



HAUTE DISH

The Arts & Literature Magazine of Metropolitan State University
Spring 2018 Volume 15 Issue 1



TOUGH AS PEARLS

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About the Cover

This photo was taken by Mitchell Piepho. The view of the city in relation to the vehicles caught his eye while standing in a skyway on Metropolitan's St. Paul campus. The vehicles add depth of field to the image, and the headlights and highlighted car rooftops add life and movement to the high-contrast photo.

Haute Dish is published two times a year, Spring and Fall semesters, and is dedicated to showcasing the literary and artistic talents of students, staff, faculty and alumni of Metropolitan State University.

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Categories

Poetry, Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, Memoir/ Personal Essay, Photography, Studio Art, and Digital Storytelling.

Who May Submit?

Current students, plus staff, faculty and alumni of Metropolitan State University are all welcome to submit their work for both the Fall and Spring issues.

Deadlines

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For more information visit our website at hautedish.metrostate.edu or email us at hautedish@metrostate.edu

EDITOR'S LETTER



Hello and Farewell,

First, I would like to thank our readers for taking the time to appreciate the words and art of Metropolitan State University's students, staff, faculty and alumni. As the only Arts and Literature Magazine of Metropolitan State University, Haute Dish's mission is to provide a free and open opportunity for artists in our university community to showcase their work. It is because of you that our mission is possible.

Thank you to all the artists that have submitted work to Haute Dish. You are the foundation of the magazine. A huge congratulations to those who have been published and may this be a stepping stone towards your artistic goals. It is because of you that our mission is possible.

And thank you to Metropolitan State's Student Life & Leadership Development Office, the School of Communication, Writing & the Arts, SAFAC, and Metropolitan administration. It is because of you that our mission is possible.

This position was a learning process for me and couldn't have done it without my fellow staff members. Thank you for making this magazine a success: Mai Xiong (Business Manager), Mitchell Piepho (Design/Layout), Elizabeth Todd (Web Editor), and all the students who participated on our Editorial Review Board.

This is my first and final semester working on Haute Dish as Managing Editor. I've learned a great deal about teamwork and the process that goes into making a magazine. As a Marketing major, I will carry this with me throughout my future endeavors. I strongly believe that all art, whether it is being observed or created, can have a positive impact in people's lives.

Please share these stories and art pieces with your friends, family members, and others around you. Support your local artists!

Thank you once again,

Rodessa Padua
Managing Editor

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It is so easy
to forget that
not everyone pumps art
into their veins
as a means
of survival. Yet, sometimes
I'm reminded, and some poor soul
Will ask me
"What is the point of poetry?"
and every time I want
To retrieve my pen
from my breast pocket
and plunge it deep
into their chest and
extract it; watch the floor
acclimate to the taste of
the surge of blood they would
be trying to cover up,
desperate to turn their
hands into a dam
to stop their life
from running dry.
I want to point
at their panic, and the
remnants of their existence
muddying the floor
all around us and say

"That."

The question would be
answered, and as they
stared at me, desperate
to understand why, I would grin.
I might even giggle.

Alas, I can never
do any of that. No.
Whenever I am assaulted
with such a question,
I can only sigh, and
Through clinched teeth, urge:

"To help us breathe."

AN ODE TO THOSE WHO DONT UNDERSTAND

Rhyan Bogle

CONSUMPTION

● ● ● ● ● ● ●
Farrah Al-Humayani

Alone, with me, oh the fun I'll have with you, it teased him as it slithered along the walls like a centipede, its many limbs ready to crawl through his ears and wreak havoc on his innermost thoughts.

Broken, broken man, all by himself—my treat. Collapsing to the icy garage floor, he took off his shirt and patiently, courteously, waited for the darkness to claw away. Deranged. Elated. Furiously hoping the pain he once inflicted on that little princess, the one with the golden locks and plump, pink lips that he was certain had whispered his name, the one from whom he sucked the life out of and left to wither in the corner of a garage, would reappear and this time, consume him instead. Granting it permission, he was ready to lose the last remaining morsels of his mind.

How you've been desperate to flirt with me for oh so long. I've been aching for you too. Just moments now.

Kneeling on the dust-ridden floor, he was transfixed by the damaged walls that surrounded him, that were closing in on him, and whispered, "If that hole in the wall over there were a vortex that could take me back in time to that night of young, milky flesh and her ineffective struggles, if it could permit me the opportunity to right my wrongs and save myself from this, I would still do it all over again. Just what does that say of me?"

Kryptonite has many forms, and yours is me.

Losing its will to resist the taste of such darkened sickness, it finally decided to make its move. Meeting the bare skin on the small of his back, it began crawling its way up his crooked spine. Never had he experienced such a rush, each step tantalizing as he could hardly wait for the sudden slash of pain. Over his shoulder it now had crawled, making its way up his neck where it could feel him swallow a gulp of anticipation, soothing to his raw, dry throat, and then under his chin. Primed and ready he was with his lips parted, eager to consume the part of himself he hated and loved the most.

Quivering at the edge with carnal desire, he watched as it rose from his heated body, gave him one last wink of appreciation, and thrust itself into his mouth, traveling down his throat, and then erupting throughout

every fiber of his being. Rejoicing in this climatic possession, he allowed his eyelids to meet and let out a blood-quickenning scream. Searing pain slashed through his tender insides and ripped his blackened soul into shreds. Thousands of images and scenes reeled through his mind: her bony waist that he gripped and lifted into the van, the salty tears he licked from her cheeks, the pink flush of her back as it met the snap of his belt, her edible cries as he tore her apart, much like was happening now.

Undoing years of damage, it gave him one last, one ultimate sensationally agonizing experience before absorbing the disease out of him, leaving him with nothing but humanity and a guilt-stricken conscience. Vexing him with the utmost remorse and self-loathing, enough to make him desperately plead for death the way he used to plead for pleasure.

Well, well, you were the most satisfying sin I've ever consumed.

* * * *

X number of days passed before he wilted away in the corner of that garage from what the police noted as dehydration upon finding his wretched, decomposing body—true, of course, he was like a dry sponge in need of water, but what he had been really thirsty for, underneath the many layers of crippling empathy and penitence it had plagued him with, was more of the crude immorality it had sucked out of him. You'll be back, it whispered through a satiated sigh, in another lifetime, in another vessel, you'll be back, and I'll be oh so ready to penetrate your conscience again, to lick your insides clean; until then.

Center of conspicuous consumption,
sacred celebrity, celebrate the self, sing the self, share,
over-share, digital – the new love letter.

Middle road thinning, vanishing point into finite distance,
gridlock philosophers meditating concrete,
weary blades of grass – last art installation.

Equal contribution to unequal shares,
doled out to either end of the pendulum,
schism of survival – eight hours to the idealized self.

Equal daughters and equal sons define themselves
externally,
exoskeletons fashioned, formed of brand-loyalty and
baggage,
merchandise legacy – landfill of precious.

Annual replanting, shallow roots tentative,
seeds patented, germination rendered void,
twisted artifice, packaged, priced and sold – the
experience.

Clamoring masses, bowing to only one intangible entity,
uncontrolled,
opaque, unconquered, unyielding to device or technology.
Calamity, capricious and mocking,
hurling warnings to earth that illuminate arrogances –
natural disaster.

FINAL COMMODITY

Rebekah Pahr

Typically, the painter stares at me
and it feels I disappear.

His pooled eyes translate old knot
of limb into a Morse code; not
branch, bark, leaf, wind. He has a
gift for avoiding what is.

Yesterday, storm played its drums
all day. Between lightning flash, I
saw him reach for dandelion paint, but
my crooked hands spilled sky of gray.
He made sure gold oil lined his idea
of “painting what he sees.”

This morning, asylum woke to land
upset by wind. My halved trunk—one part
still standing, the other splintered around me.
Immediately I longed for the painter. How
I saw him. Moved on from yellow sky, eyes
yet unseeing, painting a whole tree of me.

VAN GOGH’S OLIVE TREE

Anna Rios

The wind whipped the mail up in the air,
like how leaves dance on the ground
out of their box at the end of the drive,
up and gone.
The sky was dark
and then it was more,
close.
As we stood at the screen door we
could hear it now, the rage,
Her rage.
The God of Earth and sky and rain and wind.
That's what she was to us.
She blew through town,
past the old mill, past the five and dime,
right to our drive.
Here she came to our door,
all fits and rage
but no mail.
When she blew in, the door off its hinge,
we all froze
and all six as one said,
"Hi, mom."

