

# HAUTE DISH

*The Arts & Literary Magazine of Metropolitan State University*



*Volume XVIII - Issue II*



# Haute Dish

---

Gina Torres	Managing Editor, Art Editor
Suzanne Nielsen	Faculty Advisor
Gabriella Vang	Business Manager, Poetry Editor, Prose Editor
Susan Yakoub	Layout Editor, Art Editor
Lucy Duroche	Poetry Editor, Proofreader
Sarah McVicar	Prose Editor, Art Editor
Felicia Tripodi	Poetry Editor
Jonathan Hiatt	Poetry Editor, Prose Editor, Proofreader
Fatima Hassan	Poetry Editor, Prose Editor, Proofreader
Joshua Rieger	Poetry Editor, Prose Editor
Miranda L. Okonek	Poetry Editor, Prose Editor, Proofreader

## ***ABOUT THE COVER***

Self Portrait by Tianna Price

## ***ABOUT***

Haute Dish is a publication of Metropolitan State University and is supported by funds from student activity fees.

## ***FOR MORE INFORMATION***

[hautedish.metrostate.edu](http://hautedish.metrostate.edu) | [hautedish@metrostate.edu](mailto:hautedish@metrostate.edu)

# Editor's Letter

---

"Your writing voice is the deepest possible reflection of who you are.

The job of your voice is not to seduce or flatter or make well-shaped sentences.

In your voice, your readers should be able to hear the contents of your mind, your heart your soul."

— Meg Rosoff

Welcome to the Spring 2021 edition of Haute Dish, the arts and literature magazine of Metropolitan State University and home of many aspiring artists.

When I first started as the Managing Editor for Haute Dish, I fell in love with its culture. For me, Haute Dish is more than a magazine or a student organization. Haute Dish is a family that works hard to make each publication possible. In this letter, my last for Haute Dish, I want to take the time to thank all its members.

Thanks to all the incredible editors who work behind the scenes on submissions, proofreading, and making sure that every published piece aligns with our mission, vision, and values. Thanks to everyone who shared their work with us and trusted us with presenting it to the Metropolitan State University in a professional way.

Thanks to the staff, alumni, and students at Metropolitan State University for your support. A special thanks goes out to our advisor, Suzanne Nielsen, for motivating us on pursuing our dreams and guiding us on our journey to success.

Finally, I'd like to thank you, the reader, for picking up this issue and supporting the talent of every Haute Dish. I hope that as you read and enjoy this publication, you might feel motivated to get involved with our team.

Today, my heart breaks as I say goodbye to this incredible organization, but it also rejoices as I introduce Susan Yakoub, our Layout Designer, on becoming the new Managing Editor for Haute Dish.

Happy reading,

*Gina Torres*

# Table of Contents

---

Rule Break by Fatima Hassan	page 6
Yellow by Carlyn Crouse	page 7
Sleepy San Francisco Nights by Susan Yakoub	page 8
Empty Glasses and Porcelain by Jonathan Hiatt	page 9
Blackest Night by Erik Suchy	page 10
Nude Figure Study by Tianna Price	page 11
Foxes and Coyotes by Zach Murphy	page 12
The Wealth of a Soul by Carlyn Crouse	page 13
Too Much Time On My Hands by Erik Suchy	page 16
Voices by Felicia Tripodi	page 17
Like a Sunset by Miranda Okonek	page 18
The End by Leanna Suarez	page 19
My World in Black and White by Joy Langenburg	page 20
What Would I Have Lived? by Carlyn Crouse	page 22
Dark Stairs by Erik Suchy	page 23
The Right Gift by Ligia Kendal	page 24
Self Portrait by Tianna Price	page 26
Promises by Jonathan Hiatt	page 27
Lessons from Mother Nature by Felicia Tripodi	page 28
Flower Power by Erik Suchy	page 30
The First Step by Leanna Suarez	page 31
The Eyes in the Mirror by Carlyn Crouse	page 33
Under My Wheels by Erik Suchy	page 34
A Fair Amount of Ghosts by Zach Murphy	page 35
Scars by Erik Suchy	page 36
Biographies	page 39

# Rule Break

Fatima Hassan

---

## Rule Break

Laws, order, policies, rules

Their the first things we learn in life

Starting from school

They can make you feel safe

And terrify you to obey

We may question its existence

But we can never get away

They bond us

Restrain the beast from within

As a means to become “civilize”

At the price of our freedoms

Its how its meant to be

But is it too much to ask

TO GET A DAMN BREAK?!

# Yellow

Carlyn Crouse

---

The kids at school taunt “yellow-belly”  
As if yellow can only be of cowardice  
But is it not also the color of our life-giving sun?

Is white not the color of both purity and emptiness?  
Is red not both love and anger?  
Or green not the color of both life and poison?

They call me yellow  
And yet  
My sunshine blinds them

# Sleepy San Francisco Nights

Susan Yakoub

---





# Empty Glasses and Porcelain

Jonathan Hiatt

---

Empty glasses and porcelain

Locked away in a cabinet you never open;

Handle and caution

For if they break,

Shattered remnants

Of the artisan's work

Cannot be glued together.

The books you keep on the shelves

Are worth a second look

Brand new, they entertain and enlighten

Curious minds

And those aghast and puzzled.

The dust settles, a filmy gray coating

And cobwebs in corners of your living room;

No matter, you seldom have company anyway.

