

DOOR = JAR



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Door Is A Jar

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by Jaina Cipriano

Table of Contents

- p. 9 incantation by Salvatore Folisi
- p. 10 Waiting by Diane Funston
- p. 11 Slip Dream by Diane Funston
- p. 13 reciprocal sun by Linda Crate
- p. 14 the sky that never falls by Linda Crate
- p. 15 I LOVE ASPHALT by Kristan LaVietes
- p. 16 Love, Cupid by Arlene Tribbia
- p. 18 Spiral Handrail by Victoria Mullen
- p. 19 Miss Frou Frou by Victoria Mullen
- p. 20 Pilothouse for Irish fishing boat in dry dock by
Michael C. Roberts
- p. 21 Ancient door lock in Cefalu, Sicily, Italy by
Michael C. Roberts
- p. 22 Minimalism gnarly tree to sky Grand Canyon by
Michael C. Roberts
- p. 23 Stilettoes by Jodi Cadenhead
- p. 24 Salad Daydreams by Jodi Cadenhead
- p. 25 Omen by Rushika G. Ramani
- p. 26 I spy with my little tired eye by Rushika G.
Ramani
- p. 27 Mindfulness Season by Carlin Corsino
- p. 28 Braver Every Day by Stephen Kampa
- p. 29 Dirge of the Doordasher by Matt McGee
- p. 32 Pueblo Español by Nuala McEvoy
- p. 33 Evie's Space City by Nuala McEvoy
- p. 34 Clockwork by Patrick McEvoy and Olivia Pelaez
- p. 36 Night by Darlene Bester
- p. 37 Infinity by Darlene Bester
- p. 38 River Song 1 by Emma Galloway Stephens
- p. 39 River Song 3 by Emma Galloway Stephens
- p. 40 Atmo by Eamon Costello
- p. 41 Gifts by Antonios Tsoulfas
- p. 45 The Devil Walked Here by Jaina Cipriano

- p. 46 The Last One to Leave the Party by Jaina Cipriano
- p. 47 Power Prayer by Jaina Cipriano
- p. 48 Growl 2a by Edward Michael Supranowicz
- p. 49 That Crazy Hand Jive by Edward Michael Supranowicz
- p. 50 The Collision of Faith and Doubt by Edward Michael Supranowicz
- p. 51 Twin by Ryan Keating
- p. 52 swirling sugar by Joe Bisicchia
- p. 53 see me by Joe Bisicchia
- p. 54 Fractions by Ophelia Monet
- p. 55 Vultures by Ophelia Monet
- p. 56 My Own Way by Bill Abbott
- p. 57 Shake Before Using by Bill Abbott
- p. 59 Watch Parts by Sophia Carroll
- p. 61 Buddy's Picasso 1 by Komal Sharma
- p. 62 Desrt Snow by Komal Sharma
- p. 63 Post-School Afternoon by Komal Sharma
- p. 64 Staffy on Grandpa's Chair by Komal Sharma
- p. 65 There's No Point in Arguing by Patrick Meeds
- p. 66 Care Instructions by James King
- p. 68 Blue Stretch of Lonely by Victoria Melekian
- p. 69 Dear Stranger by Victoria Melekian
- p. 70 It's Not The End of The World by laurel Streed
- p. 73 Swamp Noir by Maggie DuBois
- p. 74 Pudgy Dove by Maggie DuBois
- p. 75 Grackle Wings by Maggie DuBois
- p. 76 Slingshot by Trevor Cunningham
- p. 77 Sakura by Trevor Cunningham
- p. 78 Flood by Trevor Cunningham
- p. 79 To Him, To Me, To Her by Steve Denehan
- p. 80 Late October, First Snow by Robert Harlow
- p. 81 Summer Morning, Pentwater by Robert Harlow
- p. 82 sonnet for no longer there by Nikki Allen
- p. 83 The Hours by Meagan Chandler
- p. 85 Accordion Waltz by Nicholas Bratcher

- p. 87 You poor creature by Sai Pradhan
- p. 89 The Cavalry of the Wagons by Horia Alexandru Pop
- p. 90 On the Road Again by Horia Alexandru Pop
- p. 91 The Boy and The Umbrella by Horia Alexandru Pop
- p. 92 The Horse-Box by Horia Alexandru Pop
- p. 93 Bat Love Song by A. A. Gunther
- p. 94 Why Does She Have to Write Such Dark Things?
by Cat Winters
- p. 95 My Apologies to the Hydrangea by Cat Winters
- p. 96 Stealing from Children by Cat Winters
- p. 97 Bright Girl by Cat Winters
- p. 98 Ballad of a Worm by Sarah Horner
- p. 99 Rainbow by Sarah Horner
- p. 100 Look Both Ways by Chase Robinson
- p. 102 Nightly Routine by Chase Robinson
- p. 104 Love in pixelated cubes by Andrea Lius
- p. 106 How the Mirror Became Infinite by Bill Wolak
- p. 107 Biting the Pillow by Bill Wolak
- p. 108 Breathless Surrender by Bill Wolak
- p. 109 The Enigma of Intrinsic Tenderness by Bill
Wolak
- p. 110 On The Loose by Kathryn Schowalter
- p. 111 Changes by Kathryn Schowalter
- p. 112 Fragility of Legacy by Kathryn Schowalter
- p. 113 Hit and run by Louise Scoville
- p. 114 Burial by Louise Scoville
- p. 115 Amtrak Wolverine by Louise Scoville
- p. 116 THE HOLY ORDER OF COOKING by Emily
Black
- p. 117 BLACK-EYED BEAUTIES by Emily Black
- p. 118 The Bodega Was the Only Thing Left Standing
by Elizabeth Rosen
- p. 121 Contributor Bios

- p. 135 Door Is A Jar Staff Bios
- p. 138 Submission Guidelines
- p. 140 Door Is A Jar Newsletter
- p. 141 Door Is A Jar YouTube Channel
- p. 142 Subscribe to Door Is A Jar Literary Magazine

incantation
Salvatore Folisi
Poetry

the birds whistling
through the snowstorm
know that spring is here.
not fooled by the weather
they sense something deeper
in the atmosphere,
the turning of the planet
into a new season.
their song an incantation of hope,
an ode to the light
that warms the earth,
softens the ground
and brings forth life from the land,
to begin again
in a new cycle of celebration.

Waiting
Diane Funston
Poetry

I creep in to the butterfly habitat
dappled with perfume
Wearing my most colorful
flower-full blouse
Inviting filigree butterflies
to cover me

I stand still as a park statue
Silent as the pious in prayer
Occasionally I drift
toward a new feathery squall---
offer myself
passive altar
a turned-down bed

I see whorls of wings
flicker and flutter past me
to settle instead upon
silver haired shrieking tourists
corpulent camera man in a sweat logged suit
chocolate smeared children waving their arms
calling "Come here butterfly, come over here"

I watch amid chatter and clutter
silent
scented
open palmed

waiting

Slip Dream
Diane Funston
Poetry

While we're asleep,
the door opens
they slip in.
Phantoms from an old attic
a previous time,
high lofty rafters
Pull-chain lightbulb in the middle
where the pitch of the roof joins,
darkness scurries away
towards unfinished walls
hidden in shadows
awake and waiting,

With time out of our hands
the clock stopped at midnight
that hour ghosts begin to dance
old-style, curtsy and bow
top hat tips revealing sunken eyes
a bony hand that reaches for hers,
pulls her in to embrace
twirling in the dance,
music from gramophone in corner,
the one covered in dust,
a pile of 78s
a spider walks across the vinyl.

Songs from WWI,
the war to end all wars
record repeats again and again

sticks in grooves skips
generations sometimes.

Alice Blue Gown still in plastic
tuxedo and tails hangs in the corner
moves only from a cold draft,
dances when armies of rats rush
seeking one another in the dark.

reciprocal sun

Linda Crate

Poetry

i am a moon
without her sun
yearning for

a bright star to dance
in my sky,

thought once
i had met her for she
woke in me the dreaming
and magic in me i thought
was long dead;

but she was not mine to hold—

just a sun that spent many moments
in my life without being a fixture
that would remain always,

so here i am laying here in all of
my yearning for a sun who could shine
half as bright as she whose love this time
could be reciprocated rather than unrequited.

the sky that never falls

Linda Crate

Poetry

never forever
is a lonely
experience,

i want a love
enduring as an evergreen
who is sometimes the
only color in a winter sigh;

i want that fairy tale
love i know exists because i do—

yearn for my beloved sun
to illuminate me on my days of
deepest darkness,

whose song is the missing half
of the lyric of my hearts duet;

i am tired of being the
bridesmaid or the greeter at the
wedding:
let me be the bride—

crowned in moonlight:
silver and glittering

let our love be the sky that never falls.

I LOVE ASPHALT

Kristan LaVietes

Poetry

how it reaches out and loops
on itself, touching my sidewalk
and your sidewalk and their
parking lot. Connecting.

I love the patched
asphalt of the off-ramp,
the jack-hammered chunks
piling up behind concrete
barriers in construction zones.
And new asphalt, its smoothness
clean gray, its shoxic yellow
lane markers.

I love the cracked, bulging
asphalt at the edges, where we all
break down sometimes and are
rescued. I love this alive,
shallow rock
and how every day we climb
inside our metal skins and
take it places.

Love, Cupid
Arlene Tribbia
Fiction

Cupid sips absinthe at the hotel bar—it's one of the new glamorous ones—sometimes stroking his golden arrow with his narrow fingertips waiting for the pleasure to take hold. He wears a dark window pane suit to blend in with all the people hurrying about the lobby.

What's the rush? It'll never happen if they don't slow down, take their time.

If they don't take their time, he will.

If by chance they look at him, they'll see nothing but an empty window of transcendent cloth, a momentary reflection of themselves which will feel like *déjà vu* or a childhood mirage, an illumination flickering off a mirror or light bouncing from the marble floor.

And it isn't easy for him either because he keeps catching only dark contours of multiple lives, lost loves slipping past. Circumstances simmer everywhere and there are shortcomings and goings, always trembling, worry, all happening on the city's streets.

People are distracted.

Yet he knows the soft skin there under persimmon silks, filmy cotton and linen weaved with air where his arrow might dig deep into the body and in particular: the heart.

An arrow to the fifth, sixth, seventh rib won't do.

He understands how many people prefer to remain anonymous, unloved until he arrives to satisfy longings they didn't even know they possessed.

He understands how their hipbones must match but he also knows it's the heart that must be pierced to fall deeply in love.

If he drinks too much absinthe he'll have to be content to take to the streets where his aim won't be any

good, but sometimes it's fun to shoot drunk and let mayhem happen. For that reason, he dips his arrows in lavender to help with the nausea that often comes for some when they're falling in love. Besides, dumb lovers often need a little extra help—even if there is no happy ending like in a rom-com where the couple first meet up at some swanky pajama party in Bel Air or Hollywood Hills wearing ivory silk pajamas.