TORNADO
Geoff Jordan

HOUSES HAVE THEIR SECRETS

● ● ● ● ● ●
Sarah Fjellanger

They had been living in the building for forty years. There were eight apartments, each outlined by brick, walled with plaster and finished in a coat of white in every room. Daisy told Fred she wanted theirs to overlook the street, not the alley. And she quickly changed the kitchen to bright yellow, a color that now looked more like a poor grade of cream.

They'd settled in, made friends, and raised their son to manhood. As the years progressed, they'd seen the hearse arrive for their friend, Benjamin. His Shiva brought the word widow into focus for Daisy and she often found herself crying for no reason. Over time, others moved to big houses and warmer climates. Fred and Daisy stayed. This was home and they were not the type to like change, even though their son had moved his family to California. They were simple people, with simple needs.

One morning, Fred shuffled his way to the kitchen, his hand using the wall for support. He was careful not to wake his wife or the dog. Some coffee would be nice, he thought.

Since her stroke in '83, Daisy needed help with most things. Her mind had grown fragile too, and her bedroom acquired an unpleasant odor that stung Fred's nose and reminded him of how much time had passed since he'd last tried putting their clothes in the washer. The tub had rusted, and the temperamental motor no longer spun out the gray cloud of water. He tried washing her soiled nightgowns in the bathtub, but his arthritic hands could not wring the water out, so he stopped. Anyway, every time he looked at the tub, it reminded him of Daisy. He'd never scrubbed the ring left the last time he'd made a bubble bath for her. It was right after she'd taken ill with a bad cold. He thought the heat and steam could help, so he filled the tub with water and bubbles, just the way she liked it, but he had no strength to carry her. The stroke had left her legs useless, one arm hanging and a tongue that couldn't manage words. There were no friends left in the building for him to call, only kids with colored hair, tattoos and piercings. They frightened him at times. So, the water was left to slowly drain through the stopper whose rubber had since crumbled.

That day, before he'd started his meander toward the kitchen, he chose to grab a wrinkled orange shirt. It had polka dots and was missing a button at the bottom where it tucked into his trousers. He failed to notice. His mind was too occupied with the cupboard and freezer inventory as both had dwindled. He wondered if he should mention something to their son, but Daisy had always told him not to bother James. They'd make do on their own, she'd said.

It would be nice to have a tray of sweet rolls, he thought to himself as he continued down the hallway, ones with jelly inside like Daisy preferred, and powdered sugar on top for him. But, first he wanted to enjoy his cup of coffee. The grounds were well used, but some color and taste had remained in the pot he made yesterday. "Worried water" is what Daisy used to call it.

Fred had chosen not to turn on the hall light, or was it that the electric company had turned them off. He couldn't be sure. After all, the kitchen was only two doors past his bedroom and he knew every step in the house. But that decision caused him to stumble over the dog's squeaky toy, the one he'd forgotten to pick up when Ralph died. His mind wondered where he'd placed that dog, or was it Daisy who'd died? He couldn't remember as he slowly descended to the floor, the impact causing his hip to break and his head to connect with the corner of the wall.

The secrets in their home took many days to uncover. Fred had stopped picking up the mail with their Social Security checks, letters from their son and advertisements that always made him feel bad he couldn't buy nice things for Daisy. The phone had stopped sounding for about a week, lights quit working too, and water flowed only because there was no individual shut off in the old building. The last of the food had spoiled. All was quiet.

Time went on. Caulking escaped some bricks, windows, dark with filth, pushed back the sun. Once the smell had been cleared away, people came and went without remembering the old couple; without knowing they'd worked hard all their lives to provide for their son; volunteered at the local homeless shelter; gave away more things than they kept, and never once forgot someone's birthday.

I made Layne breakfast
—seasoned her morning with moon rock—
swirling crystalline sweetener
into the dark dregs
of her Americano.

She normally declines the whole ritual;
it makes her feel queasy.

What delusion it takes to believe that crêpes
would bolster our love to Parisian status.

Antioxidants,
in even the brightest red berries,
are not so alluring.

Leave it to the taunting sun
to tempt the thought,

You're not the one.

GONE B₄ LUNCH
Lauren Peter



MORNING PREP

Taylor Johnson

I know a man who's rather quiet,
Until you sit down by his side.
He is old, yet just as bold,
And he thinks fondly of his time.
He'll tell you things you never knew about,
Or some things you already do.
Things you couldn't dream about
And things that are not true.
He tells of drunken nights in bars,
Fighting strangers, earning scars.
And the tender touch of women,
And the one who broke his heart.
The dog that was his favorite
And was loyal to the end.
The day that he became the last alive,
Of all his friends.
The day they said his son
Would not return home from the war,
And the day he spread his ashes
All across the ocean floor.
This man has taught me many things,
With just the sadness in his smile.
With just the simple act of asking me
To sit down for a while.
Though life is full of loss,
Full of grief and many costs,
The beauty of it blossoms
When you realize what you've lost.

TO HAVE HAD

Larry Simpson

Do not stare at me from afar
with your fiery gaze that singes.
Spare me your pathetic embrace
and your false piety.

Do not stop to solicit,
to ask me questions I shall not answer
or assume I am complicit
in my silence.

Do not try to mask it.
Isn't it dangerous
to know
too much of anything?
I cannot satisfy your curiosity.
Is "it" a blessing or a curse?
Do I look like "one of them" to you?
My identity is not made up

of essences.

Look me in the eye
and say it like you mean it,
that I am a stranger
to you.

I am an invisible man,
An "other."

You never look at me
from the place
from which I see
you.*

**"When, in love, I solicit a look, what is profoundly
unsatisfying and always missing is that—you never
look at me from the place from which I see you."*

Jacques Lacan, French psychoanalyst

THE STIGMA

Jonathan Hiatt

TISBETH

● ● ● ● ● ●
Sarah Fjellanger

Tisbeth stood on her front porch gazing at the children as they made their way to the red brick school house down the street. They all waved as they passed her gingerbread-style house laced with vines of morning glory, and surrounded by a yard pocked in every kind of herb and medicinal flower you could imagine. Not one stitch of grass did she have. She proclaimed its presence a carpet of nonsense, a waste of good earth. Even the screen door on her porch was outlined by a lattice, its design interlaced with a beautiful flower, one whose leaves, when dried, were used in her secret tea blends.

To a stranger, Tisbeth presented an unusual and sometimes frightening display. Brightly colored mystical dresses adorned her body, the kind that never let you know what size a woman is. Her hair, long and streaked with gray strands that were forever poking their way out of the loosely held braids or bun she'd thrown together that morning, formed a perfect frame for her leathered face and tanned skin that depicted German heritage. Her lips, oftentimes in a stern posture, would spring upward whenever the children appeared. After all, she and Harry had wanted a houseful, but that blessing never descended on them. When Harry took sick with a cough he got from working as a stone mason on the hotel in town, it was Tisbeth who cared for him until he died. Neighbors and friends brought food and, in the end, it was they who washed Harry's body when Tisbeth's grief was too much to bear.

Harry's passing drove Tisbeth to her bed for a time, to a point where her best friend Grace, the schoolteacher in town, decided to involve the children. Each was asked to make something for Miss Tisbeth, as she preferred to be called. And so, on a sunny Friday morning, Grace dismissed school only to reconvene it at the home of her friend. That morning, she had coaxed Tisbeth to the front porch, brought her some tea along with baking powder biscuits and jam, then said, "I'll be back. You stay here."

It wasn't long before Tisbeth saw the children approaching; all twelve of them, walking two by two and each holding something in their hands. She couldn't make out the something, but when Grace opened the porch door and they all descended showing the gifts faster than she could think, a smile and tears broke out on her face.

That was thirty years ago. Those kids grew, and now had families of their own, but none of them ever forgot Miss Tisbeth. Some had gone off to war then came back for the town to bury. Tisbeth tended their resting place as if they were her own.

Each year Grace would bring the school children for an outing to learn about a new plant, have a cup of fresh brewed herbal tea, or just listen to stories that Tisbeth could tell like no one else. They became her kids, hers and Harry's. She'd sit on the grass by his headstone and tell him of their adventures. She knew he especially loved to hear about the boys; Harry had been such a kid himself. Before leaving, she always put fresh flowers in the copper vase, the one she'd requested to be tucked in the granite stone and positioned just above his name.