2007

# Blackest Night

Erik Suchy

---

I was taken by a dark bird named defeat  
when my day was christened as a new beginning  
a fallen era that comprised a variety of unlike tastes  
they all giggle, *“welcome, offering of woe.”*

If the trees could converse as their leaves replenished  
and embrace all that is within me of former faith  
they wouldn't bite any more then the ocean would smother  
and clamor for the moments when exaltation was not a chimera

It swooped in without tranquility, a mere misnomer to its essence  
to fill the rooms of desolate inhabitancy with the call of its song  
that hummed a tune as my knees buckled under like butter  
until it found the soul it could call home

I see what lies on the other side of the mirror  
this skin that contracts with elongated displeasure  
did this skin used to know a dwelling that endured these nights  
when the fertility of my soil still grew crops of delicacy?

Outside where the midnight wind licks the ground  
with a sickening tongue that drools pain's prolonging  
inside, the bird joins the calls of the unlike tastes  
and they all giggle, *“welcome, offering of woe.”*

# Nude Figure Study

Tianna Price

---



# Foxes and Coyotes

Zach Murphy

---

The tulips grew apart from each other that Spring. The ground cracked and crumbled in ways that I'd never seen before.

I watched the foxes and the coyotes battle all Summer on Cesar Chavez Boulevard, where the blood would leave permanent stains on the concrete. The reckless packs would flash their teeth, mark their territories, and steal more than just scraps.

Me, I was a squirrel. I was small. But I was agile. I hustled from sun up until sundown at a frenetic pace. I always minded my own business and stuck to my own path. I didn't want to get involved with the vicious nature of pack mentality.

My best friend was a squirrel, too. We grew up around same nest. We used to climb trees, chase tails, and break soggy bread together. We'd walk the wires between safety and danger. And when we got too deep into the mess, we'd get out just in time. Growing up, I always wondered if we would live long enough to die from old age, or if the environment and its elements would get to us first.

That Fall, my best friend got caught up with the foxes and the coyotes. Now he's gone.

The foxes and the coyotes lied low in the Winter. Me, I trotted across the frozen ground and desperately hoped I'd see my best friend's footprints once again.

# The Wealth of a Soul

Carlyn Crouse

---

Hooray! The writer has died.

The ancient bronze bell in the center of town was rung. Once for alert, and twice to announce the passing of the old man.

He had lived in this small town for all his life, the son of a farmer and a farmer's wife. He grew to love a woman in the nearby town who came over to his to sell brilliantly embroidered cloth of every color. They settled on the edge of town in a farmhouse no longer in use. The wooden fences around the property were worn and needed mending. The grass on the hillside was spotty, where rain had fallen unfairly and given life to some parts and not to others. But the young couple didn't mind. They spent their evenings lying in the green and yellow grass on the hillside and watched the stars. Each night they gave new names to the diamond clusters in the sky and arranged them in every shape possible. Their imaginations were endless, as well as their love for one another.

The woman grew pregnant and they were overjoyed. They continued to go each night to the hillside on the edge of their property where she embroidered the stars on pieces of vibrant cloth. Reds as crisp as apples, blues as gloomy as a stormy night, yellows as warm as the afternoon sun. When she grew tired, he gently carried her home. But the man's joy was short lived, for the woman and child passed in childbirth one cold September night when the clouds covered the darkened sky and hid the diamond clusters away. No naming took place that day for child or stars.

The man was so stricken with grief that he never again took a wife. Instead, he found a new love in the written word. He pored over dusty pages that smelled of stale ink and read everything he could get his ravenous hands on. He wrote endlessly and took what little comfort he could in naming his characters. He wrote until his hand was raw, and then taught himself to write left-handed. He wrote day and night, only stopping on rare occasion to eat and relieve himself, until he emerged an aged man surrounded by a family of stories.

As the man grew grey and withered, the town watched in earnest. They knew how talented the man was. His writing had been prized in fairs, sold at markets, talked about in the town square daily, and landed in newspapers of larger towns. There was a myth in the area that when such a talent passed, it lived on in one of the person's prized belongings. Since the man had no heirs or family to his name, his estate would pass on to the town and be sold off for parts. The townsfolk waited and watched his talent grow from afar until they heard the bell ring on his dying day.

Bank tellers, lawmen, merchants, medicine men, and anyone with money came for a chance to bid on his belongings. Everyone wanted to claim that one item that would grant them comparable talent in their lives. A lawman with that much creative imagination could win every case. Medicine men could save every patient. Merchants would never lose a cent.

First to go were the quills and tiny glass bottles of ink, the very tools he touched daily to craft his work. Some of the quills were chewed on one end, some broken in frustration, and some even stained a dark rust from the old man's blood. Next were his papers, used and unused. Scribblings in the corners, pages torn in half or crumpled on the floor, some loosely tied together but most scattered unintelligibly. Every item in the writer's desk went for a substantial sum. Even the old rotting desk was sold for more than its original value.

The hungry pack of hyenas devoured his collection of books. They argued over which volumes were more influential and bid accordingly. Everyone was desperate to claim that one item that stored the soul of the old writer. Life fortunes were spent dividing up the house. Did he like to cook? All the kitchen utensils were sold, down to the blunt knives and the plate that housed his butter but was never touched. Did he like to garden? Every rusty tool was auctioned, along with all the plants on the property, until only the dirt remained. Some even bought sections of the broken fence that was never mended. All parts of the farmhouse were slowly scraped away.

The starving scavengers fought one another, placing higher and higher bids for any object left in the house, still worried they had not claimed the right piece. A shrewd merchant cut a deal with the auctioneer to get ahead of the competition. He yelled louder and bid higher, spending every dime to his name, while his four-year-old daughter wandered the grounds. She watched as men tore down the broken fence, uncarefully packed up oil paintings, and unearthed the plants. She walked delicately from room to room as each went from full of memories to dusty air that lingered gently in the beams of sunlight. Just as she was about to return to her father, a soft voice called to her. She turned, and a scrap of yellow cloth caught her eye as it nestled between the floorboards after being trampled by the pack of wolves. It was as small as the little girl's hand, but beautifully embroidered with the constellation of Virgo, the maiden of September. The cloth emanated a warm golden glow, while the slender maiden danced across in brilliant orange tones as fiery as the sun.