Sometimes Cupid even goes to these pajama parties. He doesn't care for them because they quickly commence into either orgies or a séance where it's easy to weep and the business isn't that good.

He leaves the bar and heads down on Sunset where he spots a boy, bleached Hockney blonde in neon orange sweats leaning against a graphite car that looks flashy expensive, but then he was never good with makes and models, so who knows. His friend is a skinny bent leather line drawn in next to him and if he didn't have silver star sequins and studs sewn into his lime green tennis shoes he'd fade.

For a few minutes Cupid listens to their lazy talk about the shape of time while they share a joint. He's heard it all before under this philosophical circus top that Sunset is once the emptying of bars and hearts begin.

I hear it's an arrow, neon Hockney says.

Nah. They say it's more like serenity, you know, like it heals all things, the other boy says handing the joint back.

The soul is an arrow.

When Cupid steps up, he points his arrow and as he takes aim, he whispers: it's nothing, nothing at all, nothing compared to love.

Spiral Handrail
Victoria Mullen
Art



Miss Frou Frou
Victoria Mullen
Art



Pilothouse for Irish fishing boat in dry dock

Michael C. Roberts

Art



Ancient door lock in Cefalu, Sicily, Italy

Michael C. Roberts

Art



Minimalism gnarly tree to sky Grand Canyon

Michael C. Roberts

Art



Stiletto

Jodi Cadenhead

Poetry

If you're going to insist, I talk
About my mother's pink stilettos,
Then I'll have to tell you about the time
Her lover broke into my father's tool chest to
Steal his stiletto hammer so we could
Smash the crabs wrapped up in white paper
on the kitchen counter, until

Hungry for more than food,
My sister and I ran back outside and
Spun cartwheels through the moonless night,
Never dreaming—
of how that sturdy hammer
Would be used later.

Salad Daydreams

Jodi Cadenhead

Poetry

You ignored my salad—apples, beets, cabbage:
Everything sliced and diced so coldly perfect, one
hardly missed the dates. Instead, you
opened the refrigerator, staring into the flickering light

with a longing I'd forgotten. Which meant I had
to go down the hall and out into the dark night to that
tiny house we once shared by the riverbed.

Where a woman with white hair answered the
broken door and handed me a box of moldy dates,
with the address of my old apartment, that walk-up
on Onyx, since sure enough,

Sitting on the stoop was every bad date, I ever had:
Men in muscle shirts, and cheap suits, leering, laughing,
looking like a pile of cockroaches.

So, I gave up on dates, and was about to come
back when I thought I'd stop by my childhood home.
As soon as I walked in, there were my parents.

Looking the way, they did when they were alive.
My father wondering why he never met you,
and my mother, full of complaints about how
I never put her in any of my good poems.

Omen

Rushika G. Ramani

Poetry

Last night spiders crawled out
Of my toilet bowl and invaded my
1200 sq ft apartment. I thought
That meant that the summer is coming;
But it was just him.
The three of swords and the fate of
Star crossed lovers on his shoulders; Pitted
Against each other.
Betrayal and bread go together like
The innocent and match sticks.
At least, kiss me good bye.

I spy with my little tired eye

Rushika G. Ramani

Poetry

Lingering by the door, trading secrets,
His hands on my hips.
We slow dance to a banned sermon,
All the way to the bedroom.
I carry my breasts like contraband,
He unties me, I scatter,
And he holds my breath for ransom.

Mindfulness Season

Carlin Corsino

Poetry

My heart is a middle-aged man
raking leaves. It finds new ways
to ache, watches work undone
by winds of age and compulsion.
The rake of anxiety drags
across the yard of its indecision.

My love is carefree. She leaps
headlong into leaf piles,
untroubled by the spreading.
Passes season to season
without worry for the inevitable.

Please Lord, let us learn
to slip into the warm knit sweater
of a moment. Past and future
tucked away like forgotten
to do lists. Her hand in mine,
steaming cider scenting the day.
We can watch these falling leaves
through the bay window
until spring rain boils them
down to thin nourishment
for the looming green.

Braver Every Day
Stephen Kampa
Poetry

The only reason I can put
my hand in you

o crocodile

and pull it out again intact
is that you

o crocodile

have been transfigured into one
medium-sized

handbag

Dirge of the Doordasher

Matt McGee

Fiction

Your cell dings. Burger King. \$7.75. Your minimum for driving to that side of town has always been nine dollars. But it's Sunday, and it's slow, and \$7.75 is almost \$9. So you hit Accept.

This will be your third delivery tonight. Your goal is five a day. And three is almost five. So you start the car and turn toward Burger King.

You'd had the window down while you were waiting, reading your latest acquisition from Malibu Newsstand, expecting the phone to ding at any moment. When it finally did, and you accepted, you tried to roll the window up to keep out the night air. But it won't go. There's something wrong with the motor, or maybe something else in there, you don't know, because you're not a mechanic and there is no money for a \$200 driver's window repair. So you keep hitting the button over and over and over until finally the window decides to go up. There. Fixed.

Three miles later, the window now up, you pass the local high school. Last year you read that the land once belonged to a couple who spent their lives making a famous radio show. Their whole catalog of broadcasts is still available on the Internet Archive database. You've listened to a few of them. They're still vaguely funny, and of course a little corny, but it gave you a simple smile, and seemed like such a pleasant little window into a pleasant, simpler time in the world.

And you wonder if that time was really that simple, that innocent. If you'd been alive then, you might not have even had a job. Or a car. And you wouldn't have to worry about sticky windows.

The map on the app sends you to the wrong apartment building, and you wonder how people ever did this back in the days of paper maps, even Thomas Brothers guides. But it's a luxury, and you know it, as is the flashlight app that helps you eventually find the building after a whole lot of late-night walking. It's a good thing you wore your good boots, the English ones that make you feel like you're able to march for miles if need be. That's a luxury. You wouldn't have had good boots in the radio days. You definitely wouldn't have the camera on your phone that you just used to snap a photo, turn away and collect your pay. Sometimes when you complete a delivery the customer adds on a little extra. There is no extra tip this time and you don't know why you ever expected one.

On your way back down the hill, you wonder if there were delivery people back during the radio era. If the stars and the staff of that show had their lunches brought to them as they were writing and rehearsing it. If you'd lived through that era, would you have been with the show—or would you be delivering their lunch?

Gophers. That's what they were called. You'd have been a gopher. But you'd have kept your hair nice, your clothes clean, and your eyes always on the lookout for an opportunity to go from wishing there was a little extra tip to someone that hands it out in a hash joint, or Sardi's, or whatever fashionable restaurant would've been grateful to see you then, glad to have you as a customer.

The app dings again. Do you accept, since this run is a carbon copy of the last? It's paying nine this time. Perfect. Once you go through the drive-through and roll away you hit the up button on the window and this time it rolls all the way to the top. Things are looking up.

You confirm the food is in your possession and the app shows you the delivery address: it's your exes house. The name on the order is her younger sister, the one who was always rooting for you to marry her older, slightly less

responsible sibling. The last you heard, your ex was engaged to someone with money. You pull up the hood on your hoodie and sink deep inside. You know there are cameras all over the front of the house.

It's a frightening reminder of what side of the financial world you're operating on. Maybe in a past life, a radio life, you weren't a gopher. Back then, you'd have been surrounded by glamour and celebrities.

But in this life, you know who you are.
Sticky window and all.

Pueblo Español

Nuala McEvoy

Art



Evie's Space City
Nuala McEvoy
Art



Clockwork

Patrick McEvoy and Olivia Pelaez

Art





Night
Darlene Bester
Poetry

Everything's as it should be.
The moon minus my eyes,
my eyes minus the night.
The sky was held together like scars.
They sparkle sometimes at night.
Everything's as it should be.
A deck of cards
split evenly in two.
My hands minus the queen,
the queen minus the night.
Breaking all the hearts in a quick, lucid deal.
Everything's as it should be.
The moon rotates partway.
My tears minus the faces,
the faces minus the night.
We all hide behind it sometimes.
Everything's as it should be.
Sometimes, I see the stars-
it is a mess of organized chaos.
It's night's greatest apology.
Everything's as it should be.

Infinity

Darlene Bester

Poetry

I'm standing on the brink of night.
It is vast and inclusive—
we are both there—looking for Jupiter—
and I wonder how far the night stretches.

The dust in me,
is the dust in you,
and it is also the awesome
space between the visible stars.

I picture the cosmic dust
like cotton candy,
that becomes human
when it melts into our warmth.

Why is space so cold,
and here we stand in a returning summer?

If space is flat, it is infinite.

I picture us standing on a wooden
plank- with measured out dimensions,
watching the night sky go by.
I wonder if the space between us is vast.
I wonder if we are the space
between the stars.

Standing on a wooden plank
on the curious brink of night—
Begging for Infinity.
(settling for not falling off the plank)

River Song 1

Emma Galloway Stephens

Poetry

Across our mill town's river,
I see mountains ripple

cobalt in spring, copper in autumn,
lovely in every light.

I could wade into the water,
chin deep, to reach the other side,

let the river swallow me, slay me
so I could rise again,

this time a mountain girl,
born of the water and the word,

barefoot in a green eternity,
white-eyed, full of prophecy.

In spirit and truth, I stand on the bank,
barefoot in sand slick as velvet.

This town is not my home—
it's a passing place.

But I'm dirt-deep, ankle bound
in clay, red stains to my knees.

But when this town lets me go—
who knows?

River Song 3

Emma Galloway Stephens
Poetry

Mama doesn't know
that at night I swim in the river—

me and the midnight moccasins
slither in the silver water,

bathing in moon wine,
ankle deep in mud like velvet.

Sister salamanders, slick and kind,
pull my worries from my mind.

My hair unwinds. God's ribbons.
The water makes me forget myself.

How lovely, not to know myself,
my own name a blank,

my being an eddy, a pebble,
a water moccasin, a salamander.

I let the water wrap around me
the way prayers wrap around God.

He drinks them all.
The river rises. My body falls.