But Tisbeth grew old and it was Grace who held her hand until the last breath. Kids, her kids, came back to say goodbye. They came from everywhere life had sent them and each brought a flower or an herb. After the service, they all grabbed a shovel and replanted the cemetery as Tisbeth would have wanted, ridding it of its grassy nonsense, and wasting no earth.

In 1976 Joey Ramone
tossed his hair back and leapt off a stage.
In the air he spread his arms
golden wings spawned, and
he soared over the crowd;
dove onto the world.

“Punk is here,” the crowd chanted.
Punk had already been here.
Lurking in alleyways, handing out chants
of riot like a Pastor handing out mini bibles.

Punk is not music, it is
lifestyle, spirituality. Its earliest churches
were found in the garages of scorned children.
shadows of 1950s and 1960s high schools
These shadows
who painted their skin with rage.
Yet they yearned to throw that rage,
not at others, but in the air.
At ideas; At each other.

Punk has always been here, lying dormant
in the darkest corners of our hearts.
Attics locked away, waiting to be discovered.

Every few years, some bastards want to proclaim that
punk is dead.
Fuck them.
Bastards are meant to be conquered.
Passion bleeds., but it does not die.
Punk is not heard
it is experienced, absorbed.
Legs splayed, fists pumped:
Minds blown at shows.

Our art is growing, and while we still worship
in our friends’ garages,
now we also attend mass
In libraries, in coffee shops
on street corners, at schools,
conversations, in our own hearts
in small clubs, large venues,
and entire (Fucking) stadiums.
Yet, no matter where the ritual unfolds,
when the lights dim: we greet the darkness

and we scream.

OUR NOISE

Rhyan Bogle



LIGHTING UP THE NIGHT SKY

Jonathan Benitez

Minneapolis is flooded with tattoo parlors
but our skin is running out of room
for names of the dead.

Pretty soon we'll all be covered in black ink
unable to tell black from "black"
standing on the governor's lawn
holding cups of cold coffee
waiting for any change he can spare.

But maybe I'm just Lucky
dad didn't dye my DNA dark as his.

Lucky mom's people painted my pigment a lighter shade.

Lucky I don't resemble mugshots begging for gunshots.

Lucky I wasn't one of the children who traced
their own outlines with sidewalk chalk,
arms outstretched like angels, and laid there
waiting for their dreams of flying away to come true.

Lucky my tone don't trigger no hair-trigger response from
Them
somehow more frightened than the people Them aiming at
ready to paint the street with their deepest, darkest secrets.

Lucky the odds my daughter will witness death from the
backseat
for broken tail light, or being brown on Friday night, could
be worse.

Lucky I can code switch and shape shift like a phantom.

Jackson got a twenty. Jesus got a cross. Philando got a
hashtag.

Should we start holding funerals for the next viral video?

Have students write poems on the bullets
that will plant red roses in brown bodies?
Gather to paint brick wall murder murals of our unborn
suspects?

Are we not convinced the machine we built this country
with
still needs to be fed? Jaws still gaping, salivating, hungry?
As black backs for whiplash, hungry?
for flesh, hungry?

The monster we created, the myth we made,
the bones in our closet,
strange fruit Hungry.

Old habits die hard
black bodies die young.

I can read your fortune if you show me your palms. Or,
you can turn your palms face down, so I can see
your pigment, and I'll tell you what your chances are.

LUCKY

Alexei Casselle

FATHER DROOPY DOG

Shannon Rowley-Mahaney

“Is it just me or does that priest remind you of Droopy Dog?” Mark whispered during the sermon. Instantly, the classic cartoon character replaced the insanely boring priest’s face. I burst out laughing. Giggling uncontrollably at your grandmother’s funeral is typically frowned on. That was Mark, great sense of humor, usually used to break tension. I slugged him in the shoulder for making me laugh. He shrugged and smiled. The dimple in his cheek was deep enough to park a car in. If you had told me that would be one of the last times I got to see that dimple, I would have appreciated it more. Mark is my cousin, my life-long partner in crime. Since before I can remember we had been getting into trouble together. To say he was my best friend is an understatement, we lived a few houses away from one another so while we did torture family during your typical events like Christmas and Easter, we had the awesome privilege of driving people crazy every day of the year. As we grew older, our lives took different paths. He became a successful computer guy who found his excitement atop mountains. I lived more paycheck to paycheck and found my excitement in the simple, cheap things, like the \$2 Theater and free concerts in the park. We never grew apart. Every time we saw one another, we would pick right up where we left off. We used to say it’s cause we were like peas and carrots.

Easter of 2014 would be the last time I saw him. We entertained ourselves, and caught up on life. He told me he was leaving to climb Mount Rainer soon. I was excited for him, this would not be his first climb, but it was going to be his most challenging. May 25th 2014, I took a moment to shoot him a quick text, knowing he would be heading up Liberty Ridge in a day or two. “Be safe Dummy,” was all I sent. “I will, someone needs to talk to you at family events. LOL” On May 31st, I was en route to my birthday party when my sister called me. “Have you heard from Mark?” she asked. I explained that we had had a short conversation via text the other day. She told me that he missed his check in at the ranger station. An eternal optimist I explained I was not worried. He was probably just enjoying being up there. I pushed it to the back of my mind; it was after all my birthday party. My party was at my aunt’s house and everyone seemed a bit on edge. I kept assuring them that there was no reason to worry. “Armed only with a pocket knife, he would be able to sail the Atlantic”. This was the explanation I gave to the others. He was fine, he had to be. I would know if he weren’t. My friends decided to take me to dinner that

evening. My birthday was actually the next day, but that was a Sunday and this way we could live it up a little. When we arrived at dinner, I remained outside to answer my phone. It was my sister again. “Hey, what are you up to?” She was trying to sound casual.

“Heading into my birthday dinner. What’s up?”

“Oh no, I forgot. Shannon, I’m sorry.” She sounded a little choked up.

“Don’t worry. It’s not until tomorrow.” I chuckled, “Still time to get me a present.”

“No, Shannon, he is gone.”

I knew instantly what she meant. I knew I had a few seconds tops to get off the phone before I lost it. I am not one that shows feelings willingly. I really do prefer the easygoing clown. Mark and I have that in common. Mark, Mark. “Ok thanks for letting me know. I gotta go.”

“Shannon.”

“I got to go; I will talk to you later.” I hung up the phone and tried to pull myself together. I looked toward the restaurant just in time to see my wife walk out the door to check on what was holding me up. I made eye contact and I could tell she knew something horrible was happening. She asked if I wanted to go home. I remember explaining I did not want to ruin everyone’s evening. I could not tell you the conversation that followed or how I ended up in the car with everyone heading home. I do not remember saying good-bye to the friends that had come to celebrate with me. Those hours were devoted to waiting until it was safe to break down. At home alone with my wife, the tears flowed. A piece of me was lost somewhere on Mount Rainer. No, not lost, dead.

The next few days were a blur, filled with family drama. They could not figure out how to get along in the best of times. Now missing the one thing that held his family and mine together, we suddenly became the Hatfields and McCoys. I tried playing mediator at first. When that did not work I became Switzerland. Mark would have been able to smooth it over in minutes. He would have talked his mother out of uninviting my father to the memorial service, he could have had everyone agreeing that shit would be hard but it would be better if we were together.

A few days after his death, the rangers at Rainer were able to piece together what happened. The climb had gone smoothly with warmer than usual weather for the first couple of days. They were just reaching the peak, when the weather turned. They decided not to summit but to start the descent instead. That night they camped out on the side of the mountain where the wind wasn't blowing. This proved to be a fatal decision. Sometime in the middle of the night a rockslide swept down the mountain. It took the entire camp with it, 3000 feet below. At least they were sleeping.

The day of his memorial was sweltering; it had to be a memorial, as they had not found him yet. It wouldn't be until August of that year that they found him. The day before his brother's wedding reception. It was at the same church we had been in a few months earlier for my grandmother's funeral. I sat between the families. That was where I belonged. That was where we always sat. The church quieted. The priest stood up and began explaining life, death, heaven, or something along those lines. I wasn't really listening.

Then somewhere in the back of my mind I heard his voice, "Is it just me or does this priest remind you of Droopy Dog?" I burst out laughing

Cancerous compulsions
are actually not my only weakness.
 Gin is the most gracious of guests
 (though we have few)
 yet I am always greeted by a smile

on those days when you can't meet my eyes.

My admittance of cigars,
though many mistake them for marijuana,
should pacify you.

I invite you to revel in the white lab coat
set against tar-nished lungs.
Sink into the sinister irony of ill doctors.
Smoking is a sin of the public sphere.