The little girl gently pleaded with her father to buy it, but he would not oblige. It was not worth what little money he had left to buy trash found on the floor. Saddened, the little girl obeyed and began to place the lonely constellation back where she found it, carefully sliding it between the splintered floorboards. But before the girl could walk away, the auctioneer noticed and happily offered the tiny scrap of cloth to the child, who grinned from ear to ear.

As the merchants, lawmen, bank tellers, and medicine men all ran out of money and were satisfied with how much they had acquired, they retired to their homes, now penniless but convinced they had purchased the old man's talent. However, as the years went by, it was clear that none of them had succeeded.

Memories of the old writer in the farmhouse at the edge of town faded away, along with the wealth of the town. The men despaired and tried desperately to sell the items that were now worth nothing, while the little girl held on tightly to her priceless treasure, the brilliantly embroidered constellation of Virgo.

The fiery maiden of September eternally sings softly to the girl while dancing across her imagination.

# Too Much Time On My Hands

Erik Suchy

---





# Voices

Felicia Tripodi

---

The ones who have voices  
have the ability  
to speak up about the things  
that are living in their minds,  
without letting fear threaten  
to pierce their hearts with a blade of steel.

Unlike me, they were able  
to develop confidence in their youth  
and go out into the world  
without questioning themselves  
or others questioning them.

Unlike me, they are able to stand up  
to the corrupted, the unjust,  
and speak out against the unfair workplace,  
discrimination, misogyny, and ableism.

I would give anything to have that kind of voice,  
so I could speak my mind, fly with confidence  
and show all the malevolent authorities  
what I'm worth in this planet.

And once I finally receive my new voice,  
I will shed this heavy burden of a cocoon  
and have the wings of strength and truth.

# Like a Sunset

Miranda Okonek

---

We were huddled into a pile of twisted arms and legs, sobbing on the basement floor.

“Mommy? Why do we have to be in the basement if we are going to die?”

I looked at Scarlett’s soft heart shaped face stained with tears and my throat filled with bitter bile. The young girl who would forever be nine years old.

“The person on the radio said the basement is the safest place to be.” I echoed the experts; I didn’t really know why we’d choose to spend our last minutes as a family laying on moldy, nasty carpet.

“I want to see the world end.” Scarlett always spoke with authority.

“Why?”

“Maybe it will be beautiful, like a sunset. And you love sunsets Mommy.”

We moved to our front porch and watched the angry sky burning red and orange. It was beautiful.

# The End

Leanna Suarez

---

He took a deep breath. His eyes on the road ahead of them. She knew what he was about to say.

The bed had become a lake between them. They swam around each other afraid to disrupt the delicate balance between love lost and indifference.

“I want to move out.”

# My World in Black and White

Joy Langenburg

---



I am a Black woman who was raised by a white family. My mother came of age in the 60s. She was a white girl who grew up in a southern white town during a time when Jim Crow laws were alive and well. Despite the fact that she grew up in an environment that ran the gamut from subtly to overtly racist, my mother's heart was for Civil Rights. When four black schoolgirls were killed in the Birmingham church bombing in 1963, she was outraged and heartbroken. My mother didn't get to march with Martin Luther King, Jr., or ride with the Freedom Riders, but she cried over the injustices that Black people faced. Sometimes I think adopting Black children was my mother's way of trying to help break the racial barriers that she felt so helpless to fix when she was growing up. My mother was

very conscious about making sure I learned about the Civil Rights movement when I was a child. She saved old TIME magazines with Martin Luther King, Jr. on the cover, and I would sit with her and look at pictures of Black people being sprayed with fire hoses held by white men. How could people be so awful to each other because of the color of their skin?

Growing up under the umbrella of my family's whiteness, I didn't experience as much discrimination as I might have otherwise. I wonder if their white privilege spilled over onto me. It didn't shield me from everything, though. I remember being at a grocery store when I was nine. As I stood by myself near the store entrance waiting for my family to finish checking out, two older white ladies approached. They were talking nonchalantly about what they were there to buy. The woman closest to me looked me straight in the eye and said to her companion, "We can start shopping as soon as this darkie gets out of the way." Shock coursed through my body, right down to my fingers and toes. I felt numb and frozen in place as I stood staring silently back at her. It wasn't so much the words she had spoken. It was the distain in her voice. She looked at me like I was beneath her, an inconvenience that she didn't want to have to deal with. I never told my mother what happened that day. I never told anyone.

As a child, I became aware that I was often the first Black person that people experienced in a positive light. Why was I the exception? Because I talked "white"? Because I was a polite little girl who said please and thank you? I was always on my best behavior when meeting new people so I didn't perpetuate any

stereotypes that they might have about Black people. Sometimes it felt like a heavy burden to bear. I was raised to be colorblind, and I took it for granted that people would like me once they got to know me, regardless of my skin color. I can see now how damaging this mindset can be. How would this prepare me for situations down the road when people did not take the time to get to know me and made a flash judgement because of the color of my skin? I know that it was not my mother's intention to handicap me in this way. Her goal was that we would love each other regardless of skin color.