Atmo
Eamon Costello
Poetry

Already frustrated, the pants caught
in the chain of the bike,
limbs of memory spiral
into the pothole:

Learning to drive around the rotary
The green room of the middle school play
Old friendship, the foundation of playdates
Becoming a faster runner than the father
The earnest note from a cabinmate
Hoping and waiting for summer's end
The bench of the important basketball game
The full effort sit-up in gym class
The jumps across the jetty
The bike—

Veering right into scrapes
and bruises to come
the mother and child and
the fire truck passing by
Laying there for a second before carrying on

Gifts

Antonios Tsoulfas

Fiction

Their car drove through the night, the windshield beating back the rain and sounding strange. Billy sat in the backseat next to his baby brother Jonah, who wouldn't stop trying to unbuckle his car seat. While their mom stared ahead, their father kept one hand on the wheel and with the other fumbled angrily with the radio, which made Billy say more than once, "Dad you have to put a dollar in the swear jar." His dad would clam up and not answer. Their mom and dad played no music, and the car ride was mostly silent besides the wiper and the rain, their dad's mumbling, and Jonah's cries. Billy's mother had once told him that babies were attuned to things that were yet to happen and to things that had already happened that they had no business knowing about. "You were that kind of baby," she had told him. Billy had no memory of the house catching fire or the three of them being trapped in the kitchen. But according to his mother, he had smiled up until the firefighters arrived to save them. She'd said you can tell how something will turn out by how a baby behaves.

When they arrived at Shorty's Barbecue, Billy's dad and mom got out first. His mom opened the door and took Jonah out of the car seat. Billy fumbled with his own door but finally opened it and jumped down. His dad grabbed his hand and led him to the restaurant. His mom held Jonah in her arms as they all went inside.

His dad spoke to the hostess, who led them to a table, pulled up a highchair for Jonah, smiled, and let them sit down.

"Mom, can I have the baby back ribs?" Billy said, not sure he should.

“How much are they?” his dad said loudly.

His mom gave his dad a look that had to be anger.

“Th-thirty bucks,” Billy said gently.

“Too expensive,” his dad said.

“Oh, for god’s sake, Harold, let him have them.”

Another look passed between them, and Billy knew it meant something, but wasn’t sure what. It scared him for some reason.

“My finances are going to be torched as it is, Kara, and I’m the one paying for this.”

“*Your* finances?”

“It’s fine,” Billy said quickly. “I can get something smaller.”

He started flipping through the menu to show them he was looking for something else. They only went out to eat on special occasions. The last time had been a long time ago. Why now, Billy found himself wondering.

“No, get the ribs.” His mom was looking at him with a smile.

“Kara....” his father said.

“Please stop fighting,” Billy heard himself say.

“*Please....*”

His mom and dad looked at each other for a long time. The anger left their eyes, replaced by something like sadness.

“You can have the ribs,” his dad said at last with a sigh.

Billy looked over at Jonah, the only one who seemed to be in a good mood. Somehow the thought of baby back ribs, which was Billy’s favorite food in the whole world, wasn’t making him happy. He felt the fear still, and it upset him.

The waitress came and soon Billy was digging into the ribs. His mom got a salad, his dad a burger, and Jonah had baby formula they had brought with them.

When his dad was done with his burger, he cleared his throat, looked at Billy, and said:

“Billy there’s something your mom and I want to tell you.”

Billy couldn’t breathe.

“Your mom and I are getting a divorce.”

Billy wanted to ask why, but could not. He couldn’t say a word.

“Honey,” his mom began. “Maybe when you’re older we’ll tell you more, but for now just know that your dad and I love you and Jonah very, very, much and we’ll always be a family.”

“So...” a voice said, and he realized it was his, somehow finding words at last, “we’re still going to live together in the same house. And have Christmas together. And hunt for Easter eggs?”

“Well...we won’t be living in the same house,” his mom answered. “I’ll be moving into my own place, and you’ll come and see me but otherwise you’ll be living with your dad.”

“And Christmas and Easter?”

His parents looked at each other.

“Of course, kiddo,” his dad said.

And then Billy said it. Was it because he was angry? Was it because it needed to be said and no one else was going to do it?

“You’re lying,” he said. “I know you are.”

Except for Jonah’s baby sounds, everyone was quiet.

“Billy...” his mom said gently.

Billy couldn’t see. His eyes were too full of water, and he knew that meant he was crying, which he didn’t want to do.

“Everything will be okay,” his dad was saying.

You’re lying, he wanted to say again, but didn’t. It wasn’t going to change what was happening.

Billy looked over at Jonah. Jonah had a calm, peaceful look on his face. His mother had told Billy the night before his brother Jonah was born, told him how babies sometimes knew how things would turn out. How you could always tell how things were going to turn out by looking at how a baby was acting, what mood it was in.... He wondered, sitting there in the restaurant with his parents and his baby brother, when he himself had forgotten how to do that, how to *know*, and looking at Jonah's face, how calm the baby was, he wanted to be a baby again, too, and forever.

END

The Devil Walked Here

Jaina Cipriano

Art



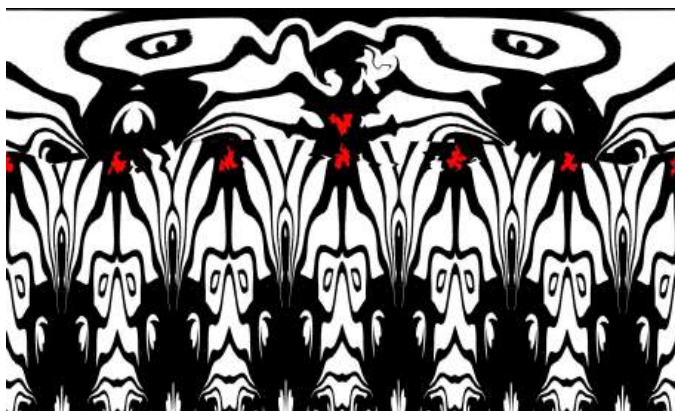
The Last One to Leave the Party
Jaina Cipriano
Art



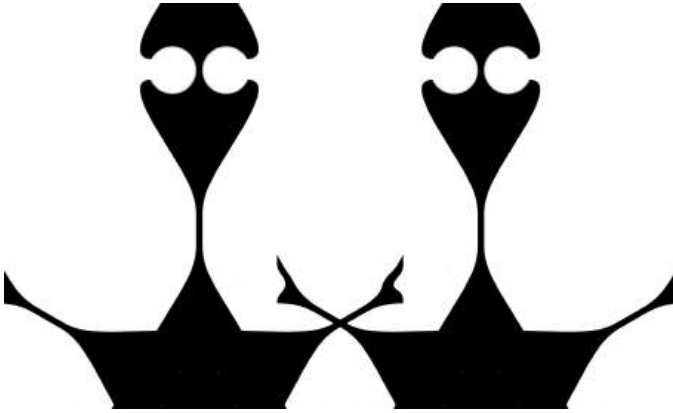
Power Prayer
Jaina Cipriano
Art



Growl 2a
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



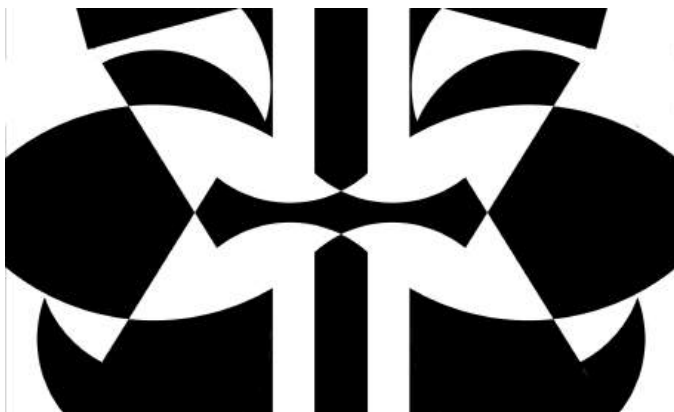
That Crazy Hand Jive
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



The Collison of Faith and Doubt

Edward Michael Supranowicz

Art



Twin
Ryan Keating
Poetry

I

The way our steps in step were
almost dancelike like our thoughts
thought at the same time; time and again
intertwined saying sayings in unison,
we were a compound word, synoptic gospel,
a full sentence. A dependent clause,
sometimes I was the verb and he the noun.
Sometimes we completed each other,
or describing, modified. We prayed
identical prayers.

II

I still answer quickly when he calls, echoing
a voice I love as neighbor and self.

I still call to uncover what I feel
when I can't recall, or to recover,

or to share a song or a moment alone
that reverberates if he shares it, too.

Today we are more plural than singular,
singing together less and on separate verses,

sometimes silent. I still listen for an echo
when I say amen.

swirling sugar

Joe Bisicchia

Poetry

you don't remember
but it's always good
to meet
intermingling
like our tea
aside the brokenness
the forgetfulness
in the
shattered
bits and pieces
grace
somehow remains
the moment
the moment next
the moment now
the moments
that were
as if forever
we are blessed
again
to meet

see me
Joe Bisicchia
Poetry

In the disarray,
find what appears
at first maybe only ash
there to alight and fit
squarely upon the sand.

A butterfly goes flying,
flying,
flying
because by mercy
I can.

I am
in the piece
by piece of today,
another doe,
a sapling,
a child in a distant land,
an unbreakable peace
of today,
of today,
and of today.

Look.

And find me tomorrow
not just in the breeze,
but upon your hand.

Fractions
Ophelia Monet
Poetry

and you're treating it like
you plan to let it go /
cautiously touch the lines
on my face, make me feel

dangerous, empty, alive /
synonyms for what it is
to be human / a little less
optimism, a little more

crisis / count the coasters
on the worn, etched table
and clean up the mess
that wasn't yours but

that you were made to
believe was / brighten
your eyes and bare your
teeth, it's almost over now /

did you see the way he
looked at me? it felt
barbaric / it made me feel
like a fraction of myself /

I never felt whole to begin with

Vultures
Ophelia Monet
Poetry

she blew kisses
you threw rocks

not just you,
everyone

spiteful vultures
don't you think

it's time to
lay down your feathers?

rustling wings
begging wind to soften

teeth so dull
flat like slates

nothing with which to
grind down brittle bone

no tools left to sand down
the edges of your

weapon

My Own Way

Bill Abbott

Poetry

I'm always in my own way,
pushing past me to get to the counter,
slipping in front of myself, blocking
the screen in the theater. Putting my
hands in the way when I reach for
the remote, the popcorn, the
pen, the next thought, the next
relationship.

I'm in the way again, I complain
to me. I want to do all the things,
but I'm blocking, boxing myself
into the old familiar places, the ones
which are so limiting, the ones which
won't let me do all the things. The ones
which won't let me do any of them.

But the limits are comfortable, and
I've limited myself to them out of
comfort. Out of fear of being noticed.
Out of fear of being recognized
for being me.

Shake Before Using
Bill Abbott
Poetry

In the event of a total meltdown
of your core reactor, please
follow all safety precautions,
dumping the offending waste
and restoring all functionality
to your collection of
ridiculous anime
figurines.

If the sideways glances from
potential suitors are unnerving
enough, please place your seat
into its upright position and
try an assortment of nacho cheese
snacks from the provided
tray.