I drink until I'm no longer cold.
My throat burns
and all the wretched pieces of wreckage,
 works deemed unworthy to me,
they all go up.

Their blue flames never do quite match the color of your eyes.

IN THE LAND
OF GODS AND MONSTERS
Lauren Peter

Summer mornings my grandfather awoke
And lit the fire with calloused hands that ached
From labor and old age, the timbers set blazing
With vigor, anew each day.
I heard the murmurs and arose from my slumber.
As grandmother made breakfast, plans were made
While I was splashing my face with the clear, crystalline water,
The blood which nourishes and gives life and falls upon the earth,
The hallowed ground from which my grandfather built a fortress.

It is humble and quiet like my grandfather.
For silence is golden like the sun
That sets and illuminates the glistening pools
Upon which the loon sings his evening song.
And in my youth I listen intently, curiously, wondering
How God had made such a creature so pleasant,
Wishing that this unspoiled wilderness, my childhood sanctuary
Could be my own someday, anticipating the yearly sojourn,
Five hundred or so miles away from home.

We'll tell grandmother tales of the one that got away.
Damn that daredevil and broken line! As grandfather ties another,
We troll along and the water is deep.
Sometimes he lets me man the boat and I am captain and he is proud as I
Crank the engine, easy on the choke.

A few years go by and I am now thirteen.
My grandfather with his calloused hands and wounded knee
And grandmother with her hip
Can no longer endure the toil, no longer like the timbers
Once set ablaze with vigor, anew each day,
They too will set like the sun
And illuminate the glistening pools of clear, crystalline water,
The blood that once nourished and gave life and fell upon the earth
And return to the hallowed ground from which they built a fortress.

Dedicated to my grandfather, a country doctor

ONTARIO

Jonathan Hiatt

DANGLING

● ● ● ● ● ● ●
Marcia Alexander

Bruce, our oldest brother, found Tricia's lifeless body hanging from her bedroom ceiling fan. She had been dead for a few hours. My brother tried to take her down, but panicked when he touched her cold stiff flesh. Rigor mortis already exacting its effect, one arm was stiff reaching out in front of her, the other clasping the rope around her neck.

In my time working in law enforcement, I saw many crime scene photos in which the subject had hung themselves; this positioning of the corpse is common. After seeing the first dozen photos where the body was in the same position—grasping at the rope—the indication was clear; they all must have experienced some form of regret. Either of the act of taking their own life, or of the method chosen to do so. In fact, the photos where the subject was not grasping at the rope, their neck is elongated indicating a broken neck. This type of hanging is called drop hanging. In these cases, the subject died instantly from a broken neck, but these are few. Most who hang themselves, suffer what's called a suspension hanging, meaning they are suspended in air while they die from asphyxiation.

With my sister Tricia, I think it was the regret of taking her own life. She never flinched at pain or suffering. She suffered her whole life. The suffering of hanging would not have caused her regret; she was too stubborn for that. What would have caused her regret was leaving her children and grandchildren behind.

According to Wikipedia it takes about 30 seconds before the body loses consciousness, and about 3 to 4 minutes to die. I wonder what was going on in her head those last few seconds. Did time stand still, or did it fly by? Did her life flash before her? Did she see the faces of those who she left behind? Or did she see the ones who preceded her in death, like our brother Jeff, or our grandparents? She was high on crystal meth; maybe she saw nothing but her hallucinations.

I hear you softly breathing.
I hear your gentle snore.
So, quietly, as not to wake you,
I slip out, and close the door.

I go out to the kitchen
Where I start my routine chores:
Making a healthy breakfast
For the one whom I adore.

But once those chores are ended,
And the paper I have read,
I look down the tiny hallway
For a sign you're out of bed.

I patiently await your awakening,
As I pace across the floor;
Always gazing down that hallway,
Hoping for a light beneath the door.

That light will tell me that you're up,
And ready to share the day.
That light will tell me you'll soon join me,
So together we'll face the fray.

That light will tell me that it's time,
For us to make our bed.
That light will tell me that, together,
We'll face what lies ahead.

But until I see that strip of light
The darkness I endure.
Who ever thought it could mean so much:
A strip of light beneath a door.

THE LIGHT

BENEATH THE DOOR

Dennis Daniels

● I see people,
● Everywhere.
● Their faces lit up with expression.
● I see one man's depression, and another's discretion.
● One woman holding a baby inside,
● While another sits quietly,
● Pondering suicide.
● Some walking tall, entitled to joy.
● Others are small, and carrying toys.
● Some walking slumped, burdened by shame,
● While others will proudly speak their own name.
● We are all different, for the reason we're the same.
● We are all people, innocent,
● And to blame.
● Looking for approval in a certain someone's eyes,
● Looking for peace, in a public disguise.
● We hurt other's feelings, just to have fun.
● We all have our demons from which we must run.
● But if you learn to live life, with an audience of none,
● You can then be yourself,
● An audience of one.
● Everywhere,
● You see people.

I SEE PEOPLE

Larry Simpson



LIGHTS THAT LIGHT THE NIGHT SKY

Jonathan Benitez

You bring out the aspiring alcoholic in me
Your many layers
They make me crazy
Make me weak
Make me happy
Make me thirsty

You bring out the need to lose myself
I need a shot
Need a sip
Need to savor
Need to get sloppy

You bring out the aspiring alcoholic in me
The hidden flask in a jacket
The ice cold one
The burn of whiskey
The undertones in a fine wine
The it's 5 o'clock somewhere logic

You bring out the blue agave mezcal in me
The salt before, and a lime chaser
The oh god, ok, one more
The lost clothing, mine, yours, ours
The need to let it all hang out
The easily entertained woohoo girl

You bring out the two fingers cowboy in me
The loner
The want to forget
The bartender is my only friend
That slow burn
The regret of things said

You bring out the Dublin in me
The need to protect what's mine
The I can be tough, just one more pint
The I'd wear a kilt to make you smile
The slightly louder than I should be
The stumbling, singing, I know I am embarrassing but
you still love me.

You bring out the Château de Goulaine in me
The sophistication
The need to let it breathe
The everything gets better with age
The understanding of pairings
The appreciation of slow sips and long talks

With every sip, shot, and pint of you
You bring out the aspiring alcoholic in me

YOU BRING OUT
THE ASPIRING ALCOHOLIC IN ME

Shannon Rowley-Mahaney

Refugee The Law

There are millions of stories my family knows

Landmarks knitting one mistake to the world.

We, the reason that everything dies.

Beautiful regal colors paint history made by them.

Children sleep cold and lonely, this is our history.

I know how this works—we aren't going back.

You start forgetting us, we make sure history remembers
the space our dropped knots created.

I just want to change that you've come undone.

I've read the books, there are many rules.

Flowing banner in the wind.

I am far from what's wrong with this world.

I protect our families from the unlawful.

Curs-ed loops fall loose and declare themselves unmovable.

My history is the reason millions journey back to landmarks
blown by imperial misery.

REFUGEE THE LAW

Anna Rios



MN STATE FAIR

LABOR DAY STORM

Janelle Danforth

We watch barn swallows,
high from the hayloft hatch,
perched on straw and hay.
Prickling bales,
packed end to end,
barn seams strain, holding warp and weft,
woven in sunlight and sweat.

Sheep barn bubbles with grey boils, erupting under eaves,
clay sculptures—a barn swallow installation.
Splatter-paintings of spittle,
dried nests of mud pellets,
lined with tufts of stolen wool,
softening lanolin,
to oil speckled eggs.

Boomerang shadows loom and shrink in flashes,
sun, stretching tail-feather tapers to pitchforks.
Swooping silhouettes hung against spider webs,
hooked thick across wood splinters.
Darting wing-tips push a whisper across our cheeks,
like melting clouds,
dissolved
into pasture and rays, vanishing.

Dropping, diving, gobbling over the manure pile,
swift turns, rapid bursts, impossible orbits.
Flies, fat and heavy, angry ink blots suspended,
swarms that rise and fall,
gasping like the breath of late yellowed lambs.
Steaming stench suffocating
soiled straw,
rich with time and soured decay,
devouring old ewe bones.

Lilac bodies hurled, greedy throats coated cinnamon,
tending translucent hatchlings.
Titters, warbles, whirrs and buzzing,
staccato scolding pollutes the air,
thick with gnats,
flurry
and fury.

