among others. Most recently, she was a semifinalist for the 2021 James Applewhite Poetry Prize. Follow her on Twitter @astridsbridg.

### **Percival Kish**

Percival Kish (they/he) is a genderqueer writer in the misty coasts of California. They have a fondness for rocks and reading myth, magic, and mystery in everyday things. When he is not writing he likes to play dnd, wander the wilderness finding lost things, and play fetch with his cat. You can find them on Twitter @nettlewildfairy.

### **Sal Kang**

Sal (they/them) is a professional sluggard and occasional writer. Their work has been published in Canvas Literary Journal, The Rappahannock Review, and Yes Poetry, among others. They tweet at @nini\_kang and also post little Instagram poems at @sal.adays.

### **Kayleigh Sim**

Kayleigh Sim (she/her) is a Southeast Asian writer living in San Diego, California, and is currently an Executive Editor for Polyphony Lit. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in Trouvaille Review, Cathartic Lit, Intersections Magazine, Poetically Magazine, Second Chance Lit, Interstellar Lit, Aster Lit, The Global Youth Review, Clandestine Lit, The Augment Review and elsewhere. She tweets @kayleighsim\_ .

### **Hudson Hess**

Hudson Hess (they/him) is a queer non-binary transmasculine human (?) and proud cat dad from New York. They have a master's degree in Contemporary Asian and Asian American Studies from Stony Brook University, and they are an MFA candidate at Stony Brook Southampton. They can be found on Instagram @frayedflowers and on Twitter @usotoundo. They are also a prose reader for The Winnow Magazine!

### **Nicks Walker**

Nicks Walker (he/him/her) is a queer bigender Scot. His allies include yellow, and his enemies include the sun. You can find his objects in The Bear Creek Gazette, Punk Noir Magazine, The Speculative Book 2021, Not Deer Magazine, The Daily Drunk Mag and others. He has four rats and autism and tweets @nickserobus.

### **Max Turner**

Max Turner is a gay transgender man based in the United Kingdom. He is also a parent, nerd, intersectional feminist and coffee addict. Max writes speculative and science fiction, fantasy, furry fiction, horror and LGBTQ+ romance, and more often than not, combinations thereof.

<https://www.maxturneruk.com/>

[https://twitter.com/robot\\_tiger](https://twitter.com/robot_tiger)

### **Alix Perry**

Alix Perry is a white, trans, neurodivergent writer living in Western Oregon. Their work has been published in Rogue Agent, Defunkt Magazine, Stone of Madness, and elsewhere. Their pen-named alter ego writes fiction for Scribd. Find out more on Instagram and Twitter @enchantedkeloid and at [alixperrywriting.com](http://alixperrywriting.com).

### **Robin Williams**

Robin Williams (she/they) is a queer poet and practicing witch from a small town in PA. When not running their small Etsy business Green Fern Coven, they can be found enjoying time with her eight cats. Robin is the author of the chapbook *Sinful Atticus*, and the forthcoming collection *In the Mid-Hours*. She has been previously published in the *Horizon Literary Magazine* and is the Community Events Organizer for *the winnow magazine*.  
Instagram: @by.robinw

### **Jade Braden**

Jade Braden (she/her) is an author and artist based in Columbus, Ohio. Her work can be found in The Bookends Review, Complete Sentence, and Sledgehammer Lit, among others. Find her on Twitter @jadewcb, online at [jadebraden.com](http://jadebraden.com), or drifting up and down U.S. Route 33.

### **Regina Jade**

Regina Jade (she/her) is an Asian American writer and poet. She loves chocolate, custard tarts, and cats. In her spare time, she can be found trawling the depths of libraries for new books to add to the to-be-read pile, which never seems to get any smaller. Her recent work appears in Eucalyptus & Rose Literary Magazine, Seedling Poets, and A Coup of Owls, and is also featured in an anthology titled "Imaginary Creatures" from Carnation Books. She tweets from @thereginajade.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thereginajade>

# *content warnings*

## *poetry*

**my husband's touch, *Kaedi Love*: implied sexual assault**

**Estimated Time of Arrival, *Beck Guerra Carter*: dysphoria**

**Deer Carries the Decapitated Head of Another Deer in its Antlers,  
*Beck Guerra Carter*: gore, death**

**Sleepover Friends, *Whitney Hansen*: homophobia, religion**

**Amalgamation, *Sappho Stanley*: transphobia**

**DSM-5 as Moby Dick, *Zoe Friedland*: suicide**

**Summer 2007, *Perry Gasteiger*: allusions to sexual assault**

## *fiction*

**Potentially Recyclable, *Melissa Martini*: alcohol, sex mention, body descriptions**

**The Hatchet, *Alix Perry*: physical violence, implied sexual content**

## *creative non-fiction*

**The time machine of religious trauma, *Catie Wiley*: religious trauma**

**Nighthawk, *Elyssa Tappero*: death of a parent**

**like the river, *Hudson Hess*: deadnaming**





Issue 03

# FALL'N CHERUB

12/2021



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ISSN: 2004-1063