After giving away the last of the
leftover sleep from your travel bag,
please exit the building in an
orderly and properly restrained
fashion.

When the frozen remains of your
libido collide with the sex toy joy
of your living room furniture,
please make sure you have
given up thoroughly on
all hopes for your personal
perspective.

Above all else, in the hopes
of a glorious sunset in the
corral of your waterborne
wilderness, please ignore
all muffled screams left in
the pit of your ever-scarred
soul.

Watch Parts
Sophia Carroll
Nonfiction

When I was three, my great-aunt tried to abduct me. I don't know if she knew what she was doing, only that she took me out of the restaurant where my parents were, walked us on winged feet to a payphone, and tried to order a taxi. My mother later told me it only took her a minute to notice I was gone, and she tracked me down as if my footprints were phosphorescent. I got in trouble for not telling her where I was going even though we both knew that I had listened to an adult, a family member, as I had been trained to do. I don't know what my mother said to my great-aunt, but I never saw her again. Years later I heard that she hung herself.

But she's still in me, the only family member my father knew with my illness, the one that manifested when I too walked on those winged feet, about to drive drunk in my pajamas at four in the morning because my skin felt like it was made of bees. I had once been reliable, orderly, but the illness disassembled me. After the hospital, I asked my parents whether they wanted to know my diagnosis. It was a crossroads and they knew it. "Of course," they said without hesitation.

On that walk around our block, my father talked about my great-aunt for the first time since the restaurant. "She was mean as shit," he told me. "She once baked me a pie with watch parts in it."

I imagine my great-aunt serving the watch—a timepiece cut into pieces. I imagine my father as a boy, cutting his tongue on glass when he expected something sweet. Trauma can be epigenetically inherited. Every time I take the medicine I am the first in my family to admit to needing, I am healing my ancestors.

As my father and I watched our dog sniff at a hedgerow, he added, "I see now that maybe some of her meanness might have been mental illness."

He walked in front of me back to the house, and his steps were lighter. Practically glowing.

Buddy's Picasso
Komal Sharma
Art



Desert Snow
Komal Sharma
Art



Post-School Afternoon

Komal Sharma

Art



Staffy on Grandpa's Chair

Komal Sharma

Art



There's No Point in Arguing

Patrick Meeds

Poetry

At four in the morning it sounds
like the end of the world but it is
just the shower curtain rod falling
into the tub. Gets the heart going
though, doesn't it? Being bitten by
a dragonfly. The electric snap of a
fuse popping. A car stereo's thump
suddenly coming through the walls.
Breaking the sound barrier.
I can't spend all day in bed. I've tried.
Even when I was in the hospital I tried,
but my blood kept whispering get up,
get up, get up. This is what wounded
animals do. This is how loneliness takes
hold. This is just practice for dying.
Every morning, I unmake the bed.
Turn all my clothes inside out. Close
the curtains on the blue-black dawn sky
and get on with it.

Care Instructions

James King

Poetry

Take this little heart and hang it
to dry in sunlight. Just sunlight.
On your counter, in that light, a package
from your sister, eight-hundred miles
away, containing a soft
brown cardigan, the label with arcane symbols—
a cup of water with the number 30
floating in it, a triangle sliced
like a strawberry, and what
looks to you like a lantern—
instructions for how to keep
this carefully made thing
from dissolving. You dreamed
your mother was dying, and awoke
frizzy and tired, small griefs
clung like lint in your hair.
When the heart gets stained like this,
here's what you must do—

pet a dog, turn on sprinklers at an empty house,
give your good friend
the strength he needs to throw away
a box of his old boyfriend's things.
Just one box, but weight
is not always measured by a scale.
Go with him to the Goodwill.
Know this has been done for you before.
In dim memory, your arm
supports a woman's neck, her haze
of straw-colored hair, as she plays
with your right hand—thumb between
your finger bones, kneading

the skin like stretching fabric,
finding the vein. In that moment,
you were physical, made of
matter, handled with care.
You've got some work to do.
This pattern in the warm brown fabric
of the cardigan. In every thread
of your worn-through heart.

Blue Stretch of Lonely

Victoria Melekian

Poetry

I no longer remember the name of the tree,
only that its leaves twirled to the ground

like tiny propellers spinning through October's
warm autumn breeze. By November you were gone

and the branches were bare, the tree's shadow
stretched across the weathered brick patio.

Hot Santa Ana winds blew smog from the sky.
At night the moon sits on a low limb

before it climbs over the fence above
the neighbor's house. You left us all behind:

husband, daughter, sisters—and me, your friend,
stuck in a blue stretch of lonely searching the sky

for doves, hundreds, like we talked about
so I'd know for sure it's a sign from you.

Dear Stranger
Victoria Melekian
Poetry

Seven years I've driven past
your memorial on Eighth and Coast Highway
wondering who was left behind, wondering
how you are. Seven years your twirling
pinwheel reminded me that the inevitable terrible
lurks: one wrong step, a small fluke in the day,
something cold in the wind, and your loss
could have been mine. I want to say how sorry
I am to see your shrine torn apart—the plastic
flowers, splintered white cross, shredded flag,
all dumped in the trash, the fuzzy stuffed toy
tossed on top. And now a backhoe is trenching
the dirt and we are losing this spot. I want
you to know I went back for the teddy bear.

It's Not The End of The World

Laurel Streed

Fiction

I was going to break up with Derek when they announced the zombie apocalypse. “Tomorrow,” I had told myself. “I’ll end it tomorrow.” But tomorrow would arrive with a sky on fire and screams traveling in on the wind like a poorly tuned string.

The couple in 2C made a run for it, but we stayed sealed in our tomb, not once daring to peek at the horror happening on the other side.

Derek was always the paranoid one, insisting the apocalypse would happen any day, so almost gleefully, he got to work filling the bathtub and sinks until water threatened to spill over the top. He counted cans of beans and Chef Boyarde, laid them all out to determine our rations. I counted the days until I could get out of here.

I asked him who would get what, the things we bought together and things that time blurred who bought what in the first place. But he was more concerned about the risk of his entrails being slurped up like Ramen, of which we had five packets left.

A week after the announcement, TV news channels petered out, so I rushed for the chunky vintage record player and flipped on the radio. The one he told me took up too much space in our tiny one-bedroom.

“No one even listens to the radio,” he said. “We all have phones.”

But I liked old things. Liked how they held up over the years. Unlike us.

I asked him if he was going to move out. He said now was not the time.

I couldn't take sleeping in the same bed anymore, couldn't stand the way he breathed so close to me, so I flipped our king mattress in front of the windows.

"To reinforce the glass in case the zombies come rushing," I told him.

When the electricity finally went out, we lit candles and spread them through the apartment. They were the smelly ones from Bath and Body Works, so the place swirled with a sickly rainbow sweetness of vanilla, pine, sandalwood, and lavender. It made us so queasy that we often preferred the dark. Derek asked if I wanted to fuck. There wasn't much else to do. At least it was dark.

One day, when it was so very quiet outside, I dared to crack open the door to take a look. The door was barely open an inch when Derek slammed it shut again.

"You can't go out there," he warned. "It's not safe. You have to stay inside."

"We will have to eventually."

"Not yet."

"Okay, then when?"

"When it's safe. When we're ready."

"I'm ready."

"How can I be sure you'll be safe?"

"You can't. But that's not your job to worry about anymore."

The houseplants withered. We couldn't waste water on them. Day by day, I watched them yellow and brown, green edges curling into themselves as they slowly died. Color faded, and I thought how awful it must be to lose what makes you beautiful long before you finally go.

"Tomorrow," Derek said. "Tomorrow we'll leave."

I nodded. "Agreed."

“What do you think it will be like out there?”

“Probably pretty scary.”

That last night, we played Jurassic Park Monopoly by candlelight. Our growling stomachs harmonized. I took Boardwalk and he sighed, such a sore loser.

I rolled my eyes. “Oh, come on. It’s not the end of the world.”

A smile ticked beneath his overgrown beard.

We laughed.

Derek helped me peel away the duct tape from the door. We shoved the couch back into the center of the living room and pried away the nailed dresser drawer face from the door.

I was about to pull open the door when Derek stopped me. “Wait.”

Maybe he wouldn’t let me go. He will say we’re making a mistake. But he retrieved his hunting knife and handed it to me handle-first.

“Be safe,” he said. “Don’t die.”

I took the knife with a thankful nod, opened the door, and emerged.

Swamp Noir
Maggie DuBois
Art



Pudgy Dove
Maggie DuBois
Art



Grackle Wings
Maggie DuBois
Art



Slingshot
Trevor Cunningham
Art



Sakura
Trevor Cunnington
Art



Flood
Trevor Cunningham
Art



To Him, To Me, To Her
Steve Denehan
Poetry

He is dying
my father
her grandfather

it has been slow
but it
is quickening

some days she is sad
at home
in school

she will miss him
she is scared
of what will happen

to him
to me
to her

I have no answers
there are no answers
to when, to where, to why

she tells me
that nothing lasts forever
I hug her

while realizing
that every moment
is infinity

Late October, First Snow

Robert Harlow

Poetry

Heavy and wet,
lining the boughs.

Evergreens bow low, some
almost touching the ground.

As if it's the first time
they were asked to dance,

silly girl pines
wearing white skirts

curtsey all morning
until the sun

offers a hand
to help them back up,

swirling the snow
from their beautiful green

dresses, their lovely,
slender shoulders.

Summer Morning, Pentwater

Robert Harlow

Poetry

Revived like everything
that needs rain, up early,
she wakes me naked
with her full-body touch.

Rising out of the sudden storm
squalling off Lake Michigan,
thunder rounds the edges
of the rapidly deepening sky.

Something similar, something
electric in her touch
always transforms everything
that is about to arrive.

sonnet for no longer there

Nikki Allen

Poetry

I want to yell at the vacant building:
“I know you used to be a Taco Bell!”
Shake my fist at the train tracks and the home
nestled next to them, keeper of first love—
burrowing under comforter while air
conditioner blasted—the young dumb stuff.
Take me to the junkyard. Hand me the cube,
metal and blue, that used to be my car—
the first one, convertible with tape deck.
My boombox rode shotgun in a friend’s lap
(their sole job not to let the cd skip).
Give me the old things back. Just as they were.
Rebuild what you have to. Destroy what you
can. Wind in my hair, burrito in hand.

The Hours
Meagan Chandler
Poetry

Black gnats creep
across tile white.

Moths cling to the netting
below the raised window,

aching for a light
she forgot to shut off.

Like its promises,
the medicine cabinet,

open, rests empty. Habitually,
she whispers a prayer

of thanks for the door's mirror
being turned away.

The hours passed without movement,
but there is no clock to say so.

Pill bottles remain
angled beside her feet.

Soles in a stare-off
with the tub's mildew-lined wall.