After I graduated high school, I spent four years in small, predominately white midwestern towns. One of these towns had an old-fashioned drug store that my friends and I decided to check out. The white lady who worked behind the counter took it upon herself to stand at the end of every aisle I was in to keep an eye on me. I was the only Black person in the store and the only person she felt the need to monitor. Just like when I was a little girl in the grocery store, I kept quiet and didn't tell anyone. I didn't have the confidence in myself at the time to stand up to this form of racism, so I just ignored it. It made me feel angry, and something else...maybe shame or embarrassment. I was being singled out for something I had no control over. I was being convicted of a crime I had no intention of committing.

Twice in my life I've been told by people close to me that they were surprised to hear that I identified as Black. I was offended by this at first. Of course I identify as Black. I am Black after all. As I reflected on their comments, I began to realize that throughout my life, I have had the luxury of disconnecting from the struggles of the Black community. I remember seeing the video of Rodney King being beaten when I was in high school. It made me physically ill. The racial strife was palpable as they showed the rioting and violence, but I was able to turn off the television and go about my business. While I wouldn't go so far as to say I identified as white, I couldn't fully relate to the Black struggle either. As I see Black men like George Floyd continue to say, "I can't breathe" as they lay dying at the hand of white police officers, I can no longer turn away. I can no longer keep these experiences at arms length. The Black struggle is my struggle.

I am now a Black woman with children of my own. I married a white man, and I have two beautiful mixed-race boys. My boys are very light-skinned, and I know that because of this they will inherit the white privilege that I had by proxy. As their Black mother, I feel the weight of rearing them to be strong men who will stand up for injustice when they see it. I want them to know that they may experience life differently because they are mixed-race. I want them to see that others experience hardships because of their skin color, and I want them to empathize with the pain that is endured because of that. My heart will champion them and I will teach them as my mother taught me when I was young. This is my world in Black and White.

# What Would I Have Lived?

Carlyn Crouse

---

If the world would end tomorrow  
What would I have lived?

These twenty some years  
Thirty some points on a resume  
Forty lines of a poem  
But what about those  
Fifty years of marriage I was promised  
Or sixty years to know my children  
Give me just six more months to be an aunt  
And more than one month to be a wife

What plagues our world is more  
Than a disease of the flesh  
It's a virus of the mind  
A hollow of the soul  
It's the idea that tomorrow will always come  
Always bring a new sun  
But nothing is certain  
Except the question  
What would I have lived?  
Time is a delusion

If given six months  
I would be naive to believe  
I'd be any place other than standing here  
Asking the same question  
Telling myself the same lies  
And simply wishing for six more

# Dark Stairs

Erik Suchy

---



# The Right Gift

Ligia Kendal

---

“Isn’t she done yet? Why does Abue take so long? She knows we can’t start *Noche Buena* without her.”

“*Cállate Daniela. Mi mama* will be done when she’s done. *Paciencia por favor.*”

“But *Mami*, look how long she’s taking; she’s just sitting there holding her *café con leche*. Why do we have to wait until she’s finished eating if there isn’t any food left on her plate? It’s not fair!”

“It’s just the way it is *mija*, once you get to be her age, you can make the rules. For now, we wait. Just be happy you don’t have to wait until Christmas morning like the *gringos* do.”

“*Ahora sí. Empezamos, ¿no?*” my grandmother asks innocently, then winks at me as she rises from the table and heads to the sala.

¡*Al fin!* Finally! My heart pounds as I race to the Christmas tree sitting by the front window and shout out, “I call dibs on going first!” But my uncle gets there before I can grab one of the boxes wrapped in brightly colored shades of red, green, and gold. I know those are the ones Mom wrapped. She’s very traditional like that.

Instead he grabs a shiny silver and blue box, crying out, “*Para la hija más linda*”, as he hands it over to my cousin Isa. Sure it stings that she got her gift first, but even though I call him Papi, he’s her dad, not mine. Now into full Santa mode, he passes out gifts and compliments. Soon enough everyone is ripping into their gifts; the paper and ribbon are flying everywhere.

My *Tía Mari* is way flashier than Mom, so glitter glue, shiny unicorn stickers, toy jewelry, and every sparkly thing you can think of comes flying out of my tightly packed silver and blue box. At first, I think there’s a mistake and this is for my baby sister, but when I see my aunt’s face, I know she really thinks I still like this kind of stuff. Remembering what *Mami* taught me, I get up to thank her with a hug.

“*Gracias Tía*, it’s all very pretty. I bet Anita tries to steal them from me.” But my sister won’t have to try too hard as I’ll probably end up giving it all to her.

Besides, that box doesn’t matter because there’s one more gift still waiting for me. I already know what it is. I’ve only been pestering Mom for it all year long, so there’s no doubt in my mind what it is. As my uncle hands me the box, he asks with a grin, “It’s pretty big. Think you can handle it *Dani*?”

Greedily, I snatch it from him and shred the paper in my desperation to break open the box to get my hands on my shiny, new...wait, what? How can this be? A doll? An ugly, fat Cabbage Patch Kid doll? What happened? Where’s my new boombox? How am I going to listen to my music? Do I look like a little baby who still plays with dolls? I’m going to be twelve in four days – what gives?

All I want to do is cry and scream, but even though Mom doesn’t seem to know me well, I know her. I know she works so hard being Mom and Dad to us, so even though I want to hurt her feelings like she just did mine, I don’t.

“*¡Dios mío!* I’m sorry *mija*, I must have mislabeled the boxes. That’s for your sister. Here. Here’s your present.” Mom kisses the top of my head as she hurriedly switches the boxes.