BARN SWALLOWS

Rebekah Pahr

HIDING PLACE

● ● ● ● ● ● ●
Ryan McClanahan

Mama called Jayne's name from the dining room. Mama didn't sound mad. Yet. But if Jayne came out, Mama would discover Jayne's special alone spot under the stairs, in the back behind the boxes of Christmas lights and Martin's baby stuff.

The wet air smell of cardboard and the sump pump filled the crawl space. Just enough light spilled between two boards so that Jayne could see the outline of her hands.

And the big gray box where Mama put daddy's stuff so she could forget it.

Mama called Jayne's name once more. The screen door slammed behind Mama as she went outside. So Jayne knew she was totally alone. She fought with the latch on the heavy box. It was hard, made for big man's hands, and she had to push her back against the wall. The latch flipped open like thunder in the small space.

The ceiling in the crawl space was too low to open the box, but Jayne could lift the thick plastic lid and reach inside. Touch the cold metal that made her hands smell like fire. And the stiff cloth that zip-zipped as she scratched her thumbnail over it, trying to remember the pattern she had only seen in photos.

Her fingertips brushed along until they found the prickly Velcro. She tore it open, closed it, opened closed, opened closed. The movement pumped air through the uniform, forcing a thick smell into the air. Like cookies and shade, like dust and iron, and far sandy places she dreamt of and salty things she didn't know. The smell Mama had hidden with all that had come home.

"I miss you, Daddy," Jayne whispered.

What did you think, Oh, ye demigods among men?
When you started us on this path
Working so hard with sickle and lash
Did you imagine our rights?

What did you think, Oh ye children of enlightenment?
When in hallowed halls you argued
Whether men would choose to be free
Did you imagine our happiness?

What did you think, Oh ye fathers of capital?
When you traded crown for coin
Where others sowed, what you did reap
Did you imagine our prosperity?

Did you see this day coming?

When our pursuit of happiness
Chokes our world
With an invisible hand

When our inalienable right
To ignore our duty
Is borne on arms

When the consent of the governed
Is bought and sold
By a free press

Did you think self-interest could save mortal fools?

REVOLUTION

Geoff Jordan

LAKE RETRIBUTION

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
Shannon Rowley-Mahaney

Damien gazed into the placid lake before him, he wanted badly to see himself in the water, but all he could see was the ominous reflection of the moon. A noise behind him made him swing around, “Who’s there?” he demanded, but no one answered. “I said who’s there?!?” his voice carried into the night.

“Calm down, Damien, it’s just me.” A small girl emerged from the woods. She wore a pastel pink jumper, and a white frilled blouse; both were torn and stained with crimson blood. Her skin was a brilliant white and her eyes seemed to melt into the night.

“What are you doing here?” He stood to his full height.

“Come on, Damien, you know why I am here,” she stopped walking towards him then disappeared, moments later she reappeared at Damien’s side, facing the lake. “I am here to help you reap what you have sown.” Her eyes met his, a grotesque grin twisted her small face. “You’ve had your intermission, now it is time.”

Damien felt a cold shiver run down his spine.

“What? Are you scared?” her small voice became demonic, “I thought you were dauntless.”

“I am!” was his defense. “How could I not be? You have seen the things I have done.”

“Picking on young defenseless children is hardly the decorum you’d expect from a full grown man.” Now her voice was almost bewitching. “Now come on, Damien, it’s time to face the inevitable.”

“What will happen?”

“Don’t worry, it won’t hurt, much.” As the young girl spoke she began to shake with rage. “You are a disease, Damien, my only goal is to prevent you from becoming a contagion.”

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LOOKING BACK

● ● ● ● ● ●
Dennis Daniels

I'm a septuagenarian who runs. Well, truth be told, I used to run, now I just jog. And for a variety of reasons I prefer to run in the still, gauzy darkness just before dawn. And stranger yet, even though I run year-around, I prefer to run in the frigid cold of a winter's morning rather than the oppressive heat and humidity of summer. I can adequately dress for the cold. I do have a much less desirable option to running in the winter: running thirty-five laps around the track at the school where I play volleyball. But the tedium outweighs the warmth and safety. I only run inside when it is absolutely impossible to run outside. My favorite runs are during a gentle April shower, when the air is filled with the fragrance of lilacs, crocus, and daffodils; Or after a snowstorm, when all of the trees are flocked with snow; unbelievably gorgeous—nature's wonderland.

Later, when the sun rises, the snow-laden branches will sparkle like diamonds for a few hours until the warmth of the sun will, once again, expose the drabness of winter. I'll stop to rest, and admire the beauty that surrounds me. And as I look back, the stillness of the morning is exacerbated by the fact that, except for an occasional deer, the only tracks I see in the cushioning, virgin snow are mine. Folks ask why I run in the dark; they ask why I run so early; they ask why I run in the cold, snow and ice; and they ask why, at my age, I run at all. All good questions. And all questions I ask myself at the start—and sometimes during—each of my runs. But regardless of the conditions, or the difficulties, I always feel better when I finish. Over thirty years ago, God blessed me with a friend, and roommate, Roger.

Roger introduced me to the joys—and pain—of running. I had never run before when he convinced me to accompany him on a two-mile run that wasn't a joy at all. I thought that I would die from collapsed lungs. But I've kept it up over the years, and now running seems to be in my blood. Now, running not only fills my need for exercise, it fulfills me in ways I can't explain. When things seem out of control in this technological age of the Internet, I-pads, cellphones, and the like, running calms me, brings me back to center. Thank you, Roger. My current loop, which I run three mornings a week, is just short of six miles long with several long-but-gradual hills.

I've come to realize over the years that hills are our friends. However, some are much friendlier than others. My route takes me past Pax Christi Catholic Church; the church I attend. And as I pass I look back on a rainy Saturday morning in May of 2013 when I participated in their first annual "RunWalkPray 5k" and pancake breakfast. And I say a prayer of thanks to God for my discipline, stamina, and all the other many blessings He bestows upon me each and every day and night: my health; my well-being; my friends; my family; and my faith. And when I pass the small graveyard behind the church, I wonder about death, specifically, my death. When my time comes will I face it with dignity, or fear? My faith teaches me that death will be miraculous, but nonetheless, I can't help but wonder.

I pass trees and houses majestically silhouetted against the pre-dawn sky. Most of the houses are dark as ghosts, their occupants sound asleep. But others, lights glowing from their windows, are warm and inviting. And as I pass I wonder what lies within: love or chaos. I like to imagine there's love. Over soothing classical music coming from my earpieces, I hear the sounds of the snow and ice crunching beneath my feet, in gentle cadence with my breathing. The comforting aroma of wood smoke comes from an occasional fireplace and mingles with the sharp scent of frost in the arctic air. Although the sidewalks are usually plowed, the surface is mostly rough; compact in some places, uneven in others, making running difficult and dangerous.

Even though I try to follow the ribbed tracks of the snowplow, it's tough to maintain my balance. The only light comes from the moon—when it's not hidden in a curtain of clouds—and the stars, streetlights, stoplights, and an occasional passing car, all of which reflect on the dangerous ice camouflaged beneath the thin layer of snow, like a minefield; showing me where not to step. Running in the winter presents some unique challenges. Deep snow and ice, and in the spring, mini lakes, formed by the melting snow, make running on the sidewalks an impossibility. In that case, I'm forced to run on a four-lane roadway.

I dress all in black and although my clothing is reflective, some drivers just don't see me. Luckily, there are few cars on the road at that time of day. I've found there are two types of drivers: those considerate enough to swerve

and give me wide berth, and those who don't. To the former, I wave in silent appreciation. To the latter, I assume they're either distracted, moronic, or the ones who deliberately run over defenseless turtles as they cross the road in the spring. One morning in late November a passenger in a passing car yelled, "Happy Holiday" and threw something at me. It didn't connect, but missed my head by mere inches. For obvious reasons I didn't stop, but after my run I went back to see what was thrown. It was a large, red Christmas tree bulb about six inches in diameter. But despite the challenges, I have no fear, Jesus always runs with me, keeping me safe.

Another memory: The morning was the coldest of the December season; minus three degrees with a minus 17 degree windchill. I had just turned left from Franlo onto Pioneer trail. I hadn't gone 20 feet when I spotted a deer lying on the boulevard between the street and the sidewalk. We saw each other at about the same time. And when she saw me she got up and tried to run, but she had obviously been hit by a car, and her left rear hip and/or leg had been broken. She could only drag herself across the sidewalk in front of me, into a little thicket behind a house. My heart ached for her, but there was absolutely nothing I could do. When I got to the Super America station on Flying Cloud Drive I called my wife, Jeanne, and told her what happened. I suggested that she call the police and/or the DNR, which she did.