The cool, damp air
of this still summer night

wanders through the screen,
settles with the scents

of lavender bath salt
and verbena candles.

Funny how death can live
in the same space as dreams.

Accordion Waltz

Nicholas Bratcher

Poetry

Bellows full
Of air deflate.

Shaping notes
Both sharp and flat.

Instruments
Playing polkas.

Waltzes, songs
Of love long past.

The blue skirt
Your lover wore.

The night you
Met dancing to

A waltz of
Sweet romance. The

Bellows bring
Back memories.

The polkas
Of the old home

Country. Great
Grandfather left.

Better life
The new world had.

But still he
Brought his home

Along. A
Song in his heart.

His timeless
Music bridging

The gap of
Generations.

You poor creature

Sai Pradhan

Fiction

Grandmothers in India know that I am an omen of death.

This one certainly did. She had been telling her grandkids about it for years, each time I issued my characteristic chuk-chuk sounds from behind the old wooden pendulum clock. She would declare this quite nonchalantly, her audience of little humans aghast at the dramatic horror of a creature heralding demise living somewhere in their youthful midst, as they innocently tucked into their post-prandial banana bread-and-butter puddings. Her dispassionate approach toward something so grim added to their alarm.

You see, us house geckos aren't just harbingers of death; in the realm of superstition, we are also bringers of luck. Death wasn't something to be feared, granny knew that. So why bother kicking up a fuss?

Well into her eighth decade of life, she was past silly fears. She had spent her life praying to many gods. Every morning, she would sit in front of her kitchen altar, chanting Sanskrit hymns. She would bestow freshly plucked hibiscus flowers at the feet of the gods, each an avatar of the whole, the one, the thing of it all, whether imagined or otherwise. She had her bases covered, but no expectation of an afterlife. Like Goethe, she simply wished that at the very least, she "wouldn't run into all those bores who had spent their terrestrial time proclaiming their belief in immortality." If one of her grandchildren turned out to be one of those bores, she knew she would have failed them entirely.

Besides, these days, she was plum out of things to do and think about. Her body ached, she was often lonely, and her interest in all things mundane had been

dissipating for a while. Therefore, she figured that an end must be a good thing, a lucky thing. That's what made the rest of it precious: the making and eating of banana bread-and-butter puddings, the plucking and strewing of the hibiscuses, the charm of the old clock that rang sonorously every hour on the hour, unnerving my reptilian self even though we both apparently served the same function.

Granny was sympathetic to me. She knew that I feigned death all the time, slowing my breathing almost to nil when I perceived a threat. That can't possibly be pleasant. She also knew that a life of chuk-chuk-ing to fellow mortals as an augury of something as obvious as death, must involve tedium. I once heard her whisper kindly in my direction: *You poor creature, you don't even get to eat any banana bread-and-butter pudding!*

The Cavalry of the Wagons
Horia Alexandru Pop
Art



On the Road Again
Horia Alexandru Pop
Art



The Boy and the Umbrella
Horia Alexandru Pop
Art



The Horse Box
Horia Alexandru Pop
Art



Bat Love Song

A. A. Gunther

Poetry

My voice never sounded sweeter
Than when it bounced off her fleeter frame
And that is why I repeat, repeat
Repeat her name—
When it strikes her it will come back
changed,
her contours written in its pitch,
etching her shape in my brain.

No, I'm not after mosquitoes
I seek for a sweeter prize,
And that is why I repeat, repeat
Repeat these cries—
Seeking an ear-glimpse of her
eyes,
dim, like mine, but doing the trick,
flickering attic-wise.

Why Does She Have to Write Such Dark Things?

Cat Winters

Poetry

Women who write horror are spiders,
knitting cold webs in the corners of rooms.
Fangs sharp,
eyes wide and watchful in the dark.
Why does she spin such terrible tales?

Women who write horror are witches,
casting wild spells in the wickedest woods.
Breasts bare,
skin slick from dancing like demons.
Why does she speak like the devil's whore?

Women who write horror are werewolves,
howling their fears to the mad, misty moon.
Fur mussed,
throats raw from their fierce, feral cries.
Why does she need to sound so damn strange?

Women who write horror are phantoms,
haunting your mind when you're searching for sleep.
Breath chilled,
words wielded like knives in the night.
Why does she have to write such dark things?

My Apologies to the Hydrangea

Cat Winters

Poetry

My apologies to the hydrangea
that we planted in June,
forgetting that the great green valleys of Oregon
sometimes burn like the Mojave Desert these days.

My apologies for the drying and the shriveling
and the thirsting for rain
that my garden hose can't seem to quench.

I am doing my best
in this parched and precarious world,
and if I can say one more thing,
it's that I hope we both make it,
the hydrangea and I,
and I hope you make it, too.

Stealing from Children

Cat Winters

Poetry

Oh, dear children,
they're trying to hide the world from you.
They've packaged up
magic, wisdom, and truths
and shipped them off to god knows where.

They're afraid, dear children,
you'll discover you're magical, too,
and they don't know how to fit
transcendent souls like yours
into their stagnant, stultifying cis-tem.

They worry you'll learn that,
once upon a time,
thieves that looked and spoke like them
also boxed up magic, wisdom, and truths
and set the entire world on fire.
Our nostrils still burn from the stink of the ashes;
our lands continue to pucker from scars
—but you won't be able to read about any of it.

These modern robbers of knowledge and joy
certainly don't want you calling *them* thieves.
Oh, heavens no!

But we all know sooner or later you'll see.

Bright Girl
Cat Winters
Poetry

Bright girl, I miss you.
I miss the streaks of orange
and red and gold
whenever you sprint past me,
and the hazel shine of your eyes that photos
can never quite capture,
and the way you love to sing with me—
even songs from long before
I brought you into this world.

Bright girl, I understand.
You struggled under the crush of our clouds,
and suffocated in air that burdened your breathing,
and you needed to replant yourself miles away,
where the nurturing sun could care for you.

Bright girl, I love you.
I knew I had to give you to the sun
instead of holding you here in the mist,
and so I stepped back,
watched you fly free
into the dry desert winds
and bloom beneath mountain-kissed skies
soaked in strawberry and tangerine sunsets.

Bright girl, it's okay.
Please know you still brighten my world,
even from all those miles away.

Ballad of a Worm

Sarah Horner

Poetry

There are good and bad ways to feel small.
Good: the length of my shoulders being held
tightly in a single strong arm. Admiring ancient
architecture. Airplanes. Seeing those redwoods
in California that have stood quake after quake and
felt the wind of a dozen wars. Bad: to touch down
on foreign land and have to mime everything, and
point to what I want rather than declare it.
Feeling cramped in public transport. Routines
of necessity and not of comfort. I don't like
poems that make unconvincing analogies, or ones that
break the fourth wall, so I won't tell you that I feel
like a soft slender creature waiting for an overcast to
lure me out of hiding. I won't tell you that I am always
staring with big wet doe eyes because I don't know
how to be anything but gentle. Most of all, I won't
tell you that sometimes I like it, feeling small. I like it,
because how marvelous is it to always have something
to look up at? To note the expansiveness of
the world and remember I'm a part of it.

Rainbow
Sarah Horner
Poetry

How it feels to grow up: A shredded hem
on a first communion dress, torn by being boyish

on the church playground. I wore
flowers in my hair at recess.
Braided them around my friends' heads

as permanent crowns. Lea made my braids
so tiny my mom had to cut them out.

I am always leaning over something.
Looking down.

My dad tells me to smile more.

The clock's ticking. I anxiously await the bell toll,
its echo's round reverberation. The scene shifts:

I am no longer wearing white. Like a thing
that sprouts from the cracks in the sidewalk
I've grown hardy from the tread marks.

I am dark, I am light. I am red, I am green.

The poppies burst in the field.
They are yellow—so am I,

like sunshine slipping through the window
on a bright afternoon.

Look Both Ways

Chase Robinson

Poetry

At school my friends and I
Would cross the street
Most of the time with the right of way
Cars did not stop
Some never slowed down
Sometimes we would hear a car screeching
Barreling towards us
Those cars always modified to be louder

If a car almost hit us
We would say our mantra:
“Almost got our college paid”
It was a win-win situation
Save a few seconds by not waiting
Or get hit and make money
Now I think we were dumb
Young men who thought
The worst that could happen
Was a few bruises and scratches
Maybe some skin torn off
From getting dragged across the road
We had no care
Begging for our heads to meet the pavement
No concern about the tires
Seeking our bodies
Internal organs
No. We thought we would dust
Ourselves off from the ground
Or hood
Carry on and go to class
At least that is what I thought

Maybe they knew
Life was fragile
And crossed without looking

Nightly Routine

Chase Robinson

Poetry

Laying in bed
Body still on side
Trying to breathe
In through the nose
And out through the mouth
Supposed to lower your heart rate
While mattress shakes
More and more
Phantom earthquake every night
What is wrong with me?

The mattress itself is still
Flipping does nothing
Sleeping as a starfish neither
Can't sleep
Thinking instead

There's a reason
My greatest fear is boredom
During the day I waste time
Playing games, watching shows, reading books
If I stop and think
I'll remember who I was
What I've done

Night time is slowly plucking out each nail
Then having a person stomp
On the freshly revealed
Squishy flesh
One by one

Gutural emptiness while remembering
Past actions
Afraid of being exposed
For a person I no longer am

Love in pixelated cubes

Andrea Lius

Nonfiction

We share a four-story brick house with one whole floor for a library. Our bedroom has a floor-to-ceiling window overlooking our farm and the open water that surrounds it. Some days are stormy, but life's simple and we're happy. I make soups and bake pies, and he gifts me diamonds.

Then one day, he asked, "Will you slay a dragon with me?"

I never expected anyone to ask me that. Or how stupidly happy it made me.

In a world of pixelated cubes, I learned to accept his help. To feel safe instead of weak when I do. And that doing so doesn't threaten my independence or womanhood. I started saying "thank you" instead of "no, I got it" when we both knew that I definitely *don't* got it. So, I let him build me a two block-wide bridge, so I don't fall in lava. Or walk in front of me when we go out at night to hunt for monsters. Because he has quicker reflexes, at least when it comes to shooting arrows at skeletons.

I learned that it's okay for me to voice my needs. Like how each day, I prefer to complete a round of farming and selling my harvest before going on an adventure to chase after some hidden treasure or find the dragon portal. Sure, maybe that makes me a bit anal, but me nonetheless. It's also completely okay for him to ask if I'd go to hell with him after, so he won't get killed for the fourth time and lose all his levels and belongings. But even then, I can still say "eh, maybe tomorrow" without him getting upset with me.

I learned to allow myself to indulge in things that make me happy, even when I knew they couldn't last.