What? It was a mistake? The doll's not mine? Thank you, Jesus! I'm really glad I didn't say anything when I first saw its ugly face. Last Christmas I made the mistake of trading gifts with my cousin because she likes big stuffed animals and I love jigsaw puzzles. Mom got so angry because the bear had cost a lot more than the puzzle. I tried telling her just how much I LOVE puzzles, but she gave me the silent treatment for a few days. Sometimes I wonder who's the bigger baby – her or Anita.

As glad as I am that I'm not stuck with that doll, thinking about the mess with the puzzle, I can't help wondering if I'm still going to be disappointed when I open up the right box. I'm not tearing into the wrapping like I did before, and my hands are shaking a little bit.

*Mi abuela* can be a bit mean and crazy sometimes, but she can also be really sweet. This was one of those super sweet moments as she comes up behind me and rubs my back while saying, “*Está bien niña, si te va gustar. Te prometo.*” How does she do it? She always seems to know what I'm feeling. Her reassurance that I really will like my present steadies my hands and they pick up the pace to reveal what's inside.

Under the paper, sitting on top of the box, is a big book of word and math puzzles. Mom grins at my quiz-zical look and nods towards her mother. So *Abuela's* assurances were on the fact that she had snuck in something she was sure I would like. Like I said, she can be really sweet sometimes, and crazy. I'm really glad she is and say “*Gracias Abue*” as I gently set the book aside and turn my attention to what lies beneath. The glossy label covering the box has sections of English, French, and what I think is Chinese, describing all the cool features available on my very shiny, very new, and very purple boombox!

“You do know that this counts as your birthday present too,” Mom laughs as I nearly knock her over with one of my world-famous bear hugs. “But you'll still get breakfast in bed.”

I can't thank Mom enough. This isn't the right gift. This is the perfect gift!

# Self Portrait

Tianna Price

---



# Promises

Jonathan Hiatt

---

I made promises to  
Myself, deliberate and intentional, furious  
Was the promise of living and not  
Merely existing a mirage, was  
Hope a mirage too or maybe  
My dreams like clouds,  
Clouds in my coffee?

I made promises too  
Little, too  
Late, too  
Many and everything all at once  
And what about college  
Or careers or children...

And what about contentment?

I made a promise  
To take each day as it comes.  
Today is beautiful  
And my promise is  
Enough for today.

And so it is with you.

July 31, 2014

# Lessons from Mother Nature

Felicia Tripodi

---

Sometimes, Mother Nature provides us with valuable learning experiences. Being born and raised in the north, I experience all four seasons, and my favorite out of all of them is autumn. I have so many fond memories of autumn: Going trick or treating with my sister and my only neighborhood friend. My mom taking my sister and I to a pumpkin patch farm an hour away from the Twin Cities, then come home and carve the pumpkins while watching *Hocus Pocus* and walk around Minnehaha Falls the next day. The one fall memory that always stands out to me was the following October after my autism diagnosis. When the leaves started to change colors, I would find a tree to sit by near the playground and just stare at them throughout recess, letting them bring comfort to me while ignoring the snotty girls in my class trying to tease me for being weird, and our teacher telling them to stop.

I am also a northerner than loves anything ocean themed. After watching the first *Pirates of the Caribbean* film and whatever Discovery Channel show that featured the ocean and its inhabitants, I kept telling my parents that I wanted to swim in the ocean someday; a nice, crystal clear ocean that wasn't filthy like Lake Nokomis. That tropical dream of mine came true sooner than I expected when my family moved to Florida in the summer of 2004. My eight-year-old sister and my eleven-year-old self were ecstatic at the idea of spending Christmas at the beach and getting free passes to Disney World (where my father got the opportunity to work as the live sound engineer at Pleasure Island) whenever we wanted to go. I remember our first visit to Coco Beach. I was happy to finally sit on that warm sand and stare out into the beautiful ocean and its calming waves. All four of us were in complete paradise, but little did we know that living in the south came with some rude awakenings, one of them involving nature.

We learned right away that our neighborhood was located near an alligator swamp. Our new neighbors warned us that once in a while these creatures would appear in the neighborhood, and if someone came across it, they had to immediately run in a zig zag all the way home so that the alligator got confused and won't be able to run up to them. They lived so close that we could hear them make low humming sounds in the middle of the night. Then there were the sinister banana spiders. According to the neighbors, they were more deadly than black widows, and the only way to get rid of them was to set them and their egg sacs on fire. They lived in their own web attached to cattails right in front of the neighborhood park that the kids and teens hung out at every day. Fire ants inhabited the palm trees, and tiny little snakes secretly pop out of the blue on our lawn.

Barely a month had passed when Hurricanes Charlie (category four), arrived with a vengeance. Hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne (both category three) came along a few weeks later. Since our house did not have a basement and there were no mandatory evacuations in our area, the safest spot in our home away from the windows was my parent's bedroom closet. It was during Hurricane Charlie that I experienced my own autistic "I hate change" breakdown.

The storms and alligators were stressful to me every day, but it was the indoor environment of elementary school that completely took a mental and emotional toll on me. Being the only kid in the entire school that had any kind of special needs (Florida doesn't require their schools to provide help for children with disabilities), I was a freak to my classmates and a burden to my teachers. On an extremely hot sunny day, I sat on the bench next to my homeroom teacher as part of my detention for being a "poor listener" while the other kids got to enjoy recess. I tried to find something to take my mind off from this heinous torture by looking at anything: The sky above me that was just as bright and blue as the ocean, the silver wired fence surrounding the entire playground like a prison, and the small palm trees on the other side of that fence, teasing me with their careless breeze. None of them were as helpful as that beautiful autumn tree that gave me comfort two years earlier. It was early October at this point. Minnesota would be at its peak with their fall colors, and I was missing out on them. I was missing out on my favorite season.