When I got home from my run, and after a good breakfast, we jumped in my pickup truck and drove up to the intersection to check on her. She was still there. I didn't think she'd get far in her condition. We drove to the front of the house and I tried to get a response from the home owner, but apparently, no one was home. We made a note of the address, and when we got home, Jeanne called the police again and gave them the address. I then left to play volleyball with the Born Again Jocks (BAJ's). After volleyball I checked on her again and she was gone. I hope they donated the venison to a worthy cause. I like to say that when I turned fifty I transitioned from the old age of youth to the youth of old age.

Now, the miles seem longer, the hills steeper. But as those miles and hills gradually fall behind me, I can look back on all the miles I've run, and hills I've climbed. Wonderful memories of experiences I've had while running

countless 5k's, 10k's, and fun runs with my very special friends, and occasionally, in earlier years, with some of my kids, their spouses, and even with my grandchildren; people who have loved me and stuck by me in the happiest of times, and the saddest of times. Memories which tend to warm my heart. I remember my wife, Sharon—now gone, taken from me by lung cancer in January of 2009—and I, volunteering at the finish line of the Twin Cities Marathon, and how we dodged vomit from the leaders as they crossed the line; and how I empathized with the folks crossing hours later.

I remember running the lakes with my friend, Jane, when she got hit in the face with a Frizbee thrown by a careless, over-exuberant teenager. Thank God she was okay, and remains gorgeous today. I remember running on trails forged only by deer and an occasional coyote. Or, running through woods with absolutely no trails. And running over furrows of cornfields plowed under. I usually ran with my friend, Roger, on these excursions. Roger was really into orienteering and loved to run on non-existent trails through dense woods. I think it satisfied his primal need for movement through nature, presumably left over from our ancestors' days as hunters. I remember we were running over a frozen lake in the middle of some woods, one day, when Roger asked me if I'd ever run across the lake before.

I told him that I had, but it was much easier now that it was frozen over. I remember running with my friend, Larry—more a brother than a friend, and without whom my life would be much less happy—around the chain-of-lakes in the warm sunshine of a summer's day; the sun glistening on the water and off the sails of boats buoyed just off shore. I remember passing deer; so close I could almost touch them. I remember running in weather so cold that I've frozen body parts and experienced the excruciating pain of thawing them out. I remember being overcome with emotion as I stumbled, spent, across the finish line of marathons and the first Aquatennial Triathlon, tearfully accepting a well-earned medal.

My first attempt at running a marathon didn't go well. I had finished the triathlon so I thought I could do anything. I trained well, but due to some bad advice stopped training prematurely. I hit the wall at the eighteen-

● mile mark and was unable to finish. Then I joined A.L.A.R.C. back when the acronym stood for American Lung Association Running Club. Under the guidance of its founder, Bill Wenmark, I was able to complete my next two marathons. And I remember walking with my partner and companion, Jeanne, and as we'd pass an evergreen tree, she would inevitably walk under a branch, heavy with new-fallen snow, and I would playfully tug the branch causing the snow to fall on her.

● She would give me a playful punch and laughingly, lovingly, look up at me with her beautiful face, now wet with melted snow. I've endless miles yet to run, and endless hills yet to climb. But God didn't grant me endless time. And when I've run my final mile and climbed my final hill, all that will matter is family and friends. And I pray that all of those wonderful memories, and memories yet to be made, will remain with me; warming my heart with love.

I do not care
for casual conversations
at drinking establishments
or in shady rooms
keeping shoddy company
on lonely Friday nights.

My heart is not pacified
with endless pickup lines
and souls exchanged for dimes.

They stopped inviting me out
when I started leaving early.
But it's just as well,
casual friendships
are exhausting.

I'm not sure if it's my saving grace
or my downfall,
but I want the same person I laugh until I cry with,
to be the person I suffer and die with.
I don't want someone to exchange mere words with,
I want someone to share life with.

This isn't an ode
to some unknown,
mystified soulmate,
but rather to the friends along life's journey.
Life is too short for cheap friends.
Lonely I may be most days,
but without a knife in my back,
nonetheless,
my secrets still intact.

It's nothing against the flirtatiously
drunken and damned,
the extroverts, and that man in the band,
it's just that unless you want to know me tomorrow,
I don't want to know you today.

MY DISLIKE
OF CASUAL ACQUAINTANCES

Megan Bauer



HEALING ECHINACEA

Lenore Vincent

RECKONING

● ● ● ● ●
Geoff Jordan

The only thing that burns in Hell is the part of you that won't let go. – Jacob's Ladder

"Honey, your coffee is ready," he called as he poured the sugar. "Aah, honey, honey, you are my Candy Girl." Even after all these years, the song just came out of him. Those were the days, he reflected, a couple of young fools. Too poor to go out, we danced on our own linoleum. Maybe it was the sunshine pouring in the kitchen's south window, the bracing smell of the coffee, or maybe he just had a good dream last night. Whatever the reason, he could tell it was going to be a good day. As he twirled the spoon, he found the motion traveling up his arm and into his hips, swiveling a bit, like all those years ago. "And you got me wanting you," he smiled at the tide of memories.

He turned toward the stairs, cup in hand, and was half surprised to see she wasn't there. Sleepyhead. The smell of the coffee usually wakes her. He walked over and called up the stairs, "Hun, did you hear me? Your coffee is ready." He waited for a moment, then set her steaming cup of black, extra sugar, on the edge of the breakfast table. It'll be waiting for her when she comes down.

Stopping at the fridge on the way to the stove, he grabbed the carton of eggs, butter, strawberry jelly for himself, and peach for her. It was a big load, but he managed, balancing the two jars on top the eggs. The butter sat on top of that but started to slide, threatening to spill the whole rig. But he bent his knees and held on so that the stick of butter just slid onto the counter. "You still got it, Harvey," he said.

Everything in its place, he turned the dial and listened to for the click-click-click-whoosh, then flicked a fat stab of butter into the cast iron. Two—no—just one egg today. Then looking at the pair habit had forced into his hand, the old dancer thought of his partner. Maybe she'll want one today. He looked over his shoulder and took half a step that way, but stopped himself from calling again. This isn't like her, he reckoned, but I shouldn't assume. Sometimes she doesn't eat the egg. I'll just pop upstairs and check on her. Rounding the corner, he saw her coffee sitting there, a wisp of steam teasing at the surface. If she isn't feeling well this might help perk her up.

Knees complained, like hinges wanting grease, as he climbed the stairs. When he gained the landing, he heard a creak and thought, there's my Candy Girl, now. But did that come from below, or come from above? He hesitated for a moment and listened. When she didn't make any other sounds, he decided to press on, and said it to his rusty parts, "come on now, you can do it."

At the top of the stairs, he turned into the hall. Approaching the bathroom, heard the floor groan again. "Say, Hun, I brought your..." Of course, she won't hear me, if she's in the shower. He raised a knuckle, to announce himself, but then thought, oh what the heck, how long has it been since I snuck in on her. Probably scare the daylights out of her. But when he finally shuffled up to the door, he found it open. "...Hun?"

She wasn't in there. But the shower was wet and the lavender and lily shampoo bottles that she always put back so carefully gave hints of her flowery sent. Did she go back to bed? Poor dear, must really be feeling rotten, he reasoned. And here I am hollering when she's trying to recuperate. He chastised himself and crept back into the hallway, quiet as he could. Almost to the bedroom, he heard a wet raspy sound that told him she must be snoring, congested and snotty. Holding back the coffee, he leaned forward and peeked in the bedroom. First, he saw his side of the bed, a little rumpled from the slothful way he always just flipped the sheets back in place. Smiling, in anticipation of sleeping beauty, he peeked in a little farther and saw, nothing. Her side of the bed was neatly made, sheet tucked under the mattress, just like she always did. There was barely an indent in the pillow. Always so tidy. They would have loved her in the military, he thought; well, if she could ever clean out a coffee cup, and well, if we hadn't been hippies. But this didn't make sense. He entered the bedroom for a good look around. Where can she be? He had just seen her. If she was awake, why didn't she answer his call?

He was starting to get upset, and he didn't like being upset with her. Then he felt a cold drop on his left foot. The act of looking down caused him to spill a little more coffee that he forgot he was holding. Well, it won't help to make a mess, he thought and set the cup down on her nightstand. Black and cold and wet, the coffee seeped into his old discolored sock. I've got to get this figured out. Now Harvey, he told himself, don't be too hard on her.