Like his visits. Or the sight of a baby zombie riding a chicken. I let myself laugh for two minutes straight before he dealt it a fatal blow with his flaming sword because it's (quite literally) killing me.

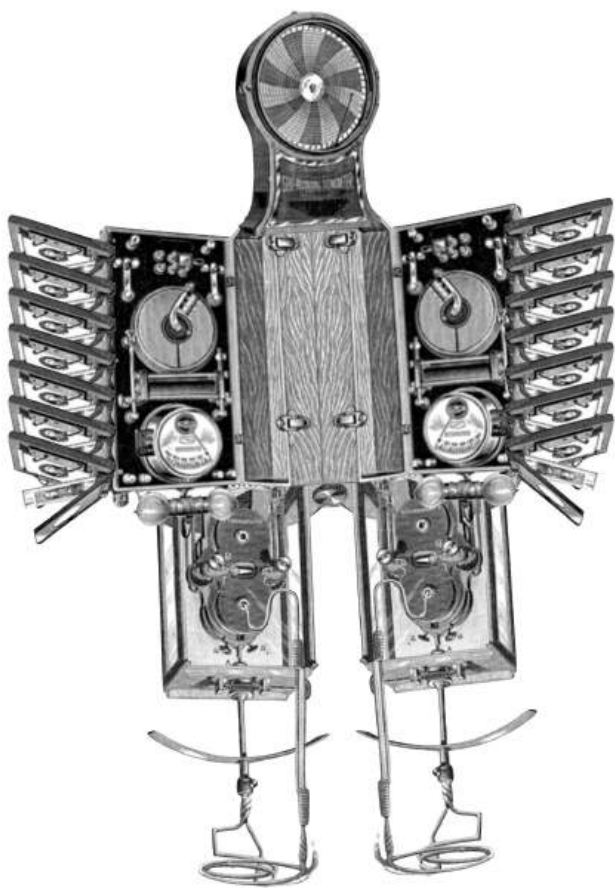
As two stacks of blocks clad with diamond armors and straight faces, we've saved each other's lives countless times. We've waited patiently, side by side, for our baby turtle to hatch, *then* grow up. We've mourned losses that are equal parts sad and unexpected. Like the death of our beloved orange tabby, Oscan (no, that wasn't a typo), who was suffocated by a pumpkin that grew around his head while he was following me around our farm.

Life's a lot simpler in this world. But we like it here, at least in the three-quarters of each month when we're over a thousand miles apart. Because here, we get to sleep next to each other, there are no work dramas or complex family dynamics and the best way to keep scary things away is by sleeping through the night. Heaven may not exist here, but there's no one we'd rather venture through hell with than each other.

How the Mirror Became Infinite

Bill Wolak

Art



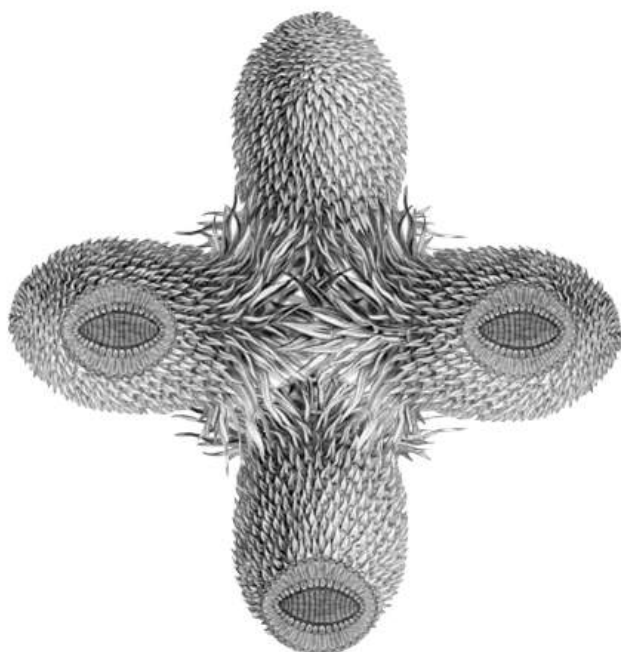
Biting the Pillow
Bill Wolak
Art



Breathless Surrender

Bill Wolak

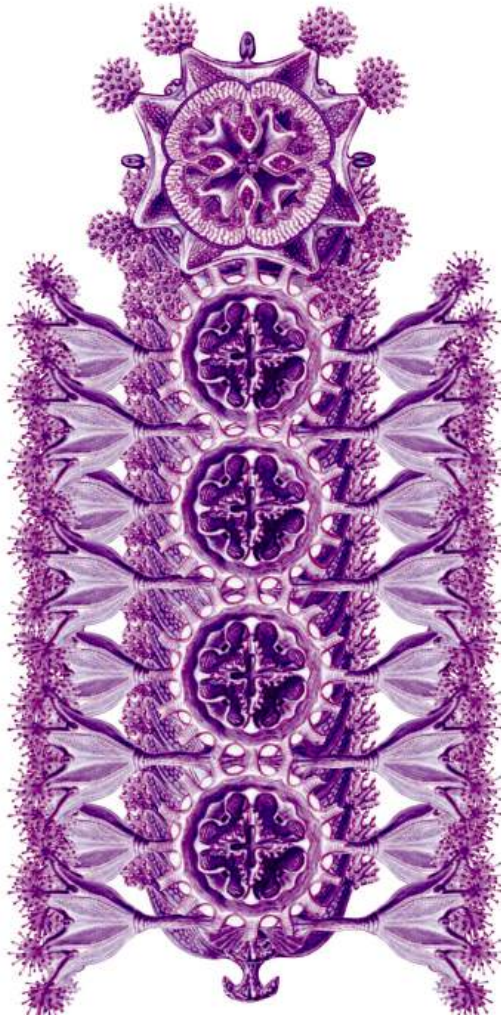
Art



The Enigma of Intrinsic Tenderness

Bill Wolak

Art



On The Loose
Kathryn Schowalter
Poetry

It took too long
to run away, escape
our great divide.

Hazel eyes betrayal,
A butt-boil, pain
unavoidable, but
not terminal.

The Goddess, Spirit
of Wind directing my
high plains escape.

The fragrance of
choices heady
and sweet and
blooming like a
raspberry sundae
peony—creamy-pink.

Feeling free finally,
feeling free and
on the loose.

Changes

Kathryn Schowalter

Poetry

They came down gently
like painted autumn leaves
on a still day. Photos and
paintings are gathered and
wrapped, moved and stored
along with other household
items. Many are swept away
to resale shops, summer's detritus
hopefully enriching others.

A home now as bare as willow
branches in winter, but soon,
like trees in spring, there will be
new paintings and photos
gracing these walls.

Stripped of all the fluff, embracing
uncertainty I amble down
unfamiliar roads, adventuring
into a vagabond life, searching
for enough boredom to ignite
creativity.

Fragility of Legacy

Kathryn Schowalter

Poetry

When my Uncle Quintin died
his homestead was sold to
a young family. Yesterday I
drove past his former house.
The trees he lovingly planted
were cut down. The Lannon
stone fence—removed. His
prairie scraped clean.

In a short time no one
will remember the field of
black-eyed Susans, queen
Ann's lace and fireweed that
fed the bees and graced
the eyes of passers-by.
A monoculture now replaces
the butterfly habitat. Moles
and voles roused, no prey
for red-tailed hawks.

What was my uncle's home
has been irrevocably changes.
The beauty of his legacy, lost.
Tend your garden, build your
fences, plant your trees, all
the while remember—this
legacy, like Quintin,
will not last.

Hit and run
Louise Scoville
Poetry

What if you
walk all the way past that yard at the end of Front St.
(that one with the tall grass and the
garish mailbox) and toss
your pack in the backseat
as we drive down that
long-hot-smack-talk road
between the water and the condos
up toward Petoskey.

You'll let me take you down past the drawbridge
over the green harbor smelling like
fish and bait and hot sugar strung
on paper cones. And you'll feel heavy
as you see the old ferry docking because you can
hear the dragging of the rope.

If I promise that it was right here
where I had given up on loving,
would you pause for me?

When you make the right-hand turn
past Four Mile Rd. you can still see the cherry trees,
even in the dark.

Burial

Louise Scoville

Poetry

Drive back from Benzie,
your bag heavy on my lap.
I see you are red,
your mouth open just a bit.
I know; we are running late.

There are fifteen miles
between the post and the lake.
Light turning toward you,
I watch the space behind your
head pulse, full legs kicking mine.

Out of midnight field.
Press full hands against my neck,
then hack up the rest.
I want you; thick dust in the
drive, cold air in my blue dusk.

Amtrak Wolverine

Louise Scoville

Poetry

Bolting through the crossroads
of the dark layered streets
of Chicago. Bitter cold.
The people are fawning over
little Christmas booths on the
corner—squinting noses
and running blue hands through
hair. I am coated in
a fresh inked film—newly born.
I am looking for your height,
shoving through German
tourists who are shorter
than sand reeds and nosy middle schoolers
buzzing as horse flies and I thought
that I would be done with this a long time
ago but here I am—a bleeding midwestern
shape to my face,
speaking your tone and whining about
what this road meant
six months ago. It is getting dark
and I am told by a boy my age to turn
back but I am walking and waltzing,
they are all watching as I twirl
through the space and hum it over and
I am too tired to be this young. I am
too old to know this now.

THE HOLY ORDER OF COOKING

Emily Black

Poetry

A lovely omelet pan, a dab of butter,
two fresh farm eggs, room temperature
and me.

I rummage the fridge and pantry for more
ingredients and find a jar of roasted red
peppers, a bit of fresh spinach left over

from yesterday's salad and some feta cheese
crumbles with basil and tomato.
With all ingredients measured into their

respective prep bowls, I don my apron,
wield my spatula and begin the holy process.
I raise the spatula like a baton

to conduct my symphony of morning,
a symphony blending pimento-red,
dark-balsam green, creamy yellow

and clear, airy white. Life, love, literature
and music fill my omelet pan. House lights
go low, there is a hush, the stage is illuminated.

Let the creation begin. Voila!

BLACK-EYED BEAUTIES

Emily Black
Poetry

Rudbeckia crowd my garden
in billowing clouds of yellow,
school-bus yellow.

Their black eyes peer upward
beseeching heaven to send them rain,
followed by brilliant sunlight.

As supplicants, they really seem
to know their way around prayer,
unrelenting prayer not to be ignored.

They get what they want, and if not,
they at least get my husband to water
them with the hose.

Sunshine we cannot produce to satisfy
their needs, but it does inevitably come
for these flowers heaven smiles upon.