There were other reasons that made us to move back to Minnesota, but the environment was the main one. After the last hurricane, my mom was scared and paranoid about future tropical storms and whether we would survive them or not (Hurricane Katrina happened a year later, so we were lucky to leave when we did). The four of us came to an agreement that we would take our chances with below zero temperatures than to go through another life-threatening storm (and alligators). This entire experience was Mother Nature's way of telling us that we were not meant to live here. We were northerners, and always will be. When we finally arrived in Bloomington in early November, the autumn leaves, though nearly dead and crispy, were there to greet us at my grandparents' house. A week later I was enrolled at Oak Grove Elementary to continue fifth grade. On my first day, I went outside after lunch and noticed a huge field just below the hill where the playground is, and there in front of me are big trees, full of fading red and yellow leaves. I sat on the ground and took this as a welcome home gift from mother nature.

Almost seventeen years later, I remain grateful to live here in Minnesota, a place full of acceptance for those with all forms of disabilities. I remain grateful to live in a state where I can experience the beauty of all four seasons, especially fall, when I take my walks at Minnehaha Falls and sit by a tree to take in the colors. At the same time, my love for the ocean remains with me, and despite all that I went through, I intend on visiting Florida again someday, but would I move back? Absolutely not.



# Flower Power

Erik Suchy

---



# The First Step

Leanna Suarez

---

*“What brings you here today?”*

That’s probably not the first question my new therapist had asked me. I don’t remember exactly how she started our first session together. I only remember feeling awkward and stupid. I had been on the verge of tears at the first hint of kindness in her eyes.

*“I broke my necklace.”*

A fucking broken necklace brought me to my knees between the dining table and the credenza. I was sobbing, holding tightly to two pieces of the only constant in my life. It had been an anniversary gift. I wore it every day. I don’t remember how long I stayed on the floor crying, but long enough to be found by my husband, our daughter, and her best friend. All three looked at me like I was crazy.

*“Let’s talk about what has been going on in your life.”*

I’d been arguing with my husband about something insignificant; like the laundry not being put away. This time, instead of getting angry, I just sat on the side of the bed and stared at the bottle of prescription sleeping pills on the nightstand. While he was raging behind me, I thought about how I’d take them one by one until the bottle was empty. I’d shake out the pills into my hand, put one in my mouth, take a sip of Coke, swallow, start over again, lay down, and ... just go to sleep.

*“Keep going.”*

The road to get help had been a long one. The year before, my daughter had tried to kill herself. I got a call in the middle of the day from the middle school principal asking me to come to the school. She said there was a concern for my daughter’s health and safety. My hands shook, and my heart pounded the entire drive. I went over every worst-case scenario and still didn’t manage to hit on the truth.

*“What happened with your daughter?”*

She had been bullied for her weight, her height, not being Latina enough, not being white enough, crooked teeth, glasses, you name it. She stopped eating and began to cut herself. She then tried to take her own life. Her dad and I missed all signs. She kept it well hidden from us. It was a friend who alerted the school counselor.

Our way of life changed that afternoon. I was given a lockbox by the county social worker to lock up all medications in the house. I had to take every sharp implement out of the kitchen, basement, garage and hide them from my daughter. There were near-daily visits from the county therapist until we could get her placed with a permanent therapist.

I was the one who took her to every therapist appointment. She was diagnosed with disordered eating, generalized anxiety disorder, and depression. I filled her medications and made sure she took them every day. I removed the scale in the bathroom so she couldn't weigh herself after eating. Dinners had to be adjusted for her to eat properly again.

I spent every night wide awake worrying about her. I would have to check on her avoiding every squeaky floorboard so as not to wake her. I needed the reassurance that she still breathed. I would put my hand on her back to feel it rise and fall like I had when she was a baby. Then, and only then, could I sleep.

*"What about your husband? Wasn't he helping you out?"*

He worked constantly. He wasn't around to help me. I did the grocery shopping, the cooking, the dishes, the laundry, the yardwork, vet visits, and school conferences, all while working full-time as well. I wasn't sleeping. I was barely eating myself. It's no wonder I had a meltdown over a necklace.

*"Sounds like we have a lot to sort through."*

She could say that again, and again, and again. I had taken the first step, though.



# The Eyes in the Mirror

Carlyn Crouse

---

I peered through the tenebrous mirror and what there did I see, but the sad weary eyes of a stranger caught looking at me. Why have you come here? I interrogated the darkened silhouette. She looked at me in grave contemplation, her eyes sharp as ice picks, hacking away bits of my soul. I stood there frozen as she chipped away every racing thought left in my mind. Her eyes sighed.

Do not gaze at these eyes and question. My child, these eyes are yours.

These eyes have been the viewpoints for countless souls and catalogued innumerable memories. They have witnessed many stories, some that never finished. A newborn babe who looks upon his mother's warm face for the very first time. A widow who stares at her freshly bare finger as she rubs the smooth flesh; no future to look to, only the haunted memories of the past.

These eyes have smiled warmly at the sights of nature and children, growing together. They have witnessed love and laughter. Been blinded by the sun as it bounces off the brilliant white snow. Darted a cheeky glance to a friend with a shared secret. A split curiosity. A wide-eyed gulp of pleasure at the sight of reunion, a friendship thought lost, but recovered. Eyes that met in a shy acquaintance, laughed in friendship, and shouted in love.

These eyes have cried oceans. They have looked into the eyes of the dead. Of family gone. Of people they will never look upon again. Longing to glance into a soul once more, but never again. Fighting to instill only the best representations into long-term memory.