He eased onto the bed so as to not disturb her sheets. I've just got to collect my thoughts. He sat there, reckoning, I'm sure I nudged her when my alarm went off. Certainly, before I got in the shower. I suppose she might have got up to make breakfast. But that's my job, since she—well—lately anyway. It's hard work taking care of us both. That's why I've been so muddled.

What I could really use is a good cup of coffee. Just as he thought it, he saw one, sitting there, on the nightstand. Satisfied with his good luck he wrapped his fingers through the handle, lifted it to his nose, and inhaled deeply of the hot, earthy, metallic aroma. Hmmm. Then drained half the cup in one gulp. Cold and too sweet. Who likes it that way? And he slid the cup back onto the nightstand with such force that it went skittering into another. The heat is half the point. He turned to look out the bedroom door. Something made him think of his cast iron pan. And boy was he hungry, no wonder he couldn't think about, whatever it was, he needed some breakfast.

Stomach leading the way, he hustled down the hall. Shuffling past the bathroom, he saw the half-open shower curtain, and thought of his wife's sweet smell. But something's burning. She must be making toast for breakfast. When he descended to the stair's landing, he heard a creak and thought, well, there's my Candy Girl now. But did that come from above, or come from below? No time, better check that toast.

Rounding the corner into the kitchen, he was surprised to see she wasn't there. With a few heavy breaths, he hustled over to the toaster. Nothing. Then he saw brown grime caramelizing in the cast-iron, burnt dry. Snatching it by the handle, he tossed it to the next burner with a crash and a bang and the hiss of flesh. Oh, that smarts!

He turned to the sink, flipped on the cold and let it run over his hot mistake. Standing there, he saw not only had she left the burner on, but she had left out the eggs, the butter, her peach jelly, and the strawberry. But she doesn't like strawberry. That's when he realized, she was going to surprise him with breakfast. This is why he could never stay mad at her. Forgetful as she was, his Candy Girl was just too sweet. And she must have gone

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Take me high in the air Venus.
I'll lay to rest this urn's ashes.
Drifting through the clouds,
A sky chariot that breathes and burns.

A gas dragon boat that carries our desire,
Ephemeral landscape moves below without warning,
Drifting onward and above while burning fire;
Venus used to give light but now I'm in mourning.

Sun rays up high in the ether eternal,
A lost seabird whispers a secret-
Venus loves you the most,
Across the ocean, on another coast.

Many intrepid souls have been beguiled in the night.
Aeneas' conflicted heart Dido did find.
Above the earth adrift and intent to find the light;
Venus will reappear in heart and mind.

VENUS REINCARNATED

Christopher Denne

SCREAM 97

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Rhyan Bogle

Since my earliest memories, I have owned a small wooden box that sits about eight inches high, and ten across. On the front of the box are two decorative “drawers,” dressed with small gold-colored handles that are doomed to never open. The top of the box opens backwards to reveal a small cache for storage, and a hidden music box that serenades you with the dings and chimes of a soothing song. The box once housed assorted jewelry; earrings, bracelets and necklaces. Most of which have been lost to time.

On the inside of the box’s lid, waits a mirror; I have often used this mirror to gaze deep into my own soul. You see, this box once belonged to my mother whom was stolen from this world when I was but two years old. I am not certain how I came to possess this box, but I know that if ever my house were to catch ablaze, it would be the first non-living thing I saved. It may sound like dreaming, but I like to think that as my mother’s spirit departed the land of the living, she grabbed the jewelry box and placed it in my hands so that I would always know she was watching over me.

When my mother was killed, it shattered a piece of everyone who loved her, and sent dozens of lives tumbling off the path they were traveling. The heart of my family broke on that day, and rather than banding together in the wake of tragedy, everyone sort of burrowed deep into themselves, and away from another. My sister stayed in Colorado, and I was sentenced to live in northern Minnesota.

Growing up with my grandparents, it was my Aunt Lori whom I always felt closest to. She was the youngest of four; my mother had been the oldest. Lori and my mother weren’t the closest siblings, but my aunt was my bridge to memories of the mother I never got to know. While others in my family cringed at the conversation, and always ended it quickly, Lori saw the desperation in my desire to know anything about the angel who birthed me; she treated my curiosity with respect, and I clung to her. My mother’s murder broke Lori quite clearly; she ran away from home just as I moved into it. The end of her childhood was spent imprisoned in group homes, but it was this part of her that I bonded with; the rebel, the broken, alive soul that didn’t know how to handle this level of sadness. I saw her as a reflection of myself, and she saw me as an actual human. A shattered, misunderstood, wonderful thing.

Lori was like a guardian angel, left for me by my mother to save me when life became terrifying. There were times growing up when life in my house became... troublesome, dangerous. When my grandfather channeled his inner-demons, Lori always seemed to be there to whisk me away for a day or three until things became stable again.

Aunt Lori stands about 5'6. Maybe more, maybe less; I've never measured. I see her in my head with wavy brown hair to her shoulders, sporting a camo hat, baggy pants and an Ozzy Osbourne tie-dye t-shirt. She radiates with a golden aura, and tries so hard to hide the half-halo that floats above her head. When I open mom's jewelry box, the song it sings is an ode to Lori.

In the summer of 1998, I was somehow able to talk my grandfather into buying me tickets to Ozfest '98. This was nothing short of a miracle, as grandpa Denny's disdain for my newfound love of heavy metal was as obvious as the heat of the sun. He, of course, would have no part in attending the concert; so, one of his conditions for the tickets was that Lori would bring me. This was ideal, and felt like a dream I was sure to wake from.

I'm sure we talked about my mother, we always did. We talked about music, we always did. We talked about the concert, and she laughed at my anticipation of the event; to her this was just another concert. To me it was an awakening.

The actual event is a blur in my memory at this point, the first of a hundred concerts I have attended, but two things stick out to me when I look back. The first was Lori's smile when I looked back at her during the show; I can't speak to her actual feelings, but it felt like she was witnessing me see myself; urging me to hunt this hidden part of myself. There is no one else in this world I would have rather spent my first concert with.

The second thing that sticks out when I look back at that show was how surreal it felt; thousands, thousands, of humans moving, dancing, and screaming in a blur. Screaming. That's what really sticks out when I look back. I had never been encouraged to scream before. Screaming was always followed by pain, shunned. My emotions

were required to be hidden, buried. But here at a random festival park, surrounded by my beloved aunt and thousands of strangers, screaming was required.

And boy, did I scream. It felt like unlocking a burden that had been plaguing my very essence since I was old enough to have conscious thought. I screamed, nay, I howled. I remember Megadeth, Pantera, Motorhead, Tool, and Ozzy. I wailed along with all of them, and they helped me resurrect a part of myself that had been dead prior to that day.

When it was over, it felt like it never happened, as if it had all been too good to be true. I didn't know how to tell anyone how much it had meant to me; it was just a concert. A cool thing, to be sure, but just a concert. However, I knew my aunt had understood. She saw me experience it; saw it experience me.

When I got home that evening, my grandfather asked me how it was, and only nodded when I said it was amazing. He couldn't understand that I had needed to scream, and how much those shrieks had meant to me. When I left him, and returned to my room, my mother's jewelry box understood. When I opened it to talk to my mother, her song sang of discovery, love and understanding. I closed the box for the night, knowing that I had finally found a way to numb the pain.

I remember the Puerto Rican starfruit dropping its bearings like spring cleaning. Except it was September and I was supposed to be in school back in America, with the kids in our uniforms. Yeah, I talk to my mother about that trip sometimes, how it was so damn sweet and terrible. It lives on in us like a question. Why hadn't we visited sooner? Why was that our trip to see grandpa? The sweetness is the way Uncle Sammy shakes a tree behind Tia Hilda's casa and estrellas shoot down like they'd be willing to die instead of grandpa. There it is. The terrible.

Grandpa, quiet in bed with more tumors than time. The starfruit tastes so rico, its flesh an unending Orion belt of island sugar. Before that September moment, I never knew this fruit could exist or how the elongated star shape could remind me how quickly space dust dies when it tries to live this side of earth dome, what we say is home. I no longer wish on stars since our visit, but every so often I'll go wandering through carpeted grocery store. Stumbling for starfruit to see if some made it through the layers of atmosphere, into land of the still living, but I don't ever find one. Every starfruit an imposter; plucked too soon or taken too late for island sweet. No flesh resembling that trip one September when Sammy shook the starfruit tree. I try and wander, but I do not taste it. Maybe because grandpa died two weeks after we left. Maybe it is that Uncle Sammy died before we could make it back again. Or perhaps the star tree will only pour out its good stars for me and Sammy, but

not
just
me.