The Bodega Was the Only Thing Left Standing

Elizabeth Rosen

Fiction

It went like this: pounding on doors up and down the hallway, and screaming. Tendrils of black smoke curling under the front door and creeping across the floor, stinging our eyes, sticking to our lungs like iodine painted onto a wound. More screaming when we yanked open our doors to flee, some of us in our pajamas, some in boxer shorts, some of us empty-handed and some with their most precious possessions in their arms.

I had Angela in mine, still wiping sleep from her eyes, and my boyfriend Pete had the other baby, Mina, in his, wailing at the top of her little lungs at the commotion. Pushing our way into the smoke-filled stairwell, joining the screamers, the runners, heat on the soles of our bare feet where there should be no heat, dashing *downdowndown* the emergency stairs, squeezing past baby carriages/electric fans/plastic bags of garbage stored there for lack of space, and inside the walls a cinder-block moaning, a gingerbread snapping—but no fire alarm ringing like the landlord was supposed to provide—the sound following us down down the stairs, as we fled past exit doors to the floors below ours, more screeching people pouring into the stairwell, and me yelling *hurryhurryhurry*, one baby in my arms and the other in Pete's behind me, bursting finally out onto the street, streaked in soot, panting, heaving, slapping at glowing embers landing on the blankets we used to cover ourselves, to cover our most precious things.

Only when I turned around once we were outside, with Pete four steps behind me, his tattooed arms wrapped around her blanketed form, I realized that it wasn't Mina's crying I was hearing. I mean, I *was* hearing it. I have been hearing it ever since. But I wasn't

hearing it from there, and when I looked closely—still blinking hard against the blinding smoke, wiping tears to see clearly—I saw that Pete had Chloe, his pitbull puppy, in his arms, and what I thought was my baby’s little soot-covered face twisted up in fear was really the dark furry face of that goddamn puppy.

When I realized it, I shoved Angela into Pete’s arms and went racing back toward the building and the roaring brightness and the *FLAMESFLAMESFLAMES*, but the blast of heat that hit me as I tried to get my Mina could not be passed through or ignored, and there were hands on my arms, and my throat was raw, and eventually my eyes went dim.

And when I finally saw Pete weeks later trying to cash his unemployment check at the bodega where we use to buy formula for Mina, I came up behind him and stood in line, though I had no check to cash and there was no check that could ever even things, and waiting behind him, I considered the switchblade I had bought especially for if this moment ever happened and which I carried in my pocket where my fingers could stroke the coolness of it and which I dreamed could quench the heat of the fire that had taken Mina, and I tapped him on the shoulder quietly because I wanted him to know it was me who had done this, and he glanced around, and, seeing me there, started and stumbled back, knocking over and falling into a stand of snacks, the packs of flaming hot Cheetos and Dorito Dinamita exploding under his weight like a series of gunshots, while I stood over him screaming my daughter’s name *MinaMinaMinaMinaMina* again and again.

Contributor Bios

Bill Abbott

Bill Abbott is a performance poet, professor, and cool guy (though his daughter may disagree). He lives on science fiction and video games. He hopes you're doing well and wishes you the best.

Nikki Allen

Nikki Allen is the author of *Hotwire* (River Dog Press '21). Her work has appeared in *Muzzle Magazine*, *Gasconade Review*, *Nailed*, *Crash*, *Profane Journal* (Pushcart Prize nominee '14/'15) and *Encyclopedia Destructica* among others. She is a freelance editor & teaching assistant for the Poems that Don't Suck and After the Ode writing workshops. She believes in revolution and strong coffee. Find her on substack or at honeydunce.org

Darlene Bester

Darlene Bester is a writer, cat lover, and fashion enthusiast from Minnesota. She draws most of her inspiration from nature and the change of seasons. She has been featured in *Bella Grace* magazine.

Joe Bisicchia

Joe Bisicchia writes of our shared dynamic. An Honorable Mention recipient for the Fernando Rielo XXXII World Prize for Mystical Poetry, he has written four published collections of poetry. He also has composed hundreds of individual works that have been published in over one hundred publications. To see more of his work, visit widewide.world.

Emily Black

Emily Black has had several professional careers, the most recent being in poetry writing. It seems that each step of her life has brought her to a new level of appreciation for past experiences. Emily wears Fire Engine Red Lipstick.

Nicholas Bratcher

Nicholas Bratcher is a poet and former broadcaster based in Phoenix, Arizona. While attending Northern Arizona University, he hosted a radio show, The Jazz Bookstore, where he shared original fiction and poetry between songs. He now writes and hosts a podcast, Greenwood and Company.

Jodi Cadenhead

A former reporter and editor, my writing has also been published in Salon. While raising three children, I've been heavily involved in leadership non-profit roles. The last time I wrote poetry was in high school. So many years later, it's a pleasure returning home to my first love.

Sophia Carroll

Sophia Carroll (she/they) is an analytical chemist and writer. Her work has appeared in SmokeLong Quarterly, Rust & Moth, and elsewhere. Find her on Twitter @torpor_chamber.

Meagan Chandler

Meagan Chandler holds a bachelor's degree in creative writing from Baldwin Wallace University. She currently attends the Poetry MFA program at Bowling Green University. Her works have been published or are forthcoming in Everyday Fiction, Inscape, Allium, and The Ekphrastic Review. She placed as a finalist and

runner-up in the 2023 competitions for the Hollin's University Literary Festival.

Jaina Ciprinao

Jaina Cipriano is an experiential designer, filmmaker and photographer exploring the emotional toll of religious and romantic entrapment. Her worlds communicate with our neglected inner child and are informed by explosive colors, elements of elevated play and the push/pull of light and dark. Jaina writes and directs award winning short films that wrestle with the complicated path of healing. Her second short film, 'Trauma Bond' is a dreamy, coming of age thriller that explores healing deep wounds with quick fixes, it took home the grand prize at the Lonely Seal International Film Festival. Jaina's photographic works forgoes digital manipulation, everything is created for the camera. She takes an immersive approach to working with models, approaching a shoot like a documentary photographer as her subject is let loose in a strange designed space. Working with Jaina is often described as cathartic and playful. Her photographic work has been shown internationally.

Carlin Corsino

Carlin is a poet, Army Veteran, and emergency physician. Much of his writing is a reflection of that work. He has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and the North Carolina Poet Laureate Award.

Eamon Costello

Eamon Costello is a 19-year-old writer born in Philadelphia and raised in Medford, Massachusetts. He is one of the editors-in-chief of The Columbia Review.

Linda M. Crate

Linda M. Crate (she/her) is a Pennsylvanian writer whose poetry, short stories, articles, and reviews have been published in a myriad of magazines both online and in print. She has twelve published chapbooks the latest being: *Searching Stained Glass Windows For An Answer* (Alien Buddha Publishing, December 2022). Linda has four full length poetry collections and a photography collection book. She is also the author of the novellas *Mates* (Alien Buddha Publishing, March 2022), *Managing Magic* (Alien Buddha Press, September 2022), and *The Queen's Son* (Alien Buddha Publishing, December 2023). Her first short story collection *King Quinlin* (Alien Buddha Publishing, March 2024) was published this spring. Linda's debut haiku collection in these ancient veins was published quite recently (Alien Buddha Publishing, May 2024).

Trevor Cunningham

Trevor Cunningham is a writer/artist/ who lives in Toronto. He has published poems in *Carousel* and two anthologies. As well, he has published photographs and a drawing in magazines such as *Maisonneuve* and *Cerasus*. He will have a poem featured on the front page of *Open Arts Forum* in August, and a poem appearing in *Last Leaves* in October. You can find him on instagram @trevorcunnington.

Steve Denehan

Steve Denehan recently discovered that by burying himself up to his ankles in the sand at the beach he can do the Smooth Criminal lean pretty well.

Maggie DuBois

Maggie DuBois is a Southern storyteller, poet, and photographer. Her work has appeared in Hobart Pulp, X-R-A-Y Magazine, Moon City Review, and elsewhere. Her memoir was selected as a semifinalist for the 2019 Pamet River Prize and she has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Salvatore Folisi

Salvatore Folisi has been enchanted by the spell of words since he began to write creatively in high school. Over the years he has jotted down his thoughts and inklings as a way to fathom the majesty and mystery of the inner and out worlds we live in. He also loves to bang on drums, walk quietly through nature with senses attuned, and engage in deep, winding conversations that lead down dusky pathways into the midnight of the soul.

Diane Funston

Diane Funston is owned by two chihuahuas and a pit bull. They type up her submissions and catalog her numerous acceptances to journals and use the rejections as piddle pads. She has a small fruit orchard and grows her own vegetables and flowers.

A. A. Gunther

A. A. Gunther is a Manhattan legal writer by day and a Long Island poet by night. Her writing appears in publications like *Dappled Things*, *Ekstasis*, *The Friday Poem* and *ONE ART*, with more poetry forthcoming in *National Review* and elsewhere. She's always wanted to tell people to go buy her work at Barnes & Noble, so this is a real trip.

Robert Harlow

Robert Harlow resides in upstate NY because someone has to. Either that or he lost a bet. He is the author of *Places Near and Far* (Louisiana Literature, 2018), which, he believes, constantly occupies the top spot in Amazon's "Least Seller" list. His poems appear in *Poetry Northwest*, *RHINO Poetry*, *Tar River*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, and elsewhere. Or so he has been led to believe. He also plays the guitar. Another thing he would also like to believe.

Sarah Horner

Sarah Horner is a writer and recent graduate of the University of Minnesota. Her poetry and fiction have been published in places such as *Redivider*, *Lunch Ticket*, and *The Minnesota Review*. She lives in Minneapolis with her cat Goose.

Stephen Kampa

Stephen Kampa is the author of four books, a session musician on half a dozen albums, a happy husband, and the caretaker of the sweetest of all possible hounds. He lives and works in Florida but is open to suggestions.

Ryan Keating

Ryan Keating is a writer, pastor, sommelier, and coffee roaster on the island of Cyprus. He takes care of a dozen neighborhood cats and doesn't know how to crochet.

James King

James King is a poet from New Hampshire. His poems appear in *The Shore*, *Bear Review*, *Exposition Review*, *Anti-Heroic Chic*, *Variant Lit*, and others. He is the recipient of the 2020 Academy of American Poets College Prize and a two-time Pushcart Prize nominee.

Kristan LaVietes

If Kristan LaVietes could shrink teeny tiny, she would live in a sand castle and make a slippery slide out of seaweed and invite hermit crabs to play on it with her. It would probably be a very short life.

Andrea Lius

Andrea Lius is a scientist and writer who splits her time between Washington and California. Her words have appeared on The New York Times and upcoming in The Mersey Review. She spends most of her spare time solving crossword puzzles or playing Minecraft with her partner. She's currently trying to teach her mischievous grey tabby how to read.