The moment when she told you she would always be yours. When he told you he beat cancer, only to get into a car accident the following year. No one lasts on this earth forever, and we are blind to what comes after.

These eyes have witnessed regret in hindsight and despair at the forking path of decisions. They have stared at the ground in embarrassment and shame. Avoided contact out of guilt. They have divorced again and again, unsure of which eyes to turn to. Staring into lonely darkness, sometimes in courage but mostly in fright.

These eyes miss things. They get distracted by the rain and they hide from the harsh light of day. Finding meaning in complete nothingness, they see what they want. They sneeze at the sun and drift away with dandelion plumes. Carried away by the changing wind, they miss what's in front of them, and yet see so much more.

These eyes have seen many lives and countless places. They have been golden brown, slate blue, evergreen, and every combination between. Now these eyes gaze into yours through the mirror, my child, vibrant and new. They weep tears that cascade down hollow cheeks. Not out of sadness, but for all the things you have yet to see.

# Under My Wheels

Erik Suchy

---



# A Fair Amount of Ghosts

Zach Murphy

---

He plays the trumpet brilliantly on the corner of Grand and Victoria. He doesn't look like he's from this era. He's impeccably dressed, from his crisply fitting suit to his smooth fedora hat. There aren't many folks that can pull that off. He's cooler than the freezer aisle on a sweltering summer day. He performs the type of yearning melodies that give you the goosebumps. I've never seen anyone put any money into his basket.

There's a formidable stone house that sits atop Fairmount Hill. It's been for sale for as long as I can remember. The crooked post sinks deeper into the soil with each passing year. It isn't a place to live in. It's a place to dwell in. There's a dusty rocking chair on the front porch. It's always rocking. Always rocking. I'm not sure if the chair is occupied by an old soul or if it's just the wind. Maybe it's both. I guess the wind is an old soul.

This town is full of posters for Missing Cats. There's one for a sweet, fluffy Maine Coon named Bear. He's been gone for a while now. I've searched through every alleyway, under every porch, and inside of every bush for him. Sometimes I think I see him out of the corner of my eye. But then he's not there. The rain has pretty much washed away the tattered posters. If he ever turns up, I worry that the posters will be missing.

I met the love of my life in Irvine Park, near the gloriously spouting water fountain, beneath the serene umbrella of oak trees. We spent a small piece of eternity there together. We talked about whether the world was coming to an end soon or not and if all of our memories will be diminished along with it. After we said our goodbyes and she walked off into the distance, I never saw her again. So I left my heart in Irvine Park.

# Scars

Erik Suchy

---

The afternoon sun beat overhead, scorching the already-boiling air quality around the lake to a degree most would find unbearable to walk through. The hiking path surrounding all 1,000+ miles of its circumference was empty, and wherever one, let alone several waves struck its rocky barriers, few people stopped to witness the great force they exhibited as they crashed, extending higher and higher before finally crumpling down.

Dustin Whitehall refused to gripe about his walking conditions, even within the confines of his mind as he strode along a particularly broken, unpaved section of trail, eyes staying fixated on keeping ahead and not back. On days with a more tolerable summer climate, ones not racked by heat that stung at his neck like an angry bee swarm, he would make his afternoon walks much more common, regardless of his circumstances. Perhaps his current attitude could have stayed plenty optimistic if specific incidents didn't give him any other option than to flee from his house, some 20-or-so minutes within walking distance behind him. All the while, his hope lessened, and he clutched the fresh set of scars he had embedded into his arms, still prickling and burning.

It wasn't the first time he had resorted to this while he'd been listening to the explosion of his parents quarreling with each other like verbal battleships, lobbying bombs, rockets, and missiles carrying words like "Bastard," "Whore," and "Shitbag" that never neglected to hit their targets. Initially, his marks would seethe with a fire he had only seen play out in volcanic eruptions in National Geographic documentaries he used to rent from the library. By now, he'd accepted the hurt

for what it was, so long as the raging blaze that was his home life rejected to simmer down to the degree he wanted it to.

He stopped and turned to look down over the guard railing at the water, sloshing and beating against the rocks some fifty feet below.

And then he found himself thinking of them both.

Him, swigging bottle after bottle of Crown Royal like a shark gulping for chum, telling him he was a mistake best left aborted and buried way beyond six feet under where the dead couldn't speak volumes to him. Her, a negligent, damaged shell of a parental figure, unwilling to stand up and fight for her son. Law enforcement called multiple times. Him being arrested directly on the spot. Her bailing him out with endless wads of cash because she couldn't see anyone else helping her pay rent, regardless of the beatings that left bruises the size of pancakes all over her. All with him in the middle, crying, shaking, discouraged, and alone, cutting himself with the same, routine kitchen knife, wondering if he'll ever make it out alive.

He turned his focus back toward the waves. They knew how to be alive.

He pulled out his cell phone and dialed for her, putting it up to his ear as it rang.

He heard it connect.

"Hello?"

"Hello, mom," he coolly replied.

"Dustin? Honey, where are you right now?"

"I'm out, Mom," he answered softly. "I'm out for now, anyway."

"Where at?" Her tone was now speaking in slim amounts of fear, threatening to rise exponentially.

"I'm going to move on," he said. "I'm going to be up where I hope someday, you and Dad can think of me in a happier light when you choose to think about me again."

"Dustin?! Dustin, what are you going to do with yourself? I hear waves. Are you going to jump? Baby, please, don't, we love you, please, your father and I care about you more than anything in--

--in the world?" he interjected. His voice remained bereft of emotion and unwilling to let her pleas sway him. "Mom, I looked into yours and Dad's world today with my eyes open wider than I've ever kept them open in my life. Do you know what it said to me when it spoke?"