ISLAND NEED

Anna Rios

WINTER NIGHT SKY

● ● ● ●
Tara Guy

Winter sunset, deep rose, slowly purpling into twilight. With a sharp snick of boots snapping into bindings, I push off from where I am seated on the fallen log, for my evening ski across the lake. The ice is new, but solid, thanks to an unusually hard freeze at Thanksgiving, and the snow is newly fallen, last night, and this morning. To the east the moon is rising, a shimmering orb, dim shadows adding depth and mystery to its bland face. It floats over tall and jagged black pines, limning the village church steeple in silver, and making the snow ahead of me glisten. I cut a sharp, carved shadow on the sparkling face of the snow next to me; faultless dance partners, we are connected at the feet, my shadow and I.

To the north is the eerily vast expanse of frozen lake, stretching to the faraway shore ringed by towering dark forest shapes. I glide out onto the lake, easing into the familiar rhythm of arms and legs moving in opposition, and in unison. My skis susurrate through the soft snow, as I head toward the middle of the lake. Often on subzero nights, there will be a booming thunderclap under my moving skis, as the ice expands, growing deeper, down and down into the deep black water below the icy plain all around me. I shiver, more at the thought of the dark watery deep and its denizens, than at the cold. But this night, the ice remains silent.

My skis are new, slippery, unlike the ancient, battle-scarred pair now leaning in the corner of the garage. This makes my normally confident glide as timid as a beginner's in the snowmobile track I find and begin following across the lake. The track is glassy, and I slip, then slide, as though some capricious snow-sprite had slicked my path with silicone. I overbalance, and cartwheel my arms and ski-poles, and end up on my back, panting and digging cold snow from my collar, glad of no audience. Lying for a moment in my graceless tangle in the snow, I see above the horizon the gleam of stars becoming visible.

One-by-one they twinkle into life, until together they dim the particular brilliance of that first harbinger of night hanging in the western sky, the evening star. A chance recollection comes to me, from some old astronomy class, of the odd term used to describe that beautiful twinkling in the heavens...atmospheric seeing. Something so lovely, the bane of every telescope user, I remember, as I untangle skis and poles, right myself, and resume my trek on the frosty path. Rhythm recaptured, and still skiing north, I have soon reached the middle of the lake, my

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CONTRIBUTORS

Alexei Casselle is a Minneapolis-based artist and educator with over twenty years of experience in creative writing and music performance. His active music projects include Kill The Vultures, Mixed Blood Majority, Roma di Luna, and Double Dragon, a band consisting of him and his nine year-old daughter.

Anna Rios was born in Saint Paul, a place her inner compass and work points back to with reverie and quiet. Poetry is her favorite form of literature for many reasons but mostly because the form first and foremost belongs to those who are poor according to the standards of an American dream. Those pressed for time, resources, power in the shadow of their goal deferred. Although her time at Metro has left her amazed with epic poets, her first true love will always be the poems her mother never had time to write, their brevity her inspiration. She is working to practice law, and sorting through all of the world's poetry.

Christopher Denne is into medieval literature, history, romance era poetry and anything that makes me gasp, laugh, and/or wonder.

Dennis Daniels is a seventy-seven year old man and a junior at at MetroState, that makes him a senior/junior. His hobby is writing poetry, song lyrics, and short stories. He lives in Eden Prairie with his partner, Jeanne. He used to be an avid runner, but due to some physical issues he had to give up running. But he plays pickleball, volleyball, bocci ball, and works out regularly at the YMCA. Dennis has four children, a son and three daughters, and four grandchildren.

Farrah Al-Humayani received her Associates of Arts degree from Saint Paul College in May of 2017, shortly before graduating from high school in June of 2017. The PSEO program offered her the chance to get all of her generals done early on so that she could jump right into the subject matter she is passionate about—writing—directly out of high school. Farrah is currently enrolled as a Creative Writing major at Metro and feels that her view of the literary world is expanding daily. While she is open to writing and reading any genre, her favorite is fiction; more specifically, Farrah loves fantasy, romance, and dystopian novels.

Geoff Jordan is currently a student at Metropolitan State. Geoff is a business analyst and gets paid to play with logic and numbers but studies creative writing because he prefers to play with words and perceptions.

Janelle Danforth is a graduate student in the Technical Communications program. She is also currently working at Metro State as an office manager in the Information Technology department. Janelle loves to take photographs, especially of the natural beauty of sunsets. She works as a graphic designer and photographer on the side, and hopes to do this full time one day.

Jonathan Benitez is a first generation college student studying public relations and expects to graduate April 2018. He plans to use his degree to move up at his current job at Apple to a PR position at the headquarters in Cupertino, California. He has also practiced photography and videography for The Light of The World church for a few years locally. Jonathan recently joined Berea International based out of Guadalajara, Mexico to further assist the art in surrounding states around Minnesota and in Mexico. He does not plan to halt his studies after Metro State, he plans to continue living life as a student by reading books, finding mentors and researching online to learn new things. Each day is a new opportunity to be better than yesterday.

Jonathan Hiatt is a senior English major who hopes to intern at a literary press in the Twin Cities. His personal and professional interests include playing percussion, reading, proofreading, editing, SEO, and of course, writing. His favorite television show is (still) Better Call Saul on AMC.

Larry Simpson is a first-year student studying Creative Writing at Metro.

Lauren Peter is a Creative Writing major at Metro State. Her primary focus is poetry.

Lenore Vincent is a senior at Metro State majoring in Individualized Studies in Art, and Health. "Healing Echinacea" is a colored pencil drawing.

Marcia Alexander is best known for her random, and often disruptive, fits of laughter. When she is not disrupting class with these gregarious spasms, she enjoys writing, photography, painting, and print making. Her work focuses on portraitures, conveying universal human experiences and emotions.

Megan Bauer is a student in Metro State's social work program and will graduate in 2019. She has had a lifelong passion for writing and has most recently become fond of poetry.

Rebekah Pahr is a Metro State Alumni who majored in Technical Communication and graduated in 2012. She grew up in the Twin Cities and enjoys writing poetry that explores themes of nature and childhood memories. She is currently working for Westinghouse and living in St. Paul with her husband. When Rebekah is not writing she enjoys reading and seeking out new running routes.

Rhyan Bogle is a cook in Coon Rapids, who fancies the idea that imagination can change the world.

Ryan McClanahan was born and grew up near the River. He knew about ice and lakes before they taught him words. He writes about ridiculous characters, shattered worlds, and hopeful monsters. About the twistings of time and looming disasters. He found no reason to care about words until they started handing out pizza for reading books. Ryan is in his final semester, completing a Creative Writing degree which he should have just done in the first place, but like reading, he found no purpose in college until rejection letters informed him he had no idea what he was doing. He's just shy of unusually tall, loves simple things used masterfully, hates wearing socks, and lives in a land of arctic winters and tropical summers. Without his coffee and music, he would never get anything done. This bio has been surprisingly self-revelatory for him.

Sarah Fjellanger is a senior at Metro State and will soon graduate with a degree in Creative Writing. She enjoys writing short pieces and is currently working on a novel of historical fiction.

Shannon Rowley-Mahaney age 30. Born in Burnsville, Minnesota, a current resident of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Attending college full time and working towards an Education Degree, with a possible minor in writing. A submission of this kind has never been attempted before. Shannon is married and has been for four years, Amber (the wife) is to be accredited with making this submission possible as she has always pushed Shannon to leave that wonderful, however not productive, comfort zone.

Tara Guy is a Creative Writing major at Metro State, slogging slowly toward my undergrad degree, a journey that began in the 1970's and continues in fits and starts to this day. With two classes left, I'm close to graduation, at last. I hope to pursue a writing career in my retirement, when I'll have more time, and more peace in which to listen for the quiet inner voice.

Taylor Johnson Morning Prep is a still life charcoal drawing of related baking items sitting on a table. A strong light source casts dark shadows from the items and darkness envelops the background and bottom part of the picture. The glass pitcher plays with perception as shadows and backgrounds behind the pitcher are distorted. Overall, the picture captures the essence of preparing for the day ahead, when preparations are made the night before or during the early morning, when the sun has yet to rise.

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