Nuala McEvoy

Nuala McEvoy taught herself to paint in lockdown at the ripe age of fifty. In 2024 her work was accepted for publication in over 40 literary reviews. She has had two exhibitions in Germany and in 2025 she will have an exhibition in London. She loves writing poetry and learning new languages.

Patrick McEvoy

Patrick McEvoy relishes being an intronaut while finding inner and outer worlds to explore. Whether writing stories that might get published (recently Apricity Press) or performed (Secret Theater), he is captivated by all genres, loves different mediums of art. He is drawn to stories and visuals, from Spidey to Virginia Woolf, from Dali to Nancy Pan.

Matt McGee

MATT McGEE writes in the Los Angeles area. In 2023 his work appeared in Four Feathers, Gnashing Teeth and The NonBinary Review. When not typing he drives around in rented cars and plays goalie in local hockey leagues.

Patrick Meeds

Patrick Meeds lives in Syracuse, NY and studies writing at the Syracuse YMCA's Downtown Writer's Center. He has been previously published in Stone Canoe literary journal, the New Ohio Review, Tupelo Quarterly, the Atticus Review, Whiskey Island, Guernica, The Pinch, and Nine Mile Review among others.

Victoria Melekian

Victoria Melekian collects words, rocks, and glass doorknobs. She gardens, makes quilts, and pretends to practice piano which means playing her favorites over and over. Victoria lives with her husband in Carlsbad, California where the weather is almost always perfect.

Ophelia Monet

Ophelia Monet (she/her) is a high school educator, mother, and storm chaser (yes, really), living in the suburbs of Cincinnati with her husband and their son. She coaches archery and enjoys reading fantasy novels, and can often be found wandering barefoot through forests.

Victoria Mullen

Victoria Mullen is a frustrated time traveler and a dual US-Greek citizen. She enjoys writing, photography, thunderstorms in summertime, a most excellent cup of coffee, and happy puppies and kittens. She attributes her creative passions to her Greek heritage and the Nine Muses, who played, sang, danced, and inspired others to do the same. See her photography in upcoming issues of 'Beyond Words', 'The Word's Faire' (THE FEAST print publication), 'Cool Beans Lit', 'Chariot Press Literary Journal', and on her website at catboycafe.com. Rumor has it that she is moving to Spain.

Olivia Pelaez

Olivia Pelaez is an American comic book artist. She graduated from the School of Visual Arts with a degree in Cartooning. Her work includes short comics published by DAPShow, SpazDog Press, Space Between Entertainment, Oneshi Press, and more. She was the main artist on the Kitchen Witch series written by Steve Orlando, published by 215 Ink and The Little Girl series written by Pat Shand, published by Devil's Due Comics. She has one daughter and resides in NJ.

Horia Alexandru Pop

He was born in Romania 40 years ago. He lives in France. He writes and tries to sell one of his movie scripts to producers. In the meantime, he goes out and shoots peculiar, eerie things he sees in the streets, in the wild, or just around the corner.

Sai Pradhan

Sai Pradhan is a Hong Kong based Indian American writer and artist. Her writing has been published in *The Iowa Review*, *The Prairie Schooner*, *JMWW*, *YOLO Journal*, *ANMLY.org*, *Ligeia*, *Litro UK*, *Litro USA*, *Sublunary Review*, *Vagabond City Lit*, *Sleepingfish*, *Moss Puppy*, *South China Morning Post's Style*, *Hong Kong Free Press* (opinion column), and *NB*.

Rushika G. Ramani

Rushika G. Ramani, a 26-year-old immigrant from India, is a songwriting major at Berklee College of Music, currently residing in Los Angeles. Her journey from India to the vibrant cultural landscapes of LA enriches her songwriting and poetry, allowing her to blend the rich musical heritages of both worlds. Her work explores the profound connections between music and words, crafting stories that resonate deeply across different cultures and reflect their commitment to artistic expression.

Michael C. Roberts

Michael C. Roberts currently lives in Phoenix after an academic career, mainly at the University of Kansas where he published psychological articles, chapters, and books. Now endeavoring to be different and creative, he has returned to photography, a familial avocation. He incorporates both digital photography and retro-analogue film formats. His photographic book of film photographs is available on Amazon: "Imaging the World with Plastic Cameras: Diana and Holga."

Chase Robinson

Chase Robinson is currently a law student. He began writing poetry in college. He has published a poem in the student literary journal *Coelacanth*.

Elizabeth Rosen

I am a former Nickelodeon TV writer and a current short story writer with a love of YouTube ghost-hunting shows. Color-wise, I'm an Autumn. Music-wise, I'm an MTV-baby. I am a native New Orleanian, and a transplant to small-town Pennsylvania. I miss my Gulf oysters and etouffee, but have grown appreciative of snow and colorful scarves. Learn more at www.thewritelifeliz.com.

Kathryn Schowalter

Kathryn is a retired middle school special education teacher. She's spending this second childhood living in an RV to limit housework, so she can spend more time writing poetry, short stories and marketing a novel. She travels with a cat (Acid Burn) and rescue Irish wolfhound (Seamus). She enjoys photography and painting, as well. Should you see a Coachman RV with the plate "C MY USA," stop in and say "Hi".

Louise Scoville

Louise Scoville is from Ann Arbor, Michigan. She is a MFA candidate at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, studying fiction. She has spent parts of life as a summer camp asst. director, receptionist, and event planner.

Komal Sharma

I am a self-taught artist and done a Master's in Architecture at the University of Newcastle. My mural has been featured in ArchDaily, and I am excited to announce that I will be showcasing my work in a solo exhibition at Ladder Art Space Gallery in Kew, Melbourne. Originally from Chandigarh, I have lived in various regions of India due to my father's service in the Indian Air Force. The artist statement for the art pieces: Welcome to “Animals in the Now” an exploration of present moment through the animals. You might find them in your own home, in your neighbour's yard, or across the street, quietly observing you in search of your attention. As we live in a whirlwind of thoughts and distractions, our furry friends remain steadfast, fully engaged with their surroundings. When they gaze at the world, they invite us to pause, breathe, and truly connect.

Emma Galloway Stephens

Emma Galloway Stephens is a neurodivergent poet and professor from the Appalachian foothills in South Carolina. Her best poems arrive after long hikes and hours of listening to folk music. She dreams of earning her PhD in gothic literature and then disappearing forever into the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Laurel Streed

Laurel Streed is a neurodivergent artist, writer, and desert dweller who enjoys creating strange twists on reality with deliciously descriptive prose. She graduated from the University of Minnesota with a BA in English, placed 3rd in *Flash Fiction Magazine's* 2024 short story contest, and currently lives in Phoenix, AZ with her two black cats.

Edward Micahel Supranowicz

Edward Michael Supranowicz is the grandson of Irish and Russian/Ukrainian immigrants. He grew up on a small farm in Appalachia. He has a grad background in painting and printmaking. Some of his artwork has recently or will soon appear in *Fish Food*, *Streetlight*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Door Is A Jar*, *The Phoenix*, and *The Harvard Advocate*. Edward is also a published poet who has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize multiple times.

Arlene Tribbia

Arlene Tribbia is a writer and artist. She writes poetry and fiction and makes portraits about otherworldly beings because she's fond of discovering characters who work to solve the larger cosmic riddles of the universe. Website: <http://arlenetribbia.com/wp/bio/>

Antonios Tsoulfas

Antonios Tsoulfas is a writer first and foremost. When he is not writing he can be found spending time with the people he loves and working out. He's also a sucker for a good TV show or movie.

Cat Winters

Cat Winters (she/her) is an award-winning author of seven novels and a picture book biography. She returned to her childhood love of writing poetry while undergoing cancer treatments at the beginning of the pandemic—a transformative experience. She can be found working in the theaters of Portland, Oregon, or wandering the woods near her Pacific Northwest home.

Bill Wolak

Bill Wolak has just published his eighteenth book of poetry entitled *All the Wind's Unfinished Kisses* with Ekstasis Editions. His collages and photographs have appeared as cover art for such magazines as *Phoebe*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Baldhip Magazine*, and *Barfly Poetry Magazine*.

Door Is A Jar Staff Bios

Maxwell Bauman

OWNER/ EDITOR-IN-CHIEF / ART DIRECTOR

Maxwell studied Creative Writing at Wilkes University and earned his M.A. in Fiction and M.F.A in Publishing. He founded Door Is A Jar Literary Magazine in 2015. He is a contributor to Chicken Soup for the Soul. His Lego art has shown in exhibitions including at the 81 Leonard Gallery and the Dr. Bernard Heller Museum. Website: maxwellbauman.com

Corinne Alice Flynn, Ph. D.

POETRY / DRAMA EDITOR

Corinne Alice Flynn is the Writing Center Coordinator at the University of Scranton. Aside from being the Poetry and Drama Editor for Door Is A Jar, she's written for each of the Night Bazaar anthologies published by Northampton House Press. She had her play "14 Symptoms" produced at the Brick Theater's Game Play Festival back in 2014. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Composition and Applied Linguistics at Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Dominique Isaac Grate**FICTION / NONFICTION EDITOR**

Dominique Isaac Grate obtained his B.A. from the University of South Carolina, majoring in African-American Studies with a minor in History. A 2013 inductee into the National Academy of Young Preachers, Rev. Grate studied at Wake Forest University School of Divinity, and he has pastored three congregations; Historic Trinity AME Church in Manning, SC, New Mt. Zion AME Church in Lexington, SC, and Calvary AME Church in Bates-burg-Leesville. In 2023, Rev. Grate transitioned to higher education, where he serves as the Assistant Vice President for Development at Jarvis Christian University in Hawkins, TX.

Submission Guidelines

Door Is A Jar Literary Magazine is looking to publish well-crafted poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama, artwork, and book reviews.

Please read over our submission guidelines carefully.

Our publication steers away from academic writing and publishes short, conversational works that use familiar language. Each new issue features artists and writers and works that are accessible for all readers.

Submit all work in Times New Roman font size 11

We only accept new, unpublished work. If you have posted something to your website or social media, this counts as being published.

For book reviews, please include the title, publisher, year published, and ISBN.

Please provide your name as you would like published, email, mailing address, and a fun 3-sentence bio. (We're not as interested in how many degrees you have, or how widely you've been published. Instead, we want to hear about the real you. We want to know about the little things that spur you along.) Contributors can submit to multiple categories; however, only submit once to each category until you have received our decision about your piece.

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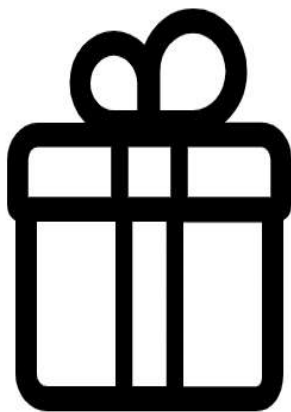
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