More silence followed, broken only by her labored, frantic breaths. He tried not to listen with too much investment; only the waves below spoke to him, and they were waiting patiently.

"Dustin--"

--it didn't speak to me at all, Mom. It just looked back at me with its two heavy eyes, and I knew, all the

same, those eyes told me there wasn't any room left to welcome me into its home. And Mom, I just want to go to my own home now."

"Oh dear Christ, Dustin--"

"I'm going, Mom. Please forgive me if God prefers not to do it Himself."

And only more silence spoke to the screams of Mrs. Whitehall before another set of waves smacked into the barriers, drowning her out as their collisions echoed and overpowered the tranquility of the atmosphere that once was.

# Biographies

---

**Miranda Okonek** lives in a historic home on the East Side of Saint Paul that she is constantly rehabilitating. She is a volunteer staff writer for her neighborhood paper The Dayton's Bluff District Forum covering community events and aesthetic. Her inspiration to write stems from her love of gardening as she cultivates the stories that blossom from within the cracks of life around her.

**Leanna Suarez** has been writing stories ever since she first read Louisa May Alcott's Little Women. She will graduate in Spring 2021 from Metro with a Bachelor's in English, after which she will focus on writing her debut novel. She has two children, a daughter studying Musical Theater at UMD and a son in his sophomore year at Roosevelt High School.

**Carlyn Crouse** is a fantasy, horror, and science fiction writer. She recently earned a degree in Creative Writing with a minor in Game Studies from Metropolitan State University. Her poetry, flash fiction, and non-fiction can be found in Haute Dish and she works as a freelance gaming journalist with articles featured in The Metropolitan and on the gaming sites Wowhead and Pro Game Guides. In her spare time, she is an avid gamer, spending ample time in the world of Azeroth. She lives in fantasy, dreams reality, and can never quite distinguish the two.

**Zach Murphy** is a Hawaii-born writer and a graduate of Metro State's Screenwriting program. His stories have appeared in Adelaide Literary Magazine, Ellipsis Zine, Emerge Literary Journal, The Bitchin' Kitsch, Ghost City Review, Lotus-eater, Crêpe & Penn, WINK, Drunk Monkeys, Door Is A Jar, and Yellow Medicine Review. He lives with his wonderful wife Kelly in St. Paul, Minnesota.

**Joy Langenburg** graduated from Metropolitan State with a bachelors degree in Biology in the spring of 2020. She is currently applying to grad school and plans to pursue her Masters in counseling. Joy is a mom to 2 boys and currently works in the mental health field. She loves to travel and spend time with her family and her dog. Nature is her healing spot and she takes any opportunity to go to Duluth to spend time by Lake Superior. Writing has become a favorite past time over the last few years, and she enjoys blogging.

**Felicia Tripodi** is a creative writing major at Metropolitan State University and is expected to graduate in December of 2021. Aside from her studies and part-time job, Felicia is currently writing her first creative non-fiction book called 'Letters', and loves to escape from society with books, heavy metal music, and Netflix.

**Erik Suchy** is a student pursuing a bachelor's degree in creative writing at Metropolitan State University in St. Paul, Minnesota. His aim in life is to make it big as a successful columnist for a major newspaper/online publication, such as The New York Times, Star Tribune, or St. Paul Pioneer Press.

**Jonathan Hiatt** is a Poetry Editor and alum who completed a Bachelor of Arts in English (Cum Laude) from Metro State on December 13, 2020. He has been involved with Haute Dish since 2017 and his works have been published in three previous issues.

Jonathan is currently enrolled at Southern New Hampshire University in Manchester, NH. He is pursuing his M.A. in English degree and hopes to build a freelance editorial business.

**Tianna Price** is a junior studying Studio Arts at Metropolitan State University. Currently, she is living in St. Paul with her wife, two cats, and two dogs. She enjoys exploring a variety of mediums and has a particular interest in painting and embroidery.

Currently, a student of English and Creative Writing at Metropolitan State University after earning an Associate degree in Liberal Arts from Saint Paul College, **Ligia Kendall** is a woman who has finally come into her own. She was first published in third grade as part of a small anthology of students' work created in honor of the retiring principal of her elementary school. As a teen and young adult, she dabbled in what she thought was poetry, but were really prayers for reassurance and direction in navigating the complexities of life. Her adult life crisscrossed through changing jobs, homes, states, even countries, but her faith remained constant. Now happily rooted in Minnesota with her beloved husband Brian, she has returned to pen and paper with the hope of sharing her experiences and epiphanies to bring some light and love, healing tears and laughter, to a scared, angry, and brokenhearted world.

**Susan Yakoub** is a California-born Assyrian and Minnesota transplant. Aside from reading and writing, in school and for fun, Susan enjoys gaming, cooking and learning about her ancient culture. She is currently pursuing her bachelors degree in English.

*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.*

*Categories include: poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, memoir/personal essay, visual art (photography, illustration, Focus on Metro), and digital storytelling.*

*Who May Submit? Current students, staff, faculty, and alumni of Metropolitan State University are all welcome to submit their work for both the fall and spring issues.*

*Haute Dish is supported exclusively by funds from Metropolitan State University student activity fees.*

## **DEADLINES**

**Fall Issue - April 15**

**Spring Issue - November 15**

## **VISIT US!**

**[hautedish.metrostate.edu](http://hautedish.metrostate.edu)**

## **QUESTIONS?**

**[hautedish@metrostate.edu](mailto:hautedish@metrostate.edu)**

## **LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!**

**[@HauteDishofMetroState](https://www.facebook.com/HauteDishofMetroState)**